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Research Report: Sustainability Transformation and Strategic Resilience in Schleswig-Holstein's Tourism Sector

Scientific analysis of ten SMEs using the MMSB framework and the 2x2 scenario matrix

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Abstract

This research report presents an in-depth analysis of the future viability of ten small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Schleswig-Holstein's tourism and service sectors. By methodologically integrating the MMSB tool (Sustainability & Resilience) with specifically developed future scenarios, the report evaluates the resilience of business models to economic and technological shocks. The report provides concrete scoring results and a resilience typology that reveal the critical dependence of many businesses on general purchasing power trends, while technological innovations are often still treated as a secondary priority.

1. Introduction

The tourism sector in the state of Schleswig-Holstein faces profound structural challenges in the wake of ongoing macroeconomic, technological, and ecological transformation processes. As a central economic pillar of the region, this sector is particularly exposed to exogenous shocks, such as recessionary market phases or volatile purchasing power trends. While the need for a sustainable and resilient realignment is theoretically clear, the operational reality of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) reveals significant barriers to operational implementation. Many stakeholders operate under rigid dependencies characterized by seasonal revenue concentration, inflexible fixed-cost structures, and a pronounced cluster risk in staffing.

This presents a fundamental challenge for regional and organizational development: traditional business analysis tools fall short, as they often treat economic resilience and sustainable action as isolated objectives. There is a lack of integrated evaluation models that make it possible to measure business viability in direct interdependence with ecological and social dimensions under dynamic future scenarios. Furthermore, a technological paradox emerges, as digital innovations, while holding considerable potential for efficiency gains, also bring about a new, inelastic fragility in the face of systemic stagnation.

This research report, part of the "Reskill" project, addresses this intersection. The primary research objective is to systematically examine the future viability and strategic responsiveness of ten selected SMEs in Schleswig-Holstein. Using a simplified application of the MMSB framework and a differentiated 2x2 scenario matrix, the report analyzes the resilience capabilities these businesses possess to actively address macroeconomic crises. The goal is to develop an inductively derived typology for the tourism sector through a comparative case analysis.

2. Theoretical Foundation & Methodology

The first chapter of this report is devoted to the methodological approach, the presentation of the MMSB framework, and, building on this, the development of a *Sustainability Score* based on a simplified business utility analysis that classifies companies according to their economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

2.1 Methodological Approach

The empirical foundation is based on a qualitative, comparative multi-case study design that operationalizes a systematic comparison of the ten selected SMEs. The primary data was collected through guided expert interviews with the respective owners or members of management. This approach enables the generation of in-depth insights into the organizational structures, strategic resource allocation, and specific barriers to transformation faced by businesses in the tourism sector in the Schleswig-Holstein region. The majority of the businesses comprising the sample are profit-oriented B2C service companies. Only one plays a special role, as it is a B2B company with secure funding from public sources. This unique characteristic is consistently taken into account and treated differently in the analysis and evaluation.

The data is systematically analyzed using the MMSB framework. This business model was developed as part of the Reskill project to analyze dynamic and resilient corporate strategies (see Riihihuhta 2023) and is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. To translate the substantive findings into a comparative evaluation format, a utility analysis follows (see Scholles 2018). The transformation of qualitative data into quantitative metrics is carried out via a scoring system with a scale from one to five. This is presented in detail in Chapter 2.3. This approach ensures a valid basis for the subsequent empirical typology, which can be developed inductively from the results of the analysis and based on the selected future scenario.

2.2 The MMSB Framework

The study follows the framework for sustainable business model innovations proposed by *Riihihuhta (2023)* (see Figure 1). Unlike traditional Business Model Canvas models, the MMSB tool integrates ecological and social dimensions as core components of economic viability. Each company under examination is assessed in terms of how its core is structured, including the business idea, key strengths, important resources, customer needs, and value propositions. Subsequently, attention is turned to the customer interface, with particular focus on marketing and communication strategies, customer relationship management, value creation, and sales. This is followed by an assessment of essential partners and networks, before the focus shifts to monetization, comprising profitability, liquidity, and solvency. Essentially, the sustainability parameters of resource efficiency, social engagement, and monetary stability are evaluated . To present this clearly, the MMSB framework is translated into a tabular format. In this way, the economic, environmental, and social sustainability aspects of each company are segmented with regard to the business idea, key resources, and customer needs and values. The first company is presented here as an example; a complete overview of all surveyed companies can be found in the appendix to this report.

Fig.1 The MMSB Framework (Riihihuhta 2023)

Company 1	Economic Sustainability	Environmental Sustain-ability	Social Sustainability
Business Idea	Operating food trucks at festivals and private events with a focus on speed and efficiency. Prices are adjusted to the market and demand.	Tailoring the offering to regional needs, e.g., by offering a higher proportion of vegan products in urban areas.	The goal is to make people "full and happy" through food, drinks, and service. Partners are selected based on compatibility and shared values.
Key Resources	Utilization of an established brand with 37 years of history and fully depreciated equipment. Flexibility in the selection of venues and products.	Efficient organization and coordinated processes at the food stands to optimize resources. Use of in-house event equipment and sausage products/beverages.	Dedicated, long-term employees and a strong corporate culture. Cooperative relationships with competitors as "colleagues."
Customer Needs & Values	Desire for spontaneity and visibility at established events. Customers often criticize prices as being too high.	Consideration of regionally varying demands, such as the demand for vegan alternatives.	Need for speed, high hygiene standards, and charismatic, personable communication. Option for anonymous feedback on-site.

Table1 : Company Analysis 1 according to Riihihuhta 2023: Sustainability of the core

2.3 The Sustainability Score

Based on these detailed analyses, each company is assigned a Sustainability Score between one and five (Riihihuhta 2023), with the lowest score indicating significant weaknesses and substantial problems, and the highest score representing excellent optimizations, clear strengths, and the absence of problems. To determine this score, a simplified version of the economic utility analysis is conducted (Scholles 2018: 228). Each individual table cell is assigned a metric based on subjective assessment, with a differentiated weighting applied: 45% is allocated to economic sustainability, 35% to ecological sustainability, and 20% to social sustainability. Since economic stability is regarded as the most fundamental condition in market-based systems—without which ecological and social goals cannot be pursued in the long term—this aspect is weighted most heavily. The arithmetic mean is then calculated. The utility analysis slightly shifts the weights to the detriment of companies with drastic economic weaknesses (e.g., U3 drops from a simple average of 3.00 to a weighted utility value of 2.80 due to the critical value in economic resilience). Conversely, strong economic values stabilize companies with slightly lower environmental scores (e.g., U4 and U8 rise to a utility value of 4.45). In this way, a multidimensional representation is made possible despite the high susceptibility of the mean to outliers. The individual sustainability scores of the companies examined are presented in the following table:

Company	Econ. Score (45%)	Ecological Score (35%)	Social Score (20%)	Unweighted Average	Weighted score
U1: Food Trucks	3	3	4	3.33	3.20
U2: Family Hotel	4	4	5	4.33	4.20
U3: Mobile Saunas	1	5	3	3.00	2.80
U4: Planning Office	5	4	4	4.33	4.45
U5: Boutique Hotel	2	5	4	3.67	3.45
U6: Hotel + Restaurants	3	4	5	4.00	3.75
U7: Traditional vacation hotel	2	3	5	3.33	2.95
U8: Vacation Rental	5	4	4	4.33	4.45

Company	Econ. Score (45%)	Ecological Score (35%)	Social Score (20%)	Unweighted Average	Weighted score
U9: High-end hotel	5	5	5	5.00	5.00
U10: Systemic Coastal Gastro-nomy	3	4	4	3.67	3.55

Table2 : Sustainability Scores of the Ten Companies Analyzed

3. Strategic Future Scenarios (2x2 Matrix)

The resilience of the companies examined was assessed using a specifically selected strategic future scenario. A total of four such scenarios are available, enabling a systematic exploration of resilience based on two critical uncertainties: the economic situation and technological developments (Riihihuhta 2023). The possible combinations range from two positive factors, through the combination of one positive and one negative aspect, to two negatively interpreted uncertainties (see Figure 2). Both factors are defined by specific characteristics; for example, a negative development in the economic situation is characterized by, among other things, declining purchasing power, reduced government support, or planning uncertainties. For the present assessment, the third future scenario is selected, which combines negative economic conditions with stagnant technological developments. It is accordingly assumed that tourism in Schleswig-Holstein faces significant challenges, which are reflected in the following aspects:

- Declining purchasing power leads to fewer customers.
- Outdated technologies are undermining competitiveness.
- Many tourism businesses are struggling with high operating costs.
- The focus is shifting toward cost-conscious travelers, with all-inclusive and last-minute offers, for example, on the rise.
- The limited availability of advanced technologies weakens service quality and leads to inefficient booking processes.

Business models are theoretically confronted with this "worst-case" scenario, which yields insights into the companies' resilience and highlights potential adaptation strategies for risk minimization. As a first step, to improve clarity, the resilience assessments are clustered by industry, then compared and presented. Based on the surveyed companies, the clusters of hospitality, food service, and others can be identified.

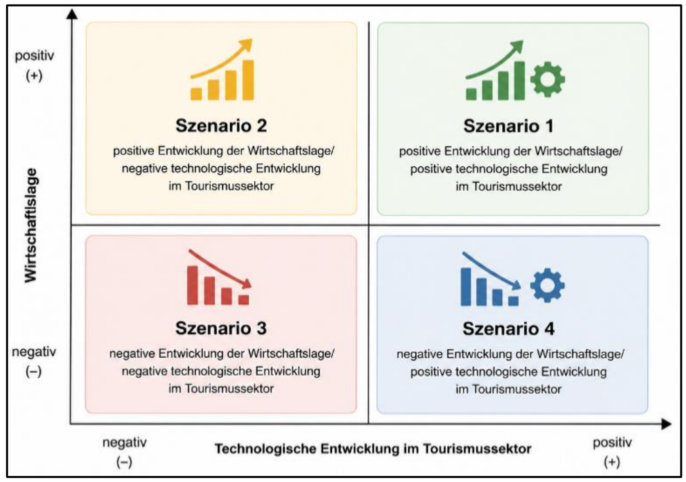

Fig.2 Scenario matrix for classifying the economic situation and technological developments in the tourism sector (Adapted from Riihihuhta 2023)

3.1 Resilience Analysis of the Hospitality Cluster

The six companies that can be classified as part of the hotel industry differ in their resilience, despite some commonalities, which will be addressed first here: All businesses share an immunity to technological stagnation, as none of the respondents are dependent on innovative developments. The outdated technologies assumed in the future scenario do not impair competitiveness, as hospitality and humanity are at the core of the services. All six businesses cite personal connections and high guest satisfaction as a key competitive advantage. In a tourism crisis where travel budgets are shrinking, this emotional loyalty is the most stable guarantee of survival, as regular guests are less likely to defect than undecided new customers. Furthermore, another advantage is that the businesses almost universally rely on regional supply chains and strong employee loyalty. This offers effective protection against global supply chain shocks.

The key differences affecting resilience lie in financial positioning, personnel structure, and external dependencies: For example, Company 2 is financially independent and, even in the event of a massive slump in tourism, can weather a crisis over a long period thanks to the absence of debt pressure and high cash reserves. Since the company does not rely on expensive, external booking platforms, it is not severely impacted by inefficient booking processes due to limited availability of advanced technologies. This analogue niche could become a valued refuge in a technologically stagnant world. In contrast, Company 7 serves as an example: although it is also family-owned, it currently sets prices too low and below cost coverage due to the aforementioned mixed pricing strategy. On the one hand, this strategy ensures that guests are not deterred; on the other hand, however, it leaves no room for price reductions in a crisis. Since the company operates in the luxury segment, declining purchasing power combined with high operating and labour costs can lead to existential problems. Added to this is a location risk due to its coastal location and dependence on summer tourism. Company 5 demonstrates that, despite solid financing, resilience can still be rated as low if the staffing structure is based on a “shaky model.” There is a dependence on the labor of the owners and employees. Since cases of illness place a heavy financial burden on the business, a prolonged crisis that also takes a toll on the health of those involved could jeopardize the model. Company 9 illustrates the risks posed by external dependencies. The business benefits from an attractive location, a lean cost structure, and dynamic pricing, which enables a flexible response to market developments. Since seasonal influences are classified as “not so significant,” the company is less vulnerable to periods of bad weather or short-term declines in tourism. However, management is outsourced, and there is a strong dependence on strategic decisions made by the local tourism board, making the business politically vulnerable. If tourism in Schleswig-Holstein faces significant challenges, this could lead to problems—despite the modern positioning, the prime location, the efficient cost structure, and the emotional, value-oriented market connection—over which the hotel has no direct influence.

An analysis of the six companies in light of the selected future scenario clearly shows that a business’s size does not shield it from the effects of crises. Large, long-established hotel chains are the most vulnerable in an emergency due to their rigid, high fixed costs. For the majority of the establishments surveyed, offerings such as all-inclusive or last-minute deals are uncommon, which is why they may become unattractive to cost-conscious travellers. In the tourism sector, security is provided either by financial independence combined with high liquidity or by maximum operational and pricing flexibility across the board. Furthermore, for all businesses in this cluster, it can be assumed that stagnating technological development is less critical to resilience, as the focus is particularly on the human element and personal customer relationships are already prioritized at this stage. In summary, the industry exhibits high resilience to stagnant technological development, in contrast to lower resilience should it be confronted with adverse economic conditions.

3.2 Resilience Analysis of the Food Service Cluster

The two companies operating in the hospitality industry are exposed to similar seasonal risks but differ fundamentally in their structural resilience.

Both businesses are extremely dependent on summer business, with the majority of revenue generated during this period, which must compensate for the low-revenue off-season. For Company 1, this is achieved through participation in events, while Company 10 focuses on its core business at the location. For both respondents, personnel expenses and the cost of goods sold represent the dominant cost factors. It can be assumed that an economic recession would directly impact both companies, as consumers cut back on leisure activities and dining out. A decline in purchasing power would consequently result in fewer customers.

The key differences in resilience lie in the aspects of location, technological dependence, and target audience focus. For Company 10, the location-specific nature of its business model poses a high fixed-cost risk, as it is tied to a fixed, physical location and must bear ongoing lease and energy costs regardless of actual utilization. Company 1 benefits from mobile operations in food trucks and sales booths at various events. Ongoing financial obligations play a minor role, as the company is family-owned and all booths are fully depreciated. Additionally, it can respond flexibly to event cancellations by offering product variations or shifting to alternative venues. In terms of technological dependence, the first company relies on traditional strengths and well-established processes, which are reflected in a clear division of labour, speed, and strong communication skills. Technological innovations are not required to be profitable. In contrast, Company 10 bases its operational management heavily on AI-generated tools, digital HR, and business planning systems. In this way, revenue and staffing levels are adjusted on short notice. However, this presents a significant risk factor should there be limited availability of advanced technologies, as described in the selected future scenario. The last aspect mentioned – the differing target audience focus – can be explained by the divergent location concepts. While Company 10 primarily focuses on a tourist audience during the peak season and relies on local guests to sustain business during the off-season, Company 1 serves customers at events and festivals, meaning it is not exclusively dependent on interregional vacation tourism during the high season.

Based on these similarities and differences, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the “worst-case” scenario: Company 1 has a significant advantage in responding to drops in demand due to its depreciated kiosks and operational flexibility. Technological stagnation is also irrelevant to its operations, as the business model is entirely analogue and does not rely on advanced innovations. Only economic dependencies could pose difficulties. For Company 10, the combination of lost revenue and rising fixed costs would be an existential risk factor to which a flexible response would be difficult to implement. The strategy of spontaneously sending employees home during periods of low capacity harms social stability in the long term, as skilled workers employed at minimum wage could respond to a crisis by resigning. Furthermore, administrative efficiency is an essential factor for the smooth operation of the business and is linked to the availability of advanced technologies; therefore, limitations or obsolescence could impair competitiveness and weaken service quality. In summary, it can be stated that Company 1 exemplifies a business with very high resilience, while Company 10 is vulnerable and, in a direct comparison, exhibits low resilience due to its location-dependence, reliance on tourism, and digital fragility.

3.3 Resilience Analysis of the “Others” Cluster

This cluster comprises Companies 3 and 4, which do not fit into any of the previous categories and cannot be integrated into a thematically related one either. For this reason, it is designated as “Others.” The following describes the respective strengths and weaknesses regarding resilience for each company, applying the selected future scenario.

For Company 3, as a mobile, exclusive leisure experience for small groups, various strengths and risks emerge regarding resilience. Regarding the cost structure, it is positive to note that the company was founded entirely with equity capital, meaning there are no bank loans or other financial obligations to third parties, and operating costs are now covered by revenue. On the other hand, the company calculates prices using a mixed-cost approach but sets them as low as possible. Given the current economic situation and the price advantage for groups of two, these bookings result in a small loss per session; however, the business remains profitable when considering all bookings collectively. In a negative economic scenario where operating costs could rise, a deficit would result without a price adjustment. The mobile leisure activity is characterized by high physical flexibility, as the saunas are built on trailers and constitute the core product. However, since the founder works alone, the operational business depends on his time and availability. With regard to seasonal dependence, which applies to the majority of the companies analyzed here, Company 3 positions itself countercyclically, as its peak season falls in the colder late fall and winter. Technological stagnation does not pose a risk to the company, as while it uses a digital booking system, it is hardly reliant on advanced developments to make the service quality and booking process efficient and attractive. As with Company 9, there is a significant dependence on external political actors, which reduces resilience without the company being able to exert direct influence. In the case of this business, it is the political, regulatory hurdles and legal provisions that are currently unresolved and could pose existential barriers for the company. Therefore, while the company is less resilient on its own, it can be assessed as largely stable in relation to a “worst-case” scenario. The pricing strategy should be strengthened solely with regard to the mixed-product mix to ensure that no existential risk arises in the event of declining demand. This is particularly important given that it can be assumed that, during a recession, consumers will cut back primarily on luxury goods and leisure activities.

Company 4 operates as a planning firm and service provider for municipalities, counties, and tourism organizations. It thus occupies a unique position in this comparison, as it does not engage in the traditional sale of products or services to private consumers. Nevertheless, due to its roots in the tourism sector, the analysis reveals interesting aspects for this project: The business model is entirely based on long-term partnerships and regional networks in the funding and tourism sectors. Should these structures disappear, for example due to adverse economic conditions as envisaged in the future scenario, this would result in a potentially existential crisis. That said, the company’s resilience can be classified as structurally stable, as its financing is secured by public funds and is thus almost entirely decoupled from market cycles. Technological stagnation also poses no risk, and the company’s portfolio remains sufficiently diversified so that a decline in tourism would affect only a portion of its order book. As long as the aforementioned network structures are maintained, this company can be assessed as crisis-proof and highly resilient.

4. Resilience Typology for Ten SMEs in the Tourism Sector

To coherently summarize the preceding analyses and present them in a systematic, structured format, five distinct resilience types were developed. This approach allows for the mapping of gradual differences between companies that influence their respective resilience and identifies overarching factors that provide relevant insights for the underlying project.

Type 1: Institutionally isolated systems with substantial immunity

Definition: Organizations of this type are characterized by a complete or near-complete departure from market-cyclical, traditional sales of products or services to private end consumers. The cost structure is protected by public funding, which results in near-complete isolation from immediate economic downturns.

Integrated Organizations: Companies 4 - Due to the special role resulting from multi-year economic security and its position as a regional monopolist, the system is largely immune to macroeconomic demand shocks in the tourism sector. Technological stagnation does not structurally affect the purely knowledge- and moderation-based business model, as it relies instead on human capital.

Type 2: Resource-based self-sufficiency models with static resilience

Definition: This type compensates for external shocks through robust financial strength. It is defined by debt-free status, substantial liquidity reserves, and a deliberate avoidance of technology. The decision to forgo the use of – and the resulting dependence on – technological innovations acts as a protective factor in stagnation scenarios.

Integrated Organization: Company 2 - Thanks to self-ownership and a high capacity for annual reinvestment, the system demonstrates tremendous financial resilience. The deliberate avoidance of digital distribution channels (no external, expensive booking portals; "old-school" room furnishings) shields the business from the risks of technological stagnation. Customer loyalty is built purely through an excellent location, word of mouth, and decades of regular customer loyalty.

Type 3: Elastic scaling models with dynamic resilience

Definition: Companies of this type are characterized by a variable fixed-cost structure, minimized capital intensity (e.g., avoidance of real estate ownership), and high process-based or spatial mobility. Drops in demand are countered with immediate temporary reductions, algorithmic price adjustments, or geographical diversions.

Integrated Organization: Company 1 - Its long-standing existence generates high brand value. Since the operational equipment (stalls, trucks) is fully depreciated, there are no fixed debt service obligations. Spatial mobility allows the system to flexibly switch to alternative locations or product variations in the event of regional crises or the cancellation of major events.

Company 8 - While the lease model entails theoretical fixed-cost risks, these are mitigated by highly efficient, digitally automated booking and check-in processes, as well as a three-month liquidity buffer. The city's year-round appeal, the use of dynamic, demand-driven pricing, and the creation of promotional offers when booking inquiries are low ensure a successful occupancy strategy.

Company 9 - Despite being location-bound, the model operates with a high degree of flexibility. Operational management is outsourced to an external company. An optimized labour cost ratio and algorithmically controlled real-time pricing enable high-frequency economic adjustments to volatile market conditions.

Type 4: Interdependent microstructures with precarious resilience

Definition: Micro- or family-owned businesses with low organizational complexity. Their resilience must be assessed on a case-by-case basis: On the one hand, they operate informally with a high degree of adaptability and relationship-intensity; on the other hand, they are subject to extreme personnel risk and have insufficient financial buffers, which makes them structurally vulnerable.

Integrated Organization: Company 5 - Its strength lies in the dense network of relationships, the owners' constant on-site presence, and a capital-efficient equipment policy. Economically, however, the model is classified as "shaky," as staff absences—due to a lack of personnel redundancy—can quickly lead to financial burdens that threaten the company's survival.

Company 3 - Structurally, the company shares the physical mobility advantages of Type 3 and has no bank loans. However, resilience is diminished by the current mixed cost structure and prices set as low as possible. In the current economic climate, this approach ensures sufficient cost coverage for the company. However, if declining purchasing power and fewer customers are anticipated, this strategy could quickly become an existential threat without a stabilized pricing structure.

Type 5: Vulnerable, Rigid Structures with Acute Fragility

Definition: These companies are characterized by significant, inelastic fixed costs (e.g., high labour intensity, space and energy costs) coupled with extreme seasonal concentration of revenue. Their price calculations already operate at or below the real economic cost recovery threshold within the regular market structure. An exogenous shock in the form of negative economic and stagnant technological development can lead directly to existential crises.

Integrated Organization: Company 6 - The system suffers from a rigid fixed labour cost ratio of more than 50%. Revenues are based on a mixed cost calculation below the pain threshold to prevent customer attrition. A decline in tourism poses a significant threat to the company due to a lack of buffers.

Company 7 - Despite strong local roots and a largely self-sufficient infrastructure, the model is highly fragile. Room rates are structurally set too low. The system lacks sufficient flexibility for adjustments, and the occurrence of two consecutive weak summer seasons poses an immediate threat to its survival.

Company 10 - The concentration of revenue over a three-month period conflicts with persistently high, fixed premises and energy costs. Administrative management depends entirely on the availability of digital AI-based inventory management and workforce planning tools, making technological stagnation a direct risk to efficiency. Furthermore, by spontaneously sending employees home during slow periods while paying them minimum wage, this reactive approach to reducing labor costs jeopardizes social sustainability and risks driving away staff.

This classification clearly shows that businesses that lack both financial self-sufficiency and operational flexibility while being tied to seasonal tourism flows exhibit a critical dependency. Realistic crisis immunity and resilience in the tourism sector are achieved either through institutional decoupling from the free market (Type 1) or through financial independence coupled with technological independence (Type 2). Furthermore, operational flexibility (Type 3) is superior to mere historical size and apparent stability (Type 5). The absence of binding financial obligations to third parties alone is also no guarantee of high resilience (Type 4). If the company lacks price elasticity or human resources, it will collapse just as quickly as fragile large-scale structures under negative economic conditions and stagnating technological developments, despite its physical agility.

5. Conclusion

This research report examines ten SMEs in the tourism sector, analyzes their business models, and assesses their resilience based on a “worst-case” future scenario. The comparative analysis using the MMSB framework illustrates, using Type 5 as an example, that organizational crisis resilience does not necessarily correlate with historical size and apparent stability. Rather, financial independence coupled with technological independence, as seen in Type 2, as well as the pronounced operational flexibility characteristic of Type 3, prove to be valid factors for survival amid drastic macroeconomic changes. While the emotional loyalty of regular customers and a genuine commitment to hospitality provide resilient protection against economic slumps in purchasing power—which are assumed in the projected future scenario—the operational reality of many SMEs reveals glaring vulnerabilities. Inflexibility in dependencies, seasonal sales concentrations, and reactive, purely cost-driven staff reductions jeopardize social sustainability and create potential risks of staff attrition.

Nevertheless, the findings are subject to methodological limitations that must be taken into account when applying them to sectoral practice. The qualitative research design, with a sample-specific focus on ten selected SMEs within the regional tourism sector of Schleswig-Holstein, precludes statistical generalizability of the results at the national and European levels. Methodologically, the questionnaire exhibited weaknesses in some areas, for example, in a non-integrated question—which is nevertheless potentially useful for reskilling—regarding requirements for a learning platform for career changers that respondents consider relevant. Furthermore, the calculated Sustainability Score is based on a simplified utility analysis and subjective assessments, which creates an inherent susceptibility to statistical outliers. Finally, the resilience analysis is limited to a systematic examination of a single, combined "Word Case" future scenario, thereby failing to account for adaptive potential under volatile but technologically progressive market conditions. Furthermore, due to the small sample size, empirical saturation regarding the resilience typology is not achieved.

Implications for the overarching project are derived from the empirical results and the developed typology; the project's primary goal is the design and implementation of a European learning platform for career changers and people from vulnerable groups entering the tourism industry. To systematically mitigate the identified organizational fragility, the digital education platform should strategically include three core areas:

1. The curricular integration of resilience competencies, rather than a narrow focus on operational service content. Career changers and other interested parties must acquire sound competencies in the area of sustainable business model management. This includes modules on agile, digital personnel and inventory planning, as well as financial responsiveness strategies to proactively break through technological stagnation in the target companies.
2. The qualitative analysis identified the interpersonal component and relationship marketing as essential determinants of resilience. For this reason, the professionalization of relationship management must be included by emphasizing relational soft skills, community building, and the cultivation of an authentic host role as core aspects.

3. The platform must raise participants' awareness of the critical interdependence between economic and social factors. Understanding that, for example, reactive wage cost pressure increases the risk of staff turnover is essential to empowering future leaders and employees to establish social sustainability as a condition for economic survival within businesses.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the integration of the empirical findings generated here with Reskill's digital learning platform makes a significant contribution to the European tourism industry, positioning it to be crisis-resilient from within during times of macroeconomic upheaval.

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Appendix

List of Appendixes

Company 1: Food trucks

	Economic sustainability	Environmental sustainability	Social sustainability
Business Idea	Operating food trucks at festivals and private events with a focus on speed and efficiency. Prices are adjusted to the market and demand.	Tailoring the offering to regional needs, e.g., by offering a higher proportion of vegan products in urban areas.	The goal is to make people “full and happy” through food, drinks, and service. Partners are selected based on compatibility and shared values.
Key Resources	Utilization of an established brand with 37 years of history and fully depreciated equipment. Flexibility in the selection of venues and products.	Efficient organization and coordinated processes at the food stands to optimize resources. Use of in-house event equipment and sausage products/beverages.	Dedicated, long-term employees and a strong corporate culture. Cooperative relationships with competitors as “colleagues.”
Customer Needs & Values	Desire for spontaneity and visibility at established events. Customers often criticize prices as being too high.	Consideration of regionally varying demands, such as the demand for vegan alternatives.	Need for speed, high hygiene standards, and charismatic, friendly communication. Option for anonymous feedback on-site.

→ **Sustainability Score: 3.20**

Resilience of the business model:

Economic resilience is characterized by a combination of low fixed costs and high sensitivity to consumer sentiment:

- Low capital pressure: A key factor in resilience is that the food carts have already been depreciated. This means fewer liquid funds are needed to cover liabilities, which significantly reduces financial pressure during times of crisis.
- Economic sensitivity: The company is directly affected by the general economic situation. During a recession, potential customers tend to stay home or spend less money on takeout food.

- Cost structure: High cost factors such as labour and cost of goods sold must be actively managed as demand declines. However, since there are no long-term contracts for events, the company can respond very flexibly to cancellations.

A decline in tourism hits an event-based company hard, but also offers alternatives:

- Dependence on major events: Since no fixed events are guaranteed, there is a clear dependence on the continued existence of the event industry. Nevertheless, the company assumes that "there will always be events."
- Flexibility in terms of location and content: The greatest strength is the ability to adapt quickly. In the event of regional slumps in tourism, the company can change locations or adjust its product offerings.
- Established brand: Its 37-year history and good reputation provide a stable foundation of trust among event organizers, which secures access to the remaining attractive locations.

Since the business model is primarily based on physical presence and operational efficiency, the risk of technological stagnation is minimal:

- Focus on Processes, Not Technology: The competitive advantage lies in efficient, coordinated workflows and staff organization, not in high technology. Stagnating technological developments therefore have little impact on the company.
- Analog strengths: Charisma, speed, and communication among employees are the decisive competencies that retain their value even in a technologically stagnant environment

The company's resilience to an economic recession, technological stagnation, and a slump in tourism can be described as highly flexible but vulnerable to economic cycles.

Simple description:

Business idea: Food trucks at festivals and private events in various sectors

Purpose: To feed people and make them happy

Products & Services: Food, beverages, including service activities (e.g., waitstaff duties at the Bierpils)

Differentiators from the competition: dedicated, long-term employees; high speed through efficient organization (coordinated processes and clear division of tasks → small areas of responsibility per person); high hygiene standards

Essential resources: Event equipment (including food stalls, grills, etc.)

Items for sale (e.g., sausages, beverages)

Staff in the food stalls & behind the scenes

Corporate culture + brand value (37 years in business → established brand, good reputation), financial resources less relevant due to depreciated booths

Essential skills & competencies of employees: attentiveness/big-picture perspective, speed, ability to maintain focus, friendliness, strong communication skills, charisma

Customers:

Group 1: End consumers, customers at the sausage stand → visitors to festivals, trade shows, events, etc. Regionally varying interests and demands (e.g., higher demand for vegan products in urban areas) → identified retrospectively

Group 2: Event organizers/partners → are actively selected, aligned with company values and the desired target audience (personality is crucial for business relationships, including with suppliers). The better the collaboration, the higher the likelihood of a long-term business relationship

Value proposition: No specific wording due to the company's small size

Reaching target customers: (in relation to consumers) at established events through repeated visibility

Social media presence for numerous touchpoints outside of events (e.g., to recruit new employees/customers, but no specific strategy or goal has been formulated),

Spontaneity at events

Eye-catching booths with bright colors (as a marketing strategy)

Customer relationship management: "Feedback slips" + box next to the booth → for anonymous, low-barrier feedback directly on-site, evaluated after events (main point of criticism: prices too high)

Value creation systems (competitive advantage): Established processes and procedures at the booth (see above)

Respectful interaction with customers and event organizers

Main partners: recurring events + long-term relationship management (For large events, up to 45 employees are deployed across four booths)

Network: room for improvement, active item on the agenda.

Established through long-standing presence

Extensive communication with all stakeholders

Networking: Competitors = colleagues ("symbiosis with others to help out") → significant potential for expansion → industry meetups?

Monetization:

Main sources of income → food stalls

Prices are adjusted to the market and demand

Major cost factors: Labor, cost of goods sold, previously: Depreciation of stalls (→ No longer requires large amounts of cash on hand for liabilities)

Deliberate seasonal loss in winter → Main business in summer (winter markets are more costly, prioritizing staff time off)

Long-term financial challenges: e.g., pandemic-related cancellations are unpredictable, no fixed events (but clear dependence) → no secure financial situation, but flexible responses are possible due to the absence of contracts → "There will always be events" → alternatives through product variation, diverse venues, etc.

Economic situation impacts business (recession → potential customers are more likely to stay home, consume less takeout food)

Debt-to-equity ratio: currently appropriate ratio (previously predominantly equity)

Funded by the European Union
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Company 2: Family Hotel

	Economic sustainability	Ecological sustainability	Social sustainability
Business concept	Ensuring the family's livelihood through a hotel and restaurant concept that deliberately avoids expensive external booking platforms. Profits are secured through sound pricing, enabling annual investments of approximately €200,000.	A sustainable business model free from greenwashing. Resource conservation through the deliberate omission of technical amenities such as televisions in the rooms and close relationships with regional suppliers.	Preserving and expanding a traditional family business to secure a livelihood. Focus on an "old-school" atmosphere free from digital distractions.
Key Resources	Fully owner-operated with no debt, plus external accounting for constant monitoring of key metrics. Significant cost reduction by foregoing traditional marketing.	Use of organic products and regional foods. Focus on plastic reduction and coastal conservation due to the proximity to the Baltic Sea.	Strong staff loyalty and long-standing network structures with suppliers based on honest communication and reliable compensation.
Customer Needs & Values	Desire for price consistency and transparency through printed price lists. Long-term loyalty through regular behind-the-scenes upgrades.	Appreciation for waste reduction, e.g., through an à la carte breakfast instead of a buffet. Need for an authentic, eco-friendly image.	Need for closeness, personal accessibility of the host, and a genuine family atmosphere. Desire for direct, personal feedback exchange.

→ **Sustainability Score: 4.20**

Resilience of the business model:

The financial structure is this company's strongest defence against negative economic trends:

- No debt: Since the property is owned outright and no loans need to be serviced, there is no pressure from interest payments or mandatory principal repayments during periods of low revenue.

- Pricing flexibility: Prices are currently set at a profitable level but have not yet been “maximized.” In a crisis, the company could lower prices to attract guests without immediately slipping into the red.

- High liquidity: With annual reinvestments of approximately €200,000, the business has a substantial cash reserve that could be used to bridge lean periods or temporarily reduced in an emergency.

The scenario of stagnating technological development hardly affects this company, as it has already proactively decided against technological dependencies and relies on analogue measures:

- Independence from platforms: By foregoing booking sites like Booking.com, there are no high commission fees that would eat into the margin if guest numbers decline.

- Tech-Aversion as a Brand: Since the company has deliberately opted out of televisions and modern technology in the rooms (“old school”), there is no pressure for expensive digital upgrades. Stagnation in the tech sector is therefore not a disadvantage here, but rather a validation of the concept.

- Regular guests instead of walk-ins: Focusing on long-term relationships and word-of-mouth creates a more stable foundation than relying on fluctuating tourism trends.

In times of crisis, loyal partnerships and stable networks are crucial:

- Staff and supplier loyalty: Close, long-standing ties to employees and regional suppliers ensure operational continuity even when supply chains or the labour market come under pressure.

- Regional autonomy: By focusing on organic products and regional suppliers, the company is less dependent on global market fluctuations

This hotel and restaurant company demonstrates exceptionally high financial and structural resilience. While a decline in tourism in Schleswig-Holstein would be a burden for the entire industry, this business has specific buffers that make it particularly resilient in times of crisis.

Simple summary:

Business Idea, Products & Services: Hotel + Restaurant

Purpose: To maintain and expand the family business, to earn a living

Key differentiators from the competition: Providing a personalized stay experience

Personal recommendations via word of mouth, deliberate avoidance of external booking sites (e.g., Booking.com)

No commercial/technical amenities in the rooms (e.g., TV) → "old school,"

Unique location due to proximity to the Baltic Sea, a genuine family atmosphere, and a sense of closeness

Essential resources: Coastal protection

Staff

Clear positioning regarding sustainability (organic, regional food suppliers, plastic reduction), while clearly distinguishing from greenwashing (understood as a sustainable business model, not a marketing ploy)

Strong & long-standing network structures

Value proposition: Continuity

Modernization efforts behind the scenes → long-term customer loyalty

Sustainability (e.g., à la carte breakfast → waste reduction is appreciated)

A genuine, family-like atmosphere

Reaching target customers: Printed price list → consistent, transparent prices

Limited social media/online presence (for an authentic, individual, tech-averse image)

Word of mouth

Customer relationship management: Regulars are retained through consistency and long-term relationship building

Customer feedback: Personal interaction

Written survey (non-anonymous) → predominantly positive feedback

Sustainability: Regular modernization measures (necessary due to tax depreciation) for long-term improvement/increased satisfaction

Marketing: Significant cost reduction through reliance on word-of-mouth and a good, established reputation

Value-added systems (competitive advantage): Family-like atmosphere

Proximity to guests

Personal visibility + accessibility

Key partners: Close, long-standing relationships with various suppliers, strong staff retention

Networking (and network building): Foundation: reliable invoice settlement & payroll, honest/friendly interaction

Monetization:

Main source of income: hotel + restaurant

Prices ensure profits, are not maximized (possible, among other things, due to the use of high-quality basic ingredients)

Liquid funds available for liabilities (annual investments in the six-figure range (approx. €200,000))

Seasonal fluctuations are managed through monthly budgeting (weather is a significant factor)

Accounting & (business &) tax consulting fully outsourced → constant oversight of company figures

Debt-to-equity ratio: company-owned assets → no debt

Requirements for career changers: Basic business management knowledge (integrated into the learning portal)

Company 3: Mobile Saunas

	Economic sustainability	Ecological sustainability	Social sustainability
Business idea	Focus on rentals (possibly future license sales). High proportion of regular customers. Characterized by seasonal peaks. Current challenges: mixed costing in pricing and legal hurdles.	Nature-oriented concept with high mobility thanks to trailer construction, which allows for quick removal in case of environmental hazards (e.g., flooding).	Focus on privacy and exclusivity through mirrored windows. Promotion of group experiences (2–6 people).
Key resources	Financing primarily through equity and in-house labour. Need for a nationwide network of sauna locations.	Use of wood both as a building material and as fuel. The oval shape ensures ideal and thus efficient heat circulation.	The founder's craftsmanship skills, as well as the potential to involve carpenters during expansion.
Customer Needs & Values	Desire for easy access via a digital booking system.	Desire for a "unique experience" in nature.	Need for autonomy through contactless and independent use (spontaneous & private).

→ **Sustainability Score: 2.80**

Resilience of the business model:

Economic resilience is currently classified as unstable:

- The company calculates prices using a mixed-cost approach but sets them as low as possible. Given the current economic situation and the price advantage for groups of two, these bookings result in a small loss per session; however, the business remains profitable when considering all bookings as a whole. In an economically adverse scenario where operating costs (such as wood or location fees) could rise, a deficit could result without a price adjustment.
- Compensation Structure: The low managing director's salary does not cover the workload. In a prolonged crisis, there is thus no financial buffer for personal withdrawals or reinvestments.

- Capital structure: A positive aspect is that only equity was used at the outset. The absence of high interest on debt increases the chances of survival in the event of declining revenues, as there is no significant debt to repay.

Should tourism in Schleswig-Holstein face significant challenges, the business model offers specific resilience factors:

- Mobility as a strategic advantage: Since the saunas are built on trailers, the company is not tied to a fixed (tourist) location.
- Diversification of target groups: In addition to tourists, the business explicitly targets local sauna-goers (aged 20 and older).
- Use in private spaces: A key feature is the option to rent the sauna for one's own garden. This allows a shift from the public tourism business to the private "home spa" market should public locations see reduced foot traffic.
- Regular customers: The company's existing large base of regular customers provides a more stable foundation than a business model reliant solely on new customers.

Since technological development is stagnating in this scenario, the company is moderately affected:

- Digital Status Quo: A digital booking system is already in place. Since the core product is physical and nature-oriented, dependence on constant high-tech innovations is low.
- Unique Selling Proposition: The company's uniqueness and the absence of direct competition protect it from being immediately displaced by more technologically advanced competitors in a stagnant market.

The greatest threat to resilience is not a lack of customer interest or the slump in tourism (since the model is geographically flexible), but the current mixed cost structure. To make the company crisis-proof, the pricing strategy would need to be stabilized so that no existential deficit arises even if demand declines.

Simple summary:

Business idea: Nature-inspired saunas in Schleswig-Holstein, innovative, exclusive & private for 2–6 people

Purpose: Unique experience

Private setting thanks to mirrored glass

Products & Services: Mobile sauna

Differentiators from the competition: Mobility thanks to being built on a trailer (e.g., quick removal in case of flooding, rental for your own garden)

Oval shape → ideal heat circulation, separate lounge area

Digital booking system, independent use of the sauna possible (spontaneous & private)

Essential resources: Wood (for construction/fuel), trailer, glass panels, tools, screws, etc., labour time

Essential skills & competencies of employees: Founder has been working alone so far (if bureaucratic requirements increase, carpenters can step in to handle the construction of the saunas)

Customers: Sauna-goers (20+ years old)

Diverse customers/tourists

No personal data is collected → no sociodemographic data available

Value proposition: Independent use of the sauna possible (spontaneous & private), exclusivity

Reaching the target customers (marketing): Large lettering on the sauna

Design with high recognition value

Location is key + on-site visibility

Social media presence (Google for reach, Instagram for personality → customer loyalty)

No concrete strategy: Marketing strategy is implemented intuitively**;** transparent presentation of the experience ensures clear, realistic customer expectations that are met; quick & independent use of the sauna; high proportion of regular customers

Customer relationship management: No close relationship due to absence (≠ privacy as a core aspect)

Feedback options: Upon personal request/via email (predominantly positive feedback)

Value creation systems (competitive advantage): Contactless use, uniqueness → no competition

Network: Statewide network necessary to secure locations for saunas (challenges due to innovation, legal/bureaucratic hurdles) → good contacts are essential for the business

External challenges: Creation of a uniform legal framework regarding the handling of mobile saunas

Network building: Arises from the emergence of problems that need to be solved (including legal difficulties)

Requirements for career changers: Extensive knowledge (business management skills for handling bureaucratic tasks)

Knowledge of legal issues/government agencies, grant applications, etc., as well as technical skills → “All-rounders beat specialists”

Monetization: Main source of income: Rentals (selling licenses has been difficult so far due to the legal situation)

Predominantly fairly calculated price → priced as low as possible (price too low for groups of two given the current economic situation, small loss per session)

Cost factors: Wood, etc., & location fees

Low managing director’s salary → does not reflect the workload

Debt-to-equity ratio: Exclusively equity at the start, offset by personal labour; costs are now borne by the company itself

Seasonal influences: Year as a “wave” → business picks up starting with the Easter break, summer is slower at times (perception of the sauna when visiting the beach → bookings are usually made in the fall, peak season November/December (gift certificates)

Company 4: Planning Office

	Economic sustainability	Ecological sustainability	Social sustainability
Business idea	Planning office with a unique selling point on the West Coast. Funding is provided through EU grant periods and membership fees from the districts, which ensures a high degree of planning security	Focus on concepts for sustainable tourism, such as signage and maintenance of cycling and hiking routes	Support for municipalities and government agencies in community development and site selection. The office sees itself as a central point of contact for regional stakeholders. Long-standing participation in the EU's ELA project
Key resources	Long-term partnerships and a large regional network in the funding and tourism sectors	The eleven staff members specialize in geography, sustainability, and urban development	A team of eleven people with strong language, facilitation, and communication skills for workshops and project support
Client needs & values	Success in securing funding and support in finalizing complex project proposals	Well-founded concepts for sustainable regional and tourism development	Need for personalized support, a high level of commitment beyond the scope of the assignment, and knowledge transfer through training

→ **Sustainability Score: 4.45**

Resilience of the business model:

In terms of economic resilience, the company demonstrates exceptionally high economic resilience to short-term market fluctuations:

- Long-term financing: The main sources of revenue are tied to EU funding periods of six to seven years or come from membership fees paid by districts using public funds. This provides planning security that extends far beyond typical market cycles.

- Crisis-resistant order structure: Since the firm supports municipalities, districts, and their agencies, it is less dependent on private consumption than, for example, the restaurant or event industry.

- As one of the few regional development firms on the west coast of northern Germany, there is little risk of being displaced by competition, even if the total volume of contracts were to decline.

Although the firm is deeply rooted in the tourism sector, its portfolio offers alternatives should there be a slump in tourism:

- Broad range of services: In addition to tourism projects such as the maintenance of bike routes or the management of tourism organizations, the firm's services also include participation in EU-funded projects on labor mobility, general community development strategies, and site selection. A slump in tourism could thus be partially offset by increased work in general regional planning.

- Systemic importance for funding: Especially in times of crisis, municipalities need expertise to secure state or European funding to strengthen the region. The firm's core competency—funding consulting—tends to gain importance during economically difficult times.

Technological stagnation poses little threat to this business model:

- Knowledge-based services: The most valuable resources are the staff's skills in facilitation, communication, and project management. These "analogue" skills cannot be replaced by technological leaps and retain their value even in the event of a technological standstill.

- Due to its low dependence on technology, the company is not reliant on constant technological innovations to remain operational.

The resilience of the Office for Regional Development in the face of the described crisis scenario can be assessed as structurally very stable, yet heavily dependent on the public sector in terms of its operations. Since it is not a traditional market-based entity, different protective mechanisms apply here than for the companies previously examined.

Simple transcription:

Business Idea & Purpose: Planning office including project management

Support for applicants with funding applications (primarily general funding advice)

Preparation of studies & concepts for municipalities & counties, e.g., site selection, town development concepts
Signage + maintenance of cycling/hiking routes, etc.

Three offices for ELA + implementation for six to seven years (EU funding period)

Offices for tourism organizations Holstein Tourism & Holstein Inland Tourism, e.g., management of the Ochsenweg trail → Planning office serves as the point of contact

Differentiating features from the competition: Unique selling point as an office for regional development on the west coast of the state

Essential resources: Human resources (team, 11 people total → must be approachable and communicative for workshops

Key areas of expertise: Geography, sustainability, sustainable tourism, urban development, engineers, office tasks such as accounting)

“Standard office equipment” (computers, project management tools, etc.)

Essential skills & competencies of employees: Language/communication/facilitation skills

Open and approachable manner, ability to articulate and write well + enjoyment of working on grant applications

Clients: Municipalities, counties, and government agencies

Value proposition: Securing grants, sharing knowledge through training sessions

Reaching target clients: Established office, long-term relationship-building, and a good reputation → Clients approach the office

Client expectations: Diverse → ranging from completing a project application and developing a funding proposal to brainstorming ideas for funding applications

Client interface: Website (updates are usually not a priority)

Instagram → individual projects are promoted, though often via the organization's own channels

Value creation systems (competitive advantage): Premise: Projects are closely supervised by leadership

Client satisfaction is evident

Workload & support are provided beyond the agreed scope of the contract → high level of commitment & personalized support

Key partners & network: Long-term partners and large networks in the region in the funding & tourism sectors; at the local level, for example, individual towns → significant dependence on network partners

Network building: Requires more time

Ideal profile: Individual expertise in a self-selected field; cross-state collaboration could be expanded

Requirements for career changers: No rigid qualification requirements → diverse, multifaceted field requires many different qualifications; accordingly, no specific degrees are required

Desire for varied work

Monetization: Funding through long-term contracts for the active region, a total of three regions (linked to EU funding periods) + membership fees from the districts using public funds for tourism organizations (e.g., projects, long-term contracts) → Long-term nature enables planning security

Company 5: Boutique Hotel

	Economic sustainability	Ecological sustainability	Social sustainability
Business idea	Operation of a seven-room hotel offering breakfast, meetings, and events. Long-term financing is secured, but the model is described as “precarious” due to the tendency for high costs in the event of illness	Focus on waste reduction by serving breakfast at the table instead of offering a buffet	The goal is to provide individualized and personalized service to guests in a modern atmosphere with high standards
Key Resources	Cost-covering pricing and financial independence from large retailers or associations through self-management	Furnished with many second-hand pieces and featuring regional, seasonal, and mostly organic products	Dedicated staff with strong communication skills who enjoy playing the role of host; the owners are always present on-site
Guest Needs & Values	The quality standards of a grand hotel, but in a contemporary, less formal setting	Appreciation for eco-friendly practices, particularly the reduction of food waste at breakfast	Desire for warm, personal service and the fulfilment of individual requests during the stay

→ **Sustainability Score: 3.45**

Resilience of the business model:

Economic resilience can be described as stable but fragile in terms of staffing:

- Financial foundation: Prices cover costs, and long-term financing is secured. This provides protection against moderate declines in revenue.

- Personnel risk: The greatest weakness is the reliance on the labour of the owners and employees. Since cases of illness place a heavy financial burden on the business, a prolonged crisis that also takes a toll on the health of management could jeopardize the model.

- Cost control: By foregoing expensive association memberships and large-scale retail structures, fixed costs remain relatively manageable.

Resilience to a tourism slump:

- Loyalty: High satisfaction leads to many returning guests. This loyal customer base forms a stable foundation that reacts less volatilely to general market fluctuations than new customer business.

- Niche positioning: By specializing in conferences and celebrations in addition to standard hotel operations, the company has a broader market position than pure vacation hotels.

- Economies of scale: With only seven rooms, the hotel can achieve full occupancy more quickly than large hotel complexes, even as overall demand in the state declines.

Technological resilience:

- Low dependence on technology: Since the focus is on personal contact, individualized service, and analogue values (e.g., second-hand furniture, a personal welcome), technological stagnation does not harm the company.

- Booking channels: Bookings are primarily made by phone or email anyway. The business model is thus independent of complex, constantly evolving booking algorithms or platforms.

Like Company 2, Company 5 is well-equipped to withstand technological stagnation and market fluctuations, as it relies on timeless values such as hospitality and quality. The greatest risk in a crisis scenario is a staffing shortage (the “shaky model”) should the owners be unable to personally manage the business with their usual intensity due to economic pressure or illness.

Simple summary:

Business idea: Family-run hotel

Products & Services: Hotel with overnight accommodations (seven rooms) + breakfast

Conferences, celebrations (no evening venue)

Differentiating features from the competition: Individual & personal attention to guests in a beautiful & cozy atmosphere

High standards (the sophistication of a grand hotel, but more modern and less “stuffy”—e.g., a personal welcome)

Maintaining a visible presence (one of the owners is always on-site)

Essential resources: Human resources

Intangible resources (friendliness, meeting individual needs, personal interaction)

High-quality hotel amenities (due to extensive renovation)

Essential skills & competencies of employees: Friendliness, openness, strong communication skills, independence, ability to think proactively, enjoyment of being a host, enthusiasm for work/interacting with people, flexibility (e.g., regarding daily scheduling)

Guests: Diverse, yet always courteous and interesting people

Sustainability: Many second-hand furniture pieces

Breakfast served at the table, no buffet (focus on sustainability, minimizing food waste)

→ Strong focus on regional/seasonal products, mostly organic

Reaching target customers: Mainly via phone or email → only research via Booking.com or similar platforms

Communication via Instagram

Recommendations via word of mouth

No large marketing budget → effective measures mostly free, more a matter of luck (e.g., newspaper articles, ADAC travel magazine)

Customer relationship management: Many returning guests due to high satisfaction

Value-added systems (competitive advantage): Personal interaction with guests, individualized, warm service

Main partners: Food/products: no wholesalers; not a DEHOGA member → no benefit, much more self-management (more financially worthwhile) & in specialized networks

Network: Independent of large retailers, networks, etc., through self-management

Networking: Exchange with other small local hotels; smaller, simpler structures

Requirements for career changers: Passion for the business, the role of host

Monetization: Prices are set to cover costs

No direct cash flow → rather, regular bookkeeping with a tax advisor to ensure financing works

Long-term financing is secured, but tends to be a “shaky model” (covering sick leave is financially burdensome) → one reason for Instagram advertising to generate additional revenue (e.g., external breakfast, hotel shop, etc.) → long-term goal

Company 6: Hotel & Restaurant

	Economic sustainability	Environmental sustainability	Social sustainability
Business Idea	Hotel and restaurant operations; ensuring liquidity through 12-month budgeting and building reserves during the peak season. Use of a mixed costing approach to keep prices moderate despite rising costs.	Focus on regional value creation by integrating local supply chains into the restaurant and beach bistro.	“Hyggelig” concept featuring personal interaction on an equal footing and North German hospitality.
Key Resources	Long-term financial strategy to balance debt and equity. Diversified revenue streams (hotel, restaurant, beach bistro).	Collaboration with local food suppliers as a key material resource.	High employee retention through permanent contracts, fair wages (56% of labour costs), and avoiding seasonal workers.
Customer Needs & Values	Desire for a high standard (DEHOGA-certified) and amenities such as dining options and proximity to the water.	Desire for regional exchange and support for local “host” networks.	Desire for personalized service, loyalty programs, and respectful complaint management.

→ **Sustainability Score: 3.75**

Resilience of the business model:

Economic resilience is threatened by high fixed costs:

- Cash flow sensitivity: Since the peak season must finance the entire year, the company is particularly financially vulnerable at the beginning of the year (January through March).
- Price sensitivity: Since prices already do not fully cover costs in some cases (mixed costing) to avoid scaring off guests, there is little room for further cost increases (e.g., energy or food).

- Dependence on transportation costs: Rising gas prices have already led to a decline in guests from within a 200-km radius. In a deep recession, this effect could intensify significantly.
- Cost structure: The company bears very high personnel costs (56% of expenses), which on the one hand strengthens social sustainability but puts profitability under pressure as guest numbers decline.

Market and tourism resilience is characterized by strong guest loyalty in the leisure sector:

- Target audience risk: With 95% of guests being leisure travellers, the hotel is extremely dependent on discretionary spending *(money people spend on leisure activities)*. In times of crisis, households cut back on vacations and restaurant visits first.
- Network as a buffer: Close collaboration with other local businesses and policymakers ("Host Association") can help develop joint marketing strategies or reduce costs through partnerships.
- Regular guests: Personalized engagement and the planned loyalty program promote repeat business, which is more stable in crises than acquiring new customers.

In terms of technological resilience, the company demonstrates a high degree of resilience:

- Focus on craftsmanship and soft skills: Since motivation, charisma, and technical skills (e.g., cooking) are considered essential, while technology plays a more background role (marketing/booking), the model is hardly threatened by technological stagnation.
- Analog experiences: The core value of "hygge" and personal contact cannot be digitized and remains a human need even without technological innovation
- Marketing & Innovation: The company's in-house marketing department actively leverages "young expertise" (trainees) for social media to stay relevant to its target audience

The company is excellently positioned operationally, as it retains a loyal team through fair working conditions. Economically, however, it is the most vulnerable of the companies considered so far, as the combination of high fixed costs, an already tight margin, and almost exclusive dependence on vacation guests leaves little buffer for a severe recession.

Simple summary:

Business idea: Hotel & Restaurant

Products & Services: Hospitality

Restaurant used by guests and the general public

Beach bistro for beach management

Differentiating features from the competition: Sailing school in the immediate vicinity (offering weekly seminars)

Proximity to the beach, including dining options

Established hotel with very high standards → consistent DEHOGA certification

Personal contact with guests (many points of interaction, on equal footing, friendly, North German)

Concept: hyggelig

Essential resources: Human resources (benefits are passed on to employees, low staff turnover, long-term employment relationships where possible, permanent contracts, avoidance of seasonal workers)

Material resources (staff retention → alignment with the high minimum wage, 56% for payroll)

Essential employee skills & competencies: “Willingness to serve” → service sector

Motivation is essential; everything else can be taught (soft skills are crucial); craftsmanship (e.g., cooking)

Customers: 95% “leisure guests,” vacationers

Focus: Leisure segment, year-round & regular wedding parties, age range: approx. 30–90 years old

Many Danish guests due to proximity to the border, waterfront location & history

Customer needs: Basic need: overnight stay & breakfast

Additional: Proximity to the beach, relaxation & amenities (e.g., sauna, Aperol on the terrace, nearby thermal baths)

Reaching the target audience: Social media (in-house marketing department to stay up to date; trainees and “young talent” are actively utilized)

Bookings are mainly direct bookings; a small portion goes through third-party providers

Customer relationship management: Regular guests receive personalized attention (this is already partly expected)

A “loyalty program” is to be established → Stays are tracked; for example, after five stays, guests receive a bottle of sparkling wine or a room upgrade on their next visit

Customer feedback: Is actively solicited (via questionnaires in the room, feedback from the booking portal, Google reviews)

Feedback is reviewed individually, but no major changes are made based on customer feedback

In the event of complaints about staff, efforts are made to mediate and resolve conflicts in order to turn negative feedback into positive feedback where possible → this has a positive effect; guests return because they feel personally supported and understood

Main partners: Few partnerships, as it is a leisure sector

Network: DEHOGA

“Host Association” for regional exchange and mutual support among small and large businesses (hotels, food retailers, restaurants, personal trainers → anyone who sees themselves as a host) → common goal: collaborating with guests and ensuring a pleasant stay

Local suppliers

Networking: The value of community has grown, with mutual support and assistance taking center stage → Collaborations have been steadily increasing for about 10 years, and joint events are being planned (e.g., Easter bonfires, fall festivals); working with local officials to meet the needs of visitors

Requirements for career changers: Passion, openness, and a desire to work in tourism and with people are essential

The field is diverse, creative, multicultural, and innovative → Motivation must be commensurate

Monetization: There are strong seasonal influences on liquidity (the peak season finances the entire year); cash flow is sensitive at the beginning of the year but becomes lucrative starting in April/May → Reserves are built up to bridge the following winter months

12-month budgeting

Long-term financial strategy to maintain a balance between debt and equity

Rising gas prices are leading to a decline in guests arriving by car (approx. 200 km radius)

Profitability → Main source of revenue: Accommodations & dining split revenue 50/50; wellness: irrelevant, tends to run at a loss (too small, competition too well-established)

High cost factors: labour, energy, and supply costs; prices do not cover the hotel’s costs → “mixed costing” (e.g., passing on higher labour costs would lead to a decline in guests, as prices would be too high; accordingly, prices are raised only moderately, remaining below the “pain threshold”), the goal is not full occupancy to avoid maximizing labour costs, etc.

Company 7: Traditional vacation hotel

	Economic sustainability	Ecological sustainability	Social sustainability
Business Concept	A family-run business with a long tradition (over 50 years) comprising ten properties and a vacation rental agency as a secondary revenue stream. The goal is to generate revenue through high-quality lodging and dining services.	Preserving the value of the expansive property through regular maintenance and modernization measures.	Creating a relaxing atmosphere and serving as a training facility for knowledge transfer.
Key Resources	Ample space (rooms, spa, parking) as well as a meticulously maintained guest database and management software.	In-house laundry to reduce reliance on external logistics, as well as close collaboration with regional craft businesses.	Approximately 90 dedicated employees who “embody hospitality,” as well as partnerships within the regional “Privathotel Sylt” network.
Customer Needs & Values	Desire for a customer-friendly sales process and the fulfillment of individual needs during the stay.	A need for relaxation in an attractive, spacious setting with plenty of personal freedom.	Desire for a personal connection with staff, being addressed by name, and being valued as a regular guest.

→ **Sustainability Score: 2.95**

Resilience of the business model:

In terms of economic resilience, low margins pose a high risk:

- Cost-revenue ratio: Staff is the main cost factor, while prices are (still) set too low. This leaves little room to cushion rising costs or falling revenue.
- Seasonal dependence: Since the summer months must finance the winter months, the company’s very existence would be threatened by several “bad” summers in a row.

- Diversification: The vacation rental agency serves as a second pillar, providing an additional source of income that helps spread the risk somewhat.

Regular guests serve as a stable foundation and increase tourism resilience:

- Loyalty: The long-standing establishment and deep personal connection with guests ensure a high number of regulars. This group is often more loyal than walk-in customers during times of crisis.
- Exclusivity and location: The attractive location and spacious accommodations are unique selling points that can appeal to a high-spending niche even amid a general decline in tourism in the state.

A focus on tradition and leveraging synergies with other private hotels make the company more resilient to technological stagnation:

- Value-based model: The business model is based on “hospitality” and personalized service. These core values are independent of technological innovations and remain relevant even in the event of technological stagnation.
- IT infrastructure: Robust hotel management software is already integrated as a tool. Further technological leaps are not essential to the core promise of “rejuvenation.”
- The merger with four other privately owned hotels, several of which use the same software, allows the company to benefit from shared knowledge and, if necessary, rely on support from the others when facing obstacles

The company has excellent market positioning and a strong operational foundation. Its greatest weakness in a crisis scenario is its financial structure: the combination of high fixed costs and insufficient price caps makes it vulnerable to prolonged slumps or external shocks such as natural disasters, which are not unlikely given the hotel’s location on an island in the North Sea.

Simple summary:

Business concept: Vacation hotel operation with ten properties, a traditional business for over 50 years, family-run

Agency for vacation rental management (second revenue stream)

Purpose: Vacation hotel → atmosphere of well-being & relaxation + revenue generation

Products & Services: Vacation hotel with spa area and separate restaurant

Rental of vacation apartments in the town → rental only, no ownership of the vacation apartments

Differentiating features from the competition: Individuality to keep up with the competition

Long-standing establishment of the private hotel with personal connections to guests, who subsequently become regulars

Attractive, spacious location with plenty of room for guests (e.g., private terraces)

Regular maintenance and modernization measures

In-house laundry with a long-standing staff structure

Essential resources: Employees who are willing to go the extra mile, with “living hospitality” as a prerequisite

Space, e.g., rooms, spa area, parking for cars and bicycles, etc. → A sense of spaciousness is conveyed

Close collaboration with local tradespeople for property maintenance

PR agency for marketing & social media is contracted externally

Essential employee skills and competencies: Approximately 90 employees; must possess strong communication skills, a natural demeanour, openness to diversity and tolerance, and the ability to respond to guests’ needs; as a training company, employees must be able to guide, train, and impart knowledge to apprentices

Reaching the target audience: Social media (especially Instagram)

The main advertising platform is the website (reservations are made through it)

Word-of-mouth from guests; self-marketing via phone (generates more bookings than third-party providers (still present there for advertising purposes)) → customer-friendly sales process

Customer relationship management: turning guests into regulars → striving to win their favour and ideally exceeding their expectations → achieved through satisfaction, presenting the range of services during the first visit, and getting to know guests personally through all staff members (e.g., the breakfast manager who addresses guests by name and identifies individual preferences as quickly as possible), Hotel management software as an essential tool & guest records are regularly maintained and updated in detail

Customer feedback: Irregular collection of guest feedback via questionnaires regarding specific issues

Verbal inquiry about guest satisfaction upon departure

Main partner: Marketing partner (unique due to island location)

“Privathotel Sylt” → Consortium of five local hotels, viewed as equal partners, joint organization of themed events, utilized by the regional marketing agency, joint procurement (e.g., of training programs), regular meetings to stay up to date, exchange knowledge, and share innovations, diverse expertise is brought together to create added value → Competitive advantage over corporate hotel chains, Goal: Strengthening & enhancing the location’s appeal

Network: No dependencies on other local businesses (e.g., through an in-house laundry)

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Network building/strengthening: Ideas for future implementation: Hiring a shared staff member to recruit additional employees, creating adequate housing for employees & trainees to present the location as attractive to workers

Requirements for career changers: Interest in “hospitality,” caring for guests, enjoyment of working with people

Monetization: Long-term financing is subject to external factors that are unpredictable (e.g., natural disasters)

Prices are currently set too low to ensure long-term profits (this has only been implemented so far in the newly opened restaurant)

Main source of revenue: Overnight stays (approx. 70%), main cost factor: Labor

Revenue is subject to seasonal fluctuations; lower prices in winter → summer months finance winter months

Survival challenges if, for example, several “bad” summers follow one another and bookings dry up

Company 8: Vacation Rental

	Economic sustainability	Ecological sustainability	Social sustainability
Business idea	Rental of 35 leased vacation apartments in a central city location. Through daily updated pricing and long-term liquidity planning, revenue shortfalls of up to three months can be bridged without external financing.	Use of high-quality second-hand furniture to furnish the apartments	Creation of living space for diverse groups (from couples to large families) through rare apartment sizes with three to four rooms.
Key Resources	A long-established network of tradespeople, as well as family support through in-house expertise.	Collaboration with local service providers, such as a regional laundry service for cleaning textiles.	A stable team with low turnover and high professional qualifications that operates independently and flexibly.
Client Needs & Values	Need for a central location within walking distance of attractions and opportunities for self-catering in fully equipped kitchens. Contactless check-in	Desire for a straightforward, guest-oriented process where, for example, dogs are also welcome.	Need for personalized service, availability, and multilingual information materials for international guests.

→ **Sustainability Score: 4.45**

Resilience of the business model:

High stability through buffers and flexibility results in high economic resilience:

- Liquidity reserve: The ability to bridge three months without revenue entirely from internal funds provides significant protection against sudden market downturns.

- No debt burden: Since no debt is involved, there is no pressure from interest or principal payments during times of crisis.

- Variable cost structure: Since the apartments are leased rather than owned, while space costs are a major factor, the business risk is distributed differently than in large hotel properties with high maintenance loans.

In terms of market and tourism resilience, diversification serves as a crisis anchor:

- Broad target audience: The "offers for everyone" strategy (ranging from affordable off-season rates to large apartments for groups) makes the company less dependent on individual market segments.

- Urban location advantage: City locations are often less seasonal than purely coastal vacation regions. Proximity to attractions remains a compelling selling point even with reduced travel budgets.

- Sales strength: A strong presence on major platforms such as Booking.com and Airbnb ensures high visibility, while repeat guests reduce commission costs through direct bookings.

Established standards enable technological resilience

- Competitive edge through automation: Contactless processes are already in place. A technological standstill would therefore not catch the company off guard, as the necessary infrastructure for efficient operations is already in place.

- Human factor: Since the staff's initiative and reliability are defined as crucial, the core value of the service remains intact even without further technological innovations.

The company is extremely crisis-resistant. The combination of financial independence (no debt), a solid cash reserve, and a highly flexible pricing and target audience model enables the business to weather even severe economic downturns. During the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, the company managed to sustain itself through existing network structures, demonstrating a high level of resilience. *Alongside Company 4, it is one of the most stable players in the analysis*

Simple transcription:

Business Idea: Family-owned business, 35 vacation rentals in a city location

Purpose: To offer suitable accommodations to people who want to explore the city

More options, such as self-catering and more space, compared to hotels

Products & Services: Individual vacation apartments (more appealing to guests, but more labour-intensive in terms of cleaning, for example, since not all are furnished the same)

Walking distance to attractions thanks to central location

Differentiating features from the competition: Proximity to attractions

Size of the apartments (three to four rooms are generally rare)

Essential resources: Staff → low turnover; skilled workers are more highly qualified compared to recent years & more applications for job postings

Cleaning & supplies (e.g., laundry: close collaboration with a local laundry service, soap, toilet paper, kitchen supplies, etc.)

Essential skills & competencies of employees: Staff are crucial → must be able to think pro-actively, be reliable, independent, & flexible (e.g., weekend work, especially Sundays)

Clients: Couples through to larger groups (families, bachelor/bachelorette parties, etc.)

Sustainability: High-quality second-hand furniture

Reaching target customers: Third-party providers are most effective (Booking.com & Airbnb); regular guests usually book directly

Social media is not widely used for vacation rentals (Booking.com is the predominant marketing tool)

Customer relationship management: Good communication: responsiveness, friendliness, and accommodating individual requests

Multilingual information materials in the apartment for international guests

Value-added systems (competitive advantage): Automated, contactless processes (e.g., key safes) + telephone/written contact to check that everything is working properly

Low-barrier, uncomplicated, guest-oriented approach (e.g., dogs are allowed)

Professional presentation for a family business, even if it's "just" vacation rentals (e.g., daily updated pricing)

Customer feedback: Feedback forms in every vacation rental → weekly team meeting to discuss potential improvements (e.g., adding amenities)

Main partners: Few external partners, except in the commercial sector (e.g., booking partners)

Network: Long-established network of local tradespeople

Family support through internal expertise

Network building: Team events & training sessions

Monetization: Seasonal periods are leveraged & prices are adjusted to demand

Off-season → attractive offers for people with lower incomes

"If we have offers for everyone, we'll always find someone who's interested."

Vacation rentals are not owned; the company leases the units

Major cost factors: general space costs, personnel costs, commission fees from booking portals, transaction costs

Summer months help finance the winter months; liquidity bottlenecks are avoided through long-term planning

No debt involved + three months without revenue can be bridged

Company 9: High-end hotel

	Economic sustainability	Environmental sustainability	Social sustainability
Business Idea	High-quality accommodations (70% of revenue) in a prime location (front row behind the dike). Profits are secured through dynamic, daily-updated pricing.	Holistic approach through certification as a partner of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. Commitment to sustainable management with regular recertification.	Selling a "lifestyle" and building a community. Engaging "locals" through free events and benefit concerts (e.g., with "Laut gegen Nazis").
Key Resources	Strong network structures and collaborations with well-known brands (e.g., Jever, MINI, Viva con Agua) that furnish individual suites + partnerships that go beyond design and are long-term	Use of sustainable cleaning products and supplies, as well as a focus on regional supply chains.	A strong employer brand and a lived-out value system (e.g., "informal culture," socially responsible employment conditions) that strengthens employee loyalty.
Customer Needs & Values	Demand for high-quality locations and a straightforward, modern booking process.	Guests' desire to be part of an ecologically responsible business that operates in harmony with nature.	A need for approachable interaction on equal terms and the feeling of being part of an exclusive community.

→ **Sustainability Score: 5.00**

Resilience of the Business Model:

In terms of economic resilience, the business's ability to withstand shocks can be rated as high due to modern pricing and efficient cost structures:

- Dynamic adjustment: Thanks to the already implemented daily pricing, the company can react quickly to fluctuations in demand. In a recession, prices can be adjusted immediately to ensure capacity utilization.

- Appropriate capital structure: The ratio of equity to debt is stable, which secures long-term financing even in the event of declining revenue.

- Low seasonality: Since seasonal influences are classified as “not particularly significant,” the company is less vulnerable to periods of bad weather or short-term declines in tourism than hotels that cater exclusively to vacationers.

- Efficient cost structure: Labor costs account for approximately 30%, which is very efficient compared to other hotels in the analysis and allows for greater financial flexibility.

- Management structure: Management is outsourced to an external firm, which ensures professional structures but also implies a certain degree of dependence on external decision-makers.

- Brand Building: The hotel does not differentiate itself through physical features (such as a spa or room size, which are standard), but rather through emotional appeal and a sense of community.

Location advantages and community ties strengthen resilience in the market and tourism sectors despite strong political dependence:

- Location resilience: A “front-row” location is a scarce commodity. Even in times of crisis, such locations lose their appeal less frequently than hotels in the second or third row.

- Community effect: The strong bond with “locals” and guests’ identification with the hotel’s lifestyle create an emotional loyalty that is less price-sensitive than a purely accommodation-based market.

- Dependence on politics: A weakness is the strong dependence on strategic decisions made by the tourism board and local politicians. Should the region as a whole lose its appeal, the hotel can only mitigate this to a limited extent on its own.

In the technological sphere, the company is already well-positioned, which is why stable resilience can be assumed:

- Digital Competence: Since the hotel already uses modern tools for pricing and management, a technical standstill would hit it less hard than businesses that still have ground to make up in this area.

- Focus on soft skills: The core of the business—the “lifestyle” and sense of community—is a deeply human service that remains valuable in the long term even without technological innovations.

Economically, the company is one of the most modern in this series. The combination of a prime location, an efficient cost structure, and emotional brand loyalty makes it highly resilient. The greatest risk in a crisis scenario is the dependence on overarching political and tourism structures over which the hotel has no direct influence.

Simple summary:

Business concept: Hospitality (accommodation → 70%, food & beverages → 24%, spa → 4%, ancillary revenue → 2%) with 10 employees

Products & Services: Hotel including spa + dining

Differentiating features from the competition: Prime location (first row behind the dike)

Selling a lifestyle

Informal, friendly atmosphere (informal "you" culture), guests as part of the community

Hard facts are identical to the competition (e.g., spa, coffee machine, average-sized rooms)

Individually designed suites in collaboration with partners

Free events that facilitate the involvement of “locals” and strengthen the sense of community (e.g., joint benefit concert with “Laut gegen Nazis” → admission proceeds were donated)

Essential resources: Intangible: strong network structures & strong employer brand, including value proposition / Strong dependence on politics, stakeholders, and strategic business decisions by the tourism board

Tangible: Dependence on suppliers, service providers (e.g., food, cleaning supplies, consumables, etc.), and tradespeople for maintenance

Essential employee skills & competencies: “Better to have someone untrained who is motivated and eager” → Soft skills more relevant than hard skills (for sustainable recruiting)

Authenticity, willingness to take responsibility, eagerness to learn, not ego-driven, honesty, commitment to open collaboration

Customers: 90% leisure, 10% business

Current issue within the company that is receiving a lot of attention → University partnership to tap into the customer base, to what extent marketing strategies/public image align → Result: curious people who are needed are already coming, but the apparent target group (e.g., surfers) is not represented

Core target group: 35–55 years old, families, people with dogs (very welcoming atmosphere toward pets)

Primarily from SH, HH, NI

Value proposition: Major corporate decisions are critically examined based on the value framework; employees are actively encouraged to participate

Sustainability: Commitment to ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable practices within the national park partnership, including recertification every two years and mandatory annual training sessions

Permanent employment contracts to ensure social responsibility as an employer

Reaching the target audience: Social media (90% Instagram; Facebook is still relevant, but generally attracts people who are already familiar with the company)

New customers are reached through advertising and word-of-mouth

Strong brand presence as a corporate group with six locations

Sales channels: as low a proportion as possible of third-party providers such as Booking.com, primarily direct sales

Customer relationship management: More difficult to manage via third-party providers

More amenities & personalized communication before arrival for direct bookers (e.g., advance check-in)

Customer feedback: Individual surveys on new changes (e.g., paper survey with checkboxes regarding the new menu)

Email after the stay summarizing review channels + request for guests to rate the hotel (every review is responded to whenever possible)

Reviews are analyzed → Customer-focused improvements are pursued (e.g., new curtains, as there were complaints about inadequate blackout capabilities)

Main partners: Close collaboration with partners (e.g., Jever Beer, Gin Sul, MINI Germany, Viva con Agua → each has furnished suites)

Long-standing partnerships with other companies that share the hotel's values (e.g., Viva con Agua)

Stakeholders: Tourism office & the municipality (no contracts, but close ties nonetheless)

Nature conservation certified since 2019 and part of a partner network (focus on the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site) → Commitment to sustainable (economic, ecological, and social) business practices and recertification every two years

Networking: Cooperation partner meeting → no longer held for the past year due to lack of added value and high costs; previously fostered closer collaboration and a vibrant network

Regular meetings with select partners → Updates on collaboration, current concerns/satisfaction, etc.

Monetization: Prices ensure the hotel's profits (dynamic structure in the accommodation sector → daily updated pricing in collaboration with a southern German company)

Largest cost factor: Staff (approx. 30%) / Seasonal influences are not significant

Management is outsourced to an external firm & the debt-to-equity ratio is appropriate → Long-term financing is secured

Company 10: Systematic coastal gastronomy

	Economic sustainability	Environmental sustainability	Social sustainability
Business Idea	A seafood concept for the masses. Profits are secured through a mixed cost structure. Revenue generated during the peak summer season (June through August) must support the lower-revenue off-season. To reduce costs, efficient staffing and inventory planning is managed using AI-generated tools.	The culinary offering emphasizes a distinct regional identity with a focus on seafood.	Offering a comprehensive maritime experience in an attractive location. In the summer, menus are adapted to require minimal preparation, keeping the workload in the kitchen low and ensuring smooth operations.
Key Resources	Digital infrastructures such as point-of-sale and inventory management systems, as well as a broad network of multiple food and beverage suppliers, are essential to prevent dependencies.	The physical location on the fjord and high-quality furnishings in the dining area to create a specific atmosphere serve as material resources.	The staff is the decisive resource for service quality. Teamwork, flexibility, and the ability to handle high pressure during unpredictable seasonal peaks are expected. Compensation is based on the industry-specific minimum wage in Schleswig-Holstein.
Customer Needs & Values	Demand for high-quality dining whose prices fall within the range of general willingness to pay.	Guests desire a cohesive, maritime-themed concept with a regional focus.	Expectation of a high-quality experience and prompt implementation of feedback (e.g., separating the open kitchen with a glass partition following noise complaints). During the off-season, there is also a desire for personal interaction and engagement.

→ **Sustainability Score: 3.55**

Resilience of the business model:

Economic Resilience

- Dependence on the summer season: Since profits are primarily generated over three months (June, July, August) to finance the rest of the year, the model is vulnerable. An economic recession, during which people spend less money on dining out, potentially threatens the business's viability, as long-term planning is already considered difficult given the fluctuating economic situation.

- Cost-Absorption Strategy: While flexibly sending employees home during periods of low demand reduces labor costs in the short term, it increases the risk of losing qualified staff entirely during a prolonged crisis, as this financial uncertainty could create social instability for employees.

Resilience against a tourism slump

- Loss of the core target group: During the peak season, the restaurant relies heavily on walk-in customers, cruise ship passengers, day tourists, and sailors. If tourism in the state collapses, this customer base disappears almost entirely.

- Regular customers as an insufficient buffer: Local guests and regular customers primarily use the restaurant during the off-season, when there is spare capacity anyway. They cannot structurally offset the massive loss of revenue from the missing summer months.

Technological Resilience

- Dependence on digital tools: Unlike "analogue" businesses, this restaurant's economic success relies on the intensive use of AI-generated tools and digital personnel/financial planning systems to cut costs.

- Loss of efficiency: A technological standstill or the failure of modern software solutions strikes at the core of this business, as responding smoothly and quickly to fluctuations in demand becomes vastly more difficult without these systems.

In the given crisis scenario, the company's very existence is acutely threatened. Weaknesses such as high fixed costs and dependence on leisure spending are exacerbated by reduced temporal flexibility, as the entire business model is geared toward a short summer window and the smooth functioning of modern digital management tools.

Simple transcription:

Business idea: Culinary offerings with a regional identity

Products & Services: Dishes with a focus on seafood

Differentiators from the competition: A culinary concept that focuses on seafood dishes and is accessible to the general public (unique selling point)

Attractive location on the fjord

Efficient staff and inventory planning using AI-generated tools/digital staff scheduling systems → Sales and staffing ratios can be easily viewed, and quick adjustments can be made as needed; for example, if there are too many staff members on the floor, employees are sent home to save costs (particularly relevant for seasonal businesses)

Essential resources: Tangible: Location, kitchen and dining room furnishings (high-quality to specifically create a certain atmosphere), all digital systems, e.g., POS, inventory management systems, etc.

Intangible: Staff (crucial for service quality), brand representation including Google reviews

Essential employee skills and competencies: Teamwork, resilience, and flexibility, especially in seasonal businesses where workloads can reach peak levels that cannot be planned in advance

Customers: Customer demographics change over the course of the season:

During the peak season: day trippers, walk-in customers, cruise ship passengers, and sailors docking at fjord ports

In the off-season: local guests, regulars

Value proposition: Overall experience: high-quality dining with a maritime atmosphere on the fjord

Reaching the target audience: Previously: Poster advertising, flyers, newspaper ads

Today: Social media (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok) to reach all age groups. Content varies by platform

One employee is responsible for social media marketing + collaboration with regional influencers

Customer relationship management: Built on the quality of the stay, e.g., satisfaction with the food, the atmosphere, etc.

During the off-season, there is time to interact with guests. With very regular repeat guests, a personal rapport develops automatically. This is not possible during the peak season

Feedback: Is not actively solicited in the restaurant, but there is a general willingness to receive feedback (e.g., if the soup doesn’t taste right, it is remade upon complaint) so that guests leave the restaurant with a positive impression

Guest criticism is addressed very quickly and feedback is implemented; for example, due to complaints, the open kitchen was separated from the dining area by a glass partition because the noise level was too high

Value-added systems (competitive advantage): Menus are adapted, e.g., in the summer with dishes that require as few steps as possible to ensure smooth kitchen operations, keep labor costs low, and quickly meet increased demand

Main partners: Suppliers (multiple suppliers for food and beverages to avoid any dependency)

Coordinate with the city and tourism stakeholders to, for example, feature events in regional newsletters

Influencers (on a phased basis)

Network: DEHOGA member

Monetization: Main source of income: Restaurant business, especially during the summer months of June, July, and August

Revenue generated during the peak season is used to help cover periods of lower income during the off-season

During peak seasonal periods, walk-in customers are the primary target; in the off-season, these customers ideally become regulars

Prices are set using a mixed-cost calculation to sell more expensive dishes within the range of what customers are willing to pay

Prices ensure profits throughout the season; long-term planning is difficult due to factors beyond our control, such as weather and the economic situation in society

Main cost factor: labour (industry-specific minimum wage in Schleswig-Holstein), followed by rent, energy costs, and cost of goods sold