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“I Feel Hopeful and Optimistic”: Post-Quake Psychological Resilience in Small Tourism Firms in Kaikoura, New Zealand

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Title: "I Feel Hopeful and Optimistic": Post-Quake Psychological Resilience in Small Tourism Firms in Kaikoura, New Zealand

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Abstract:

The ability for small tourism firms to bounce back from adversity has been linked to the resilience of both individuals, such as business owners and employees, and the organization itself. Studies examining how psychological resilience manifests in small tourism organizations are scarce. More importantly, the question of how psychological resilience of business owners and managers contributes to business recovery in the aftermath of a disaster remains unanswered. Using Kaikoura, New Zealand, as a case study, this paper attempts to understand how hope and optimism as markers of psychological resilience contribute to business recovery of small tourism firms. In 2016, Kaikoura was hit by a magnitude 7.8 (Mw) earthquake causing extensive damage to tourism infrastructure leading to a drastic fall in tourism numbers and expenditure. Post-quake international spending dropped to zero. In 2017, 17 small business owners and managers were interviewed on several aspects of business recovery. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings reveal two prominent themes in shaping psychological resilience, hope and optimism.

Hope consists of three components namely, goal, pathway and agency thinking. Drawing from Snyder (2002), hope refers to the perceived capability of an individual to derive pathways to reach the desired goals and motivate oneself through agency thinking to use these pathways. Luthans et al. (2007) suggest that hopeful organisational leaders are crucial to the survival and growth of organisations in the face of environmental change. Fifteen out of the 17 participants exhibited hope. Those participants were used to setting personal and business goals to cope with change. By having clear goals in mind, these participants had a good picture of what they wanted to achieve for their business post-quake. More importantly, this also implied that they set realistic and achievable goals, which enabled them to plan business recovery in an effective way.

In addition, when thinking in an entrepreneurial context, the 'pathway' component of hope suggests that the entrepreneurs who can demonstrate hope have the ability to come up with multiple courses of action for the business to overcome the event (Baron, Franklin, & Hmieleski, 2016). Participants in this study who were hopeful were able to proactively find alternative

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pathways to reach their goals, and were strongly determined in achieving those goals by adapting their plans to achieve the desired outcomes.

Optimism refers to holding positive expectations for the future (Carver, Scheier, & Segerstorm, 2010). Studies have shown that optimism is positively related to authentic leadership and entrepreneurial venture creation intention (Lindebaum & Cartwright, 2010; Mathew & Gupta, 2015; Trevelyan, 2008). Optimism is positively related to individual wellbeing post-quake (Kuijjer et al., 2014). The findings reveal that 15 out of the 17 participants exhibited optimism. When faced with adversity, optimistic attributions to the extenuating circumstances provide the necessary impetus for accepting and implementing change. One participant mentioned that he focuses his attention on the positive side of things as these generate business opportunities. The findings have implications for the well-being of small business owners and the type of business support that must be offered post-quake.

References available upon request.
