

**SURVIVING IN AND RECOVERING FROM THE COVID-19 IMPACTS BY  
SRI LANKAN HOMESTAY OPERATORS**

**Munasinghe S.\*, Kulathunga K.**

Department of Tourism Management, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

*sarath@mgt.sab.ac.lk*

**Abstract**

The Covid-19 pandemic paused international tourism posing millions of tourism businesses a historical challenge of surviving and recovering. Tourism businesses in Sri Lanka are composed 60% of small and medium-scale businesses (SMEs), including homestay operators. For this segment of business, surviving and recovering is even a challenge as many businesses represent informal sector and some of them are not registered businesses. As a result, these businesses face difficulties in obtaining benefits from relief packages offered by the government. However, the way tourism businesses survive during crises is not well explored. Accordingly, this research focuses on homestay businesses and interested in exploring those business operators' 1) survival strategies during the shut-down period caused by COVID 19, 2) experience of and satisfaction with social and governmental supports that they received, and 3) recovery strategies planned for in the post COVID tourism scenario. This research is significant given the fact that not many researchers have inquired into exploring lived experiences of tourism operators' survival and recovery strategies in the face of crisis. In Sri Lankan context, limited research can be found in relation to the issues and challenges faced by SMEs when recovering from crises, except for a limited research related to recovering from Tsunami disaster in 2004. A qualitative explorative research approach is proposed as this inquiry requires exploring personal interpretations of respondents' experiences, strategies adopted, and recovery plans. This research expects to make theoretical contribution to the knowledge regarding the survival and recovery strategies of tourism SMEs during the times of crisis. The knowledge generated can have implications in making plans for preparing SMEs for facing crisis situations in tourism.

**Keywords:** *Homestay Tourism, Tourism in COVID 19, Post COVID 19 Recovery Strategies, Tourism in Crisis*