

Establishing a Safe and Sustainable Future for Travel in the Better Normal

Compendium

APEC Tourism Working Group

February 2024



**Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation**



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Glossary

- **Aotearoa Plan of Action:** sets out individual and collective actions towards achieving APEC's vision, along with how we will progress will be evaluated. Economies will review and adapt the Aotearoa Plan of Action over time to ensure it remains comprehensive, balanced, and relevant across all elements of the Putrajaya Vision. It is intended to be a living document. The Aotearoa Plan of Action does not preclude other APEC work to implement the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040.
- **APEC Safe Passage Framework:** considerations to ensure that border policies are based on science; espousing convenient travel due to availability of pertinent information required for safe, secure, and sustainable travel; opportunity to advance cooperation and coordination that will develop a mechanism that is flexible to proximately respond to future threats to cross-border travel.
- **APEC Safe Passage Scheme:** reconnect all economic areas and improve travel procedures for APEC member economies.
- **APEC Safe Passage Taskforce:** group for exchanging best practices on the safe resumption of cross-border travel at the domestic, sub-regional, and regional levels.
- **Better normal:** created when stakeholders and policymakers pivot to something new and at the same time leave behind unsustainable practices rendered obsolete by the pandemic and move forward with the lessons that will facilitate safety, security, serviceability, sustainability, and resilience.
- **Collaborative governance:** comprehensive understanding of the diversity and heterogeneity of tourism stakeholders towards long-term relationship building and cooperation.
- **Empathy map:** a design thinking exercise and an innovation toolkit that is used to understand another person, stakeholder, or user's perspective (i.e., what the users are thinking, feeling, seeing, hearing, and saying)
- **Immunity passports:** evidence of past infection with laboratory confirmation.
- **Interoperability:** ability of different systems, devices, applications, or products to recognize, connect, and communicate in a coordinated way, without effort from the end user.
- **New normal:** recalibrated practices and norms that are responses to the deficiencies encountered during the pandemic.
- **Old normal:** practices and norms (competition, autonomy) that were working prior to the pandemic but were found to be deficient during the pandemic.
- **Resilience:** a strong capacity to withstand crises and to grow stronger through adaption, learning, and effectively dealing with risk.
- **Safety:** everything and everywhere all at once encompassing both health, security, and environmental facets of seamless mobility.
- **Security:** the state of being free from danger or threat.
- **Serviceability:** convenience; speed with which the product can be put into service when it breaks down.

- **Sustainability:** consists of fulfilling the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations; ensuring a balance between economic growth, environmental care, and social well-being.
- **Travel bubble:** an agreement between two or more economies to open their borders to visitors from a partner economy (or economies)
- **TTHI Value chain:** interaction and collaboration between and among stakeholders directly influence tourist experiences and safety; operating in an interconnected and interdependent value chain perspective where tourists (end users)' experience are readily influenced by the reaction and interaction of tourism stakeholder.
- **Vaccine passports:** proof of vaccination against COVID-19 that are linked to the identity of the holder.

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List of Abbreviations

ABTC	APEC Business Travel Card
AIM	Asian Institute of Management
ALTCFT	Dr. Andrew L. Tan Center for Tourism
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APEC BMG	APEC Business Mobility Group
APEC PSU	APEC Policy Support Unit
APEC SCE	Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation
APEC SOM	APEC Senior Officials' Meeting
APEC TPTWG	Transportation Working Group
APEC TWG	APEC Tourism Working Group
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CDC	the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
COVAX	COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access
COVID-19	Coronavirus 2019
DOT	Philippine Department of Tourism
eHAC	electronic-Health Alert Card
EU	European Union
GTPP	Guide to the Philippines
IATF-EID	Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICV	International Certificate of Vaccination
ICVC	International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LITB	Langkawi International Travel Bubble
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
NC	Non-Constrained Environments
PATA	Pacific Asia Travel Association
PCDP	Polycarbonate Data Page
PENTUR	Respecto a la Política Ambiental del Sector Turismo
PHE	Public Health Emergency
RT-PCR	Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SHA	Thailand Safety & Health Administration
STV	Special Tourist Visa
TAST	Time, Air, Space, and Touch
TTHI	Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality Industry
UN	United Nations
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
US	the United States
VAT	Value Added Tax
VDS	Visible Digital Seal
WHO	World Health Organization
WTTC	World Travel & Tourism Council

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Executive Summary

- There are three fundamental principles that guide the creation of the APEC Safe Passage Framework. These are: (1) TTHI is a value chain; (2) there is no going back to the old practices rendered obsolete by the pandemic; and (3) the better normal is characterized by safe, secure, serviceable, sustainable, and resilient TTHI.
- The APEC Safe Passage Framework paves the way for a better resumption of cross-border travel while adhering to safety standards imposed by governments to ensure that risks and threats are minimized. However, it is hinged on cooperation and collaboration. Hence, with the appropriate policy environment, it would be relatively easier to safely resume cross-border travel because it is grounded on coordination among members of the TTHI value chain.
- The APEC Safe Passage Framework should be: (1) adaptive; (2) collaborative; (3) systematic; and (4) convenient guiding the design of policy frameworks and policy environments in driving safety, security, serviceability, sustainability, and resilience in the APEC region.
- While an across-the-board protocol may be ideal, the varying pandemic situation, resource availability and utilization, economic objectives, and priorities of different APEC member economies would not create a harmonious convergence of policy design and compliance. However, recognizing that such differences exist may lead to convergence. Despite differences in many aspects of various APEC member economies, everyone is geared towards a common goal – to revitalize TTHI and enable it to become safe, secure, serviceable, sustainable, and resilient in the better normal.
- The APEC Safe Passage Framework recognizes that “safety perceptions differ”; however, participating member economies have agreed that safety is “everything and everywhere all at once encompassing both health, security, and environmental facets of seamless mobility”. Hence, because jurisdictions are diverse along with approaches, differences in protocols are inevitable. In this light, the work continues because the concept of an APEC Safe Passage, which has been deemed a complex and a dynamic concept, still must be discussed, cascaded, defined, and operationalized to the TTHI stakeholders of APEC member economies. Because TTHI is a value chain, in communicating the concept of safe passage, the following must be addressed: (1) what it means for TTHI stakeholders; and (2) how it can benefit them? This is of critical importance because through a more empathic APEC, not only an effective policy environment can be created but also platforms to meaningfully engage stakeholders.

Keywords: APEC; COVID-19 pandemic; resiliency, safe passage; sustainability; travel, tourism, hospitality

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I. Introduction: Key constraints of TTHI amid the pandemic

“We shouldn’t go back to normal. Normal wasn’t good enough.”
Samuel (2021)

The TTHI is one of the global economy’s critical sectors as it has the capacity to boost economies and enable them to thrive given its power to generate employment and livelihood opportunities (Guterres, 2020). In fact, during the pre-COVID-19 era, the global TTHI has been posting rapid growth arising from its direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts (Perrottet & Benli, 2016). This rapid growth has been fueled by rising consumer disposable income (Chou, 2013), decreasing cost of travel (Hoeller & Roach, 2015), liberalization of travel-related markets (Fu & Oum, 2014), and enduring technological development (Vidal, 2019). All of these transformed the TTHI by enabling it to become autonomous, faster, safer, convenient, and cheaper (Hagemann, 2016).

However, TTHI’s growth trajectory was disrupted by the pandemic’s unprecedented impacts, exacerbated by travel restrictions, social distancing protocols, stay-at-home policies, temporary shutdown of transportation, and border lockdowns, among others (Rivera et al., 2022). Succinctly, the pandemic and the measures to contain it has constrained the movement of people and hit the core of tourism – high-touch, interactive, mobile (Gutierrez et al., 2020). Consequently, tourism flows, revenues, and employment were instantaneously and severely affected (Roxas et al., 2022).

As the global economy become successful in managing and containing the pandemic given aggressive vaccination thereby achieving herd immunity, the remnants of the damages and casualties point to various lessons that the TTHI must incorporate in its systems to speed up recovery, to do better, and to become more resilient in preparation for another interruption that may happen again in the future.

As economies recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, creating a more sustainable and resilient TTHI presents a challenge because of the varying priorities, mental models, and objectives of stakeholders. Nonetheless, there is concurrence to the fact that the pandemic disrupted the four salient characteristics of TTHI was stricken (Gutierrez et al., 2020):

1. service elements of TTHI are inseparable wherein production, delivery, and consumption occur simultaneously (Chitty et al., 2019);
2. TTHI services are human capital intensive and delivered by people (Chitty et al., 2019);
3. customers spend significant resources planning and paying for TTHI services (Nguyen & Pham, 2020); and
4. TTHI services are heterogeneous and highly differentiated (Bisland et al., 2020).

Because the spread of the virus is accelerated by the very essence of how TTHI operates, demand for business and leisure travel swiftly plunged to bare minimum and to what is necessary and essential only. This severely impacted the transportation industry particularly airlines, tour operators, travel

agencies, restaurants, hotels, and local communities dependent on tourism as a primary source of livelihood. Furthermore, government assistance that tends to be homogenous proved to be challenging in a heterogenous industry in terms of design, distribution, and monitoring. From these constraints, the priorities, mental models, and objectives TTHI stakeholders evolved and diverged.

Among a variety of other specific constraints faced by stakeholders, there is a need to find alternative approaches to allow TTHI to liberally operate, remain operationally viable given possible health crisis, mobility threats, and other disruptions that may interrupt the core salient characteristics of TTHI, co-exist with mobility-threats such as a virus that is possible to linger for a longer period (Rossman, 2021; Greshko, 2021), and minimize the impact of such threats (Zhang, 2021). While experts anticipate that health crises like the COVID-19 will be endemic and pose less danger over time (Phillips, 2021), individuals, families, and communities depending on TTHI are looking for an assurance that current and future risks and threats are mitigated.

II. Background and overview: Establishing safety, security, and serviceability in TTHI

2.1. Statement of policy question

As the operations of TTHI in most economies resumes (e.g., transportation connectivity is jumpstarted; hospitality sector welcomes guests once again; manufacturing, retail, and services becomes highly operational), risks remain to be a challenge (United Nations [UN], 2020). A relatively weaker consumer confidence and purchasing power persists due to remaining uncertainties in the pandemic situation coupled by the economic headwinds and downturns in many economies and in the global economy (e.g., rising inflation and interest rates, weak and slow economic growth) (Gourinchas, 2023).

Hence, it is important that key stakeholders and policymakers at the local, economy-wide, and multilateral level address the question on *how to facilitate mobility safely, securely, and serviceability across borders?* The discourse on taking sustainability and resilience in the TTHI must be taken to a higher level (i.e., policy level). This is a critical discussion point for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) wherein ensuring uninterrupted cross-border travel without undermining safety and security measures (e.g., maintain minimum public health standards aimed to manage the spread of virus would be a good starting point in bootstrapping the TTHI in the better normal, instead of new normal, from the old normal). The terms *old normal*, *better normal*, and *new normal* will be defined and distinguished shortly.

2.2. Required mindset to establish safety, security, and serviceability in TTHI

A “systems thinking” approach to bootstrapping tourism post-COVID-19 was developed by Roxas et al. (2022). In this study, causal loop diagrams identify areas where interventions can be made to help restart local tourism from the impacts of a health crisis (i.e., pandemic). Insights for policy action were proposed well before the crisis deepens and permanently derails the tourism industry. However, before discussing interventions, there is a need for TTHI stakeholders to recognize that the pandemic, or any disruptions, can serve as

a transformative opportunity (Mair, 2020; UN, 2020) and a transition event (Hall et al., 2020) where systemic modifications must be introduced to an industry that seems to have a seemingly defective system (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020). The impacts of this seemingly defective system were not profound enough to be observed prior to the pandemic but became overwhelming when existing explanatory models failed when the pandemic disrupted multiple scales encompassing economic, socio-political, and environmental facets (Sigala, 2020).

Alternatively, Gutierrez et al. (2020) argued the need to redefine travel and tourism in the *new normal* because there is no going back to the *old normal*. Stakeholders cannot insist that after the pandemic, they will just revert to what was prior to the pandemic, or a new system will just be in place as a reaction or a response to the pandemic. Learning from the experiences of the TTHI during the height of the pandemic, stakeholders should not drive towards going back to the *old normal* because that normal was not working and is now rendered obsolete by the pandemic. By going back to that way TTHI operates before loses the lessons learned. Hence, a *new normal* is required but a *new normal* is not enough.

This is where a mindset of a *better normal* comes into the discussion. A *better normal* is created when stakeholders and policymakers pivot to something new and at the same time leave behind unsustainable practices rendered obsolete by the pandemic and move forward with the lessons that will allow TTHI to emerge safer, more secure, more serviceable, more sustainable, and more resilient (Rivera et al., 2022). This is because another pandemic will happen in the future and by then, TTHI stakeholders cannot anymore argue that they were caught off-guard (Clausing, 2020). In the *better normal*, the TTHI is more proactive than reactive. Figure 1 briefly illustrates the distinction between old, new, and better normal.

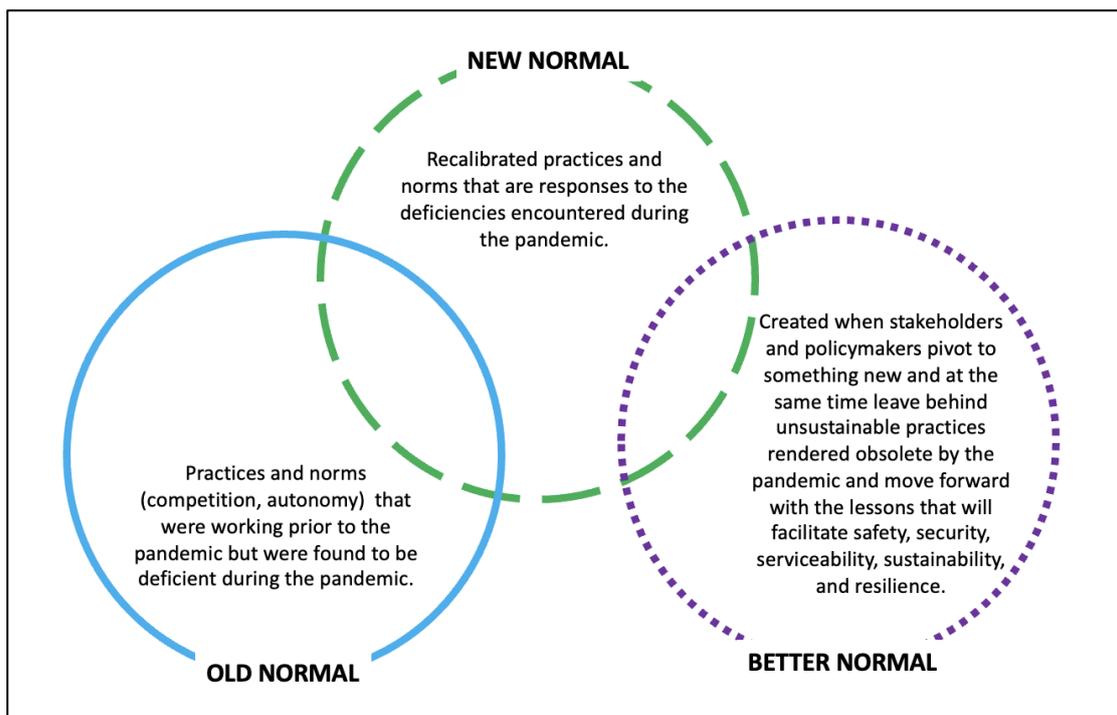


Figure 1. Distinguishing old, new, and new normal.

2.3. Necessary and sufficient conditions to establish safety, security, and serviceability in TTHI

Positioning the mindset of creating a *better normal* as a motivation for the creation of a safe passage framework among economies would be truly value-adding and such would remain to be relevant in the long run even if the COVID-19 pandemic has officially ended. This is because the creation of a better system and safe passage is geared towards making the entire value chain of TTHI not only safe, secure, and serviceable but also sustainable and resilient. The post-pandemic situation is an opportune time to create something better.

However, if the motivation is to temporarily alleviate the constraints brought about by the pandemic because of the belief that the industry must revert to the *old normal*, it can be construed as a deliberate disregard and sidestepping of the lessons learned from the plights of TTHI stakeholders (Samuel, 2021). Hence, any planning process may prove to be an ineffective utilization of resources. Figure 2 illustrates the mechanism in moving towards the *better normal*.

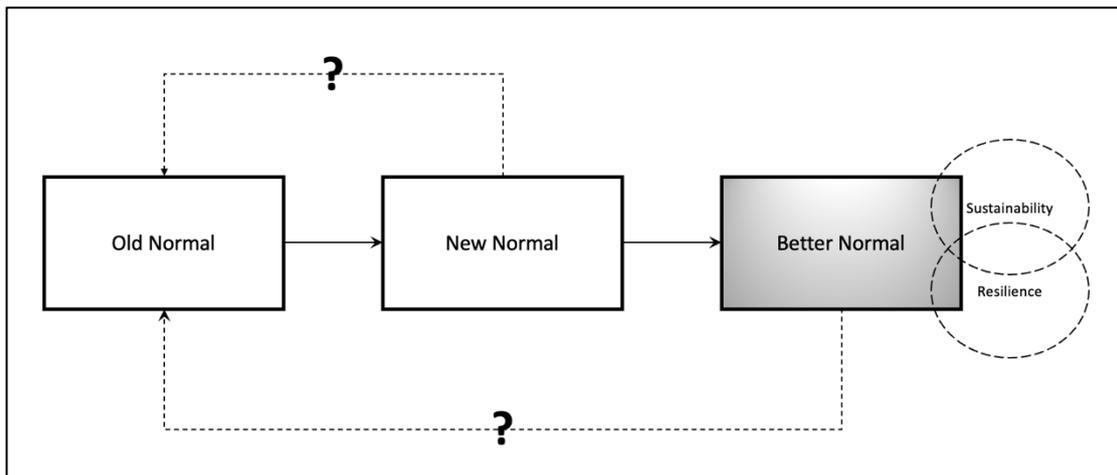


Figure 2. Conditions to establish safety, security, and serviceability in TTHI.

Travel behaviors and preferences have changed as seen in Figure 3 (Awad-Núñez et al., 2021; Fan et al., 2022; Jou et al., 2022; Paul et al., 2022; Terzić et al., 2022). Briefly, travelers now prefer outdoor and uncrowded attractions and destinations; travelers' decision to travel is hinged on the end-to-end travel experience; and convenience amid protocols and restrictions is of utmost concern to travel internationally. Hence, business models, TTHI products and services, and systems must change to continue serving the industry's heterogenous consumers with changing tastes and preferences. If the mismatch between the two will persist because of the inability to quickly pivot to changing landscape, it may pose more harm than good.

Recognizing that the landscape of travel has changed (DOT et al., 2021) is a necessary condition to establish a safe passage framework for economies. For this to become truly value-adding and effective, sufficiency condition requires acknowledgement that there is no going back to the old normal (Samuel, 2021) so that the safe passage framework can be anchored on the mindset that this is an opportunity not only to reboot TTHI but also to make it

not only safe, secure, and serviceable but also sustainable and resilient. In the advent of another disaster or disruption, stakeholders are ready to mitigate the risks and demonstrate resilience.

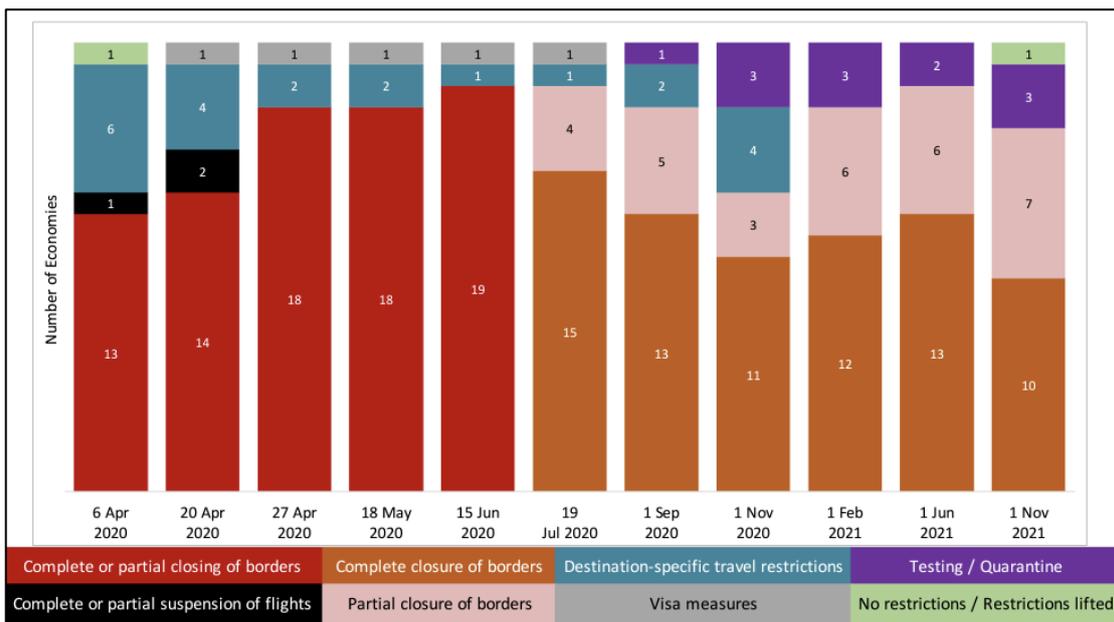
Old Travel Preferences	Renewed Travel Preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No pronounced preference between indoor-outdoor attractions and destinations against mass/crowded and sustainable/uncrowded attractions and destinations; Travelers' decision to travel is hinged on the cost of travel; Standardized travel itineraries are abundant; People tend to use both public and private transport; People prioritize the most affordable and convenient mode of transportation. Travelers have to deal with rigid policies of TTHI enterprises (costly rebooking) and destination economies (entry requirements) and are not able to mitigate uncertainties in travel due to unforeseen circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travelers prefer outdoor and uncrowded attractions and destinations; Travelers' decision to travel is hinged on the safety of end-to-end travel experience; Personalized or customizable travel itineraries are preferred; People tend to use less public transport and more private cars; People prioritize presence of safety measures in selecting a mode of transportation. Sanitation measures result in a greater willingness to use public transportation and ride-sharing services. Travelers require coordinated response among economies with respect to travel restrictions, harmonized security, and hygiene protocols to help restore consumer confidence and trust. Travelers prefer the most flexible destination economies, providing some confidence in risk mitigation.

Note: List is not exhaustive. While there are old travel preferences that persist, their degree may have changed in a post-pandemic TTHI.

Figure 3. Changes in travel preferences due to the pandemic.

III. Lessons from the impact of the pandemic on travel, tourism, and hospitality

3.1. Responses to manage the pandemic



Source: Lifted from APEC PSU (2022) sourced from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), COVID-19 Related Travel Restrictions, First Report – Eleventh Report, available at <https://www.unwto.org/covid-19-travel-restrictions>.

Figure 4. COVID-19 border restrictions in the APEC region.

Most economies, if not all, have prompted measures to manage and contain the COVID-19 pandemic by limiting mobility. In general, these responses include, but is not limited to travel restrictions, social distancing protocols, stay-at-home policies, temporary shutdown of transportation, and border lockdowns, face masks, sanitation, testing and vaccination requirements, quarantine protocols, and travel bubbles.

For instance, as per the APEC Policy Support Unit [APEC PSU] (2022), the APEC region has imposed some of the most stringent cross-border travel restrictions in the world including complete border closures and non-issuance of entry permits during the early period of the pandemic. See Figure 4 for the breakdown of COVID-19 border restrictions in the APEC region.

As the pandemic progresses, economies have witnessed a cycle of worsening and improving conditions. This compelled some economies to start reopening borders to reboot their TTHI. However, to manage risks to public health, economies also introduced mass testing, vaccination (both primary and booster doses), quarantine protocols, and other travel requirements that facilitate mobility but at the same time discourage non-essential travel. See APEC PSU (2022) for the full details of what APEC, in terms of travel, has implemented to manage the spread of the pandemic.

3.2. Key insights from independent studies

An economy-wide survey on the perception on travel was conducted in the Philippines in 2020 to 2021. The key implications generated by the survey results, while derived from the situation in the Philippines, may be useful as a baseline strategy that other economies may apply, adapt, or redesign to suit local and regional situations. The survey's key implications are geared towards recommending approaches to assist tourism stakeholders in rebooting the TTHI from disruptions.

At the onset of the pandemic, in May 2020, the Philippine Department of Tourism (DOT¹), Guide to the Philippines (GTTP²), and the Asian Institute of Management – Dr. Andrew L. Tan Center for Tourism (ALTCFT³) (DOT et al., 2020) launched an economy-wide travel survey with the objective of understanding travelers' behavior that will provide insights on how the pandemic affected travel decisions. The collective responses provided policymakers a better understanding of the local market and generated insights on the likely period when travel demand will resume, conditions for people to travel, measures to establish to increase confidence to travel, and traveler tolerance for additional safety measures. These findings were found to be

¹ The DOT is the Philippines' primary government agency mandated with the responsibility to encourage, promote, and develop tourism as a major socio-economic activity to generate foreign currency and employment and to spread the benefits of tourism to both the private and public sector. Website: <https://beta.tourism.gov.ph/>

² GTTP is a travel booking website and travel agency with the largest collection of Philippines tours, packages, and travel services on a single marketplace to give travelers a hassle-free vacation. Website: <https://guidetothephilippines.ph/>

³ ALTCFT is one of the research centers of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) that provides valuable education in tourism management; assists and uplifts tourism stakeholders through research, educational programs, and conferences to pursue sustainable tourism development. Website: <https://aim.edu/research-centers/dr-andrew-l-tan-center-tourism>

consistent with other studies conducted in other economies such as that of Abdullah et al. (2020) in various economies, Awad-Núñez et al. (2021) in Spain, Fan et al. (2022) in the People’s Republic of China, Jou et al. (2022) in Chinese Taipei, Paul et al. (2022) in various economies, and Terzić et al. (2022) in 29 European economies. Table 1 presents the salient findings of these studies.

Table 1. Salient findings of scholarly studies on traveler’s behavior during the pandemic.

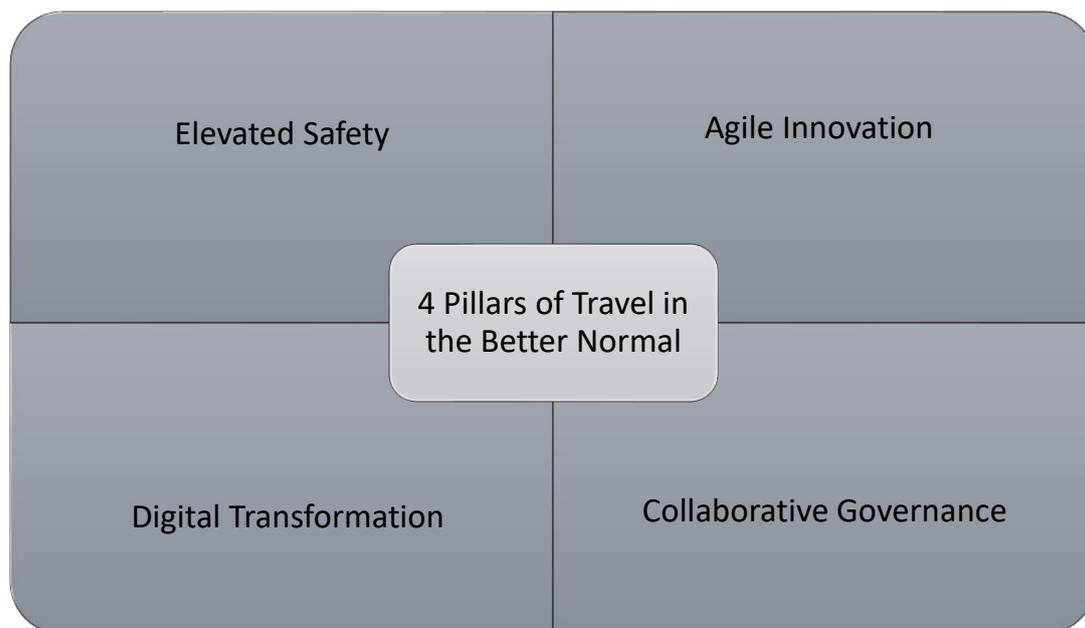
Authors	Locale	Key findings
DOT et al. (2020)	the Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel is perceived by travelers as key to keeping their sanity; • Travel behavior has changed that opened opportunities for designing and developing new travel products and services; • Travel and safety protocols need to be standardized and convenient to comply with; • Traveling can be personalized based on renewed preferences.
Abdullah et al. (2020)	Various economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures imposed by economies to manage the spread of COVID-19 influenced travel behaviors; • There is significant change in primary purpose of travel due to the pandemic – people tend to use less public transport and more private cars; • Modal shift to active modes from public transport and paratransit was significant; • People prioritized pandemic-related factors in selecting a transport.
Awad-Núñez et al. (2021)	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitation measures (e.g., vehicle disinfection, provision of covers for handlebars and steering wheels) result in a greater willingness to use public transportation and ride-sharing services in a post-COVID-19 situation. • People expect that implementing safety measures and improvements would not severely affect prices. • Transport operators must be guided on how to deploy safety measures while retaining users.
Fan et al. (2022)	People’s Republic of China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pandemic changed travel preferences in various ways. • Travelers tend to prefer natural / outdoor / uncrowded over cultural / indoor / crowded attractions and destinations; • Travel behaviors and intentions of residents are positively associated with their charitable attitude to contribute to the recovery of the TTHI, tourists' trust in domestic COVID-19 control, and awareness of destinations' promotion strategies; • Travel intentions of residents are negatively linked with risk perception; • Concerns about the international COVID-19 control and travel restrictions are two major factors affecting residents' intentions to travel abroad; • Implementing strict preventive measures while improving effectiveness, and adopting diverse

		marketing and promotion strategies increase tourists' trust.
Jou et al. (2022)	Chinese Taipei	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People might significantly reduce travel activities related to social entertainment during the pandemic outbreak. • Total travel activities by private vehicles are significantly reduced, while there is no significant decrease in the use of transit. • Highlighted the importance of: the time to promote government policies (such as implementing the real-name registration system for mask purchases, publishing confirmed cases, and establishing the transit disinfection system), types and number of weekly activities, and storage of various types of consumer goods. • Results can serve as reference for accommodating similar pandemics in the future.
Paul et al. (2022)	Various economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pandemic made a perceptible impact on daily travel behavior globally, particularly on mode shifts and changes in trip frequencies. • Changes in travel patterns before and during the pandemic were observed. • Possible viral transmission in public transit reduced public transit usage and increased private vehicle usage that poses challenges to sustainable transportation. • Discussed intervention measures to support transportation planners and policymakers to deal with the current pandemic as well as any future pandemics.
Terzić et al. (2022)	29 European economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two critical factors are likely to determine the future of tourism: politics and personalities. Politics and regulatory policies immensely impact travel intentions and decisions, in line with the slow international tourism recovery process. • General risk perception in times of pandemic went beyond health-related issues, spilling over economic and regional political tensions, while controversial travel bans and sanctions affected not only targeted economies but perceptions of travel risks in general. • Enforcement of quarantine on international travelers has immense implications for the relative attractiveness of economies to tourists after lockdowns have been eased. • Safe resumption of outbound tourism will continue to highly depend on a coordinated response among economies considering travel restrictions, harmonized security and hygiene protocols, as well as effective communication to help restore consumer confidence and trust. • Together with socio-economic aspects, evaluation of personal health status, reliability of governmental decisions and available health services in

destination economies are important for the decision-making process of travelers.

- Travelers will prefer the most flexible destination economies, providing some confidence in risk mitigation and the lowest impact on satisfaction aspects.
-

The collective findings of the abovementioned surveys and studies are critical in introducing initiatives to resume cross-border travel, consistent with the objectives of the establishment of a safe passage framework. These findings can be categorized into the four pillars of travel amid the pandemic developed by DOT et al. (2020) illustrated in Figure 5.



Source: Lifted from DOT et al. (2020).

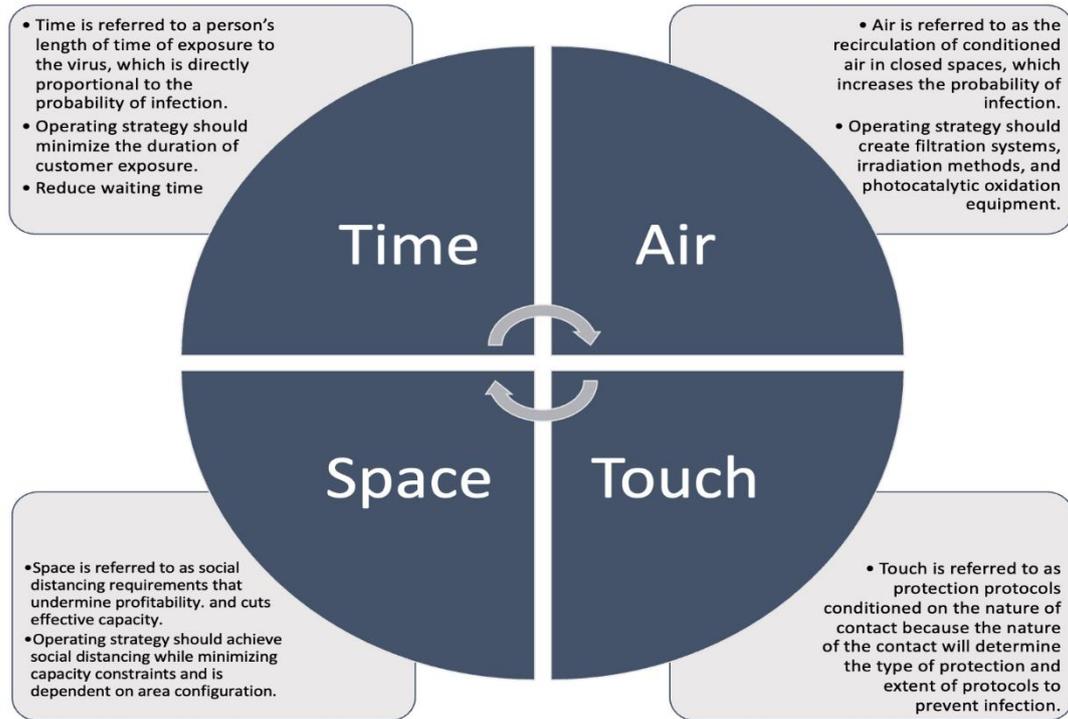
Figure 5. *Four pillars of travel amid the pandemic.*

3.2.1. Elevated safety

For elevated safety, there is a need to rebuild trust and confidence in travel. Enterprises in the TTHI must prioritize instituting trust and confidence in the safety of travel because safety has emerged to be a main driver of value. It is essential to design customer experience in the new normal around safety and ensure that enterprises look beyond their own touchpoints. The survey indicated that travelers are willing to undergo safety protocols, but this does not mean that possibilities of inconvenience will be disregarded. While safety protocols are deemed additional inconveniences and cost, it is a challenge for government and enterprises to create an effective communication plan and messaging to convey this to travelers. Note that travelers now require transparency on their overall experience unlike before, travelers can tolerate instantaneous, additional, and hidden charges. If we want to resume likelihood of cross-border travel, ensure travelers their safety at minimum inconvenience.

To advance elevated safety Roxas et al. (2022) proposed the TAST framework (p. 96). It provides a way of thinking about the elements of Time, Air,

Space, and Touch in designing strategies to rebuild trust and confidence without sacrificing everyone's safety. This is illustrated in Figure 6.



Source: Culled from Roxas et al. (2022)
Figure 6. TAST Framework.

3.2.2. Agile innovation

For agile innovation, there is a need to review, recalibrate, and pivot value propositions in TTHI with respect to the renewed preferences and behavior of travelers given the lessons from the pandemic. That is, if in the old normal, cookie cutter product offerings worked, the survey indicated that this is not the case anymore in the better normal. Travelers now prefer personalized, engaging, narrative-rich, and technology-driven tourism products and services for greater value for their money. Value-adding tourism products and services for the heterogeneous TTHI market requires an understanding of consumers, of an enterprise's specific target consumer segment. We can construe from this that mass tourism is not the way to go but rather safe and customized travel that appeals to a renewed consumer preference.

3.2.3. Digital transformation

For digital transformation, consumers have become more digital savvy resulting to compelling enterprises to pivot to technology to continuously thrive. Enterprises need to move forward with bolder and more innovative solutions to adapt to currently emerging and to shape travel experiences in the better normal. This can be done by harnessing the growing number of available online marketplaces to expand digital reach.

3.2.4. Collaborative governance

Finally, for collaborative governance, we must understand that the TTHI is an entire value chain (Rivera & Gutierrez, 2019). In pivoting to the better normal, all stakeholders in the TTHI must avoid a myopic view of the industry and seek convergence points. In rebuilding trust and confidence in travel, achieving bandwagon effect in agile innovation and digital transformation is a shared responsibility. If in the old normal, the norm was competition and autonomy, in the better normal, it is collaboration that is key. The stakeholders of the TTHI need to strengthen their coordination mechanism to deliver a better product and service as travelling during the pandemic is hinged on an integrated system of stakeholders, which will persist in the better normal. To have an efficient and effective delivery of products and services, it requires a comprehensive understanding of the diversity and heterogeneity of tourism stakeholders towards long-term relationship building and cooperation.

3.3. Continued evolving landscape of TTHI

Similar to other developing economies, the Philippine Department of Tourism, Guide to the Philippines, and the Asian Institute of Management – Dr. Andrew L. Tan Center for Tourism (DOT et al., 2021) launched a follow-up economy-wide travel survey, in December 2020, with the objective of understanding travelers' updated behavior that will provide recalibrated insights on how the pandemic affected travel decisions given recent developments in the policies of the domestic government in containing the pandemic and restarting the economy. The availability of vaccines was a game changer in designing and developing initiatives to resume travel (APEC PSU, 2022). Hence, it is critical to understand any changes in the sentiments and preferences of stakeholders. The collective responses provided policymakers a better understanding of the local market who have been making decisions as new information comes in. All of which are even more critical in introducing initiatives to resume cross-border travel, consistent with the objectives of a safe passage framework.

Like the first survey, this follow-up survey developed an updated four pillars of travel towards the better normal as illustrated in Figure 7. Note that it is now called the pillars of travel in the better normal. It did not rendered Figure 1 obsolete, but it justified and strengthened the earlier pillars.

3.3.1. Effective communication

First, stakeholders in the TTHI must effectively communicate and continuously engage in a discourse that will discuss the parameters of the changing landscape of travel and how each stakeholder can contribute to the rebooting process. Effective communication can only be done if the pillar of collaborative governance was in place.

3.3.2. Diversification of TTHI products and services

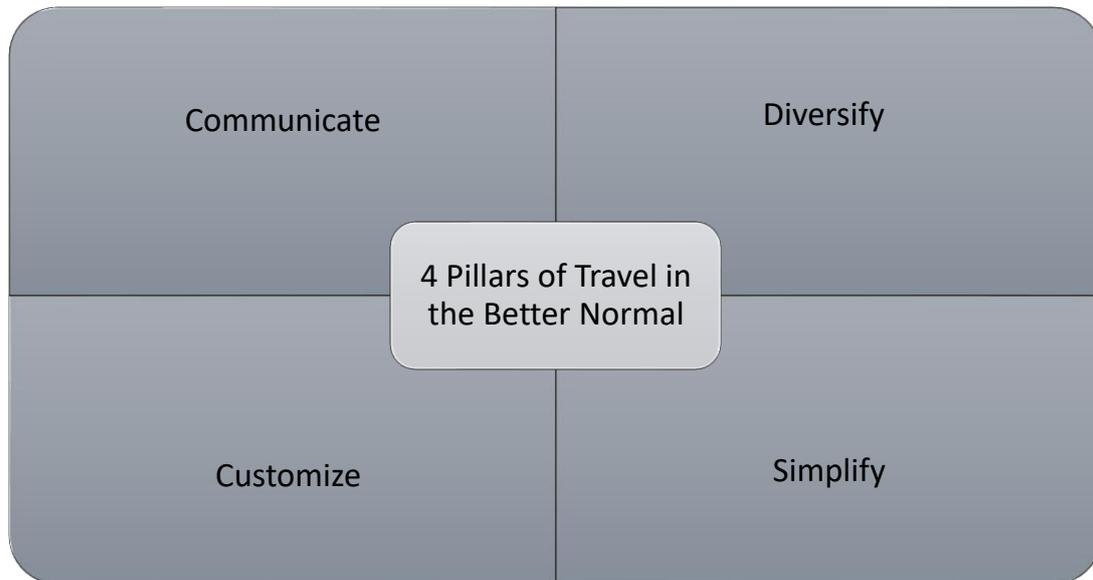
Second, the emergence of new travel segments and new product design and offerings compel the TTHI to shift from generic mass-based offerings to niche and sustainable tourism.

3.3.3. Customization of TTHI products and services

Third, because of diversification, indeed, as construed earlier, mass tourism has never been the way to go but rather safe and customized travel that appeals to a renewed consumer preference. This can only be mainstreamed if the first four pillars in Figure 1 are adapted.

3.3.4. Simplification of TTHI protocols

Finally, in support of the first four pillars in Figure 1 and the three pillars above, simplification is the way to go. Stakeholders must collaborate in making cross-border travel simple and safe. This is anchored on standardization of travel and health protocols. This is the driving factor of the establishment of a safe passage framework.



Source: Lifted from DOT et al. (2021).

Figure 7. *Four pillars of travel in the better normal.*

IV. Objectives of APEC Safe Passage

Dovetailing from 2021 when New Zealand served as the APEC Host Economy when the project on APEC’s Safe Passage Scheme began, Thailand continued its development. As global travel restrictions have eased and eventually eliminated, there is still a need to focus on connectivity and on how to ensure that borders remain open in the case of another pandemic or economic threats in the future.

Hence, the overarching objective of an APEC Safe Passage Scheme is “to reconnect all economic areas and improve travel procedures for APEC member [economies]” (Tangsathaporn, 2022, para. 1). That is, as economies transition to a post-pandemic situation, there is a need to regain confidence by rebuilding the connections lost among APEC member economies during the pandemic by providing APEC member economies with safer and more efficient

travel; and building key public infrastructures and an information-sharing platform to facilitate mobility across borders.

Specific objectives would include (Antara, 2022):

1. To promote the resumption of safe cross-border travel across the APEC region;
2. To revitalize tourism activities that are anchored in health security; and
3. To facilitate business activities and increasing investment in health security.

Succinctly, the goal is to reopen borders and facilitate travel while balancing health and the economy from a multi-stakeholder and value chain approach hinged on the participation of APEC member economies.

V. Significance of APEC Safe Passage

The establishment of an APEC Safe Passage is an important step in enabling safe passage coordination between member economies to continue even when the COVID-19 pandemic becomes endemic. Taking the lessons learned from the crisis, member economies need to collaborate in building resilience in facing future pandemics or crises that may affect cross-border travel. This is justified because through the years, the TTHI has become a critical driver to the economic growth of the region. Hence, facilitating the safe resumption of cross-border mobility is warranted moving forward to post-pandemic scenario (Baziad & Chapnick, 2022).

Since its inception in 2022, the safe passage taskforce has been exchanging best practices on the “safe resumption of cross-border travel at the domestic, sub-regional, and regional levels” (Baziad & Chapnick, 2022, para. 7). It has made strides towards greater alignment of approaches across APEC member economies through policy discussions on facilitating air and maritime crew travel, as well as improved interoperability of vaccine certificates issued by APEC member economies. This is anchored on containing the pandemic through herd immunity because of extensive and equitable access to inoculations – still the most important requirement to reopen borders and reboot the TTHI in the region safely and continuously. However, this must be complemented by policies geared towards saving lives while enabling economic activity and people-to-people connectivity.

Hence, having an APEC Safe Passage is significant on the following grounds illustrated in Figure 8. From a policymaker perspective, *with a safe passage framework, it would be easier to balance these considerations to ensure that border policies are based on science.* From a traveler perspective, *with a safe passage framework, convenient travel can be espoused due to availability of pertinent information required for safe, secure, and sustainable travel.* In the grander scheme of things, because mobility issues encompass various TTHI stakeholders, it will involve several government agencies and ministries. Hence, *with a safe passage framework, it can be an opportunity to advance cooperation and coordination that will develop a mechanism that is flexible to proximately respond to future threats to cross-border travel.*

5.1. Underscore collaborative governance

As emphasized earlier, cross-border restrictions that were imposed as a response to mitigate the ill effects of the pandemic have unprecedentedly affected not only the APEC region but the rest of the world. In particular, the TTHI has been interrupted, to some point halted, alongside business travel, investing and business activities which is the engine of international trade (APEC 2022). As economies went into recession resulting to loss of livelihoods plunging many households to poverty, the only way is up. To swiftly make this happen, borders must be reopened so economic recovery can commence. However, the importance of transitioning to a better normal must be overemphasized to further enhance connectivity in all dimensions and move forward the resumption of safe and seamless travel, as well as greater business mobility in the long run.

In coordinating cross-border travel resumption and to drive forward in the better normal, the importance of cross collaboration between APEC member economies and its corresponding agencies/ministries/departments, as well as other multilateral and international organizations (e.g., International Civil Aviation Organization [ICAO], World Health Organization [WHO], Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN], among others), in managing not just the pandemic or any other shock but moving the region towards safe, secure, serviceable, sustainable, and resilient TTHI. All these stakeholders must work together to adapt initiatives and complement best practices that will allow for the realization of objectives.

This is the first significance of the APEC Safe Passage – it will **underscore the critical importance of collaborative governance in proactively responding to cross-border mobility threats that do not recognize borders thereby affecting everyone**. Efforts on reconnecting APEC require coordination between member economies in various working groups for technical and cross-cutting issue discussions.

5.2. Establish solid foundation of long-term resilience

The second significance of the APEC Safe Passage emanates from the consequence of materializing collaborative governance. It will **work towards establishing a solid foundation in safe passage for APEC's long-term resilience against potential future pandemics and enhanced connectivity in all dimensions** for the benefit of our people and businesses will reinvigorate the TTHI and swiftly jumpstart APEC's economic recovery (Antara, 2022; APEC 2022, 2022; Thai PBS, 2022).

5.3. Outline a flexible framework

While tangible groundwork on APEC Safe Passage has already been started evidenced by the following: (1) Interoperability of Vaccination Certificates: Sharing of Technical Specifications so that COVID-19 vaccination certificates issued by APEC economies can be easily verified across the region; (2) APEC Information Portal for Safe Passage Across the Region to create a one-stop portal for information on international travel within APEC member

economies; and (3) A more inclusive APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) by expanding its scope to cover a broader range of businesses and professionals. While all these proposals are expected to be implemented soon, aligning these with a well-founded framework will allow for the creation of more initiatives for safe passage that are adept with local situation in each APEC member economy.

Hence, the third significance of the APEC Safe Passage results from a well-founded discourse that will **outline a framework that member economies can follow in designing their safe passage initiatives**. These would be anchored on key pillars that will facilitate easy adaption and compliance. This is in recognition of a homogenous imminent problem that exists amid heterogenous situations and circumstances. The APEC Safe Passage is not a rigid policy but a flexible framework that can be applied by member economies despite dissimilarities in local situations.

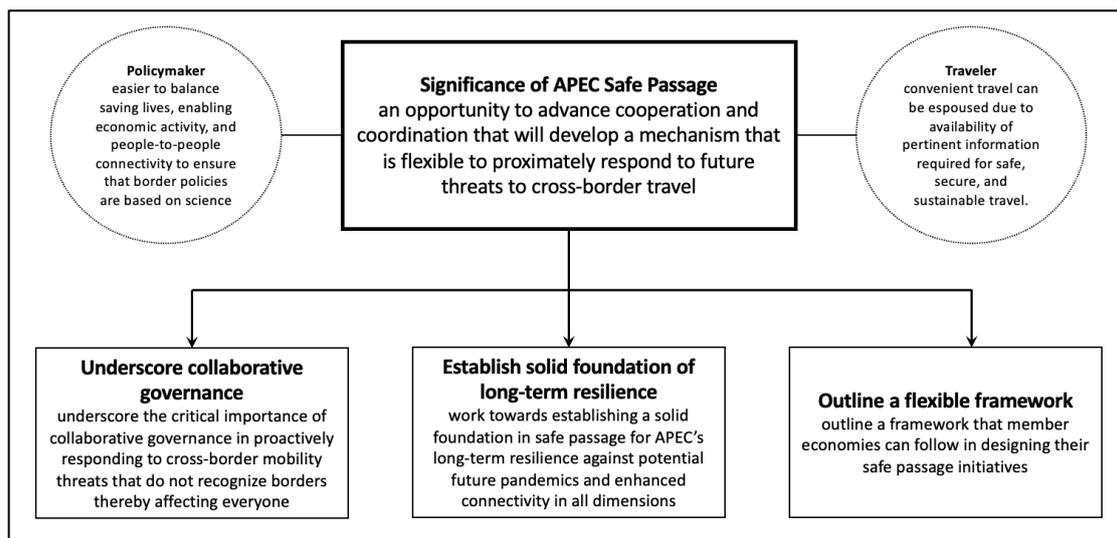


Figure 8. *Significance of APEC Safe Passage.*

VI. Salient features of safe passage

The salient features of APEC Safe Passage were identified during an APEC Safe Passage Workshop⁴ held last 25 April 2023 at Iloilo City, Iloilo, the Philippines prior to the APEC Tourism Working Group (TWG) Meeting on Safe Passage held last 26-27 April 2023 also in the same venue. During the workshop, delegates actively participated in a series of activities that will generate ideas and content for an APEC Safe Passage compendium.



Figure 9. *Conduct of APEC workshop on Safe Passage.*

⁴ See Appendix 1 for the program content and flow.

6.1. Stakeholder collaboration in safe passage: Exercising understanding through empathy map

In identifying the salient features of the APEC Safe Passage, an Empathy Mapping workshop was conducted. Because the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic heightened risks associated with the activities of the TTHI, it warranted a shift in mental models and paradigms of operation across stakeholders including tourists, travel-, tourism-, and hospitality-related business sectors (i.e., accommodation, tour and travel operation, transportation), governments, international and regional organizations, among others. A commonality across modifications includes prioritizing safety across industries because the decision to travel rests on the safety of the end-to-end travel experience. In line with this, the prospect of promoting Safe Passage in the APEC region has become an important pillar supporting the recovery of TTHI characterized by sustainability and resiliency. In better understanding how TTHI stakeholders (i.e., tourists, government, travel agency/tour operator, accommodation, transportation) may react and behave with respect to the features and contents of the APEC Safe Passage, an empathy mapping exercise is vital.

6.1.1. Description of empathy map

An empathy map is a design thinking exercise and an innovation toolkit that is used to understand another person, stakeholder, or user's perspective (i.e., what the users are thinking, feeling, seeing, hearing, and saying) (Cairns et al, 2020). Originally developed to identify customer profiles in business environments (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010), the mapping exercise is now used in a variety of fields and sectors including health care (Cairns et al, 2020), education (Corrêa et al, 2022), environmental policy (Czap et al, 2018), security (Levy & Hadar, 2018), tourism (Remondes & Borges, 2016), among others. At the core of this approach is the value of "empathy" which is the ability to share and understand the feelings of another person. The outcome of empathy maps therefore allows its users to visualize and articulate what is known by a stakeholder, and to create an understanding of what they need (Zuber & Moody, 2018). The assumption of the exercise is that the concept of "safe passage" is a novel product that **requires further examination from the lenses of the end users** (i.e., TTHI stakeholders including tourists). Thus, carefully understanding and analyzing their perceptions, attitudes, behavior, and motivations towards it is crucial.

6.1.2. Relevance of empathy map in APEC Safe Passage

Given the dynamic and flexible nature of the term Safe Passage, there are a variety of ways it is understood by stakeholders across APEC member economies. The thrust of Safe Passage hinges on the collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders. Safety, in this sense, is defined by the workshop participants as **"everything and everywhere all at once encompassing both health, security, and environmental facets of seamless mobility"**. As suggested, despite the simplicity of the terminology, it can be interpreted in various ways by a diverse set of stakeholders. A mutual

understanding of processes and systems, through digitalization and data sharing is vital, can be achieved by exercising empathy. The empathy map designed for the APEC Safe Passage is hinged on two realities, as illustrated in Figure 10, *tourism as a value chain* and *safe passage as a form of innovation*.

TTHI as a value chain. The empathy map works as TTHI is understood to operate in a value chain, where the interaction and collaboration between and among stakeholders directly influence tourist experiences and safety. The TTHI is agreed to operate in an interconnected and interdependent value chain perspective where tourists (end users)’ experience are readily influenced by the reaction and interaction of tourism stakeholder. That is, “safety” is understood as an end-to-end user experience (i.e., safe ride, safe flight, safe stay, safe dining, safe tours, etc.). In this perspective, understanding the tourism stakeholders’ respective personas and profiles, the workshop participants can better determine how tourist experiences can be improved while promoting safe passage.

Safe passage as an innovation. As recognized across industries and sectors, the pandemic serves as a transitional and transformative event that re-introduced new paradigms and modes of operations for the TTHI. Arguably, the pandemic exposed defective systems in the industry where the “better normal” requires changing of mindsets and mental models. Part and parcel of this is the incorporation of safe passage across TTHI activities, products, and services. Safe passage, from this perspective, serves as an innovative step towards facilitating a safe, resilient, and sustainable tourism.

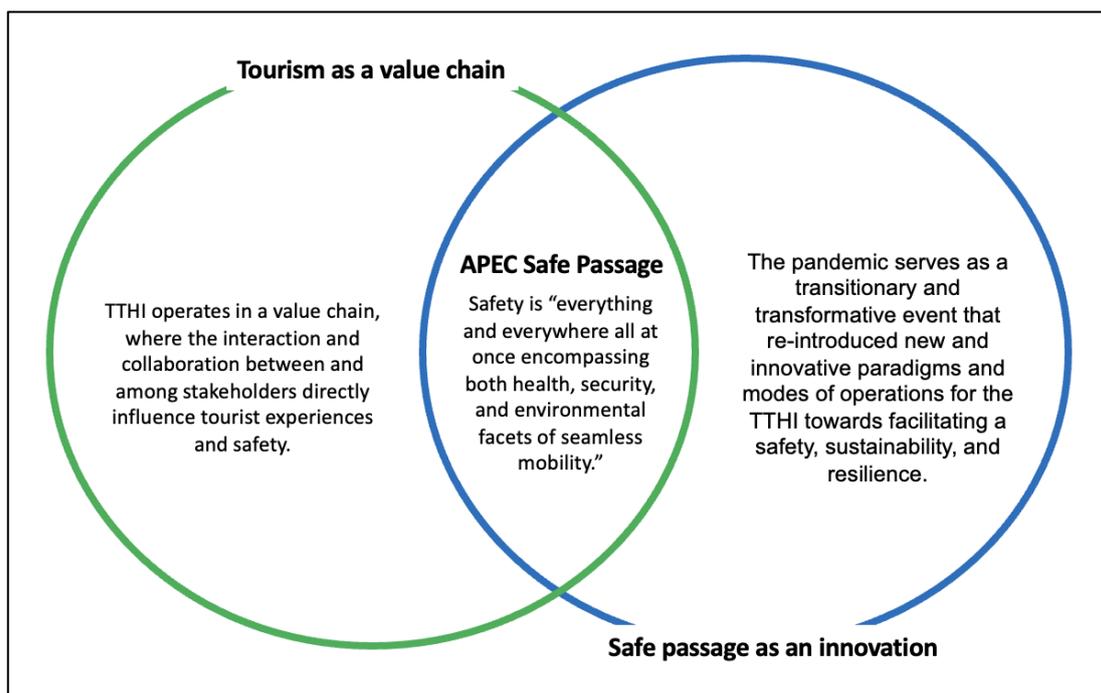


Figure 10. Realities surrounding APEC Safe Passage.

6.1.3. Structure of the empathy map

While the contents of the mapping exercise may vary, the approach taken in this exercise utilized a total of six (6) components that capture the external and observable world of the stakeholder, and their internal mindset. These include

facets of what the stakeholders “do, say, hear and see, think and feel, along with their own pains and gains.” See Figure 11 for the empathy map utilized in the workshop.

Several tourism stakeholder groups (Rivera & Gutierrez, 2019) were identified and became the subjects of the exercise, namely: tourists, accommodation, transportation, travel agent/tour operator, and government. There was a total of 25 participants from various APEC member economies. The participants were then divided equally and randomly assigned a stakeholder group to empathize with.

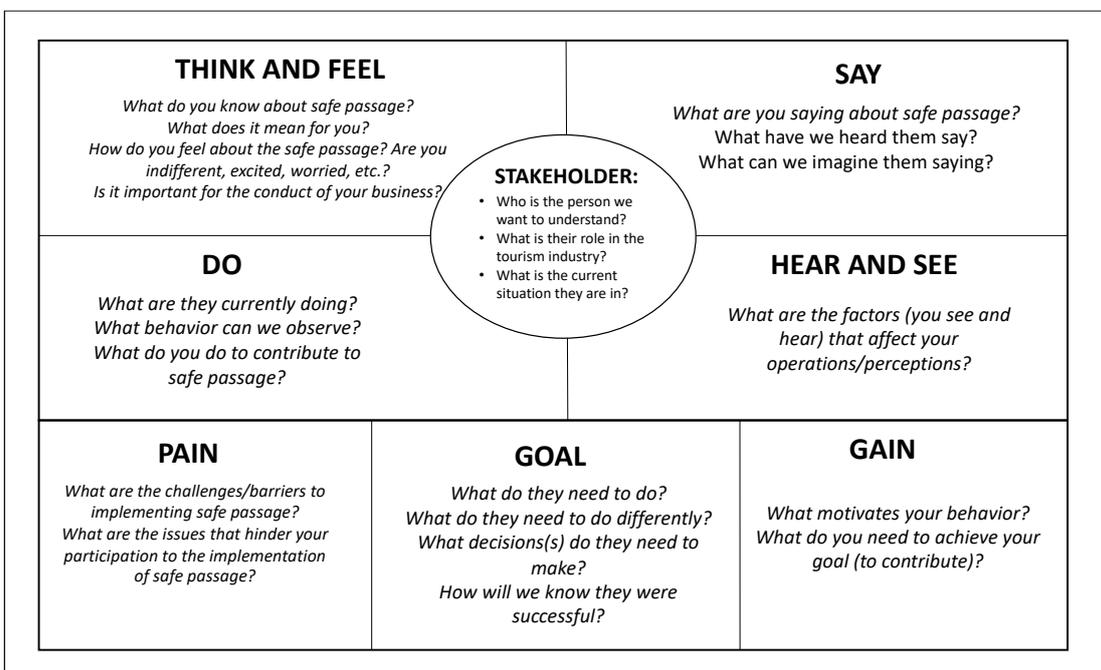


Figure 11. Empathy map for APEC Safe Passage

The mapping exercise proceeded as follows:

1. The stakeholder group was described, specifically according to their role in the industry along with their situation in the context of the pandemic.
2. The goal of the stakeholder group in line with the objectives of the safe passage was identified. Questions such as “what does success look like? What does he or she need to do differently or decide? What do they need to do differently? What decisions(s) do they need to make? How will we know they were successful?” were reflected on.
3. The participants were asked to empathize with their assigned stakeholder by specifically capturing their behavior and the factors that affect their behavior. Initially, the participants were asked to describe what the stakeholder do in the context of the pandemic – What are they currently doing? What behavior can we observe?
4. The participants were asked to describe what the stakeholders say in relation to safe passage. Some questions that were asked include: “what have we heard them say? What can we imagine them saying?”
5. Factors affecting the stakeholder group’s perceptions and behavior were determined. More specifically, what the stakeholders hear and see were explored. Several guide questions were asked including: “what is the

stakeholder hearing and seeing, and how is it influencing them? What is the stakeholder watching, reading, consuming, and exposed to in their environment or the marketplace that could influence them?

6. The participants were asked to explore the inside of the mind of their assigned stakeholder by looking at the thoughts and feelings of the stakeholder. More specifically, the participants were asked what their stakeholders think and feel by asking questions such as: “how does the stakeholder feel about safe passage? Frightened? Excited? Anxious? Is it important to their conduct of business?”
7. The participants explored the pains and gains of their assigned stakeholder. In terms of exploring their pain points, questions such as: “what are the challenges/barriers to implementing safe passage? What are the issues that hinder your participation to the implementation of safe passage?” were asked. On the other hand, in exploring the motivations or gains of their assigned stakeholder, some questions such as: “what motivates your behavior? What do you need to achieve your goal (to contribute to safe passage)?” were asked.

After the exercise, participants were given time to reflect on the workshop. Afterwards, each group were asked to explain their key insights and takeaways from the activity by specifically answering the questions: “what are the important points you learned about your stakeholder group? What needs to be done for your stakeholder group?”

6.2. Findings from the empathy mapping exercise

Following the empathy mapping exercise, key findings are outlined and summarized in Figure 12 and Table 2.

<p>ACCOMMODATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe passage must be operationally relevant, business-friendly, and a collaborative effort. Safe passage can form part of branding that can increase occupancy once implemented. 	<p>TRAVEL AGENCY/TOUR OPERATOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressed a positive outlook on the creation of safe passage. Implementing safe passage is a vital component of bouncing back safely and more sustainably. Concerned on the costs it may entail for both supply- and demand-side. 	
	<p>TOURISTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety must not reduce quality of tourist experience. Safe passage must be convenient and affordable to comply with. Safe passage must be an enabler of travel instead of a burden to tourists. 	
<p>TRANSPORTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivated primarily by profit and the presence of financial support, concerns on the cost of implementation and compliance is a real constraint. 		<p>GOVERNMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected to lead the APEC Safe Passage and collaborate with stakeholders. Information dissemination is key to the success of the APEC Safe Passage. Despite a unified goal, the varying priorities and resource capabilities of each member economy is a challenge.

Figure 12. Key concerns of TTHI stakeholders from the empathy map.

Table 2. Key findings from TTHI stakeholders.

Stakeholder Group	Key Findings
Tourist	<p>The key insight emphasized was the perception and achievement of “safety must not reduce tourist experiences.” That is, requirements to achieve “safe passage must not be considered tedious and expensive by the tourists.” In fact, it should be considered “easy to do” for them to participate. Deemed crucial is the value of safe passage as an enabler of travel instead of becoming a “burden to tourists.” While safety is a priority for tourists, there is a need to properly and effectively communicate the importance of safe passage to travelers whose priority is to conduct leisurely and/or business activities. Similarly, it is important to ensure that health and safety is ensured across host economies. In cases where personal data is required, “policies must ensure data security and protection.”</p>
Accommodation	<p>The main concern for the accommodation sector is the relevance of safe passage to their operations. As suggested during the workshop, the main question posed was “<i>why bother?</i>” Part and parcel of this concern is the “cost of compliance” which may be difficult to justify from a business perspective. Thus, it is important to communicate and “<i>cascade the importance of safe passage across members of the accommodation sector including large hotel chains.</i>” Communication to customers is also a concern for the stakeholders. With this comes concerns about the possibility of implementing consistent policies across the sector and the need to increase collaboration with other value chain members. Despite these issues, safe passage may be seen as part of a company’s branding which can increase their number of occupants once implemented internationally and domestically.</p>
Transportation	<p>In empathizing with their opinions, the participants imagined them questioning how safe passage will benefit them, how much cost its implementation will this entail, whether this can be profitable for them, and whether safe passage is even necessary in their daily operations. The sector is believed to be easily influenced by their status of living, the presence of livelihood opportunities, and their personal emotions and whims. In the same manner, they are motivated primarily by profit and the presence of financial support. Without proper information, the transport sector may respond through “strikes.”</p>
Travel Agency/ Tour Operator	<p>Given the impact of the pandemic to their operations, the participants expressed a positive outlook towards this sector where they are expected to “agree with safe passage.” Although to some members, it may be considered “a hassle,” the requirements of its implementation is seen as a vital component of bouncing back safely and more sustainably. Others have also emphasized that “safe passage means a lot for tourism recovery.” Despite this, there are mixed sentiments regarding safe passage, with specific concerns on what tasks and costs it may entail for the travel agencies and tour operators. The same concerns were raised in relation to their hesitation in communicating and educating tourists about safe passage, and their ability to comply with its requirements. Their participation may also be ensured</p>

	through government's provision of incentives and other forms of support.
Government	As the policy maker and enforcer, the government is expected to provide all necessary instruments and initiatives to ensure the health and safety of its people. With this, governments are expected to agree with the implementation and adoption of safe passage in relation to travel and tourism industry. To do so, governments are expected to collaborate with each other to create an effective plan. Despite these, governments cannot act on safe passage without proper information and awareness about its contents. Primarily influenced by public opinion, proper information dissemination is deemed across its constituents and agencies is deemed vital. The diverse capacities, capabilities, and available resources of each member economies' governments may also be considered a challenge.

From these key findings, each stakeholder groups' expected behavior and attitude towards *Safe Passage* are outlined below and in Table 3:

6.2.1. Tourist

In describing a "tourist," the participants noted that they remain "uncertain about travelling in a destination because of complex and diverse mobility protocols and procedures across economies." Despite having the desire to travel, some remain hesitant due to healthy, safety, and procedural concerns. For tourists, it is expected that "*some will follow regulations while others will not.*" Despite this, it is expected for them to promote and support safe passage because "*they realize the value of their health and safety when travelling.*" In general, tourists are expected to have a positive response towards the promotion of safe passage conditioned on degree of compliance. A significant factor to their compliance is the availability of proper and clear information, policies, and regulations that promote health and safety when they travel. In terms of the challenges and barriers to tourists' participation, lack of information and digital piracy were identified as the key issues. Meanwhile, some of the factors that readily influence their behavior and perceptions include the available information from media, the credibility of the host economy to ensure safety, and the benefits they perceive from contributing and participating in *Safe Passage*. In order to measure the success of participating and contributing to the *Safe Passage*, tourists are expected to "*adjust themselves to become more responsible*" travelers wherever they may go. Against the context of the pandemic, tourists are expected to have a changed perspective in terms of valuing safety in travelling alongside satisfaction.

6.2.2. Accommodation

In describing the members of the accommodation sector, the participants cited the diversity of its members—from formal establishments such as hotel chains, boutique hotels, lodges, resorts, to smaller and less formal establishments such *AirBnBs*, hostels, motels, camping sites, etc. In empathizing with the sector's behavior, the participants cited that "*due to the pandemic experience, these actors have reflected on and learned experiences that allowed them to modify*

their operations, including booking systems, cleaning protocols, staff education, among others.” Hinged on the negative impacts of the pandemic to their business operations, the accommodation sector is seen to practice streamlining of services, while enhancing their communication strategies with other stakeholders and their customers. In doing so, innovation and technology has been widely applied.

In terms of what they are expecting how the sector would respond in line with the *Safe Passage*, the communication feedback loop was identified to be the utmost concern—how will safe passage be communicated to staff and customers, to other members of their value chain. Without a clear definition and regulation on *Safe Passage*, little to no participation/contribution may be expected from this sector. The same level of uncertainty is reflected on the low level of knowledge regarding *Safe Passage*. As suggested, its implementation may raise a question on “*will this affect me? This is someone else’s problem.*” For most members of this sector, the participants revealed that they “*might not realize that the sector is part of the whole tourism cycle*” affecting the experiences of tourists. What might be effecting the behavior and perceptions of the accommodation sector include the available information about natural and man-made disasters, personal safety, and the expectations and perceptions of their customers towards their operations and products/services.

The main challenge cited revolved around the availability of information—about safe passage, cost of compliance, trusted information sources, consistency of policies, among others. Once implemented, an emerging concern includes staff availability and awareness of the implications of safe passage along with ensuring that they are up-to-date. Meanwhile, the accommodation sector, as a supplier, is expected to be highly motivated by the expectations of their customers—whether or not the implementation of safe passage can fulfill the satisfaction of their customers, whether safe passage can generate increased income. Thus, informed customers can drive accommodation sector to comply as a part of their goals to market, brand, and ensure competitiveness. In order to effectively participate and contribute to safe passage, the members of the accommodation sector are expected to prioritize their revenue, while also reimagining the changing customer needs as a result of the pandemic. In line with this, they are expected to innovate their operations by differentiating their product, training their staff, enhancing local partnerships, and improving relationship and communication with customers.

6.2.3. Transportation

The transportation sector was widely characterized by their sensitivity to the cost of rising fuel prices—from local and international transportation systems such as jeepneys, auto rickshaw, tricycles, to buses, airplanes, among others. Because of this diversity, the experience and motivations of one transport group in one member economy may be different from another. In contributing to safe passage, profit and the price of fuel remain important along with proper coordination between and among transport groups. As suggested, the main objective of the transportation sector in travel and tourism is to provide ease of mobility among tourists. Yet, as observed by the participants, the management of capacities prove to be a problem across the sector (i.e., cramping of passengers, overbooking of schedules, etc.). Due to majority of them being

unorganized and have issues with competitiveness, the participants suggested that the establishment of a “code of ethics” might be helpful in supporting safe passage.

6.2.4. *Travel agency/tour operator*

As curators of travel experiences for tourists, travel agencies and tour operators are seen to mainly operate within government protocols and policies. In complying with safe passage, they are expected to “*provide quality and innovative travel products and services which may include the provision of vaccination certificates, among others.*” Hence, the implementation of safe passage is expected to be implemented readily across the sector once government provide clear and implementable guidelines. Directly communicating with tourists, they are expected to educate and communicate the value of safe passage to their own customers.

6.2.5. *Government*

The members of the government including local government units, policymakers, decision makers, among others are expected to act as the authoritative body establishing rules and regulations in communities and societies. Due to the pandemic, the government finds it difficult to strike a “*balance between public health and economic growth*”—opening economies for tourism activities and ensuring public health and safety. To be able to contribute to the goals of the *Safe Passage*, the government is “expected to develop specific measures (i.e., crisis management plan, etc.) that can be adopted in the face of crises. They are also expected to collect and protect relevant data to ensure safety. In observing what the government currently does, the participants noted that governments are found to “*strengthen current policies to promote resiliency through digitalization.*” Part and parcel of this is facilitating “*collaboration with other economies to produce a standard in health documentation*” while also enhancing the “*communication between and among players from private and public sector... local and domestic actors.*” The governments of APEC Member Economies are also expected to have a positive outlook in promoting *Safe Passage* as it supports “*convenience, seamless and safe travel experience.*” As suggested, governments may have a shared insight on the “*importance of Safe Passage in ensuring the continuity of tourism activities and in promoting economies.*” Due to its relative importance, “*Safe Passage may be considered as a high priority in line with their respective pandemic responses.*” As they are primarily influenced by public opinion, available data, and recommendations from international actors and experts, government actors are already expecting that “*tourism industry players (will) request support from them to improve their facilities, human resource training, among others.*”

The main challenge faced by governments include the varied requirements and non-standardized protocols for travelling, differentiated capacities, capabilities, and resources of member economies, and the lack of awareness about *Safe Passage* initiatives. The main motivation for governments to promote *Safe Passage* include assuring “*public safety,*

effective collaboration among stakeholders, adequate resources, favorable policies, and develop a comprehensive and inclusive action plan.”

Table 3. *Stakeholder perceptions on APEC Safe Passage.*

Stakeholder Group	Perception on APEC Safe Passage	Remarks
Tourists	Uncertain; conditional optimism	Possibility that some will follow regulations while others will not; a significant factor to compliance is availability of clear information, policies, and regulations that promote health and safety when travelling.
Accommodation	Uncertain; conditional optimism	Without a clear definition and regulation on Safe Passage, little participation may be expected from this sector; due to the pandemic experience, these actors have reflected on and learned experiences that allowed them to modify their operations, including booking systems, cleaning protocols, staff education, among others.
Transportation	Conditional optimism	Due to majority of transport operators being unorganized and have issues with competitiveness, establishing a “code of ethics” might be helpful in supporting Safe Passage.
Travel Agency / Tour Operator	Conditional optimism	Effective implementation of Safe Passage is hinged on governments’ provision of clear and implementable guidelines and the value of Safe Passage to all those involved.
Government	Challenging but optimistic	Challenged by (1) domestic regulations for travelling; (2) differentiated resource capabilities of other APEC member economies; and (3) lack of awareness about Safe Passage initiatives; Motivated to promote Safe Passage to ensure public safety through effective collaboration among stakeholders towards favorable policies and a comprehensive and inclusive action plan.

6.3. Deriving APEC Safe Passage salient features from the empathy map’s key implications

Collaboration and cooperation among TTHI stakeholders prove valuable in the implementation of the APEC Safe Passage. By understanding the diverse interests, perceptions, attitudes, and behavior of each stakeholder group, a more practical and useful Safe Passage compendium can be created. As emphasized in the empathy mapping exercise, empathizing with the needs and challenges faced by each stakeholder is a key factor to ensuring their participation and contribution to the aims of Safe Passage. With this, the

following points of collaboration and expected responsibilities per stakeholder group are summarized in Table 4.

Tourists are found to play a crucial role in driving the adoption of *Safe Passage* across tourism-related businesses (i.e., accommodation, travel agency/tour operator, transportation). As suggested in the workshop, the demand and expectation from tourists may serve as an incentive for businesses to implement accordingly. Meanwhile, tourists are expected to be receptive and participative in receiving information from the government. They are also expected to entrust their personal and travel information to the government and other sector members, if and when deemed necessary in the implementation of *Safe Passage*.

The accommodation sector, as a huge player in the tourism industry, may use *Safe Passage* as a branding/marketing scheme to attract tourists. In partnership with other stakeholders including the government, *Safe Passage* may be implemented as a branding scheme to promote health and safety in tourism. As a product and service provider, the accommodation sector, is expected to comply with the policies and regulations in line with *Safe Passage*. Similarly, they are also expected to support information dissemination to their customers (i.e., tourists) in relation to *Safe Passage*.

The transportation sector, meanwhile, is expected to provide safe transport services to tourists which include efforts to manage their own carrying capacities. Together with other tourism stakeholders, they are also expected to comply with the standards implemented to implement *Safe Passage*, alongside efforts in communicating with their customers relevant information to *Safe Passage*.

Travel agencies/tour operators, like the accommodation sector, may leverage on using *Safe Passage* as a marketing strategy to attract tourists. Part and parcel of their responsibility is to provide quality products and services, alongside the education of tourists about the importance of *Safe Passage* to their activities. Similar with the expectations from other sectors, they are expected to comply and assist in the dissemination of information regarding *Safe Passage*.

Governments were found to play a pivotal role in the implementation of *Safe Passage*. As an enforcer of policies, the government is expected to educate the stakeholders about the importance and relevance of *Safe Passage* to their operations and activities. In line with this is the expectation for them to protect any information shared with them by tourists and other stakeholders. The government is also expected to provide trainings and incentives to facilitate the cooperation of stakeholders in implementing *Safe Passage*.

Table 4. Matrix of stakeholder collaboration.

Stakeholder	Tourist	Accommodation	Transportation	Travel Agency/ Tour Operator	Government
Tourist		Tourists may demand for businesses to comply with <i>Safe Passage</i>	Tourists may demand for businesses to comply with <i>Safe Passage</i>	Tourists may demand for businesses to comply with <i>Safe Passage</i>	Take part in the information dissemination schemes created by the government in relation to the implementation
		Provide accurate and reliable information about	Provide accurate and reliable		

		their travel (i.e., data collection)	information about their travel (i.e., data collection)	Provide accurate and reliable information about their travel (i.e., data collection)	of <i>Safe Passage</i> Provide accurate and reliable information about their travel (i.e., data collection)
Accommodation	<i>Safe Passage</i> to be used as a branding/marketing scheme to attract more tourists		Increase collaboration and cooperation among other stakeholder groups affecting tourist's experience	Increase collaboration and cooperation among other stakeholder groups affecting tourist's experience	Provide necessary information to support the aims of <i>Safe Passage</i> Compliance to established policies and standards in providing services under <i>Safe Passage</i> Communicate with the government regarding the needs and challenges in promoting <i>Safe Passage</i> Participate in information dissemination and training programs created by the government in relation to the implementation of <i>Safe Passage</i>
Transportation	Provide quality and safe transportation services to tourists (i.e., avoidance of overbooking, cramping of vehicles, over-charging)	Increase collaboration and cooperation among other stakeholder groups affecting tourist's experience		Increase collaboration and cooperation among other stakeholder groups affecting tourist's experience	Provide necessary information to support the aims of <i>Safe Passage</i> Compliance to established policies and standards in providing services under <i>Safe Passage</i> Participate in information dissemination and training programs created by the government in relation to the implementation of <i>Safe Passage</i>

					Communicate with the government regarding the needs and challenges in promoting <i>Safe Passage</i>
Travel Agency/ Tour Operator	<i>Safe Passage</i> to be used as a branding/marketing scheme for product offerings			Increase collaboration and cooperation among other stakeholder groups affecting tourist's experience	Provide necessary information to support the aims of <i>Safe Passage</i>
	Provision of quality products and services in line with <i>Safe Passage</i>			Increase collaboration and cooperation among other stakeholder groups affecting tourist's experience	Compliance to established policies and standards in providing services under <i>Safe Passage</i>
	Educate tourists about the importance of <i>Safe Passage</i>				Participate in information dissemination and training programs created by the government in relation to the implementation of <i>Safe Passage</i>
Government	Educate tourists about the importance of <i>Safe Passage</i>			Provide training and incentives for transportation sector members to comply with <i>Safe Passage</i>	Communicate with the government regarding the needs and challenges in promoting <i>Safe Passage</i>
	Provide useful information on how tourists can integrate <i>Safe Passage</i> in their travels	Provide trainings and incentives for accommodation sector members to comply with <i>Safe Passage</i>		Ease concerns about rising fuel prices with incentives to support <i>Safe Passage</i>	Provide training and incentives for travel agency/tour operating sector members to comply with <i>Safe Passage</i>
	Ensure data protection once personal information is provided by tourists				

6.4. Recommended salient features of APEC *Safe Passage*

Safe Passage has been proven to be a vital component supporting tourism recovery across APEC member economies. By visualizing and understanding the perceptions, motivations, behaviors, and expectations of tourism stakeholders, the empathy map revealed some crucial elements of its implementation that require more attention, as also illustrated in Figure 13:

1. *Establishes an operational definition of Safe Passage.* Given the relative newness of the terminology to tourism stakeholders, there is a need to establish a unified and operational definition of Safe Passage. A baseline information about *Safe Passage* must be provided. The proposed definition should answer the questions about its significance, cost of compliance, implementation mechanisms, among others. As suggested in the workshop, without a reliable definition, stakeholders may not be able to effectively implement Safe Passage in their daily operations.
2. *Stipulates a Code of Safe Passage for TTHI stakeholders.* In relation to the abovementioned, accompanying the operational definition of Safe Passage must be a manual that may act as a guideline for each tourism stakeholders to follow. This may include specific steps that each specific stakeholder group must implement to contribute to the objectives of Safe Passage. Emphasized in the workshop, given the diversity of motivations and challenges faced by each stakeholder group, there is a need to create an accommodation, transportation, travel agency/tour operator, tourist, government-specific manuals to contribute, participate, and implement Safe Passage.
3. *Integrates with existing international and regional frameworks.* Given the existence of multiple frameworks, guidelines, and models supporting tourism recovery, it is important to position the implementation of Safe Passage alongside these existing frameworks. As pointed out in the empathy mapping exercise, stakeholders cannot easily differentiate one international or regional tourism initiative from another. To assist them, Safe Passage must not only delineate itself from the objectives of other frameworks but also integrate its goals with established guidelines.
4. *Serves as vehicle for effective communication systems to disseminate information.* As emphasized, useful and well-disseminated information about Safe Passage's implementation is necessary to ensure stakeholders' participation. Part and parcel of establishing operational definitions and policies on Safe Passage is the identification of effective communication platforms to inform tourism stakeholders. As suggested in the workshop, each stakeholder group has diverse motivations and influencers for their perceptions, attitudes, and behavior.

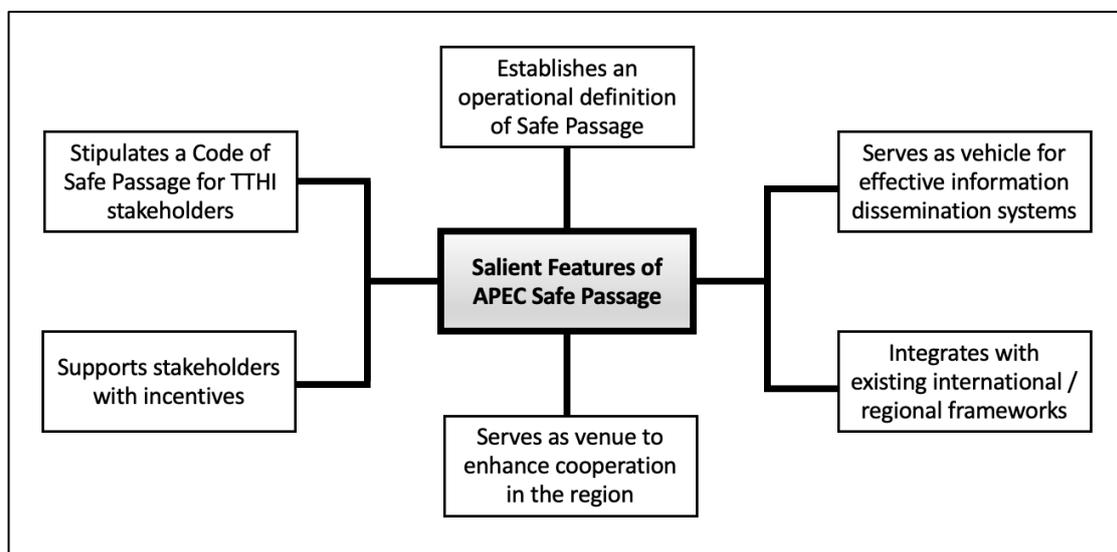


Figure 13. *Salient features of APEC Safe Passage.*

5. *Supports stakeholders with incentives.* Considered a new concept, stakeholders from the supply-side of tourism industry are highly driven to comply with the presence of incentives. This may come in the form of financial assistance (i.e., subsidy for costs entailed from compliance), but may also include non-monetary incentives (i.e., promoting Safe Passage as a branding initiative for businesses and destinations, educating stakeholders on the importance of Safe Passage, among others). Such incentives may come from regional and/or international organizations and governments of member economies.
6. *Serves a venue to enhance cooperation among tourism stakeholders across APEC member Economies.* As suggested in the workshop, some business sectors (i.e., accommodation, transportation) are not readily aware of their involvement in the tourism value chain and their impact on curating tourist's experiences. For *Safe Passage* to be properly and effectively implemented across sectors, creation of platforms to enhance interaction, cooperation, and collaboration among tourism stakeholders is necessary. Strengthened communication channels among stakeholders was suggested to be beneficial in achieving the objectives of *Safe Passage*. Such efforts are expected to pave the way to the realization among stakeholders that they are part of the TTHI value chain.

VII. Case Studies of Safe Passage Initiatives in APEC

The following discussions explicate several initiatives started in APEC that serves as groundwork for the establishment of Safe Passage. While these initiatives are still either in the discussion stage or early implementation stage, it is important to note that these are the paving the way for a travel experience that is characterized by safety, security, and serviceability; and a TTHI that is geared towards sustainability and resiliency.

7.1. APEC Customs Administrations to facilitate the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines

Extensive inoculation against the COVID-19 is deemed a global public good and a vehicle to facilitate the resumption of cross-border travel. Alternatively, vaccination is not just a part and parcel of the resumption of travel (Wyatt, 2020), but a vital requirement for the rebooting of TTHI (Pavli & Maltezos, 2021). However, this rests on the importance of equitable access to safe, effective, quality-assured, and affordable COVID-19 vaccines.

According to Emmanuel San Andres, a senior analyst with the APEC Policy Support Unit, as cited by Sinaga (2022), "containing COVID-19 through widespread and equitable access to vaccines is still the most important prerequisite to safely reopen borders and resume travel and tourism in the region" (para. 12). In line with this, the APEC Sub-Committee on Customs Procedure (SCCP) Convenor (2021) during the Second Committee on Trade and Investment Meeting in 25-27 May 2021 has outlined a best practice

guidelines 5 in facilitating the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and strengthening the predictability, visibility, and reliability of economies' vaccine supply chains. This is with the objective of underscoring APEC's commitment to the global community in expediting a successful rollout of COVID-19 vaccines. Likewise, successfully implementing the guidelines will allow APEC member economies to harness the benefits of a simplified, modernized, and harmonized vaccine distribution. More importantly, consistent with Safe Passage's vision of strengthening resilience, successfully implementing the guidelines will also strengthen their supply chain security and connectivity, making economies more resilient to future supply chain disruptions and challenges.

These guidelines encompass the following areas: (1) border clearance procedures, (2) engagement with relevant traders, (3) coordination and preparedness, and (4) implementation. In the grander scheme of things, the aforementioned guidelines highlight the salient features of the Safe Passage – harmonization and coordination.

The successful massive rollout of vaccines throughout the global economy gave rise to the discussion of issuing documents showing proof of vaccination (e.g., vaccine cards, vaccine certificates, vaccine passports, green passes) (Wang & Ping, 2022), as well as interoperability of such documents (APEC Business Mobility Group [APEC BMG], 2022) to allow travel while protecting the health of individual travelers and their contacts (Pavli & Maltezos, 2021).

7.2. Commitment by APEC economic leaders and ministers to explore ways to facilitate the safe resumption of cross-border travel



⁵ For details, see http://mddb.apec.org/Documents/2021/CTI/CTI2/21_cti2_is11.pdf.

Source: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (<https://www.apec.org/meeting-papers/leaders-declarations/2021/2021-leaders-declaration/annex-aotearoa-plan-of-action>)

Figure 14. *Aotearoa Plan of Action.*

As vehicles to facilitate mass vaccination becomes available and continues through the support of many economies, for this to drive sustainability and resiliency in TTHI, it needs strong political support and joined-up action now more than ever (Pavli & Maltezou, 2021). In line with this, the APEC Economic Leaders have expressed harmony in supporting the promotion of greater information exchange and coordination measures related to cross-border movement of people⁶, as seen in Figure 14, through the **Aotearoa Plan of Action**.

In terms of rebooting TTHI, this includes establishing processes to support the movement of both air and maritime crew, availability of COVID-19 testing and vaccination, interoperability of vaccination certificates, and continuous pursuit of other specific initiatives, solutions, and best practices to facilitate safe travel in the region. These would in turn pave the way for a return to people moving across borders for business, tourism, and education. Such mandate from APEC Economic Leaders lead to the APEC-wide coordination and work on Safe Passage.

Consistent with DOT et al. (2020)'s pillar of elevated safety, such commitment hinged on harmonized travel and health rules are vital in restoring trust and confidence in travel that will restart tourism that will boost global economic reboot and growth. In considering of recent and current circumstances in pandemic response and recovery, policies frameworks are required to present approaches to balance public health considerations and economic bootstrapping (Roxas et al., 2022).

Among APEC member economies, guidelines for reliable proof of vaccination have been adopted in line with vaccination-related travel policy. According to Pavli and Maltezou (2021), despite reservations, ongoing scientific, ethical, legal, and societal discussions in requiring proof of vaccination such as vaccine passports to permit travel have been implemented. While this is aimed to facilitate travel, it must be standardized and interoperable for travelers with verifiable credentials. However, this requires international cooperation, open interoperability standards, and harmonization across complex systems to support access to secure data or exchange for this policy to effectively work. Hence, the support of economic leaders is a necessary and sufficient condition.

7.3. Cross-Border Mobility in the APEC Region

Complementing cases under subsections 7.1 and 7.2 is the report⁷ of the APEC Secretariat and APEC Policy Support Unit (2021) explicating the similarities and differences of the various border measures implemented during the pandemic.

The cross-border mobility of people is critical for economic activity such as trade, transportation, and tourism to grow and flourish (Docquier et al., 2022)

⁶ For details, see <https://www.apec.org/meeting-papers/leaders-declarations/2021/2021-leaders-declaration/annex-aotearoa-plan-of-action>.

⁷ For details, see https://www.apec.org/docs/default-source/publications/2021/8/passports-tickets-and-face-masks/221_psu_apec-cross-border-mobility_main-report.pdf.

by enabling logistics and supply chains, investments, employment, education, and capacity-building to operate – all of which have been halted by the pandemic because of border closures and mobility restrictions needed to contain the spread of the virus (Mallapaty, 2020). While this is the case, it created uncertainties for travelers and suppressed demand (APEC PSU, 2022).

Likewise, while its effectiveness in preventing imported cases from spreading in the local economy is ambiguous, its impact on trade, economic activity, and people are immediate and unprecedented. Hence, given the persistence of uncertainties in the pandemic situation despite the WHO announcing that even if the pandemic is not yet over, COVID-19 no longer constitutes a “public health emergency of international concern” (Cabico, 2023, para. 2), the APEC Secretariat and APEC PSU (2021) presented recommendations to enable safe border reopening and outlines APEC’s role.

Subsections 7.1 to 7.3 present a compounded and consequential approaches to APEC Safe Passage. In fact, the report of APEC Secretariat and APEC Policy Support Unit (2021) comprehensively documented the following salient information for the knowledge of travelers so the uncertainties in mobility are mitigated while containing the virus everywhere:

1. Border policies of each APEC member economy;
2. Travel exemptions and restrictions based on geographical considerations;
3. Travel exemptions to meet labor and business needs;
4. Travel exemptions for residency and familial matters;
5. Quarantine and other health requirements for inbound travelers;
6. Measures taken to mitigate costs and quarantine time;
7. Measures taken by APEC economies to improve transparency and information sharing;
8. Risk modeling and policy procedure in deliberating travel restrictions.

It is interesting to note that while stringent policies are implemented by APEC member economies, it recognizes and respects the differences in personal and professional needs, local situation, and domestic regulations. It is also apparent that information is comprehensively shared and there is a conscious effort to make information publicly available to all users so that risks at the border are mitigated, although not eliminated, for the safety and convenience of travelers.

Bottomline, a safe and secure cross-border mobility during a health crisis can be facilitated through recognition and cognizance of differences in approaches due to differences in situations; information-sharing; and a unified risk modeling framework that will guide policies on travel restrictions – all of which harmonize understanding of what to do when indicators show warnings. This is the root of Safe Passage.

7.4. APEC Safe Passage Taskforce

Building from the abovementioned initiatives under subsections 7.1 to 7.3, the APEC Safe Passage consolidates everything with emphasis on applicability to TTHI. As reported by Sinaga (2022), the APEC Safe Passage is specifically tasked to put forward recommendations to drive work on passenger movements in the region, looking into issues at and behind the border that can be addressed

to facilitate TTHI in the region characterized by safety, security, serviceability, sustainability, and resilience.

These characteristics must be underscored because as cited by Sinaga (2022), according to Thailand's APEC Senior Official and Chair of the APEC Safe Passage taskforce, Cherdchai Chaivaivid, "safe passage coordination between member economies needs to continue even when the pandemic becomes endemic."

That is, beyond COVID-19, APEC economies must collaborate and shape resilience in preparation for future circumstances that may disrupt cross-border travel. Anchored on the role of TTHI as a key economic sector of the APEC region, it is critical to facilitate the safe resumption of cross-border movements for the speedy recovery not only of specific sectors but the global economy.

7.4.1. Facilitating travel for air and maritime crew

This initiative began in a high-level Roundtable on Safe Passage⁸ in May 2021 and in September 2021 when Thailand was the APEC host economy. These Roundtables provided a platform for international organizations and APEC economies to exchange views on the safe resumption of cross-border travel in the region. Three major initiatives related to air travel have emerged during the initial stages of the APEC Safe Passage:

1. An *Air Crew & Supply Chain Continuity Roundtable* was conducted in August 2021 to deliberate ways to **overcome constraints faced by aircrew**, including divergent requirements and procedures implemented to manage the spread of COVID-19.
2. Augmenting the best practices created by ICAO, the need for a **cohesive approach to public health safety** that enables crew to safely serve international locations has been emphasized to prevent disturbances in air travel services.
3. A Research Paper⁹ was prepared by the APEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) Steering Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (SCE), Transportation Working Group (TPTWG). It features eight key recommendations for APEC economies, which includes **the adoption of a harmonized suite of processes**, whose objective is to protect public health, while maximizing the ability of carriers to operate air services for the benefit of APEC member economies.

7.4.2. Interoperability of vaccination certificates

It is important to note that these initiatives are characterized by safety, security, and serviceability. It has also been made apparent that harmonization is the way to go. Hence, since its inception, the taskforce has been discussing and exchanging best practices on the safe resumption of cross-border travel at the domestic, sub-regional, and regional levels. Moreover, it has made significant strides towards greater alignment of approaches across APEC, particularly

⁸ For details, see http://mddb.apec.org/Documents/2021/SOM/RT/21_som_rt_001.pdf.

⁹ For details, see <https://www.apec.org/publications/2021/12/understanding-the-impact-of-covid-19-requirements-on-air-crew>.

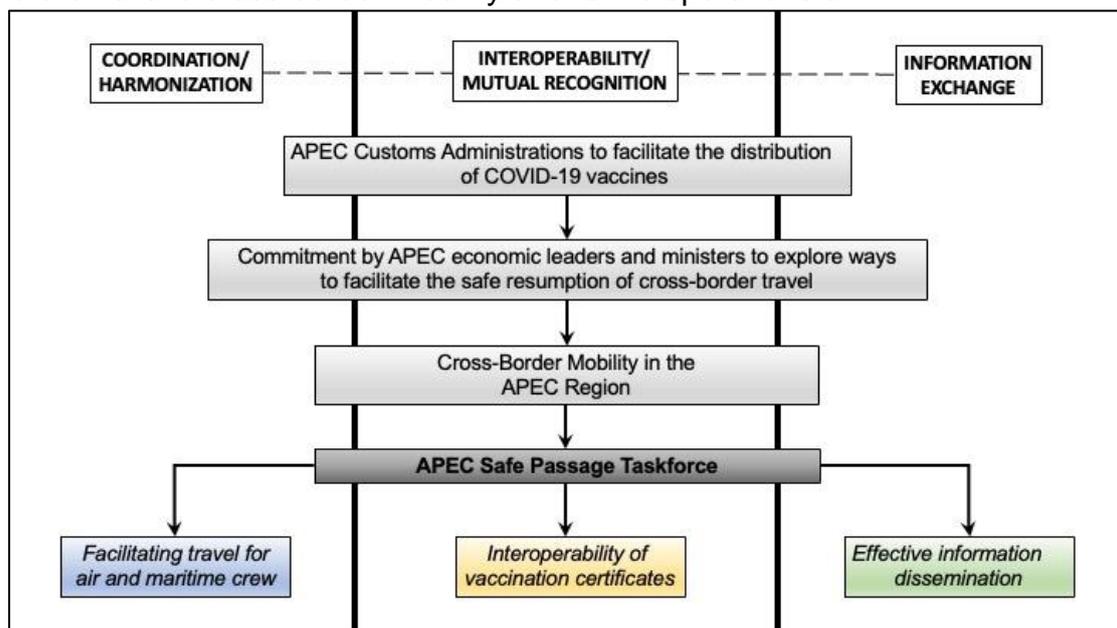
through policy discussions on facilitating travel for air and maritime crew as well as **voluntary principles for the improved interoperability of vaccination certificates**¹⁰ issued by APEC economies. This is discussed in detail in the next section.

The voluntary principles encourage member economies to mutually recognize vaccination certificates issued by other APEC economies as proof of an individual’s COVID-19 vaccination status for cross-border entry and use within borders, while respecting reservations, and making considerations for ongoing scientific, ethical, legal, and societal discussions about the inequalities this initiative is alleged to cause (Voight, 2022). This is because there is still a need to strike a balance between policies that save lives and policies that enable economic activity and people-to-people connectivity (Sinaga, 2022).

7.4.3. Effective information dissemination

For the abovementioned Safe Passage initiatives to hold, there is a need to design border policies based on “best public health science and empirical data”, as quoted from Emmanuel San Andres, a senior analyst with the PSU (Sinaga, 2022, para. 14). However, this is dependent on the availability and accessibility of clear and timely information to travelers about entry requirements relating to COVID-19. For example, Thailand recently launched a **one-stop information hub**¹¹ that highlights the summary of health and COVID-related border measures across APEC.

Correspondingly, the creation of mechanism that will make information dissemination effective emphasizes that the discourse on regional mobility cuts across borders and involves member economies and their respective ministries. This requires continuous coordination and cooperation for this mechanism to become more flexible, reliable, and accessible in immediately responding to future risks to cross-border mobility and to the operations of TTHI.



¹⁰ For details, see <https://www.apec.org/meeting-papers/sectoral-ministerial-meetings/trade/apec-ministers-responsible-for-trade-statement-of-chair/annex-b---voluntary-principles-for-the-interoperability-of-vaccination-certificates-in-the-apec-region>

¹¹ For details, see <https://safepassage.apec.org/>

Figure 15. Safe Passage initiatives in APEC.

Thus, as illustrated in Figure 15, the APEC Safe Passage Taskforce stems from earlier initiatives. It emerges as a channel to rationalize, coordinate, and to materialize APEC's work in creating not just a safe resumption of cross-border travel but also enabling it to be secure, serviceable, sustainable, and resilient. It has been consistent and has intersected with the following facets: coordination/harmonization, interoperability/mutual recognition, and information-exchange. Likewise, consistent with recommendations from literature, stakeholder discussions, and workshops, it has also been made explicit that the APEC Safe Passage must be anchored on greater alignment of approaches across APEC member economies, while respecting the policies and measures adopted by member economies to combat COVID-19 and future public health emergencies. With the work that has been done, synergies can be created in implementing a harmonized APEC travel protocol, enhancing interoperability of travel documents, and consider mutual recognition of any vaccine certificates developed and implemented by APEC economies.

VIII. Best practices

While the previous section took a general approach to explicating the initiatives implemented leading to Safe Passage, the succeeding discussions highlight specific initiatives implemented by APEC member economies. These are specific responses that aim to facilitate cross border mobility. Also included in this section are the presentations of member economies who participated in the APEC Safe Passage Workshop (Figure 9). Like the cases discussed in the previous section, while these initiatives are still open for interoperability and mutual recognition, it is important to note that these are the prototypes or proofs of concept that can be innovated further towards a travel experience that is characterized by safety, security, and serviceability; and a TTHI that is geared towards sustainability and resiliency.

8.1. APEC: Interoperability of vaccination certificates

The WHO has made work on a digital vaccination certificate in cooperation with various partners to establish a governance framework and specifications for its implementation at both domestic and international levels (Sinaga, 2022; WHO, 2021). This WHO-approved International Certificate of Vaccination (ICV) is deemed the gold standard followed by the economy-specific and industry-associated options as secondary proof. However, the development of multiple documents by economies and different industries might be overwhelming to deal with. Hence, as a response, economic ministers welcomed the **Voluntary Principles for the Interoperability of Vaccination Certificates** in the APEC Region, as mentioned in subsection 7.4.2, during their meeting in Bangkok last 21-22 May 2022 (APEC BMG, 2022). The voluntary principles encourage members to recognize vaccination certificates issued by other APEC

economies as proof of an individual's COVID-19 inoculation for international border entry and within borders.

The principles build on the existing work and recommended protocols developed by other economies and relevant international organizations. It encourages member economies to: “practice pragmatism and flexibility in accepting vaccination certificates in various formats, for example, both digital and non-digital formats, paper and non-digitally verifiable proofs of vaccination, as well as certificates that use a different encryption method or signing process” (APEC Business Mobility Group, 2022, para. 7) and “make public their regulations, procedures and requirements regarding proof of vaccination to help foster confidence, as well as support information sharing and build capability among APEC economies” (APEC Business Mobility Group, 2022, para. 8).

Citing Matthew Bannon, convenor of APEC's BMG, who endorsed the voluntary principles:

“The fundamental purpose of the principles is to support the safe reopening of travel in the APEC region and to avoid the risk that differences in the format of vaccination certificates carried by travelers becomes an unnecessary handbrake on that reopening. The principles acknowledge that there are a range of formats and approaches to vaccination certificates and that consolidation around a single format is not practical in the short or medium term. Instead, getting these different systems to be accepted, recognized, and where possible, talk to each other should be the primary focus.”

8.2. Australia: ICAO Visible Digital Seal (VDS) for non-constrained environments (NC) standard for international health proofs

In line with the interoperability of vaccination certificates comes Australia's contribution in developing and finalizing ICAO's VDS NC standard for international health proofs and in leading the adoption and issuance of ICAO VDS NC standard proof of vaccination certificates through their International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate (ICVC¹²). This is cryptographically secure, digitally signed, and encrypted data that can be authenticated to prove content is original and unchanged. It is a free and secure means of proving your COVID-19 immunization history for cross-border travels.

Australia also helped develop an open, secure, and royalty-free iOS and Android applications to authenticate all economies who issued the ICAO VDS NC compliant proof of vaccination and played a role in engaging with specific neighboring economies in finding solutions on proof of vaccination.

Australia's next generation of passports (i.e., R Series)¹³, whose major new feature is its polycarbonate data page (PCDP) with forensic level security features, protects passport holders' identity and personal information in line with international best practice. Just like previous passport designs, this new Australian passport meet standards for travel documents set by the ICAO.

The details of this new passport design have been presented by Ms. Ruth Sear, Policy Officer of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade during the APEC Safe Passage workshop.

¹² For details, see <https://www.passports.gov.au/international-covid-19-vaccination-certificate>

¹³ For details see <https://www.passports.gov.au/australia-has-new-passport>

8.3. Indonesia: PeduliLindungi

Like other economies, Indonesia has also established a COVID-19 special task force, wherein one of their mandates is to develop innovations to mitigate the pandemic. The economy initiated its own tracking and information-storage and sharing application to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative was highlighted by the Indonesian delegation during the APEC Safe Passage workshop.

PeduliLindungi¹⁴ is comprised of two Indonesian words – *peduli*, which means to care, and *lindungi*, which means to protect. This is a smartphone health and mobility tracking application created by Indonesia’s Ministry of Health for the COVID-19 pandemic to control and track positive COVID cases. However, over time, it has emerged to become an important and must-have application for Indonesians, as well as foreigners in the economy, especially in terms of traveling. By keeping the app active on the smartphone and using the scanning feature, it can track which flight you take, which establishments you visit, and more. In addition, it can store your COVID-19 vaccination certificate and any COVID-19 test results you take (e.g., RT-PCR method or rapid antigen test). That is, within the application, there is a special feature called electronic-Health Alert Card (eHAC), which is used to create a QR code that you must have before taking international and/or domestic flights to and from Indonesia. Hence, it also helped health authorities map out areas requiring testing, vaccination, and other assistance.

As the pandemic situation improves, this technology has evolved to have greater functions beyond pandemic management useful for the general medical industry and the TTHI. In fact, as reported in Coconuts Jakarta (2023), Peduli Lindungi has been transformed into *Satu Sehat*, which means “one health”. It is now a one-stop app for users to obtain medical services and store their medical history.

8.4. Malaysia: Langkawi International Travel Bubble (LITB)

To restart travel and reboot the TTHI industry, a managed reopening is warranted. In this case, Malaysia created the Langkawi International Travel Bubble (LITB¹⁵) wherein travelers are required to comply with specific and well-defined entry protocols, which include full vaccination, booking with a Malaysian tour operator, periodic testing with negative results during the first seven days, and traveling through specific ports of entry. Once the seven days in Langkawi have passed, visitors can travel elsewhere in Malaysia. Langkawi was chosen as the destination bubble because of its capacity to attract tourists given its heritage tourism products.

¹⁴ For details, see: <https://come2indonesia.com/peduli-lindungi-how-to-download-install-and-register-in-the-health-app-to-travel-to-through-indonesia/>

¹⁵ For details, see <https://langkawiinternationaltravelbubble.com/>

8.5. Peru: PENTUR 2025

The government of Peru has put priority in the recovery of its economy's tourism sector. An emergency has been declared to facilitate alignment of the different sectors of their TTHI towards a common goal of regulating tourism. To do this, two important management documents have been launched – the *Tourism Sector Emergency Plan* and the *Tourism Sector Reactivation Strategy*. These documents contain specific and urgent short- and medium-term actions for the recovery and strategic reactivation of the sector. These have also been reflected in their National Strategic Action Plan, *PENTUR 2025* (see Figure 16), which has four strategic pillars: (1) diversification and consolidation of markets; (2) diversification and consolidation of the tourism offerings; (3) travel facilitation; and (4) institutional framework of the sector with the objective to consolidate Peru as a competitive, sustainable, quality, and safe tourism destination in line with the international safe travel seal.

Measures to achieve these objectives include financial rescue, economic support, tourism facilitation, investment promotion, and tourism promotion. By considering the travel needs as well as the changing preferences and behavior of both domestic and foreign tourists, the quick reactivation plan called *Con Punche Peru* (translated to Be Stronger, Peru) amounting to USD 130 million has been launched with three principal lines – (1) support tourism; (2) improve tourism infrastructure and safety; and (3) strengthening and promotion of tourism.

In supporting tourism, the following have been implemented:

1. Tax flexibility and reprogramming *Reactiva Peru* and *FAE Tourism* (financial institutions to provide grace period to enterprises)
2. Temporary release of deduction accounts and extension of tax obligations to micro, small, and medium-size enterprises (MSMEs)
3. Entrepreneurial impulse program – *Impulso Myperu* (MSME loans with lower annual rates for good payers)
4. Economic subsidy for tourism service providers
5. Refund of Value Added Tax (VAT) to tourists.

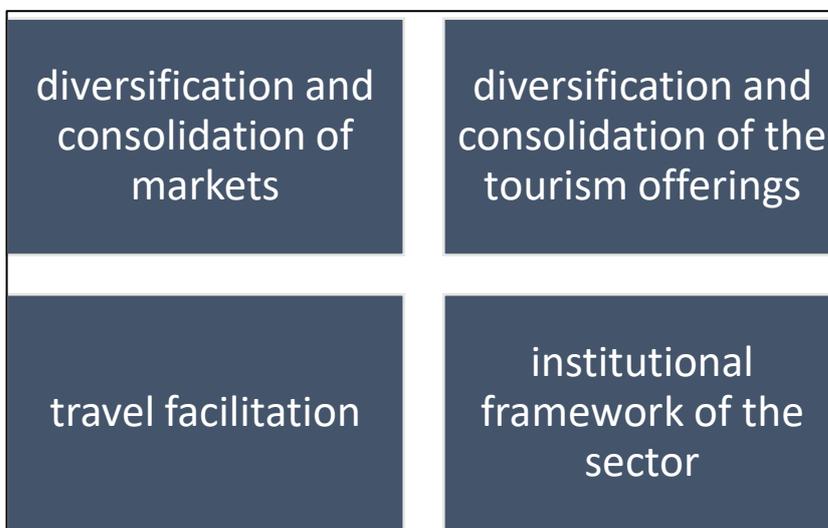


Figure 16. Pillars of Peru's National Strategic Action Plan.

In improving tourism infrastructure and safety, the domestic government coordinated with regional, district, and municipal governments, and all sectors including transportation and environment ministry, to complete and inaugurate 11 pending infrastructure projects in nine important tourism destination areas. This initiative cost USD 89 million.

In strengthening and promotion of tourism, the following have been initiated through the following campaigns:

1. Promotion of domestic tourism through the *National Promotion Campaign for Domestic Tourism* and *Strategic Alliances for Domestic Tourism* – both with the coordination and collaboration with the different public and private sectors
2. Promotion of inbound tourism through the *Recovery Campaign: Peru Now* – a call to action campaign that includes *International Tourism Promotion Campaign* and *International Campaign for the Promotion of Meeting Tourism* (i.e., Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions or MICE)
3. Image Promotion – Peru Brand Image Campaign, gastronomy promotion, and other brand promotion actions
4. Business investment promotion through advertising campaigns (promotion of locations), roadshows in Europe and the United States (US), investment promotion in priority markets, and other film location actions.

Like the four pillars of travel amid the pandemic of DOT et al. (2020), these practices initiated by Peru highlighted collaborative governance in the recovery and reactivating strategy TTHI in an economy, whose economic growth and development is also driven by this sector. However, the success of these initiatives also rests on harmonizing protocols for international entry modality. This is critical in avoiding inconveniences in entry and exit due to constant variation in safety measures.

The details of these initiatives have been presented by Mrs. Madeleine Burns Vidaurrazaga, Vice Minister of Peru's *Ministerio de Comercio Exterior y Turismo* during the APEC Safe Passage workshop.

8.6. The Philippines: VaxCertPH

In elevating safety and simplifying travel protocols as suggested by DOT et al. (2021, 2020), the Philippines has developed and launched its own domestic proof of vaccination – the VaxCert or VaxCertPH. Like Australia and Indonesia, this is the digital vaccination certificate for both Filipinos and non-Filipinos vaccinated in the Philippines. This can be used for domestic and international travel, as it complies with the WHO's guidelines on the digital documentation of COVID-19 certificates (Chiu, 2022). This contains a unique QR code that can be scanned allowing for fast and accurate validation of the vaccine received (primary and booster) by the holder at border controls.

In fact, this vaccination certificate is recognized by ASEAN member economies as declared in a Joint Statement on Mutual Recognition of COVID-19 Vaccination Certificates¹⁶ during the 15th ASEAN Health Ministers' Meeting

¹⁶ For details, see <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/4.-15th-AHMM-Joint-Statement-on-Mutual-Recognition-of-COVID-19-Vaccination-Certificates.pdf>

in Bali, Indonesia last 14 May 2022. Likewise, according to the Delegation of the European Union to the Philippines (2022), “the Philippines is now connected to the European Union (EU) Digital COVID Certificate #EUDCC system” (para. 1). That is, by equivalence and mutual recognition, the Philippines’ VaxCert is recognized by the European Union (EU) as a valid and verifiable proof of vaccination required for entry. At the same time, the Philippines also accept to recognize EUDCC certificates according to its own legal order.

Similarly, the Philippines, through its Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) has also expanded its list of accepted and recognized domestic COVID-19 vaccination certificates. It approved 12 more from economies¹⁷ whose travelers are allowed visa-free travel to the Philippines (DOT, 2022).

VaxCertPH is a testament to the feasibility of working together with other economies in mutually recognizing such important safety document generated by respective economies. This is a critical step in making travel processes and requirements easier and seamless for travelers that will boost arrivals and significantly facilitate the safe resumption of TTHI activities, that will restore employment in an industry unprecedentedly impacted by the pandemic.

8.7. Thailand: Nexus of institution-integration-people mobility-area and issues-based adaptability process

Thailand, through Dr. Jutamas Wisansing, Managing Director and Consultant, Perfect Link Consulting Group Executive Committee of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) – Thailand Chapter during the APEC Safe Passage workshop, highlighted sustainability and resilience as the anchor of their economy’s approach and policy environment to restarting TTHI activities.

As per Dr. Wisansing, on one hand, resilience typically means “a strong capacity [to] withstand adventure, crises, or traumas and to grow stronger through adaption, learning, and dealing with risk in their stride.” On the other hand, sustainability requires to “learn from recent and ongoing stress and shock events, to prepare for the next catastrophic event, and ensure the long-term sustainability of their evolving tourism activities.”

In the discourse of Safe Passage, there is a need to highlight the tension between facilitation (openness) and safe passage (safeguards). Considerations must be made for the following:

1. Maintaining TTHI jobs in the face of travel shutdowns
2. Swiftly adapting to new visitor markets to keep hotel and related business occupancy high
3. Implementing effective processes for responding to natural disasters protecting local populations and natural assets and reopening for tourism as soon as it is safe to do so.
4. Ensuring community involvement in tourism activities to build greater connection and information flow.

¹⁷ As reported by DOT (2022), as per Resolution 162 of the IATF-EID, in addition to the domestic vaccination certificates approved in resolutions, “vaccination certificates of Argentina, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Chile, Denmark, Ecuador, Indonesia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Portugal, and Spain” would be accepted and recognized as other proofs of vaccination required to enter the Philippines.

Thailand is a main hub in Southeast Asia primarily because of its central geographical location, good long- and short-haul air connectivity, and fair number of visa exemptions. Although this brings positive economic impacts to the economy, too much openness can create security challenges and facilitate crimes such as illegal immigration and trafficking. Balancing such requires safeguarding not only destinations but also communities.

To do this, Thailand operated on the nexus of institution-integration-people mobility (visa policy)-area and issues-based adaptability process as framework of their tourism policy environment. That is, the COVID-19 warranted the establishment of a close inter-ministerial cooperation mechanism comprised of the Prime Minister with members from the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Defense. This highlights collaborative governance at the economy-level.

To complement this, Thailand adapted the safety certification of the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), which has certified that entrepreneurs who have been awarded The Amazing Thailand Safety & Health Administration (SHA) has also passed the Safe Travels Protocols. This highlights the importance of certification in facilitating continued business operation of those who are compliant with prescribed safety standards.

In consideration of safety while allowing TTHI to operate, Thailand launched the Phuket Sandbox (Safe and Sealed) wherein Phuket was opened for international tourism but only for tourists willing to quarantine for 14 days upon their arrival in Thailand. However, this met resistance from the residents of Phuket and was later dropped. This highlights the importance of involving everyone in the TTHI value chain especially those who would be affected by the policy, whether in a positive or negative light. Collaborative governance is indeed a necessary and sufficient condition.

In terms of visa policy, a special tourist visa (STV) for international visitors, long-term visa for emerging new market opportunities, long-term resident permit, long stay visa, privilege entry visa, and smart visa all for longer-staying and higher-spending visitors. Thailand also maximized the use of the ABTC to facilitate entry of visitors from APEC member economies. This highlights the need for entry permit documents that are valid, verifiable, and mutually recognized in facilitating mobility.

With Thailand's experience in navigating the resumption of safe travels, it has been underscored that interoperability that is data-driven and data sharing is critical in rebooting TTHI in the APEC region.

These two issues and recommendations must be considered.

1. Due to their online components and process, e-safety process are susceptible to cybersecurity threats that can compromise the privacy of applicants' data. Data breaches in the process can lead to identity theft and financial fraud. For this reason, e-platforms must use robust cyber security measures, including multi-factor authentication, encryption, firewalls, intrusion detection and prevention systems, and regular security audits and updates.
2. In the digital era, social media provide a multitude of real-time interactive platforms that are actively used by organizations for their brand-building and marketing efforts as well as for crisis communications. Crisis and safety communications provide a bank of guidelines, and dispensing

advice for optimal behavior in emergencies, organizational response strategies, and the credibility of the media source and message.

8.8. The United States: Massive vaccination and data-driven response

The United States has made COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) declarations to respond to the repercussions of the pandemic. Through the PHE declarations, the US' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been authorized to collect certain types of public health data. The CDC has worked during the height of the pandemic in folding and implementing COVID-19 emergency response activities into its existing structure and programs, as part of the path towards sustainable public health practice. In line with collaborative governance (DOT et al., 2020), the CDC has also collaborated with partners, including states and local territories, to prepare for the end of the PHE declaration and communicate updated reporting requirements and cadences. Such mechanism allowed the US to mobilize and sustain a historic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. That is, over the last two years, the US has effectively launched the largest adult vaccination program in their history, with approximately 270 million of its population having received at least one shot of a COVID-19 vaccine. Due to the US' whole-of-government approach and the historic investments and efforts to combatting the virus, the economy is now in a relatively better position than in 2020, which warrants a transition away from the emergency phase to a new and better normal situation.

As explained by Mr. Curt Cotle, Senior Policy Analyst National Travel and Tourism Office of the US Department of Commerce, during the APEC Safe Passage Workshop's panel discussion, the federal COVID-19 PHE declaration has been declared ended on 11 May 2023. Beyond this date, CDC's authorizations to collect certain types of public health data will expire.

While mitigating the spread of COVID-19 remains a public health priority and reporting frequency and source data for some metrics will shift when the PHE declaration ends, CDC will continue to report valuable data to inform individual and community public health actions to protect those at highest risk of severe COVID-19. The priority of necessary information to protect the economy's public health remains. With improvements in pandemic situation and availability of much better tools and resources than before, the economy can protect communities and the economy more than ever after the lessons learned from the pandemic. Likewise, as the US transition its COVID-19 policies towards more flexibilities and improved standards for patient care, it has become more relevant to continue working closely with partners, including state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies, industry, and advocates, to ensure an orderly transition towards the better normal. Indeed, harnessing collaborative advantage is the way to go. The US' policy environment is illustrated in Figure 17.

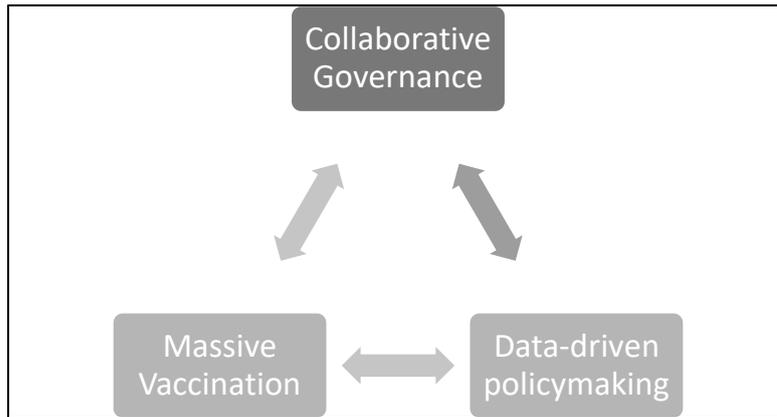


Figure 17. The US' whole-of-government policy environment.

8.9. Viet Nam: Expanded adoption of technology

Safety is vital to providing quality tourism. Success of tourism destinations in a post-pandemic scenario depends on being able to provide safe and secure environment not only for visitors but also for TTHI workers that they are comfortable in their respective work environments to increase their productivity. However, this must be reinforced by skills development to ensure everyone's safety from the risks and dangers of the health crisis.

Viet Nam is one of the economies in the world that has demonstrated success in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic (Dabla-Norris & Zhang, 2021). In fact, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as cited by Dabla-Norris and Zhang (2021), in its assessment of the economy, despite the pandemic, Viet Nam's economy has remained resilient and has demonstrated one of the highest growth rates in the world due to its strong economic fundamentals, decisive containment measures, and well-targeted government support. While Viet Nam has also experienced the worst of the pandemic due to the volatility and unprecedented scale of the situation (Calonzo & Nguyen, 2021), it has managed to make a model recovery given its ability to attract foreign investment relocating from the People's Republic of China (Malesky, 2022).

The details of Viet Nam's these initiatives to navigate the pandemic have been presented by Ms. Tran Thi Phuong Nhung, Deputy Director General, International Cooperation Department of the Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism during the APEC Safe Passage workshop.

In Viet Nam, safety in all areas of TTHI such as transportation, accommodation, destination, tour guiding, shopping, and entertainment, among others have been the guide in designing its policy environment. Their Ministry of Tourism has issued guidelines in governing the operations of accommodation establishments and other sites. To effectively do this, like Indonesia's *PeduliLindungi* and other ASEAN member economies' similar approaches, Viet Nam's government developed and launched a unified mobile application for COVID-19 prevention and control called *PC-Covid Viet Nam*.

This application integrates the functionalities of the Viet Nam Health Declaration app, Bluetooth-powered COVID-19 contact tracing and alert app Bluezone, and NCOVI – a mobile application where users can update their

health status, and vaccination card generation (Ang, 2021). Specifically, its major features are: (1) provides a COVID-19 card which serves as a travel and social pass for fully COVID-19 vaccinated or recovered individuals; (2) stores a user's single personal QR code; (3) records their movement for contact tracing; (4) enables them to sign health declaration forms; (5) provides a map of places with high risk of infections; and (6) information on COVID-19 vaccinations and news about the pandemic.

As a form of immunization management platform developed by military-backed telecommunications firm *Viettel*, the platform is composed of four systems: an e-health record app, a COVID-19 vaccination information portal, a domestic vaccination support system, and a response center. Because the system is capable of handling registrations for COVID-19 immunization and tracking vaccination records, it supported Viet Nam's mass vaccination drive allowing them to reopen their borders in a safer and more secure manner.

Equally important, this highlights Viet Nam's expanded adaption of technology in managing all aspect of TTHI and other tourism-related sector including aviation immigration, payment modalities, among others. In fact, touchless transactions and communications have become the norm (e.g., online check-in for transportation, automated immigration processes given passports with electronic components like Australia's R series passport, cashless transaction between merchants and customers, online health certificate generation and verification. Robots and Artificial Intelligence (AI) have also been used in hospitals and the medical system and most localities have used the telehealth application to provide medical support for COVID-19 patients (VOV World, 2021).

The use of technology enabled Viet Nam to be at par with other economies' safe measure adoption as they have adapted safety standards across all members of the TTHI value chain – direct and indirect. Viet Nam is also able to align with WTTC's call for resiliency and sustainability (see Figure 18), consistent with Thailand's policy environment and the findings of DOT et al. (2021, 2020), wherein tourism destinations must learn from the pandemic and prepare for the next catastrophic event that may threaten viability while ensuring long term sustainability of TTHI activities. Leveraging technology allowed Viet Nam to link resilience and sustainability together characterized by ensuring unending prosperity for everyone in the economy and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).



Figure 18. Viet Nam's technologically inclined policy environment.

IX. Constraints faced and solutions introduced

In explicating the constraints faced and solutions introduced by APEC member economies during the pandemic, another workshop activity was conducted succeeding the empathy mapping exercise. In this exercise, the workshop participants retained their groupings from the previous exercise and were tasked to complete the worksheet found on Table 5, which contains the common constraints faced by participating APEC member economies. Once Table 5 has been completed, workshop participants synthesized their discussion by highlighting major and collective lessons learned by TTHI of the respective economies during the pandemic. Moreover, appealing from the responses in Table 5, workshop participants were also tasked to identify salient recommendations for inclusion in the APEC Safe Passage Framework, as seen in Table 6.

Table 5 and Table 6 contains the collective and common responses from participating APEC member economies during the workshop. This is because the concerns and issues raised by member economies encompass a commonality that forms the APEC Safe Passage Framework.

Table 5. *Worksheet on constraints faced and solutions introduced by APEC member economies.*

Give the biggest safety challenge faced by your economy's TTHI during the pandemic	Solutions introduced to address the biggest safety challenge (How did your economy manage the constraint?)	What made the solution successful (or not successful)? (What made the solution work/not work?)	Would you consider this solution as best practice? (YES/NO)	Do you advise this approach to be replicated by APEC member economies? (YES/NO)
Exodus of health workers to be deployed for work outside the sending-economy	Imposed travel bans for health workers.	Unsuccessful: Health workers already had contracts	NO	NO
Rising infections in the population	Secured different vaccines from COVAX facility and other suppliers at the same time	Successful: Herd immunity was achieved faster	YES	YES
Vaccine hesitancy of the population	Provided incentives to those vaccinated	Unsuccessful: Despite the incentive, hesitancy persisted.	NO	NO
Travel, even essential travels, became inconvenient	Interoperability of travel documents; vaccination certificates recognized by member/partner economies	Successful: It reduced inconvenience to travel	YES	YES
Lack of credible information about	App to monitor pandemic situation	Successful: It provided a better picture of the pandemic situation	YES	YES

pandemic situation		allowing for better pandemic management		
Uncertainty of the pandemic nature and situation	Risk communication and management mechanisms based on what WHO has advised.	Successful in relaying credible information about the pandemic to manage the spread, but had negative implications on economic sectors	YES	YES
Awareness of people to adopted new normal (protocols, quality standards, new rules, etc.)	To increase efficiency communications channels	Successful: It provided formal information and there was a high level of vaccinated people	YES	YES
Lack of investment and financing in tourism industry	Promote investment and do campaign about tourism for instance work from Bali program	Successful: encourage people to do tourism and investing in tourism	YES	YES
Lack of manpower in tourism industry	To hire new graduates; upskill and reskill new and existing human resources	Successful: human resource in TTHI has developed in preparation for the better normal.	YES	YES

Table 6. Salient recommendations for inclusion in the APEC Safe Passage Framework.

Major Lessons	Recommendations for APEC Safe Passage Framework
Lack of preparedness in responding to pandemic is harmful to the economy and the people.	The APEC Safe Passage Framework must be characterized by adaptiveness and proactiveness rather than reactivity. Preparations for future crises must be done now so that TTHI stakeholders would not be caught off guard again.
TTHI needs to have a safety nets (e.g., policy frameworks and environments must be in place; alternatives and diversity of products and services must be designed so a total shutdown of the industry can be avoided)	The APEC Safe Passage Framework must be characterized by collaboration, cooperation, integration, and harmony between member economies and international organizations (APEC-TWG, UNWTO, WHO, etc.) in developing a guiding framework that are amenable and feasible to all member economies.
Provision of timely and clear information saves lives.	The APEC Safe Passage Framework must be characterized as being systematic . Member economies must utilize the power of technology and innovation as tools to enhance information dissemination and improve the competitiveness of destinations, make travel safer and easier, and manage tourist flows to tourist sites safely for hosts and visitors.
The social responsibility of the sector towards local communities and the	The APEC Safe Passage Framework must be characterized as conducive, flexible, facilitative,

environment can improve its image and contribute to sustainable development. It is essential to harmonize protocols for different international entry modalities. This will allow tourists to avoid inconvenience at entry, stay, and exit controls due to constant variations in current health measures or to differences in measures established by other APEC member economies.

non-restrictive, and convenient so that travelers would find it easy to comply with safety protocols. In this way, the recovery of TTHI in the better normal would be sustained while ensuring the safety, security, serviceability, sustainability, and resilience.

X. Conclusions

As explained from document reviews and scholarly literature reviews, there are three fundamental principles that guide the creation of the APEC Safe Passage Framework. These are:

1. TTHI is a value chain.
2. There is no going back to the old practices rendered obsolete by the pandemic.
3. The better normal is characterized by safe, secure, serviceable, sustainable, and resilient TTHI.

Pandemic management is a public good and the under provision of one entity will result to a collapse of the pillars and a continuous delay of rebooting. That is why it is important to establish the required mindset and common objectives to make this happen.

All the above-mentioned pillars can serve as facilitating frameworks that can pave the way for a better resumption of cross-border travel while adhering to safety standards imposed by governments to ensure that risks and threats are minimized. However, it is hinged on cooperation and collaboration. Hence, with the appropriate policy environment, it would be relatively easier to safely resume cross-border travel because it is grounded on coordination among members of the TTHI value chain.

As the pandemic ends, the discourse moves beyond COVID-19. The discussion must encompass threats to the core salient characteristics of TTHI. Hence, there is a need for a stakeholder-driven understanding of the concept of safety, security, serviceability, sustainability, and resilience.

XI. Synthesis

Supplementing the document reviews and scholarly literature reviews with key informant discussions, workshops, and information exchange with representatives from APEC member economies, the APEC Safe Passage Framework should be: (1) adaptive; (2) collaborative; (3) systematic; and (4) convenient (as lifted from Table 6 and as seen in Figure 19). These are the four guiding pillars of Safe Passage that facilitate the design of policy frameworks and policy environments in driving safety, security, serviceability, sustainability, and resilience in the APEC region.

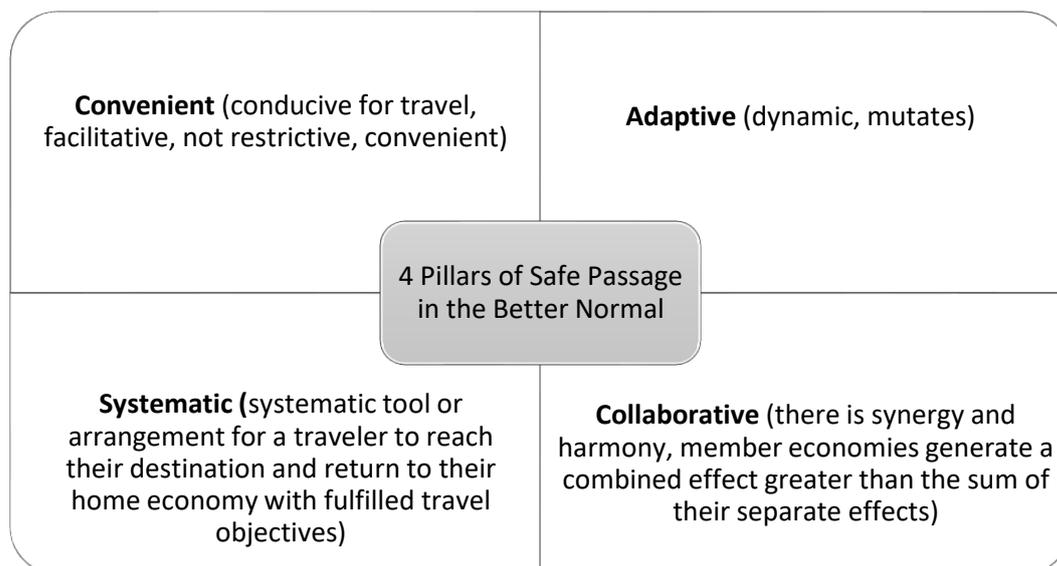


Figure 19. *Four pillars of Safe Passage in the better normal.*

While an across-the-board protocol may be ideal, the varying pandemic situation, resource availability and utilization, economic objectives, and priorities of different APEC member economies would not create a harmonious convergence of policy design and compliance. However, recognizing that such differences exist may lead to convergence. Despite differences in many aspects of various APEC member economies, everyone is geared towards a common goal – to revitalize TTHI and enable it to become safe, secure, serviceable, sustainable, and resilient in the better normal.

When economies converge towards making Safe Passage adaptive, collaborative, systematic, and convenient, regardless of the protocol, there is a common understanding and recognition that a certain policy is towards a shared common goal. After all, the cooperation of all APEC member economies is a necessary and sufficient condition for Safe Passage to be successful.

XII. Policy and overall safe passage recommendations

Following the framework developed in Figure 19, below are some policy recommendations that can facilitate Safe Passage in the APEC region. These policy recommendations also build on those cited by APEC PSU (2022).

1. **Systematic and Collaborative.** APEC member economies must continue to ensure widespread and equitable access not only to COVID-19 vaccines but to other vaccines against diseases to ensure that stakeholders remain healthy and vigorous to allow TTHI activities remain viable and continue to flourish. As seen from the experience of the US and Viet Nam, among other APEC member economies, the widespread and equitable access to safe, effective, and affordable COVID-19 vaccines was crucial to the reopening of borders and resumption of economic activities. Because the pandemic is a public concern, through the collaboration and support of economies through sharing of vaccines, it resulted to APEC's high vaccination rates among their residents, despite some degree of hesitancy in certain

economies, have facilitated the relaxation and elimination of protocols that undermine the viability of TTHI and other economic sectors.

2. **Adaptive and Convenient.** Any border control, safety protocols, and other safe passage requirements that APEC would implement must be evidence-based – supported by data, flexible to an ever-changing situation, and anchored on cognizance of varying economic circumstances of other member economies. It is critical to acknowledge that any health crisis is a public health issue and with varying circumstances (e.g., healthcare capacity, risk tolerance, perception of safety), domestic policies and border measures will not be homogenous. However, it has been underscored in the workshops that while this is the case, member economies converge to a resolution that decisions, directions, and policy directions relating to health crisis must be anchored not only on safety (i.e., saving lives, mitigating illness, safeguarding the public health system) but also on ensuring that policies are facilitative (i.e., convenient to those who will be subjected to it, balanced consideration to safety and socio-economic viability). This can be done if policies are not ad-hoc but rather based on what the situation on the ground warrants, which are reflected in data.
3. **Convenient and Systematic.** APEC member economies must continue working on developing interoperability of documents required for cross-border mobility beyond vaccination certificates. Taking the case of Australia; Indonesia; the Philippines; and Viet Nam, while they have demonstrated an inclusive and flexible approach to mutually recognize both paper and digital vaccination certificates, the APEC region will benefit from standardization. Benefits would include time and cost savings brought about by a more efficient and faster search, matching, and review of documents. A systematic approach will promote convenience to both authorities and travelers. This will also result to greater amenability because it is convenient. For this to materialize, both soft and hard infrastructure must be established to ensure compatibility with existing international digital standards. However, the returns would be significant as the APEC regions would have a TTHI that is conducive for both demand- and supply-side that can unprecedentedly boost recovery and sustain growth of travel in the APEC region.
4. **Collaborative and Adaptive.** The workshops highlighted the critical importance of data generation, data sharing, and data analytics in combating the pandemic. Hence, APEC member economies must continue the work on facilitating dissemination of accurate and timely information on safety requirements. The one-stop information hub of APEC is an excellent proof of concept that efficient and effective information dissemination is possible. To sustain this, member economies must continue to agree and cooperate on regularly updating such information dissemination facility and expand its use beyond pandemic context.
5. **Collaborative.** From the hard lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been made more apparent that APEC's coordination and cross-sectoral works are critical and must continue beyond the pandemic. APEC's sub-fora and working groups have facilitated collaboration and emphasized that navigating the way out of the pandemic rests on the contribution of everyone because a crisis is not just a concern of one economy but the concern of everyone. Being informal, voluntary, and non-

binding, APEC's structure puts it in the best position to propose initiatives that address emerging risks as they occur and move for adoption under mutual respect and recognition of the circumstance of other member economies. The APEC workshop and TWG meetings also served as avenues to discuss cases, best practices (i.e., what worked and did not work), and recommendations on how to enable APEC's TTHI to be safe, secure, serviceable, sustainability, and resilience. All of which are important in moving APEC forward in the better post-pandemic situation and prepare the region for future risks.

XIII. Gender equality recommendation for sectors

The success of promoting safe passage within APEC is hinged on ensuring that travelers, across varied demographics (i.e., age, sex, etc.), can safely visit destinations without fearing their safety from discrimination, and violence, among others, as per the UNWTO's International Code for the Protection of Tourists¹⁸. A two-pronged recommendation is presented below:

1. Ensure the commitment of APEC economies to creating safe public spaces for travel. Gender-based violence remains to prevail in various tourism destinations globally. A multi-sectoral approach to ensuring their safety is therefore important. This may include efforts to ensure the security and comfort of tourists in transport vehicles both public and private, accommodation establishments, among others. Commitments from the public sector must be communicated and coordinated across TTHI.
2. Guarantee non-discriminatory workforce participation in tourism across APEC economies. Collaborative platforms to ensure quality and meaningful tourism participation should be made available across both direct and indirect tourism-related business sectors.

XIV. Way forward

The work of the APEC Safe Passage Taskforce and the wealth of information generated by its series of meetings and workshops has underscored the tangible benefits of a cross-sectoral APEC mechanism that coordinates discussions on regional mobility issues. In moving towards the better post-pandemic scenario, APEC must sustain such initiatives that enable and facilitate timely regional cooperation and coordination given the persistence of risks to cross-border mobility (e.g., pandemic, war, terrorism).

The APEC Safe Passage Taskforce has also highlighted during the workshop that "safety perceptions differ"; however, participating member economies have agreed that safety is "everything and everywhere all at once encompassing both health, security, and environmental facets of seamless mobility". Hence, because jurisdictions are diverse along with approaches, differences in protocols are inevitable. In this light, the work continues because the concept of an APEC Safe Passage, which has been deemed a complex and a dynamic concept, still must be discussed, cascaded, defined, and operationalized to the TTHI stakeholders of APEC member economies.

¹⁸ For details, see <https://www.unwto.org/international-code-for-the-protection-of-tourists>

Because TTHI is a value chain, in communicating the concept of safe passage, the following must be addressed: (1) what it means for TTHI stakeholders; and (2) how it can benefit them? This is of critical importance because through a more empathic APEC, not only an effective policy environment can be created but also platforms to meaningfully engage stakeholders.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. APEC Safe Passage Workshop Program.



APEC WORKSHOP ON SAFE PASSAGE

25 APRIL 2023

ILOILO CITY, ILOILO, THE PHILIPPINES
Jaro Ballroom, Courtyard by Marriott

PROVISIONAL PROGRAM

TIME	AGENDA	REMARKS
0830H – 0915H	Registration	
0915H – 0930H	Business Arrangements	
0930H – 1000H	<p>Project Overview "Establishing a Safe and Sustainable Future for Travel in the Better Normal"</p> <p>Ms. Jem Micaiah M. Turla OIC Chief Policy Formulation and International Cooperation Division Philippine Department of Tourism</p> <p>Dr. John Paolo R. Rivera Project Consultant, The Philippines</p>	
1000H – 1020H	AM Snacks	
SESSION: BEST PRACTICES ON TOURISM RESILIENCE		
1020H – 1140H	<p>AUSTRALIA Ms. Ruth Sear Policy Officer, APEC Governance and Reform APEC and Supply Chains Branch Trade Resilience and Indo-Pacific Economic Cooperation Division Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</p> <p>PERU Mrs. Madeleine Burns Vice Minister of Tourism of Peru</p> <p>THAILAND (VIRTUAL) Dr. Jutamas Wisansing Managing Director and Consultant, Perfect Link Consulting Group Executive Committee, Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Thailand Chapter Founder, Thailand Gastronomy Network</p> <p>VIET NAM Ms. Tran Thi Phuong Nhung Deputy Director General, International Cooperation Department Vietnam National Administration of Tourism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defining safety, sustainability, and resilience in the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry Tourism safety protocols and opportunities for a safe passage protocol



PANEL DISCUSSION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES		
1140H -1230H	<p>MALAYSIA Ms. Siti Nur Fakhirah Binti Mohamad Matahab Assistant Director Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture</p> <p>USA Mr. Curt Cotle Senior Policy Analyst, National Travel and Tourism Office U.S. Department of Commerce</p> <p>THE PHILIPPINES Ms. Jem Micaiah M. Turla OIC Chief, Policy Formulation and International Cooperation Division Philippine Department of Tourism</p> <p>Discussion and Q & A</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. John Paolo R. Rivera Project Consultant, The Philippines</p>	Evaluating the need for a safe passage protocol
1230H – 1330H	Lunch	
WORKSHOP EXERCISES		
Facilitator: Dr. John Paolo R. Rivera Project Consultant, The Philippines		
1330H – 1500H	<p>Activity I: Industry’s Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy Map: Assessing the Safety Needs of Stakeholders • Presentation of Empathy Map 	<i>*Participants will be grouped in to five (5) groups representing the major tourism stakeholders*</i>
1500H – 1530H	Break	
1530H -1630H	<p>Activity II: Tourism Safe Passage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plotting the safe passage compendium with supporting policy requirements • Processing of safe passage compendium 	
1630H – 1700H	Discussion and Q&A	
1700H -1730H	Wrap up and Moving Forward Closing	

