



Exploring the opportunities and challenges of the tourism industry in Papua New Guinea post-COVID-19

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Abstract

The tourism sector in Papua New Guinea is currently at a critical point following the COVID-19 pandemic, offering both favourable circumstances and challenges. This study explores the varied terrain of Papua New Guinea's tourism industry, analysing how the epidemic has altered its dynamics. This literature-based study utilised databases such as Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, ProQuest, DOAJ, and Scopus to comprehensively search relevant literature. Thirty-three publications and reports, which had undergone peer review, were reviewed. The study found several opportunities, such as the potential for cultural tourism to develop and grow, the growth of domestic tourism, the increased utilisation of information and communication technologies (ICTs), legislative reforms, and the enhancement of public-private partnerships. The primary challenges cited were security concerns, reduced foreign currency earnings, and poor infrastructure and facilities. The research culminates in strategic recommendations designed to foster sustainable growth and resilience in Papua New Guinea's tourism sector post-COVID-19. This study aims to enhance our understanding of the changing possibilities and difficulties in Papua New Guinea's tourism industry after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Tourism industry, Papua New Guinea, COVID-19 impact, cultural tourism, ecotourism, infrastructure development

1. Introduction

Tourism is a vital economic sector for many countries, including Papua New Guinea (PNG), where it plays a crucial role in generating income, creating job prospects, and fostering cultural interchange. Papua New Guinea is internationally recognised for its abundant cultural legacy, varied ecosystems, and breath-taking terrains, rendering it an exceptional choice for tourists in search of thrilling experiences, cultural engagement, and awe-inspiring natural scenery. Nevertheless, like many other countries, Papua New Guinea's tourism sector witnessed unparalleled challenges because of the worldwide COVID-19 outbreak. The global pandemic resulted in extensive travel limitations, enforced lockdowns, and a substantial decline in foreign travel, significantly affecting the global tourism industry. The tourism sector in Papua New Guinea, which was already facing challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, political instability, and logistical difficulties, was additionally burdened by the pandemic. The sudden decrease in visitor arrivals resulted in substantial economic losses, impacting businesses, communities, and the whole economy that depend on tourism. With the world slowly recovering from the pandemic, it is crucial to evaluate the present state of the tourism sector in Papua New Guinea and determine the potential opportunities and challenges that arose because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics is important for stakeholders, such as government authorities, industry, and local communities, as they strive to rejuvenate and fortify the tourism sector post-COVID-19. This literature-based study seeks to explore the prospects of rejuvenating the tourism sector in Papua New Guinea, while simultaneously tackling the enduring obstacles that have arisen because of the pandemic. The study enhances the overall discussion on the revival of tourism in developing countries and provides valuable insights into efficiently navigating the aftermath of the epidemic.

The following sections of this study will address the background of the study, the methodology employed for gathering relevant literature, and an examination of the global and PNG contexts post-COVID-19. Additionally, lessons learnt, recommendations for key stakeholders, implications for practice, and policy and future research directions conclude the study.

1.1 Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on global tourism, bringing the industry to a near standstill in 2020. As countries imposed travel restrictions and lockdowns to curb the spread of the virus, international tourist arrivals plummeted, leading to unprecedented economic losses and job cuts. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021) reported that in 2020, international tourist arrivals decreased by 73% globally compared to the previous year, translating into a loss of about \$1.3 trillion in revenue. The decline in tourism has had significant repercussions on economies heavily reliant on the sector, including small islands, developing countries, and many countries in Africa, Asia, and the Americas (UNWTO, 2020). However, as vaccination rates increased and restrictions eased, the tourism industry is slowly recovering, though challenges remain. In 2021, a gradual recovery began, with international arrivals increasing by 4% compared to 2020. By 2022, the tourism sector showed more robust signs of recovery, driven by the easing of travel restrictions, pent-up demand, and the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines (see Figure 1). The UNWTO projected that global tourism could reach 55-70% of pre-pandemic levels in 2022, depending on the pace of recovery and the lifting of travel restrictions. With the global situation showing signs of improvement in the aftermath of the pandemic, the tourism industry in Papua New Guinea is

currently at a pivotal juncture. Exploring emerging opportunities resulting from COVID-19, such as the increasing interest in eco-friendly and thrilling tourism, is of utmost importance.

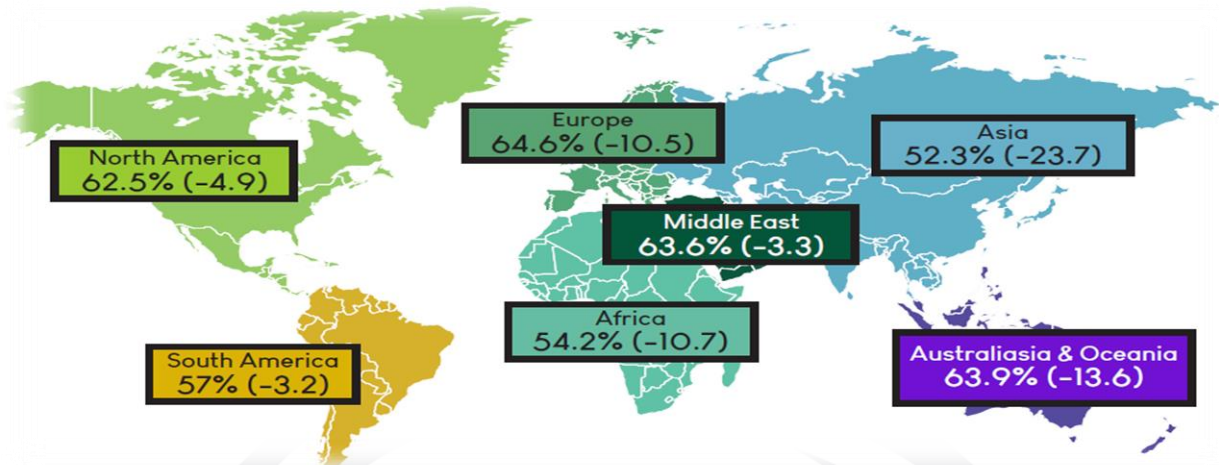


Figure 1: Global hotel occupancy recovery, 2022, and percentage point difference versus 2019 (in brackets). Source: STR, 2023.

Domestic tourism initially led the recovery, followed by gradual international travel resumptions as confidence in safety measures grew. However, travel preferences shifted towards health-conscious and sustainable options (Deloitte, 2023). Because of this, there is a rising interest in outdoor, nature-based, and remote destinations as travellers seek less crowded and more open spaces.

On a more positive note for most countries, the pandemic accelerated digitalisation in tourism, with increased use of contactless technologies for bookings, check-ins, and virtual tours (W TTC, 2021). Online platforms became crucial for information dissemination and booking accommodations.

Tourism-dependent economies faced severe economic downturns, emphasising the need for diversified revenue sources and resilience strategies (IMF, 2021). Governments implemented stimulus packages and financial support to revive the sector. The crisis underscored the importance of sustainable tourism practices and resilience planning (ERIA, 2022). Many destinations incorporated sustainability criteria into recovery plans to ensure long-term viability.

The tourism business in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is experiencing a steady recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, with a strategic emphasis on rebuilding and enhancing resilience within the sector. The Papua New Guinea Tourist Promotion Authority (TPA) has implemented a Tourism Crisis Management & Destination Recovery Plan to enhance the robustness of the tourist industry in times of crisis. This strategy centres around four essential pillars: Reduce, Ready, Response, and Recovery, and is expected to be put into action by September 2024. The objective is to protect the tourism sector, which is vital for the growth of the economy, the creation of employment opportunities, and the generation of the most needed foreign currency (Post Courier, 2024a).

Since 2021, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture in PNG has been highlighting the importance of domestic tourism in enhancing economic growth after the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies. The government prioritises promoting local cultural events and festivals to entice domestic tourists and prepare for a more robust tourism business after the epidemic (The National, 2021).

Based on the data from the Pacific Tourism Organisation, Papua New Guinea recorded over 60,277 international air arrivals from June to November 2023, contributing USD 182

million to the economy (PTO, 2024). Primary draws for tourists encompass natural landscapes, sustainable tourism, cultural immersion, and historical monuments landmarks. According to the International Visitor Survey (IVS), 46% of the participants were visiting for the first time. These first-time visitors expressed high levels of satisfaction and showed a strong intention to suggest and revisit Papua New Guinea (PNG) in the future (Post Courier, 2024a).

PNG is aggressively engaging in international events to demonstrate its tourism capabilities. The presence of the TPA at the 2024 Global Bird Fair in the UK displayed PNG's outstanding birdwatching prospects. It established connections with foreign tour operators and travel agents to enhance international tourist interest (Post Courier, 2024b). PNG's tourism industry prioritises resilience, domestic tourism, and strategic international promotion to rebuild and improve its recovery efforts following the COVID-19 pandemic. It is uncertain whether the country will accomplish the established objectives. The next section presents the theoretical framework for the study.

2. Theoretical framework: Resilience theory

The concept of resilience theory, originally used in the study of ecological systems, has gained popularity in the social sciences. Ledesma, (2014: 1) defines resilience as “*the ability to bounce back from adversity, frustration, and misfortune*”. The theory is used to examine how systems can withstand, adjust to, and bounce back from disturbances or disruptions, like the one posed by COVID-19 (Zimmerman, 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented disruption to the worldwide tourism industry, highlighting the importance of resilience in analysing its recovery and transformation. The resilience theory is based on three fundamental principles:

- Absorptive capacity- refers to the resilience of a system to resist a disturbance without incurring any significant alterations.
- Adaptive capacity- refers to the ability of a system to modify its characteristics or behaviour to adapt to changes.
- Recovery capacity- refers to the system's capability to revert to its original condition after a disturbance or to establish new stable states.

In the field of tourism, resilience refers to the industry's capacity to endure the effects of the epidemic, adjust to emerging challenges, and restore itself to an adjusted state of normalcy. This entails studying the ability of tourism locations, ranging from urban centres to rural areas, to withstand and recover from the effects of the pandemic, as well as the elements that influence their recovery.

The theory assists in understanding how tourist enterprises, including hotels, airlines, and tour operators, have adjusted their operations and strategies to endure the crisis. Examining the ability of local communities reliant on tourism to adapt to employment losses, economic decline, and shifts in social dynamics is important. The theory assists in understanding the characteristics that have led to the resilience of tourism firms and destinations. Additionally, it aids in comprehending the extent to which the crisis has expedited innovation and the development of novel company models. It also helps in investigating possibilities for diversification and targeting new market niches.

However, the theory is criticised for its failure to analyse the vulnerabilities of the tourism industry to future shocks. It falls short in identifying obstacles to recovery and adaptability. Furthermore, it is unable to evaluate the enduring effects of the epidemic on tourism sites and communities. The next section presents the methodology for the study.

3. Methodology

This study employed the systematic literature review methodology to collect and analyse pertinent literature for this study. The study employed databases such as Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, ProQuest, DOAJ, and Scopus, to perform an extensive search for pertinent literature. The reason for using these databases is that they offer verified and authentic studies.

Inclusion criteria

- Studies focusing on tourism in Papua New Guinea or provide relevant insights into the global tourism industry post-COVID-19 that can be applied to the PNG context.
- Peer-reviewed journal articles, official reports from recognised tourism and international organisations (e.g., UNWTO, World Bank), government publications, and relevant conference papers.
- Studies employing qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods that provide empirical data or well-supported theoretical analysis.
- Papers that discuss opportunities (e.g., new tourism trends, sustainability initiatives) or challenges (e.g., economic impact, health and safety concerns) in the tourism industry.
- Full-text availability to ensure comprehensive analysis.

Exclusion criteria

- Studies not focused on tourism or those focusing solely on unrelated sectors.
- Publications that do not consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry.
- Studies published in languages other than English, unless they are available in reliable English translations.
- Articles from magazines, blogs, or other non-peer-reviewed platforms unless they come from reputable organisations and provide substantial insights.
- Studies for which the full text is not available or accessible.

By applying these criteria, the literature review was comprehensive, relevant, and focused on the most significant and current developments in the tourism industry in Papua New Guinea post-COVID-19. The subsequent search terms were employed to identify relevant materials for the study.

- Challenges in PNG tourism post-pandemic
- Tourism recovery in Papua New Guinea
- Economic recovery PNG tourism
- Sustainable tourism initiatives PNG
- Tourism trends post-COVID-19
- Tourism infrastructure development PNG
- Community-based tourism PNG
- Tourism resilience strategies PNG
- Travel behaviour changes post-COVID-19
- Tourism digital transformation post-COVID-19
- PNG tourism promotion post-COVID-19
- Domestic tourism trends in PNG

- Eco-tourism PNG

To improve the trustworthiness of the study, reliable sources were utilised. The literature reviewed consisted of reputable and peer-reviewed sources, including academic journals, books, and official reports. The study employed a systematic literature review due to its use of an organised and transparent procedure for choosing and analysing the material. The process included establishing explicit criteria for inclusion or exclusion, guaranteeing uniformity in data extraction, and employing acknowledged frameworks for analysis. The process of cross-referencing information from various sources was employed to ensure the accuracy and coherence of the data and its interpretations. This involved doing a comparative analysis of research findings from various regions, periods, or viewpoints within the tourism sector. The researchers meticulously documented the literature review process, which encompassed the search of keywords employed, the databases accessed, and the justification behind the selection of particular sources.

To enhance the accuracy of the study, a thorough analysis of sources was conducted to evaluate their trustworthiness, relevance, and potential biases. The study also took into account the methodology, sample size, and setting of each study, and was careful not to make broad conclusions based on studies conducted in various cultural or economic contexts. The researchers ensured that there was contextual significance. The utilisation of the theoretical framework provided direction for the study and ensured that the discussion was both significant and aligned with established knowledge.

To address ethical concerns, the researchers took measures to guarantee that all sources were appropriately referenced. The literature ensured that a wide range of viewpoints was taken into account, particularly when addressing delicate subjects such as the effects of COVID-19 on indigenous communities or marginalised groups in Papua New Guinea.

4. Global context of the tourism industry post-COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a substantial decline in the tourism industry, as seen by a 74% decrease in international arrivals in 2020 compared to the previous year (UNWTO, 2021). Nevertheless, the industry has exhibited indications of recuperation since 2021. Several countries have experienced a consistent rise in the number of tourists visiting their countries. This can be attributed to the easing of travel limitations and the implementation of vaccination campaigns globally (UNWTO, 2022). However, there are disparities in the pace of economic recovery among different countries due to different support initiatives by governments and key stakeholders (see Figure 2). Europe and the Americas have experienced more robust recoveries because of their greater vaccination rates and well-coordinated travel protocols. The Asia-Pacific region has experienced delays in progress due to more stringent travel restrictions and slower implementation of vaccination campaigns in certain countries. Africa and the Middle East are experiencing a gradual recovery, although they still encounter substantial challenges (Dube, 2022). The post-pandemic era brought in several transformations and it is no longer business as usual. These transformations are discussed below.

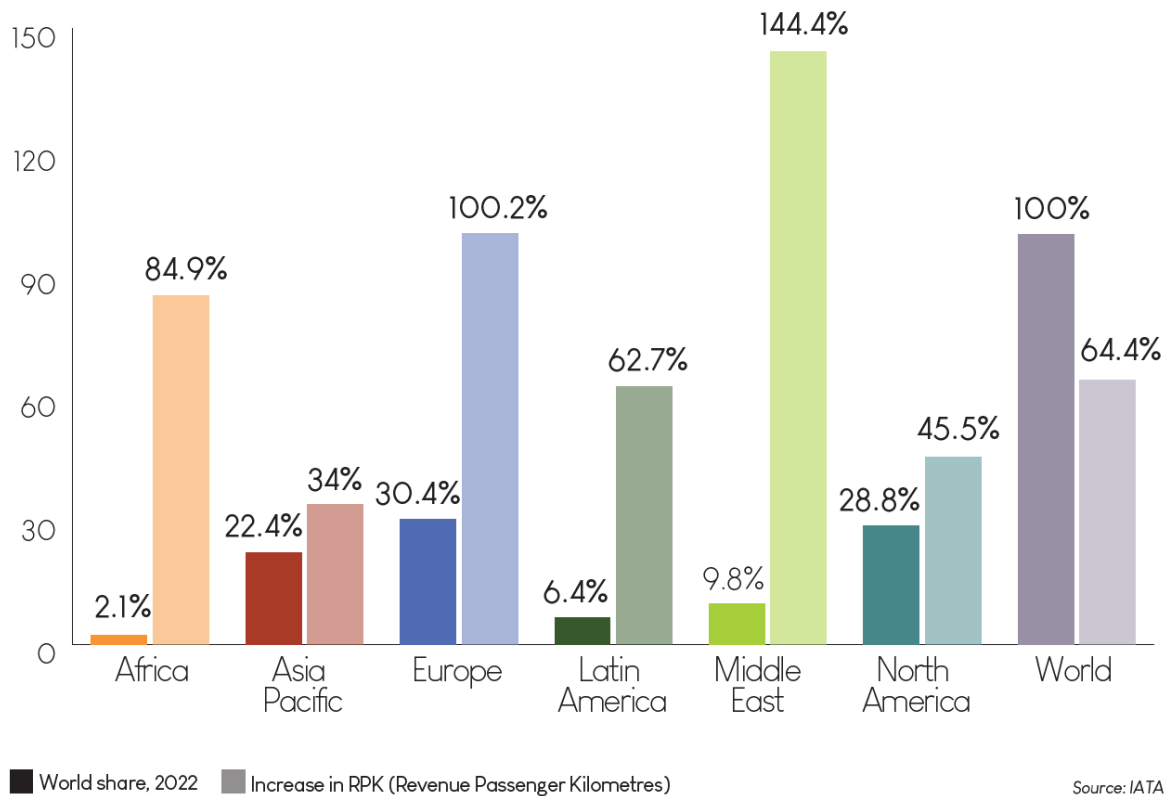


Figure 2: The rise of air traffic travel in 2022, increase as measured by revenue passenger kilometres versus 2021.

4.1 Modifying traveller preferences

The pandemic has significantly altered the preferences of travellers. Health and safety have emerged as significant considerations, influencing decisions regarding travel destinations and influencing travel patterns (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2021). Increasingly, people are showing a preference for less congested venues, located outdoors, and centred on nature (Gössling et al., 2020). Travellers are increasingly drawn to wellness and health-oriented experiences, which aligns with the growing emphasis on maintaining both physical and mental well-being (Nguyen-Van et al., 2024)

There is an increased desire for places that provide thorough health protocols and have fewer people. Furthermore, there has been a significant increase in internal and regional travel due to the prolonged imposition of international travel restrictions (Gössling et al., 2021) and it is believed that this could be a turning point for domestic tourism. In a study that was carried out by Chan (2021) in Malaysia, it was revealed that domestic tourism possesses the capacity to rejuvenate the tourism industry post-COVID-19. It is further noted that local tourism is now a preferred option because of convenience, cost, and health and safety issues. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced the behaviour and views of tourists, leading to a preference for domestic travel over international travel. Moreover, tourism stakeholders recognise the capacity to rejuvenate the tourism sector and commerce through domestic tourism.

4.2 Domestic tourism

The resurgence of interest in domestic tourism can have a positive impact on local economies and provide support to regional attractions. Domestic tourism refers to the act of a tourist spending time within his or her own country instead of venturing abroad. Typical activities include visiting nearby tourist destinations that are popular and interesting to them (Azzahra, in 2023). Instead of going on a trip to another country, individuals have the option to save money by eliminating the expenses and risks associated with accommodation and transportation, which typically account for 15% of the average household vacation budget. This saved money can be used more productively for alternative travel plans (Goncalves, 2020).

The outbreak has created a chance for the business to embrace and execute sustainable methods and encourage domestic tourism. An increased passion for domestic travel might have beneficial impacts on local enterprises, and communities and strengthen regional tourism attractions across the globe. Chen (2022) emphasises the opportunity to give priority to responsible tourism following the epidemic. Furthermore, the tourist industry has experienced a resurgence in the significance of sustainability which is critical for achieving sustainable development goals by 2030. The pandemic highlighted the necessity of implementing responsible tourism strategies that reduce environmental harm and assist local **people** (Soliku et al., 2021). Consequently, an increasing number of tourists are seeking environmentally sustainable options and experiences that contribute positively to the destinations they visit. Nevertheless, this could potentially affect the influx of foreign currency, as domestic tourists typically make payments in the local currency.

4.3 Adoption of technology

Positively, the crisis has accelerated the integration of technology in the tourism sector, resulting in the emergence of online booking systems and virtual experiences that cater to the evolving needs of travellers, and create exceptional customer experiences. The adoption of contactless payments, digital health passports, and virtual tours has increased, improving the safety and convenience of travel (Sigala, 2020). Integrating technology has not only resolved urgent health issues but also enhanced the whole travel experience

4.4 Policy and regulation reviews

Governments globally have enacted diverse steps to bolster the revival of the tourist sector. These encompass monetary assistance packages, promotional initiatives to enhance domestic tourism, and measures to guarantee the secure resumption of border operations (OECD, 2021). These activities are vital in rebuilding trust and encouraging consumer interest in the tourism industry.

5. Papua New Guinea context

The tourism industry in Papua New Guinea has been well acknowledged for its capacity to stimulate economic growth, foster cultural interchange, and promote environmental sustainability. PNG has a wide range of habitats, a valuable diversified cultural history, and exceptional adventure tourism options, making it highly appealing to international and local tourists. Nevertheless, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic presented unparalleled challenges, causing significant disruptions to worldwide travel and dramatically affecting the

tourism industry. It is therefore the objective of this study to explore opportunities and challenges posed by COVID-19 to the PNG tourism industry. By examining current trends, potential growth areas, and existing challenges, the study seeks to provide insights and recommendations for reviving and sustaining the tourism sector post-COVID. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for leveraging PNG's unique tourism assets and ensuring long-term economic and social benefits for the country.

Papua New Guinea (PNG) experienced significant economic setbacks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the tourism sector being one of the hardest hit. In 2020, the Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority (PNGTPA) reported that 90% of bookings were cancelled, resulting in an estimated loss of K67.9 million in revenue (PNGTPA, 2020). This substantial decline in tourism activity contributed to broader economic challenges, including job losses and reduced income for many local businesses dependent on tourism (Sumb, 2021).

Despite these setbacks, the tourism industry in PNG is showing signs of recovery. In 2023, the country's tourist sector achieved a total revenue of USD120 million, indicating a significant rebound from the lows experienced during the height of the pandemic (Post-Courier, 2024b). This recovery has been fuelled by increased domestic travel and a gradual return of international visitors as travel restrictions ease and global vaccination rates rise.

The PNG government and tourism authorities have implemented strict health and safety protocols to restore traveller confidence and ensure the safety of both visitors and local communities. These measures include enhanced sanitation practices, vaccination requirements, and health screenings at points of entry (PNGTPA, 2022). Such initiatives are crucial in rebuilding the tourism sector and attracting cautious travellers.

While the recovery is underway, PNG's tourism industry continues to face several challenges. These include ongoing political and social instability (News.pngfacts.com 2024), limited infrastructure, and the need for improved healthcare facilities to handle potential future health crises (Post-Courier, 2024). According to the United States Department of State's travel advisory for 2024, Papua New Guinea is deemed hazardous for tourists due to the presence of criminal activity, civil turmoil, kidnapping incidents, unreliable access to healthcare facilities, probable natural disasters, and instances of piracy. Widespread occurrences of violent crimes, including sexual assault, carjackings, house invasions, and armed robberies, are prevalent across the nation. Pereira (2019) characterizes PNG as the "land of the unexpected," highlighting its potential for adventure, excitement, and allure while acknowledging that it falls short of being a paradise.

However, there are also significant opportunities for growth. The increased interest in eco-tourism and adventure travel presents PNG with the chance to capitalize on its rich natural and cultural heritage. Sustainable tourism practices and community-based tourism projects are gaining traction, offering new avenues for economic development and environmental conservation (Sumb, 2021).

Effective collaboration among stakeholders, including the government, private sector, and local communities, is essential for the sustainable development of PNG's tourism industry. Initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure, training the local workforce, and promoting PNG as a safe and unique travel destination are critical components of the recovery strategy (PNGTPA, 2022).

The tourist sector in Papua New Guinea (PNG) has substantially impacted the country's economy throughout its history, playing a crucial role in employment creation, foreign currency generation, and preservation of cultural heritage. Papua New Guinea's unspoiled rainforests, coral reefs, and volcanic mountains, along with its abundant cultural variety of more than 800 languages, establish it as an exceptional choice for eco-tourism and cultural tourism (We Love it Wild, 2020). Although PNG's tourist business has its benefits, it has

encountered persistent obstacles such as poor infrastructure, safety issues, and insufficient marketing endeavours (Harrison & Prasad, 2013).

Although tourism is susceptible to various environmental, political, and socio-economic influences (Sigala, 2020), it has had a significant and sustained increase globally for several decades. This industry has demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of several crises, such as the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome in 2003 and the global economic crisis in 2008 (Gossling, Scott, & Hall, 2020; Pham, Dwyer, Su, & Ngo, 2021).

6. Linking the theoretical framework to the findings

Connecting the concepts of absorptive capacity, adaptive capacity, and recovery capacity to the results of the literature-based study, provides a more profound comprehension of the industry's ability to bounce back and its potential for long-term recovery can be achieved.

6.1 Absorptive capacity

Absorptive capacity, within the context of Papua New Guinea's tourism industry, pertains to the industry's ability to withstand and adapt to the disturbances produced by COVID-19 without experiencing substantial and permanent alterations. The literature emphasised how some sectors of the tourism industry, such as eco-tourism or cultural tourism, exhibited the robust ability to adapt and continue their main activities despite the constraints posed by the epidemic. For example, the industry's ability to maintain interest from both international and domestic tourists during the pandemic, albeit at lower levels, demonstrates its capacity to absorb challenges (Caiazza, 2021). Additionally, the industry's ability to preserve essential infrastructure and retain skilled workers during the economic downturn can be seen as a display of absorptive capacity, preventing lasting harm to the sector's fundamental components.

6.2 Adaptive capacity

Adaptive capacity in the post-COVID-19 environment refers to the industry's capability to adjust its operations, services, and plans to the evolving circumstances. The data uncover the extent to which the tourism industry in Papua New Guinea adjusted to changing market conditions and health regulations (Post Courier, 2024a). The industry's adaptive capacity is demonstrated by its transition to online marketing, virtual tours, and digital booking systems in reaction to travel constraints. The industry's adaptation to changing traveller expectations is evident through the deployment of advanced health and safety procedures, including contactless services and increased sanitary protocols (UNDP. n.d.). The emergence of novel tourism offerings, such as the promotion of less congested and environmentally friendly areas, highlights the industry's capacity to adjust to evolving tourist inclinations and worldwide patterns.

6.3 Recovery capacity

Recovery capacity refers to the tourism industry's aptitude for returning to its previous state before the epidemic or adapting to a new and stable condition after a disruption. The study's findings may provide insights into the recovery or potential recovery of various sectors within the industry. The sector's recovery capacity is highlighted by the progressive increase in tourist numbers and revenue sources, which is being facilitated by government policies and international collaborations (Australian Government, 2021). Local communities play a crucial role in rebuilding the tourism industry by implementing community-based tourism initiatives, which can lead to a more resilient and inclusive industry. Prioritising sustainable practices during the recovery phase, such as eco-tourism and conservation efforts, can result in a stronger tourism industry that is better equipped to face future challenges. By establishing a connection between these concepts and the facts, you may illustrate how the tourism sector in Papua New Guinea has demonstrated resilience by effectively absorbing, adapting to, and recovering from challenges. These capabilities not only assisted the sector in managing the immediate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic but also established a basis for its long-term viability and expansion in the post-pandemic period.

7. Lessons learnt

- Tourism plays a critical role for PNG's economic growth
- The country has acknowledged the importance of domestic tourism in its various forms
- The government and other key stakeholders are encouraging domestic tourism to revive the industry
- COVID-19 has led to the surge of ICTs that support tourism
- The country has limited infrastructure to support tourism
- Security for tourists remains a major concern
- Sustainable tourism is more important than before

8. Recommendations

The study proposes several strategies to revive the economy from the effects of COVID-19.

- The government should prioritise maintaining law and order within the country. The recommended course of action involves augmenting the police force and ensuring political stability within the government structure.
- The government and key stakeholders should continue to promote a favourable perception of Papua New Guinea on social media by displaying its remarkable attractions and natural splendour. This will assist in growing the local economy
- Enhancing tourism-related infrastructure, such as internet networks and training facilities for the development of tourism human resources, as well as investing in promising start-ups for hotels and guesthouses, can contribute to the improvement of various aspects of a destination, including its culture, people, landscape, hospitality, and wildlife. Furthermore, there will inevitably be situations that emphasize the unfavourable aspects of PNG.
- Conserving the cultural heritage and biodiversity of the country is important. To cater to travellers interested in ecotourism, cultural tourism, and adventure travel, the

recording and documentation of the diverse cultures and languages in each province and the district is undertaken.

9. Implications for practice

In the post-COVID age, tourism practitioners should create specific advertising strategies that emphasise the distinctive features of Papua New Guinea, with a particular focus on nature, culture, and adventure tourism. These campaigns aim to attract both local and international tourists. The sector should embrace more robust business structures that are capable of enduring future disruptions, including pandemics or natural disasters.

By prioritising and enforcing sustainable tourism practices, Papua New Guinea can save the environment and conserve its cultural legacy, both of which are vital to the country's tourism attractiveness. Establishing robust collaborations across the government, corporate sector, and local communities has the potential to enhance the coordination and efficacy of tourism development efforts. These pragmatic consequences can guide stakeholders in the tourist sector to adjust and flourish in the post-COVID-19 setting in Papua New Guinea and other regions.

10. Implications for policy

Policymakers should give utmost importance to the creation and implementation of sustainable tourism laws that safeguard the environment and conserve cultural heritage. This will ensure that the rise of tourism does not compromise these vital resources. The government has the potential to provide fiscal incentives, like as tax exemptions, financial aid, or subsidies, to bolster tourism enterprises that have been impacted by the pandemic. This would stimulate their recuperation and expansion in the aftermath of the COVID-19 period. It is crucial to enhance health and safety laws that are specifically tailored to the tourism business. This may entail establishing compulsory cleanliness regulations, vaccine prerequisites, and emergency response procedures to guarantee the safety of travellers and instil trust in the destination.

Investing in infrastructure upgrades, specifically in transportation, communication, and tourism amenities, is essential for improving accessibility and enhancing the entire visitor experience. This may involve enhancing the infrastructure of roads, airports, and internet connectivity in crucial tourism destinations. Implementing policies that encourage domestic tourism has the potential to broaden the market and decrease dependence on foreign visitors. These offerings may encompass promotional initiatives, exclusive travel rewards, or reduced rates for domestic tourists.

Government regulations should promote the digitalization of the tourism industry by facilitating the implementation of technology such as online reservation platforms, digital advertising, and virtual tourism encounters.

11. Future research directions

Subsequent studies could investigate the enduring alterations in tourist conduct and inclinations caused by the epidemic, with a specific emphasis on how these changes impact the desire for particular forms of tourism in Papua New Guinea.

Further investigation might explore the extent to which local communities are involved in tourism development and the impact of this engagement on economic outcomes, cultural preservation, and social cohesion in Papua New Guinea.

The study of digital transformation in the tourism industry in Papua New Guinea should concentrate on the utilization and consequences of digital tools and platforms. This research should examine how these technologies enhance both tourist experiences and business operations.

Examining the adoption of sustainable tourism practices and their ecological consequences is a vital subject for future investigation, especially in comprehending the harmonization of tourism growth and environmental preservation.

Future research could analyse the growth and influence of domestic and international tourism in Papua New Guinea, offering valuable insights into the respective contributions of each sector to the tourism industry and suggesting ways to enhance their support.

These study directions can facilitate a more profound comprehension of the tourism business in Papua New Guinea and guide future endeavours to improve its sustainability, resilience, and overall economic impact on the country.

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