NAVIGATING THE POST-PANDEMIC BUSINESS LANDSCAPE IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

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Abstract:

This qualitative study explores multiple cases of navigating the post-pandemic business landscape in the travel and tourism industry. The researcher involved four (4) ticketing and travel agency business owners within the Davao Region and used purposive sampling techniques in choosing the study participants. The participant's sequence number during the Case units' pseudonyms were PO1, PO2, PO3, and PO4. A comprehensive, in-depth interview was used to collect data using multiple-case designs. This study's multiple case analysis approach fits the qualitative research paradigm, which aims to explore the significance of respondents' data, experiences, and perspectives. A thematic analysis approach was utilized for PO1_CQ1.1, which pertains to Participant 1 under Central Question 1 and Sub Question 1. Thus, it is pointed out that the significant themes in handling travel and tourism service businesses in the post-pandemic business landscape were Health and Safety Protocols, Marketing and Promotion, Digital Innovations, Partnerships and Collaborations, and Flexibility and Adaptability. Significant themes in coping mechanisms with the changes brought by the post-pandemic business landscape are precautions in safety measures, virtual customer engagement and experience, resilient business operation, strategic planning, and business innovation.

SDG Indicated: SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) and SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities)

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic devastated the travel and tourism industry, causing widespread economic disruption and forcing businesses to adapt rapidly to unprecedented challenges. Due to health concerns and government-imposed limitations, traveler confidence and mobility have drastically declined, which has caused significant difficulty for the tourism industry both during and after the pandemic (Hao *et al.*, 2020). In 2020, there was a 74% decrease in foreign travel compared to the previous year, according to a report issued by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). This decline was worsened by varied degrees of lockdown across countries, which halted international travel and significantly reduced domestic tourism. While the world is gradually emerging from the pandemic's grip, the post-pandemic business landscape in travel and tourism remains fraught with uncertainties and complexities. This will exacerbate the harm to travelers' and businesses' confidence and their ability to survive. (Aman *et al.*, 2019; Bauer *et al.*, 2021; Park *et al.*, 2019).

Further, the travel and tourism sector has been affected greatly economically due to the pandemic. This industry covers covers various services, including domestic, international, inland, and island tours. In 2020, airlines lost $370 billion in income due to a 65.9% decline in passenger demand from 2019. This information is provided by the International Air Transport Association (IATA, 2021). Each segment has been uniquely affected by changing consumer behavior, travel restrictions, and health concerns. The pandemic has disrupted travel plans and led to significant financial losses for businesses reliant on tourism. The economic impacts of the pandemic have prompted the closure of numerous tourism-related firms, including inland and island tours, which has resulted in a considerable loss of jobs in the tourism industry. The travel and tourist industry has been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the necessity of resilience in this sector. Thus, the industry can recover from the pandemic more robustly if it integrates these three goals: promoting resilient urban environments (SDG 11), creating innovative environments, encouraging equitable and sustainable industrialization, and developing robust infrastructure (SDG 9) and decent work through sustainable practices in tourism (SDG 8). Establishing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, which focuses on promoting complete and efficient employment, equitable, inclusive, viable economic growth, and decent work for everyone, is essential to rebuilding tourism. This can be accomplished by generating employment opportunities that are sustainable for the environment and profitable for the economy.

Moreover, the pandemic's impact on the travel and tourism industry underscores the importance of achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 9 (SDG 9), which focuses on building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation. Thus, when the industry starts to

recover, it is imperative to prioritize sustainability and consider the long-term implications of travel and tourism activities. In addition, SDG 11—which at first aspires to make communities and cities equitable, secure, and ecologically viable—significantly impacts how urban tourism develops after a pandemic. To promote local culture and heritage and ensure safe tourist experiences, cities must modify their infrastructure. This entails improving public transportation networks to lessen traffic and pollution while maintaining accessibility for every guest. The primary goal should be to create regulations that promote ethical tourism, which boosts urban sustainability and benefits the local economy.

Domestic tourism primarily showed indications of recovery as restrictions were lifted; nonetheless, it faced difficulties. Many travelers remained cautious, considering continuous concerns about transmitting viruses. Furthermore, local economies that relied mainly on inbound tourists struggled with lower spending from residents who were also experiencing financial difficulties (Cabrera *et al.*, 2020). Thus, inland travel frequently depends on infrastructure and accessibility, which may have been compromised by lockdowns or reduced operational capacity of attractions. While many islands are remote and can only be reached by air, island excursions have experienced particular difficulties. During pandemics, air travel was severely restricted. In addition, islands have to balance tourism-based economies and public health initiatives (Kim *et al.*, 2020).

The tourist industry significantly impacts the resilience of the Philippines' economy as a whole. Being among the biggest employers in the country, it provides a range of opportunities to individuals and companies from all walks of life. Understanding the experiences and difficulties faced by the tourism sector is therefore crucial. This will benefit in determining the opportunities brought by the pandemic, the challenges the industry faces, and their coping mechanism in the post-pandemic period. In addition, it will allow business owners to create recovery plans and strategies toward transitioning to the new normal. The study's findings will determine initiatives aimed at encouraging sustainable tourism and contributing to the industry's recovery (Battjer & Yabut, 2019).

Simultaneously, health and safety concerns have grown in importance in the post-pandemic travel and tourism business landscape. The World Health Organization (WHO) highlights the need to implement robust health and safety protocols to avert the spread of COVID-19 (WHO, 2021). Putting these protocols in place, such as sanitation procedures, social distancing measures, and mask mandates, has become essential to regaining consumer trust in travel and tourism-related activities.

To highlight the effect of COVID-19 in the post-pandemic environment, the travel and tourist sector is using digital technology extensively due to the rising demand for online and contactless services. The pandemic has accelerated the digital transformation and innovation in the travel and tourist sector. Amadeus (2020) asserted that 78% of travellers prefer contactless technology for their travel requirements. Along with the rise of new business models like virtual tours and remote work packages, digital

transformation has also given the tourism industry new chances for creativity and adaptation (Anderson *et al.*, 2020; McKenna and Bargh, 2021).

Numerous investigations have been conducted to gain a deeper comprehension of the impact of the pandemic on the travel and tourism sector. Sigala (2020) investigated the contribution of technology to the industry's post-pandemic recovery, whereas Gössling *et al.* (2020) evaluated the pandemic's economic impact on the sector. Businesses in the field of tourism face threats to their survival in the new normal because they will likely be among the last to recover. Other threats include effects on consumer confidence and travel behavior, changes in the broader economy, and the ability of businesses in the travel and tourism sector to meet demand. Previous research has centered on particular business segments, like the hotel and airline sectors (Budd *et al.*, 2020).

Globally, passengers, airlines, and locations experienced an abrupt and severe psychological, social, and economic impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides, the fast spread of COVID-19 in the year 2020 has been the global health crisis, which forced the government to impose stringent measures that have caused extremely destructive effects on the economy and the travel and tourism industry. (Dube, Nhamo, and Chikodzi, 2020). The implications extend beyond the tourism industry, as numerous other industries that contribute to and depend upon tourism are also greatly affected (Lee & Chen, 2021).

The Philippine economy ranks 36th in the world in terms of nominal GDP based on the 2019 estimate provided by the International Monetary Fund. The tourism industry has made a huge contribution to the Philippine Economy. Hence, the country is grappling with the most devastating impact of this pandemic. Moreover, the Philippine government has instituted nationwide quarantine measures, non-essential company closures, travel restrictions, border closures, social distancing, and stay-at-home orders to limit and stop the spread of viruses that carry the deadly and highly contagious virus (Philippine News Agency, 2020). However, with severe economic problems due to COVID-19 Pandemic, the Philippines has changed the typical tourism-related services and activities such as purchasing tickets, traveling, dining due to destinations have totally or partially shut down their operation for tourists' arrival (Alonso *et al.*, 2020).

Locally, the Davao region was used to attract both domestic and international tourists before the pandemic since it was positioned as a top location for MICE activities, and the tourism service industry benefited significantly from this event. Due to the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, the local government unit (LGU) of Davao instituted lockdown and local and international travel restrictions that affect most business owners in the tourism sector whose activities have been put on hold for 2020 and 2021. As a result, most travel and tour companies and other tourism-related enterprises can only continue to operate for a maximum of six months without any income (Fabro, 2020).

Additionally, the travel and tourism industry is one of the industries most negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Button, 2010). Unexpected financial difficulties during the pandemic in the travel and tourism sector and the closure of numerous businesses, particularly micro, small, and medium-sized businesses that had

served travelers or operated in associated industries, make it difficult to assess (Helble & Fink, 2020).

According to data made public by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA)-Davao on February 7 of the year 2022, there were 1,306,732 tourist arrivals in the Davao Region in 2021, a 3.9% decrease from 1,360,168 in 2020 (Colina, 2022). Similarly, Baguio City, known as the country's tourism hub, was not exempt from the pandemic's negative effects of COVID-19 on the industry. An unprecedented 82.5% decline in tourism to the city in 2020 compared to 2019 is expected to have cost the P7 billion in lost revenue (Llanes, 2021). However, given the tremendous expenses associated with the travel industry for the Philippine economy, it is important to focus on the business needs that will determine how the country's key sub-areas are reclaimed when the epidemic passes (Kock *et al.*, 2020; Hao *et al.*, 2020). According to the World Tourism Organization, border and airport closures, restrictions on land travel, big gatherings, and related services could potentially jeopardize between 100 and 120 million jobs globally. In this context, it is hard to accurately project the unforeseen effects on the travel and tourist industry (UNWTO, 2020).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on consumer attitudes and behaviors, the Philippines has taken action to combat the virus, and other stakeholders have been compelled to review management plans and adapt to the changing environment. The travel, tour, and tourist sectors, according to Toubes *et al.*, have been compelled to modify their marketing and promotion plans to conform to the "new normal" requirements (Cordero, 2021). This includes using digitalization and online platforms to guarantee health and safety regulations. These modifications result from these shifts in visitor behavior and consumption (Toubes *et al.*, 2021).

In addition, businesses use online platforms more frequently for marketing campaigns. Understanding and implementing this new mechanism to contemporary company trends is laborious. While it is vital to acknowledge the challenges of employee empowerment and productivity enhancement, it is also critical to remember that creating a new digital marketing channel will demand a significant time and money commitment (Hao *et al.*, 2020).

The Philippine Department of Tourism advises consumers to make electronic and contactless purchases. In light of COVID-19, one of the "new normal" procedures that need to be followed for operations to continue is this one. Industry-driven best practices are applied to guarantee customer satisfaction and provide customers with the highest quality services (Philippine News Agency [PNA], 2020b). Besides mitigating the effects of the pandemic, new technologies are being utilized. The performance of innovation, brand awareness, and safety risks can all be improved by enhancements in information and communication technologies.

Additionally, ongoing attempts have been made to lessen the pandemic's consequences by paving the way for innovation in reaction to the unanticipated global health catastrophe and prospective post-COVID-19 tourism while getting ready for a more adaptable and resilient industry. Nevertheless, in these challenging times, "*creating*

appropriate resilience and restoration plans is vitally important, not only to the industry's survival in small states with high tourism but also to maintain the vital socio-economic ties the sector cultivates." (Cave and Dredge, 2020)

The immediate government initiative to boost domestic tourism also reinforced the tourism industry's resiliency. The Philippine Tourism Department plans to market its tourist attractions and increase foreign visitor arrivals. Besides, the government developed a few digital platforms to support the tourism industry and is looking for measures to promote domestic travel. Given the risk of being infected with COVID-19 disease, uncertainty, and general unpredictability, many people still have a great desire to travel. For economies that strongly depend on tourism, the government's help to reconstruct and transform tourism industries makes sense. Most governments have implemented COVID-19 mitigation measures to mitigate its effects; these measures will facilitate the tourism industry's rebound once the crisis has passed (Nyakiba, *et al.*, 2021). Besides, the immediate revival of the businesses after the government dropped its restriction was the reason for this small-scale industry's resiliency. As business activities finally reopened, the tourism sector was able to adapt eventually to the 'new normal,' focusing on the local market's potential and expanding domestic travel. Additionally, several tourism-related businesses have adopted tourism services that are suitable for customers' needs. Others create other features, such as producing new vacation packages and providing flexible services and discounts, to remain competitive and relevant throughout the trying times. The department tourism aim of "*strengthening the attractiveness and diversity of tourist experience while increasing the quality of tourism services*" has been further realized through such initiatives, ensuring the sustainability of tourism in the country.(Adam, and Alarifi, 2021).

Additionally, Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri submitted Senate Bill No. 1558, a bill called the Philippine Economic Stimulus Act (PESA), to the Philippines Senate in May 2020 to promote economic development and growth in the wake of COVID-19 by providing financing. This Act requires the Department of Tourism to assist DOT-accredited businesses that are adversely affected by tourism in any of the following programs:

1) providing loan guarantees or interest-free loans for up to five (5) years to cover maintenance and operating costs;
2) providing credit resources for modernizing or rehabilitating existing buildings or facilities to comply with new health and safety regulations;
3) marketing and product development campaigns and initiatives;
4) providing grants for the training, education, and consultation of tourism stakeholders for new normal alternative livelihood projects;
5) utilizing information technology; and
6) other appropriate initiatives, like infrastructure, to lessen the financial effects of COVID-19 on the travel and tourism industry.

Tourism is a broad and wide industry comprising travel and tourism, food and beverages, lodging, and recreation (Ardemer, 2020). Travel and tourism stakeholders

include large international hotel chains, seaports, cruise lines, airports, airlines, and businesses that earn a profit annually, as well as private citizens who operate bed and breakfasts, purchase tickets, and guide tours of their neighborhood. To reduce the impact of the global crisis, it is necessary to implement training programs, policies, and risk evaluation. Experience and strict adherence, which incorporate improvements in workers' understanding and knowledge, motivate applying safety regulations and procedures (Hao *et al.*, 2020). The management demonstrates a sense of commitment to worker safety in the workplace by using three management practices: security, development, and collaboration, which benefit customers and the entire business (Hu *et al.*, 2020).

Republic Act No. 11494 also supports sectors in the Philippines impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This pertains to businesses in the tourism sector that may be eligible for government credit assistance, cash-for-work initiatives, unemployment benefits, and involuntary relief for displaced workers or industry personnel (Partlow, 2021). The tourism sector faces difficulty in getting its clients back throughout this pandemic, and only a few tourism businesses have been equipped to deal with the effects of the increasing challenge to the tourism industry and destinations (Wahyuningtyas, Tanjung, Idris & Islam, 2020).

Nonetheless, the effects of COVID-19 on the travel and tourism sector will vary throughout time and space. The Department of Tourism (DOT) is the organization in charge of promoting the Philippines as a travel destination and regulating the country's tourism sector. The nation's economy benefits from tourism, creating jobs for thousands of people, boosting company growth, and funding public services like education and security(Department of Tourism, 2019).

As globalization advances, there will be a greater need for air transportation for people and freight moves where speed is crucial. This may only have domestic implications due to growing globalization, and it should be isolated from the worldwide market for air travel. On the other hand, the COVID-19 Pandemic and rising air travel demand have put the aviation sector, especially, under a lot of strain. According to recently published research, the sector may need to prepare for declining profit margins or take climate change more seriously by creating lighter ships or engine technologies that emit fewer pollutants (Aguiar *et al.*, 2019).

Through the majority of 2020, the tourist industry's business performance will be greatly impacted by travel disruptions worldwide and limitations placed on certain nations due to the pandemic breakout. The tourism industries rely on tourism-related income and will also be at risk from managing debt. Companies that are indebted, have weak cash flows, are unable to maintain operations, or cannot control the cost of employee remuneration will be the ones affected in the long run (Chinazzi *et al.*, 2020).

However, the data supplied indicates that during the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic in March to April 2020 in the Philippines, it reached 38 percent, leading to the closure of commercial operations owing to lockdown and the loss of jobs. In April 2020, the rate of unemployed people reached a new high of 17.6%. Following the nearly two-

year-long coronavirus pandemic of 2019 (COVID-19), the governmental and commercial sectors have put out several strategies to aid in reconstructing enterprises and employment. Early in 2020, despite international government efforts to stop the virus's spread, the pandemic had a detrimental effect on businesses and jobs (Department of Trade and Industry, 2021).

Furthermore, introducing new technologies and evolving trends in the travel and tourism sector are driving a shift in how businesses engage with their clientele. Travel agencies are implementing various technologies to meet consumer expectations and increase operational efficiencies. In light of COVID-19, tourism illustrates how the local community is a hub for change. The micromobilities at the local level are severely hampered when tourism stops and social distancing measures are put in place. At this point, the conflict between the desire to "go back to normal" and the rejection of what could be referred to as the new normal could redefine the post-COVID-19 world (Benjamin *et al.,* 2020).

Moreover, the loss of livelihoods significantly negatively influences nearby populations. Nonetheless, this setback presents a chance to revive tourism with a triple bottom line, ensuring a more robust and sustainable local economy (Cooper & Alderman, 2020). Rebuilding could spark institutional innovation (Brouder, 2020), revitalize environmental hope and cleanup (Crossley, 2020), and revive short-circuit economies (Ateljevic, 2020).

According to Kassahun (2010), the balanced scorecard is a performance-measuring model that converts an organization's strategy into precise objectives, initiatives, measures, and targets. It can be used from the four perspectives of customers, finances, internal business processes, and human resources or learning and innovation. According to Kaplan and Norton (1992), the company used the advantages of a balanced scorecard to create and carry out successful business strategies. Using a balanced scorecard, travel and tour service providers can create and carry out successful business initiatives by focusing on the three main benefits of strategic approach, framework, and vision: integrating financial and non-financial indicators to verify current operational efficiency and focus on every aspect of the company process; and implementing customer satisfaction strategies (Madsen & Stenheim, 2014).

In addition, several research gaps in this field must be filled. First, there has been little research done on how the pandemic has affected small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the travel and tourist sector (Шебеко, 2022). These companies are essential to the sector's overall viability, but they face unique obstacles and constraints compared to larger corporations (Didier *et al.,* 2021; Escoto *et al.,* 2022). Second, there is a lack of comprehension of how technology can support the tourism industry's recovery (El-Said & Aziz, 2022). There has been a significant shift toward technology adoption in the travel and tourism industry as a result of the new normal (Ajmal *et al.,* 2022), and it is necessary to investigate how technology can be used to improve service delivery, customer experience, and overall business performance (Bonfanti *et al.,* 2021).

Additionally, research into the pandemic's long-term effects on the travel and tourist sector is vital (Chang *et al.* 2020). While the short-term effects are evident, little is known about the long-term consequences and the potential for lasting changes in customer behavior, travel patterns, and industry structure.

This qualitative multiple-case research explores how owners in the tourism sector navigate the post-pandemic business landscape in the travel and tourism industry using the qualitative multiple-case research approach. Specifically, the research questions that this study sought to provide answers to are the following:

1) How do the travel and tourism industry managers navigate the post-pandemic business landscape?
2) How did the travel and tourism industry managers cope with the challenges of the post-pandemic business landscape?
3) What were the similarities and differences that explain each case?

This study was anchored on the Resilience theory, suggesting that systems, including the travel and tourism industry, can absorb disturbances and reorganize while changing (Holling, 1973). This theory has been applied to the travel and tourism industry to understand how to recover from crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Faulkner, 2011).

According to this theory, the travel and tourism industry can build resilience by diversifying its product offerings, strengthening its supply chains, and developing partnerships with local communities (Faulkner, 2011). Additionally, the industry can enhance its resilience by investing in technology and innovation, such as contactless payment systems and virtual tours (Gössling *et al.*, 2020).

Further, The Destination Life Cycle Theory posits that tourism destinations follow a predictable pattern of growth, maturity, and decline (Butler, 1980). COVID-19 pandemic crises can accelerate the decline phase, making destinations need to develop effective recovery strategies. Their growth and the phases they go through over time are explained by the "destination life cycle." Five phases comprise Butler's tourism destination life cycle model, each described and given possible results.

Sustainability theory focuses on the long-term viability of the travel and tourism industry and its ability to meet the necessities of both current and future generations (World Tourism Organization, 2017). This idea highlights the significance of striking a balance between economic, social, and environmental sustainability in the travel and tourist sector. This theory states that the post-pandemic travel and tourism industry's business environment should prioritize sustainability by encouraging ethical travel behaviors, cutting carbon emissions, and aiding local communities (World Tourism Organization, 2017). Gössling *et al.* (2020) further discuss that the travel and tourism industry can build resilience by diversifying its offerings, improving crisis management, and fostering stakeholder collaboration. In addition, the industry can promote sustainability by implementing sustainable supply chain management practices and investing in sustainable tourism infrastructure (Gössling *et al.*, 2020).

This study is significant because it will offer prospective outcomes for companies and identify a competitive survival strategy for tourism companies in the post-pandemic business landscape. First, it will help comprehend how the pandemic has affected the industry, which will help identify the opportunities and problems the business will face in the post-pandemic period. Secondly, strategic and recovery planning will enable industry stakeholders to plan for rebuilding and develop marketing strategies, collaboration, and business innovations to adapt to the post-pandemic business landscape. Thirdly, it will create plans for resolving COVID-related issues and boosting competitiveness, which is crucial for businesses to survive and bounce back. Lastly, the researcher, a travel and tour agency business owner, finds it significant to study the post-pandemic business landscape.

Building inclusive, secure, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements is the aim of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 11) of the United Nations. It is achieving this objective in the tourism industry after a pandemic requires making calculated adjustments that support sustainability and competitive survival. The pandemic has brought attention to the sector's weaknesses, which calls for a change to more robust economic models that put community involvement, environmental sustainability, and public health first. The tourism sector must innovate to meet SDG 11 by integrating technology to enhance visitor experiences while limiting environmental impact. This entails using data-driven tourism strategies leveraging local cultures to strengthen community resilience and innovative tourism practices to improve resource management. Partnerships with local governments can also strengthen urban planning programs that encourage the construction of sustainable infrastructure in popular tourism destinations.

The result of this study enables the government policymakers, especially the Department of Tourism and City Tourism in Davao Region, to create a program that will assist the travel and tour companies as well as to consider and review the existing policies as regards general travel limitation, policies and procedures in the post-pandemic era.

2. Method

This chapter presents the methodology used in this inquiry, especially the study participants, materials and instruments, research design and procedure, and ethical considerations of the research. Multiple case studies were used because this is the most appropriate type of qualitative study method to qualify for deeper information about the business landscape in the post-pandemic travel and tourism industry.

2.1 Participants

The researcher involved four ticketing and travel agency business owners within the Davao Region and used purposive sampling techniques in choosing the study participants. In the realm of qualitative research, particularly within multiple case studies, Yin (2018) suggests that a minimum of 3 to 5 cases is ideal for achieving depth

and richness in data analysis and would create substantial outcomes. Stake (2006) suggests that the research question should govern case selection rather than a predetermined number. Each case should provide unique insights that contribute to a broader understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Yin (2018) highlights that although larger samples can improve generalizability, they may dilute the detailed exploration of each case. Therefore, researchers often balance having enough cases to draw significant conclusions while ensuring that each case remains manageable and allows for thorough investigation.

The code names are assigned to each participant based on the case unit number and participants' position. The participant's sequence number during the Case units' pseudonyms will be PO1, PO2, PO3, and PO4. Each case company was described in terms of its background, business model, and response to the pandemic.

Participant 1 is a manager and travel consultant of a full-service travel, tour operator, and destination Management Company that provides various international tour services, visa processing, and cruise ship tours. The company has focused on the travel and tour business for almost eighteen (18) years, specializing in international tours, visa processing, and cruise ship tours. Participant 2 is a business owner whose primary offerings include domestic tour packages focusing on the Philippines' most popular tourist sites. The company also caters to MICE tourism services, offering Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conferences, and Exhibitions for almost nine (9) years. Participant 3 is a company that has operated for more than five (5) years and has become a leading island-hopping tour operator that offers Samal island hopping for both joiners and exclusive tours, boat rentals, and food packages to both local and foreign tourists. Lastly, participant 4 has seen significant growth over the past five (5) years as they focused on different inland tours featuring Mt. Apo hiking, back trail, and circuit trail for domestic and foreign travelers.

Purposive sampling was used to choose companies with different service offerings in the travel and tourism industry within the Davao Region. Researchers utilized this strategy to focus on particular business types essential to the research problem. The researchers concentrate on different service classifications, including international & and domestic, island, and inland tours offering all-in tours in the Davao Region. Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) recommend employing purposeful sampling to select research participants who will likely provide valuable insights for the study. This method involves the deliberate selection of individuals because of the potential significance they can bring to the analysis.

The participants of this study are the business owners in the Davao Region that operate ticketing and travel agencies. The participants' selection requirements are as follows: the first requirement is that all participants must have an existing ticketing and/or travel service agency that operates international, domestic, local island, and inland tours. Second, the tour operator must have business registration in the Business Bureau and accreditation in the City Tourism Office in the Davao Region; on the other hand, business sectors in tourism that offer purely accommodation and restaurants are

not included in the study. Newly operated travel agencies that just started after the surge of the pandemic are not included in the study to ensure that the researcher can compare business experiences and strategies before and after the pandemic. Businesses that are shut down and unable to offer relevant data about the post-pandemic business landscape are also not included in this criterion.

2.2 Materials and Instruments

A comprehensive, in-depth interview was used to collect data using multiple-case designs. Transcripts were produced using the interview guide questionnaire, which subject matter experts and content-method specialists have verified. Utilizing an interview guide covering the research questions and sub-topics, participants will use one-on-one interviews, which may occur in person or virtually, to collect data for this project. The researcher collected the participants' opinions, perspectives, and feelings about the post-pandemic business landscape in the tourism industry.

Creswell (2008) added that researchers must use a data recording protocol to record information during observation and interviews. As a result, in this study, the researcher provided informed consent and let the participants sign for not allowing the researcher to use an audio recorder. The researcher takes notes during the interview that highlight their experiences as travel and tourism business owners in the post-pandemic. The data gathered from the conversations and perspectives of the participants was transcribed for analysis. All relevant documents will be gathered during the interview and observation, placed in a large archival envelope, and properly labeled for safekeeping and retrieval.

Accordingly, the researcher goes through various key steps in data gathering. Then, the manuscript was handed to the Ethics Review Committee (UMERC) of the University of Mindanao Ethics Board for a thorough assessment after a comprehensive validation process. After the UMERC made friendly suggestions and recommendations, a final and reviewed manuscript and interview guide was created. The six (6) professional validators reviewed and approved the semi-structured IDI protocol. After receiving comments from the validators, the IDI was modified. The validation sheets were reviewed, signed, and assessed by professional validators to ensure the viability of the expected output and then approved at the start of the data collection process.

2.3 Design and Procedure

This study's multiple case analysis approach fits the qualitative research paradigm, which aims to explore the significance of respondents' data, experiences, and perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This strategy is very beneficial for investigating unique or developing phenomena, such as the post-pandemic business landscape, where existing theories and knowledge may be insufficient. By observing multiple cases, the researcher can find commonalities, themes, and differences between them, which can help create new hypotheses and insights. Furthermore, the multiple case analysis design

allows for triangulation, which is comparing and validating data from different sources to increase the credibility and validity of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The multiple case analysis design offers a holistic and contextual perspective on the post-pandemic business landscape in the travel and tourism industry. This design allows for exploring the complex interplay between factors, such as organizational strategies, market trends, government policies, and customer behavior, that shape the industry's recovery and adaptation to the new normal. Moreover, the multiple case analysis design enables the researcher to examine the diversity and heterogeneity of the organizations within the industry, thereby providing a nuanced and differentiated understanding of the phenomenon. This perspective is crucial for developing targeted and effective strategies to support the industry's recovery and growth in the post-pandemic era.

In this study, the researcher employed to analyze participants' responses was structured around coding frameworks facilitating a systematic examination of qualitative data. A thematic analysis approach was utilized for PO1_CQ1.1, which pertains to Participant 1 under Central Question 1 and Sub Question 1. This involved transcribing interviews verbatim and subsequently coding the information to identify commonalities and recurrent topics pertinent to the main research question. Each segment of the Participant`s responses was meticulously categorized, allowing for an in-depth exploration of their perspectives and experiences. The coding process was iterative, enabling adjustments based on emerging insights throughout the analysis phase. This rigorous methodology ensured that the findings were grounded in participant narratives while maintaining fidelity to their original context.

Thematic analysis was used in this study to examine the data that was gathered. The technique of encoding qualitative information as codes, words, or phrases that act as labels for data sections is known as thematic analysis, according to Boyatzis (1998). He clarified that there are three possible formats for this set of codes: a simple list of topics, a complicated model with themes, indicators, and qualifiers that are connected causally, or anything in between. Afterwards, the participant responses will be coded to find common themes. These will be used for additional research after being labeled. Then, a series of checks repeatedly to refine and establish a logical flow on how the themes and categories were extracted, formed, and interpreted and ensure validity and reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These techniques help to increase the trustworthiness of the findings and reduce the risk of bias.

Lastly, the cross-case analysis involved the study within-case analysis in which every case was analyzed separately, followed by a cross-case analysis in which the cases were contrasted and compared (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analysis focused on identifying patterns and themes across the cases and differences and similarities between the cases. Businesses navigate a complex environment characterized by rapid changes in technological advancements, consumer behavior, and economic uncertainties. To thrive in this new landscape, organizations need to embrace creativity, resilience, and adaptability. The cross-case analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of how

travel and tourism companies navigated the post-pandemic business landscape. The analysis identified several key themes and patterns, including the importance of adaptability, resilience, innovation, and strategic planning, and highlighted the diversity of experiences and responses among the case companies.

A researcher gives trustworthiness a lot of weight in a qualitative investigation. DeVault (2016) highlighted that the domain of qualitative research is generally unfamiliar with the ideas of validity and reliability. Qualitative researchers replace data trustworthiness for validity and reliability. In a qualitative study, trustworthiness is highly considered by a researcher. DeVault (2016) emphasized that the concepts of validity and reliability are relatively foreign to qualitative research. The concepts are just not a good fit. Instead of focusing on reliability and validity, qualitative researchers substitute data trustworthiness. Credibility was highly considered in this study. The researcher consulted her mentors to do peer debriefing by listening, prompting, and recording insights throughout the study's entire conduct. The researcher also checked the researcher's interpretation to guarantee that everything appropriately represented the records, transcripts, and interview notes. To prevent misinterpretation and inconsistencies, the researcher also gave copies of the transcripts and translations to each participant for review and comment.

Credibility was described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as assurance in the "truth" of the results obtained by extended participation, ongoing observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member-checking. Through in-depth interviews with the four (4) travel and tour operators operating within the provinces of the Davao Region, the researcher obtained adequate data and a thorough description of the respondents' experiences to achieve transferability. To address dependability, the research endeavor's procedures will be thoroughly and accurately explained, allowing future researchers to duplicate the study and the public to assess the caliber of ethical research practices. It was meticulously constructed by explaining the research strategy and how it was carried out, the methods used to collect data, and the wise evaluation of this project.

Additionally, the researcher made sure that the conclusions were based on the opinions and experiences of the participants to assure conformability. Triangulation was stressed in order to prevent bias. It examined the participants' experiences in light of what they said and did during the interview and observations. "neutrality or objectivity of the data collected" refers to conformability. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), triangulation is the only way to meet this condition. Triangulation was applied to enable several perspectives to elucidate meaning. Triangulation in this study was aided by the data gathered from in-depth interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Additionally, to secure permission to conduct the study, particularly for conducting in-depth interviews, the researcher completed formal communication forms that the adviser and the Professional School Dean duly signed. Relevance to the research problem, ease of access, and desire to engage in the study have been considered while selecting the cases. To guarantee that rich and comprehensive data are gathered, the data-gathering techniques should be customized for every case study (Stake, 2005).

After obtaining the approval from the travel and tour business owners, the researcher utilized a variety of necessary documents to comply with and follow the basic protocols of conducting interviews, observation, and research-related documents and informed consent from the interview participants was obtained before the interview and researcher immediately coordinated with the participants asking for their availability for the interview. The researcher must first obtain the participant's agreement to conduct an effective interview. They should also introduce themselves, explain the study's goal, and lead the participants through the interview. Participants are asked to carefully read and execute an acceptance form or interview protocol, which explicitly says that they are free to decline or withdraw from the interview at any point. The duration of the study covers January 2024 and ends in March 2024.

The researcher worked hard to get permission and schedule from each of the four cases that were selected as the participants of the study, considering that two (2) of the business owners took four (4) weeks to schedule the interview due to tremendous demand of their tour and other international and domestic group tour schedules for the next few weeks. For the two cases, it took six (6) weeks to obtain approval, as it requires the owner to be actively involved in all aspects of the business, leaving little time for external activities like research. Considering that the owner was involved in several conferences, exhibits, and other tourism-related activities.

The researcher plays a crucial role in designing the study, collecting data, analyzing findings, and interpreting the results. This role is essential to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. To understand the participants' experiences and perspectives, the researcher interviews key stakeholders in each case, such as business owners and managers. The study of the post-pandemic business landscape in the travel and tourism industry is significant because it will offer prospective outcomes for companies and identify a competitive survival strategy for tourism businesses in the new normal. These challenges in the tourism industry will also be pointed out and will be addressed well. The researcher intends to draw insights to create a strategic plan for the tourism industry, specifically the travel and tourism services will be more flexible and will meaningfully contribute innovative visions that researchers, professionals, policymakers, and entrepreneurs may use to evaluate the resilience of firms that rely on the tourism industry and to speed up the industry's revival of the economy while increasing diversification.

Further, in order to avoid bias or predetermined conceptions, the researcher made an effort to maintain objectivity during gathering and analysis of data, transparency about the methods and findings, providing sufficient detail to evaluate the study's credibility, and employing stringent techniques to guarantee the accuracy and reliability, of the results from gathering and analyzing data. Considering the context, the researcher, who is a proprietor of airline ticketing, travel, and tour agencies, finds it a significant role to study the post-pandemic business landscape and how travel and tourism services can be more resilient in the new normal setting. Thus, this study aims to emphasize the business performances, experiences, and coping mechanisms of travel and tourism

industry managers in navigating the post-pandemic business landscape (Smith & Reece, 1999).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) further explain that the data in the form of words collected in qualitative research is descriptive. By using this approach, statements have become less influenced by the biases or limitations of a specific process. The information gathered may also be utilized to develop more precise and appropriate results. In qualitative research, triangulation is performed as a validating indicator. The strategy limits the probability that results will solely be influenced by the biases or limitations of a particular method.

According to Cresswell (2013), a multiple-case approach thoroughly collects data from many angles to analyze a multiple-bounded structure in real life. Using a multiple-case design, the researcher will gain a deeper understanding of the variations and convergences in information management among the three multiple cases examined (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

This study adhered to any ethical criterion applicable to research manners, especially with regard to participants and the gathering of data. This is evidenced by the Ethics Review Committee certification number "UMERC-2023-408". The purpose of the research, procedures, and outcomes were explained to the participants to ensure the use of ethical procedures. Informants' willingness to be part of this study was highly considered. The more willing the informants are, the more meaningful experiences they may share. No financial payment was associated with this study; participation is entirely voluntary. Informants were informed that the research was being done with future program members in mind, even though they were not paid for their services.

Additionally, informants were made aware that they would be assigned an identifier, either a number or a pseudonym, and the researcher obtained their consent by introducing themselves during the actual interview process, outlining the goal of the study, and assisting the respondents in entering the interview—all crucial steps in the initial stages of the process. Once again, informants were assured that all data gathered for the study would be treated with the utmost confidentiality and that analysis would solely utilize aggregated data. Nonetheless, the participants and the school will have access to the results upon request.

3. Results and Discussion

The data below presents the summary of the results in response to the study objectives.

3.1 Case Units
3.1.1 Case 1
Patsy is a travel and tour company manager, a full-service travel, tour operator, and destination management company that provides various international tour services. She has been working for the company for almost ten (10) years and is responsible for overseeing the operations of a Davao branch, ensuring that the company provides

satisfactory tour services; she is also managing numerous staff, including tour specialists and agents.

During the pandemic, they shut down their operation in Davao and retrenched some of their staff and tour specialists as they incurred losses. Her work has evolved in the new landscape as the industry begins to recover along with the rest of the world, requiring her to navigate changing consumer confidence to travel again, adapting technology, and new health and safety regulations as she prioritized the health and safety of employees and customers above all else.

Despite the effect of the pandemic on their company, she managed to cope with the operation by adapting to the technology to improve client satisfaction and simplify processes, prioritize health and safety precautions to protect staff and customers; she focused on developing marketing strategies that adapt to change and reevaluate their business plan.

3.1.2 Case 2

Jen is a sole proprietor of a domestic travel and tour company. A decade ago, she worked in their family business, offering steel products to different companies in Mindanao. However, she decided to start her company nine (9) years ago as she focuses on providing a range of travel and tourism services. In her third year of operation, she managed to cater to MICE tourism services, offering Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conferences, and Exhibitions. Most of her clients were from government agencies for their incentive travel or conferences, mostly in Bagiuo, Ilocus, and Boracay.

Despite the company's notable background in the domestic travel and tourism Industry, Jen faced challenges in managing the business during the pandemic due to travel restrictions, ever-changing travel advisories and regulations, and closure of local destinations as they prioritize safety, significantly impacting the demand for group tour services. She strictly worked closely with local authorities and enforced a routine sanitizing of vehicles, ensuring that our customers and employees were safe and healthy. In response to the pandemic's impact, Jen had to adapt its marketing strategies to reach a new audience and overcome the negative perception of travel post-pandemic. Her marketing initiatives to increase demand for their services utilize social media campaigns, commissions to travel agents, and in-house promotions. Jen provided training programs to enhance employee awareness of health protocol by putting strict health measures in place and maintaining customers' safety. She also improves customer service by embracing digital transformation, encouraging customer interaction and operational efficiency.

3.1.3 Case 3

Stephanie is a tour operator on Samal Island, offering a full-board island hopping and boat rental service. She managed to be the leading company in island hopping for five (5) long years. Stephanie faced a challenge in the post-pandemic as the government authorities (Coast Guard) limited the number of guests in every tour by about 50% of the

total capacity per boat. Her joiners and exclusive tours, boat rentals, and food packages to local and foreign tourists declined due to constantly changing regulations, creating confusion and uncertainty for travelers. The company led to a significant drop in revenue, and the decline in income and increased operational costs put a significant financial strain on her business.

Due to the demand for island hopping in the post-pandemic era, Stephanie faces high competition from other local operators offering similar services. She focuses on providing high-quality services, maintaining a strong reputation, and offering unique and memorable experiences for her customers. Despite the competition, she achieved resilience through continuous improvement, enhanced marketing efforts, targeted online advertising, social media marketing, and partnerships to develop innovative services.

To navigate through these difficult times, Stephanie followed the recommendations and requirements of the government authorities. She also formed strategic partnerships with Samal Island LGU as she is the President of Samal Island Gabay Association (SIGA), a group of tour guides on the island. As a business entity with many followers, she interacted with her audience on social media. She used these channels to inform travelers about her offering, marketing campaigns, and even health and safety protocols.

3.1.4 Case 4

Mia has operated a travel and tour business that has focused more on inland tours in the past five (5) years. Mia saw significant growth, with a particular emphasis on inland tours featuring Mt. Apo hiking, backtrail, and circuit trail. Mia pursued a career in the corporate world for almost a decade. Still, after years of being employed, she decided to embark on her career as a business owner of travel services. Mia`s entrepreneurial journey is deeply intertwined with her dynamic personality, whose interest is in unique and one-of-a-kind outdoor experiences and trails, and her desire to immerse herself in the rich culture of the people living at the foot of the mountain. She took advantage of adventure tourism, which has grown steadily, and this trend is visible in the Davao Region, where Mt. Apo stands as the highest mountain in the Philippines. However, when the pandemic happened, Mia was challenged by her business sustainability and profitability, even until the post-pandemic era. She put in place several essential strategies to secure her company's future by offering personalized trip packages. Mia has also enhanced its internet presence, increased digital marketing efforts, and collaborated with other businesses in the tourism industry.

3.2 Experiences of the Travel and Tourism Industry Managers in Navigating the Post-Pandemic Business Landscape

Table 1: Experience of travel and tourism service
businesses in the post-pandemic business landscape

Themes	Core Idea
Health and Safety Protocols	• Strict hygiene measures were put in place for clients • Keeping up with the ever-changing travel advisories and regulations
Marketing and Promotion	• Social media marketing campaign • Reconsider pricing strategies and travel bundles
Digital Innovations	• Strong online engagement • Transition to digitalization and Internet platforms
Partnerships and Collaborations	• Alliances with different business partners • Cooperation with local tourism boards, and tourism organizations
Flexibility and Adaptability	• Introduction of flexible booking practices • Offerings more customized trips and personally planned itineraries

3.2.1 Health and Safety Protocols

Health and safety protocols are crucial in the tourism industry to protect travelers and staff, restore confidence in travel, and ensure the sustainable recovery of the sector post-pandemic. These protocols include rigorous sanitation practices, such as regular cleaning and disinfection of accommodations, transportation, and tourist sites. Social distancing measures are implemented by reconfiguring spaces, limiting capacity, and managing crowd flow. Health screening procedures, including temperature checks are commonplace. Additionally, staff are trained in hygiene and safety protocols, and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) is enforced. Clear communication about these measures through various channels reassures tourists and encourages adherence to safety guidelines, thereby helping to restore confidence in travel. These were emphasized in the following responses:

"Strict hygiene measures were put in place, including enforced mask wear, temperature checks, and routine sanitizing of vehicles and tourist attractions. Making sure that our customers and employees were safe and healthy was another challenge." (P02_CQ1)

"The way we handled travel and tourism services required to change significantly in the post-pandemic business environment. First and foremost, our top priority was the well-being of both our clients and staff." (P03_CQ1)

"Strict health and safety regulations, like required mask use, social distance rules, and sanitization procedures, became necessary but also increased our operating expenses." (P04_CQ1)

> *"It was a logistical headache to keep up with the ever-changing travel advisories and regulations because we had to do so every day in order to give our clients appropriate information."* (P01_CQ1.2)

Adherence to strict hygiene practices to ensure the safety and health of customers and employees became essential in the new normal as highlighted by Hu *et al.* (2020) stating that the implementation of safety standards and protocols is driven by experience and thorough compliance that involves advancements in workers' knowledge and comprehension. The management demonstrates the sense of commitment to worker safety in the workplace through the use of three management practices: security, development, and collaboration which benefits customers and the entire business.

3.2.2 Marketing and Promotion
In the post-pandemic era, social media has become vital for promoting tourism by enabling destinations to reach a global audience, showcase safety measures, share real-time updates, and engage with potential travelers through visually appealing content and interactive campaigns. This statement can be attested by participants in their responses:

> *"We engage more to customer through social media marketing and building brand value and awareness."* (P03_CQ1)

> *"We used different marketing tools / strategies such as social media campaigns, commissions to travel agents, as well as in-house promotions."* (P02_CQ1)

These views are supported by Toubes *et al.*, which revealed that the travel and tour and tourism industries have been forced to adjust their promotional and marketing strategies to the "new normal" standards, including integrating online platforms and digitization to ensure health and safety standards. These changes in tourist behaviours and consumption have led to these changes (Toubes, Araújo Vila and Fraiz Brea, 2021). It should also be aware that it will need a large time and financial investment and that the task of inspiring and preparing the workforce for increased productivity cannot be understated (Hao, Xiao, & Chon, 2020).

Tour packages and competitive pricing are crucial for promoting tourism by providing attractive, cost-effective travel options that cater to diverse budgets and preferences, thereby encouraging more people to travel and explore new destinations, especially in the new normal. This idea supports to the statements of the participants:

> *"Travel package sales are how the business generate income. These packages include of travel, lodging, car rentals, and organized tours and activities such as Educational Tour, Company tours. The supplier can provide clients a discount and boost overall sales by combining these services. This technique is what we called "bundling.""* (P01_CQ1.1)

"The economic impact of the pandemic led to a decline in consumer spending on vacation travel. We had to reconsider our pricing standards, promotions, and packages in response to the change in customer behavior in order to stay competitive in a market that is still recovering from the effects of the pandemic." (P04_CQ1.2)

The results are confirmed by Offutt (2013), as he believed that the travel operator planned and provided a wide selection of tour packages in order to seize the expanding tourism opportunities and was responsible for creating and maintaining tour packages for travelers. Furthermore, the management of tour packages includes preparing activities that appeal to the specific travelers embarking on the trip.

3.2.3 Digital Innovations

Having a strong online presence is essential for promoting tourism as it allows destinations and businesses to reach a wider audience, provide up-to-date information, engage with potential travelers, and facilitate the seamless booking and customer service experiences. This innovation is congruent with the participants' opinions:

"We made significant investments to create a strong online presence and improved our website, social media platform like boosting to provide easy booking, guided tours, and more engaging conversations with consumers. This made it possible for us to meet the increasing demand for virtual travel experiences and reach a larger audience within the country. Adopting digital transformation made us establish ourselves as innovative companies in addition to ensuring our company's existence." (P02_CQ1.3)

"During the pandemic, communication that is transparent and clear became even more important. We implemented a particular customer service channels of communication, through social media messages, and regular email updates to notify our clients about revised regulations, safety precautions, and travel restrictions. The use of platforms and streamlining digital touchpoints to make it easier for customers to book via digital channels." (P03_CQ1.3)

Thus, the tourism-related service companies have begun to invest in employee training for digital roles, staff development, and employment flexibility to accommodate shifts that support multi-business and multi-channel routes. (Hao *et al.,* 2020).

Digitalization is crucial for the tourism industry in the new normal as it enhances operational efficiency, improves customer experiences through personalized services and seamless transactions, ensures health and safety with contactless solutions, and enables data-driven decision-making to better adapt to changing market dynamics. The three participants agreed to this idea by responding:

"Our travel and tour company had to quickly modify its business plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic's challenges in order to maintain value and sustainability. One important strategy we employed was a swift transition to digitalization and internet platforms. We realized that the old ways of operation would not be viable in light of travel restrictions and safety concerns." (P01_CQ1.3)

"We had to carefully consider a number of factors when deciding what to prioritize and how to make decisions for our travel and tour business during the pandemic in order to maintain the company's survival and profitability. In order to attract clients who were unable or unwilling to travel locally or abroad because of restrictions or worries, we moved our marketing efforts to digital platforms. We employed email marketing campaigns, social media platforms, and internet marketing techniques to attract new clients and retain previous clients." (P03_CQ1.4)

"As the proprietor of a travel and tour company, it has been difficult yet vital to ensure sustainability and profitability throughout the pandemic. We have put in place a number of essential strategies to secure the future of our company, such diversifying our offerings to meet the demands of our clients. In addition, we now provide online travel assistance, and personalized trip packages for domestic destinations that were considered much more secure during the post-pandemic. We enhanced our internet presence and increased our efforts in digital marketing and collaborating with other businesses in the tourism industry." (P04_CQ1.5)

Consequently, the significance of technology in the tourism industry is undeniable. There has been a significant shift toward technology adoption in the travel and tourism industry as a result of the new normal (Ajmal *et al.*, 2022), and it is necessary to investigate how technology can be used to improve service delivery, customer experience, and overall business performance (Bonfanti *et al.*, 2021).

3.2.4 Partnerships and Collaborations

By joining forces with other businesses, destinations, and stakeholders, tourism entities can leverage shared resources, expertise, and networks to navigate the challenges posed by the post-pandemic in the tourism industry. Collaborative efforts enable the development of innovative solutions, such as joint marketing campaigns, package deals, and safety protocols, which not only enhance the overall visitor experience but also foster trust and confidence among travelers. Moreover, partnerships facilitate the pooling of knowledge and best practices, enabling tourism businesses to adapt quickly to evolving consumer preferences and market trends, thus ensuring resilience and sustainability in the post-pandemic landscape. These collaborations are expressed by the participants:

"We established contact with different operators/ suppliers and clients." (P01_CQ1)

"With the goal of giving our clients unique experiences, we concentrated on forming alliances with nearby companies. Our ability to provide bundled packages at cheap costs and a seamless end-to-end service for our clients was made possible by our partnerships with hotels, restaurants, and activity providers." (P02_CQ1)

"We also earned thru commission-based. Through collaborations with several travel-related suppliers, including hotels, rental car companies, airlines, and tourist destinations, commission-based income is generated. The service provider receives a commission for each transaction completed between our client and these suppliers." (P03_CQ1.1)

"Additional revenue streams can be generated through ancillary services such as travel insurance, visa assistance, and airport transfers. These services are often offered at an extra cost to customers who may find them convenient or necessary for their trip. This is known as the "Ancillary Services" model." (P04_CQ1.1)

"In order to save expenses wherever possible, we renegotiated terms with suppliers and service providers. This involved renegotiating office space rentals, as well as negotiating to cut other unnecessary expenses on other operational expenses." (P02_CQ1.4)

In the new normal of the tourism industry, partnerships and collaborations with business partners hold immense importance. Furthermore, the travel and tourism sector has the potential to generate millions of new jobs by 2028 given the correct legislative and policy framework, as well as government backing (ICAO, 2018). Tourism is a very broad and wide industry that consists of travel and tourism, food and beverages, lodging and recreation (Ardemer, 2020). Travel and tourism stakeholders include everyone from large international hotel chains, cruise lines, seaports, airports, and airlines that generate a profit each year, to small-time operators of bed & breakfasts that handle reservations and tickets as well as provide tours of their neighborhood. When we approach the sector in this way, we are able to see not only the industry's enormous worldwide economic influence but also the potential for life-altering consequences for actual people in various parts of the world (ICAO, 2018).

Amadeus (2014) describes that services related to travel from one location to another, including services that are directly related to the travel itself, such as transportation, services related to catering to travelers' needs and wants after they have arrived at their destination, are travel services functions. Essentially, travel services are those processes used by guests to book components of their trip. Part of the role of the travel agency is to market pre-packaged travel tours and holidays to potential travelers. As one of the sectors hit hardest by the pandemic, tourism relies heavily on governmental assistance to navigate the unprecedented challenges it faces. Moreover, governments play a crucial role in coordinating cross-border travel regulations, implementing health and safety protocols, and promoting destination marketing campaigns to rebuild consumer confidence and stimulate demand. One participant responded:

"We established strategic alliances with tourism boards, and tourism organizations because we understood the value of collaboration. Through these partnerships, the business in general became more supportive of one another, and we were able to take advantage of special offers and incentives." (P04_CQ1.3)

Hence, Government support for tourism businesses' rebuilding and transformation stands to reason for economies that rely heavily on tourism. To lessen the effects of COVID-19, the majority of governments have put in place economic stimulus programs, which will aid in the tourism sector's recovery after the current crisis has passed (Nyakiba, Nason, & Onchieku, 2021).

3.2.5 Flexibility and Adaptability

With the ever-changing landscape of travel restrictions, health guidelines, and consumer behaviors, tourism businesses must be agile in their responses to unforeseen challenges. This requires the ability to quickly adjust operations, such as implementing flexible booking policies, modifying service offerings, and adopting new technologies to enhance safety and convenience for travelers. By remaining adaptable, tourism stakeholders can not only mitigate risks but also seize opportunities for innovation and growth in a rapidly evolving environment. Flexible business model is a new idea recognized by participants, as they said:

"We introduced flexible booking practices in response to uncertainty around the pandemic, which allowed clients to modify their travel arrangements. One example of this was providing complimentary cancellations or minimally charged rescheduling. Additionally, in order to inspire confidence and trust in prospective clients, we made our COVID-19 safety procedures clearly understood." (P04_CQ1)

"We enhanced our offerings by including more flexible booking options, customized trips, and personally planned itineraries in order to adapt to changing customer preferences and travel trends. We were able to provide an increased number of travelers seeking exclusive and customized services by keeping adaptable and paying close attention to market trends." (P01_CQ1.3)

Several tourism-related businesses have adapted tourism services that are suitable for the customers' needs. Others create other features, such as producing new vacation packages, and providing flexible services and discounts, to remain competitive and relevant throughout the trying times. The department tourism aim of "*strengthening the attractiveness and diversity of tourist experience while increasing the quality of tourism services*" has been further realized through such initiatives, ensuring the sustainability of tourism in the country (Adam and Alarifi, 2021).

With travelers seeking more personalized and flexible experiences, offering tailored packages allows tourism businesses to meet individual needs and preferences

while accommodating safety concerns and evolving travel restrictions. By providing options such as customizable itineraries, flexible booking terms, and curated experiences tailored to specific interests and demographics, tourism providers can enhance customer satisfaction, foster loyalty, and differentiate themselves in a highly competitive market. Moreover, customization enables businesses to optimize resource allocation, minimize wastage, and maximize revenue generation by catering to niche markets and adapting quickly to changing consumer demands and market trends in the post-pandemic landscape. These thoughts are shared by the participants:

"Long-term planning was quite challenging due to the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic. Our company strategy, marketing efforts, and product offers all have to be often revised in order to quickly adjust to the constantly changing circumstances. It was also difficult to forecast demand due to a lack of certainty of when international travel and even domestic would resume." (P03_CQ1.2)

"We operate on a business model that focuses on providing personalized and exceptional travel experiences to our customers." (P02_CQ1.1)

"Running a travel and tour company during the pandemic has become an unforgettable difficulty for any entrepreneur. Managing last-minute trip cancellations and rescheduling due to travel restrictions and lockdown measures implemented by various countries was one of the main challenges. This resulted in a significant decline in income since we had to give consumers their money back or give them vouchers for future trips." (P02_CQ1.2)

By being adaptable, tourism businesses can survive and thrive in challenging times, ensuring resilience and long-term sustainability. This agility also allows for exploring new markets and developing innovative offerings, helping maintain a competitive edge in a dynamic industry landscape. Cave and Dredge (2020) believed that developing suitable restoration and resilience strategies is vital to the industry's survival in tourism-intensive small states and to sustain the crucial socio-economic links the sector cultivates.

Agile and responsive management was crucial for sustaining operations and building resilience in an unpredictable environment. Managers had to make swift decisions to reallocate resources effectively, ensuring that critical areas of the business remained functional despite reduced revenues. Businesses could continue engaging with customers and streamline operations by adopting digital tools, such as online booking systems, virtual tours, and remote working platforms. Maintaining clear communication, both internally with staff and externally with customers, helped manage expectations and build trust during uncertain times.

3.3 Coping Mechanisms of Travel and Tourism Industry Managers during Post-pandemic

The data on the travel and tourism industry's coping mechanisms with the changes brought by the post-pandemic business landscape are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Coping Mechanisms of Study Participants during the Post-pandemic

Themes	Core Idea
Precautions in Safety Measures	• Making sure our clients and staff are safe • Working closely with the local health authorities
Virtual Customer Engagement and Experience	• Utilizing technological improvements • Encouraging digital interaction with customers.
Resilient Business Operation	• Responsive adjustments in bookings • Preparedness for abrupt changes
Strategic Planning and Business Innovation	• Adaptive and communicative business plans • Customize packages for different travelers

3.3.1 Precautions in Safety Measures

Precautions in safety measures within the tourism industry are vital for both clients and staff, as they ensure a secure and reliable environment for everyone involved. For clients, rigorous safety protocols prevent accidents and health risks, enhancing their travel experience and building trust in the destination. For staff, these measures create a safe workplace, reducing the likelihood of injuries and ensuring their well-being, which in turn leads to better service quality and operational efficiency. Additionally, maintaining high safety standards protects the industry from potential legal issues and financial losses, fostering a sustainable and reputable business environment.

> *"Being a travel and tour company owner, our first concern during the post-pandemic has been making sure our clients and staffs are safe and well."* (P02_CQ2.2)

> *"When making a reservation with us, they may feel secure knowing that we have taken all the necessary precautions to alleviate any worries about safety. Our staffs were also fully vaccinated to ensure safety."* (P01_CQ2.2)

> *"Our personnel went through full instruction on the latest health protocols. When required. We have also given them personal protective equipment (PPE)."* (P02_CQ2.3)

> *"To improve our safety precautions, we worked closely with the local health authorities and followed their recommendations and requirements."* (P03_CQ2.2)

> *"By keeping up with the changes in public health guidelines, we were able to rapidly and effectively adjust to changing conditions without sacrificing our clients' and staff's high level of safety."* (P04_CQ2.2)

Therefore, to enhance precautionary safety measures. The Philippine Department of Tourism is advising consumers to start making electronic and contactless purchases. In light of COVID-19, this is one of the "new normal" protocols that must be observed for operations to continue. In order to guarantee customer satisfaction, industry-driven best practices are applied to provide customers with the highest quality services (Philippine News Agency [PNA], 2020b). Besides mitigating the effects of the pandemic, new technologies are being utilized. The performance of innovation, brand awareness, and safety risks can all be improved by enhancements in information and communication technologies.

3.3.2 Virtual Customer Engagement and Experience

Online engagement in safety measures plays a pivotal role in increasing customer satisfaction within the tourism industry. By leveraging digital platforms, tourism providers can offer real-time updates on health and safety protocols, ensuring that clients are informed and prepared throughout their journey. This proactive communication fosters a sense of security and trust, which is crucial for enhancing the overall travel experience. Additionally, online engagement allows for immediate feedback and resolution of safety concerns, demonstrating a commitment to client well-being. This responsiveness not only mitigates potential risks but also significantly boosts customer confidence and satisfaction, ultimately leading to higher rates of repeat business and positive reviews. These technological advancements are taken advantage by the participants, as they said:

"Our technology use in the travel industry has increased as a result of the pandemic. In the months following the pandemic, digital marketing strategies, online booking systems, and virtual tours have become essential resources for connecting with our clientele. We have improved consumer engagement, expanded our audience reach, and streamlined our processes by utilizing these technological improvements." (P04_CQ2.4)

"We made use of technology to improve client satisfaction and simplify processes. Online booking platforms, contactless payment methods, and virtual tours turned into essential resources for us." (P01_CQ2.2)

"Along with interacting with our audience on social media, we also used these channels to inform them about our products and security protocols." (P03_CQ2.2)

"We were able to successfully navigate through these difficult times by putting strict health measures into place, embracing digital transformation, expanding our offerings, forming strategic partnerships, and encouraging customer interaction." P02_CQ2

The presence of these digital advancements is clear. Accordingly, Booking.com, which operates in 190 countries, recorded 29 million accommodation listings in 154,000

places globally. Comparably, TripAdvisor claims 8.4 listings for lodging in 156,000 locations spread across 49 markets, with 490 unique users each month contributing more than 250 reviews and comments per minute (Farronato *et al.,* 2018).

Furthermore, the e-ticketing service has become popular, particularly within the Asia Pacific region, such as the Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Malaysia. Thus, the electronic ticketing system within the airline industry is well-known and prominent for e-commerce (Nielsen, 2005).

3.3.3 Resilient Business Operation

Resilient business operations in the tourism industry allow for quick adaptation to changing conditions, ensuring ongoing operations while keeping both customers and employees safe. This adaptability not only helps navigate immediate challenges but also sets the stage for sustained growth and stability in the long term. Therefore, participants maintained their business operations, as they indicated:

> *"The need for travel and tour services has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. As the proprietor of a travel and tour company, I have personally seen how the global health issue has had a big impact on our sector. The demand for our services has sharply decreased as a result of lockdowns, limits on international travel, and the fear of getting the virus."* (P01_CQ2.1)

> *"Bookings immediately decreased when the virus initially emerged as a result of countries closing their borders and airlines cancelling flights. This resulted in financial losses for our company as we were obliged to cancel numerous tours."* (P02_CQ2.1)

> *"The pandemic changed how consumers responded when it came to travel. Concerns about their health made many people more cautious travelers, which decreased customer demand. Due to the uncertainty around travel restrictions and quarantine regulations, customers were unwilling to make reservations for travels in advance."* (P04_CQ2.1)

This crisis differs from all past disruptions to the tourist sector due to its global scope, prolonged duration, ongoing uncertainty, and interconnectedness with regard to health and the economy. The consequences beyond the tourism economy, with the many other sectors that support and are supported by tourism, are also significantly impacted. Although the tourism industry has demonstrated its ability to withstand shocks in the past, the magnitude and dual economic and health aspects of this crisis make revival extremely unclear (Lee and Chen, 2021).

Resilient operations foster a culture of adaptability and preparedness, empowering businesses to navigate uncertainties with confidence and resilience. In the context of the pandemic, such resilience not only helps businesses survive the immediate crisis but also positions them for long-term sustainability and growth in the ever-changing tourism landscape. Thus, one participant responded:

"We were forced to immediately adjust and put in place strict health and safety procedures, social distancing rules, and smaller group sizes." (P03_CQ2.1)

According to data made public by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA)-Davao on February 7 of the year 2022, there were 1,306,732 tourist arrivals in the Davao Region in 2021, a 3.9% decrease from 1,360,168 in 2020 (Colina, 2022). Similarly, Baguio City, known as the country's tourism hub, was not exempt from the pandemic's negative effects of COVID-19 on the industry (Llanes, 2021). Based on the total revenue from incoming tourism, the same dramatic decline was observed at 83.12%, dropping from a projected PHP482.16 billion in 2019 to PHP 81.40 billion in 2020 (Cordero, 2021).

3.3.4 Strategic Planning and Business Innovation

Adaptive plans allow businesses to swiftly alter their strategies, whether by shifting to virtual services, updating health protocols, or exploring new market opportunities. Effective communication ensures that clients, employees, and partners are well-informed about these changes, fostering trust and transparency. This combination of adaptability and clear communication helps businesses navigate the uncertainties of a pandemic, ensuring operational continuity and enhancing customer satisfaction, and laying the foundation for future resilience and growth, as stated by the participants:

"Being a travel and tour company owner, I have had to use resilience, innovation, and adaptation to get through the difficulties brought by the post-pandemic business setting. Being among the most severely affected industries during the pandemic, our activities have been greatly impacted by travel restrictions, border closures, and fear of transmission of the virus. Nevertheless, we realized that in order to prosper in this new setting, we would have to adapt to change and reevaluate our business plan." (P01_CQ2)

"Our travel and tour company experienced major supply chain and workforce difficulties during the pandemic. We put a number of adjustment and continuity-ensuring strategies into practice to deal with these challenges. Disruptions in the supply chain were one of the main problems we faced, especially when it came to getting the supplies we needed for our tours and travel services. Aside from that, we had to adjust our staffing needs and schedules so we could prepare for the limitations on travel and gatherings, which badly affected our income. Our top priority is the safety and well-being of our workers, which is why we have policies in place for remote work when it is possible and reducing the number of days worked to survive their compensation." (P03_CQ2.5)

"Above all, communication has been essential. In order to ensure that everyone is aware of the most recent rules and requirements, we have had to have ongoing communication with our partners, suppliers, and workforce. This includes frequent updates on recommendations for safety and travel restrictions." (P04_CQ2.3)

"It is impossible to accurately assess the unanticipated financial difficulties that the travel and tourism sector experienced during the pandemic and the closure of numerous businesses, particularly micro, small, and medium-sized businesses that had served travelers or operated in adjacent industries (Helble and Fink, 2020). Hence, Along with knowledge of emergency preparation, the key measures in assessing readiness are the application of tourism management training and simulations." (Wahyuningtyas, Tanjung, Idris, and Islam, 2020).

By offering tailored experiences—such as private tours for those seeking social distancing, wellness retreats for health-conscious travelers, or flexible booking options for those wary of future disruptions—tourism providers can attract a wider range of customers and enhance their sense of safety and satisfaction. Customization also demonstrates a business's commitment to understanding and accommodating individual preferences, which fosters customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. Ultimately, personalized packages help tourism businesses adapt to the challenges of the pandemic, ensuring they remain competitive and resilient in an uncertain market, as observed by the participants:

"Our operations now need to be more adaptable in order to meet the ever-changing needs of our clients. For instance, we now provide personalized tour packages that enable private tours for families or smaller groups. Additionally, we've expanded the list of outdoor activities that offer opportunities for overall satisfaction while maintaining health protocols." (P03_CQ2.3)

"As the owner of a travel and tour company, I have witnessed a number of positive changes and opportunities brought about by the pandemic. One notable change has been the increased emphasis on domestic travel. numerous travelers have turned to explore local destinations nearby, which has increased demand for local tourism experiences." (P02_CQ2.4)

From the perspective of COVID-19, tourism highlights the local as a hub for transformation. The micro mobilities at the local level are severely hampered when tourism stops, and social distancing measures are put into place. The post-COVID-19 world may be redefined at this scale by conflicting desires to "go back to normal" and refuse what could be referred to as the new normal (Benjamin *et al.,* 2020).

Local communities are severely impacted in large part by the loss of livelihoods. Yet, from within this loss, the opportunity exists to rebuild tourism with a triple bottom line which will secure a more resilient and sustainable local economy (Cooper and Alderman, 2020). This rebuilding has the potential to regenerate short-circuit economies (Ateljevic, 2020), reinvigorate environmental hope and remediation (Crossley, 2020) and promote institutional innovation (Brouder, 2020).

Proper management is crucial in handling and coping with the COVID-19 pandemic in the travel and tourism business, as it enables companies to navigate unprecedented challenges effectively. By implementing agile strategies, such as offering personalized services, enhancing health and safety protocols, and leveraging digital tools, businesses could mitigate financial losses and maintain customer trust. Moreover, proactive communication and adaptive planning helped organizations respond swiftly to changing regulations and market conditions, ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience.

3.4 Similarities and Differences that Explain Each Case

The data on similarities and differences between the travel and tourism service business's experiences in handling and coping mechanisms to address the business performance brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic is in the table below.

Table 3: Cross-case Analysis of the Experiences and Coping Mechanisms of the Subject Cases

	Case Units		Explanation
	Similarities	Differences	
Handling travel and tourism service business in the post-pandemic business landscape			
Health and Safety Protocols	02, 03 & 04		The three cases all shared common experiences, with a primary focus on ensuring the safety of their employees and clients. These protocols include enhanced sanitation measures and the installation of hand sanitizing stations throughout facilities.
		01	One participant views health and safety protocols as a necessary compliance with government regulations. Furthermore, social distancing guidelines are enforced in common areas, while mask mandates remain in place in accordance with local regulations.
Marketing and Promotion	02 & 03		Two participants regard social media like Facebook and Instagram as crucial tool for promoting their business and for displaying aesthetically beautiful content that captures travelers' curiosity. These two companies have taken advantage of social media platforms to advertise, promote community involvement, and give real-time updates regarding safety precautions, travel limitations, and trip highlights. This is due to the notable shift in consumer behavior towards digital platforms.
		01 & 04	Two participants believe that discounts and pricing strategies are key factors in promoting their business. These companies have started offering bundled packages and time-limited promotions, which not only

			benefit customers but also push early reservations.
Digital Innovations	01, 02, 03 & 04		All participants agreed that adopting technology is necessary for engaging with customers. Additionally, these companies have adopted contactless technologies for check-ins and payments to minimize physical interactions such as G-Cash, Paymaya, and online banking
Partnerships and Collaborations	01, 02, & 03		The majority of participants emphasized the significance of collaborating with business partners to sustain their presence in the industry.These partnerships frequently entail collaborative marketing campaigns, pooled resources, and integrated service offerings that improve services while minimizing expenses. For instance, tour operators work with local businesses to encourage sustainable tourism practices, while tour companies engage with airlines, transportation providers, and hotels to produce bundled packages that offer seamless travel experiences.
		04	Participant Four emphasized the necessity of government assistance to operate the business. In order to promote domestic tourism initiatives, governments have offered financial support, regulatory flexibility, and marketing assistance. Businesses have also assisted by sharing data on consumer trends and behavior.
Flexibility and Adaptability	01, 02, 03, & 04		All participants agree on the significance of flexible booking and business practices to ensure the convenience and safety of customers. More accommodating booking practices have been adopted by businesses, enabling clients to alter or cancel appointments without facing severe consequences. Additionally, by integrating technology, these businesses are now able to provide customized travel experiences that can be easily adjusted in response to suggestions from clients or new trends.
Coping mechanisms with the changes brought by the post-pandemic in the business landscape			
Precautions in safety measures	01, 02, 03 & 04		All participants agreed about prioritizing the safety of both clients and staff. The implementation of mandatory mask-wearing policies in shared venues and health screenings, such as temperature checks at entry points, have become standard practices.

Virtual Customer Engagement and Experience	02 & 03		Two participants employed social media as a platform for engaging with customers. By putting these technologies into practice, like offering chatbots and social media channels for real-time support, businesses not only keep prospective travelers interested, but they also create a feeling of security and assurance in an unpredictable setting.
		01 & 04	Participants two and three perceive social media as a tool for streamlining business processes. This change has involved using digital platforms to improve customer service, virtual tours, and customized online consultations.
Resilient Business Operation	01, 02, & 04		Most participants noted abrupt cancellations of bookings, which had a detrimental effect on their businesses, highlighting the importance of being prepared.
		03	One participant opted to offer smaller travel packages as a strategy to maintain their business operations.
Strategic Planning and Business Innovation	01, 02, 03 & 04		All participants agreed that having an adaptive business plan helps with strategic planning and innovation. Furthermore, companies have broadened their range of services by endorsing flexible reservation systems and customized itineraries prioritizing security and well-being.

The shared experiences among the four cases highlight a collective emphasis on prioritizing the safety of both employees and clients within their respective businesses. This focus underscores a recognition of the paramount importance of safeguarding the health and well-being of all individuals involved in their operations. By prioritizing safety measures, such as implementing health protocols and guidelines, providing necessary protective equipment, and adapting business practices to mitigate risks, these cases demonstrate a commitment to maintaining a secure environment amidst uncertain circumstances. On the other hand, one participant sees following health and safety rules as something they have to do because the government requires it.

"For all of us in the travel sector, it has been a difficult time, but we have adapted and adjusted to the changes. To protect our clients' and employees' health and safety, we have put in place a thorough set of health and safety practices." (P01_CQ1)

"We implemented stringent hygiene protocols, such as regular sanitization of vehicles and offices, mandatory mask-wearing, and temperature checks." (P02_CQ1)

"We prioritized the health and safety of our customers and employees above all else."
(P03_CQ1)

"We follow government-mandated protocols by requiring health certifications or vaccination requirements for travellers and even to our staff." (P04_CQ1)

On the second theme, all participants recognize the importance of effective marketing and promotion in driving business success, but they differ in their preferred approaches, with one emphasizing digital outreach and the other focusing on pricing tactics to attract customers. Two participants consider social media as essential for advertising their businesses to reach wider audiences and engage with customers. Meanwhile, two participants prioritize discounts and pricing strategies, believing that offering competitive prices and attractive deals can attract more customers and boost sales.

"We created a team who will focus on developing promotional digital materials for services and marketing strategies to attract travelers." (P01_CQ1)

"By providing discounts to our clients if they will book in advance for their future tour. This can help the company compete with others in the same industry." (P02_CQ1)

"We produce content for our social media platforms, including images of our past clients, videos of popular tourist destinations around Samal Island, and other content that highlights the unique features and benefits of the services we provide." (P03_CQ1)

"One strategy we did was to provide discounts at off-peak times; at least it provides income that could otherwise be lost." (P04_CQ1)

Additionally, all participants emphasize the recognition of digital innovation as an indispensable tool for effectively engaging with customers. This acknowledgment suggests an understanding of the evolving digital landscape and the importance of leveraging technological advancements to meet the changing preferences and expectations of consumers.

The majority of participants emphasized the importance of collaboration with business partners, recognizing its significance in sustaining their presence within the industry. Additionally, one participant underscored the necessity of government assistance to facilitate business operations. These viewpoints reflect a dual focus on leveraging external partnerships for industry longevity and seeking governmental support to overcome operational challenges, demonstrating a multifaceted approach to business sustainability.

Hence, the importance of government support is backed by Senate Bill No. 1558, the proposed Philippine Economic Stimulus Act (PESA), which was presented to the

Philippines Senate in May 2020 by Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri is intended to stimulate economic growth and development in the aftermath of COVID-19 by giving funding. The Department of Tourism is required by this Act to help significantly affected tourism businesses that are DOT-accredited businesses in any of the following programs:

1) the issue of loan guarantees or interest-free loans with maturities of up to five (5) years for maintenance and operating costs;
2) credit resources for rehabilitating or modernizing existing buildings or facilities so they adhere to new health and safety regulations;
3) campaigns and initiatives related to marketing and product development;
4) Grants for training, education, and consulting of tourist stakeholders for new normal alternative livelihood projects;
5) the use of information technology; and (6) other appropriate initiatives, such as infrastructure, to lessen the economic effects of COVID-19 on the travel and tourism sector (Philippine Economic Stimulus Act [PESA], 2020).

Finally, all participants agree that flexible booking and business practices are crucial for ensuring the safety and convenience of customers. This reflects a shared understanding of the importance of adaptability in meeting customer needs, particularly in uncertain times like during the pandemic. By offering flexibility, businesses can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty while prioritizing their safety.

In terms of coping mechanisms with the changes brought by the post-pandemic changes in the business landscape, varied responses were shared by the participants.

All participants unanimously prioritize the safety of both clients and staff, highlighting a shared commitment to ensuring a secure environment within their businesses. This collective agreement underscores the recognition of the paramount importance of safeguarding the well-being of all individuals involved in their travel and tour business operations.

In the context of virtual customer engagement and experience, most participants utilize social media to engage with customers, leveraging its interactive capabilities. Meanwhile, some participants view social media as a means to streamline internal business operations and enhance efficiency. This dual usage underscores the versatility of social media in both customer-facing and internal organizational contexts.

Conversely, the abrupt cancellations of bookings were a common challenge noted by most participants, causing adverse effects on their businesses. This shows the importance of being prepared for unforeseen circumstances. In response to this challenge, one participant chose to adapt their strategy by offering smaller travel packages as a means to maintain their business operations. This proactive approach demonstrates a willingness to innovate and adjust to changing market conditions, thereby enhancing resilience in the face of disruptions.

Most importantly, everyone agrees that having a flexible business plan is really important. They know that being able to adapt helps them deal with uncertain situations and find new ways to innovate. This shared understanding shows that they are

committed to staying responsive to changes in the market and what customers want. Overall, it helps them be more resilient and successful in their businesses.

4. Implication and Concluding Remark

4.1 Implication for Practice
In the post-pandemic business environment, companies that provide travel and tours are essential to revitalizing the tourism sector and guaranteeing the security and welfare of tourists. Rebuilding customer confidence requires putting strong health and safety procedures into place. By prioritizing measures such as enhanced cleaning procedures, social distancing guidelines, and vaccination requirements, travel businesses can reassure customers and mitigate health risks, thus facilitating the industry's gradual recovery. Additionally, marketing and promotion efforts must emphasize these safety measures to communicate transparency and reliability to potential travelers, fostering trust and encouraging bookings.

Furthermore, digital innovations have become indispensable tools for travel businesses to adapt and thrive in the post-pandemic era. Leveraging technology for contactless transactions, virtual experiences, and personalized customer interactions enhances safety and convenience. Online platforms and mobile apps can streamline booking processes and provide real-time updates on travel restrictions and health advisories, empowering travelers with essential information. Embracing digital marketing strategies, such as social media campaigns and targeted advertising, enables businesses to reach a wider audience and stay connected with customers in an increasingly digital landscape.

Moreover, partnerships and collaborations are essential for travel businesses to navigate uncertainties and leverage collective strengths. Collaborating with local authorities, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders can facilitate the implementation of standardized health protocols and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. Strategic partnerships with accommodation providers, airlines, and tour operators can create bundled offerings and cross-promotional opportunities, expanding market reach and enhancing value propositions for travelers. Flexibility in business operations, including adaptable cancellation policies and agile response to changing market conditions, enables travel businesses to remain resilient and responsive to evolving consumer preferences, thereby positioning themselves for sustained success in the dynamic post-pandemic business environment.

4.2 Implication for Future Research
Future research on handling travel and tourism service businesses and coping mechanisms with pandemic-induced changes holds significant implications for industry resilience and recovery. Further research into the impact of government policies and support measures on ensuring business continuity and sustainability within the travel and tourism industry can provide valuable insights. These insights can then inform

advocacy efforts and policy recommendations to strengthen resilience in preparation for potential crises. Overall, future research in this area can contribute to enhancing preparedness, fostering innovation, and ensuring the long-term viability of the travel and tourism sector in a post-pandemic world.

4.3 Concluding Remark

This study offers valuable insights into navigating the post-pandemic business landscape within the travel and tourism industry, focusing on handling and coping mechanisms in response to the pandemic's significant changes. Through comprehensive analysis and examination of various strategies businesses employ, it has become evident that resilience, adaptability, and innovation are paramount for success in this evolving environment. By understanding the challenges faced and the effective coping mechanisms implemented, stakeholders can better prepare for future disruptions and uncertainties.

Moving forward, businesses in the travel and tourism sector must prioritize ongoing adaptation and agility. This includes implementing robust health and safety measures, leveraging digital technologies for enhanced customer experiences, fostering strategic partnerships, and remaining responsive to changing consumer preferences and market dynamics. Additionally, collaboration among industry stakeholders and continued support from governments and policymakers will be crucial in fostering a sustainable and resilient recovery. By embracing these principles and lessons learned from navigating the post-pandemic landscape, the travel and tourism industry can emerge stronger and more resilient than before, ready to meet the evolving needs and expectations of travelers in the future.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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