

COVID-19 pandemic and the resort-based tourism industry in Calamba City and Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines

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ABSTRACT. The paper discusses the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the resort-based industry in Calamba City and Los Baños in Laguna, Philippines, particularly on private resorts. The pandemic led to the total closure of these resorts from March to May 2020 and their intermittent opening afterward. A resort inventory showed 1,009 private resorts in the study area, and losses were estimated at PHP 1.72 B (USD 34.4 M) from March 2020 to February 2021. To cope with the pandemic's effects, resort managers intend to initiate resort disinfection, require personnel to use face masks and shields, and limit the number of visitors. They plan to promote their resorts through online platforms to boost visitation rates. A visitor survey revealed that most respondents would still visit resorts in the area if health and safety protocols were followed. A higher preference for private resorts than public resorts was observed. Many respondents recognized that the new health and safety standards for resorts may result in higher fees. To cope with the pandemic's effects, retrofitting the resorts, complying with and training personnel on health and safety protocols, and using digital marketing tools and online platforms to promote the private resorts are recommended. Coming from prolonged periods of closure and irregular opening, the resorts need the assistance of the local government units and national government agencies to access financing, build capacity, and disseminate information about the proper and safe way of enjoying resort-based tourism to facilitate the recovery of this industry.

Keywords: coping with pandemic impacts, private resorts, recreation, visitors' resort preferences

INTRODUCTION

The Mount Makiling Forest Reserve (MMFR) covers an area of 4,244 ha, located about 65 km south of Metro Manila, Philippines, and was declared an ASEAN Heritage Park in 2013. It is an important watershed that supports the domestic, agricultural, and industrial water requirements of Calamba City, Los Baños, and other areas in the provinces of Laguna and Batangas. Because it is a dormant volcano, hot springs and hot groundwater sources abound, resulting in the establishment of many hot spring resorts in the area that capitalize on having natural hot spring water for swimming pools and baths.

The resort-based tourism industry is a significant contributor to the domestic economies of Calamba City and Los Baños. The heightened economic activities brought about higher incomes for resorts and generated employment as well as livelihood opportunities for other business establishments such as restaurants, food stalls, convenience stores, and variety stores. At the national level, the tourism sector contributed 9% to the Philippines's gross domestic product (GDP) and 3% to total exports in 2016 (WTO n.d.).

The resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños may be classified as public and private. Official records show 477 resorts in

the area, of which 32 are public resorts and 445 are private resorts. There are more registered resorts in Calamba City (393) than in Los Baños (84). Most of these resorts fall under the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) category, defined under Republic Act 9501 (Magna Carta for MSMEs) as “any business activity or enterprise engaged in industry, agribusiness and services, whether single proprietorship, cooperative, partnership or corporation whose total assets, inclusive of those arising from loans but exclusive of the land on which the particular business entity’s office, plant, and equipment are situated, must have value falling under the following categories:” micro – not more than PHP 3,000,000 (USD 60,000), small – PHP 3,000,001 to PHP 15,000,000 (USD 60,000 to 300,000), and medium – PHP 15,000,001 to PHP 100,000,000 (USD 300,000 to 2,000,000) (Republic Act 9501 2008). In terms of the number of employees, micro, small, and medium enterprises have 1–9, 10–99, and 100–199 employees, respectively (Senate Economic Planning Unit 2012).

On 16 March 2020, the Philippine government declared the whole country under the State of Calamity for six months. It imposed a Luzon-wide enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) (from midnight March 17, 2020 to midnight April 13, 2020) through Proclamation No. 929. The lockdowns in Luzon were extended in duration to other parts of the country following the sharp increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases. As a result, mass gatherings were prohibited, work transitioned from physical to work-from-home arrangements, mass public transport was suspended, land, air, and sea travels were restricted, and consequently, the tourism industry was greatly affected (PwC 2020).

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism is the third-largest export category of the world’s major economic sectors after fuels and chemicals. It is also one of the sectors hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting economies, public services, and opportunities. Export revenue losses from international visitors’ spending were estimated at USD 910 B to USD 1.2 T in 2020, and about 100 M direct tourism jobs were at risk (WTO n.d.). Small businesses, which support about 80% of global tourism, are particularly vulnerable. In Asia and the Pacific, travel restrictions resulted in a cumulative decline of 95.3% in international arrivals from January to July 2021, the biggest worldwide, compared to the same period in 2019, when international arrivals were placed at 360 M in 2019 (ADB and WTO 2022). In the Philippines, the Department of Tourism (DOT) reported that international travel arrivals in the first quarter of 2020 decreased by 22%, with an estimated loss in global tourism receipts of USD 8 B (PwC 2020).

In Laguna, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the total closure of resorts from March to May 2020 and their intermittent opening from June 2020 to the present (January 2022),

seriously affecting the incomes of resorts and tourism dependent households. Even when health protocols were relaxed, a reduction in visitation rate was observed owing to the visitor’s hesitation to engage in this recreation.

The role of domestic tourist destinations such as the resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños are important in the country’s tourism industry post-COVID 19. In its 2020 report entitled “Philippine Travel Survey: Insights on Filipino Travel Behavior Post-COVID 19”, the DOT noted that domestic leisure travel would lead to the recovery of tourism in the country as reduced incomes and travel budgets and heightened health and safety protocols are expected to make people travel within the country (WTO 2020). The same report noted that domestic tourism is the biggest contributor to the 12.7% GDP share of tourism at 10.8%.

This paper investigates the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the resort-based tourism industry in Calamba City and Los Baños. Specifically, it estimates the extent of the industry in the study area in terms of the number and types of resorts, describes the plans of resort managers to cope with the impacts of the pandemic on their business, and discusses the factors affecting visitors’ decision to visit resorts during the pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

A 100% inventory of resorts was conducted to determine the number and types of resorts in the study area. The geographic location of the resorts was collected using the KoBoToolbox form. The KoBoToolbox is an open-source software suite for field data collection that can be used online and offline on phones, tablets, or any browser (KoBo Toolbox n.d.). The collected coordinates were processed in a Geographic Information System (GIS) software to generate a distribution map of all the operating resorts.

The sample of resorts included in evaluating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the resort-based industry was based on the list of 477 registered resorts. The optimal sample size for the study of 97 resorts was determined using G*Power (Faul 2007). G*Power is a tool for performing various types of statistical power analysis. Statistical power is the probability of rejecting the false null hypothesis. It can also be used to compute effect sizes and graphically display the results of power analyses. The main advantage of G*Power compared with other available statistical packages is that it is freeware, easy to use with its graphical user interface, and intended solely for power analysis. For two-tailed testing under t-test with Means: difference from constant (one sample case), error probability ($\alpha=0.05$), and type II error ($\beta=0.05$) or power ($1 - \beta$ err prob), and effect

size (d) between medium and small, a sample size of 97 was obtained (**Figure 1**). The final sample size used was 100 resorts, distributed proportionately as shown in **Table 1**.

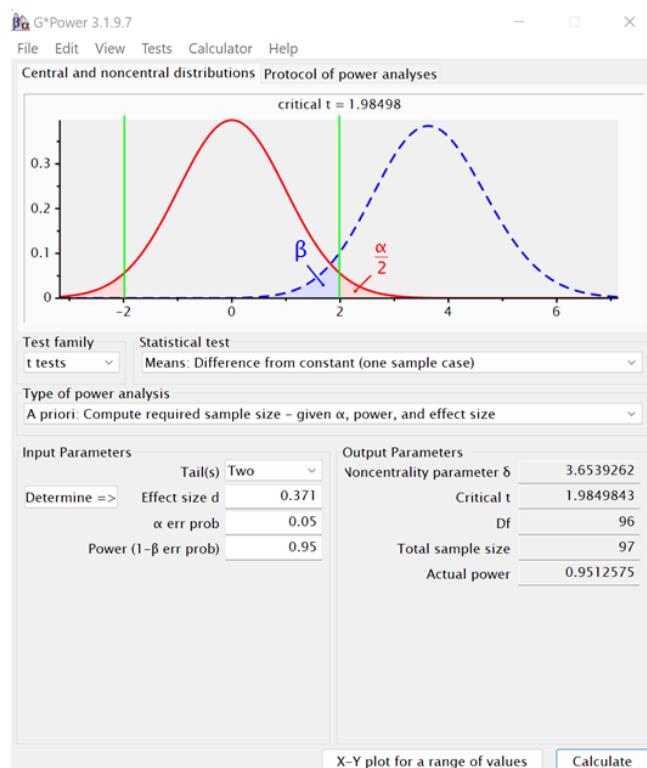


Figure 1. Sample size calculation for resort inventory survey using G*Power.

Table 1. Distribution and classification of sampled resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños.

Municipality/ City	Public	Private	Total
Calamba City	9	72	81
Los Baños	5	14	19
Total	14	86	100

There were 86 respondents (resort owners, managers, or caretakers) from private resorts. The respondents were asked questions about resort rates during peak and lean seasons, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the resort, and their plans to ensure the safety of visitors and boost visitation. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

For the visitor survey, no estimates of the annual number of visitors to all resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños were available. The survey sample size was also determined using G*Power at a 95% confidence level, resulting in a sample size of 500 respondents. The online survey using Microsoft

Forms was conducted among Facebook users who visited resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños from December 2020 to February 2021. Respondents were recruited through a Facebook advertisement using general keywords for interest such as family vacation, hot spring, resort, swimming, swimming pools, and vacation rental. The responses of eight respondents were invalidated, resulting in a final sample size of 492. The survey asked the respondents about their reasons for visiting resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on their households, the importance of recreation during the pandemic, the possibility of future visits to resorts, and the conditions that will make them visit, and their expectation/s about the effect of the pandemic on the fees charged by resorts. Data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

The resort inventory and survey of private resort representatives were done from October to November 2020, while the visitor survey was implemented from December 2020 to February 2021.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños

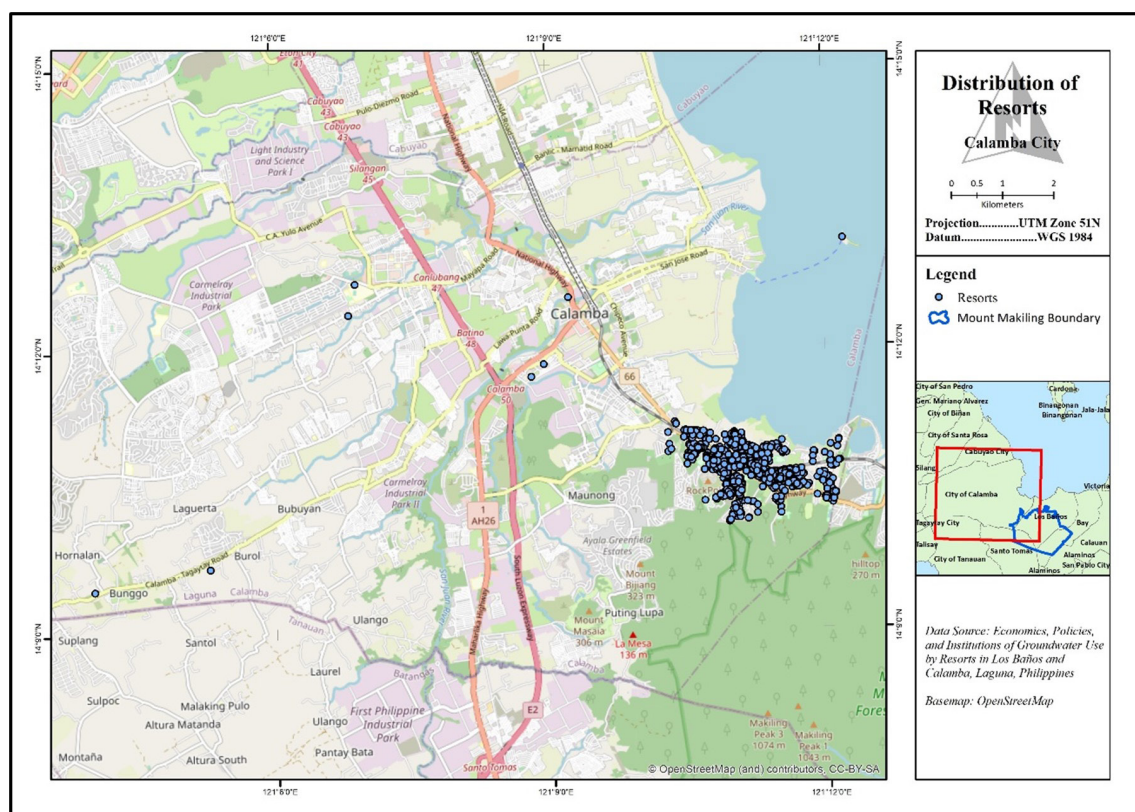
As of 2019, 445 private and 32 public resorts were registered in Calamba City and Los Baños. However, the 100% inventory of resorts showed that there were two public resorts and 564 private resorts, more than the registered resorts, bringing the total to 34 public and 1,009 private resorts in the study area (**Table 2**).

Eight hundred seventy-one resorts were geotagged and recorded in Calamba City (**Figure 2**). Of the total recorded resorts, 393 resorts (45.1%) were registered with the Tourism office, while 478 resorts (54.88%) were not registered. Regarding resort type, 849 resorts (97.5%) were classified as private, while 22 resorts (2.5%) were classified as public. Majority of the recorded resorts were in Barangay Pansol, followed by Barangays Bucal, and Bagong Kalsada. Most of the private and unregistered resorts recorded in the inventory were in Barangay Pansol.

In Los Baños, 172 resorts were geotagged and recorded (**Figure 3**). Out of the total number of recorded resorts, 84 resorts (48.8%) were registered, while 88 (51.2%) were not registered. Most resorts in Los Baños were classified as private (160 resorts), while the rest were public/semi-private (11 resorts). Most of the geotagged resorts were from Barangay Lalakay, followed by Barangay Bambang. Barangay Lalakay was also noted to have the most number of private resorts and unregistered resorts.

Table 2. Registration and type of resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños, Laguna.

Resort status	Calamba City			Los Baños			Combined		
Type	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	Total
Registered	20	373	393	12	72	84	32	445	477
Unregistered	2	476	478	0	88	88	2	564	566
Grand total	22	849	871	12	160	172	34	1,009	1,043

**Figure 2.** Distribution of geotagged resorts in Calamba City, Laguna, Philippines.

Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños

The effects of COVID-19 on the resorts-based industry were sudden and abrupt. The imposition of strict lockdowns resulted in the immediate closure of the resorts. Being the closest to the hard-hit National Capital Region (NCR) and the CALABARZON Region, the Calamba City and Los Baños resort-based tourism industry was heavily hit as a result of the Community Quarantine restrictions on travel and leisure. The subsequent discussion focuses on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on private resorts, which fall under the micro and small enterprise categories.

Table 3 shows the estimated revenues of private resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños during the four-month peak season (March to May and December) and the eight-month lean season (January to February and June to November). The

average monthly net revenues of private resorts were obtained by subtracting electricity, water, and salary expenses from the total monthly revenue. These amounted to PHP 394,761 (USD 7,895) resort⁻¹ mo⁻¹ and PHP 130,252 (USD 2,605) resort⁻¹ mo⁻¹ during the peak and lean seasons, respectively. For all private resorts, the average mo⁻¹ revenue for the peak and lean seasons were PHP 398,313,345 (USD 7.97 M) mo⁻¹ and PHP 131,424,436 (USD 2.63 M) mo⁻¹, respectively. Furthermore, the peak season and lean season net revenues were estimated at PHP 1,593,253,378 (USD 31.87 M) and PHP 1,051,395,489 (USD 21.03 M), respectively, for a total of PHP 2,644,648,867 (USD 52.89 M) for private resorts. The values were estimated using the 2019 survey values based on the number of peaks (4) and lean (8) months for the period and the number of private resorts (1,009).

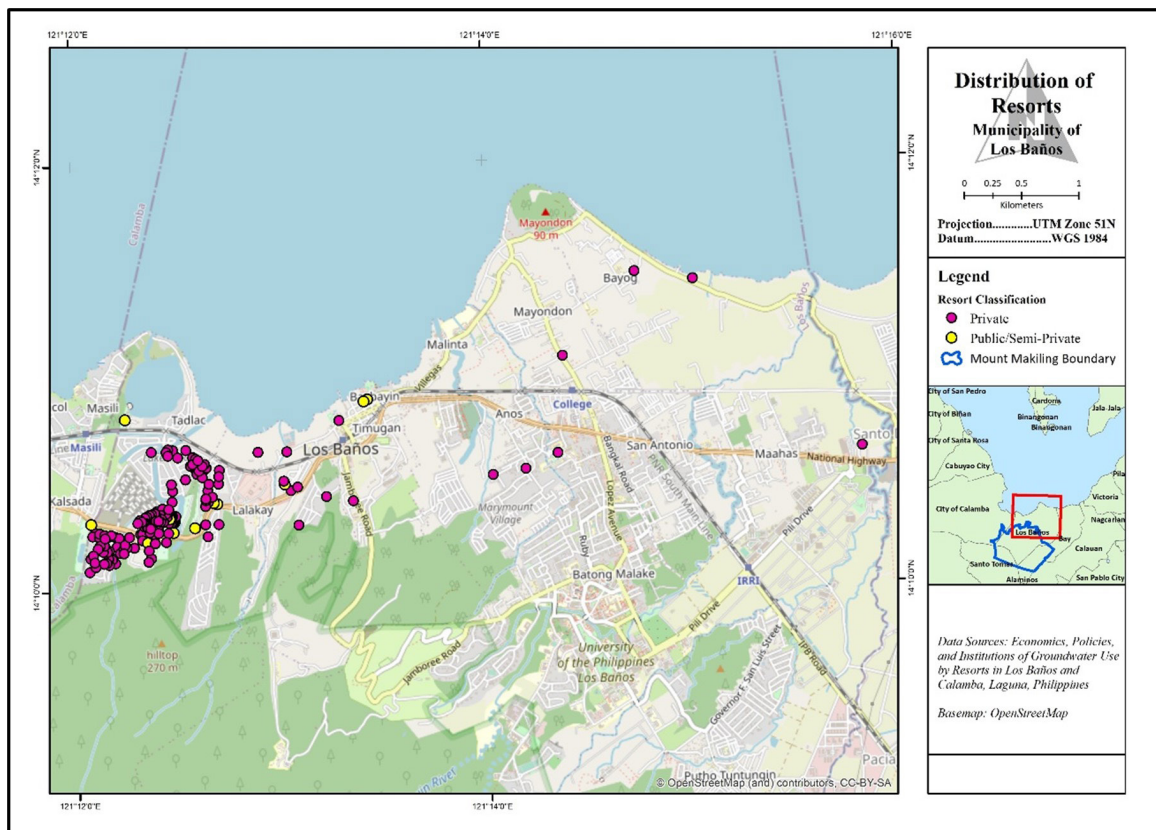


Figure 3. Distribution of geotagged resorts in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines.

Due to lockdowns in 2020, private resorts could not open for at least three months from March to May 2020 and intermittently from June to the present due to COVID-19 restrictions. Assuming that 50% of the private resorts were able to open from June 2020 to February 2021 (to complete the one-year observation period), the estimated revenue losses for March to May 2020 and June 2020 to February 2021 were PHP 995,783,363 (USD 19.92 M) and PHP 724,854,417 (USD 14.50 M), respectively, or a total of PHP 1,720,637,779 (USD 34.41 M) for the period March 2020 to February 2021 (**Table 4**).

The combined survey results in Calamba City and Los Baños show that 93% of the respondents identified loss of income as the top effect of the pandemic due to the restrictions on travel and leisure, followed by reduced employee salary (38%). This result is consistent with the findings of Shinozaki & Rao (2021) that the Philippine economy started recovering six months after the March 2020 lockdown. However, the MSMEs continued to experience reduced demand for the goods and services they produced and, consequently, their revenues. The government took cognizance of the impacts of the pandemic on MSMEs and allocated PHP 10 B (USD 200 M) to MSMEs under the *Bayanihan* to Recover as One

Act (Republic Act No. 11519 or *Bayanihan* 2), with PHP 6 B (USD 120 M) for tourism-related enterprises and PHP 4 B (USD 80 M) for other MSMEs (Crismundo 2021).

Some private resorts (14%) had to retrench personnel. In comparison, 9% of the respondents observed the adverse effect on businesses related to the resort-based industry, such as hotels, restaurants, water refilling stations, and convenience stores (**Figure 4**).

DOT launched its GREEN Corridor Initiative (GCI) in December 2021 to re-open Region 4-A (CALABARZON) to domestic tourism to help the local tourism industry from losses due to the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to this, the participating local government units (LGUs) of Laguna have already enacted a resolution to support and participate in the program; each LGU still has to establish its “Green Corridor Task Force (GCTF) to oversee the operations and management of the travel clusters” (DOT 2021; Arnaldo 2021).

A DOT study revealed that more than 80% of the respondents expected tourism establishments to comply with best health and sanitation practices (WTO 2020). Almost all of the private resort respondents (98%) said that their resorts had

Table 3. Revenue estimates of private resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños during peak and lean seasons.

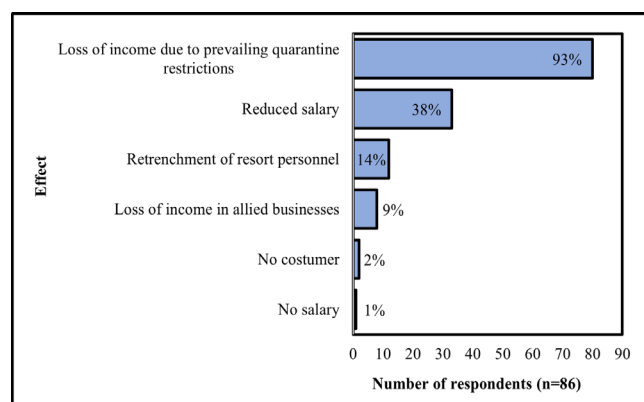
Rental Period	Income ¹ (PHP rental ⁻¹ resort ⁻¹)		No. of bookings ⁻¹ resort ⁻¹ week ²	Monthly revenue, weekday and weekend ³ (PHP mo ⁻¹ resort ⁻¹)			Total monthly revenue ⁴ (PHP mo ⁻¹ resort ⁻¹)			Expenses (PHP mo ⁻¹ resort ⁻¹)			Net revenue ⁵ (PHP mo ⁻¹ resort ⁻¹)	
										Electricity ⁶	Water ⁶	Salary ⁷		
	PEAK SEASON (March, April, May, and December)													
WEEKDAY	Min	Max	Ave	Min	Max	Ave	Min	Max	Ave				Min	Ave
12hr Day	3,000	22,000	8,375	2	24,000	176,000	67,000							
12hr Overnight	3,500	23,000	9,547	2	28,000	184,000	76,375							
22hrs	7,000	40,000	15,797	2	56,000	320,000	126,375							
	TOTAL			108,000	680,000	269,750								
WEEKEND							156,000	1,040,000	420,813	14,260	4,792	7,000	129,948	394,761
12hr Day	3,000	30,000	9,945	1	12,000	120,000	39,781							
12hr Overnight	4,000	25,000	10,680	1	16,000	100,000	42,719							
22hrs	5,000	35,000	17,141	1	20,000	140,000	68,563							
	TOTAL			48,000	360,000	151,063								
Estimated revenue for 1,009 private resorts (PHP mo ⁻¹): 131,117,532 1,023,073,532 398,313,345														
Estimated revenues during Peak Season (4 months): 524,470,128 4,092,294,128 1,593,253,378														
LEAN SEASON (January, February, June, July, August, September, October, and November)														
WEEKDAY	Min	Max	Ave	Min	Max	Ave	Min	Max	Ave				Min	Ave
12hr Day	3,000	20,000	7,227	1	12,000	80,000	28,906							
12hr Overnight	3,000	23,000	8,125	1	12,000	92,000	32,500							
22hrs	5,000	30,000	13,266	1	20,000	120,000	53,063							
	TOTAL			44,000	292,000	114,469								
WEEKEND							58,667	405,333	156,304	14,260	4,792	7,000	32,615	130,252
12hr Day	3,000	25,000	8,114											
12hr Overnight	3,000	25,000	8,895	1	14,667	113,333	41,835							
22hrs	5,000	35,000	14,367											
Average	3,667	28,333	10,459	TOTAL	14,667	113,333	41,835							
Estimated revenue for 1,009 private resorts (PHP mo ⁻¹): 32,908,199 382,694,865 131,424,436														
Estimated revenues during Lean Season (8 months): 263,265,589 3,061,558,923 1,051,395,489														
Annual Revenue (Peak and Lean Seasons) (PHP yr ⁻¹): 787,735,717 7,153,853,051 2,644,648,867														

Assumptions:¹ Average, Min, and Max values from 64 private resorts interviewed with an entry on the questionnaire² Number of bookings per week. Six (6) bookings for a weekday on a peak season; Three (3) bookings for a weekend on a lean season; One (1) booking for a weekend on a lean season³ Monthly Revenue, Peak or Lean Season = (Income * x Estimated Rental Sales per Week) x 4 weeks; *the average weekend revenue was used⁴ Total Monthly Revenue = Total Weekday Monthly Revenue + Total Weekend Monthly Revenue⁵ Electricity bills based on the average of 65 private resorts interviewed with an entry on the questionnaire⁶ Water bill based on the average of 12 private resorts interviewed with an entry on the questionnaire⁷ Caretaker Salary: Low (PHP5,000), Middle (PHP7,000), High (PHP9,000), based on <https://ph.jobloom.com/job/caretaker/627432>; Middle value (PHP7,000) was used in the salary computation⁸ Net Revenue = Monthly Estimated Revenue – Expenses^{**}; ** Expenses = Electricity + Water + Salary, other consumables not yet included

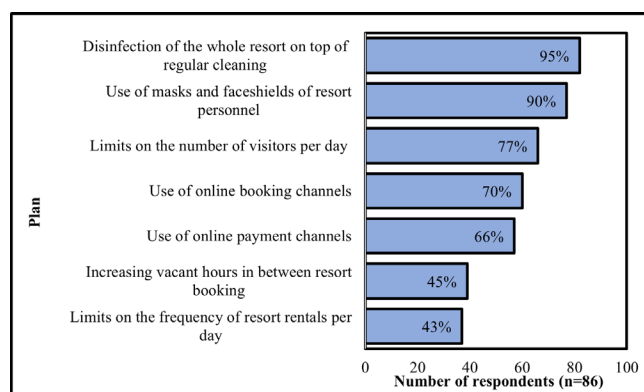
Table 4. Estimated revenue losses of private resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños, Laguna for March 2020 to February 2021.

Operation of resorts	Months/ Season	Average revenue of private resorts, Peak season (PHP mo ⁻¹)	Average revenue of private resorts, Lean season (PHP mo ⁻¹)	Revenue lost (PHP yr ⁻¹)
Number of months, closed March - May 2020	2.5	398,313,345	131,424,436	995,783,363
Number of months, June 2020 - February 2021 ^a	9			724,854,417
Peak season	1	398,313,345		199,156,673
Lean season	8		131,424,436	525,697,744
Total revenue lost, March 2020 - February 2021				1,720,637,779

^a50% of the net revenue realized, 50% of the net revenue lost

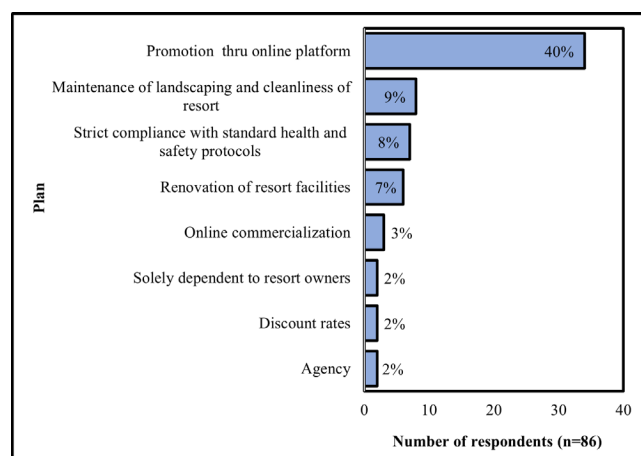
**Figure 4.** Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on private resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños (multiple responses).

set plans should they be allowed to operate again fully. Disinfection of the whole resort on top of regular cleaning after every use or booking and the use of face masks and face shields of resort personnel when communicating with guests were the top answers (95% and 90%, respectively) (Figure 5).

**Figure 5.** Plans for the safety of visitors of private resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños, Laguna (multiple responses).

Though social media marketing has been popular in recent years, the surge of promotion through online platforms increased during the COVID-19 pandemic when almost

all products became marketed online (Mason *et al.* 2021). This marketing strategy is what 40% of the private resorts planned to use (Figure 6). A survey conducted by the DOT among more than 12,000 respondents revealed that travel plans during the pandemic would mainly be done through online bookings and arrangements. Tourism establishments are expected to have self-service procedures and allow, for example, contactless check-in and digital payments (WTO 2020). Thus, the resorts need to adjust their booking strategies accordingly.

**Figure 6.** Plans to boost visitation of private resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños (multiple responses).

Effects of COVID-19 on resort visitors' decision to engage in recreation activities

Five hundred online survey respondents were initially accepted based on the target sample size. However, upon inspection, eight respondents were invalidated because of inconsistent and incomplete responses, leaving 492 qualified respondents.

There were more female respondents (65%) than male respondents (37%), more single respondents (71%) than married respondents (23%), and respondents from other civil status groups. For educational background, 64% of

the respondents were college graduates, while 21% were undergraduates. The mean age of the respondents was 29 years, which can be an advantage to the resort-based industry as the WTO identified younger people as the most resilient and had shown stronger travel recovery (WTO n.d.).

The respondents' average family size was five members, which is higher than the country's average household size in 2020 of four persons per household (PSA 2022). On the other hand, the respondents' average monthly personal and household incomes were PHP 19,967 (USD 399) and PHP 48,650 (USD 973), respectively.

The provinces of origin of the respondents are shown in **Figure 7**. All the respondents came from Luzon, particularly Regions I (Ilocos Region), II (Cagayan Valley Region), III (Central Luzon), IVA (CALABARZON), IVB (MIMAROPA), V (Bicol Region) and the National Capital Region (NCR). Region IVA and NCR were the highest sources of respondents at 49.6% and 43.1%, respectively. Province-wise or city-wise, Laguna had the highest number

of respondents (29.3%), followed by the City of Manila (13.4%) and Cavite (11.8%). These results are consistent with the expectation that the highest number of visitors would come from Laguna, where Calamba City and Los Baños are located. The high proportion of visitors from NCR was generally expected because of its proximity to the study sites. During the peak season, long vehicle queues may be observed at the Calamba Exit of the South Luzon Expressway, many of them ferrying vehicles to the resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños. Furthermore, 75.4% of the respondents visited private resorts, while 24.6% visited public resorts.

Most respondents (83.7%) said the pandemic affected their households, while the remaining 16.3% said they were not affected. The effect of the pandemic was most felt in the respondents' occupation (68.2%), socialization (62.4%) as well as psychological and mental health (60.2%). On the other hand, the pandemic effect was least felt in their physical health (38.1%), relationships with family members (35.9%), and mobility (32.5%) (**Figure 8**).

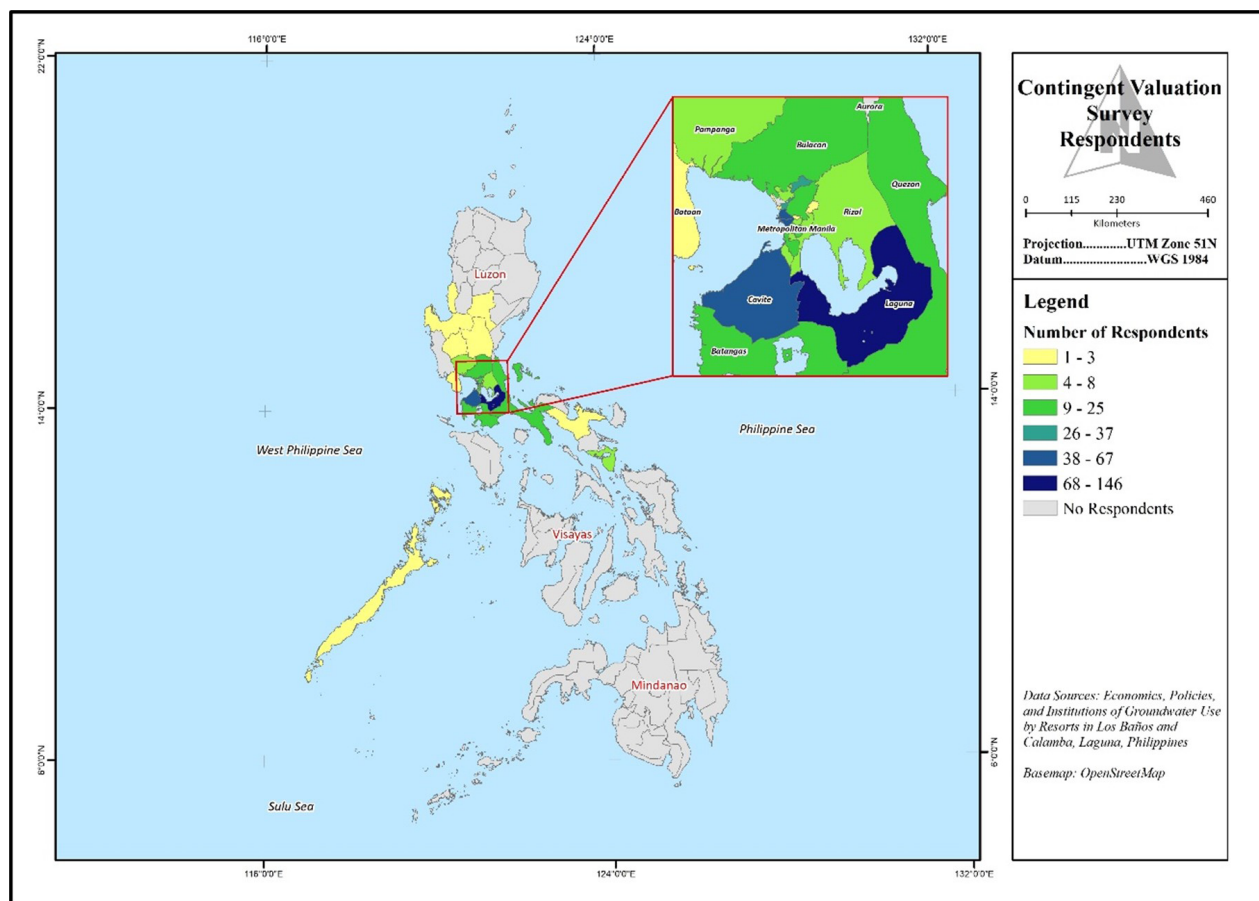


Figure 7. Origin of the visitor survey respondents.

Recreation remains important to 94.1% of the respondents despite the pandemic (**Figure 9**), with the top reasons being to help them cope with stress (79.0%), relax (72.6%), and for mental health (70.6%). Only one respondent mentioned the importance of supporting the tourism industry. These results illustrate the respondents' appreciation of the role of recreation in their mental and physical well-being, especially since everybody has been under tremendous stress from the pandemic.

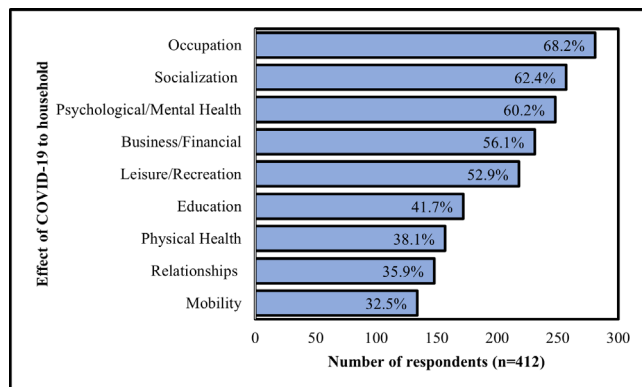


Figure 8. Number of visitors' households affected by COVID-19 pandemic and its effects (multiple responses).

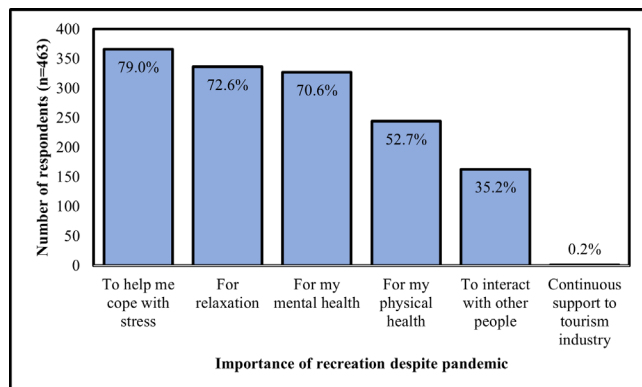


Figure 9. Importance of recreation to respondents despite pandemic (multiple responses).

There were 442 respondents (89.8%) who said they would still consider visiting resorts in Calamba City or Los Baños mainly to enjoy the pools and the environment (77.1%) and for the health benefits that the hot-water pools provide (68.8%) (**Figure 10**). The proximity of Calamba City and Los Baños to Metro Manila may prove to be an advantage because of changes in the behavior of travelers due to COVID-19. They now have more preference to travel to destinations closer to home. Furthermore, nature tourism, rural tourism, and road trips have become more popular due to travel limitations and the advantages of open-air recreation experiences (WTO n.d.).

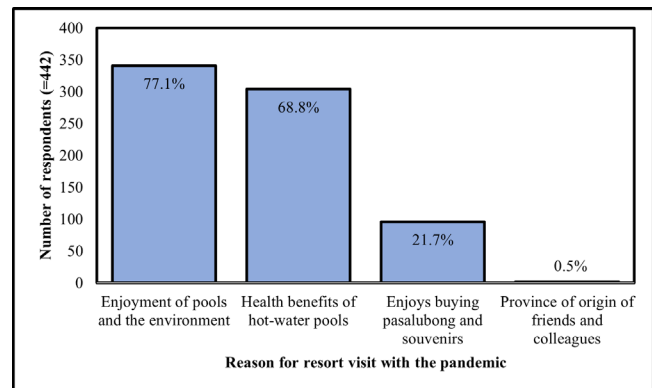


Figure 10. Reasons for resort visit with the pandemic (multiple responses).

About 65.4% of the respondents said they would prefer to go to private resorts, 24.7% said they would visit both public and private resorts, and only 11.3% indicated public resorts (**Figure 11**). There appears to be a preference shift from public to private resorts. In the survey, 25% of the respondents visited public resorts. The high preference for private resorts may be because these can be rented for the exclusive use of a group, unlike public resorts where visitors from different families or groups share common facilities such as swimming pools. When the health and safety protocols were relaxed in March 2021, it was observed that only some private resorts opened, but the big public resorts remained closed. The danger of going to public resorts and swimming in common pools was illustrated by an incident in Caloocan City, NCR, when the Gubat sa Ciudad Resort opened on May 9, 2021 despite restrictions for this kind of activity. As a result, at least 20 positive COVID cases were reported as of May 26, 2021 (CNN Philippines 2021). The preference for private resorts is also consistent with the expectation that travelers consciously avoid crowded places post-pandemic (ADB and WTO 2022).

On the other hand, the main reason of the 50 respondents who said they would not visit resorts during the pandemic was because they had safety concerns (98%) (**Figure 12**). A few said they no longer want to go out for recreation (10%), while one respondent would want to save on expenses and have accessibility issues. The same group of respondents said they would revisit resorts even during the pandemic if the pool water were cleaned using industry standards after each use in the case of private pools (36%) and allow the pool to be used for only one shift per day (against the current practice of two shifts per day especially during the peak season) to allow sufficient time for the resort to be cleaned and sanitized (34%) (**Figure 13**). The additional cleaning required to sanitize resort facilities will translate to higher operating costs. Having only one shift instead of two during the peak season will effectively halve the resort's revenues. Both ADB and WTO (2022) note that post-pandemic,

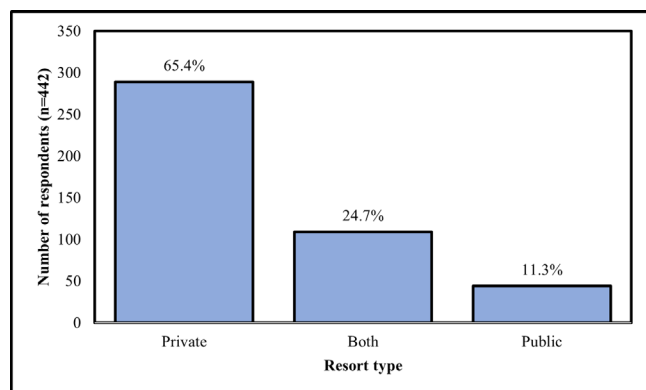


Figure 11. Resort type that will be visited with the pandemic in Calamba City and Los Baños, Laguna.

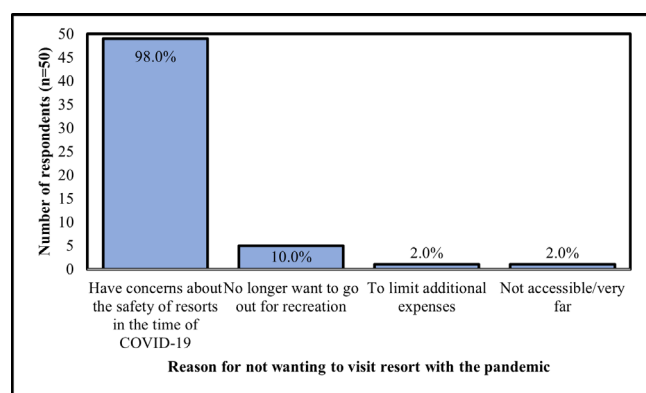


Figure 12. Respondents' reasons for not wanting to visit resorts during the pandemic (multiple responses).

there will be a preference for destinations where effective infection control and responsible destination management are in place, as well as good health care facilities.

The respondents recognized that the new health and safety standards for resorts would impact the fees charged. There were 363 respondents (73.8%) who expected the fees to increase (**Figure 14**), mainly because of the expected rise in the cost of cleaning and sanitizing supplies (65.2%) and

maintaining clean water (46.1%). On the other hand, the 129 respondents (26.2%) who said that the fees should not change believed that the additional costs of complying with health and safety protocols should be shouldered by resort owners (18.3%); or because there will be no additional costs on the part of resort owners (8.1%).

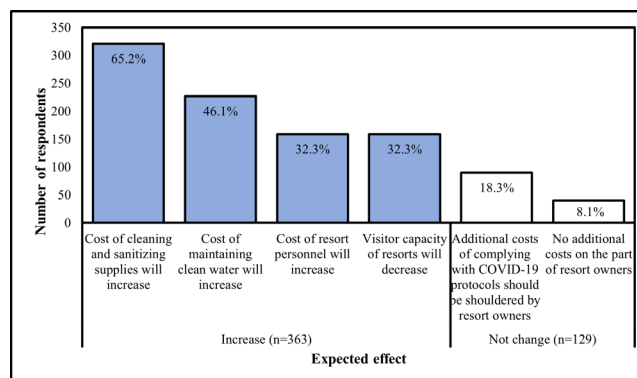


Figure 14. Expected effect of the pandemic on fees charged by resorts and their reasons why/why not respondents think resort fees should increase to comply with COVID-19 health and safety protocols (multiple responses).

CONCLUSIONS

The resort inventory revealed 34 public and 1,009 private resorts, or a total of 1,043 resorts in Calamba City and Los Baños. All resorts were closed from March to May 2020 and intermittently opened from June 2020 to the present. The revenue losses of private resorts, micro, and small enterprises, were estimated at PHP 1,720,637,779 (USD 34.41 M) for March 2020 to February 2021. To cope with the impacts of the pandemic, resort managers intend to conduct resort disinfection, require their personnel to use face masks and face shields, and limit the number of visitors. Most plan to promote their resorts through online platforms to boost visitation rates during and after the pandemic.

The visitor survey revealed that most respondents would still consider visiting resorts in Calamba City or Los Baños mainly to enjoy the pools, the environment, and the health benefits that the hot-water pools provide. However, there was a higher preference for private resorts than public resorts because these can be used exclusively by a family or group. The respondents who do not want to visit resorts during the pandemic said they would consider visits again if the pool water were cleaned using industry standards after each use in the case of private pools and allow the pool to be used for only one shift per day to allow sufficient time for the resort to be cleaned and sanitized. Finally, most respondents recognized that the new health and safety standards for resorts might result in higher fees.

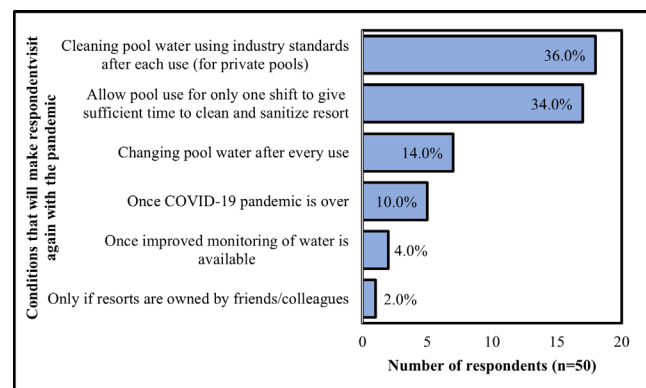


Figure 13. Conditions that will make respondents revisit resorts during the pandemic (multiple responses).

The study results provided information that can help owners and managers draw up strategies to attract visitors back to their resorts while ensuring their satisfaction and safety. Complying with health and safety protocols has cost and expenditure implications for resort owners and tourists. However, the outlook for the resort-based industry in Calamba City and Los Baños is good because of the emerging preference for proximate nature-based recreation areas that afford visitors fresh air and open spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enable the private resorts to cope with the effects of the pandemic, physical interventions are recommended, such as retrofitting, complying with, and training personnel on health and safety protocols, and using digital marketing tools and online platforms for the promotion. On the other hand, public resorts need to address visitors' apprehensions about the safety of their resorts due to crowding. There is also a need for behavioral change not only on the part of resort owners and personnel but also for visitors who should observe health and safety protocols at all times and become responsible tourists. Compliance with the protocols is expected to raise the resorts' operating costs, and they need to streamline operations to reduce costs. Coming from prolonged periods of closure, the resorts need the assistance of LGUs and national government agencies, particularly the Department of Tourism and the Department of Health, to access financing, build capacity, and disseminate information about the proper and safe way of enjoying resort-based tourism to facilitate the recovery of this industry not only in Calamba City and Los Baños, Laguna but also in other parts of the country.

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