Tourism Enterprises’ Resilience Influencing Factors in the Face of COVID-19 in Sichuan Province, China

Zhe Liu¹,∗ and Vivian²

¹Tourism School, Sichuan University, Chengdu 610207, People’s Republic of China
²Nanyang Centre for Public Administration, Nanyang Technological University, 50 Nanyang Ave, 639798, Singapore

Abstract. The COVID-19 pandemic has had enormous health and economic impacts, and it has halted the global tourism industry, forcing it to become more resilient. This study explored the resilience influencing factors in the tourism industry before and after the pandemic in China. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used for this study. First, questionnaire-based interviews were conducted in February 2021 with 10 Chinese tourism enterprise managers, a thematic analysis based on the content of the interviews yielded six main themes. Using these six themes as indicators, a follow-up survey was conducted in May 2021 and May 2022 among 45 tourism enterprises in Sichuan Province to assess changes in their perceptions of the importance of these influencing factors. The importance of corporate social responsibility increased dramatically, psychological adaptability decreased slightly, and other factors increased slightly, according to the findings. These findings have implications for tourism enterprises recovering from major disasters. Keywords: Tourism enterprise, Resilience, COVID-19, China, Disaster prevention.

1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been the most highly contagious outbreak in recent human history, with more than 652 million cases and 6.6 million deaths (as at 9th December 2022), which has led to critical worldwide health challenges and had a major effect on national and global economic growth.

Because of COVID-19’s high transmission speed, governments have had no choice but to impose lockdowns, which have adversely affected nearly every industry sector in the world. While some industries quickly moved to online digital platforms, others found it difficult to survive the travel restrictions and social distancing measures [1]. In particular, because of its dependence on tourist mobility, the global tourism sector has been devastated, which has revealed its extreme fragility [2]. The halt or slowdown in domestic and global travel put millions of travel industry-related jobs at risk and threatened the industry’s sustainable development goals. Because of the travel restrictions, low consumer confidence, and the global struggle to contain COVID-19, international arrivals fell by 72% in the first ten months of 2020, which led to the worst tourism year on record. The COVID-19 impact has been far greater than the SARS pandemic in 2002-2003 [3].

∗e-mail: 2372982428@qq.com

© The Authors, published by EDP Sciences. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).
Richter (2003) suggested that the emergence or re-emergence of infectious diseases was one of the corollaries for global tourism and mobility [4]. However, as tourism mobility clearly played a role in exacerbating the rapid global spread of the virus, to minimize the negative effects on tourist destinations, it has become important to identify and quantify the key influencing factors for the tourist industry’s resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, only limited research has been conducted in this area; however, past studies on the effects of crises such as pandemics on the tourist industry found that it usually managed to bounce back, which indicated the sector’s remarkable resilience in mitigating sudden breakdowns in demand or supply [5].

While some studies have examined the effects of crises on tourism, most attention has been focused on the impacts of crises on tourism demand; for example, tsunamis [6], terrorist threats [7], and earthquakes [8]. However, there have been few studies on understanding how these impacts can be minimized or on the recovery and development of tourism resilience after crises, and most previous work has primarily been focused on clinical trials or involved social psychology [9] follow-up surveys. Ritchie and Jiang (2019) claimed that comprehensive assessments of the crisis’s impact on tourism were needed. After COVID-19 appeared in early 2020, it spread rapidly to become a global public health emergency, which in turn had significant impacts on economic and social development, with the “new normal” associated with social distancing and other hygiene measures dramatically impacting tourism and hospitality sectors [10]. Therefore, to prepare for similar future crises, it is important to explore the influencing factors on tourism resilience during the pandemic and the impact of each of these factors.

This study did not intend to conduct a comprehensive COVID-19 analysis of all the impacts, theories, themes, and tourism stakeholders. Instead, to provide practical and theoretical future research directions, interview texts and survey data from tourism operators were analyzed to identify and understand the key factors affecting tourism enterprise resilience during COVID-19 and the impact on the tourism sector.

2 Literature Review

The concept of resilience is becoming more widely accepted as a paradigm for understanding world systems because it gives a consistent explanation of key human and environmental phenomena. It also offers a fresh perspective for numerous disciplines to investigate the evolution of the human environment, including its current application in tourist research [11]. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic provides a chance to research how to improve tourism resilience in the face of unanticipated crisis events [12]. This section reviews previous studies on organizational resilience and the effects of COVID-19 on the tourist industry.

2.1 Organizational Resilience

The general concept of resilience has long been associated with ecology, in which studies have attempted to understand the response of ecological systems to exogenous disturbances [13]. However, Adger (2000) defined social or community resilience as the ability of human communities to withstand external shocks to their social infrastructure, and this concept has been applied to various fields, such as economics [14, 15], psychology [16], and socioecology [17]. Because the influencing factors associated with organizational elasticity determine the level of organizational elasticity, there has been significant research on these influencing factors, with many studies focused on economic resilience and its application to the tourist industry.
Within tourism literature, organizational resilience has been generally defined as an organization’s ability to cope with unexpected change and adapt to unprecedented threats to the business environment [1]. Consequently, resilience has become an important concept in the tourism sector [18]. Tourism resilience has been defined as “the ability of social, economic, or ecological systems to recover from tourism-induced stress” [19].

However, there have been several research limitations in previous organizational resilience studies. First, as there has been no systematic research approach, there has been little consistency in the measurement of the dimensions associated with organizational resilience. Second, while some studies have sporadically explored organizational resources [20], organizational communication, and team relationships as possible influencing factors, few studies have systematically summarized or analyzed the influencing factors, the action mechanisms associated with organizational toughness, or the importance of the influencing factors over time. While some studies have examined tourist organizations’ resilience, there has been no consensus on the conceptualization or operationalization of the resilience concept. Romagosa (2020) [21] suggested that rather than return to previous operating models, COVID-19 has challenged the tourism industry to think about the unsustainability of its pre-crisis travel and tourism models. Therefore, systematically exploring the key elements of tourism enterprise resilience is particularly important as the world looks toward a post-COVID-19 “return to normal”.

2.2 Tourism During COVID-19

As the tourist industry is highly vulnerable to environmental, political, and socio-economic risks, it has become resilient [5], as evidenced by its ability to “bounce back” from crises, such as terrorism, earthquakes, and disease outbreaks. However, when serious disease-based pandemics occur, such as SARS and COVID-19, worldwide tourism suffers [22].

Current research and speculation on the unprecedented situation the travel and tourism sector find themselves in because of the COVID-19 pandemic can be generally divided into two categories. The first, which is based on past recovery history extrapolations, is that the sector will gradually revert to its pre-crisis unsustainable growth-oriented trajectory. However, the second alternative suggests that there will be a transition toward a radically different way of doing things [23]. Regardless of which direction the industry takes, it is particularly important to understand the tourism resilience influencing factors during this pandemic situation to better understand the current situation and to provide guidance for the reinvention of the tourist sector as more sustainable, resilient, and innovative.

Taking a resilience-based approach to understanding tourism in the COVID-19 era can assist in understanding the ability of the socio-ecological tourist system to maintain its essential characteristics and identity in the face of ongoing unpredictable change [1]. Previous papers by this research group have examined the different resilience levels in different sectors of the tourism industry [24]. However, it is not enough to analyze the pandemic impact from an industry perspective only because exploring the importance of the influencing resilience factors in individual tourism enterprises could provide more focused realistic guidance for enterprise recovery. The complexities associated with the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 event have meant that tourism stakeholders have been impacted by socio-cultural, economic, and psychological factors [25], the effects of which may be felt for many years to come. Therefore, continued research attention and comparative analyses are necessary. However, there have been few follow-up studies on the factors influencing the resilience of tourism enterprises.

Therefore, based on interview text analyses, this study first identified the main tourism resilience influencing factors, after which follow-up surveys were conducted in May 2021 and
May 2022 to identify the importance of these factors and the changes over time. A combined qualitative and quantitative methodological approach was used to explore and identify the tourism enterprise resilience growth factors under COVID-19. Initially, the main factors were determined from the coding analysis of the interview texts, after which the changes in the importance of each factor were explored based on an analysis of data from two surveys conducted one-year apart. The findings can assist decision-makers to strategize and develop better plans to reduce the pandemic impact on the tourism industry and to motivate its socio-ecological system change.

3 Methodology

While quantitative methods can produce generalizable results, qualitative methods produce a more detailed, descriptive grasp of the phenomenon being studied [26]. It is common to see the use of mixed methods in tourism research such as tourist destination image research, tourist behavior research, and sustainable tourism. This paper detailed the study design in phrases and demonstrated the integration of quantitative and qualitative outcomes in this section.

3.1 Semi-structured Interview

In the first phase of the study, with the assistance of the General Association of Sichuan Entrepreneurs, in February 2021, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 tourism industry enterprise managers in Sichuan Province (see table 1), which allowed targeted questions to be asked about the impacts and challenges being faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and their perceptions on the tourism industry’s resilience. Due to the tight control of the pandemic situation, one-to-one in-depth interviews with the interviewees were conducted through network communication tools (primarily corporate WeChat, Tencent Meeting, and WeChat Call). The majority of the questions revolve around a pre-written interview outline (also see in table 1.).

The semi-structured interview questions were adapted from existing relevant research, such as Kaushal & Srivastava [3], Sanchis et al. [27], and Hall et al. [28]. With a limited sample size for the study, non-probability judgmental sampling was adopted for this study. For the formulated interview questions, tourism business managers among the members of the General Association of Sichuan Entrepreneurs were considered as appropriate respondents.

The investigators recorded the interviews and eliminated the interview text later which was not relevant to the study’s need which is the resilience of tourism enterprises under COVID-19. For content analysis, the obtained responses are put into word documents. A content-coding study of the interviewers’ responses generated 30 probable sub-themes based on numerous iterations of the interview responses and the analysis and interpretation of the material. This research proved to be both useful and systematic [3]. In addition, the theme analysis assisted in identifying distinct perspectives and opinions, and the coding allowed for reliable quantification of repeating content [29]. Government support (a), psychological adaptation (b), technical innovation capabilities (c), human resource management (d), corporate social responsibility (CSR) (e), and financial condition (f) were identified after careful observation and screening of the 30 probable sub-themes. table 2 summarizes the main findings of the analysis. It should be emphasized that one significant disadvantage of this study is that the inter-reliability coders were not reported, as the coding was done by one researcher in the current study.
Table 1. Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Experience In Current Organization (Years)</th>
<th>State/Region</th>
<th>Organization Category/Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Chengdu</td>
<td>Travel agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Co-founder</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mianyang</td>
<td>4 Star Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Commercial Director</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chengdu</td>
<td>5 Star Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Public Affairs Manager</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chengdu</td>
<td>Tourist attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Gunzi Prefecture</td>
<td>5 Star Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chengdu</td>
<td>Travel agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Senior Human Resources Manager</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chengdu</td>
<td>5 Star Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chengdu</td>
<td>Tourist attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Marketing Director</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chengdu</td>
<td>4 Star Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>Project Director</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chengdu</td>
<td>5 Star Hotel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Broad interview outline:
A. What are the major challenges facing your company in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic?
B. What do you think of your company’s performance during the pandemic?
C. What do you think are the important lessons for the development of enterprises in this crisis?
D. In your opinion, what are the most important abilities and qualities of enterprise managers in this crisis?
E. What do you think is the main role of the government in this crisis?
F. What changes do you expect in travel consumer behavior in the post-epidemic period?
G. If the aftereffect lasts for a long time, do you think the enterprise labor force will become redundant?
H. What changes do you expect will occur in the corporate development environment in the future?

Table 2. Results of interview text encoding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original interview statement</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The government has introduced many policies and measures for SMEs to recover during and after the outbreak, such as tax relief, which are timely.&quot;</td>
<td>Policy support</td>
<td>Government Support (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The government’s support measures have helped many of our scenic spots and travel agencies resume operations.”</td>
<td>Policy opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Although the current reality has led to the shutdown of travel, the essence of leisure demand remains the same, so we still have to be confident.&quot;</td>
<td>Confidence of business managers</td>
<td>Psychological Adaptability (b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We still need to seize new opportunities after the pandemic, innovate products and marketing, and continuously expand the business to increase corporate income.”</td>
<td>Innovative products and services</td>
<td>Technological Innovation Capability (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;By developing promotional strategies ahead of time, using big data analytics and online marketing penetration, you can reach a wider audience.”</td>
<td>Application of science and technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Grasp the business personnel training, and pay attention to the enterprise’s internal culture brand to create it”</td>
<td>Employee training</td>
<td>Human Resource Management (d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;There is a country, there are families, enterprises that depend on society to survive, certainly need to bear social responsibility”</td>
<td>The social responsibility</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility (e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;When the economy shuts down, the impact on cash flows is sure to be catastrophic”</td>
<td>Cash flow</td>
<td>Financial Condition (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Payment cycles in the hospitality industry range from 90 to 60 days.”</td>
<td>Fixed costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Questionnaire

The contact information for member enterprises was obtained from the General Association of Sichuan Entrepreneurs for the conduct of two surveys, an initial online survey conducted in May 2021 and a follow-up online survey conducted in May 2022. The data were collected using an online survey because of time and financial constraints, and most importantly, because of the COVID-19 outbreak and the various regional lockdowns. Before formally launching the survey, with the assistance of the General Association of Sichuan Entrepreneurs, a pretest survey was conducted on the same small sample of business owners in February and October 2021 to evaluate the items’ clarity and relevance and identify and eliminate any potential issues.

Based on the results of the semi-structured interview text theme analysis in the first step, the survey items were based on the six main themes (government support (a), psychological adaptability (b), technological innovation capability (c), human resource management (d), corporate social responsibility (CSR) (e) and financial condition (f)). The importance of these six themes was used as the six indicators of the questionnaire and answered using a five-point Likert scale from 1= “very unimportant” to 5 = “very important”. The online survey was distributed to Sichuan Province tourism industry enterprise managers by the General Association of Sichuan Entrepreneurs. On average, participants took about 15 min to complete the questionnaire, and no monetary or any other reward was offered for participating. After eliminating the invalid questionnaires, a total of 45 valid questionnaires were collected, after which SPSS25 was used for the data analysis.

To ensure the scientificity of the survey scale and data, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire data samples were tested. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s α) were 0.813 in the first wave and 0.819 in the second wave, which indicated that the scale met the reliability standards for further data analysis. Paired sample T-tests were used to determine the changes in the rankings for the importance of the factors affecting the tourism enterprise managers’ resilience in the early, middle, and late stages of the pandemic. The analysis results showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the two questionnaires (p > 0.05), which might have been because of the small changes in the participants’ perceived risk. However, in general, the increase or decrease in the mean value reflected the changes in the importance of the main factors. The specific analysis results are shown in table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>May 2021</th>
<th>May 2022</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>4.20 ± 0.661</td>
<td>4.33 ± 0.564</td>
<td>1.522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>4.04 ± 0.737</td>
<td>4.02 ± 0.723</td>
<td>-0.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>4.11 ± 0.682</td>
<td>4.11 ± 0.573</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>4.00 ± 0.603</td>
<td>4.02 ± 0.583</td>
<td>0.216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>3.73 ± 0.751</td>
<td>3.89 ± 0.647</td>
<td>1.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>3.98 ± 0.657</td>
<td>4.00 ± 0.707</td>
<td>0.256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Findings

Access to finance and a healthy financial condition are integral to enterprise survival and success [30]. Financial resources can help organizations weather the storm by providing a buffer against losses, and giving them the scope to redeploy financial assets, which makes
them important sources of resilience [31]. The interviewees generally believed that the financial situation of tourist enterprises was the most critical factor in determining whether the enterprises could smoothly recover after COVID-19.

The psychological adaptability factor was also highlighted by interviewees. Tourism has been seen to be a complicated psychological process, and resilience has been recognized as an important quality for entrepreneurs. Through the enterprise’s dynamic development, the entrepreneurs acquire new knowledge and skills, which allow them to face uncertain futures with a positive attitude, creativity, and optimism by relying on their own resources. Some interviewees pointed out that the life satisfaction of business owners and managers contributed to organizational resilience. However, judging from previous studies, the notion of psychological resilience has yet to be embraced in tourism resilience and crisis management studies as there has been little direct analysis of the resilience of individuals, that is, tourists, community members, or entrepreneurs [30]. Therefore, to further understand the human enterprise elastic interface, the resilience means used by tourism entrepreneurs to cope with incremental changes and recover from disasters is worthy of attention.

One management practice that has been discussed in crisis situations is the critical role played by human resource management [32]. Avey et al. and Bustinza et al. both saw employees as valuable assets who contribute to business sustainability and strengthen organizations during prolonged downturns [33]. However, despite the significance of human capital in building organizational resilience in crises or disasters, the link between an organization’s human resource management and resilience capacity has not been fully examined in tourism literature [34]. The interviewees mentioned more than once that it was less expensive to retain employees than to fire them during major crises, which was consistent with the findings in Ineson’s research [35].

In general, the tourism industry, while vulnerable, has shown strong resilience after crises, disasters, and regional pandemics such as SARS, much of which has been because of local, regional, or national government assistance and incentives, such as tax breaks and the lifting of stringent land use regulations, which is different from earlier crises, for which no policy impacts were found on the tourism industry. Given the high speed of COVID-19 transmission, governments worldwide have had no other option but to impose lockowns. Although the measures taken by governments to support economic development have varied from country to country, there is no doubt that the recovery and development of the tourism industry have required government support, which appears to have evolved in many countries during this crisis.

Technology innovation capabilities have been at the heart of the solutions to combat COVID-19 and re-open tourism and the economy. One interviewee mentioned that innovations, such as mobility tracing apps, robotized AI touchless service delivery, digital health passports, identity controls, social distancing, crowd control technologies, and the disinfection and sterilization of public spaces, have arisen in response to the pandemic. Disasters have been found to accelerate technological change, which has been evident during this COVID-19 crisis. Robotic, automation and artificial intelligence innovations can reduce costs, increase mobility, and increase flexibility. These rapid changes have resulted in a surge in the public’s trust in technology, their readiness to connect, and their willingness to change their attitudes toward technology, with people now starting to ignore privacy issues to gain greater technological benefits. Therefore, tourism industry companies that survive the pandemic must make their products more resistant to future pandemics.

CSR refers to voluntary organizational actions that improve social or environmental conditions, and include actions such as charitable donations, community projects, supportive employment relationships, and positive environmental policies [36]. Some interviewees specifically mentioned that the State Taxation Administration explicitly announced that cash and
items donated by enterprises and individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic could be deducted in full when calculating their taxable income. Other preferential tax policies, such as value-added tax, consumption tax, and urban maintenance and construction taxes were also proffered. The introduction of national preferential policies can improve corporate image and promote the recovery and development of tourism enterprises after COVID-19. From an enterprise perspective, some interviewees also mentioned that their positive social practices stimulated employee creativity [36], which assisted them in maintaining flexibility and more quickly recovering from turbulence, which was also in line with Yang’s findings.

In addition, further analysis of the follow-up questionnaire showed that the importance of government support (a) and corporate social responsibility (e) increased significantly after one year, especially CSR. The importance scores for human resource management (d) and financial condition (f) also increased slightly, but the technological innovation capability (c) score remained unchanged; however, it was still considered to be an important influencing factor for enterprise resilience. It is worth noting that the psychological adaptability (b) score decreased slightly, which may have been because of the return to a normal social lifestyle in the post-pandemic period.

5 Discussion

This study sought to provide insights into tourism enterprise resilience before and after the COVID-19 pandemic in Sichuan Province, China. The study focused on two main themes: the main factors affecting enterprise resilience during COVID-19 and a comparison of the importance of each factor before and after the pandemic. To provide both theoretical and managerial guidance, this discussion examines the associated sub-themes found to be effective and the lessons learned.

While research on organizational resilience influencing factors have gradually increased in the last decade, it is still in a theoretical stage as little relevant empirical research has been conducted. It was found that government support, psychological adaptability, technological innovation capability, human resource management, corporate social responsibility, and financial condition were perceived by tourism enterprise managers to be important enterprise resilience factors after the pandemic. These findings highlighted how tourism enterprises were able to adjust their inputs of various production factors to promote the recovery and development of their enterprises after the pandemic. These findings extended Sharma et al. by revealing that besides government response, technological innovation, local belongingness, and employee confidence, psychological adaptability [37], CSR, and financial conditions also had an important impact on the development of enterprise resilience.

More importantly, it was found that there were interesting changes in the importance of the above six factors before and after the pandemic. As the resilience of SMEs also depends on the resilience of their ecosystems [38], the tourism industry needs credible measures from governments to inspire confidence and reduce the risks posed by the virus. In general, the role of government in this crisis needs to evolve over time [39]. While government support has always been a key factor in the survival of tourism companies, organizational resources, suitable organizational responses, adequate capital reserves, and a good financial condition can also enhance enterprise adaptability and flexibility and ensure a favorable atmosphere for responding to external stimuli. Organizational members, therefore, are important resources when seeking to emerge from adversity. The pandemic led to the suspension of economic activities, which in turn led to an enterprise survival crisis, with some enterprises choosing to lay staff off to ensure their post-crisis recovery. However, studies have found that post-crisis lay-offs were often related to inherent pre-crisis problems, such as insufficient capital reserves, a lack of a viable business model, and relationships within the organization. Although
layoffs can reduce enterprise costs in the short term, they are not good for the recovery and growth of enterprises after a crisis [31]. This study also proved that staff was the cornerstone of the human capital of any organization [34], and human resource management had a direct influence on enterprise resilience. These findings were in line with previous research [1, 40] on resilience-building practices.

Over the year between the two surveys, there were some changes in the tourism enterprise managers’ importance ratings for two of the influencing factors. CSR was believed to have a more significant impact on corporate resilience one year after the outbreak, but management psychological resilience was rated slightly lower. Filimonau et al. found that CSR enhanced job security and promoted greater organizational commitment from senior managers, improving corporate resilience [12]. Practical evidence has shown that tourism enterprises need to be more actively involved in CSR to deal with future catastrophic events. This study also found that from an enterprise perspective, investment in socially responsible practices helps to retain qualified employees, establish a more solid organizational capital, and strengthen organizational resilience in a crisis. Arguably, this was the key finding in this study and suggests that companies should pay greater attention to CSR to improve their ability to withstand future crises and disasters.

Existing studies have found that the resilience associated with individual psychological adaptability positively impacts internal enterprise resilience [41]. However, different from existing studies, this study found that after a year, the scores given for the importance of psychological adaptability were slightly lower than the year before. This may have been because organizational change has not been part of the tourism enterprise’s corporate culture. After all, many of these enterprises tend to be owner-centric (especially family-owned enterprises) and tend to focus on day-to-day operations rather than long-term sustainable growth. Further, it has been shown that while soft power, such as the employee base, internal relationships, and corporate culture, does not directly promote resilience, it is important to long-term corporate performance [42]. However, there are few examples to prove whether CSR practices result in long-term tourism enterprise vitality or whether the management’s mental resilience is less important to resilience recovery after COVID-19. More detailed empirical studies are therefore needed.

6 Conclusion

Because of the identified themes, this study contributes to resilience theory and provides some guidance for more detailed future research. This study used a process-based approach to determine the importance of the different tourist enterprise resilience factors in different stages of a crisis, which in this case was the COVID-19 pandemic. From the initial analysis of the interview texts, thirty sub-themes and six dominant themes were identified: government support, psychological adaptability, technological innovation capability, human resource management, CSR, and financial conditions. Two online surveys one year apart were then conducted to determine the importance 45 tourist enterprise managers gave to these six resilience factors for post-pandemic recovery. Compared with the early stage of the pandemic, the importance of CSR increased significantly, which was possible because of the situation in China. Because of the slowing economic development and the changes in social consumption, increasing CSR could assist enterprises to optimize or even reshape their corporate image, promote enterprise growth, build resilience to withstand crises, and be better able to adapt to change [32]. However, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are going to be long-lasting, especially when many people in the world do not yet have access to a vaccine [32]. It is therefore crucial going forward that governments and marketing firms analyze the effects of the current catastrophe on the industry.
6.1 Implications

From a managerial perspective, as COVID-19 continues its global disruption, businesses are going to face multiple obstacles and challenges. By exploring the major factors affecting business resilience during the pandemic, this study provides practical implications for the development of crisis management practices at both individual and organizational levels. At the individual level, managers need to enhance employee and organizational resilience as psychological adaptability, technological innovation capability, human resource management, CSR, and their financial conditions all have a significant impact on the development of enterprise resilience and the crucial task of reviving and sustaining enterprises and the industry at large. The proposed organization resilience framework suggested by the results in this study provides practical guidelines for the development of viable action plans to respond to current and future crises. Notably, to be able to formulate strategies to overcome or lessen the effects of the threats, management needs to be aware of the complexity of the system environment in the different crisis stages [37]. Therefore, timely and rapid coordination between management and employees is needed.

At the organizational level, governments have played major roles in the fight against COVID-19 to ensure economic recovery, including a recovery in the tourism industry. For example, many government-sponsored no-interest loans are available to assist enterprises to get through this turbulent time. The tourism industry needs credible measures from the government to generate market confidence and reduce the virus risk. Overall, governments should move quickly from the first stage of subsidizing liquidity to incentivizing sustainable recovery and innovation.

Whether COVID-19 leads to a radical transformation of the tourism sector remains to be seen; however, the imprint it will leave on both tourism demand and supply is expected to have long-term, incremental impacts for many years to come and will ultimately result in a transformation of the tourist experience. Therefore, the results of this study may provide some guidance for this transformation.

6.2 Limitations

Because of the scarcity of information and the ongoing nature of the event, there is a need to mention the study’s limitations. First, the research was mostly based on qualitative analyses, which means that the results cannot be generalized to the tourism industry as a whole [43]. Therefore, based on the results from this study, comprehensive empirical investigations are needed to fully assess the pandemic’s impacts on tourism industry resilience. Further, as this study was focused on tourism managers and enterprises in Sichuan Province, some factors may not be applicable to other regions or countries. Therefore, random samples from diverse regions and cultures could bring a deeper understanding of these resilience factors [3].

This study only consulted tourism industry managers [20], such as travel agents, accommodation providers, and restaurants. Therefore, future research could consider examining the resilience factors in a greater number of representatives from each sector and tourism industry players in other sectors, such as transport and tourist attractions, to better understand the different levels of resilience.

Lastly, the pandemic event discussed in this article was ongoing at the time of writing; therefore, future studies need to continue observing the situation to determine further research directions.

References

[37] G.D. Sharma, A. Thomas, J. Paul, Tourism management perspectives 37, 100786 (2021)
[38] E. Thukral, Strategic Change 30, 153 (2021)