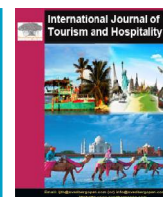




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Rebuilding Leisure: The Covid-19 Aftermath of Selected Resorts in Bulacan, Philippines

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Abstract

This unexpected health catastrophe has turned into a global economic calamity, particularly for businesses and organizations in the hospitality sector. Combating the Covid-19 pandemic is extremely difficult, especially in terms of economic recovery. This paper was designed to examine the strategies used by selected resorts in Bulacan that contributed to the province's ability to rebuild leisure, as well as to identify the implications of the pandemic in terms of operation and guest services, human resources, and sales and marketing. This research is a hybrid of qualitative and quantitative methods, with a focus on descriptive research, which is classified as phenomenology.

Keywords: *Resort, Leisure, Pandemic, Sales and marketing strategies, Operation and guest service, Human resource*

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1. Introduction

Philippines is a country famed for its beautiful and magnificent past, as well as its cultural landmarks, which draw tourists in massive numbers. Bulacan is one of the most well-known holiday destinations in Luzon. According to Sialo (2020) Bulacan gained its name from the attractive orchards, blossoming flora, gardens, and gorgeous ladies in the province. Bulacan is a fantastic holiday destination, especially in the summer, because there are many themed resorts and the province is only a few kilometers from Manila, the Philippines' capital. Bulacan is among the destinations noted for its natural beauty, scenic views, and leisure opportunities. Today, Bulacan is considered to be one of the provinces with the most to offer in terms of leisure, as you will have fun in both ordinary resorts, waterparks, and farm resorts. However, with the global crisis brought about by the pandemic, everything suddenly changed and these well-loved and famous resorts were forced to shut down.

To prevent the rapid spread of Covid-19 illness, quarantine regulations prohibit people from going outside and having a great time. Resorts are among the most affected industries in the hospitality sector. The pandemic has a massive effect on resort revenue since people are unable to leave their homes and are unable to reopen their businesses, whereas before the pandemic, a resort's revenue, particularly for those in high demand, were consistent.

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In their research, Mendoza *et al.* (2019) mentioned that the hazards which are often seen in this industry are noted in provider firms such as resorts or hotels, as well as food and beverage services. The hospitality industry must ensure that their employees are able to cope with the presence of hazards by providing protection applications. These hazards have been magnified by the current pandemic, and resort management is doing everything possible to avoid the worst effects of the pandemic on their operations. This pandemic has a significant influence on many types of businesses. As stated in the study of Kaushal and Srivastava (2021), a new type of coronavirus was discovered in 2019 and this has changed everything all of a sudden. The Covid-19 epidemic has weakened the hospitality and tourist business, affecting many individuals who work in this area. In this new normal, hospitality leaders are looking for innovative solutions to deal with tighter health regulations. The organizations are increasingly working to adhere to health norms in terms of hygiene and human resources.

The current state of the globe is a great sight from the life we once knew. According to Davahli, M. et al. (2020). One of the aspects that aids the sector in regaining the vitality of their businesses are surveys and analyzing how the virus spreads. The resort sector has profited from this form of testing and monitoring. Resorts overlook how their visitors might put their trust in them when it comes to their safety. The purpose of this paper was to examine the strategies used by selected resorts in Bulacan that contributed to the province's ability to rebuild leisure, as well as to identify the implications of the pandemic in terms of operation and guest services, human resources, and sales and marketing.

2. Methodology

This research is a hybrid of qualitative and quantitative methods, with a focus on descriptive research, which is classified as phenomenology. The researchers utilized the internet to identify resorts in the mentioned area for obtaining the data.

This study's respondents were the resort managers, human resource managers, supervisor, and others in-charge of resorts particularly in the municipalities of Hagonoy, Paombong, Malolos, Calumpit, Plaridel, and Bulakan, Bulacan. The frequency distribution and percentage are based on a municipality's number of resorts. The survey questionnaire was the primary data collection instrument employed by the researchers. The surveys were given out individually and carefully explained to the respondents. A video conferencing was also facilitated. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents. As a statistical tool, the mean, frequency, and percentage were employed.

3. Results

Out of every 10 respondents, 20% have a business that has been in operation for one year or less, 30% have a business that has been in operation for one to five years, 0% have a business that has been in operation for 6 to 10 years, and 50% have a business that has been in operation for 11 to 25 years. 30% of responders were from Hagonoy, 20% from Paombong, 10% from Malolos, 20% from Calumpit, and 10% from Plaridel and Bulakan-Bulacan.

Table 1 represent the total weighted mean of the effect of pandemic in the resort's operations and guest services. Indicator no. 1 has a total weighted mean of 4.4. The overall weighted mean calculated for indicator no. 2 is 4.1. The cumulative weighted mean for indication no.3 is 3.3. As a result, the total weighted mean derived for all indicators is 3.93. Unexpected cancellations for the safety purposes of the guests has the highest weighted mean among the three indicators.

Table 2 indicated the overall weighted mean of the effect of pandemic in human resources of resorts in Bulacan. Indicator no. 1 has a total weighted mean of 3.6. The total weighted mean calculated for indication no. 2 is 2.7, whereas the total weighted mean calculated for indicator no. 3 is 3.2. As a result, the total weighted mean derived for all indicators is 3.17. It shows that although there was cost-cutting, there was no employee termination Employee reduction was apparent and is understandable due to financial constraints.

Table 3 reflect the total weighted mean in terms of the effect of pandemic in the resort's sales and marketing. Indicator no. 1 has a total weighted mean of 4.0. The overall weighted mean calculated for indicator no.2 is 3.8. The cumulative weighted mean for indication o.2 is 3.2. As a result, the total weighted mean derived for all indicators is 3.67. It shows that there has been a great impact in the sales and marketing which resulted to a very low sale.

Operations and Guest Services	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Unexpected cancellation for the safety purposes of guest	0	0	0	6	4	4.4	Agree
Limited services provisions because of physical distancing	0	1	0	6	3	4.1	Agree
Insufficient information and safety gears needed for safety protocols	2	0	3	3	2	3.3	Neutral
Total						3.93	Agree

Human Resource	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Employee Reduction	1	0	3	4	2	3.6	Neutral
Employee Termination	2	1	5	2	0	2.7	Disagree
Cost-cutting (no overtime, early retirement, no work, no pay scheme)	0	1	5	5	1	3.2	Neutral
Total						3.17	Neutral

Service and Marketing	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Very low sales	0	1	2	3	4	4.0	Agree
Feed resorts to reevaluate their advertising and marketing campaigns	0	0	4	4	2	3.8	Neutral
Restrictions on face to face marketing strategies	0	0	2	7	1	3.2	Neutral
Total						3.67	Neutral

3.1. Strategies Adopted by Resorts in Bulacan

Below is the matrix of the strategies adopted by resorts in Bulacan:

The resorts' strategies were determined to be effective since they were able to keep up with the economic decline. They have also been able to recover gradually while applying these strategies.

Operation and Guest Service	Human Resource	Sales and marketing
Provided customers with experiences that prioritized safety and superior service	Continuously provided employees with a suitable compensation	Devised scheme to bring people together while keeping them secure and separate
Invested in data and technology that allowed the resorts to learn more about consumer preferences	Kept their employees productive, inspired, engaged and connected which is now the shifting benchmarks in the new normal	Adjusted marketing campaigns and timetables
Recognized physical distancing measures and other safety protocols	Took responsibility for employee retention by giving webinars and other activities	Offered discounts and promotions to attract new visitors while increasing loyalty among existing customers

4. Discussions

As the pandemic spreads, the safety of both tourists and employees should become a top priority. According to the study's findings, the emergence and spread of Covid-19 has a significant impact on resort operations. One of the implications was the loss of a large number of clients, which resulted in a significant income gap. Unexpected cancellation for the safety of guests received the most agreement from responders. However, the resorts did not close totally; they followed health and safety standards, including physical distance, and only a restricted number of guests were permitted. Employees were not terminated, but their hours were cut and they worked on a rotating basis. During their time off, the resorts continued to provide their personnel with webinars and trainings delivered through online platforms. In terms of sales and marketing, the majority of the resorts earned modest sales, forcing them to rethink their marketing methods. Some resorts were able to come up with the idea of partnering with film makers and renting out their resorts as a venue for Netflix Filipino movies and series. Most resorts were used for lock-in tapings and shootings due to government health restrictions and standards. According to the findings, the resort industry continued operating despite the effect of the pandemic. However, regardless of business approach, they have not been able to earn the same level of income as before the pandemic.

5. Conclusion

It is critical to recognize the lessons learned from this pandemic, and it is even more crucial that resorts and other organizations develop and improve their preparedness plans and risk management procedures to battle the potential impact of future upheavals. The resort may protect its employees from getting laid off if they could formulate a scheme fitted in times of adversity.

It is strongly recommended that Bulacan resorts establish innovative marketing concepts focusing on safety and security, as well as strengthening their branding and unique selling proposition, in order to adhere to the new normal set-up. It is also suggested that they find new target markets and increase their partnerships with local governments and municipalities. Finally, in order to attract more visitors and be globally visible, they should maintain and run a high-quality website.

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