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Covid-19 pandemic and tourism entrepreneurship in the new normal: An assessment of Meghalaya, India

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Abstract: The entrepreneurs who operate micro and small enterprises are one of the worst affected by the covid-19 pandemic. In tourism, the accommodation units saw a drastic fall in business with numerous challenges to survival. The present study aims to assess tourism entrepreneurship in the new normal, focusing on the small accommodations of the North-East Indian state of Meghalaya from March 2020 till early 2022. The primary data was collected during February-March 2022 with a sample size of 100 covering variables such as enforcing regular hand sanitizing/washing, proper masking, social distance practices, regular sensitization of covid-19 safety protocols, etc. It is found that the businesses have changed in terms of the implementation of compulsory directives (hand washing, masking, etc.) and how core business operations are executed. However, there is scope for improvements in planning, control, and business processes. The policy implications include capacity building on entrepreneurial skills, emotional support and hand-holding for budding entrepreneurs, and an emphasis on a resilient business organization.

Keywords: covid-19, pandemic, tourism, entrepreneurship, accommodation, new normal

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INTRODUCTION

The global economy continues to be impacted by the covid-19 pandemic. The World Bank Global Economic Outlook (2020) mentioned that it has one of

the worst economic impacts in the world. The global GDP in 2022 is projected to increase by around 3%. In India, the worst impact was experienced by the trade, hotels, transportation, communication, and broadcasting sectors (Table 1).

Table 1: Annual growth of gross value added (percentage)

Sectors	2019-20 (1st RE)	2020-21 (PE)	2021-22 (1st A.E.)
Agriculture and allied sectors	4.3	3.6	3.9
Industry	-1.2	-7.0	11.8
Services	7.2	-8.4	8.2
Trade, hotels, transport, communication, and services related to broadcasting	6.4	-18.2	11.9

(Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Economic survey 2021, RE - Revised estimates, P.E. - Provisional estimates, A.E. – Actual estimates)

The worst affected by the downturn are the entrepreneurs who operate micro and small enterprises. Due to their size, limited capital, and other resources, small firms often suffer disproportionately and are more vulnerable during a crisis (OECD, 2009). Small and medium enterprises are estimated to represent 90% of businesses globally (World Bank, 2021), provide 70% of total employment worldwide (International Labor Organization, 2019), and are a significant contributor to GDP, which is about 50% in OECD countries and 40% in emerging economies (European Commission, 2020).

Significantly, Stephan *et al.* (2021) found that 61% of entrepreneurs believed that a significant decrease in trading activities threatened the very existence of their businesses. The covid-19 pandemic forced small businesses to undertake mass layoffs and shut down in the first quarter of 2020 (Bartik *et al.*, 2020).

In relation to tourism entrepreneurship, the accommodation units have seen a drastic downfall and uncertainty since the start of the pandemic (UNWTO, 2022). This trend is highlighted in Table 2. Size is a

crucial issue since small businesses are frequently financially unstable, and this directly affects the availability of resources and the abilities needed to adapt to change (Bartik *et al.*, 2020, 2020a; Crespi-Cladera *et al.*, 2021). In the case of small lodging enterprises, which include budget hotels, motels, backpacker inns, and homestays, the impact of the pandemic was comparable

to that of other small businesses with difficulty in business recovery (Rivera and Cores, 2020). Globally, many hotels and lodging personnel have been furloughed or laid off, and revenue per available room is lower than expected. This desperate situation was more visible in Italy, Greece, and Spain (Chiappa *et al.*, 2021).

Table 2: Change in worldwide occupancy rate in accommodation units

Months	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	59%	57%	34%	43%
April	70%	22%	46%	58%
July	74%	42%	59%	68%
October	71%	44%	59%	-

(UNWTO, 2022)

Covid-19 and The New Normal

The crises of different types, such as financial, environmental, political, or social, occur periodically around the world affecting business operations (Krammer, 2022). The covid-19 pandemic also caused significant interruption to economies and entrepreneurship, resulting in several unprecedented challenges (Meahjohn & Persad, 2020, Li-Ying & Nell, 2020). Corpuz (2021) states that the covid-19 pandemic has unexpectedly forced us to adjust to the 'new normal like work-from-home arrangements, parents home-schooling their children in a new blended learning environment, lockdown and quarantine, and the requirement to wear face masks in public.

The term 'new normal' was coined at PIMCO (Pacific Investment Management Company LLC) in early 2009 after the 2008 financial crisis (Elerian, 2009). It refers to the dramatic economic, cultural, and social transformations that caused precariousness and social unrest, impacting collective perceptions and individual lifestyles. Further, in the view of Tomsett (2022), the new normal is a phrase that denotes a condition, behavior, or state of things that is atypical but then becomes a baseline casting a long-lasting effect. In addition, the state of the economy and society settling after a crisis emphasizes that it differs from the prior situation. In a business sense, the new normal is how entrepreneurs steer in a new way of working and taking lessons from the past. However, Corpuz (2021) underlines that the new normal is still emerging and that the immediate focus should be to address the complex issues that have arisen due to the pandemic by focusing on resilience, recovery, and restructuring.

Amidst the contextualization above, the reality is that the global tourism sector is the most severely affected and is still in the process of complete recovery. The direct adverse impacts are devastating, not to forget the indirect effects that would cascade into the other economic sectors. Tourism entrepreneurs are therefore

going through a period of change, coping with the new normal and implementing new practices through innovation, with technology playing a vital role (Liu *et al.*, 2020; Gössling *et al.*, 2020). The new normal has brought about growth to one group of entrepreneurs, with an unparalleled loss being felt by another (Ratten, 2020). This only highlights the evolving nature of the subject matter.

Covid-19 and Tourism Entrepreneurship

Global research has shown the significance of entrepreneurship during an economic crisis, such as faced during the current covid-19 pandemic (Maritz *et al.*, 2020). In entrepreneurship, crisis-related studies have increased substantially over the past decade (Williams and Vorley, 2015; Doern, 2016). Ratten (2020) states that the pandemic resulted in a need for entrepreneurship revisiting as to how things are currently being done. It has also caused a surge in entrepreneurial activity (World Economic Forum, 2022). There have been many successful start-ups during an inevitable crisis, like Disney, which was created in 1929 during the great depression, and Uber, Air BNB, and Groupon emerged from the chaos of the 2008 financial crisis (French, 2021).

The countries with the highest share of entrepreneurs seeing the existence of their business threatened by covid-19 were China (95.3%), Bangladesh (91.6%), and Pakistan (71.7%). In comparison, entrepreneurs in Norway (40.8%), Poland (43.5%), and Denmark (47.8%) adapted to the pandemic by changing their business planning (Sahasranamam *et al.*, 2021). In India, it is found that almost 60% of entrepreneurs predict a long-term positive impact of the covid-19 pandemic on their businesses (University of Strathclyde, 2021). Nonetheless, tourism entrepreneurship is one of the most affected sectors by the pandemic. With various restrictions imposed, the number of tourists also declined rapidly, leading to the downfall of various tourism start-ups. The lockdowns led millions of small businesses into

existential testing around the world. As a result, service businesses will likely see much innovation in how services are created, packaged, and sold (Meyer *et al.*, 2020).

Contemporarily, a critical challenge tourism entrepreneurs face is rethinking the tourism development model in times of crisis. Even though crisis management models in tourism have a considerable scenario-building component for proposing prevention measures or contingency plans (Hall, 2010; Kuo *et al.*, 2009, Mair *et al.*, 2016), they fail to consider the scale and intensity of the crisis caused by the pandemic (Hall *et al.*, 2020). It has demolished economic buoyancy by shutting down hundreds of thousands of small businesses, and millions of workers suffered unemployment. On the bright side, entrepreneurs across the globe have exhibited resilience, determination, and proficiency to see or seek opportunity in chaos (Maritz *et al.*, 2020). The ability of an entrepreneur to adapt to change shows resilience (Salisu *et al.*, 2020), an essential concept in entrepreneurial crisis management (Thukral, 2020). For Liu *et al.* (2020), resilience is needed for individuals, organizations, and society to meet health challenges and tackle the new economic and social effects. The entrepreneurs' main priority is to innovate, and their contribution to innovation in the new normal is significant. Ensuring regular training and employing qualified staff are now given more emphasis due to the pandemic (Dias, 2022).

Covid-19 and Accommodation Units

Small businesses were severely impacted by the covid-19 pandemic and are having difficulty adjusting without external assistance (Bartik *et al.*, 2020). The small accommodation units are faced with a similar challenge. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are especially vulnerable to the effects of external shocks (Biggs *et al.*, 2012; Ha *et al.*, 2020). The segments worst impacted by the pandemic are airlines and accommodations, which form an integral part of the travel and tourism industry (Aydin & Doğan, 2020). These crises create high levels of uncertainty and usually require speedy responses in facing negative impacts (Ritchie & Jiang 2019). Previous studies have revealed that the hospitality sector is not well-prepared for a crisis (Bremser *et al.*, 2017). This is mainly due to a lack of dedicated resources (Ghaderi *et al.*, 2014) and a shortage of knowledge and experience regarding how to behave (Okumus *et al.*, 2005; Ritchie, 2008).

A crisis situation is one where the root cause of an event is, to some extent, self-inflicted through such problems as inept management structures and practices or a failure to adapt to change. On the other hand, a disaster is when an enterprise is confronted with sudden, unpredictable catastrophic changes over which it has little control (Faulkner, 2013). In the view of Hao *et al.* (2020), the covid-19 pandemic is considered a disaster in the literature related to hospitality. As a result, this disaster has transformed the hotel industry and required

hotels to adapt to the new normal conditions (Le & Phi, 2021). For the hotel sector to support business recovery and post-pandemic growth, they should reflect on the two proactive themes of business innovation and recovery strategies (Le and Phi, 2021).

Kenny and Dutt (2021) stated that in the case of accommodation units, there would be three significant long-term effects of covid-19 responses: business closure, business consolidation and development, and operational improvements. Due to the pandemic, the hotel sector revenue per available room decreased by 11.6% in the United States during the first week of March 2020. In China, occupancy slipped by 89% in January, while in Germany, it was 36% in March 2020 (Durbin, 2020). Many traditional hospitality providers had to halt operations temporarily, furlough staff or lay off, borrow precautionary funds to weather the storm, seek government aid, or temporarily suspend operations altogether (Nicola *et al.*, 2020; Chiappa *et al.*, 2021).

Currently, the covid-19 pandemic is subsiding. Generally, during the post-pandemic holidays, tourists will pay particular attention to hygiene and cleanliness, especially in selecting accommodation (Chebli & Said, 2020; Kılıç *et al.*, 2020; Kourgiantakis, 2020). Today, understanding consumer wants and expectations is crucial for businesses if the accommodation sector successfully handles and manages the pandemic. Regulations governing the provision of services in accommodation establishments have undergone a great deal of change. Online entry-exit records, technological systems utilizing contactless transactions on room door cards, full implementation of daily health measures, sterilized kitchen applications, and a la carte service in restaurants are thought to be able to allay consumer concerns (Çetin & Coşkun, 2021). With more cautious tourists, the post-pandemic tourism experiences are anticipated to be sustainable. Where hygiene is essential, tourist expectations will be reshaped, and hygiene-themed businesses will be predominant (Mostafanezhad, 2020).

In the case of SARS and H1N1, studies have shown that hygiene and cleanliness are significant elements during a pandemic, and technology can aid hotels in meeting their hygienic goals (Hung *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, during the hotel industry's recovery, hotel hygiene and cleanliness should be prioritized (Hao *et al.*, 2020; Jiang and Wen, 2020). In order to meet higher standards of hygiene, cleanliness, and safety, the hotel industry may adopt technology-enabled solutions to provide contactless service (Gursoy & Chi, 2020; Hao *et al.*, 2020). However, the road to recovery is extremely tough for smaller and weaker firms that lack the resources to improve operations. The new normal has also influenced the exploration of technologies in service provision, such as using artificial intelligence and robotic service agents to limit face-to-face interactions (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020). By and large, there is a need

for the hospitality sector to rethink its operations, with a focus on providing new and valuable accommodation experiences (Wen *et al.*, 2020), sustainability (Dolnicar & Zare, 2020; Filimonau *et al.*, 2020; Niewiadomski, 2020), employee care and plans to compete in new ways in a more challenging environment (Dube *et al.*, 2020; Huang *et al.*, 2020).

DATA AND METHODS

The scope of the study is tourism entrepreneurship in the new normal, particularly focusing on the small accommodations of the North-East Indian state of Meghalaya. Meghalaya is one of the promising and emerging destinations in domestic and international tourism. The timeframe covers the covid-19 pandemic (i.e., March 2020 till present) and with increased emphasis on the early part of the year 2022. The accommodations included are bed and breakfast, homestays, small resorts and hotels, tent houses, etc., and the respondents are the entrepreneurs' who provide such services. Concerning data, both secondary and primary sources are used. The secondary data is comprised of print and electronic publications from various sources and forms the background. The primary data was collected during February-March 2022 through a field survey and interviews using a schedule. The schedule applied an interval scale of 1 for 'no,' 2 for 'low,' 3 for 'moderate,' 4 for 'notable,' and 5 for 'high' for capturing vital elements of tourism entrepreneurship in the new normal. An important criterion applied in the data collection was that the small accommodation had been in existence prior to the covid-19 pandemic and is currently still in operation.

The sample size is 100, spread across the small accommodations of the East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya. The district represents the major share of tourism in Meghalaya in terms of natural resources, available attractions, tourism service providers such as food, beverages, accommodations, etc., and tourist footfall. This is the rationale for selecting the East Khasi Hills small accommodations for assessment. Subsequently, samples were collected from the more popular tourist locations of Shillong, Sohra, Mawlynnong, Nongriat, etc. The variables included are aimed at presenting a holistic view of tourism entrepreneurship under the new normal such as enforcing regular hand sanitizing/washing, proper masking, social distance practices, regular sensitization of covid-19 safety protocols, negative effects on the long-term growth prospects, etc. It also comprises the entrepreneurship profile variables such as gender, age, education, course/training on entrepreneurship, accommodation type, accommodation nature, etc.

The statistical tools used involve descriptive statistics and correlation coefficient for results and discussion on the subject matter of new normal measures. The variable-specific mean scores derived were used to holistically comprehend how covid-19 pandemic has impacted upon tourism entrepreneurship in the new normal. In addition, the question of whether a course/training on entrepreneurship equips the host to mitigate the effects of covid-19 pandemic better as compared to the others was assessed. This was done by comparing the mean scores of the host who had undergone a course/training on entrepreneurship against those who did not.

TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE NEW NORMAL: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the small accommodation entrepreneurs' profile (Table 3) portrays a number of important insights. The table is valuable as it provides an understanding of the nature and structural makeup of entrepreneurs under study in terms of gender, age, education, etc. The entrepreneurs' profile also includes an assessment of whether they had gone through a course/training on entrepreneurship in the past before the covid-19 pandemic.

Table 3 highlights that the majority of the entrepreneurs operating a small tourism accommodation are males. This is against the common perception in Meghalaya that the majority of entrepreneurs and business operators are females. In terms of age, the median computed is 36-45 years. However, on close observation, it can be fairly stated that the ages of the entrepreneurs are primarily in the bracket of 26-55 years. This portrays a wide range of entrepreneurs operating small accommodations. The majority of the entrepreneurs have an education level of graduation and above, which depicts the attractiveness of the tourism sector in providing gainful employment. Notably, some have entered into the trade on account of the non-availability of other means of meaningful livelihood. With regards to having done a course/training on entrepreneurship, most of the entrepreneurs responded negatively. This in itself represents a challenge with regard to managing the nuances of the covid-19 pandemic. It also highlights that the small accommodations in Meghalaya are mostly owned, operated, and managed by those who do not possess the desired skill set and training in business and entrepreneurship. This can be a pitfall when it comes to professional management and the progress of tourism accommodation. Most entrepreneurs are single, with the married ones recording a median score of 1-2 in terms of the number of children.

Table 3: Entrepreneurs' profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Average
Gender	Male	67	Mode = Male
	Female	33	
Age (in years)	< 26	08	Median = 36-45
	26-35	31	
	36-45	23	
	46-55	21	
	> 55	17	
Education	Illiterate	03	Median = graduation and above
	< 10 th pass	06	
	10 th pass	07	
	12 th pass	16	
	Graduation and above	68	
Did a course /paper on entrepreneurship?	No	87	Median = No
	Yes	13	
Marital status	Single	65	Mode = Single
	Married	35	
If married, number of children	None	40	Median = 1-2
	1-2	39	
	3-4	14	
	5-6	04	
	7 and more	03	
Family type	Nuclear	73	Median = Nuclear
	Extended	10	
	Joint	17	

(N = 100)

Table 4 depicts the small tourism accommodation profile in the context of accommodation type, accommodation nature, number of people employed, and market targeted. The Cronbach Alpha value is 0.59 (N=3), depicting the internal consistency of the data. The profiling gives a picture of the features of small accommodations in various categories and is also indicative of the mix of properties responding to the new normal requirements. Most of the accommodations are in the form of homestays. In addition to being easy to establish and maintain, they offer a cozy and need-based service per the tourist's needs and wants. The majority of the enterprises are sole proprietors, which are owned and

managed by the same person. The tourism sector provides meaningful livelihood opportunities. In Meghalaya, the sole proprietorship form of business is more commonly used to take advantage of the opportunities available. Consistent with the small nature of the accommodations and the services offered, the majority only have 2-4 rooms. They employ 2-3 people to provide various services such as food and beverages, housekeeping, front office, etc. In most cases, the front office is operated by the entrepreneur himself/herself. Lastly, most of the accommodations target domestic and foreign tourists through their advertising, marketing and service offerings.

Table 4: Small tourism accommodation profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Average
Accommodation type	Bed and breakfast	11	Median = Homestay
	Homestay	40	
	Resort	05	
	Hotel	17	
	Others (Lodges, tent, etc)	27	
Accommodation nature	Sole proprietorship	59	Median = Sole proprietorship
	Family	28	
	Partnership	05	
	Government	08	
People employed	None	20	Median = 2-3
	One	09	
	2-3	24	
	4-5	18	
	6 and more	29	
Market targeted	Domestic	20	Median = Both
	Foreign	01	
	Both	79	

(N = 100)

Table 5 portrays the assessment of tourism entrepreneurship in the new normal in terms of mean scores and standard deviation. It underlines how the covid-19 pandemic has influenced new normal measures in small tourism accommodation. This has the scope of providing valuable information for planning and strategy in relation to the sustainability of tourism entrepreneurship. The Cronbach Alpha value for the new normal measures variables from enforcing regular hand sanitizing/washing (Var 1), enforcing proper masking (Var 2) so forth till negative effects on the long-term growth prospects (Var 11) is 0.74. The score points that the data set is reliable and meets the internal consistency needs. In addition, the standard deviation values are found to be acceptable under social science study conditions. This further corroborates the mean scores derived.

The results derived an important insight presently into the subject matter. The scores range from 'low' to 'high' regarding the implementation of new normal measures and how the covid-19 pandemic has impacted a change in business dynamics. The small tourism accommodations of today are no longer the same as in the past. Many nuances have changed its methods of operations, service delivery, and outlook toward the future. The results specifically highlight a lot of emphasis on enforcing regular hand sanitizing/washing and regular sensitization on the covid-19 safety protocols. There is a moderate and notable focus given to enforcing proper masking, enforcing social distancing practices, change in business processes with regard to management and operations, and a focus on frugality and negative effects on long-term growth prospects. This depicts that the covid-19 pandemic has entrusted the small accommodations to act responsibly and operate as partners to mitigate the adverse effects.

Apart from the strict adoption of hand washing, masking, social distancing, and regular sensitization on covid-19 safety protocols, which are compulsorily required, the accommodations have also given due importance to their business management aspects, operations, and service delivery. Emphasis is given to human contactless services to the extent possible. This is done while keeping in mind the limitations of running a small accommodation. They lack the financial strength and infrastructure as compared to more established businesses such as big hotels and luxury resorts. Nonetheless, they are aware and alert to the new normal measures and adopt them to their utmost capabilities. Another explanation for the large-scale implementation of new normal measures is the realization by the small accommodations of the possible negative impact of covid-19 on the long-term growth prospects. To safeguard against a business's closure or downsizing, it is better to follow new normal measures judiciously. Amidst these developments, there has also been a wide focus on frugality by climbing down on non-essential expenses and indulging in cost reduction and control wherever possible. A number of employees were retrenched, and there has been a significant decrease in advertising and marketing spending.

Notably, variables such as a change in business planning, emotional support in the pandemic, and planning for a crisis before covid-19 returned low scores. This is a problem area as it shows that the focus on planning has not changed pre and during the covid-19 pandemic. Planning as a management function has not received much credence. Business planning, particularly crisis management, is important for any enterprise. It is required for sustenance and growth. Its low scores highlight a concern whereby the small accommodations do not view planning as a crucial element in preparing and dealing with the hardships of a crisis such as a lockdown or/and a natural calamity. In addition, the

absence of emotional support for the entrepreneur during the pandemic is a concerning area as it impinges upon depression and a person's mental health. An explanation for its absence can be the lack of counseling services for

businesses and the uncomfortable fact that there are fewer networking efforts amongst the entrepreneurs regarding camaraderie.

Table 5: Tourism entrepreneurship in the new normal

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	Variable	Mean	Std. Dev
Var 1	4.63	0.71	Var 7	2.37	1.60
Var 2	4.36	1.03	Var 8	3.89	1.44
Var 3	3.61	1.32	Var 9	2.35	1.61
Var 4	4.70	0.67	Var 10	1.91	1.51
Var 5	2.55	1.77	Var 11	4.12	1.25
Var 6	2.75	1.73			

(N = 100)

The assessment of new normal measures culminates with the correlation coefficients, as shown in Table 6. Most of the relationships are positive, implying a unilateral direction of the variables under consideration. The new normal measures of the small accommodations move positively, whereby the increase in one is matched by an increase in the other. In addition, many correlation coefficients are statistically significant at 1% and 5%. This represents the acceptability and generality of the results. The correlation matrix significantly establishes a statistical relation amongst the four important variables covering hand sanitizing/washing, masking, social distancing, and

sensitization on safety protocols. This is also prevalent with respect to their relation with the other new normal measures. This is indicative of the consistent and holistic efforts of the small accommodations towards enduring the implementation of the new normal measures. There is a serious focus on applying all necessary means possible to mitigate the effects of the covid-19 pandemic, both in terms of safety and business maintainability. This can be considered as being akin to a business transformation whereby operations and management shall be viewed from a new perspective altogether. Such a perspective would include new and better ways of doing and managing operations.

Table 6: Correlation matrix

	Var 1	Var 2	Var 3	Var 4	Var 5	Var 6	Var 7	Var 8	Var 9	Var 10	Var 11
Var 1	1	0.38**	0.20*	0.32**	0.15	0.01	0.16	0.26**	0.04	0.03	0.06
Var 2	0.38**	1	0.55**	0.27**	0.08	0.13	0.22*	0.16	0.23*	0.16	0.12
Var 3	0.20*	0.55**	1	0.16	0.23*	0.34**	0.30**	-0.04	0.44**	0.37**	0.05
Var 4	0.32**	0.27**	0.16	1	-0.06	0.00	0.09	0.42**	0.07	-0.04	0.26**
Var 5	0.15	0.09	0.23*	-0.06	1	0.63**	0.60**	0.06	0.33**	0.35**	-0.04
Var 6	0.01	0.13	0.34**	0.00	0.63**	1	0.65**	0.07	0.25*	0.39**	-0.08
Var 7	0.16	0.22*	0.30**	0.09	0.60**	0.65**	1	0.24*	0.33**	0.37**	-0.02
Var 8	0.26**	0.16	-0.04	0.42**	0.06	0.07	0.24*	1	-0.04	-0.16	0.25*
Var 9	0.04	0.23*	0.44**	0.07	0.33**	0.25*	0.33**	-0.04	1	0.61**	0.04
Var 10	0.03	0.16	0.37**	-0.04	0.35**	0.39**	0.37**	-0.16	0.61**	1	-0.03
Var 11	0.06	0.12	0.05	0.26**	-0.04	-0.08	-0.02	0.25*	0.04	-0.03	1

(**Significant at 1%; *Significant at 5%)

OBSERVATIONS

The covid-19 pandemic-induced new normal measures have changed the business dynamics of tourism entrepreneurship in general and small accommodations in particular. The pandemic has drastically changed the perspective toward the operation and management of businesses. The small accommodations have had to assimilate and adapt to the new developments in terms of new normal measures and how services are delivered to the tourist. The focus has migrated toward health and safety while factoring in the long-term sustainability of enterprises by preparing for future outbreaks/calamities. In this changing dynamics, more emphasis is laid upon contactless service delivery, realizing the importance of strong internal business systems and creating a resilient

enterprise. This is required so as to enable the mitigation of future uncertainties more effectively. In the interest of business continuity and livelihood, the small accommodations have consistently and holistically made efforts towards implementing the new normal measures.

As found in the assessment, the inadequate importance given to planning is an area of concern. It has not been given much focus in the pre and during the covid-19 pandemic period. Planning is critical in business management and growth. Largely, the small accommodations do not view planning as a key element in business processes and a tool for mitigating hardships. One tenable explanation for this is that the majority of entrepreneurs have not done any course/training on entrepreneurship. Most of the small accommodations are

run by those who lack the desired entrepreneurship skills. While factoring in the mental stress and anxiety that the covid-19 pandemic has brought, it is imperative for emotional support apart from any financial relief package. Its absence can be detrimental to the mindset and outlook of the entrepreneur, particularly in a business environment like Meghalaya, where entrepreneurship is still at a nascent stage.

In general, it is observed that the external-based new normal measures like hand sanitizing/washing, masking, social distancing, and sensitizing on covid-19 safety protocols have been given more importance by the small accommodations as compared to the internal-based measures such as a change in business processes, planning, etc. This is because external measures are required to be followed compulsorily without fail, as directed by the Government of India and the Government of Meghalaya. Small accommodations are required to be prepared and implement the covid-19 directives and guidelines without fail. This also explains why the scores are higher for such variables as compared to the internal measures. The covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a massive downturn in business. It brought about revenue loss, income depreciation, a reduction in the standard of living, and large-scale unemployment. These pressures entrusted a sense of responsibility towards following the new normal measures so as to ensure continuity of livelihood in the tourism sector as a whole.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Under the new normal, tourism entrepreneurship has changed for good. The businesses' inherent nature has changed regarding implementing the compulsory directive (hand washing, masking, etc.) and how core business operations have been executed. To this end, it is important learning for the entrepreneurs, and improvements have been made, as seen from the assessment. Although the new normal measures were applied out of necessity by the small accommodations, they have resulted in a number of benefits. This is seen in terms of reduced cost and professionalism on account of contactless service delivery, the increased use of technology for check-in and check-out, online feedback, self-service, etc. However, there is further scope for progress in the areas of planning, control, and business processes. While factoring in the hardship that the covid-19 pandemic brought, the new normal has become a blessing for tourism entrepreneurship in Meghalaya. This is because the small accommodations have had to work towards an efficient and effective approach to business to achieve profitability and sustainability goals.

The policy implications identified are three-fold. Firstly, a capacity-building program on entrepreneurial skills will be of benefit to tourism entrepreneurs. This can be considered for both existing and prospective entrepreneurs. The business processes

that need a special focus are core operations related, such as cleanliness and hygiene, service delivery, and client delight, including management specifics such as planning and control, record and bookkeeping, market research and sustainability, etc. The government may collaborate with various training agencies and NGOs to administer the same. Secondly, new entrepreneurs who have just entered the trade need emotional support and hand-holding during its early stages. This is critical as, in many cases, this has proven to be the underlying factor for the growth or demise of an enterprise. This becomes more relevant in the case of severe downturns in business caused by uncertainties like the covid-19 pandemic. As a response to this concern, the government can set up an online response/assistance cell for giving real-time help to the needful entrepreneurs. Trained and professional personnel are required to run the cell so as to do justice to the mission. Lastly, factoring that the covid-19 pandemic persists and the possibility of similar outbreaks in the future, an emphasis on a resilient business organization is the need of the hour. Currently, the downturn has impacted small businesses extensively. To respond to such situations in the future, entrepreneurs need to be made aware of frugality practices and inculcate the habit of reserving a certain amount from the monthly profits for difficult times.

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Annexure A: Variable coding

Code	Variable
Var 1	Enforcing of regular hand sanitizing/washing
Var 2	Enforcing of proper masking
Var 3	Enforcing of social distancing practices
Var 4	Regular sensitization on the covid-19 safety protocols
Var 5	Change in business processes – management
Var 6	Change in business processes – operations
Var 7	Change in business planning
Var 8	Focus on frugality
Var 9	The presence of emotional support in the pandemic
Var 10	The presence of planning for crisis before covid-19
Var 11	Negative effects on the long-term growth prospects