

# Post-Pandemic Business Recovery Experiences of Samal Island Beach Resorts Owners: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Inquiry

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## ABSTRACT

The tourism industry globally was primarily affected by the covid-19 pandemic travel restrictions due to the suspension of tourism activities including the tourism of small islands like the Island Garden City of Samal. The purpose of this study is to find the meaning of the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of the resort owners, managers, and local government tourism workers. This is a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach to understand the recovery experiences of island beach resorts. There were six purposively chosen owners and managers of beach resorts in Samal underwent in-depth interviews, while six participants took part in a focus group discussion. Thematic analysis was applied to the gathered information. The study found that the resorts were able to re-operate gradually and business continuity was manifested. The most relevant theme presented was Tourism business renovation. Participants seized the pandemic as an opportunity to upgrade resort facilities, enhance amenities, and improve service quality, providing job stability for employees through construction projects.

**Keywords:** Davao Region, pandemic recovery, resorts, tourism, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Lockdowns and business closures highlight business experience during the Covid-19 Pandemic on the global scene (Gu et al., 2020). Recovery of businesses was perceived to be more difficult for those who were greatly affected by the devastating effects of the pandemic. (Yeh, 2020; Campbell et al., 2013). The tourism industry suffered the most due to travel restrictions from its border to the suspension of tourism activities worldwide (Braun et al., 2020; Gu et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020; WTTC, 2020). The tourism of small islands was not exempted from the dilemma caused by the Pandemic as it isolated from the large population pointed out by Mestanza (2020). The problematic aspects concerning island tourism include the lack of consistent government policies regarding reopening strategies (LGU of Samal, 2020; Philippine Policy, 2020) and business closures within the tourism sector (Gu et al., 2020). Additionally, there is a heavy reliance on internal sources of income for small islands, which affects the livelihoods of residents and hampers overall economic growth (Duro, 2016; Arias et al., 2019; Ganesan, 2020; Connell, 2021; Goretti et al., 2021; Khan, 2021). Moreover, there is an over-reliance on and excessive prioritization of the tourism industry (Sheller, 2021; Carrs, 2020; Kosyrev, 2019; Connell, 2018), which can lead to various challenges and vulnerabilities.

The importance of the business recovery of beach resorts will highly affect the valuable market of the tourism industry (Connell, 2018). The excessive reliance on tourism presents various opportunities for island beach resort management to navigate their way out of this predicament. However, it also poses

challenges as it serves as a primary source of employment for the local population and generates substantial revenue for the island beach resorts (Goretti et al., 2021; Khan, 2021). Thus, the primary purpose of this study is to uncover the recovery experiences of the island beach resorts, the strategies they implemented, and the lessons they learned to help the business recover and continue its growth.

This study holds significant value as it focuses on operational strategies implemented during the pandemic, providing valuable insights for the government to shape future tourism policies for island resorts. The global health crisis drastically altered the dynamics of tourism, prompting practices such as social distancing, capacity reduction, and sustainable approaches to be adopted by island beach resort management. The study aims to explore themes related to the recovery efforts of these resorts and develop strategies to ensure business continuity and overcome closures. The findings have the potential to drive operational changes in future tourism management, serving as integral components of business continuity plans.

The literature review helped the researcher identify the gaps, including knowledge and empirical gaps. Traditionally, the definition of sustainability has something to do with the wise use of resources without sacrificing future generations' ability to use the resources and continuously allow business growth (Kabat-Zinn, 2006; Gotojones, 2013; Wilson & Pile, 2015). The recent Pandemic caused business disruptions and closures, thereby creating doubt on the current definition of sustainability. This study will help shed light on whether there is a need to incorporate elements from the Pandemic experience into the definition of sustainability in the future and how these closures bring recovery to each island resort. Another gap is an empirical gap. Businesses demonstrated resilience on set of the pandemic, and a significant number of closures occurred (Rosita et al., 2017). It is widely acknowledged by the authors that businesses must proactively cultivate resilience to effectively navigate future challenges (Aziz et al., 2021; Sheller, 2021).

This study is unique among others as it will provide information on the operational experiences of island beach resort recovery and how management addressed the dilemma. The findings of this study will be published in a tourism-refereed journal and shared through research forums, and national and international conferences as reference on island tourism, business recovery, and business continuity of the same subject study. Moreover, the findings will also be shared with tourism industry stakeholders such as businesses, academics, government regulators, and future researchers to understand the lived experiences of beachresort owners in Island Garden City of Samal.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this Phenomenological study is to understand, describe and find meaning in the recovery experience of Samal island beach resorts. In the research study, I aimed to interpret the perceptions of resort owners and managers on how these operational challenges lead to recovery. Next, describe the challenges towards recovery. Then, find meaning in their experiences. With these, it will draw out the in-depth gist of their challenges and develop insights that are useful for future tourism planning policies and strategies.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the lived experiences of resort owners as regards recovery from the effects of the Pandemic?
2. How did they cope with the challenges attributed to the re-opening of the business operations?
3. What insights can be drawn from the participants that can serve as

a reflection for tourism stakeholders?

### **THEORETICAL LENS**

This research was anchored on the Theory of Resilience by Catherine Moore (2019). The Resilience Theory

of Catherine Moore in 2019 has a premise linked to a social-ecological system that responds to and manages changes. Furthermore, changes in regulations and policies for the intuitive appeal of the new framework revitalized the sufficient needs. The use of this theory was on how management deals with the changes made by the COVID-19 pandemic. These, guidelines on tourism protocols made changes for tourism establishments, specifically in island beach resorts to generate innovative management flow for business safety and continuity (Bec et al., 2015; Hall, 2018; Moore, 2019).

In the context of the study, the resorts are one of the tourism establishments that were primarily affected by tourism closure. For these, travel guidelines and policies in tourism establishments make the resort management act accordingly and the basis of their decision-making. In addition to that, the concept of resilience has been applied widely to multiple disciplines during a pandemic and its recovery. The changes made by the COVID-19 pandemic brought new sets of policy that rationally decides business operations. Not to mention, the anchored theories will be able to strengthen the organized gathered data during the result analysis.

### **Importance of the Study**

This study is aimed to highlight recovery experiences and perceptions of resort owners in terms of operational challenges and strategies and how the present situation will be helpful for future growth of operational planning and strategies. In particular, the study participants have shared their responsibility during the conduct of the study by voluntarily putting time and effort into research involvement. Essentially, the primary beneficiaries of this study were the stakeholders, such as the following the Island beach resort owners, beach resort managers, tourism policymakers, and future researchers.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research design of this study is qualitative research, particularly the hermeneutic phenomenological study approach to determine the recovery experiences and perceptions of resort owners. Creswell (2012a; 2012b) posited the qualitative study is exploratory in nature. On the other hand, in the definition of Ingram (2002) phenomenological study is a research approach that understands the perspective of individuals. It utilized the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate by gathering personal experiences and analyzing their significance within the participants' areas of expertise (Shahbazian, 2015). This study facilitated the exploration of the obstacles faced during the recovery of island beach resorts. On the one hand, it shed light on the challenges encountered in the process of resort recovery. Specifically, this hermeneutic phenomenological study sought to comprehend the firsthand experiences of resort owners, managers, and individuals closely associated with the industry, who were profoundly impacted by the pandemic. Furthermore, the analysis process aimed to uncover patterns and relationships at the individual level. For this reason, the phenomenon was focused on island beach resorts of Samal Island, Davao del Norte, Philippines and the people within the industry as the participants have their own experiences before and after the Pandemic. The direct experience of tourism people allowed the readers to understand and appreciate what it was like to be in the tourism sector. Furthermore, the said phenomenon allowed readers to understand that the people involved in the study had expertise in the tourism industry and how the Pandemic changed their lifestyle. Additionally, the views and experiences of the participants contributed to the development of new ideas and strategies as they adjusted and changed over time.

### **Research Participants**

The researcher obtained significant data for the research study. The data gathered from the resort owners of island beach resorts in Babak, Island Garden City of Samal (IGACOS), Davao del Norte, Philippines who primarily took part in the study. The participants have primarily six (6) owners and managers of beach resorts. In addition, there are also six (6) participants who participated in one (1) focus group discussion to

triangulate the data of the IDI consisted of tourism government officials of Samal Island, resort organization members, and customers. The researcher utilized a purposeful sampling strategy in the participant selection process in order to acquire the necessary information required and needed from different perception of operations on their respective resorts.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection started after securing the Research Ethics permit and certification. To ensure the smooth collection of data, the initial step involved seeking permission from Samal tourism officials to conduct the study and obtain relevant data from all beach resorts in the Babak District spanning from 2019 to the present. Once the necessary permissions were granted, I reached out to the resorts through email and letters, inviting them to participate in the study. After receiving their acceptance, I proceeded to select six resort owners and managers from six distinct resorts on Samal Island for in-depth interviews. The remaining participants were scheduled for the focus group discussions, which contributed to a diverse range of perspectives and insights. The sampling design was homogenous sampling. According to Kabir (2016), homogenous sampling design is a portion of population that has similar characteristics in particular sub- group in depth. In this regard, the primary participants are owners and managers of island beach resorts in Samal. The nature of participants has social stand, position and common goal in terms of operations and managerial business growth.

For the interviews, I personally visited each beach resort to ensure convenience for the participants. In-depth interviews were conducted at their respective establishments, while the focus group discussion took place at the Samal Tourism Office to ensure privacy and familiarization of the participants within its own area. To facilitate the process, I sent the interview guide to the participants in advance, along with a clear explanation of the confidentiality of the information collected. Throughout the entire activity, audio recording was employed, and note-taking was done with participants' permission to capture key points and ideas discussed. On average, each interview took approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete.

The data collection framework that was used in this study was the Framework Analysis in Applied Qualitative Research of Laurie Goldsmith (2021) who presented an explicit step such as data familiarization, the researcher must have understanding of the entire study to generate codes and themes. Framework identification, conclusive description of themes from owners and managers and have more abstract concepts during and after Pandemic for better interpretation. The process commenced with the letter being sent to the prospective participants, and once they agreed to participate, they were requested to provide a specific time and day for the IDI. Subsequently, interviews were scheduled and conducted as per the agreed-upon arrangements.

After the interviews were conducted, I discussed the contents of the Informed Consent form with the participants and their permission to sign the Informed Consent form.

### **Data Analysis**

In analyzing the qualitative data, a thematic analysis approach was employed to interpret the information gathered through IDIs. The analysis was further strengthened through data triangulation, incorporating insights from the focus group discussions, field notes, and document analysis.

In addition to that, the data analysis framework used in the study by Gale et al. (2013) consisted of seven steps. Firstly, transcription was carried out to convert the high-quality recordings into essential data. Secondly, familiarization with the interviews took place, involving a comprehensive understanding of the transcriptions. Thirdly, the data was classified and organized through coding, which involved interpreting and paraphrasing descriptions. Fourthly, a working analytical framework was developed by comparing and grouping the

labels into categories that defined the relationships or causalities in participants' responses. Subsequently, the analytical framework was applied by indexing subsequent transcripts using the established categories and codes. This allowed for the management and summarization of data, achieving a balanced representation of participants' thoughts and insights. This process, known as charting, involved organizing the data into a framework matrix. Lastly, data interpretation took place, going beyond the data collection stage to provide direct responses and answers to the research questions. The findings were analyzed and interpreted within the context of the study, providing meaningful insights and conclusions.

Thematic analysis in qualitative research is the main approach in analyzing data (Sundler et al, 2018). As research requires accurate methods for the data analysis, this requires the following steps: Familiarization of data, generation of codes, themes searching, themes review, defining themes, and making a report among the steps in thematic analysis.

### **Ethical Consideration**

This research protocol was submitted to the UIC-Research Ethics Committee (REC) and reviewed. The researcher observed the 10 dimensions of research ethics such as social value, informed consent, vulnerability issues, risk-benefit ratio, privacy and confidentiality of information, justice, transparency, qualification of the researcher, adequacy of facilities, and community involvement.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section summarizes the discussion that can be drawn from the studied data. This discussion goes into a lot of detail about the presenting sequence from the previous chapter.

**Profile of the Participants.** The participants in this research were resort owners and managers of beach resorts in Babak, Island Garden City of Samal (IGACOS). They provided valuable insights based on their diverse experiences and perspectives in operating their respective resorts. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym representing the character they portrayed during the interview.

**Type of Beach Resorts.** The participants were categorized based on the type of beach resort they are managing, distinguishing between low-end, mid-range, and high-end beach resorts. The basis of classification is the comparison between their published rates as well as the type of amenities that the resorts are offering. In addition, the participant's years of service in the beach resort industry were considered, adding depth and expertise to their contributions.

A Low-End Beach Resort is typically more budget-friendly and cater to travelers seeking affordable accommodations. These resorts offer just basic amenities and services at lower price points. The rates for low-end beach resorts can range from approximately PHP 1,000 to PHP 3,000 per night, depending on factors such as location, facilities, and demand based on seasons. These resorts further provide comfortable lodging and beach access for budget-conscious travelers without compromising the essential features of a resort.

Moreover, the mid-range beach resorts offer a balance between affordability and added comforts. They provide more amenities and services as compared with low-end resorts while maintaining a reasonable price point. The rates for mid-range beach resorts can vary between approximately PHP 3,000 and PHP 8,000 per night, depending on factors such as location, room type, facilities, and the specific offerings of the resort. It can also change based on the season like high rates during peak season which is the summer and Christmas seasons while low rates during the off-peak season. Mid-range resorts often provide spacious rooms, dining options, swimming pools, and additional recreational facilities to enhance the guest experience.

Further, high-end beach resorts are known for their luxurious offerings and premium services. In most cases,

these resorts target travelers seeking upscale and indulgent experiences. The rates for high-end beach resorts may range from approximately PHP 8,000 to PHP 20,000 or more per night, depending on factors such as location, reputation, exclusivity, amenities, and the level of luxury provided. Most High-end resorts have minor rate changes during varying seasons. They offer top-tier accommodations, gourmet dining options, extensive leisure facilities, and personalized services to cater to the discerning tastes of guests.

In addition, the price ranges mentioned are price ranges and were approximations. This is because prices can vary depending on factors such as the specific resort, location (popular tourist destinations may have higher prices), room type, seasonal variations, and market demand.

**The Lived Experiences of Resort Owners as Regards**

**Recovery from the Effects of the Pandemic**

**Table 2**

*Lived Experiences of Resort Owners on Recovery*

*from the Effects of the Pandemic*

Major Themes	Core Ideas
<b>Increase in guest arrivals by enforcing COVID safety protocols</b>	Guests’ confidence in resorts in compliance with government restrictions
	Increasing guest arrival due to grant of permit from 25% capacity in 2020 to full capacity in 2023
	Feeling safe among guests in the beach resort
	Increasing number of guests during recovery period
	Utilizing Government-initiated financial support for additional funding
<b>Implementation of Marketing Strategy in New Normal</b>	Implementing promotional tourism booster activities through weekend water sports
	Promoting resort-based initiatives with entertainment shows and parties
	Intensifying promotion through social media presence
<b>Increase in Revenue</b>	Increasing guest arrivals by implementing government-mandated capacity over the years
	Increased revenue from tourism-initiated promotional water sports activities
<b>Sustaining Regular Employees and Recruiting new ones</b>	Retaining regular employees to prioritize their job security
	Dividing the schedule for flexible working arrangements
	Regular employees recommending friends or relatives as prospective employees.

Increase in guest arrivals by enforcing COVID safety protocols, Implementation of Marketing Strategy in New Normal, Increase in Revenue, and Sustaining Regular Employees and Recruiting new ones.

**Increase in guest arrivals by enforcing COVID safety protocols.** The participants gladly shared that they

saw a gradual increase in guests when local government ease the restrictions, instilling confidence in the resorts' policies. They expressed that they are doubling their income, which significantly impacted their business. Moreover, they were delighted to receive a government funding which boosted their capital, enabling them to expand their services and income. The participants' adept handling of changing situations, along with government support, contributes to the gradual recovery of resorts, resulting in increased guests and revenue.

This discovery aligns with the findings of Beh & Lin (2021), indicating that the collaboration between the local government's efforts to enforce restrictions and the compliance of beach resort owners with these policies effectively strikes a harmonious balance between preserving public health and bolstering the local economy, with these, modifying the continuing consequences of the pandemic during the recovery phase. Additionally, Nicolau (2006) coincided, stating that adjusting to evolving circumstances due to this dilemma instills confidence during the recovery period, leading to an improvement in guest arrivals.

**Implementation of Marketing Strategy in New Normal.** The participants reiterated their significant experience in promoting new services by focusing on weekend watersports activities and utilizing resort-based initiatives, including entertainment shows and parties that seek outdoor adventure in the New Normal. As they emphasized, they aimed to create a vibrant and lively atmosphere within their respective resorts to enhance their appeal and attract more guests. They also intensified their promotional efforts through a solid presence on social media platforms that reach a wider audience and potential guests.

This concept was linked to the works of Botero (2020) and Hall (2020), who emphasized that island beach resorts are poised to experience heightened demand compared to other tourism sectors once the crisis subsides, as they can help compensate for the missed outdoor activities that many people longed for while staying at home. Additionally, they emphasized their proactive engagement on social media platforms to attract potential guests and enhance their arrivals and sales during the recovery phase. These findings were corroborated by Romagosa (2020) and Yu et al. (2020), who highlighted the role of digital platforms in bolstering operational confidence and excitement among people. They further stressed that information shared on social media platforms will become a vital tool for promoting a positive outlook on travel and destination stays.

**Increase in Revenue.** The participants revealed the ways their revenue increased in the new normal. The participants acknowledged the stimulus support of the government through lifting restrictions that relieved them to operate weekend watersports activities that contributed to the rise in income. The time spent by each guest on their respective activities becomes a multiplier effect on the operation that increases income thoroughly. Similar cases in Asian island beach resorts linked by Erbl and Koh et al. (2019) pointed out, when COVID-19 restrictions were gradually eased. In these cases, participants anticipated a recovery phase characterized by increased tourist spending, which directly influenced the income of the beach resorts. Furthermore, they also shared alternative strategies to boost revenue by introducing outdoor activities and hosting parties, resulting in an initial revenue boost during the early stages of the recovery period. Gossling et al. (2020) reinforced this observation by noting that beach resorts experienced a swift recovery, triggering a chain reaction of increased tourist arrivals and a positive impact on financial inflow. Consequently, the challenge faced by these participants involved effectively promoting their resort services and maximizing their capacity after the pandemic.

**Sustaining Regular Employees and recruiting new ones.** The other important matter that beach resort owners are concerned about the most is their people. As mentioned by one of the participants, they expressed that they prioritized regular employees, and they are flexible in changing the resort's needs, like shifting. Moreover, the shift of operation caused by the Pandemic made people more adaptable who already had the experience of pre-pandemic. With these, it helped them to make changes without hesitation. Furthermore, in operation, beach resorts need more people in the recovery period. Additionally, the participants shared how they trusted the references of their regular employees to hire new people within their community.

## Coping with the Challenges Attributed During

**Table 3**

*Coping Mechanisms during re-Opening*

Major Themes	Core Ideas
<b>Tourism Regulation Compliance in the NewNormal</b>	Acquiring government permits
	Having beach resort inspection as part of accreditationrequirement on reopening
<b>Extensive Sanitation and Safety Measures inthe New Normal</b>	Housekeeping is cautious about deep cleaning of roomsand usage of UV light.
	Restricting customer capacity to execute social distancing
	Operating large areas for guests' groups
<b>Tourism Business Renovations</b>	Upgrading the facilities and amenities for reopeningpreparation
	Improving facility design by adding aesthetics andenvironmental value

**Re-Opening of the Business Operations.** The participants are evidently optimistic in mitigating the Pandemic they revealed their coping mechanism on how they handled the operational growth of their businesses, to wit: Tourism Regulation Compliance in the New Normal, Extensive Sanitation and Safety Measures in the New Normal, and Tourism Business Renovations.

**Tourism Regulation Compliance in the New Normal.** The participants shared their confidence in acquiring government permits before the reopening. The beach resort owners expressed the procedure of attaining requirements and additional certificates as a mandatory step. They restated their unstoppable contribution to filing accreditation requirements that involve inspecting their respective resorts, which is a necessary criterion for reopening, ensuring their compliance and safety for the management and guests. The results validated the findings of Dw.com (2020) and Dube et al. (2021) concerning the obligation ofobtaining tourism business certification, which serves as a testament in establishing standards set by the government authority, by this means ensuring the quality of service during the New Normal period. Furthermore, achieving a harmonious and sustainable balance between ecological and social aspects, as emphasized by Cheer (2020), is not only economically advantageous but also contributes to overall sustainability and equity of Samal Island community and the environment. The participants underscored the advantages of these additional policies and requirements in implementing safety protocols within theiroperations, resulting in positive outcomes for their respective beach resorts.

**Extensive Sanitation and Safety Measures in the New Normal.** As participants embraced the NewNormal, they exposed their meticulous execution of safety measures, emphasizing housekeeping beingdiligent in performing deep cleaning of rooms by adding sanitation measures like UV light. Another is the social distancing measurement on guests that limits guests in certain areas so that the management prevents overcrowding. To limit guests sharing in an area, the participants said they offer ample spaces to accommodate guest groups to maintain social distancing. As expressed by participants, their commitment to cleanliness and safety measures aimed to adapt to the New Normal period's comfort and safety for guests.

The findings, as corroborated by the Ministry of Health (2020) and Gispert (2020), underscore the



importance of sanitation and safety measures in beach cleaning and disinfection, serving as preventive measures against the transmission of Covid-19. Participants mentioned their efforts to enhance facility protection, reducing the fear of infection through the utilization of safety tools. Another strategy discussed by those interviewed involved limiting customer capacity in specific large areas, reducing close contact among guests. This reduction in guest numbers aimed to encourage social distancing and mitigate the risk of overcrowding during the recovery period. These findings align with the research of Wen et al. (2020), which highlights the effectiveness of zoning systems in automatically separating guests from each other. As circumstances continue to evolve, it remains crucial for beach resorts and tourism businesses to remain vigilant, adhering to guidelines that continuously assess and implement appropriate measures during the recovery period.

**Tourism Business Renovations.** Participants underscored the significance of tourism business renovations started during lockdowns. In preparation for the recovery period the participants speak out on how they used the time with limited guests in addressing resort facility issues and damages. They uttered on how they focused on boosting repairs, maintenance, and improvements to be more appealing in reopening.

The research results confirmed the observations made by Stankov (2020) and Steidle (2017), demonstrating that the outcomes were used as a chance to elevate the overall guest experience by introducing fresh amenities and upgrading existing features. These enhancements rejuvenated their beach resorts, making them more appealing to potential guests. This aligns with the findings supported by Ioannides et al. (2020), underscoring the importance of leveraging the lockdown period not only for facility improvements but also for engaging employees, thereby demonstrating resilience and adaptability in the face of the challenging circumstances arising from the pandemic.

**Participants’ Insights drawn that can serve as a reflection for tourism stakeholders**

**Table 4**

*Insights drawn from the participants that can serve as a reflection for tourism stakeholders*

Major Themes	Core Ideas
<b>Tourism Business Continuity Schemes</b>	Adhering good public health image resulting increased of guest arrivals and business continuity
	Embracing online platforms for promotional and accessible approach to guests
	Leveraging the support of Local Government Unit as venues for social gatherings and engagements
<b>Pandemic Support from Owners, LGU and Organizations</b>	Dedicating to employee’s well-being with job provisions and financial aid from the owners
	Collaborating efforts among government entities for employment financial aid
<b>Essence of Hope and Faith</b>	Reassuring that God will provide in coping difficulty during and after Pandemic
	Hoping there will be no more Covid19 cases in the future
	Challenging Business Operations in Pandemic with new hopes of new normal

Participants highlighted the profound transformation in their operations from the pandemic to the post-

pandemic phase, which had a pervasive impact on their lives. The beach resort owners and managers' positive outlook portrayed the recovery stage as a rainbow after the rain, dispelling fears and instilling a sense of optimism for the future. The insights they have shared were seized into three aspects: Tourism Business Continuity Schemes, Pandemic Support from Owners, LGU and Organizations, and Essence of Hope and Faith.

**Tourism Business Continuity Schemes.** The participants were innovative in dealing with the recovery stage. One of the things they thrilled for, was their good public image for their accomplishment of covid protocols that appeals more guests and revenue. This was also warranted by Aziz et al. (2021), resilience in the face of evolving circumstances adheres safety measures that helped mitigate the risk of transmission and demonstrated a responsible approach to business operations that later on impacts good recovery phase for obedient businesses.

Another, as recapped by the participants, is the convenience of social media that intensifies their presence for promotional activities and approach that made them accessible to the public regardless of less physical contact. Moreover, the support of the local government in promoting their resorts for social gatherings, as mentioned by one of the participants, the local government helps them promote by posting and informing the public on how safe it is to travel to Samal and how beach resorts are ready in accepting guests with excitement activities and venues prepared.

The research findings, supported by Kotler (2016) and Kristina (2020), underscore the significance of digital platforms that foster global connectivity. During the pandemic, adaptation relied on leveraging technological benefits to share social events that draw the interest of potential guests. Beach owners also expressed their gratitude for the support they received from local communities, which added to their joy in promoting their individual beach resort services.

**Pandemic Support from Owners, LGU and Organizations.** The unwavering care of every supporter printed in the heart of every participant as they echoed collaboration among entities in sustaining their livelihood and businesses. Amidst the trials brought forth by the Pandemic, the participants specified that they shoulder their employees need by sustaining their work and financial assistance from Pandemic to recovery period. On the other hand, gratefulness overflowed the emotions of employees as they shared their view to their beach resort owner and their barangays. The similar sentiment in Ranasinghe's (2020) work on collaboration, as seen in the study of tourism industry recovery, emphasizes the interconnectedness between employers and employees, as well as between the government and businesses. Similarly, Manuel and Herron's (2020) research findings highlight unity, suggesting that the act of businesses showing generosity during a crisis endures and contributes to economic recovery in the post-pandemic period. Therefore, the experiences recounted by the participants serve as a testament to the strength of compassion, solidarity, and community in surmounting challenges.

**Essence of Hope and Faith.** The incessant hope of every participant anticipated their trust in recovery period as they emphasized their belief through their faith in God. The gladness showed on their expression when they heard the news of lifting most of safety measures. They spoke their hopes in New normal to be Covid free. Furthermore, one of the remarkable things they open was their faith in God through prayer that pushed them to go through the complications.

Whitzman (2020) reinforced the participants' optimism, as they emphasized their desire for a more favorable New Normal in the tourism industry. While acknowledging the pandemic's impact on the sector, they retained hope for positive changes and enhancements in how tourism functions during the recovery phase. This optimism signifies the resilience and adaptability of the participants, who expressed their unwavering commitment to surmounting challenges and fostering a positive vision. This concept is akin to Cheer's (2020) vision of a future where valuable lessons are assimilated, innovative practices are embraced, and sustainable measures are put into action. Therefore, the hopeful outlook shared by the participants serves as a

motivating force for the industry to persist and adapt in the face of uncertainty.

**Implications for the Recovery.** My interaction with the Samal Beach resort owners and managers reflects their gratitude and optimism. The time I spent with them was productive as I could sense their sincere aspirations in the context of the New Normal. The Island Garden City of Samal is a community that tremendously depends on tourism. The island often has close-knit communities that rely heavily on tourism for their livelihoods.

*Implications to Beach Resort Owners.* In discussions with beach resort owners who experienced significant revenue losses during the pandemic, their resilience and gratitude for their health, recovery on sales and business continuity were inspiring. They also showed empathy towards their employees, offering support and kindness. However, the reality of the situation necessitated a focus on recovery. To overcome the challenges, beach resort owners adapted and strategized by prioritizing financial planning to mitigate the impact of previous downturn to great opportunity. They may also implement effective marketing and promotion strategies to attract guests and events such as extensive digital marketing, more outdoor activities, and local partnerships. With these, they will remain responsive to the changing travel trends. Being agile, innovative, and customer-centric is crucial for success in navigating the challenges of the New Normal and positioning themselves for a strong recovery in the post-pandemic era.

*Implications to Local Government Unit.* The study unequivocally highlighted the vital role of the Samal government unit during the pandemic and recovery era, receiving commendable feedback on its effective governance and community collaboration. However, it also revealed the substantial impact of these restrictions on businesses' revenue. The study's findings may be necessary to the local government unit as it shows the perspective of beach resorts during the Pandemic and how beach resort owners lift their businesses during recovery. Through these, it can be helpful as one of the sources of contingency plans for Samal Island in the tourism sector. Moreover, it can also be beneficial if they can provide financial assistance and implement discounted permit rates to provide valuable resources to owners striving to recover from the new normal.

*Implications to Tourism Practice.* The Pandemic has challenged the ability of beach resort owners to remain resilient and adaptable, highlighting the vital value of tourism practice presented by the data. Beach resorts are implementing sustainable measures to safeguard the well-being of both their guests and employees. Furthermore, they actively embrace digital transformation to improve operational efficiency, enhance the guest experience, and improve digital marketing. Finally, they are diversifying their sources of income by offering unique experiences through activities and entertainment, collaborations with local government, and upgrading their facilities through renovations, all of which contribute to sustained growth in the tourism sector. As mentioned by Ledesma (2014) and Bec et al. (2015), recovery is the ability to build and rebound its capacity from a fortuitous event. On top of that, the local government's active participation from the Pandemic to the recovery period was one of the highlights presented by participants as their presence became the light for beach resort management to operate confidently, with the active implementation of safety measures, tourism permits, additional accreditation, and inspections. Similarly, the government guidelines on tourism protocols have changed island beach resorts, necessitating innovative management approaches for safety and continuity (Bec et al., 2015; Hall, 2018; Moore, 2019). Therefore, the World Travel & Tourism Council's research in 2020 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020b) underscores the significance of pandemic continuity in the context of island beach resort operations. It emphasizes the vital role it plays in the continuous adaptation and enhancement of tourism management and operation practices, even in the face of the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic.

*Implications for Future Researchers.* The research study assimilates the lived experience of beach resort owners in terms of management and operations. Sufficient evidence could increase the quantity of knowledge and aid in understanding island beach resorts situated in another aspect. Future researchers may explore

adopting and implementing sustainable tourism practices by beach resorts on Samal Island during their recovery phase. It may examine the initiatives taken by resorts to minimize their environmental impact and promote sustainable tourism principles in the post-pandemic context. Thus, by delving into these topics, researchers can contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and strategies involved in the long-term recovery and sustainability of the tourism industry in Samal Island.

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