

## **AN ASSESSMENT OF THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON THE OPERATION OF RESORTS IN TABUK CITY, KALINGA**

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### **Abstract**

The study aimed to evaluate the effect of the Covid19 pandemic to the tourism businesses of Tabuk City, Kalinga, specifically on the operation of resorts. It was focused on the market performance of resorts during the first declaration of national lockdown in March 2020 to present. Furthermore, it will examine the effects and contexts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how innovation and change has aid the tourism industry's transition to the new normal, and how the business strive towards recovery. Despite the pandemic, the resorts in the province continued operations, but accommodated only limited guests and visitors. During the second quarter of the outbreak of COVID-19, mandatory closure of tourism establishments was imposed in the province as this would greatly help to prevent the proliferation and transmission of the virus. However, the number of people continued to increase in the succeeding quarter and this has become the reason why resorts have to shut down operations totally. Owners of this business observed that the impact on their market performance and operations is long-term and takes more than a year to recover since tourism was one of the most impacted industries during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The needed responses were gathered through the use of a questionnaire based from conducted studies and were quantified through the Three-Point Likert Scale and meanings were determined through the weighted. The Percentage was likewise used to determine the profile of the respondents.

**Keywords:** Resorts, Covid-19, Tourism Industry

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background of the Study**

Existing wealth and health inequities are frequently exacerbated and impacted during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 epidemic. People from disadvantaged origins are disproportionately affected by inequalities in the service sector since so many employees are regarded as vital. The present COVID-19 pandemic has triggered international difficulties, economic crises, and healthcare crises. It has also had an impact on other international industries, such as tourism and travel, which is a significant contributor to the global service sector.

One province that is particularly fortunate to have a nice atmosphere suitable for firms in the tourism and hospitality sector is Kalinga. In reality, the province's tourism industry was growing before to the outbreak of the epidemic. The establishment of several resorts and travel agencies contributed to the expansion and development of the tourism industry.

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, few industries have fallen as far and as fast as tourism. The technological revolution that brought us closer together by making travel and tourism easy and affordable - a revolution that fuelled one billion trips a year—is helpless in halting a virus that demands we shelter in place. Taking a snapshot of tourism losses is

difficult, as the data changes as quickly as the virus spreads. If the pandemic continues for several more months, the World Travel and Tourism Council, the trade group representing major global travel companies, projects a global loss of 75 million jobs and \$2.1 trillion in revenue. Losses come daily; as of April 2, British Airways is reportedly poised to suspend 36,000 staffers. (Elizabeth Becker 2020). Most of the countries all over the world have decided to close their borders and postpone their airline's services due to the covid-19 pandemic. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, there is a global crisis in the tourism industry and covid-19 is responsible for a decline of international tourist arrivals that estimates the losses of US\$300-450 billion. This is surprisingly terrible than the effect of SARS in 2003. The pandemic has affected many countries and the global tourism industry faces terrible situations in which business has been closed, lives has been lost, and people are on high alert for social safety. (Muhammad Khalilur Rahman, 2021) Also, there is a reduce occupancy rate of resorts room occupancy and a decrease in the number of tourists availing tour packages.

To understand the impact of COVID-19 on the Philippine tourism industry, PwC Philippines, together with the Department of Tourism, surveyed 247 decision makers across the different subsectors in May 2020. Forty-four percent of the respondents are from the tourism services sector (i.e., travel agencies, bookings, tours, etc.), and 34% are from the accommodations sector. According to the survey, 97% say that COVID-19 has the potential for significant impact on their business operations, and is causing them great concern. Such finding is not surprising given that only businesses related to essential services and products were the only enterprises allowed to operate during the ECQ. Because of the low demand and restrictions, majority of the respondents say that they temporarily stopped offering a service/product, reduced their level of operations, and reduced the employee headcount. (World Tourism Organization – WTO).

The employment impacts of tourism as measured by COVID-19 have increased the strain on tourism education. Globally, it has had a significant impact on the possibility of creating jobs. Students also have to cope with training interruptions, recruitment, and insecure work chances in the tourism industry as a result of virtual learning and teaching. Tourism programs, initiatives, and academic universities face the challenge of reducing new student enrollment, marketing and government support, and research funding. Similarly, teaching aspects must be explored, such as the planning and implementing more sustainable and flexible methods of tourism teaching and the development of students with transferable and practical skills in other business sectors. (Jaffar Abbas, 2021) Higher Education Institution should apply for the limited face to face classes in accordance with the mandate of the Commission on Higher Education for Tourism and Hospitality Management students, this deem beneficial since they have laboratory subjects. In addition, this will prepare them in their future career.

The present pandemic has caused numerous health issues, which resulted in the burden on healthcare systems worldwide (Le and Phi, 2021; Karl et al., 2020; Scott and Laws, 2008).

According to the World Health Organization (UNWTO) the tourism sector has already felt the negative impact of the pandemic on its performance. Travel agencies and resorts owners are

extremely concerned about the pandemic and are fearful on the significant impact on their business operation. Provision of service and product, decrease number of employees due to the low demand and constraints are some of the effect of pandemic in the tourism related businesses.

This study sought to look into the impacts/effect of the Covid19 pandemic to the resorts in the city of Tabuk. It will focus on the profile of this tourism business, room occupancy, revenue performance, and the immediate response of resorts during the onslaught of the pandemic, alternative methods implemented by the management to their employees, plans in reviving their operations, and the socio-economic impact of the pandemic before the community quarantine and during the community quarantine. Moreover, will look at how the virus affects a tourist attraction like a resort, which can provide information and link to other tourist destinations in the area.

### **Conceptual Framework**

According to Adam H. Viljoen et al, 2019 resorts across the world have played a pivotal role in tourism and can even be seen as the backbone of tourism as we know and comprehend it today.

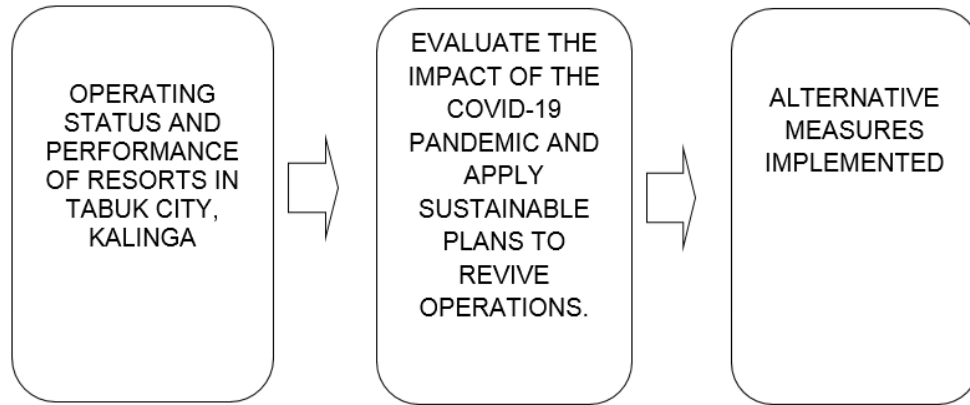
Nowadays resorts are classified in a multitude of ways, ranging from location-/destination-specific resorts to activity-specific resorts. A resort is defined as ‘a physical location where a number of tourism-related elements occur to create a cluster of activities, often in attractive locations such as coastal areas, but can be found in mountainous, rural, or city locations’ (Page & Connell, 2014). Beaver (2012) states that resorts are contextually vacation areas, places or towns with various leisure facilities, for example, mountain resorts, spa resorts or seaside resorts. Moreover, a resort is also described as a place that attracts a large number of tourists according to (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill, 2008).

At this time, Tabuk city has paved the path and unlocked job and livelihood prospects, including businesses and other entrepreneurial pursuits. The other municipalities that make up the province, including Pinukpuk, Rizal, Tanudan, Tinglayan, Lubuagan, Pasil, and Balbalan, are served by Tabuk, which is situated in the province's center. People come and go from all of these municipalities, including those from neighbouring provinces, for a wide variety of different activities and objectives. One of the attractive and potentially entrepreneurial activities in the area of commerce and revenue generation is the management and operation of resorts.

The province of Kalinga features a number of resorts that draw thousands of visitors each year before the occurrence of the Covid-19 virus. There is a huge competition among these resorts as to the number of visitors/guests. As a result, different techniques/strategies are being applied and adopted, the used of digital technologies in the establishment are useful in delivering/providing excellent services to their guest/s.

The study undertakes to determine the effects brought by the covid-19 to the tourism businesses specifically, the resorts situated in the city. Additionally, it will look into the comparison of

tourists' arrivals, resort room occupancy, sales, revenue and financial conditions before the GCQ and during the GCQ.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study primarily aimed to assess the effect of Covid19 Pandemic to the Resorts situated in Tabuk City, Kalinga. To attain the aim of the study, it addressed the following specific questions:

1. Find out the current operating status of resorts in the Province
2. Determine the profile of each tourism and hospitality establishment as to products and services offered
3. Identify the length of effect of pandemic to the resorts
4. Determine the market performance of the resorts as to:
  - a. room occupancy
  - b. number of tourists arrivals
5. Identify The immediate and alternative methods implemented by the resorts to:
  - a. maintain sales
  - b. sustain number of tourist/guest arrivals

### **Significance of the Study**

According to the DOT statement on uniform travel protocols for the safe reopening of tourist destinations, this allows us to restart our economy and help our tourism workers regain their jobs. The Department therefore welcomes the approval of uniform travel protocols for all local government units (LGUs) by the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-MEID) to facilitate travel movement and promote local tourism. (DOT)

The tourism sector's future remains exceedingly uncertain. Many countries are also working on strategies to establish a more resilient tourism sector in the aftermath of COVID-19. Preparing measures to help tourism's long-term recovery, encouraging the digital transition and a shift to a greener tourism system, and rethinking tourism for the future are among them.

Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat says that The Department of Tourism joins the worldwide tourist industry in placing a premium on traveler health and safety. In support of this shared effort, the Department of Tourism (DOT) will continue to enhance protocols to ensure that stakeholders, communities and workers in the Philippines who rely on Tourism can return to work securely once travel restrictions are lifted.

Even before the global epidemic, the province's resorts expanded in number. In order to satisfy and exceed the expectations of guests and tourists, these resorts have adopted and applied various strategies and delivered excellent services. Furthermore, these tourism enterprises play a significant part in the region's tourism industry. They provided jobs for inhabitants as well as a reason for visitors and tourists to visit the city. Hence, the need to enhance and develop these for customer satisfaction, especially during the pandemic will help with sustainability and economic stability.

The findings and results of the study will be beneficial to the owner of the establishments as this will help them evaluate the effect of covid-19 in the whole operation of their businesses. Also, to customers and clients – the results and findings of the study will give them sufficient ideas on the importance of following protocols to prevent spread of the covid-19 virus.

### **Scope and delimitation of the Study**

The study was conducted in August 2022 to November 2022. The study respondents will be the five major resorts of the city, namely: Bilza Lodge and Resort, Iloba Resort, Heritage Pinagan Resort, Tree Tops Adventure & Resort, and Villa Rosalina Resort. There are other resorts in the city; however, most do not comply with the minimum standards.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The pandemic has provided the sector ample time to reconsider and transform its traditional practices and incorporate sustainability (P Harchandani, S Shome,2021) This indicates that global economic losses due to the pandemic are enormous, but particularly in destinations whose economy system mainly depends on tourism businesses. DV Huynh et.al 2021 study on The COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impacts on Tourism Business in a Developing City: Insight from Vietnam measures the general impact of covid-19, assess the overall impact on specific tourism destinations and tourism businesses throughout the waves of the pandemic. The study recruited 40 representatives of tourism-related organizations for in-depth interviews, while 280 questionnaires were distributed to participants from different tourism organizations. The findings indicate that the majority of tourism businesses in the examined case study seriously suffered from the pandemic, and very few tourism-related enterprises were able to recover after the first wave of infection. Unfortunately, the tourism business sectors were found to be on the brink of bankruptcy or facing permanent shutdown after the third wave. All tourism

enterprises generally appeared to experience a sharp drop in the number of customers, tourism revenue, service facilities and exploitation, as well as employee downsizing, but the degree of downturn differed among the examined enterprises.

Nyawo, J.C. (2020) in his study on the Performance of international and domestic tourism sector due to COVID-19 stated that COVID-19 pandemic has created social and economic crisis both in developed and developing countries, and the tourism sector has been mostly affected by the pandemic. The majority of the countries in which the tourism sector contributes significantly to job creation, export generation revenues, economic income, and investments were mainly exposed to the effect of the COVID-19 crisis.

Mathew, J., & MA, J. (2020) carried out a study on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic in the tourism sector particularly in India. It was found out that Indian tourism industry is projected a revenue loss of Rs 1.25 trillion in calendar 2020. It was also revealed that the impact on the inbound and outbound passengers is expected to be most severe during the pandemic. This indicates that tourism needs life support, liquidity to survive Covid crisis. Economic recovery, marketing and promotion, institutional strengthening, and resilience building are some of the initiatives that make up the Tourism Recovery Technical Assistance Package.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

The terms are defined accordingly to facilitate understanding of the study:

**Resort** - A location that is frequently used for a particular activity or as a popular vacation spot

**Tourist Arrivals** - the quantity of foreign and domestic travelers who enter a country/City within a specific year and spend at least one night there.

**Lodging room** - a sleeping area that frequently accommodates multiple people

**Tourism destination** - A tourist destination that draws visitors for its inherent or demonstrated natural or cultural worth, historical significance, natural or architectural beauty, and ability to provide entertainment and leisure.

**Entertainment activity** - Is a type of action that keeps a viewer's interest and keeps them engaged, or brings them pleasure and delight.

**Resort operation** - the individuals and organizations in charge of running and maintaining resort properties as well as resort support facilities.

## METHODOLOGY

### Locale of the Study

The study is conducted in the city of Tabuk province of Kalinga. An interview guide was used to gather information to answer the question, collect data and accomplish the study's aim and objective. The interview was participated by the owners/ managers of the five major resorts of the city, namely: Bilza Lodge and Resort, Iloba Resort, Heritage Pinagan Resort, Tree Tops Adventure & Resort, Villa Rosalina Resort. The resorts in the City offers lodging services, food



and beverages, entertainment and leisure activities to domestic and international tourist/guests.

### Research Design

To reach the goal and objective of collecting data and information to finish the study, the research design used qualitative methods. An interview guide was utilized to collect data about the resorts operating status, tourists/visitors arrivals before and during the pandemic and profile and performance. The perception of any potential challenges relating to the pandemic by the respondents was elicited.

### Respondents/ informants/ research participants of the study

The respondents are the owners or managers of the five resorts in the city, namely: Bilza Lodge and Resort, Iloba Resort, Heritage Pinagan Resort, Tree Tops Adventure & Resort, and Villa Rosalina Resort.

**Table 1: Hotels and its owners-respondents of the study**

NAME OF HOTEL	HOTEL OWNERS
1.Bilza Lodge and Resort	Joyce Dilag
2.Iloba Resort	Mike Aboli
3.Heritage Pinagan Resort	Norma Gonzales
4.Tree Tops Adventure and Resort	Caleb James Bides
5.Villa Rosalina Resort	Ivy Balageo Bargas

The table shows the resorts name and its owners, who are also the respondents in the study. Based on the data gathered Iloba Resort has the highest number of tourist/guest arrivals followed by Tree Tops Adventure Resort and Bilza Lodge and Resort respectively. The Tree Tops Adventure and Resort has the most number of guest with regards to room occupancy.

### Instrumentation

Through the use of an interview guide, we conducted interviews with them to get more information on the resort's profile and performance before and during the pandemic. The survey also covers the pandemic-related initiatives and adoptive measures used by the resort management.

### Data Gathering

In gathering data and information to accomplish the objectives of the research, a structured interview was used, and the researcher conducted the following steps:

Firstly, the researcher sought to approve the title of the study from the research director of the University.

Secondly, the researcher conducted an interview to the owners or manager of the resorts in the city.

Finally, the collected information were classified, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted.

**Data Analysis**

The data collected during the interview was collated, tabulated, analyzed, and evaluated by simply ranking the respondents' answers.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Resorts' decrease in percentage of tourist arrivals during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Figure 1.1** presents the resorts' number of tourist arrivals as a percentage during the covid19 pandemic: the Villa Rosalina Resort has decreased by 80%, the Bilza Resort has declined by 70%, the Iloba Resort and Adventure Place have decreased by 73%, the Tree Tops Eco-adventure Resort has decreased by 50%, and the Heritage Resort has decreased by 90%.

The results imply that none of the resorts shut down its operation. However, the management has to implement various strategies in order to cope up with the continuing drop-off of guest and tourist arrivals.

**Figure 1.1: Resorts' decrease in percentage of tourist arrivals during the COVID-19 pandemic**

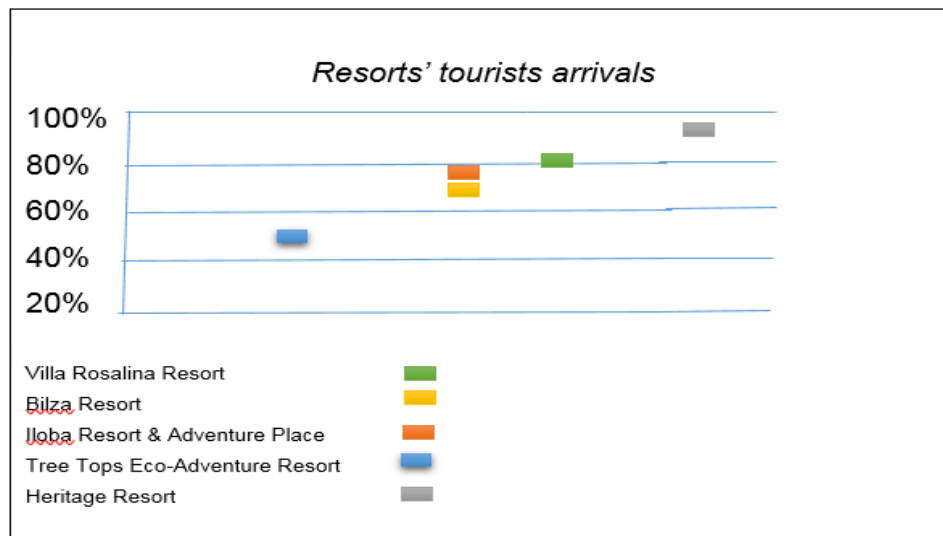
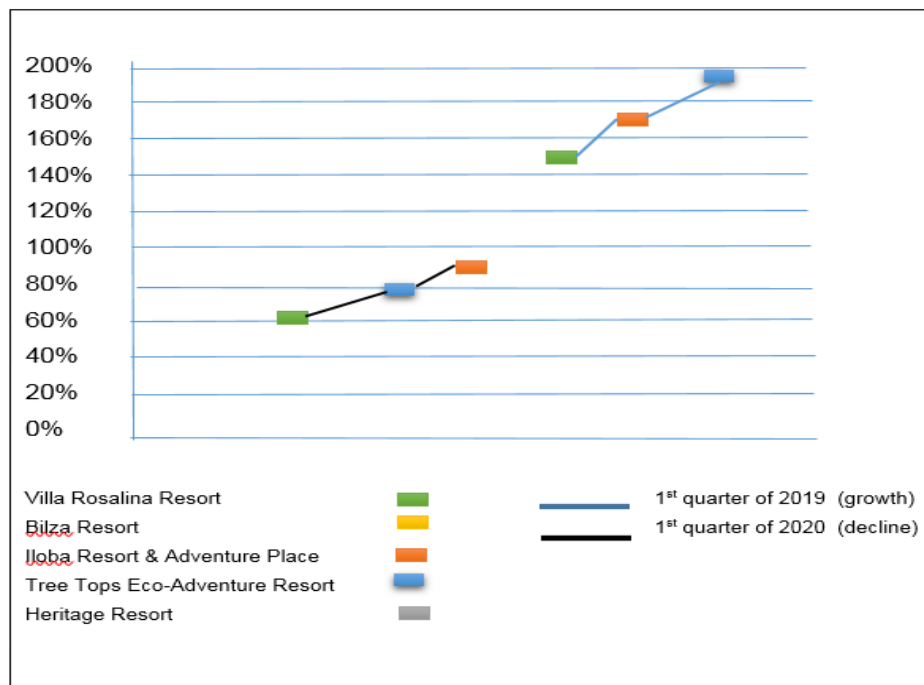


Figure 1.2 presents the growth and decline of resorts' room occupancy during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2019 and the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2020. Tree Tops Eco-Adventure Resort has declined by 80%, Iloba Adventure Place Resort has declined by 85% and Villa Rosalina Resort has declined by 65% during the first quarter of 2020, Two of the resorts do not offer room occupancy. During the first quarter of 2019, the Villa Rosalina Resort increased by 50%, the Iloba Resort and Adventure Place increased by 70% and, the Tree Tops Eco-Adventure Resort increased by 90% on room occupancy.



**Figure 1.2: Performance of resorts in terms of room occupancy**

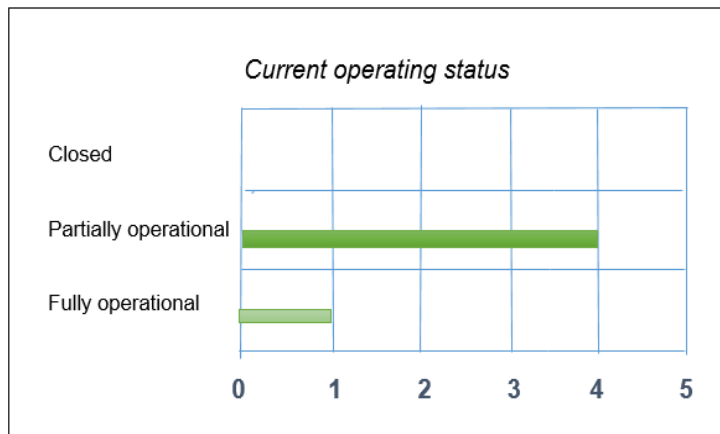


Resorts suffered significantly as a result of the localized quarantine, travel limitations, and low visitor and tourist numbers. Room occupancy has decreased at the majority of the city's resorts. Due to the decrease in the number of available rooms, there are also fewer personnel. Although widespread immunization cannot totally eradicate the virus, it is nevertheless important to include suggestions for updated health and safety practices in lodging facilities.

The figure 2 presents the resorts' operating status during the covid19 pandemic; whether it is fully operational, partially operational, and closed. It shows that four resorts remained partially operational, and one is fully operational provided that it will fully comply with the protocols required.

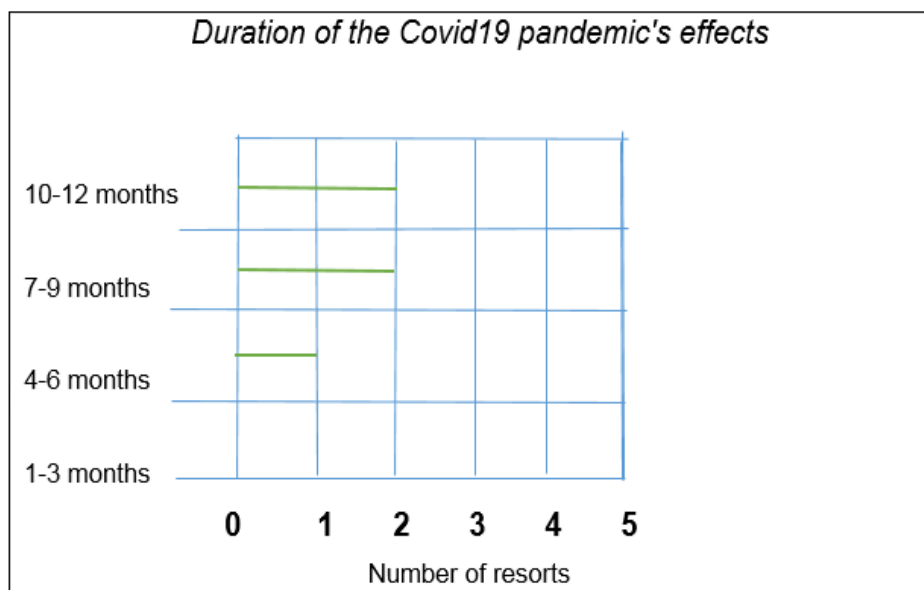
This implies that most of the resorts being studied are not compliant with the minimum standard set by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the IATF during the outbreak of the Covid-19. Moreover, the majority of the resorts choose to be partially operational to help prevent the growing cases of covid-19 in the city.

**Figure 2: Resorts' Current Operation Status during the Pandemic**



Duration of the Covid19 pandemic's effects

**Figure 3** presents the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic to the resorts being studied. Though, most of the resorts undergo various adjustments to regain the sustainability of the whole operation of the business, still, they have experienced the effect it has brought.



This implies that 1 resort answered 4-6 months to recover from the effects of the pandemic, 2 resorts answered 7-9 months respectively and, 2 resorts said it would take 10-12 months for them to recover again. However, they specified that it would take enough time to get back to normal again considering the fact that they need to regain what was lost during the outbreak of the pandemic.

The figure presents the different alternatives being used or implemented by the resorts to maintain their sales. Three of the resorts used promotional strategies as this would help them entice guests and tourists; all five resorts opt to offer leisure activities to attract prospective target markets, four out of five resorts have reduced prices of the products that they offer and the services that the resort is offering to guests and visitors; and 3 resorts have answered that they have regular procurement of supplies and materials to be used daily since, the location of their resort is far from the city.

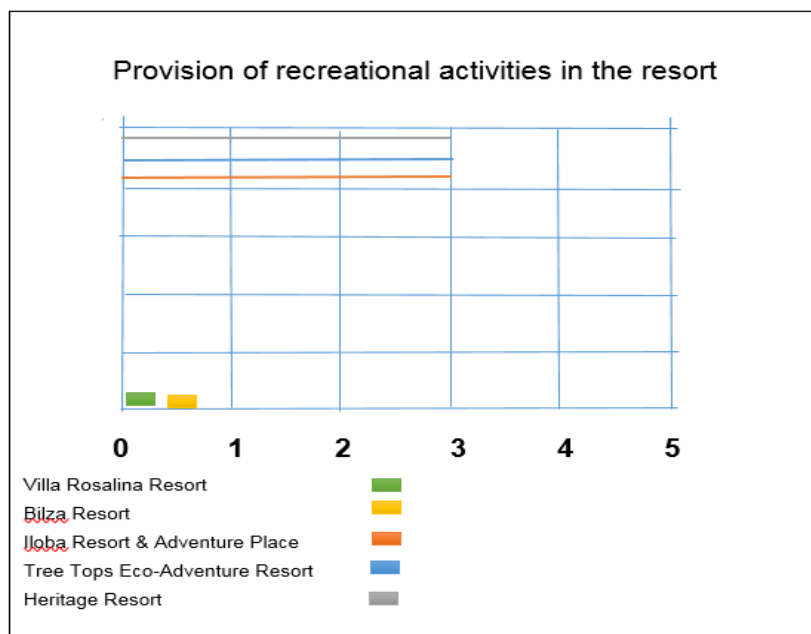
**Figure 4: Measures used to sustain sales**



These resorts may continue operations, although at a reduced capacity, by developing a thorough continuity plan and cash flow forecast. This will also make it easier to recover after the crisis is over.

The graph shows how many resorts prefer to include and locate recreational and entertainment activities within their property. Three of the resorts, namely, Heritage Resort, Tree Tops Eco-Adventure Resort, and Iloba Adventure Place, wanted to add recreational activities since it was also mandated by the Department of Tourism (DOT) to do so as long as all the required processes were followed, especially the protocols during the pandemic. Two resorts, namely Bilza Resort and Villa Rosalina Resort, could not put in recreational activities because the location of the resort was not spacious enough to accommodate a multitude of people.

**Figure 5: Provision of recreational activities**



It has been observed that some resorts within the locality have added recreational and entertainment activities to attract guests and tourists. However, others are not compliant with the minimum standards and procedures in the management of the different equipment installed within the vicinity of the resort. thus causing accidents for their guests.

### SUMMARY

The most complicated issue we face in this crisis is finding the correct balance between preventing not only the damage caused by Covid-19 but also the damage caused by a substantial downturn of economic activity. A severe recession is likely to cause widespread suffering, including higher mortality rates due to causes other than the virus, making this a question of life and death, as well as prosperity or poverty. As a result, we must devise clever techniques as wealth or lack thereof. The tourism and hospitality businesses were the most impacted establishments during the occurrence of the Covid-19, some have to shut down operation to help in the prevention of the nationwide virus. The effect has been experienced by the

The study focused on the resorts in Tabuk City, Kalinga. It sought to determine the effects of Covid-19 Pandemic in the Operation of Resorts in the City thru: the number of tourists /guests arrivals, current operating status, provision of recreational and entertainment activities, numbers of room/cottages occupied before and during the pandemic, duration of the pandemic to the management of resorts, re-opening plan and measures or procedures to be implemented to maintain sales. The results were tabulated and analyzed using frequency and ranking

As a last point, Kalinga is having a difficult time recovering due to the pandemic's effects. As a result, there are significant adjustments can be made specifically for the business to continue, especially in sectors tied to tourism, such resorts. But despite the fact that the epidemic occurred, they used the time to upgrade their facilities, creating a safe environment financial situation. Considering the respondents' profiles, when it comes to educational background, the majority of them have degrees in business-related fields like tourism and hospitality, demonstrating their aptitude for owning and running a resort.

## CONCLUSION

This study is designed to assess the effect of the Covid-19 to the resorts in Tabuk City, Kalinga by conducting a survey questionnaire. In accordance with the result of the research, it was found out that majority of the resorts have decreased up to 90% in number of tourist arrivals during the pandemic more so because of travel restrictions both local and international. The performance of resorts as to room occupancy also drop-off, most of the resorts limited their guest occupants which resulted to low sales but, they are aware that it is a mandatory requirement by the Department of Health (DOH) to all lodging establishments. As to the resorts' current operating status during the pandemic, four resorts are partially operational and one is fully operational, these resorts are compliant with the health and safety protocols. While it is true that the recovery for the pandemic is a long term process, most of the resorts being studied answered 4-6 months and 9-12 months concerning the length of Covid-19 pandemic's effect in their respective tourism establishment. However, they are trying to cope up, and implement different strategies to regain their status and possibly back to normal again. It is visible that the pandemic has affected the whole operation of the business especially when it comes to their daily, weekly, and monthly sales. The researchers enumerated measures used by the resorts to sustain sales of which most resorts opted to offer recreational and entertainment activities as this would help them in increasing their sales and revenues.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Continue to offer different recreational activities, provided that they are inspected by Department of Health (DOH) employees and safety and health protocols are observed throughout.
2. Prepare and put into action more specific marketing and promotional strategies can be thru social media platform.
3. Signage may be visible and readable.
4. Consider to update the resorts' website for international tourists.

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