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The Resilience of Corporate Tourism: Bleisure, Digitalization, and Sustainability

Resiliencia del turismo corporativo: bleisure, digitalización y sustentabilidad

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to analyze the resilience of corporate tourism in the last three years. Interviews were conducted with industry professionals, and a questionnaire was applied to corporate clients. The results show that adaptation was achieved through short-term planning, bleisure tourism, digitalization, and sustainability. The main conclusion is that resilient companies have changed their line of business, accepted to operate in the short term, and offered more flexibility in pricing.

Keywords: corporate tourism, Covid-19, adaptation, resilience, digitalization

JEL CODE: M19



RESUMEN

El objetivo del trabajo es analizar la resiliencia del turismo corporativo en los últimos tres años. Para alcanzar dicho objetivo se hicieron entrevistas a profesionales del sector y se aplicó un cuestionario a clientes corporativos. Los resultados muestran que la adaptación se alcanzó mediante cuatro factores: planeación a corto plazo, el turismo bleisure, la digitalización y la sustentabilidad. La principal conclusión es que las empresas resilientes han cambiado su línea de negocios, aceptado operar a corto plazo y ofrecido mayor flexibilidad en los precios.

Palabras clave: turismo corporativo, Covid-19, adaptación, resiliencia, digitalización.

Código Jel: M19

INTRODUCTION

Corporate tourism is significant because it reduces seasonality (Durieux, Amaral & Lenzi, 2013; Cardona, 2014). Especially in Spain, where tourism is primarily seasonal. It is a fact that the impact of Covid-19 on corporate tourism was initially high. Everything seemed to return to normal after the first few months, but the Omicron variant's appearance caused the tourism market to suffer.

Mass vaccination gradually diluted the effect of Covid-19. Nevertheless, both tourism companies and corporate clients have been able to adapt. Segmenting corporate clients and identifying the economic agents involved in the sector (SMEs, multinationals, works, and projects) have been key to adaptation. Covid-19 has undoubtedly taught companies how to act in an extreme situation and has given hope that it is possible to recover with even better results than before (Lu et al., 2020; Ngutsav & Ijirshar, 2020)

Ignorance and permanent fear for two years have been other essential aspects. However, despite this, tourism companies and client companies have guaranteed all the security to continue their activity based on health, hygiene, and safety measures for clients and their employees. This situation leads to the following research question: What factors have contributed to the resilience of corporate tourism in the last two years?

THEORETICAL-CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Resilience depends on the ability to reinvent business models and strategies as circumstances change constantly (Demmer, Vickery & Calantone, 2011; Contreras & Alvarado, 2021; Adekola & Clelland, 2020). Best practices are insufficient when changes in the global environment are radical and surprising (Hamel & Valikangas, 2003). Resilient companies can absorb change and disruption, both internal and external, without affecting their profitability (Swaminathan, 2022). They even gain extra benefits from adverse and unforeseen circumstances (Contreras & Alvarado, 2021).

The competitiveness of enterprises has been measured in terms of their market share and comparison with others (Umarov et al., 2019; Iversen et al., 2020). However, competitiveness must be challenged in the face of new realities. Therefore, competitiveness should be measured by how difficulties are converted into opportunities for the company's survival (Estrada & Alvarado, 2020).

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Moreover, firm size only becomes an obstacle to resilience if those working in large organizations fall into the error of believing that success is self-perpetuating (Hamel & Valikangas, 2003; Minolli, 2005). On the other hand, smaller firms have shown greater resilience to rapid change (Belitski, 2022) because they have a more vital link to locality.

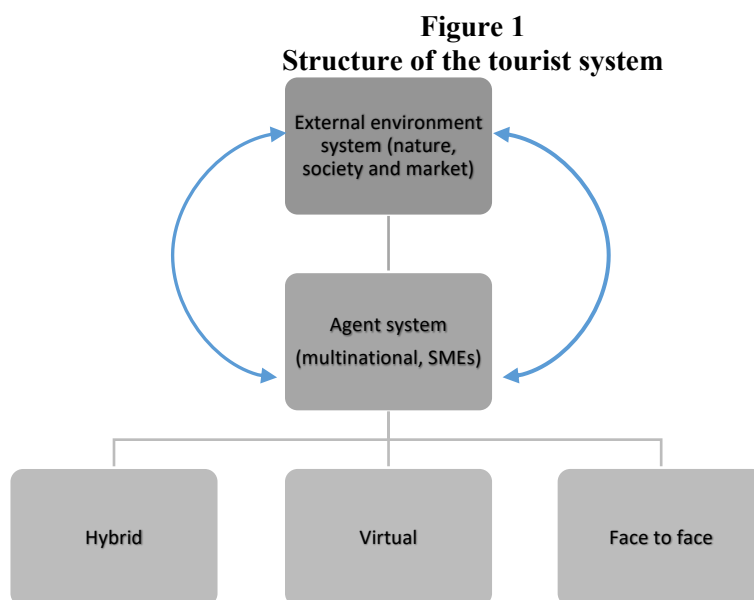
A study of small businesses in the accommodation sector in the city of Yogyakarta revealed remarkable resilience in local tourism businesses during the decade-long crisis that affected Indonesia's tourism industry (Dahles & Susilowati, 2015).

Business resilience is closely related to the resilience of the locality. The location of the enterprise can be a source of resources that strengthen resilience. It is the case as long as resources are channeled appropriately. How each organization, territory applies resources, or economic sector makes a difference in the adaptation period and results.

Complex adaptive systems theory is the basis for analyzing and understanding business resilience (Ma, Xue & Huang, 2020; Basile & Dominici, 2016; Langdon & Sikora, 2006; Haataja & Okkonen, 2004; Etemad, 2004; Rullani, 2002).

Complex adaptive systems are agents that perform actions from which they learn to adapt while interacting with each other (Figure 1). Thus, the company offering tourism services is an agent. This agent is linked to other agents (client companies).

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Fuente: Own elaboration (Yang et al., 2019).

In turn, each of these enterprises is composed of learning individuals. Individual learning depends on the environment (it does not always encourage learning), the motivation to learn, and the capacity to do so (skills, aptitudes, and attitudes that lead to critical thinking) (Tejedor & Aguirre, 1998; Peña, Gómez & Rubio, 1999; Esteban, 2002; Pérez, 2002; Prot, 2004; González, 2006; de Medrano & de Paz Higuera, 2010; Morgado, 2014; Bruner, 2018).

Corporate tourism

Corporate or business tourism refers to tourism that involves travel to carry out business-related activities and whose primary purpose is for the company's work purposes (Belén, 2013). It involves a company member traveling to a different place of work and residence to attend a meeting, activity, or event. In addition, business tourism is combined with other types of tourism during the same trip.

This combination increases the company's productivity and profitability because the employee is motivated to do his or her job. In addition, it fosters the employee's sense of belonging to the company. Corporate tourism fosters commitment between both parties (company- employee).

The company to which the employee belongs is a customer of the companies offering corporate tourism services. However, the individual corporate tourist receives the service: the employee who travels. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze and identify their profile, needs, and expectations.

The individual corporate tourist is characterized by a more stable profile than the leisure tourist in terms of finances and travel planning. In addition, they do without personal belongings, so traveling with the essentials is an identifying feature. Finally, they seek well-being that prioritizes rest, concentration, security, and protection throughout the trip.

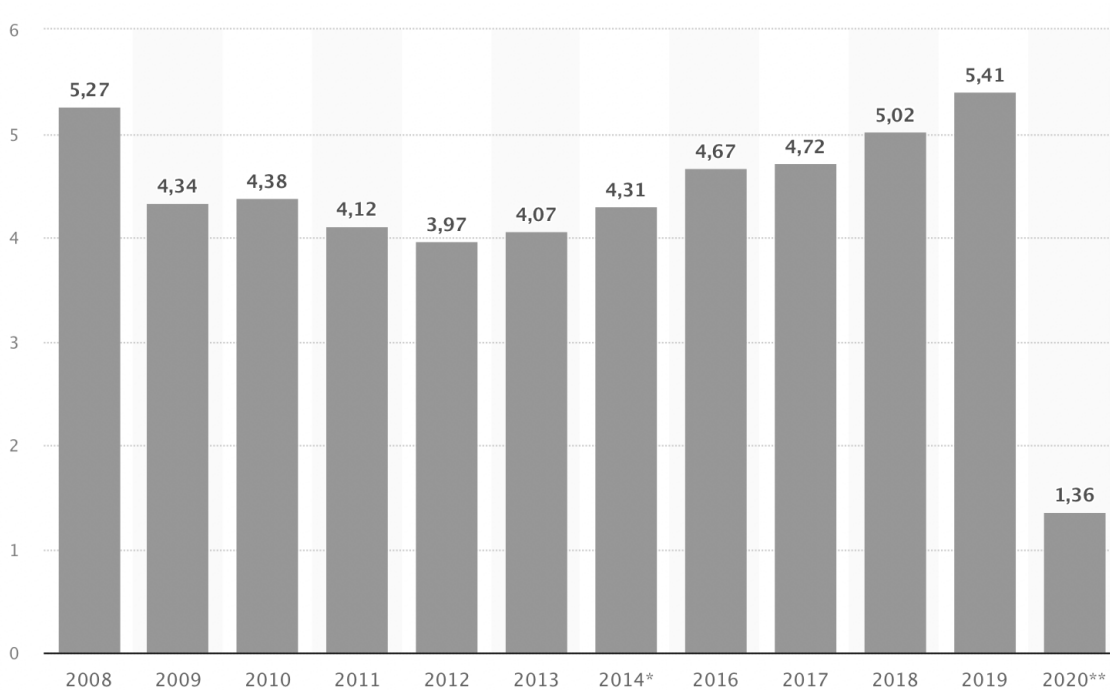
Aspects of agility in documentation, connectivity with co-workers and family members during the trip, and spaces dedicated to the work environment are essential. They also need extra services, such as transfers, laundry, and room service. Like any other tourist, the corporate tourist becomes demanding and requires only treatment for a satisfactory travel experience.

Pre-pandemic business tourism and COVID impact

Expectations for the business tourism sector were high in 2019 (Graph 1). World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2020) expected growth of 3-4% in 2020; the Middle East region had the fastest-growing region in terms of international tourist arrivals in 2019, almost doubling the global average (+8%). Growth in Asia and the Pacific slowed. Despite this, it had above-average growth, with a 5% increase in international arrivals. Europe, where growth was also

lower than in previous years (+4%), was leading in international arrivals, with 743 million international tourists in 2019 (51% of the global market) (UNWTO, 2020).

Graph 1
International tourists visiting Spain for work purposes, 2008-2020 (millions)



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Source: Statista (2022).

Possible crisis threats such as Donald Trump's policies, Brexit, or the financial instability left by the previous crisis were possible. However, in recent years, none of these aspects had had a significant impact, so no one imagined that the arrival of a global pandemic, which would lead to one of the greatest catastrophes in history, was yet to come.

COVID meant that society had to adapt to a new life. Even the companies were surprised because all the people who contributed to the operation of the companies were affected by the health restrictions imposed by the situation. As a result, companies sometimes must resort to different decisions to continue their activities, although sometimes, they are forced to close down.

Others reduced staff through the innovative "Expediente de Regulación Temporal de Empleo" (ERTE), a working modality already being carried out in a small proportion in certain companies and on certain occasions, but which was now massively applied worldwide in the majority of companies: teleworking.

Teleworking and digital meetings had an impact in many ways, but what concerns us, which is corporate tourism, had a significant, almost decisive impact.

It affected the organization of corporate tourism events with a decrease in tourism services, venues, and transport. It was also required to bring venues up to sanitary standards, affecting costs and profitability. As a result, tourism, in general, underwent a significant transformation while simultaneously trying to provide the most significant possible security for the client regarding safety and hygiene measures.

In the first stage of COVID, the adaptation of spaces and measures led to higher costs and low profitability. On the other hand, in meeting rooms, the most used spaces by companies, there was a considerable decrease in prices as they had to be affordable for the few meetings that could be held face-to-face. It decreased by 40% in 2020/2021 and 15% in 2022 compared to 2019. Recovery will be a reality by 2022.

The latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer shows that international tourism experienced a strong rebound in the first five months of 2022, with almost 250 million international arrivals recorded. This figure, compared to the 77 million arrivals recorded between January and May 2021, means that the sector has recovered almost half (46%) of the pre-pandemic level of 2019 (UNWTO, 2022).

In 2022 it tends to even out, as far as Spain is concerned, as the most reactivating client in the country is the national one. However, local business tourists cannot yet reach 2019 levels either, although they are in the process of doing so. The combination of leisure and business is a crucial element for the recovery of corporate tourism.

Bleisure travelers

Bleisure tourism combines business and leisure travel (Lichy & McLeay, 2018; Chung et al., 2020). It is the union of business and leisure. It changes people's travel and business and contributes to holiday leisure tourism (Pinho & Marques, 2021). In this way, they have more flexibility in their schedules during the working day, enjoying leisure tourism wherever they are.

Companies are increasingly seeing employees spend part of their day at work and leisure. Moreover, 2 out of 5 business travelers opt for bleisure, according to Braintrust (2019). It also has advantages for employees, as they can become happier and more productive, leading to higher productivity.

The economic factor is also noteworthy, as it allows workers to travel more cheaply and to enjoy a short holiday which, in many cases, they share with their families. It is the case when they include the weekend after working days. For companies, this translates into more motivated employees at work, more significant commitment to the company, and stronger bonds between staff. And, of course, higher productivity for the company.

Travel agencies are essential in corporate tourism due to their alliances with hotels. For medium and large corporate clients, it is easier and more accessible to manage their bookings through an agency.

Although there are different ways to make reservations in hotels or other tourist companies, traditional agencies are better positioned than other modalities. Bleisure tourists, due to their more demanding requirements than other types of tourists, opt for traditional agencies because of the specialized treatment they guarantee to the client. In addition, many travel agencies specialize in business travel, which is why they are indispensable in this trend for combining a few days' holidays.

Looking to the post-pandemic future, the expectation of the arrival of bleisure tourism will help the sector to recover and contribute positively to the attitude of company employees.

Digitalization

Telematic meetings were used before the pandemic. During 2020 and 2021, digitization was chosen as a form of company interaction. However, this threatened the tourism sector, as digitalization in companies is evolving very quickly.

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The digitalization pandemic has also brought to light that companies realized a lot of unnecessary travel and face-to-face meetings could be solved remotely. As a result, it has allowed companies to cut costs. However, there is a recovery in conventional forms of business meetings.

Recent restrictions on mobility and direct contact with other people have reinforced the human need for personal relationships. After all, business tourism aims to connect employees and their involvement in the company.

On the other hand, other forms of business are helping the sector to recover significantly, such as digital nomads (workers who are not tied to a single workplace) and the bleisure typology, which, as mentioned in the previous section, could increase their stay by combining it with leisure. Spain is relevant as a setting for this new employment trend.

The elements that explain its potential as a tourist destination play an equally crucial role in positioning the country as a destination for these new professionals. Thus, several Spanish cities are at the top of the rankings of the best cities in the world to live and telework (Expat Insider 2020: <https://www.eleconomista.es/economia/noticias/11166843/04/21/Estas-son-las-cuatro-ciudades-espanolas-favoritas-para-vivir-y-teletrabajar-entre-los-extranjeros.html>).

It is also worth highlighting the case of Malaga, where large technology companies such as Google and Vodafone are opening hubs, to guarantee the best professional conditions to retain talent, which today go far beyond the salary itself.

The evolution and use of technology are significant here, as it helps to do away with paper and the expense of other scarce materials. For this issue, the pandemic has been positive since, on the one hand, telematic means were the primary means of communication, and on the other hand, the less contact (personal or through objects) there was, the more secure it was perceived to be.

Sustainability

Sustainability has been taking place in business for many years, but it remains an elusive challenge. It is not easy to achieve without prior awareness, not only within companies but also in society. There are many ideas about sustainability, but there are still no defined guidelines that smaller companies can apply. In addition, financing is a crucial aspect of sustainability, as it gives rise to conflicting economic interests on the part of different agents (governmental or business) that hinder progress.

The pandemic has greatly "helped" the sustainability of this sector; by telematically holding all these meetings and events, the environmental impact and carbon footprint that these face-to-face meetings or events used to produce have been significantly reduced.

The main reason for this is transport. People traveled by any means of transport to where the event or meeting was held. As a result, large-scale international events had a high polluting impact. The pandemic eliminated the environmental impact by telematically carrying out all these events and meetings. Therefore, companies are beginning to value proximity as a primary element in reducing their carbon footprint.

Choosing suppliers with strong environmental policies, such as hotels or airlines, is increasingly decisive in celebrating an event or company meeting. In addition, those who respect recycling management or develop Corporate Social Responsibility actions will go first in choosing companies.

It takes time for sustainability actions to be taken by most companies, with 31% currently willing to invest in more sustainable travel, according to GBTA (Global Business Travel Association). On the other hand, business travelers value choosing a sustainable hotel, as we will see below.

METHODOLOGY

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A questionnaire was applied to 40 key informants (professionals involved in individual corporate tourism) to understand the changes in their profiles during the pandemic. Applying this questionnaire allowed us to build a different perspective on the corporate tourism market. The 40 people traveled for professional reasons, and their collaboration allowed us to learn about their habits and aspects that have changed during this time.

The number of informants was limited due to scope issues. The questionnaire was applied under limitations for contact with other people. On the other hand, applying it later would not have made it possible to know the actual situation of the sector in a critical situation that would be difficult to repeat. Essential details would have needed to be recovered. Additionally, the analysis of the interviews is complemented with secondary sources.

Firstly, a filter question was asked about whether the person currently travels for business purposes, and of all the respondents, 65% said yes. However, 30% said no but previously traveled for work purposes, which consider a high percentage, in line with what has been studied so far.

Based on people who used to travel but do not currently travel, information was extracted on their travel habits, frequency, and destination of travel. It is important to note that, in terms of destination, the percentages were equal both inside and outside Spain. There was a balance between domestic and international, which has changed in recent years.

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Analyzing the opinion of experts in the sector helps to understand the sector's evolution during the pandemic. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews with experts complement the analysis of the questionnaire results. In addition, the interviews help to identify the resilience strategies followed by the different client companies (SME and Multinational). Finally, the results have been enriched with statistical data obtained from official sources and reports presented by the UNWTO (2020, 2022).

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The pandemic has not affected all businesses in the same way. As restrictions were lifted, what little activity there was mostly from SMEs and businesses whose services were needed and could not be interrupted by the pandemic. Smaller firms have shown greater resilience to rapid change because they have a more vital link to locality.

Interviews with industry experts

According to the interviews conducted, as of September 2020, hotel occupancy was around 10-15%, and most clients were companies whose work was essential, particularly medical, service and construction, and project companies.

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The sector began to recover in 2021, with small and medium-sized companies leading the way due to their need to travel to survive. However, it should not be forgotten that, throughout this year, there were still restrictions on mobility within the national territory between the different autonomous regions.

However, business activity in the tourism sector was mainly domestic, as all the social and health restrictions made the international transit of people difficult. Each of these enterprises is composed of learning individuals. Individual learning depends on the environment (it does not always encourage learning), the motivation to learn, and the capacity to do so (skills, aptitudes, and attitudes that lead to critical thinking. This type of company requires continuous and direct contact with its customers or with its activity, as it does not have the resources and infrastructure of a multinational.

After going out for a short time, companies already needed employee training, team visits, and recruit meetings, so in the first quarter of 2021, trips began to be activated. From then on, new companies have been joining the program.

In the case of multinationals, activity came to a screeching halt. Leading companies were the first to interrupt travel and the last to reactivate it. For these companies, the health of their employees was paramount, and strict protocols were put in place to ensure the health and safety of employees. If the companies were doing well financially, they would consider traveling again, but if the situation was precarious, the first thing they would restrict was traveling, as it was an item that could reduce costs, and so they did.

As for Covid-19, the situation has been very variable. For example, considering the air mobility of each country, the requirements to present a PCR to enter many countries, and border closures, among others.

Telework was effective for large companies, and they have been able to afford it because of their telematic means, advertising, increased purchasing power, and online activities. It has allowed them to invest more in IT equipment and digitalization aspects. They have been able to give their employees the necessary materials to telework or carry out certain activities online.

In terms of teamwork, technology has been fundamental. In the past, if not travel and not see colleagues, but now with all the telematics options, it is possible to keep the team in contact and united.

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In some companies, a "rebound effect" is observed when people have not seen each other in person for a long time; people need to see each other in person. There is a need for regular departmental meetings to restore or improve team spirit.

Involvement in the company and the belonging to the company is critical. There are small meetings in the short term, whereas before, it was the other way around. Instead of scheduling it for a few months from now in the hope that the situation would be more favorable, they are organized now. Before, the dynamics were different, long-term scheduled meetings with many people.

They are now resuming face-to-face visits, although only for those situations considered vital for the business, and the rest of the contacts are maintained by teleconferences. For these face-to-face visits, they adjust their trips in terms of number, frequency, and purpose.

On the other hand, health and safety measures are still required, as the safety of their employees is still of paramount importance in large companies. Furthermore, as a supplier, tourism companies must meet their requirements and offer all the needs and conditions demanded by multinationals. Therefore, tourism companies are constantly changing, adapting, and anticipating the client's needs.

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Within corporate tourism, the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions/Events) section has been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. As we have already stressed, companies cannot put the health of their employees at risk. Therefore, all pandemic travel restriction policies ensure that the company can continue to operate without the risk of making many people ill if they were to gather for such events. Again, it occurs primarily at the national level, as with SMEs, due to international restrictions and limitations.

However, the MICE section is currently the one that is most influencing the recovery of the business tourism sector and is the basis for the survival of hotels. However, reaching the billing levels of 2019 is difficult, although the volume will increase significantly. Therefore, the possibility of raising prices is expected in the medium term, not before 2023. Remember, complex adaptive systems are agents (SMEs, Multinationals) that perform actions from which they learn to adapt while interacting with each other. (Table 1)

Table 1
Company resilience 2020-2022

| | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| SMES | They did not stop traveling in full | First to be reactivated and quickly | Activated |

MULTINATIONALS

They stopped traveling altogether

Last to be reactivated

Some activated

Source: Own elaboration based on expert interviews.

The recovery is expected to be almost complete in the coming years. First, however, it will integrate a new way of meeting: the hybrid model. This new trend allows companies to meet from different locations without requiring many people to travel to another city or country.

The hybrid model has the particularity that part of the attendees is at the meeting place, and another part follows a streaming broadcast. It can be unidirectional or bidirectional, and everyone can participate. For this reason, it is not known whether face-to-face work will be fully recovered, as there is the advantage that having it streamed gives the option of reaching a much broader market.

In addition, experts say that there has been a major shift in how companies plan meetings. Companies have not been traveling and, therefore, not meeting for a long time. They see that as the social beings that we are, we have this need, and now, it is very noticeable as the health situation has been at its best since it began. So, they want to regain that movement and socialization.

Prices

SMEs are now practically reactivated and sometimes exceed pre-pandemic levels in hosting volumes. However, the most changing aspect has been price. With the total paralysis of activity in the country, tourism companies were forced to close their establishments, and not only that, but when they reopened, they had to adjust their prices to a loss-making level for a period.

Gradually it is increasing as demand has grown, but even so, companies going to hotels are still going at tight prices; they have become accustomed to lower rates. It should be noted that, although prices are still far from pre-pandemic, the volume is very even in some companies; it is being exceeded. For comparison, the first quarter of 2022 exceeds 2021, in this case, both in terms of production and nights. Moreover, concerning 2019, it may exceed volume, but not production, mainly because it used to sell higher.

According to professionals, 2022 is excellent—companies to bring their employees together again and, of course, by removing the Covid-19 restrictions. Companies now want face-to-face meetings and not only that, but they are increasing the number of people per event, in

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some cases even bringing the whole company together to reactivate the feeling of belonging to the company.

The spring of 2022 saw a significant increase in short-term requests for events or hotel bookings, making sure that the health situation makes it possible and not taking the risk that there might be an unforeseen event in a few months. So again, teleworking was the primary tool to continue the business activity.

Many companies continue to telework, as the pandemic has changed the structure of companies and how they work. For this reason, some companies do not need to travel in the same volumes as before because they have parameterized the online mode, and this modality may be here to stay.

Many companies are keen to get back to doing events, as it will always be different to do it online as it is in person. Face-to-face work involves ways of selling any company and actions for it.

The hybrid model will be maintained for now. It is a balance between essential travel and meetings that are optional or different ways of bringing a company together from different places. This hybrid model will also incentivize MICE, as people see less of each other but will want to do so with better quality when they meet.

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On the other hand, eliminating the mask and other restrictions as compulsory will improve the situation by itself, and the fear of meeting again will disappear. Teleworking is going to stay, it has already been adopted by companies (not 100%), but it does not have to affect travel. They just only go to the office sometimes, but if they must travel, they will travel, in any case.

Small meetings may still be able to be held online, but business travel will be resumed. However, from then on, the savings from eliminating travel would have to be replaced by telematic improvements in companies with the consequent investment in digitalization. Therefore, the trend in companies will be to find a balance between meetings that can be done electronically and those that must be face-to-face.

The most striking changes in the corporate customer are the variations in the flexibility conditions for event cancellations or bookings. It is mainly due to the uncertainty we had for two years, as nothing was known for sure, and when everything seemed to recover in the last quarter of 2021, everything went down again.

Customers are uncertain about the future and want to avoid losing money. As a result, it results in fewer long-term confirmations, which experts say used to be the norm. As a result, they are now very short-term bookings, having been a medium to long-term segment.

Travel agencies have an essential role to play here, as many companies will use them as mediators in this respect. It is expected that their activity will increase again and that large companies will use them above all. In the end, it is an agent that guarantees certainty regarding cancellations, Covid measures, and security, among others.

Consequently, tourism companies have adapted to this situation by increasing and relaxing cancellation policies. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that although the Covid-19 era is behind us, issues continue to cause uncertainty, such as Brexit or the ongoing war in Ukraine. These conflicts may similarly affect corporate tourism as the pandemic has.

On the other hand, quality and hygiene standards are aspects customers expect and need to know in advance. In this respect, the tourism companies' rapid adaptation is worth noting, so the client companies hardly had any demands.

Today, the situation has relaxed, but the customer takes it for granted that these measures will be present. Tourism companies have changed their lines of business, specializing in sectors in which they were less focused than small and medium-sized companies since, during this period, they have had more significant and more constant activity. They had to search for the client; after a privileged situation until 2020 where there were no problems, they could even afford to reject specific requests.

At this time, they learned how to attract new customer segments to survive. They had to diversify. Some hotels were very focused on a particular customer segment, but the pandemic has led them to become multi-segment to achieve higher occupancy.

Price flexibility

Before the pandemic, the business was substantial; there was a great demand nationally and internationally. The price was fixed and did not move. Today, in the wake of the situation, a more commercial vision of the segment has been developed, and prices are negotiated and made more flexible, considering customers' different segments and needs.

Response times are changing.

Tourism companies must adapt. Orders are being placed at shorter notice, and adjusting the response to the customer's need is essential. After a situation of zero turnovers, which led to minimal staffing levels, there is now a workload that exceeds the current existing staff, and this must be balanced as soon as possible to continue providing quality service to the customer.

Sustainability

Sustainability has become very important as demand from companies to tourism organizations. Although professionals still need to consider it a decisive aspect in the choice of supplier, it can be a differentiating factor.

The reality is that the current expectations for sustainability are years away. Although the ideas exist, the infrastructure and the mentality to achieve these goals still need to be implemented. Moreover, there is a conflict between the cost ratio and the measures requested by the customer, as they want to avoid assuming higher costs for sustainable services. The road to sustainability is long; if sustainability costs so much, companies with less economic capacity will not be able to adopt sustainable measures.

Future

The recovery in 2022 is going fast. The multinationals have yet to reactivate fully; professionals expect that by the end of the year, it will have increased to a large extent, assuming an almost complete recovery in volumes throughout 2023. As mentioned above, demand will have to increase, considering all types of tourism and a return to regular activity in society.

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Once leisure tourism becomes active, it will help corporate tourism. If the pandemic is treated in the same way in all countries, this will give more social flexibility in all aspects so that companies will be less pressured and can return to the usual business of traveling and meeting. By September 2022, activity levels of 80% to 90% compared to 2019 are expected, and by 2023 95%. The trend is for stabilization to be achieved by the end of 2023.

Results of the questionnaire

Based on those who used to travel but are not currently traveling, interesting data was obtained on the alternatives travel companies have sought from these corporate tourists, and thus understand their travel decrease. A total of 91.7% said that the alternative to travel was videoconferencing, which confirms that internal company activity is still on the move, although not face-to-face. Looking to the future, the majority (66.7%) think that their company will resume business travel, although some do not know or even say no. In addition, all of those who used to travel on business feel that the pandemic has been the determining factor in their company's elimination of travel.

Concerning the responses of corporate tourists who currently travel, the following results were obtained: 65.4% say that they travel less than before because of the pandemic and therefore carry out their tasks via teleworking and videoconferencing. 19.2% say that they

have remained the same. 15.4% have traveled more because of changes in their jobs, increased responsibilities, and the drop in the incidence of Covid-19.

For individual corporate tourism, customer habits about how much they traveled and where they went have been ascertained. The answers are similar. However, we also asked where they travel now and saw that domestic travel had increased considerably. 61.5% travel domestically, 19.2% travel only internationally, and another 19.2% travel domestically and internationally. 57.7% indicated traveling to the same destinations as always and to the same hotels; 23.1% mentioned the same but different hotels, and 19.2% indicated different destinations and hotels.

As for expecting different quality and hygiene standards than before the pandemic, the free responses are divided into three blocks: 52% expect better quality and hygiene, 32% expect it to be the same as before, and 16% do not expect it to have to be better.

A fascinating question is about the difference in travel expenditure between before and now. Although more companies say they would maintain the same expenditure, 42.3% confirm that expenditure has increased. They explain the reason for their higher spending and comment that, on the one hand, it is due to the measures and services adapted to COVID-19 and, on the other hand, the price increase.

Regarding alternatives to travel, a high percentage (53.8%) indicated that they were videoconferences. We can see that this is a high percentage and confirms what we saw in the interviews with professionals; some companies have been unable to stop. 34% expressed that the alternative was teleworking, and 11.5% indicated using other alternatives. 88.5 percent of respondents said the pandemic influenced their company's travel, while 11.5 percent said it did not. 11.5% said it did not.

About sustainability, we wanted to know whether the companies surveyed had developed measures for implementing aspects related to sustainability, and the answer was as follows: 65.8% stated that they had, 23.7% said that they had not, and 10.5% did not know.

It confirms that although the road is long, companies gradually acquire sustainable guidelines. Furthermore, it is interesting to know if corporate tourists would go to a sustainable hotel and if they would pay more for it, and although most of them are willing to stay in one (73.7% said yes), only 47.2% agree to pay a higher price (52.8% indicated that they would not pay more). So here we see the problem between sustainability and the economic expense involved.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the resilience of corporate tourism in the last three years was made thanks to the results obtained from interviews with industry experts and questionnaires to corporate clients. The results show that adaptation was achieved through four factors: short-term planning, hybrid model, sustainability, and bleisure tourism.

Digitalization has played a significant role in this time. All existing technological means have been exploited and have even evolved favorably. It is not to say that it has threatened business tourism. In the end, it has made a place for itself between travel and meetings, giving rise to the hybrid system, which will endure in the long term because of its cost-effectiveness in terms of price, comfort, and security.

Travel will not be stopped because of health measures because, at the time of writing, there are few restrictions associated with Covid-19, although there may still be more fear than limitations. Therefore, the health risk will not be a lasting reason, although we must remember that it has been for many months.

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In support of the fact that travel will not stop, we can add the creation of many new start-up companies in the wake of the pandemic, which means that they are adding to the business tourism activity. However, others have disappeared. It means that the market has shown itself to be flexible and agile and is restructuring. Despite the restrictions suffered and the digital solutions found, there is a relevant aspect to be considered: telematic developments are functional, but connection, bonding, engagement, team spirit, and even creativity also need scenarios in which to meet and experiment physically, and here we can expect further development of MICE in the future.

In addition, the bleisure concept is also relevant, as it improves involvement with the company and its purpose, helping companies nurture and retain the talent of their workforces, which is a fundamental element of differentiation.

As far as sustainability is concerned, it has proved to be a complicated issue. First, a change in the mentality of groups and individuals in society is necessary, as more is needed for companies to establish sustainability guidelines, which only some of them would be able to meet.

It is mainly because financial budgets are proposed that companies with less purchasing power are unwilling to assume today. In addition, there needs to be more accurate and complete information from the media, which would help this global awareness. So, although

many companies have high sustainability values, we have realized the difficulty of implementing sustainable parameters without collaborating with other sectors.

The trend in corporate tourism is positive, as confirmed by professionals in the sector. Likewise, the data estimate that the pre-pandemic levels of 2019 will be surpassed in the coming years.

It is a fact that uncertainty and fear have grown in society as a result of this virus, and any situation that arises in the coming years will keep businesses, individuals, and society in general on their toes. It will mean that everything will be done cautiously so that any threatening situation will be dealt with one step at a time. Both the current war in Ukraine and the emergence of a new strain of the virus in Shanghai are issues that cause us to be on constant alert and that, for the time being, prevent the return to normality that we all hope for

Finally, it is concluded that resilient corporate tourism companies have changed their line of business, accepted to operate in the short term, and offered greater flexibility in pricing. The pandemic has had many positive effects on corporate tourism. Thinking about ways of action and recovery to adapt to the situation has made business lines change, leading to good results that have contributed not only to the exit of the crisis but also to the personal growth of the companies.

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