HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY:

OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES'23

ARTICLE DIGEST

Riga, 2023

HOTEL SCHOOL
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HOTEL MANAGEMENT COLLEGE

"Hospitality Industry:
Opportunities, Challenges and Perspectives'23"
Article Digest

Riga, 2023

Foreword

Dear colleagues, I am glad to introduce the collection of articles from two conferences organized by HOTEL SCHOOL Hotel Management College, Riga.

The 4th International Applied Research Conference "Crisis Management in Hospitality" on 26 May, 2022 was held online due to Covid-19 restrictions. Effective planning and preparation for the unforeseen is very important for any organisation, particularly in a highly vulnerable industry such as hospitality. Hospitality organisations continue to undertake vulnerability analysis to identify potential future internal and external crises, so that they can formulate strategic plans. The sector has already learnt a lot from the impact of Covid-19, which highlighted issues for future effective strategy planning. What lessons the hospitality industry can learn from the pandemic and what are the ways to enhance excellent service in these demanding times – these are the topics covered by our researchers.

Crisis management is nothing new to the sector with international disasters inevitably impacting the sector globally. There are many types of crises, such as crises caused by nature and man-made crises. All of them present critical situations that need to be handled appropriately. Majority of students have selected Covid-19 crisis and on the example of a particular enterprise tried to discuss the crisis management strategies applied there. The chosen for analysis enterprises are not only from Latvia, but also from Cameroon, China, Ukraine and UK. The range of hospitality industry spheres covered in the students' articles is also quite wide: hotels, restaurants, cruise ships, ski resorts.

The 5th International Applied Research Conference "Business Models Post-Corona in the Hospitality and M.I.C.E. industry" was organized On May 30, 2023 in the framework of the Nordplus Horizontal project No. NPHZ-2021/10064. The International Applied Research and Project Results Dissemination Conference was aimed to present the developed teaching and learning materials for the hospitality learners with a review of suggested ways of operating within the hospitality sector in the post-Corona times, with a specific focus on the Nordic/Baltic countries including Latvia, Denmark, and Iceland. The invited conference speakers from Latvia, Denmark, Iceland, USA, and Switzerland enlightened the participants over recovery practices that hospitality and M.I.C.E. industry's companies have applied. The future of hospitality and

M.I.C.E. markets was also discussed with much-heated debate about how to better return to all economic, social and academic activities. As many hospitality-related enterprises have demonstrated remarkable resilience and developed the skills that will help them to withstand even more uncertain times.

So, a great work has been done. We thank all the participants for their time and active engagement in the activities of both conferences. Thanks to all the tutors, who worked intensively with their students, thanks to students who managed to complete their works in spite of demanding deadlines. We are thankful to the organizing committee and HOTEL SCHOOL management and we are looking forward to the opportunity to discuss new challenges and perspectives of hospitality industry at the coming conferences. I wish you all every success in this new chapter of our academic life.

Yours faithfully,

Chief Editor, Catherine Koryuhina

Contents

OVERCOMING COVID-19 CRISIS IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR IN RIGA: THE CASE OF "NEIBURGS" HOTEL

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Abstract. Due to impact of Covid-19 virus outbreak in the world, hospitality sector was one of the most affected business sectors. Hospitality sector is the most vulnerable sector to crisis situations. Covid-19 crisis showed the vulnerability and how regulated and closely linked the sector is with the overall issues in the country and around the world. Previous studies show that crisis can be divided into 3 stages (pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis stage), and can be managed using reactive or proactive strategies. During Covid-19 crisis caterers and accommodation sector were looking for a way how to cope with an uncertainty and limited demand of their services. This paper provides insights of Covid-19 virus influence on hospitality sector in Riga, Latvia. Research highlights adaptation practices to this pandemic with an example of privately owned 4-star boutique hotel - "Neiburgs" Hotel.

Key words: Covid-19 crisis, crisis management, impact of Covid-19, crisis in hospitality, crisis response

Introduction

Last couple of years, Covid-19 was the biggest threat for hospitality industry throughout the world. As it is known of being the biggest employer of all the sectors, the effect of Covid-19 created a danger not only for health concerns, but also a financial concern, as a lot of hospitality businesses were challenged to keep providing services for their guests. Facing the uncertainty of Covid-19 crisis, hospitality enterprises tried different approaches; however, governments in different countries had a major influence on regulating the business operation of the hospitality sector. Due to limited research about Covid-19 virus and the time of producing the cure for it, first years of pandemic had significant effect on hospitality sector.

At the end of 2020, pharmaceutical companies together with the field experts created various brand vaccines which were supposed to help with limiting the transmission of the virus in between individuals. However, Covid-19 virus mutated and created other strains, which did question the effectiveness of vaccination, leading to continuation of pandemic, to which hospitality businesses are still managing to adapt.

This research paper will focus on hospitality sectors response to Covid-19 pandemic in capital city of Latvia on an example of hotel "Neiburgs", which is an operated hotel in Riga. Throughout

the research paper, the author has reviewed various resources gathered from online databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Emerald, Scopus, Credo Reference, as well as internet articles related to the subject of the research project.

The author of this research has gathered primary data using quantitative and qualitative method in a form of questionnaire and conducting an interview with restaurant manager of family-owned boutique hotel "Neiburgs".

At the end of the research paper, the author has drawn conclusions regarding the adaptation practices to Covid-19 crisis in hospitality sector of Riga, as well as provides recommendations for "Neiburgs" hotel.

Literature review

The meaning of word "crisis" can be understood differently in various professions. The term in general sense, that is understood by larger population, implies unpredicted and undesirable situation that possesses latent harm to people, organizations, or society (Canyon, 2020). Other academics state that a crisis is frequently used interchangeably with the notion of threat or adversity (Dutton, 1986). Cambridge Dictionary defines crisis as a time of great disagreement, confusion, or suffering. In the context of hospitality, it can be understood that crisis is related to dangerous and unpredicted situation which affects the demand, operation itself and rest of the stakeholders involved negatively.

On the other hand, crisis management are the activities and practices pertaining to this unprecedented situation (crisis) (Ghaharian et al., 2021). Other scholars define crisis management as a set of factors designed to combat crises and to lessen the actual damage inflicted by it (Coombs, 2015). Farid and Ajwa (2005) stipulate that crisis management is strategic planning process that requires the business to act upon in situation of tension and doubt, at specific time with an aim to provide proper response to the events of the crisis and preventing its escalation, minimizing its negative effect.

Table 1.*Crisis management process (Source: made by author, 2022)*

Crisis Management Stages	Description of the stage	Measures applicable
Pre-crisis stage	Prevention and preparation stage. Includes preventive processes that help with avoiding the occurrence of the crisis.	Preventive measures signal detection, prevention preparation (Zech, 2016). Development of CMP (Crisis mitigation plan) and frequent reviewing and updating. Predict crisis happening, prepare for crisis, and prevent (if possible) crisis of happening (Pedersen, Ritter & Benedetto, 2020).
Crisis stage	The period of crisis happening. At this stage organization takes serious measures to deal with dangerous situation. Decisions made in this stage are crucial part of the success of the organization to overcome crisis.	Crisis response strategy -initial crisis response (Coombs, 2007). Crisis management plan recognition of the trigger event and response (Zech, 2016). React, respond to events happening.
Post-crisis stage	Stage after crisis has ended. Post-crisis stage in which firms reactively repair the aftereffects of the crisis (Raassens, Haans&Mullick, 2021).	Resolutions, evaluations, and other actions after operations have returned to normal (Zech, 2016). Recover, rebound, remember, retain.

Various researchers (Faulkner, 2001; Coombs, 2015; Bundy et al., 2017) have stated, that crisis management is various part process. However, the most common and simplest of them all are 3-part division of crisis management process – pre-crisis stage, crisis stage, and post-crisis stage. The author's description of 3-stage crisis management process can be seen in Table 1 (see Table 1).

Methodology

For this research the author used quantitative and qualitative primary data collection method. For qualitative method the author created an online questionnaire that was based on literature review of crisis and crisis management.

Throughout the research paper, the author has reviewed various resources gathered from online databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Emerald, Scopus, Credo Reference, as well as internet articles related to the subject of the research project.

The aim of the designed questionnaire was to understand the hospitality sector actions towards Covid-19 crisis throughout pre-crisis and ongoing crisis stage, as well as opportunity for respondents to express the possible actions in post-crisis stage. Database of 138 hospitality enterprises in Riga was created and survey was sent allocating the e-mails from businesses' official websites.

For qualitative method, the author conducted an interview with F&B manager from Neiburgs Hotel – Inna Kučera.

Results

For quantitative data method the author received answers from 23 out of 138 respondents that were employed in hospitality enterprises in Riga.

Mainly the respondents were of executive and departmental manager positions. 61% (14) respondents worked in catering sector, 17.4% (4) were employed in accommodation sector and 21.7% (5) respondents worked in hotels with on-site restaurant (see Fig.1).
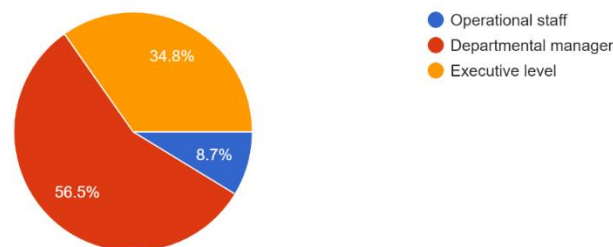
Figure 1. *Respondents' job position (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

The gathered survey data shows, that although the first reports of Covid-19 virus outbreak in China were reported through social and traditional media, hospitality enterprises still did not think that health crisis that is happening in other part of the world, can affect their business in the near future (see Fig.2).
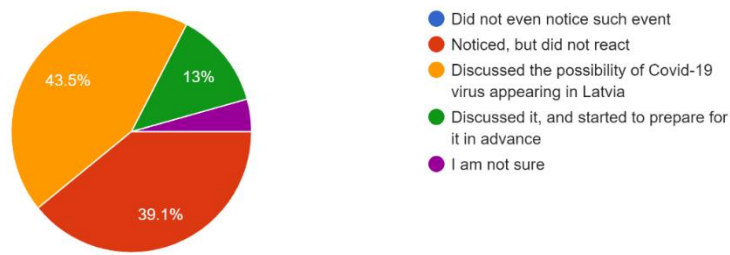
Figure 2. *Hospitality enterprises' initial reaction towards media coverage of Covid-19 virus outbreak in China at the end of 2019 (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

First actions towards limiting the crisis were only taken after the government declared the state of emergency in Latvia. This leads to think, that Latvian hospitality sector, whose large portion of businesses is privately owned, used a reactive strategy of crisis management, reacting to the situation at the moment that problems occurred already at the doorstep of the business, leading to the temporary (mainly up to 3 months) closure of the business operations.

To save the financial resources during Covid-19 pandemic, hospitality enterprises were forced to reduce the working hours of their employees, decrease the salary, and even ask the employees to take the annual leave or no pay leave (see Fig.3).
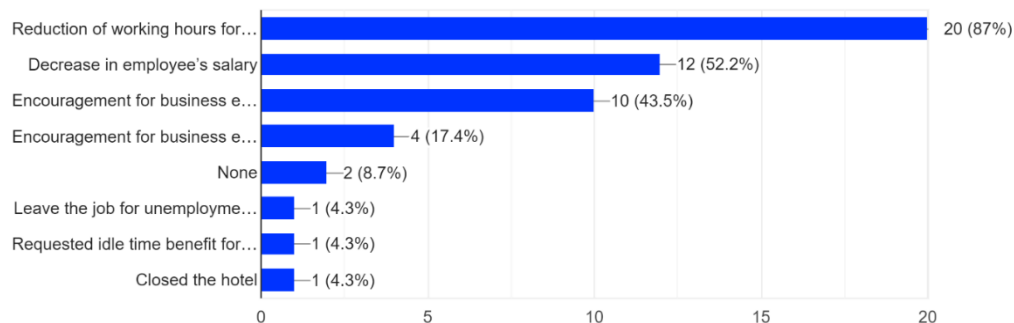
Figure 3. *Measures taken by hospitality enterprises during Covid-19 pandemic (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

Covid-19 pandemic shaped the way the hospitality enterprises provide their operational practices. Putting emphasis on guests and employees' safety, large portion of the enterprises changed their cleaning and safety practices, as well as human resource practices. Due to limited demand, the marketing activities also needed to be reshaped in order to establish the communication with the local market (see Fig.4).

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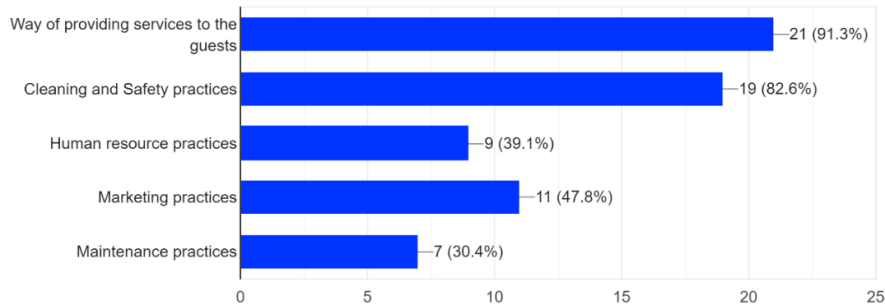
Figure 4. *Changes in operational practices of hospitality enterprises during Covid-19 pandemic (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

Even though the operational practices were changed and adopted to the government's regulations and guidelines, and even additional safety practices were introduced, in general they did not help much, and the demand for the hospitality services decreased. Which shapes the understanding, that buying power of local customer is low and inbound tourism is of a major importance for the sector overall (see Fig.5).
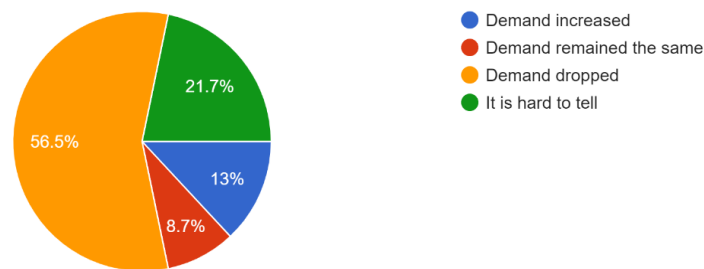
Figure 5. *Applied changes effect on demand of enterprises services (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

21 respondents stated that they applied and received government's financial support during Covid-19 pandemic. Although government tried to support the hospitality sector, major part of the respondents (14 respondents) thinks that it was not sufficient for a longer period (see Fig.6).
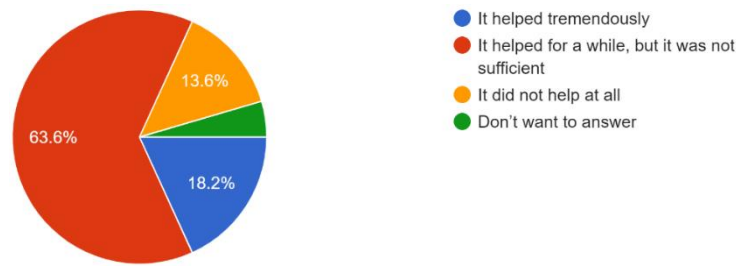
Figure 6. *Respondents' opinion on government's financial support (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

Most popular answers from respondents regarding the near future and operational changes that will remain as changed are cleaning & safety practices (52.2%); overall way of providing services (39.1%); human resource practices (26.1%) and marketing practices (21.7%). Two respondents think that neither of the changed practices will remain for the future after Covid-19 practices (see Fig.7).
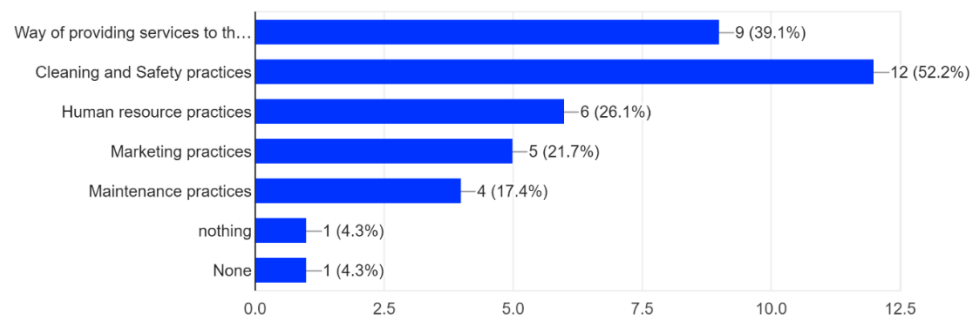
Figure 7. *Respondents' opinion about changes of operational practices that will stay in near future (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

From Covid-19 pandemic the sector has learned that financial emergency funds are of a great importance in crisis. Large portion of the respondents agreed that hospitality enterprises need to be flexible and quick to adapt to changes in external environment in order to survive crisis (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Respondents' answers on open-ended question (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

Question: *In your opinion, what are the main lessons your employer and industry can learn from the Covid-19 pandemic?*
1. It is not possible to be ready for such things. The only thing that would help is if the company is financially strong (has savings or owners are ready to invest during hard times), because during such time expenses

exceed income tremendously.
2. That nothing is impossible. We are living in times when anything may affect everything. Since we have survived in one global pandemic, everybody is already keeping in their minds, that this is not the last one. New ones may come up and that shows that company must have some obligatory "emergency pillow" budget.
3. Enterprise must be flexible and be able to react quickly in order to survive.
4. Business must be able to adapt (and adapt quickly) to any kind of changes in the external environment. The Human Resources factor (qualified, skilled, flexible employees) is of paramount importance. It is vital to implement employee loyalty/support/development programs.
5.The ones who will be able to change and adapt will survive

For qualitative method of primary data collection, the author conducted interview with Inna Kučera, who at the time was the F&B manager in Neiburgs hotel restaurant.

Interview results have showed that in pre-crisis stage Neiburgs Hotel followed the same principles as respondents mentioned in the survey. At the beginning the hotel was not expecting the Covid-19 outbreak to reach Latvia although media was widely covering the situation in China.

In between first official case of Covid-19 appearing in Latvia and declaration of state of the emergency there was minimal time period, which left the enterprise no time to prepare for crisis in advance.

After the announcement of the state of emergency (ongoing crisis stage), hotels owners and department managers held online meeting to discuss further actions of the enterprise. Initial reaction of the enterprise was to close hotel's restaurant for outside guests and only serve breakfast for the remaining guests of the hotel.

Due to frequent changes in government's guidelines, the working situation was rather chaotic, which is normal for such unexpected period. The hotel followed the guidelines provided by the government as well as received Latvian Hotels and Restaurants Association's emails that explained the instructions for frequently changing guidelines.

During the pandemic, Hotel Neiburgs also responded with various changes to their working practices. The hotel's restaurants integrated 3rd party food delivery services, restaurant also tried to provide a la carte dining options in guests' hotel rooms. The restaurant implemented automated and commercial coffee machines which eased the way of providing services with limited human resource. Long term accommodation services were also offered to potential guests.

The hotel implemented additional hygiene and safety guidelines that Latvian government set for businesses, such as: providing employees and guests with protective masks and gloves; placing dispensers around the traffic zones; establishing regular air circulation through hotels premises; placing protective shields in-between a receptionist and a guest at reception area; reorganization of tables in the restaurant with 2m distance in between them.

The hotel was forced to lay off major part of their employees and the rest were assigned to additional duties. From 60 employees only 15 remained.

Additionally, the hotel actively used their social media platforms to communicate with their audience. Various price promotions and special offers were created to arouse interest of local market. Prices for services were also decreased in order to make the offers more appealing for the local market segment.

Although food delivery services were not resulting in profits, it was used as a marketing tool to inform restaurant's customers that restaurant is still being operated.

The hotel had a financial "emergency pillow" before the pandemic; however, the money was quickly spent on adaptation process to the government's regulations. The hotel applied and received all the financial support that government provided to hospitality sector. Mrs. Kučera stated that without government's support, 70% possibility is that hotel would not have survived the ongoing crisis.

Regarding post-crisis stage, Inna Kučera expressed the opinion that future is still uncertain, however, the ongoing employee issue will be more drastic than before. It will take time for employees to trust the sector again. Catering sector will more likely focus on limited working

hours and taking table reservation in advance. Neiburgs restaurant will undergo interior changes and transform to gastro pub concept.

Recommendations

One of the research project's objectives was to provide recommendations for the "Neiburgs" hotel based on the analysis of gathered data. The author would like to note, that so far hotel has been successful to keep the enterprise running during Covid-19 crisis.

Not disrespecting in any way the management of the Neiburgs Hotel, the author would like to recommend the following:

- Creation of additional safety policies that can be used as a marketing tool for Covid-19 cautious travelers. Providing listed Health & Safety activities that hotel practices, as well as briefly updated overall Covid-19 regulations in the country. Guests can receive this listing after booking their stay in the hotel.
- Day-time usage of hotel rooms that guests can use as a work office, changing the environment of being locked in house during lockdowns. Such change in hotel room usage, might provide additional revenues.
- Using low occupancy time to implement sustainability practices for the enterprise. Due to the fact, that travelers nowadays are becoming environmentally conscious, the hotel could develop and adapt environmentally friendly practices, which in post Covid-19 times can be used as a marketing tool to attract additional environmentalists.
- Identification of opportunities to improve energy efficiency. While Covid-19 crisis has forced the hoteliers to look for opportunities to reduce costs, hotel could develop energy management plan.
- Creating the crisis management plan for possible upcoming Covid-19 wave that experts say will occur in fall this year.
- Defining fixed and variable staff, that hotel needs in order to adapt to the fluctuation of demand for the hotel services. Encouraging staff members to help each other because of understaffing. Using outsourcing services to employ workers that can help in time of need.

- Continuing to reach out to the LVRA (Latvian Hotel and Restaurant Association) for information exchange about the operational practices and regulations that can help to survive upcoming Covid-19 waves. Asking the government to provide forecasted plan of state's actions in case of another Covid-19 wave.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this research paper was to address the Covid-19 impact on the hospitality sector in Riga, Latvia and highlight successful hospitality business adaptation practices to the Covid-19 crisis.The author researched and reviewed valuable and valid literature from online databases and summarized the concepts of crisis and crisis management in hospitality industry.

During primary data collection, the author created a questionnaire which helped to gather information from 23 hospitality enterprises in Riga, and conducted an interview with Inna Kučera, who is the F&B department manager of hotel "Neiburgs". All of the questions in the interview and questionnaires were aimed towards understanding of hospitality sector's response to Covid-19 crisis.

From this research, the author has drawn the following conclusions:
- hospitality enterprises in Riga mainly used reactive approach of crisis management. Global health crisis showed that no one was prepared to such a drastic decrease in demand, and local authorities play major role in managing and limiting virus outbreak. Set regulations aimed to limit the transmission of virus, damaged the hospitality sector in Riga.
- due to adopting safety measures set by local authorities, hospitality sector still had decrease of demand, which again proves, that inbound tourists are essential part of revenue generators for hospitality enterprises in Riga.
- in order to survive during Covid-19 crisis, accommodation and catering sector were forced to take different measures, from which the main changes were in cleaning and safety practices, changes in the way of providing services to the guests and changes in marketing practices.
- due to limited number of employees, various enterprises integrated additional technologies to make services more automated, thus, limiting the need of human

resource. At the same time, the employees, who were asked to continue their employment had additional responsibilities added to their daily job responsibilities.

- to receive financial support from government in times of crisis, hospitality sector had to be an honest taxpayer. Also, financial "emergency pillow" budget is obligatory in such conditions.
- management of hospitality enterprises need to be flexible and adapt to the changes in order to survive in crisis situations.

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COVID-19 IMPACT ON CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN CRUISE SHIP INDUSTRY

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Abstract. This article presents an analysis of crisis management awareness among cruise industry personnel. First general analysis about crisis management is given; cruise industry is described; and how the pandemic has affected the cruise industry is shown. Then the awareness of cruise ship personnel about crisis management is analyzed. Finally, the analysis of results, conclusions and suggestions for improvement based on the research data are provided.

Key words: crisis management, Covid-19, cruise ship industry, hospitality industry

Introduction

Crisis management is the application of strategies designed to help an organization deal with a sudden and significant negative event. A crisis can occur as a result of an unpredictable event or an unforeseeable consequence of some event that had been considered as a potential risk. In either case, crises almost invariably require that decisions be made quickly to limit damage to the organization (Posey, n.d.).

The author decided to conduct a study of how the cruise industry survived Covid-19 pandemic: how it all began, the financial losses of companies in the billions, the sale of ships, and, of course, the changes of customer service and the crisis management practices. The author is sure that this study will help to find out and understand how the cruise industry can change the approach to crisis management in the future. Taking into account the fact that the author has experience in the cruise industry, he expressed his personal interest in exploring this topic. The author is going to analyze the cruise industry and the impact of the Covid-19 on this sphere, as well as the impact of the pandemic situation on crisis management in the cruise ship industry.

The literature review about crisis management, the history of the rise of the cruise industry, and how the pandemic has affected the cruise hospitality sector have been analyzed for this study. In addition to this, this study is backed up by a survey of 10 current cruise industry employees about their views on what is happening in the cruise industry now after Covid-19 pandemic.

Aim: to investigate if cruise industry is ready for the new post-Covid-19 reality and to find out how it will impact crisis management in this sector.

Objectives:

- To provide relevant literature review.
- To define key methodology for the research project.
- To explore the crisis strategies of cruise ship industry against Covid-19.
- To prepare and conduct primary research.
- To identify future technologies for crisis management in cruise ship industry.
- To formulate conclusions and propose some recommendations for the chosen industry.

Methodology

The basic aim for this research project was to investigate if cruise industry is ready for the new post-Covid-19 reality and to find out how it will impact crisis management in this sector.

This article focuses on how the pandemic has affected the cruise industry and how the industry is coping with its aftermath. To do this, the author used numerous sources to arrange the literature review.

The author used both secondary and primary research. For secondary research the author used official databases: www.emerald.com and www.sciencedirect.com, namely 54 resources for the literature review. For the primary research the author prepared two questionnaires with questions about crisis management in cruise ship industry in the post-pandemic period. The first list of questions consisted of eight general questions (for example: age, how long a respondent has been working in a cruise company, and so on). The second list included eleven questions about crisis management and how the respondents work on the current ship after two years of non-service. For example, the question: "What crisis management practices have been implemented on your ship in your department/ all departments?" was asked to the correspondents. A question was also asked whether new methods have been developed for crisis management training. Altogether 10 respondents have participated in these surveys.

In summary, the total collecting of information took 3 weeks from 03.03.2022 till 28.03.2022. Such a long time can be explained by the fact that all the respondents are currently working on the ships and they do not always have access to the Internet.

Literature review

The 1960s witnessed the beginnings of the modern cruise industry. Cruise ship companies concentrated on vacation trips in the Caribbean, and created a "fun ship" image which attracted many passengers who would have never had the opportunity to travel on the super liners of the 1930s and 1940s (Grace, 2008). Cruise ships concentrated on creating a casual environment and providing extensive on-board entertainment. There was a decrease in the role of ships for transporting people to a particular destination; rather, the emphasis was on the voyage itself (ibid.).

During the 1980s cruise companies pioneered the idea of travelling for pleasure not just for purpose. It was still in the interest of the passengers to get to their destination, but the idea was to enjoy the journey as well. Ships became an ever more pleasurable place for passengers to spend time. Throughout the history of the cruise industry, it has constantly changed and adjusted to certain events: financial, political, etc. Crisis management in emergency situations has been constantly modified and changed. The damage to tourism caused by a crisis or disaster may not only have serious implications for a national economy but also threaten the livelihoods of many in the destination. The monitoring of crisis indicators could allow intervention to minimize the crisis and offers a chance of protecting tourism for the benefit of all stakeholders (Sausmarez, 2009). Due to the high uncertainty of the economic environment, economic crises discourage travel (U and So, 2020), and thus, a decrease in tourism demand and the loss of qualified employees (Okumus et al., 2005). The impact of terrorism can, from the tourists' view, be broader and different levels of terrorism threats influence their selection in travel packages (Walters et al., 2019).

One of the most striking examples is Covid-19. Over the past decades, crisis management has not faced a greater threat than Covid-19. This pandemic situation has caused enormous damage not only to the global economy, but also to the hotel industry.

Crisis management is a popular topic in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Many previous studies have emphasized the important linkage between crisis and tourism. For example, De Sausmarez (2007) argued that the damage caused by a crisis threatens not only the national economy but also the livelihoods of many tourist destinations. Therefore, it is worth monitoring crisis management strategies to minimize the negative effects. Some crises are man-made, such as economic crisis and terrorism. Due to the high uncertainty of the economic environment, economic crises discourage travel (U and So, 2020), and thus, a decrease in tourism demand and the loss of qualified employees (Okumus et al., 2005). The impact of terrorism can, from the tourists' view, be broader and different levels of terrorism threats influence their selection in travel packages (Walters et al., 2019).

To better understand crisis management practices, it is necessary to recognize that a crisis consists of multiple stages, such as pre, during and post (Ritchie, 2004). The pre-disaster stage is before a triggering event and research in the pre-disaster phase aims to develop a state of readiness (Carmeli and Schaubroeck, 2008). Research in the post-disaster phase aims to critically examine the lessons learned and facilitates the management of future incidents; however, the research aim in the during-crisis stage is different, it is to develop emergency management and contingency management (Sawalha et al., 2013). Counting the number of studies of crisis management practices in different stages, most of the studies were conducted after the crisis. This study has a good value for tourism crisis research because it is conducted during the Covid-19 crisis.

Incidence of multiple outbreaks on cruise ships during the Covid-19 pandemic illustrates the vulnerability and weakness of confined cruise travel. Passengers are confined to a cruise ship for days and weeks at a time with poor ventilation within the cabin rooms, thus human-to human transmission of disease is amplified (Rocklov et al., 2020). As a result of this amplified transmission, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the No Sail Order in March 2020 and has advised U.S. travelers to defer all cruise travel (CDC, 2020c). All this public information, as well as discussions about the cruise ship on social and traditional media, has had a negative impact on potential future cruise travel (Laufer and Coombs, 2006).

According to data presented by Stock Apps and Statista data the entire cruise industry generated $23.7 billion in revenue in 2017. Over the following 12 months, that figure jumped to $25.8 billion and continued rising. Statistics show the global cruise market's revenues hit $27.4 billion in 2019, a 15 percent jump in three years (GTP editing team, 2020).

However, Covid-19 triggered the worst market contraction in history, with cruise line revenues plummeting by almost $20 billion in a year (GTP editing team, 2020) (see Fig. 1).
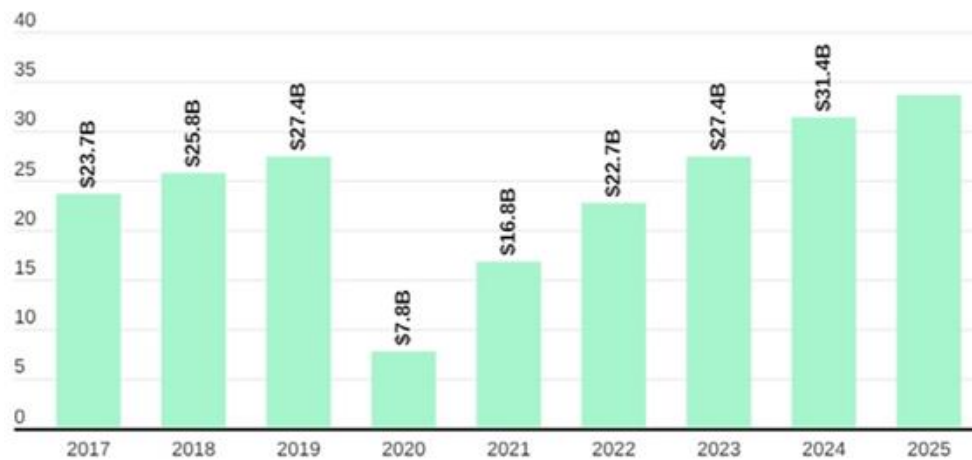
Figure 1. *Revenue in the cruises segment, from 2017 to 2025 U.S. dollars (Source: Statista forecast adjusted for expected impact of Covid-19, September 2020)*

According to Stock Apps it will take years for the cruise industry to recover from the effects of the pandemic (Statista, 2020). The year 2023 is forecast to witness $27.4 billion in sales revenues, still $100 million less than in 2019. By the end of 2025, cruise line revenues are expected to rise to $33.7 billion.

The United States, as the world's largest cruise industry, is expected to lose almost $10 billion in revenue due to coronavirus outbreak, with revenues falling by 71.3% to $3.8 billion in 2020. Revenues of the German cruise line market, the second-largest globally, are expected to plunge to $797 million, compared to $2.8 billion last year. In their turn, Chinese and Canadian markets are expected to generate $537 million and $284 million in revenue, respectively.
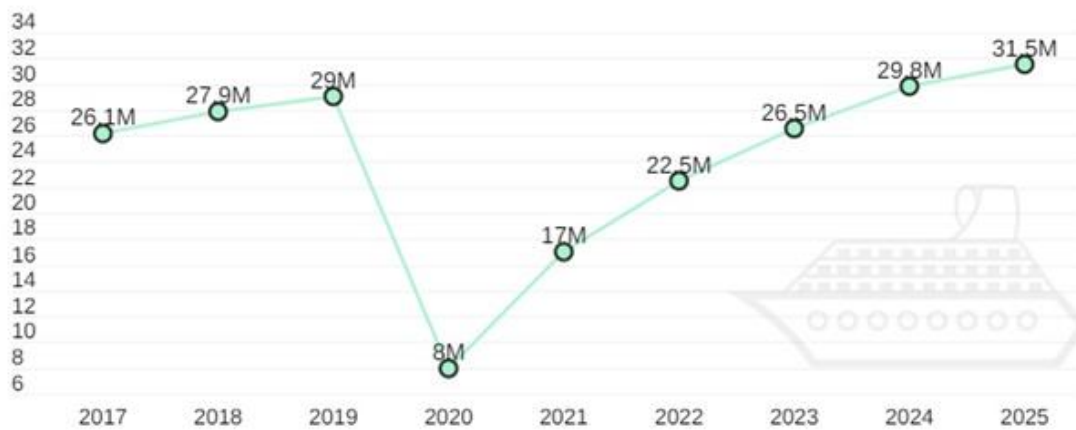
Figure 2. *Number of users in the cruises segment, from 2017 to 2025 (Source: Statista forecast adjusted for expected impact of Covid-19, September 2020)*

Apart from substantial financial losses, the coronavirus pandemic also caused considerable drops in the number of cruise line users. Three years ago, the number of people choosing cruise lines for their vacations amounted to almost 26.1 million worldwide. By the end of 2019, this figure rose to over 29 million (Statista, 2020) (see Fig. 2).

For example, as at the end of April 2020, one in ten Covid-19 cases in Australia were attributed to a Ruby Princess cruise voyage (Cockburn, 2020), while between February and mid-March 2020, about 17% of the confirmed cases in the United States (US) were linked to returning cruisers (Moriarty, Plucinski, Marston, et al., 2020). Official and unofficial counts show that there were at least 3908 confirmed Covid-19 cases and 111 confirmed deaths linked to over 102 Covid-19 outbreaks involving at least 124 cruise ships as at October 2020 (CDC, 2020). Fig. 3 shows that many cruise companies had outbreaks on their ships, including Carnival Corporation, Royal Caribbean, and Norwegian Cruise Line, the three biggest companies in the industry, which account for 80% of the industry's passenger capacity (Papathanassis, 2017) (see Fig. 3).
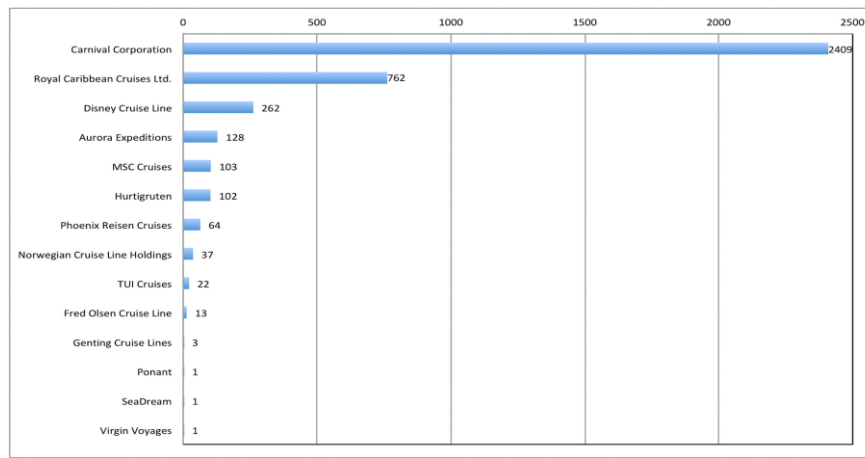
Figure 3. *Number of Covid-19 cases by Cruise Company on 2020 (Source: Miami Herald, 2020)*

These cruise companies also suffered economic setbacks because of the pandemic, with their share prices falling off a cliff in the first quarter of 2020 (see Fig. 4). Cruises continue to record transmission of Covid-19 despite high vaccination rates among passengers and crew, with 1359 reported confirmed cases in the US between June and October 2021 (CDC, 2021).

Results

Since one of the main objectives of the study was also to conduct a survey among those currently working in the cruise industry, the author decided to conduct this survey among his former colleagues with whom he had been working for two years at Carnival Cruise Lines.

The survey was conducted by sending an electronic document with various questions regarding the current situation in the cruise industry. The author has structured the questions in such a way as to avoid excessive confidential information that may cause further questions. Questions were made on two lists: one included questions regarding general information (age, where and on what ship a respondent currently works, etc.); another list already included specific questions regarding the situation on ships in the post-Covid period, as well as questions on crisis management today (see Table 1).

Table 1. *General questions about respondents (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

		Number of people - 10	Percentage
Age	18-25	3	30%

	26-35	4	40%
	36-50	2	20%
	50>	1	10%
Gender	Male	7	70%
	Female	3	30%
Country of origin	Indonesia	3	30%
	Philippines	4	40%
	Ukraine	2	20%
	Belarus	1	10%
What company do you currently work for?	CCL – Carnival Cruise Lines	10	100%
How many years have you been with the company?	<1	2	20%
	1-3	6	60%
	3>	2	20%
Department	F&B	7	70%
	Housekeeping room	2	20%
	Engine Room	1	10%
Current vessel	Carnival Freedom	4	40%
	Carnival Panorama	1	10%
	Carnival Sunshine	3	30%
	Carnival Radiance	2	20%

Next, the questions from the second list were asked. The first question was "What is crisis management?" (see Fig. 4). 70 % of respondent answered correctly by choosing point A, while 20 % chose point C (20 %) and only one person answered B (10 %).
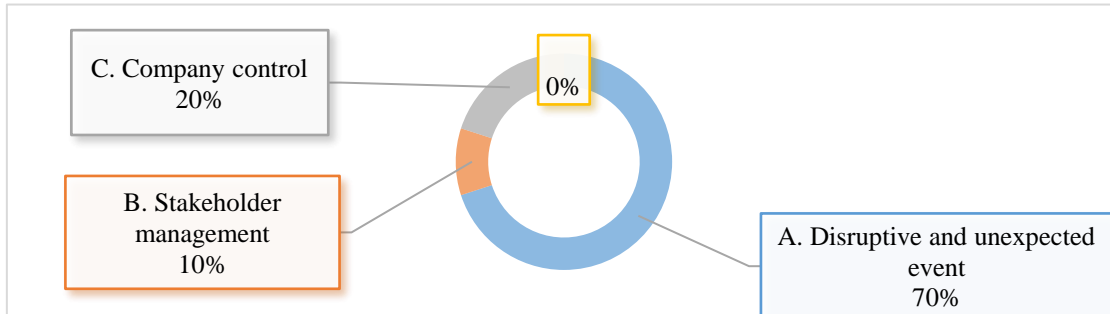
Figure 4. *Responses to the question "What is crisis management"? (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

The next question was: "Is your cruise ship certified in crisis management?" Everyone (10 respondents) answered positively (see Fig. 5).
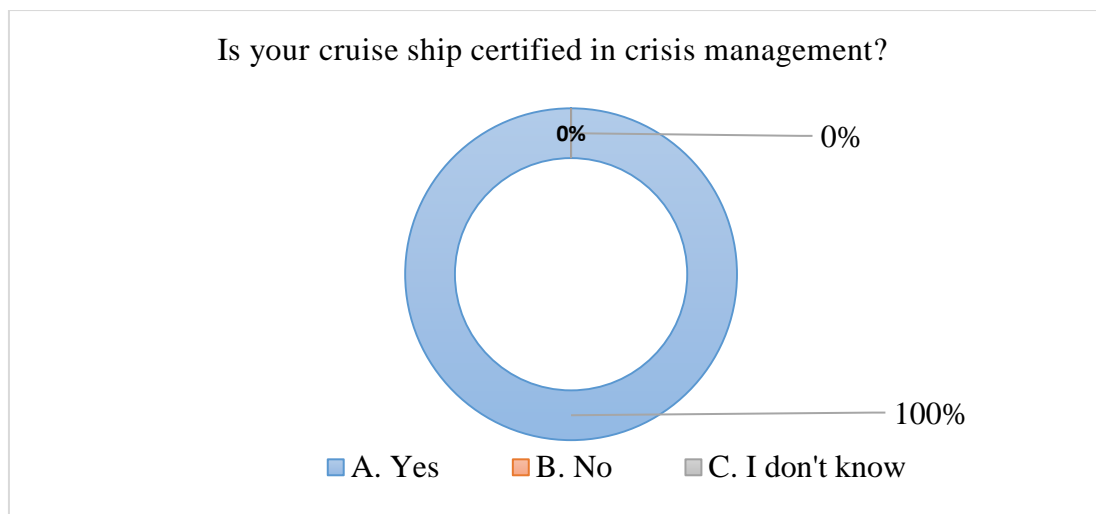
Figure 5. *Cruise ship certification in crisis management (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

The following question was: "What crisis management practices have been implemented on your ship in your department/ all departments?" The author received a similar response from all survey participants, due to the fact that this is the policy of one company (Carnival Cruise Lines) and it applies to its entire fleet (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Answers regarding crisis management practices' implementation on board of the ships (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

What crisis management practices have been implemented on your ship in your department/ all departments?	Basically, additional trainings were carried out in case of a sudden outbreak of a viral infection on the ship: general alarm, opening storages with medical masks and antiseptics, dividing residential areas into sectors, the command to move all crew members back to their cabins.

Also, all respondents (100 %) answered yes to the next question (see Fig. 6). According to author's experience, CCL always provides this training every time, when crew member is getting back on board, even after 1.5 years of non-service, the company is still doing this.

Did you have basic training about crisis management after arriving on board?

■ A. Yes   ■ B. No
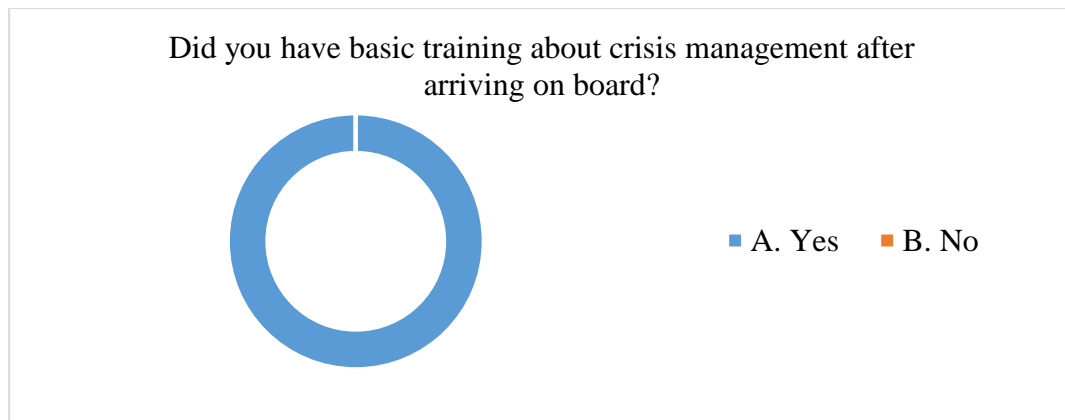
Figure 6. *Basic training on crisis management among employees after arriving on board (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

The next question was: "Did the retraining occur again after two years of working?" 6 respondents answered yes to this question (75 %), and only 2 persons answered no (25 %). The answers of two more people were not taken into account here, since they have been working for less than one year. The author wants to note that this is wrong, that not everyone has had retraining (see Fig. 7).

Did the retraining occur again after two years of working?

25%

75%

■ A. Yes

■ B. No
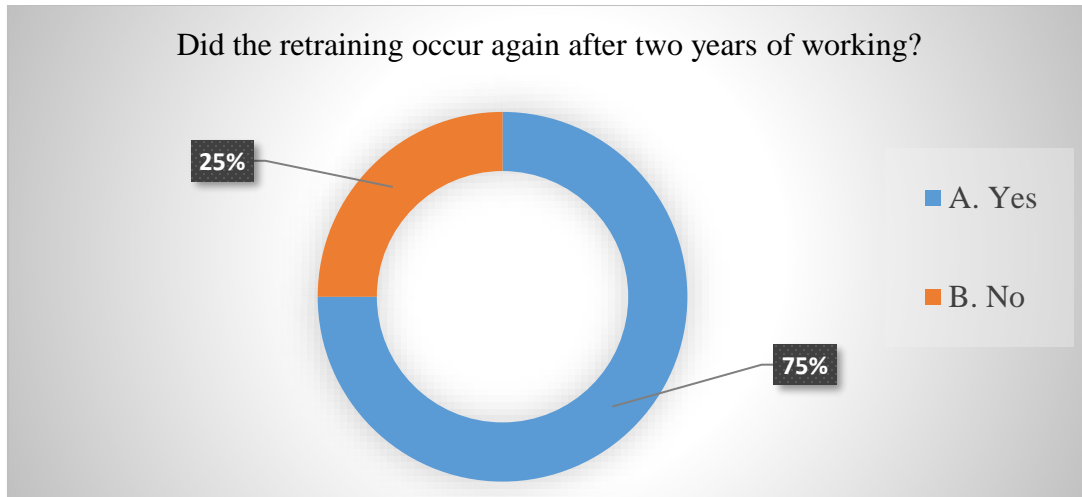
Figure 7. *Responses to the question: "According to international rules, the retraining must be done after two years of working – did you have it?" (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

Regarding an opportunity to ask staff managers any questions about crisis management, there were very different responses. 4 people (40%) answered in the affirmative; 3 people (30%) answered in the negative and 3 more people (30%) found it difficult to answer (see Fig. 8).

Do you have an opportunity to ask your staff managers any questions about crisis management?

30%

40%

30%

■ A. Yes

■ B. No

■ C. I don't know

Figure 8. *Opportunity to ask staff managers any questions about crisis management (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

Everyone also agreed that the pandemic has greatly affected crisis management in the cruise industry. An example of the answer can be seen below (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Example of the response to the question: "During the crisis management training, did the company mention the huge impact of Covid-19 on it?" (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

During the crisis management training, did the company mention the huge impact of Covid-19 on it?	Yes, at our last training, our mentor told us that the pandemic has had a huge impact on crisis management, and that big changes are coming soon.

The next question was: "The Company I work for is coping well with Covid-19 non-proliferation requirements on my cruise ship. Would you agree with this statement?" (see Fig. 9).
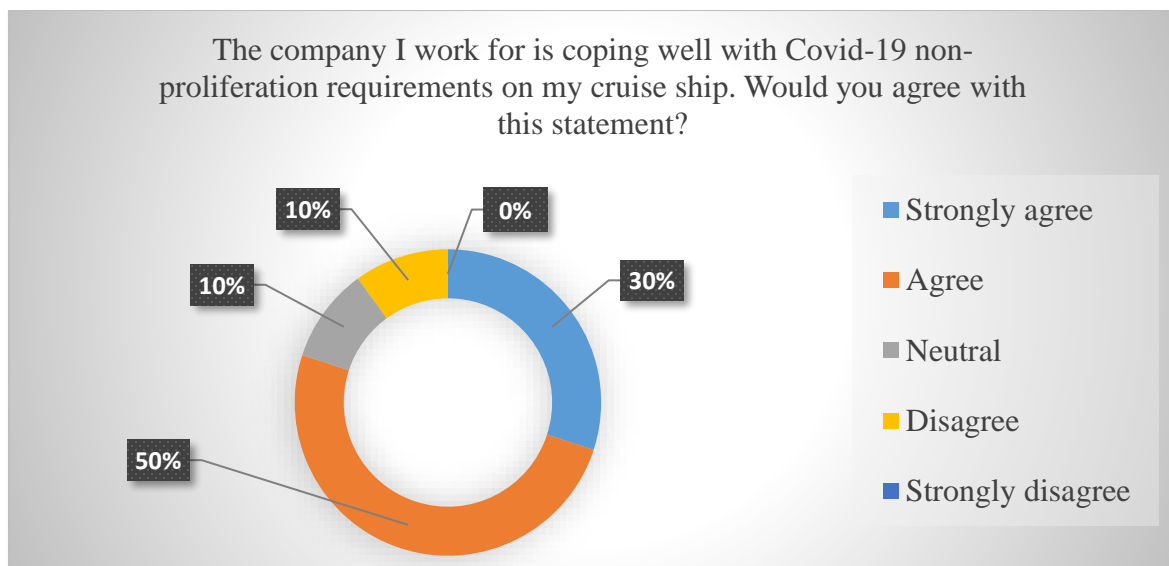
Figure 9. *Results showing the extent to which the respondents agree to the statement: "The Company I work for is coping well with Covid-19 non- proliferation requirements on my cruise ship."(Source: made by the author, 2022)*

All respondents answered "no" to the question "Did your company put a cutting edge idea in crisis-management trainings?"What's more, they added comments as company now is just creating new cutting edge idea about crisis-management trainings, they will present it in the nearest future.

The question "Do you feel more stressful after returning back to cruise industry with all these new restrictions and rules about Covid-19?" was asked as well (see Fig. 10).
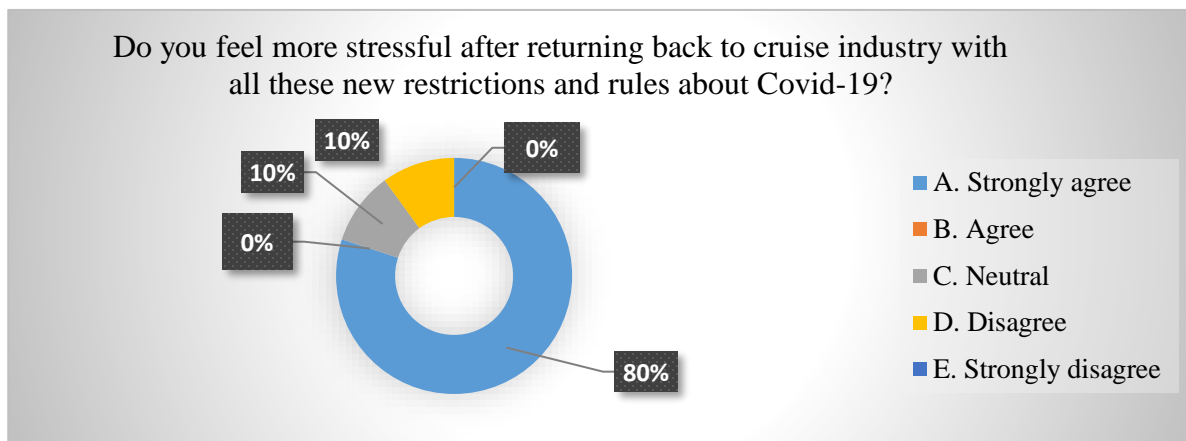
Figure 10. *Respondents' level of stress after returning back to cruise industry with new restrictions and rules regarding Covid-19 (Source: compiled by the author, 2022)*

8 persons (80 %) answered they "strongly disagree" about not being stressful after returning back to work in cruise industry. 1 person (10 %) disagreed and one (10 %) respondent answered "neutral".

Finally, on the question "How has your job changed due to Covid-19 crisis?" one of the current employees answered: "In my opinion, the work has not changed much since pre-Covid. The only thing that really bothers is the wearing of not just fabric, but respiratory masks. This interferes with work, especially in a restaurant when you have to run a lot and carry heavy trays of food."

As a result of this survey the author can conclude that at present, the cruise industry is changing its approach for conducting trainings about crisis management. Also, it is worth noting that Carnival Cruise Lines still has Covid-19 restriction and rules for its employees: they should wear masks and make vaccination. However, mostly the general mood of the workers remains good. The author can confirm that the survey was successful and one of the aims of this research was reached.

Conclusions

The main purpose of this research work was to study the general concepts of the cruise industry, crisis management in this area and how the pandemic has affected the cruise industry along with crisis management planning.

To identify this, the author has used both primary and secondary types of research. For the secondary research the author has analyzed literature recourses. For the primary research the author has prepared two questionnaires: the first questionnaire consisted of general questions about the respondents and the second one contained questions about crisis management situation in Carnival Cruise Lines among employees of different ships and how the post-pandemic period has affected working conditions and whether new methods of crisis management have been developed (or are planned). These questionnaires were sent online via e-mails and the total amount of correspondents was 10 people from different ships.

Thus, the study of this topic has shown that the cruise industry has suffered a lot in the hospitality industry. Every cruise company has suffered multimillion-dollar losses due to the inability to operate cruises as usual. In order to be able to somehow stay afloat, the companies were forced to sell their ships for scrap in Izmir (Turkey). However, it is worth noting that the cruise industry is one of the first to take steps to restore its operations in the form of cruises.

The following conclusions can be drawn:
- The cruise industry has been hit hard by state of emergency and lockdowns during the pandemic.
- Post-Covid-19 period should focus on creating new opportunities to reorganize crisis management in emergencies.
- The pandemic has shown that the cruise industry is the most sensitive to sudden changes in the sphere of human activity, so it is necessary to develop some types of state support for this private business.
- Analysis of the survey showed that the cruise company is taking certain steps to make changes in crisis management.

Recommendations

After analyzing the entire research, the author can formulate the following recommendations to prevent problems in the future.

To begin with, it is imperative for cruise lines to rethink their emergency crisis management strategy in order to be ready for them. In particular, this applies to events related to the pandemic. Also, cruise companies can develop some information technology aimed at the marketing component of their work.

Besides, having analyzed the topic of cruise industry and crisis management in the post-pandemic period, the author identified his further recommendations:

- Introduce additional trainings on the subject of crisis management and increase the number of trainings from once every two years to 3-4 times per two years.
- Conduct drills in the event of an outbreak of infectious diseases on board of ships.
- Raise awareness of hygiene and disinfection among guests on each cruise.
- Develop technologies for monitoring infectious diseases on board of ships. For example, to tell the guests it is now safe to return to cruises; all safety measures are taken into account, etc., so that guests can be ensured of the safety for the whole duration of the cruise.
- For a while, make online reservations for food places to avoid overcrowding.
- Place disinfection racks in all places of the ship.
- Keep the passenger capacity bar not full for some time (70-80% of the ship's capacity).

Limitations and contribution for the future research

To begin with, the main difficulty for writing and collecting information was the restrictions due to Covid-19. To search for information, one source was used - the Internet. To make a research about the change in crisis management under the influence of Covid-19 a survey among current employees of the cruise company has been conducted. Though the number of respondents may seem insufficient, the obtained results can be used for characterization of the situation due to the fact that the company generally does not disclose such information for the public access.

This research paper has its own contribution to the future, showing how the cruise industry is recovering after two difficult years of the pandemic.

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CRISIS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT EUROPEAN UNION SKI RESORTS

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Abstract. This research article presents analysis of the problems and crisis situation in the ski resort industry in the European countries (the Alps). Covid-19 outbreak over the past years has created a complete upheaval and conditions that have forced most ski businesses to rethink their strategies to be able to survive. Small and medium-sized businesses have not had it easy changing their methods to avoid bankruptcy, but the industry has suffered losses anyway. The article consists of three parts. The first part presents a general analysis of crisis management, a general overview of the ski industry and how the pandemic affected the ski industry. The second part provides an analysis of foreign industries and resort personnel about crisis management. The third part describes the conclusions and suggestions for improvement based on the research data.

Key words: Crisis management, Covid-19, European ski resorts, hospitality industry

Introduction

The author decided to do a study on how the ski industry survived during the pandemic and what the new reality is for them now. The author believes that this study will help clarify and understand how the ski industry after financial losses and difficult times for companies can change in the new reality. The author is going to analyse the ski industry and the impact of Covid-19 on the industry, as well as the impact of crisis management on the ski industry.

The aim of this research is to find out if the ski industry is ready for the new reality and to find out how European countries, such as France, Germany and Austria apply the most successful practices of crisis management in the ski industry in general and during the Covid-19 pandemic in particular.

The following objectives have been put forward:
- To study and present an appropriate literature review of crisis management, pandemic and crisis;
- To examine the ski industry's crisis strategies against Covid-19;
- To collect and examine data on examples of crisis management practices in European ski resorts;

- To formulate conclusions and offer some recommendations for the ski industry.

Methodology

The main goal of this research project was to find out if the ski industry was ready for the new post-Covid-19 reality and to find out how this would affect crisis management in the sector. This research paper focuses on how the pandemic has affected the ski industry and how the industry is coping with its aftermath. To do this, the author used numerous sources and data to organize the literature review. The author also prepared a questionnaire consisting of two parts. The first part of the questionnaire contained questions related to the impact of the pandemic on the industry, while the second part of questions related to crisis management. The overall collection of information took the author about two weeks.

Literature review

"A crisis could be a singular, large event, but it may be more useful to conceive of sequences of sub-events over time, as in a process perspective, such that this approach synthesizes elements from both strands of research" argued Jaques (2009). In this definition, an event is a delimited element, with a beginning and end, such that it happens or takes place.

A crisis can arise as different types and take different forms. Crisis literature features debates about how many stages constitute a crisis lifecycle (e.g., Faulkner, 2001; Fink, 1986; Roberts, 1994). Following Coombs (2007), a narrow view of crisis in its simplest form has three phases: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. However, issue management literature also suggests the need to consider the period immediately before the crisis, when it is building, to identify and proactively react to early symptoms (e.g., Ansoff, 1975), as well as immediately after the crisis, when extraordinary activities are required to handle its effects before a new "normal" stage might be achieved, which ensures that the firm learns and prepares (Madsen, 2009).

Depending on the type of crisis, the organization might take different forms of action. "Even if the crisis is unpredictable and evolving, decision makers must follow logical patterns, which can be especially difficult with insufficient or conflicting data" argued Bundy et al. (2017).

The effect of Covid-19 has emphasized the tremendous importance and positive contribution of travel and tourism. The benefits of travel & tourism spread far beyond its direct impacts in terms

of GDP and employment; with indirect gains spreading through the entire ecosystem and the supply chain linkages to other sectors. In 2019, travel & tourism were among the world's largest sectors, accounting for 10.4% of global GDP, 10.6% of all jobs (334 million), and were responsible for creating 1 in 4 of all new jobs across the world. Moreover, international visitor spending amounted to USD 1.7 trillion in 2019. In 2020, 62 million jobs were lost, leaving just 272 million employed across the sector globally (see Fig.1). This 18.5% decrease was felt across the entire travel & tourism ecosystem. Millions of the remaining 272 million jobs that are currently supported by government retention schemes and reduced hours could be lost without a full recovery of the travel & tourism sector (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2020).
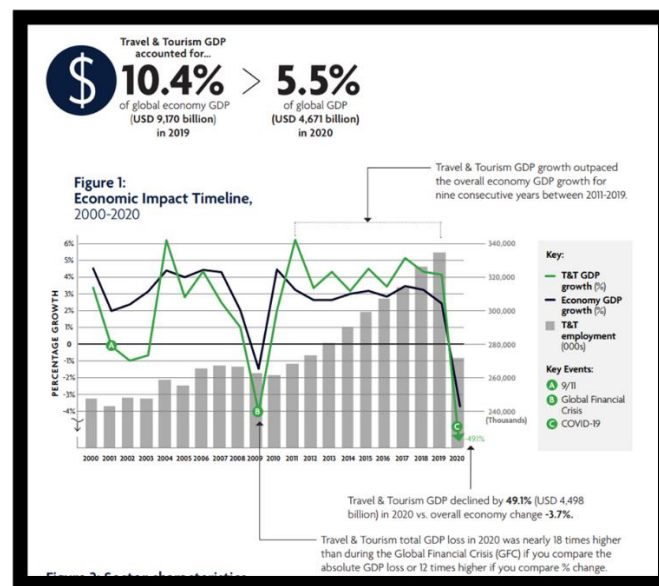
Figure 1. *Travel & Tourism GDP (Source: World Travel and Tourism Council, 2020).*

A ski resort is a resort designed for skiing, snowboarding and other winter sports. In Europe most ski resorts are towns or villages located in or adjacent to the skiing area - mountainous terrain with pistes (ski slopes) and a system of elevators. In North America, ski resorts are more often located far from the cities, so ski resorts are usually resorts. High concentrations of ski resorts are located in the Alps, Scandinavia, western and eastern North America and Japan.

Ski resorts across the globe struggled to overcome the challenges of SARS CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19 (Associated Press, 2021). Ski resorts face complex challenges when developing and implementing robust infection control plans. "Ski resorts grapple not only with various

government regulations and guidance at the local, state, national, and international level, but must also balance additional requirements and guidance from corporate policies, property management, and trade associations, resulting in an assorted milieu of infection prevention practices" argued Lauer, et al. (2021).
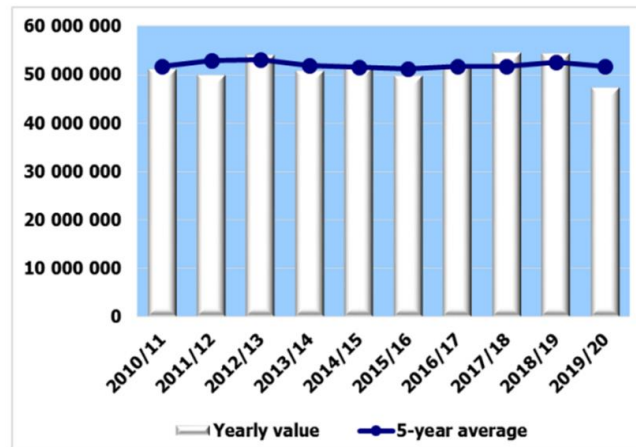
Figure 2. *Austria, evolution of skier visits (Source: International Report on Snow & Mountain Tourism, 2021).*

Season 2019/20 was cut short by the Covid-19. The industry was right on track until the official closure of the operations, but then had to accept heavy losses (see Fig.2-4). Despite the figures for the season show a decrease in visitation of 13.0% compared to 2018/19, the period between November 2019 and February 2020 saw an increase of 8.4% in skier visits over former season and an even higher increase in sales (International Report on Snow and Mountain Tourism, 2021).
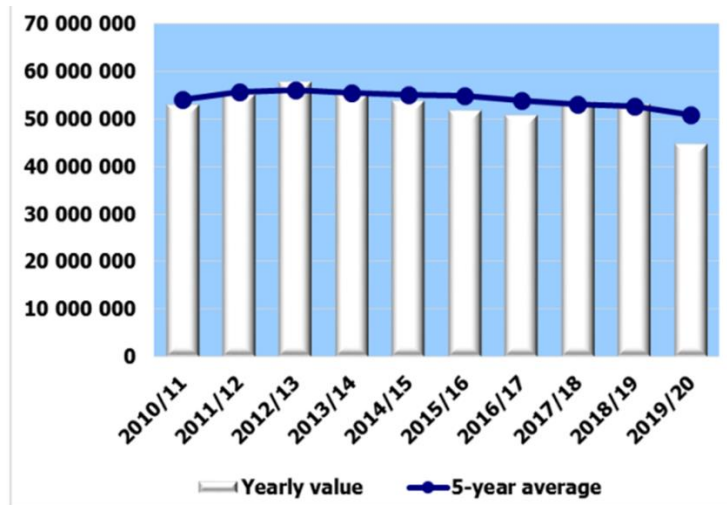
Figure 3. *France, evolution of skier visits (Source: International Report on Snow & Mountain Tourism, 2021)*

In 2018/19, attendance declined again 0.8% on former year due to unfavourable holiday's periods. Resorts of all sizes suffered during season 2019/2020, but those most impacted were the smallest and the biggest.
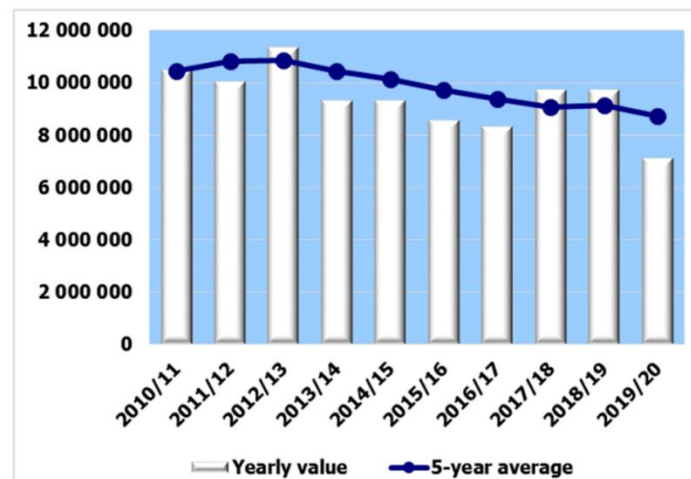
Figure 4. *Germany, evolution of skier visits (Source: International Report on Snow & Mountain Tourism, 2021).*

The long-term trend appeared to be declining on recent years, before stabilizing in 2017/18, before being impacted by Covid-19 in 2019/20 and losing 26.7% in visitation (International Report on Snow and Mountain Tourism, 2021).

Results

For absolutely all countries, 2019-2020 was a big blow to business and statistics. Many have lost, especially the country's smaller townships, their profitability, and many have even closed for good. Countries closed their borders so that people would travel less, have less contact, and that the disease would not catch up with everyone, because not all people would survive the disease without complications. Soon, when each country slowly began to comply with the rules, people began to believe that everything would soon go back to normal, and so did the ski resort countries. German resorts are nervously waiting for the start of the season, which will be the first for almost all in almost two years after the closure of ski resorts last winter. France became the latest of the big four ski countries to announce an easing of work restrictions due to the pandemic. Austria announced that the current measures against Covid-19 would be largely lifted.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the problems in the ski industry faced by European countries, such as France, Germany and Austria, in order to identify the most successful anti-crisis management practices in general and during the Covid-19 pandemic in particular. The survey questionnaire developed for this study consists of two parts. The first part with questions dealt with the impact of Covid-19, the impact of the company's activities and competition between hotels in the ski area. The second part of questions was related to crisis management issues, what kind of crisis plan the companies had, procedures and precautions, as well as what they focused on first. Both groups of questions can be seen below:

- Questions on the impact of the pandemic and the competition of resorts:

1. How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted your company's performance (occupancy, price, turnover, and profitability)? If possible, please provide some general statistics.

2. What impact did it have on your primary guest segment? Were there any changes in the guest demographic or nationalities?

3. How has the Covid-19 situation impacted the work of your hotel staff? Did you reduce number of employees? If so, by what percentage?

4. What impact has the Covid-19 situation had on competition in the ski resort industry on your hotel?

- Questions for hotel crisis management issues what they focused on first:

1. Did you have a crisis management plan in the place before Covid-19 (strategic plan, action plan, etc.) in case of a pandemic?

2. Has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted your approach to crisis management? And, if yes, what has changed?

3. Could you briefly describe the key procedures or precautions implemented at your resort throughout the Covid-19 period, as well as the effect they had? Has it had an impact on your major products and services?

4. As a result of the "new reality" condition, what is your primary focus – digital marketing, innovations, cozy-effective operations management, human resource management, or other?

Data collection lasted for two weeks (beginning of March until mid-March). A questionnaire with specific questions was sent to 60 ski resort hotels in countries such as Germany, Austria and France. Not all hotels answered by mail, as well as not all hotels wanted to answer questions by phone. Eventually, the author managed to negotiate with two hotels. A total of one "4-star" and one "5-star" hotel were available and agreed to answer questions. The student contacted the hotel (A), which has a good rating, indicators and profitability, directly by phone and also contacted the hotel (B), also with a good rating, but with less profitability and poorer indicators. The information that the author can disclose about the participants of the hotels is that in the hotel (A) a person works in this hotel in a front office department, aged 32-38, with 1-3 years of experience in the hotel. In the hotel (B) a person working in this hotel in the position of marketing and sales, aged 39-45, with +3 years of experience in the hotel.

In total, 8 questions were asked and the answers were given in text format. Of course, it would be better if there were more answers (that is, more answers from employees and hotel participants), which would allow for better comparison.

Conclusions

To summarize, the main purpose of this research paper was to explore the general concepts of the ski industry, crisis management in the industry, and how the pandemic has affected the ski industry along with crisis management planning. Additionally the task was to find out if the ski industry is ready for the new post-pandemic reality and to see how this has affected crisis management in the industry. The research showed that the ski resort in each country is developing differently, everyone suffers some losses, and every hotel has experienced a crisis facing Covid-19. Employees providing information always know what they can tell, and what they should disclose. Each hotel struggled to keep its name, its status, and at the same time suffered monetary losses, lost visitors, guests and vendors from different countries. The following conclusions can be made:

- The ski industry, like others, suffered from the state of emergency, closures and quarantine during the pandemic.
- The period after Covid-19 should focus on creating new opportunities and challenges for the organizations, as well as emergency management should be advanced to avoid long recovery.
- The pandemic has shown that the ski industry is sensitive, that is, carries a great loss of visitors, when closing borders with other countries, so it is necessary to develop and anticipate national crisis situations not to lose reputation.

Recommendations

After conducting an analysis on the topic of the ski industry and crisis management, the author identified the following recommendations:

- Ski companies need to think about their crisis management strategies to be ready and ahead of events. Also, ski industries and their companies need to develop some information technology with the direction on marketing moves.
- Develop technologies to monitor infectious diseases in the industry, that is, the body temperature of the visitor. To provide all safety measures, as well as rules in public places. To make sure that visitors visiting the ski area are aware of them and are safe.

- Conduct drills in case of a disease outbreak in an area where there is a risk. Every employee should know and be familiar with information, regarding an outbreak, and provide assistance as needed.
- Conduct crisis management training, i.e., create a plan for staff and once/twice a month have some sessions and follow up.
- For ski industry companies to visit familiarization sites of ski resorts with high attendance and risk of illness so that the guest can be assured that the occupancy of the resort is good and the incidence of illness on vacation is low.

Limitations and contribution for the future research

First of all, the main obstacle to conducting better research is the limitation associated with Covid-19 itself. Another limitation is obtaining of current data, since it is quite difficult to find relevant information, especially abroad regarding the selected for the research three countries. The research is also limited to the number of respondents. Marketing research, on the other hand, could investigate the perception of consumers, the approach of companies to the new reality. It would be also interesting to study individual hotels, hotel groups in different countries to find out the depth of the problems caused by the Covid-19 crisis. In particular, it would be important to study, analyze, compare the work of successful hotels and disseminate their experience.

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COVID-19 CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN FOOD AND BEVERAGE DEPARTMENT ON THE EXAMPLE OF MIKLA BAKERY

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Abstract. The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown have hit the hospitality industry in the past few years. This outbreak has created a condition that forced most businesses to rethink their strategies. The small and medium-sized enterprises had to change their ways to avoid bankruptcy. Yet, some businesses got closed and went bankrupt just a few months after lockdown. On the contrary, some businesses managed to survive during the crisis. The purpose of this paper is to get insight into successful operational practices of one such business, Mikla Bakery in Riga, Latvia. This paper in the beginning gives a whole review about Covid-19 in the aspects of psychology and economics. In addition, the crisis management in hospitality in small and medium enterprises is discussed. Primary data is obtained from an interview with the owner of the enterprise. At the end the author gives conclusions and recommendations for the chosen business organization based on his study and research.

Keywords: Food and beverage sector, Covid-19, Crisis management, Hospitality industry

Introduction

Covid-19 crisis is one of the most serious problems after the World War II that has happened to people and businesses around the world. For the past two years, lots of businesses especially small and medium-sized enterprises have faced lots of problems due to Covid-19 crisis. These issues included the decreasing the number of customers, cash flow and eventually bankruptcy. What is more, one of the most important skills that became noteworthy to people was 'crisis management'. In this situation, the businesses that were familiar with that skill benefited which not only made them survive the crisis but also made them grow and become more successful. An example of such successful business is Mikla Bakery in Riga, Latvia. This bakery has been chosen due to the fact that the author had worked there and had seen the problems Covid-19 brought to them.

In this paper the author will explain the importance of crisis management, study Covid-19 influence on the enterprises of hospitality sphere, analyze an interview with the owner of Mikla bakery and based on the primary and secondary data obtained during the research the author will formulate his conclusions and suggestions to improve the situation.

Aim: to study the Covid-19 impact on food and beverage sector, and examine planning for post crisis period on the example of Mikla bakery, Riga.

Objectives:
- To study literature about crisis management in food and beverage industry;
- To find how Mikla bakery survived during the Covid-19 based on interview and personal research;
- To conclude and provide recommendation for the chosen business organization based on the analysis of the research.

Methodology

This study will focus on Covid-19 impact on small and medium enterprises in food and beverage sector which includes restaurants, bars, bakeries and cafes. The author has used both primary data and secondary data to achieve the aim.

For secondary data, a quantitative data from the literature review has been used. This data gives basic information and an overview to understand the economic and further impact of Covid-19 and related statistics especially in Latvia. In addition to this, the literature review gives information about crisis management, especially in hospitality industry. Furthermore, some explanation will be given about how to use crisis management techniques in small and medium-sized enterprises.The author has used journals and articles from online resources such as www.emerald.com and www.scholar.google.com in literature review.

For primary research the author has arranged a meeting with the owner of Mikla bakery in Riga. This bakery has survived during the pandemic because of their skills in crisis management. The interview, consisting of 14 questions, took about twenty-five minutes and was recorded by the author. One of the most important issues is that the questions were designed following three categories: pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis situation.

Literature Review

A pandemic is described as a new disease that emerges and spreads around the world, and to which most people do not have immunity (WHO, 2010). Pandemics can cause economic damage in multiple ways such as short-term fiscal shocks and longer-term negative impacts to economic

growth (Madhav et al., 2017). An economic shock to one country quickly spreads to others due to financial linkages and increased trade associated with globalization (Lee and McKibbin, 2004).

The revenue losses that food service providers, such as restaurants and cafes, suffered during the lockdown were immense with the industry witnessing monthly losses of, on average, $40 billion in the US, $50 billion in China, $3 billion in UK, between €2 to €4 billion in the major economies in Europe and $4 billion in India (Garnett *et al.*, 2020; Garrett Peel, 2020; Huang, 2020).

Evidence shows that fear of external threats leads to employee silence in organizations (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009), reduces creativity (Deng et al., 2019) and damages employee well-being, performance and organizational citizenship behavior. Therefore, overcoming employee anxiety and fear in the wake of the disastrous outcomes of Covid-19 and promoting employee psychological recovery drew significant attention from hospitality and tourism scholars and practitioners (Zenker and Kock, 2020).

A more appropriate framework to assess the management of the Covid-19 crisis may be a more simplistic one. Periods of crises could be categorized into three straightforward stages: before*, during,* and after. This is in accordance with Heath's (1998) general aims of crisis management for managers and executives, which are (1) to plan and provide for possible crisis events (the *pre-crisis* stage), (2) to reduce or mitigate the impacts of a crisis by improving the response management (the *crisis* stage), and (3) to swiftly and effectively determine the damage caused by the crisis (the *post-crisis* stage). Similarly, Smith and Sipika (1993) conceptualize three aspects of crisis management with a feedback loop to indicate the role of organizational learning in recovery and a return to the status quo; (1) crisis of management (*pre-crisis* period), (2) operational crisis (*crisis* period), and (3) crisis of legitimation (*post-crisis* period). Additionally, 4-stage crisis management models are commonly utilized by organizations and can easily be applied to hospitality businesses; mitigation, preparation, response, recovery (MPRR) and prevention, preparation, response, recovery (PPRR) (Pforr and Hosie, 2008). These models represent a cycle of events that encourage learning. Yet, as noted prior, crises often do not occur in a linear fashion and the preparation, response and recovery are interconnected (Pforr and Hosie, 2008).

Accordingly, this study explores the Covid-19 crisis using a three-phase framework: preparedness, response and future. During restrictions in Latvia, food stores were open and food supply was not disrupted. In time of the Covid-19 pandemic, wider access to healthy food should be a necessity and top priority. Good overall health is essential for the prevention of infectious diseases. Obesity and type 2 diabetes are considered risk factors for more a severe form of Covid-19 disease and mortality (Dietz and Santos-Burgoa, 2020). According to data of the CDPC of Latvia from 2018 34.6% of persons aged 15 to 74 were overweight and 24.1% were obese (CDPC of Latvia, 2018). The Covid-19 pandemic has a significant impact on the economic situation. Restrictions had a direct impact on employment and heightened the risk of food insecurity for millions due to lockdown and border restrictions (Hobbs, 2020). People in Latvia were also affected by job loss, for some only temporary.

Overview of Food and Beverage Sector in Latvia

According to the latest data, the number of enterprises registered in Latvia in 2020 reduced significantly, but the number of liquidated companies did not increase; on the contrary, it considerably dropped. The reasons for these not obvious changes and other economic indicators of Latvian business environment are described in this briefing. The Table 1 characterizes the business environment showing the number of liquidated companies in Latvia. However, the statistics here is not so obvious, and the comparative data in this table requires additional analysis and commentary (China Cee, 2021) (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Number of companies registered and liquidated in Latvia (2019-2021) (Source: China cee, 2021)*

Year	Registered	Liquidated	Proportion. %
2019	10 444	23 857	228.4
2020	8 939	11 687	130.7
2021	1 680	3 442	204.9

In the first year of the pandemic, 2020, the number of liquidated companies significantly decreased, which is explained by the introduction of the simplified liquidation process performed by the Register of Enterprises for high-risk companies, excluding those companies that have not identified the true beneficiaries or do not carry out an economic activity (Statistika, 2021). The majority of enterprises related to this cause of liquidation were terminated in 2019, which is the

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explanation of the high number of liquidated companies this year. However, the next year, 2020, has caused a considerably fewer number of liquidated companies, even though it was the year of pandemic and brought extremely tough conditions for business. The reason for it is the law "On Measures to Prevent and Overcome the State Threat and its Consequences Due to the Spread of Covid-19" promulgated on March 21, 2020, which stipulates, among other things, that as of 1 September, creditors were prohibited from submitting an insolvency application of a legal person (China Cee, 2021).

The table below indicates the food and beverage serving activities from 2018 to 2020. As it shows the number of enterprises has been lowered through years (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Entrepreneurship indicators of enterprises by Economic activity (Source: Official Statistics Portal, 2022)*

		2018	**2019**	**2020**
Food and Beverage Serving Activities	Number of enterprises	3073	3046	3021
	Turnover (thsd euro)	670187	719429	513737
	Production value (thsd euro)	677066	720962	518864
	Personnel costs (thsd euro)	205250	238662	170385
	Number of persons employed	31215	30851	27550

The number of people who have been employed has been reduced as well. In total, the turnover, personnel costs and production value have been increased by 719429000 Euros, 720962000 Euros and 238662000 Euros respectively.

Interview

Mikla bakery is a modern bakery which is located in the heart of Riga. This place offers breads (Ciabatta, Sourdough, Focaccia, Baguette and etc.) and fresh pastries (Croissant, Pain au Chocolat, Cinnamon Buns, Cardamom Buns, Tart, Cakes and etc.). As the author is a baker in this bakery, he thought it could be a very good opportunity to arrange an interview with the owner of the enterprise. In total fifteen to twenty people work in the bakery and the working hours during weekdays are from 7:30 to 20:00. The working hours during weekends are from 9:00 to 20:00.

It is worth mentioning that Mikla at first, served breakfast but in the second wave of Covid-19, when the lockdown happened, they decided to close the kitchen and now they don't serve breakfast anymore. The interview questions and answers can be seen below:

1. As I understood correctly you opened Mikla Bakery during Covid-19 pandemic. Did you know it was going to be challenging?

-Yes. We anticipated that it could be challenging for us. But we had no other way back so we decided to go forward.

2. How much time did you spend for your planning?

-We planned everything a few months prior to Covid-19, but the idea of Mikla had been around for years before Covid-19, then we kept crystallizing and crystallizing it and it became real.

3. How much of these challenges could you predict? (What specifically?)

-Yes, we anticipated some challenges but we did not know what kind of. Because we had no idea what Covid-19 would bring us, what would happen and what actions of the government would be. We just went forward and we decided that whatever happened it would happen. We just hoped for the better and as you can see, everything has worked out.

4. How much of you prediction was correct?

-We anticipated summer opening of the bakery would be easier but in autumn and winter it would be a little bit harder. Also, we knew there had to be some restrictions and other stuff happening as well, but, of course, we did not know what kind of restrictions those would be. Nobody knew as well. We had to change everything so fast because nobody expected that there would be no sitting allowed inside, there would be different rules regarding the number of people allowed in the place and we had to adapt really quickly.

5. When you opened up, how did Mikla survive since the pandemic? What did you do?

-The first thing that helped us to get through everything was the team. Because without the team we could do nothing as everybody understood that that was the first time something like Covid-

19 happened. To do that everybody stayed together and they all helped each other in that difficult time.

The second thing was that we adapted quickly since everything was changing every week and we had to make important decisions every week. These decisions were about what to do and how to do it, what to sell and what not to sell. For instance, the kitchen had to be closed and we had to decide what to do with it. Eventually we quickly decided to have take-away food. We had to change and adapt so fast and we were forced to make important decisions very quickly. Those are the aspects that helped us, making fast decisions and getting the team to be more like a family.

6. What was the hardest decision you made for Mikla during the pandemic?

-The hardest part was being in the flow of everything that was happening. Not earning as much money as we hoped and staying alive so that we could pay the bills. The second part was to keep the team together as long as we could. Also, we tried out best not to fire people. Keeping the team as much as possible to give everyone a job, to let them work.

7. Do you have any plans for post-crisis? And if you do, what are they?

-Of course. We have a lot of post-Covid-19 plans and we have ideas. Hopefully we will realize some of them at least. But unfortunately, I cannot tell you. You will see sooner or later.

8. Looking at the changes in society and environment, have any new ideas come to your mind? And do you plan to pursue them after the crisis?

-Yeah, of course, we figured that we have to work with take away services like the Wolt, for example. It was a long discussion but in the end we decided to work with the delivery system in the future. As a famous Latvian writer says "the person who accepts the change, is stronger". The second change was that we decided to use different products. Since we are not a restaurant, we can adapt easily, we are not truly a breakfast place and we are not a coffee place as well, this means that our place is unique and this helps us to make new ideas all the time. Even if there was not Covid-19, we could have made these changes but with the pandemic all of the decisions happened faster. So, in this case Covid-19 pandemic helped us a lot.

9. Have you felt you grew stronger and more professional because of all the challenges?

-Yeah, of course, we feel stronger dealing with all the unimaginable issues that we had to do. We could maintain the core team and to be honest we did a lot better than we expected. In addition, the issues that were challenges before are not as hard as before and now they seem like daily routine. Nowadays we look at them in a different way. We are more ready for what will happen in the future.

10. Was Covid-19 pandemic effective in your sales since you mostly sell in take-away?

-It is so hard to answer this question. Before the Covid-19 or at least in the start of it, there were not so many restrictions, so the sales were booming and it was very nice. After that, there was time that we only had take-away. The amount of money we got by take away before and after Covid-19 was the same. I should mention that lots of people purchased products from us just to support us during the pandemic, so we would not experience bankruptcy since many places got closed down. Gladly we maintained our operation and we didn't go bankrupt just because people came and bought breads and everything from us; also we tried our best not to lower the quality of our products. We are so glad that we had the support of our loyal customers and that helped us a lot. This was a positive side of the pandemic for us.

11. In what way was Covid-19 useful for your business as well?

-Surprisingly, but Covid-19 had some positive impact as well. It made our team more cooperative. Everybody got closer. Lots of people had to self-isolate themselves and we had the option to interact with each other and due to that, our team became stronger. Like the English saying "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger". It was hard but we did it anyway and it led to personal growth for everybody.

12. Do you think if another crisis happens you would be more prepared?

-Yes, of course. Let's hope it won't happen but I am sure if it happens, we are more prepared. Now we understand how the government operates, what to expect and what not to expect from them. We will be prepared next time; we will make rational decisions because there were times that we made hasty decisions which we learned not to do!

13. Did you receive any help from the government?

-Yeah, with the first wave of Covid-19 we received financial help that made us stay afloat. But during the second wave this winter we did not receive anything. But we are thankful to the government for the money they allocated for the salaries to our personnel.

Analysis

To have a better analysis, it is better to check out the key information the author has gathered through the interview. First of all, while a crisis is on the business owners might predict the challenges but they could not predict more than eighty percent of it. The thing that comes in handy in these situations is to be adaptable to all conditions and rules. As Mikla's owner mentioned, these challenges and crisis made them more skillful and maybe even more prepared for the next crisis.

Secondly, the important issue in crisis is not earning money and making profit of the situation, but surviving as such. A prepared and strong team that works hard is bond together like a family and the support they give to each other is more important. Without this family, surviving and moving on would not be possible. As it was mentioned, fast decisions and adaptability is important especially in food and beverage industry. In addition, working with delivery services is another good aspect. It might not be pleasant to work with them at first but to be honest if these services were not around, even more restaurants and cafés would get shut down. At last, it should be mentioned that while crisis is happening, we should not wait for others' help, neither from human nor from government. It would be best to adapt fast and make better and faster decisions.

Conclusions

To conclude, the following should be noted. The aim of this research was to study about crisis management of food and beverage industry and to find out how pandemic affected it. Specifically, the crisis management in pandemic was investigated in small bakery in the heart of Riga, Latvia.

This study has shown that the food and beverage and hospitality industry have suffered the most during Covid-19. Based on the data analysis one can say that the revenue in many enterprises

dropped dramatically and a large number of businesses went bankrupt. However, some of the companies could survive and manage the crisis.

The author has done research to find out how to be successful during Covid-19. It has become clear that crisis management plays a key role in staying alive through hard times. It should be mentioned that fast adaptability and having a great team is crucial. In addition, all these crisis challenges made the business owners and entrepreneurs more prepared for future challenges and crisis. Covid-19 pandemic brought out the creativity and lots of new ideas in people which is a positive side. Most successful business owners have decided to use the new ideas in their post crisis plans.

Recommendations

Given the fact that the author was working as a baker in Mikla bakery, he had the chance to see everything from within. This together with the interview with the owner of Mikla bakery helped him to have a few recommendations and critical comments:

- The first thing Mikla bakery could do during Covid-19, was to use social media which are very effective in marketing especially while crisis was happening. When the author checked out their Instagram page, he noticed a few things which included lack of information, lack of customers and even the absence of bakery's activity in social media. This made the author come with a suggestion for the owners of the bakery. He suggested that at least they could repost their customers' stories about the bakery. That could encourage people to purchase Mikla's products and share them with their friends on social media.
- The second recommendation is using influencers and bloggers in Latvia. The bakery could invite them or send pastries and coffee for them which would have an impact on the growth of the customers.
- The third recommendation is controlling the waste of the bakery especially on the days products would not sell out. The suggestion is to come up with a system of discounting of some products after a specific hour.
- Finally, the last recommendation for the bakery is to use loyalty programs to motivate their loyal customers. This would make the customers purchase more products and receive more discounts or coupons for free pastries and bread.

Limitations and Contribution for the Future Research

At first, the main difficulty for writing and gathering information was the restrictions due to Covid-19. So, information was mostly obtained from two sources: interview and Internet. To do research about crisis management the author had to arrange an interview with non-English speaker which was another challenge and represented some limitations for author.

This research article has its own contribution to the future, showing how the food and beverage industry is recovering after two difficult years of the pandemic.

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OVERCOMING COVID-19 CRISIS IN THE HOTEL SECTOR IN UK

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Abstract. The UK has one of the most dynamic and diverse hospitality sectors in the world. However, for a sector that exists to bring people together, the impact of the Covid-19 has been of such magnitude that despite the unprecedented government support throughout the pandemic, and in response to the crisis, hospitality businesses especially the hotel sector struggled to break even. As restrictions imposed to prevent and limit the spread of the virus included travel bans, it caused some hotels to consider closing down temporarily, or even forever. Such a deep crisis in the UK, has generated economic and social crisis for hotels, with consequences that are still difficult to measure. This study is based on a survey, which was responded by 61 individuals, their responses being calculated in percentages. The respondents were both males and females, who had made use of the services of hotels during the Covid-19 pandemic. The responses from the survey were content analyzed, and resulted in 14 sub-themes and 5 major themes that discussed the hotel industry within the UK, how it was impacted by the Covid-19 crisis, and what crisis management practices were put in place in order to overcome it.

Keywords: Covid-19, UK, hotel sector, crisis management practices

Introduction

A crisis is defined as a sudden and unplanned event that results in the instability of an organization (Indeed.com, 2022). This can be caused by internal or external factors and, in order to limit the negative impacts it may have on the company, it is important to predict these factors and plan on how to overcome them when they arise through a crisis management plan. Covid-19 crisis is considered as one of the most influential and unprecedented events for firms, investors, policy makers and many other stakeholders. Preventive measures to fight the spread of the virus were taken such as business closure, physical distancing, and travel restrictions which inadvertently affected the performance and stability of the hospitality industry which forced stakeholders and hoteliers to rapidly change and adapt their crisis management plan.

The Covid-19 pandemic, being an unprecedented event, pushed stakeholders and company owners to rally up to strategize and implement functional crisis management practices which helped curb the impact of the Covid-19 crisis with the point of focus here being the Hilton Deansgate Hotel.

Literature Review

A crisis typically demonstrates the characteristics of suddenness, uncertainty and time compression. Crises management has its roots in strategic planning incorporating contingencies for unexpected events (Khaled&Tevhide, 2018). Different types of crises include organizational crisis, technological crisis, financial crisis, natural crisis and human made crisis. A good way to protect the organization from a crisis situation, is by preparing before it occurs, which is done through the help of models and theories.

Crisis management theories represent a plan to resolve any sudden events that cause major disturbances in the organization, and they include the Burnett's crisis model, Fink's crisis model, and the Mitroff's crisis model (Zamoum&Gorpe, 2017).

Some of the most well-known crisis management theories include stakeholder crises management theory, contingency crises management theory, situational crisis management theory, and attribution crisis management theory (Andy, 2020).

By viewing events through a model, managers are able to gain context and better apply best practices. Crises management is a popular topic within the hospitality sectors. When crisis situations such as Covid-19 happen, they force hospitality companies to change their operating strategies. The immediate-term impacts are a decrease in tourists, occupancy levels and a fall in revenue per available room (RevPar).

The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted the hospitality industry. Hotel occupancy rates have been increasing to nearly 50% occupancy compared to an average of 20% in the height of the crisis (De Sausmarez, 2007). The magnitude of this crisis and its devastating effects on operations, employees, and customers are unrivaled. Businesses within the hospitality industry applied and followed safety measures such as regularly sanitizing, providing hand sanitizer, gloves and masks. Approximately 66% business owners have reduced the number of staff to diminish the impact on their regular operational activities (Statista, 2021).

Border closures, travel restrictions, mandatory quarantine, infection, and fear of disease have significantly affected global supply chains. The hotel market in the UK is segmented across upper, mid, and lower scales. Luxury segments are most prominent in London, where high

tourist traffic and economic wealth provide a greater market for deluxe and first-class hotels. Budget-minded travelers increasingly turn to peer-to-peer platforms such as Airbnb for cheaper rates. Hotels have to take into consideration the use of natural ventilation in order to increase dilution of indoor air by outdoor air.

Rigorous standards for installation and maintenance of ventilation systems are essential. Staff must be trained in the use the full PPE kit and procedures for putting on, removing and disposing of the PPE. The prevalence of Covid-19 has significantly resulted in the decline of demands from the consumer's affinity to stay in hotels across the UK. Furthermore, the prevalence of government restrictions across the country has also significantly impacted the businesses and hotels in the hotel industry of the UK as a result. The Covid-19 crises has led to decrease in GDP, and therefore, in national income (Christie&Co, 2020).

Hotel workers are faced with a dilemma of fear of infection at work, and losing money while not working. As the hotel industry is much more dependent on crowd gathering, they have been more affected. The hotel industry responded in a variety of ways to Covid-19. New legal considerations have arisen and continue to emerge such as that which has to do with furloughing and applying for government assistance.

Hilton Deansgate hotel is housed within the 47-storeymixed-use skyscraper known as the Betham Tower. The four-star hotel occupies floors from 1 to 22 with its 279 contemporary bedrooms. The 23rd floor has a four-meter cantilevered overhang with two glass windows in its floor, overlooking the ground from the sky bar (Hilton.com, 2020). Hilton Deansgate hotel pledged commitment to safety, and followed all latest advice and recommendations from the Center for Disease Control (C.D.C), Wealth Health Organization (W.H.O), and local authorities within the UK. A corporate crisis response team was put in place with a strong support, along with a team of experts.

Methodology

For this work, the author used primary and secondary research methods. The primary quantitative research method was based on a survey. The survey, made to understand crisis practices by hotels in the UK, what they did, and how these practices influenced the preferences and attitudes of the hotel guests, consisted of 14 questions, and 61 respondents, who

have made use of the services of hotels during the Covid-19 crisis responded to the questions. They had the opportunity to choose from the proposed questions, and in some cases, wrote a more detailed reply. This information was collected online with the help of visidati.lv, and results showed that the crisis management practices are as important to the customers as they are to the company, and what is more, these customers have positive feedback on how well they felt the hotels managed the Covid-19 crisis. The secondary research method is the literature review which includes the analysis of literature, books, brochures, reports, scientific and research articles.

Results

A survey was conducted to analyze the impact of the crisis management practices used by the hotels in the UK on the guests. 61 respondents both male and female responded to the questions. The information was collected online with the help of visidati.lv which is a survey tool used to create surveys quickly and easily.

Crisis management practices are as important to the customers as they are to the company. When asked what crisis management practice would be the most effective for attracting them to a hotel, results showed that 48.7% of respondents picked information on super sanitation, 34.3% chose reduced prices, 5.7% chose extra services, 7.6% picked higher level rooms for regular price, 1.9% chose free breakfast, 1% picked free extra services, 1.9% preferred discounts and 1.9% chose second person for free (see Fig. 1).

5. Which hotel crisis management practice would be the most effective for attracting you to a hotel? (many answers possible)

|		
Reduced prices	36	34.3%
Information on super sanitation	48	45.7%
Extra services	6	5.7%
Higher level rooms for regular price	8	7.6%
Free breakfast	2	1.9%
Free dinner	0	0%
Free extra services: spa, fitness	1	1%
Discount for next stay	2	1.9%
Second person for free	2	1.9%
Other	0	0%
Total answers	105	

Figure 1. *Clients' preferred crisis management practices for hotel (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

The crisis management practices used by the hotel had impacts on the guest's attitude to lodge at hotels. 47.5% of respondents thought the hotels compensated the negative impact of Covid-19 by means of good and special offers, 49.2% thought hotels provided a safe feeling for lodging and 3.3% felt the hotels did not do enough to encourage the stay of clients (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2. *Influence of hotel practices during Covid-19 on customer's attitude (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

Customers liked the use of robots in hotels, when asked how they evaluate the use of robots in hotels instead of people during Covid-19, 70.5% said that they liked the use of robots, while 29.5% did not like the use of robots in hotels (see Fig. 3).
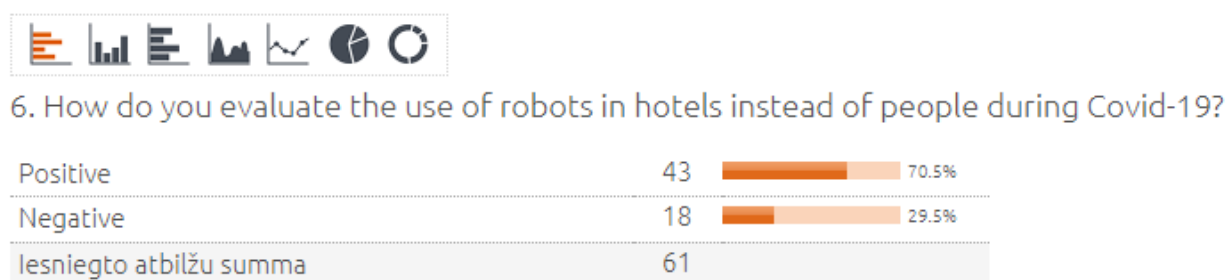
Figure 3. *Customers' opinion about the use of robots in hotels during Covid-19 crisis (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

Conclusion

Covid-19 crisis is said to be the largest pandemic that has affected the world in the last hundred years, and has caused devastating effects both on the world and on individual nations, especially within the hospitality field. These negative effects have been due to the drastic restrictions on

mobility that were initially decreed by the government of most countries which affected a large part of the hospitality industry, even worse, the hotel sector, and the reduction in disposable income of families which once more, directly and indirectly affected tourists spending, as such affecting yet again the hotel sector.

The hotel industry within the UK have focused on building trust with guests, strengthen their brand and modifying their operations to fit the new normal through the use of crisis management practices such as: increasing the process of sanitation, cutting cost by letting go of some employees, making use of job retention schemes developed by the government in order to help this said employees. There was a drop in pricing, which has been efficient in this period, and will continue to be in the near future when the crisis has completely subsided.

Crisis management practices used by hotels such as the Hilton Deansgate Hotel included: pledged commitment to safety which was done by putting a crisis response team of experts in place that reviewed existing health and safety processes and then developed safety protocols, offers for free cancellation, and cutting costs. This was done by no longer making furlough payments to employees under the terms of the government's job retention scheme.

The Covid-19 crisis has been a thorn in the flesh of hotel business owners especially in the UK. Nevertheless, they have made use of good innovative crisis management practices which have helped them to overcome the Covid-19 crisis. In general, hotel businesses have used this opportunity to innovate and strategize more on the way forward.

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THE POST REALITIES OF THE HOSPITALITY BUSINESS IN UKRAINE AFTER THE CRISIS OF 2022

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Abstract. This article will analyze the impact of the Crisis 2022 in Ukraine on the hospitality sector and tourism in general. The article consists of three parts. The first part is an explanation of what crisis and crisis management are, how crisis management is used in the hospitality sector, as well as an explanation of the Crisis in Ukraine and how it affects tourism and the hospitality sector. The second part of the research paper presents three scenarios (optimistic, less optimistic and pessimistic) of the crisis and how these scenarios will affect the hospitality sector. The third part of the paper presents the results of the survey which helped to determine how wrong hotel strategies during the crisis of 2022 in Ukraine might affect the choice of a potential guest in the future.

Key words: crisis management, Ukraine, hospitality business, tourism

Introduction

Humanitarian crisis is an event that threatens the health, security or well-being of a large group of people. Humanitarian crises can be caused by war, natural disasters, famine and outbreaks of disease. Children and families are often severely affected by humanitarian crises and may be affected long after the event has occurred (Posey, 2020).

Exactly such crisis is now taking place in Ukraine. The author decided to do a research on how exactly it affects the hospitality industry and what post-reality will be after the crisis in Ukraine in 2022. The author is confident that this research will help to understand what awaits the industry after the crisis and how the hotel management crisis strategy in Ukraine can influence the choice of potential guests. First, the author is going to analyze how 2022 crisis in Ukraine will affect hospitality industry, then the literature will be reviewed about crisis management and definition of crisis will be given. Also with help of literature the author wants to make comparison of similar crises in other countries and compare what post realities for hospitality business can be expected based on statistical data and real development of hospitality environment after the crisis. Also a survey for this study has been conducted among people from Ukraine and European countries to analyze future loyalty of potential guests to some hotels with specific crisis strategies.

Thus, the article aims to analyze and understand how the hospitality business will recover and develop in Ukraine after the 2022.

Methodology

The main goal of this research is to find out what post reality awaits the hospitality sector in Ukraine after the crisis of 2022, how exactly the industry will respond to the crisis and what the consequences will be. Also, the goal of the work is to develop three different scenarios for the post-realities of hospitality business in Ukraine. To do this, the author has used many different sources to develop a literature review.

The author referred to secondary and primary sources. For a secondary data collection, the author used the official statistics databases, such as https://www.statista.com and https://www.unwto.org. The author also used 27 sources of literature.

For the primary research, the author conducted a survey in which 10 respondents from Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Norway and Italy participated. The survey consisted of two parts; the first part contained questions about the general information of people (age, gender and country of origin), while for the second part of the survey, the author prepared 7 questions to analyze how hotel strategies in crisis of 2022 in Ukraine would affect the post realities of these hotels and the impact of the future project "Black List" of the Government of Ukraine on the hospitality industry. The collection of information was during two weeks from 14.04.2022 to 28.04.2022.

Literature review

There is no single definition of crisis, since in every field and profession the term has a different meaning. For example, in psychology the concept of crisis is primarily a disruption of internal equilibrium (mental, emotional) or homeostasis of a person resulting from environmental influences (Myagkikh and Larina, 2011).

In general, a crisis (Dr. Greek κρίσις - decision; turning point) is a coup, a time of transition, a turning point, a condition in which the existing means of achieving goals become inadequate, resulting in unpredictable situations (Gluschenko, 2022). There are also different types of crises in an organization:

- Financial crisis.

- Staffing crisis

- Organizational Crisis

- Natural crisis

- Anger Crisis.

- Confrontation Crisis

- Man-made disasters (Bhasin&Nisa, 2019).

The author also wants to discuss the term "humanitarian crisis", which is an event or events that threatens the health, security or well-being of a large group of people (What Is a Humanitarian Crisis, 2013). Humanitarian crises can be caused by war, natural disasters, famine and outbreaks of disease. Children and families are often severely affected by humanitarian crises and may be affected long after the event has occurred. Humanitarian crises have devastating physical, psychological and social consequences for children. Children are particularly vulnerable after losing their homes or families or having to flee a conflict.

Crisis management is the application of strategies to help an organization deal with a sudden and significant negative event. A crisis may arise from an unpredictable event or as an unintended consequence of an event that was seen as a potential risk. In either case, crises almost always require quick decisions to limit the damage to the organization.

The nature of the potential damage depends on the nature of the crisis. However, in most cases a crisis may affect the health or safety, the organization's finances, the organization's reputation or some combination of all these. A destructive fire can be a crisis that puts the organization's finances at risk. However, if a fire occurs during working hours, it may also jeopardy the health and safety of employees as they may be at risk (Posey, 2020). Crisis management is a process designed to prevent or reduce the damage that a crisis can cause to an organization and its stakeholders. As a process, crisis management is not just one thing. Crisis management can be divided into three phases: (1) pre-crisis, (2) crisis response and (3) post-crisis. The pre-crisis phase is concerned with prevention and preparation. The crisis response phase is when management must actually respond to the crisis. The author would like to stress the importance of a crisis manager for a hospitality business, as crises can have a major impact on the livelihood

of such a business and any crisis can completely destroy an organization, so having an anti-crisis plan and having a crisis management in place is very important.

There has been a plethora of international crisis demonstrating how fragile the business environment can be. The most cited crises have been caused by nature (e.g. tsunami, hurricanes, bushfires, floods or disease) or by man (e.g. terrorism and the current economic crisis). In this environment, the hotel manager's duties should also involve planning and preparing for unforeseen events; running 'what if' scenarios, designing action plans for all departments, allocating individual responsibilities; building back-up capacity and training their staff to respond in an appropriate manner to security concerns.

Crisis management is a popular topic in the tourism and hospitality industry. Many previous studies have highlighted the important link between crisis and tourism. For example, De Sausmarez (2007) argued that the damage caused by the crisis threatens not only the national economy, but also the livelihoods of many tourist destinations. Crisis management strategies are, therefore, worth keeping an eye on in order to minimize the negative effects. Some crises are man-made, such as economic crisis and terrorism. Due to the high uncertainty of the economic environment economic crises discourage travel, and, thus, reduce tourism demand and loss of skilled workers (Okumus& Karamustafa, 2005).

The author wants to provide three possible options for the post 2022 crisis reality of the hospitality business in Ukraine. As development and restoration of hospitality business are directly dependent on events in Ukraine, how the crisis will end and so on, as no one can know at the moment how the crisis will end and what will happen next, the author offers for consideration three scenarios (optimistic, less optimistic, pessimistic) of hospitality business depending on the development of the situation in Ukraine.

Optimistic Scenario

The optimistic scenario for hospitality business in Ukraine after the crisis in 2022 is that hostilities in Ukraine will be completely stopped and the conflict will end soon, a peace treaty with security guarantees for Ukraine will be signed. This is the most optimistic scenario for the restoration of hospitality business in Ukraine, since when the conflict ends, the country will be able to begin to restore the economy, cities and gradually restore tourism in the country. As an

example, looking at the first war in Lebanon (1975-1990), it is possible to see how quickly tourism in the country has recovered and on this example make a forecast for a hospitality environment in Ukraine. Tourism was one of the most important sources of income to the country's economy. Before the war Lebanon was well known worldwide as a business and financial center, where tourists and businessmen from around the globe could enjoy the tourist attractions or conduct business in a relatively peaceful and conducive atmosphere. Number of tourists visited Lebanon before and after the civil war can be seen the graph below (see Fig. 1).
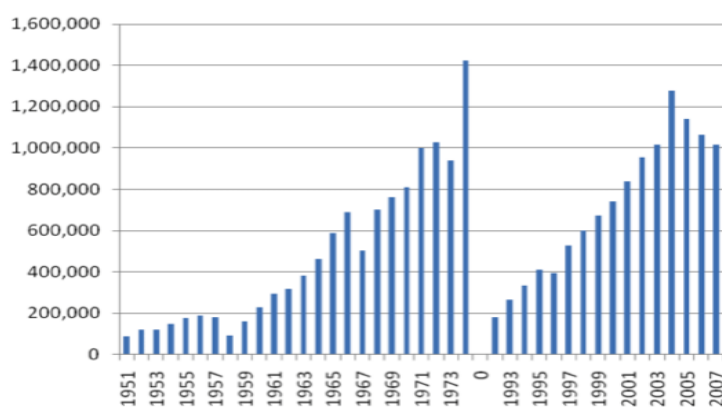
Figure 1. *Number of tourists visited Lebanon before and after the civil war.*
*(Source: Ministry of Tourism- Lebanon, 2011a)*

Seeing the statistics from Lebanon the author can conclude that during the war and conflict tourism and hospitality business practically did not function. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that until the end of the crisis in Ukraine, tourism and hospitality sphere absolutely will not be able to function normally. For example, the number of tourists who entered Ukraine in 2021, increased by 26.3% compared to 2020, and amounted to almost 4.3 million people. Here it is necessary to consider the fact that the hospitality sector was greatly influenced by Covid-19 and tourism in the country was greatly reduced. That is why, looking at the example of Lebanon, the author concludes that immediately after the war, number of tourists visiting the country will fall several times compared to what it was before the 2022 crisis.

Analyzing statistics, it is also possible to see that it may take at least 5 years to restore the hospitality environment and tourism in general after the 2022 crisis in Ukraine in an optimistic scenario.The DART announced the creation of memory routes: some of the objects destroyed by

the invaders will be saved for history to show what crimes the aggressor country committed in Ukraine. Obviously, in the first years after the end of the war, the influx of tourism and the restoration of hospitality business will be at a low level, but every year the sphere will develop, and with the right strategies, the government will fully return the country to the level of pre-war time, and in 10 years, the level of hospitality business in Ukraine can demonstrate signs of grow.

Less Optimistic Scenario

A less optimistic scenario for the development of the 2022 crisis in Ukraine is that there will be no physical armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine, but the conflict will be frozen, and from time to time shelling and bombing cities will continue, i.e. there will be no active actions on the territory of Ukraine, but the conflict will not be over as well. For example, the Arab-Israeli war, that has lasted for more than 60 years in between Arab countries (Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Iraq and other Arab countries) and the Jewish state of Israel. Active conflicts from time to time occur between Israel and Arab countries, for example, in the spring of 2018, a series of mass anti-Israeli protests of Palestinians took place on the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel, organized by the Hamas movement. And a less optimistic scenario for Ukraine after the crisis of 2022 is that there will be no active military actions in the actual territory of the country, but there will remain risks of renewed fighting and renewal of the offensive on Ukraine; rocket attacks on cities are also possible, since a peace treaty will not be signed, and the conflict will turn into a frozen headlight, like in Israel. Most often such conflicts last for a long time. Below is a graph showing the number of tourists who visited Israel over the past years (see Fig.2).
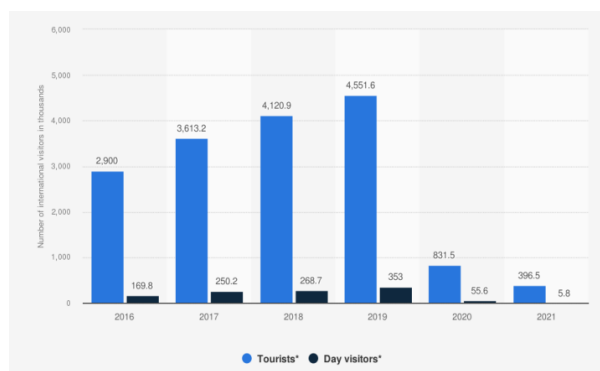
Figure 2. *International visitors in Israel from 2016 to 2021 (in 1,000s). (Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2022)*

Looking at the graph the author can presume that in 2020 a sharp reduction in tourism was caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, but the decline continued also in 2021, which can be associated with the events that took place on May 10, 2021. At that time, mass shelling of Israel from the Gaza Strip began, and at least 150 missiles were fired.The author wants to emphasize that despite the open military conflict that has lasted for more than 60 years in Israel, this country remains a very popular destination among tourists. According to Reuters (2022), tourism revenues in 2019 amounted to a record amount of 22 billion shekels (about 6.6 billion dollars). Apparently, Israel had the right marketing strategies to attract tourism to the country, and those strategies worked.

For Ukraine, such a positive scenario as in Israel is also possible if the Ukrainian government develops the right strategies for attracting tourists to the country. Just for such success as in Israel, Ukraine needs good air defense, similar to "iron dome" in Israel. Israel in general has a reputation of a safe for the tourists' country. Ukraine will also need to earn such a reputation so that tourists would not be afraid for their lives. Specially protected rooms in hotels can also be a solution. For example, as in Israel, a protected room (MAMAD) having a hermetically sealed window and reinforced walls reliably protects against rocket attacks. Such practices can also be used by hotels in Ukraine, and the advantage will also be the presence of a bunker in the hotel. This will allow the guest to feel safe and secure in the hotel.

Pessimistic Scenario

The pessimistic scenario for the development and resumption of hospitality business in Ukraine is that if partially the territory of Ukraine will be occupied, or hostilities are carried out in part of the territories of Ukraine, missile attacks on cities, for example, in the east or south of Ukraine, continue, etc. In this scenario tourism and the hotel industry practically cease to develop, since the country's economy will have to be transferred to military. There will be a very small flow of tourists to the country and the most important problem for the development of tourism in the country will be closed airspace, which means that the sky will be closed for civilian aircraft in order to keep people safe. To compare the Civil War in Syria can be taken.

The Syrian conflict has been going on for ten years – almost as long as the First World War and the Second World War combined. The conflict in Syria is actually frozen, and since March 2020

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there have been almost no hostilities. But as long as there is no political settlement, the war cannot be considered over. Statistical data on the number of tourists in Syria from 2008 to 2019 (see Fig. 3) show that before the conflict, Syria had fairly high tourism rates in the country, and a huge decline began after the start of hostilities, but since 2016, an increase in the number of tourists in the country can be observed. This can be due to the fact that already in 2016, there were peaceful cities in which territories there were no hostilities, and every year there were more of such cities, which in general reflected in positive dynamics in the influx of tourists.
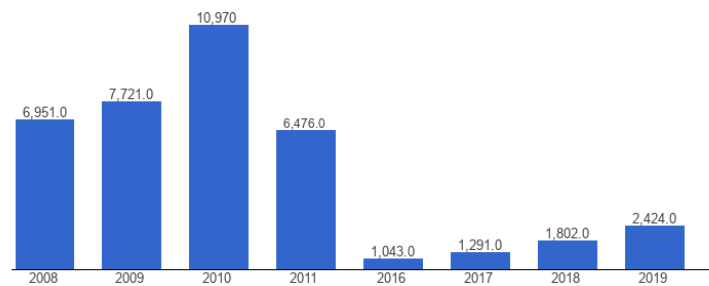
Figure 3. *Syria: Tourist arrivals, 1995 – 2019 (Sourse: The Global Economy, 2021)*

Therefore, the author can conclude that in a pessimistic scenario development of the hospitality sphere in Ukraine will practically stop, new hotels and restaurants will not open, those that already exist will be closed, since there will be many more hotels than tourists themselves.

Primary Data Collection

For the study, the author has conducted a survey with an aim to assess the future selection of potential guests of hotels, hostels and other housing in Ukraine after the 2022 crisis. Survey has been conducted to analyze the future attitude of potential guests to hotels that had different strategies for doing business in Ukraine during the 2022 crisis. 10 people participated in the survey from Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Norway and Italy. Survey has been conducted using Email and social networks.

The purpose of the survey: in April 2022, the Ukrainian government announced that after the end of the war, so-called "Blacklist" would be created for hotels and other housing that inflated prices for refugees from hot spots. The number of internal refugees at the UN is estimated at 7.7 million in March 2022. Since the safest regions were western Ukraine (Lviv, Transcarpathian region), as

of early March in 2022, there was practically no free housing left in these regions. And some hotels, hostels, etc. began to greatly inflate prices for refugees. Just as an example, the author can cite a hotel in the Carpathians called "Marion SPA" and in early March 2022 the price per night was approximately $400.

Therefore, the author conducted a survey to understand with its help what the future will be for these hotels after the 2022 crisis in Ukraine, whether potential guests will look at the "Blacklist" when choosing accommodation and in general how crucial for potential guests will be the fact that hotels raised prices and how exactly this will affect the future work of this housing. The author conducted a survey for two groups in order to assess the impact of the "Blacklist" for both Ukrainians and people from European countries. The first question was about the country of origin; the results showed that most participants were from Ukraine (see Fig.4).
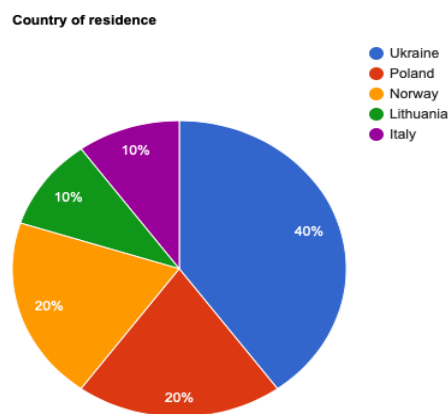
Figure 4. *Percentage of all participants by country of residence (Source: made by author, 2022)*

The second question was about the age of the survey participants; the author concludes that most of the participants are between 25 and 35 years old (see Fig.5).
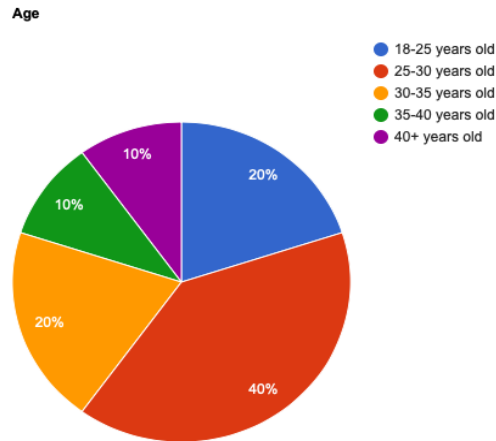
Figure 5. *Percentage of all participants by age (Source: made by author, 2022)*

And the final question from the first part is regarding gender. According to the results, most of the participants are women (see Fig. 6).
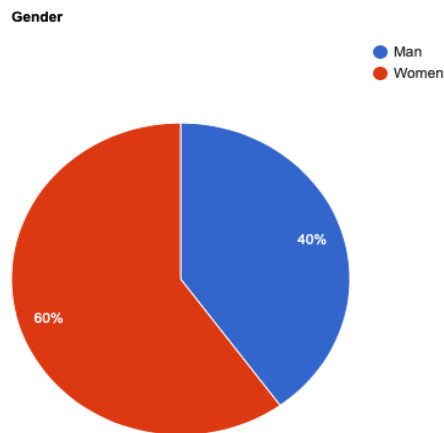
Figure 6. *Percentage of all participants by gender (Source: made by author, 2022)*

In the second part of the survey the following questions have been asked:

Question № 1. Do you know about the Crisis 2022 in Ukraine?

100% of respondents know about Crisis 2022 in Ukraine.

Question № 2. Are you planning to travel to Ukraine when the Crisis 2022 ends?

70% of respondents said yes. Thus, the author can conclude that the majority of participants have a desire to visit Ukraine after the Crisis of 2022 (see Fig. 7).
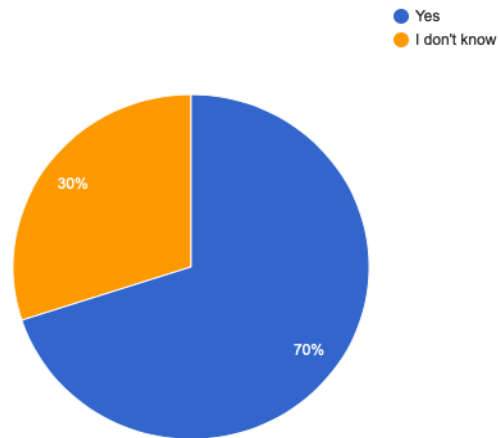
Figure 7. *Question № 2. Are you planning to travel to Ukraine when the Crisis 2022 ends? (Source: made by author, 2022)*

Question № 3. How do you feel about hotels that overestimated prices for accommodation during the Crisis 2022 in Ukraine?

The vast majority of respondents (80%) expressed negative attitude (see Fig. 8). Obviously, those hotels that have increased prices, receive condemnation and misunderstanding from their potential guests that can directly affect the loyalty of guests. What is more, reputation of the hotels will suffer as well. Also, the author noted that mostly these were the citizens of Ukraine who were concerned about such acts of hotels and expressed misunderstanding.
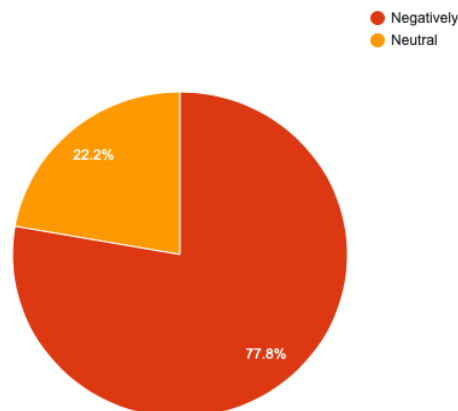
Figure 8. *Question № 3. How do you feel about hotels that overestimated prices for accommodation during the Crisis 2022 in Ukraine? (Source: made by author, 2022)*

Question № 4. Do you know about the future "Black list" project that the government is developing for people accommodation facilities?

100% of the participants answered positively. Further, the author explained the participants the details of the future project "Blacklist".

Question № 5. Will you use the "Blacklist" app or website if you want to visit or travel Ukraine?

60% of respondents will use app, 30% of replied that they do not know whether they will use the app, and 10% of participants replied that they will not use the app (see Fig. 9). Thus, the author can conclude that in the future this application will be quite popular and in demand.
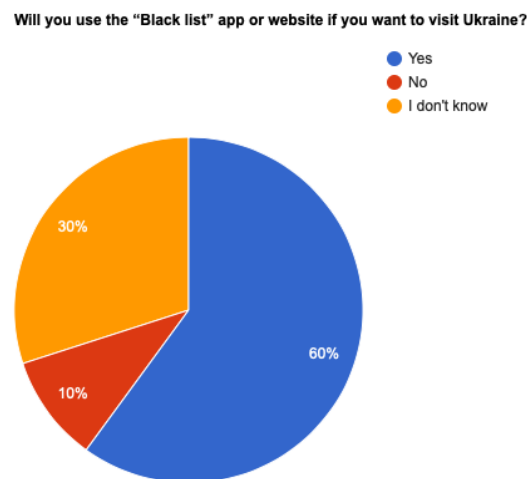
Figure 9. *Question № 5. Will you use the "Black list" app or website if you want to visit or travel Ukraine? (Source: made by author, 2022)*

Question № 6. Will the fact, that the hotel will be on the "Black List" because it overestimated the prices, be important for you when choosing a hotel in Ukraine?

70% of participants consider it important, 20% consider it not important when choosing a hotel, and 10% don't know (see Fig.10). For those hotels that are on this list, it means, that still for most people, it seems important that fact, that the hotel increased prices and this can affect the future occupancy rate of the hotel, it is likely that the money that such hotels earned during the Crisis 2022 in Ukraine will be much less than what they will lose, when potential guests will choose another hotel due to the fact that the hotel is blacklisted. Such hotel strategy in Crisis

2022 in Ukraine changes the choice of a potential guest towards a competitor who has reduced or at least left the same price for refugees from hot spots in Ukraine.
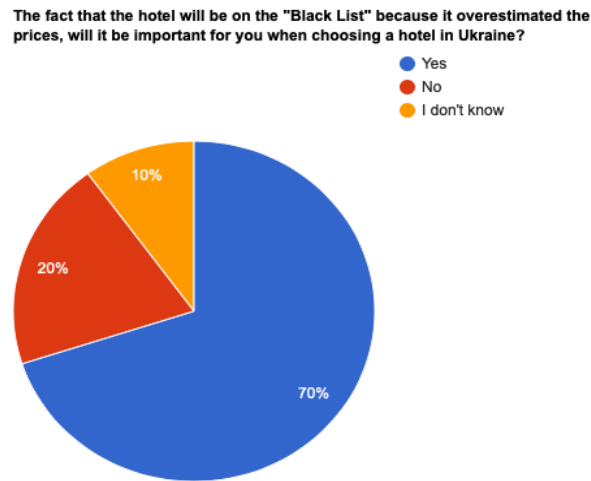
Figure 10. *Question № 6.Will the fact that the hotel will be on the "Black List" because it overestimated the prices, be important for you when choosing a hotel in Ukraine? (Source: made by author, 2022)*

Question № 7 If you choose a hotel in Ukraine, will you choose the one that is on the "Black List"?

60% will not choose a hotel if it is on the "Blacklist", 20% percent can choose such a hotel and another 20% do not know whether they will choose such a hotel or not (see Fig. 11).
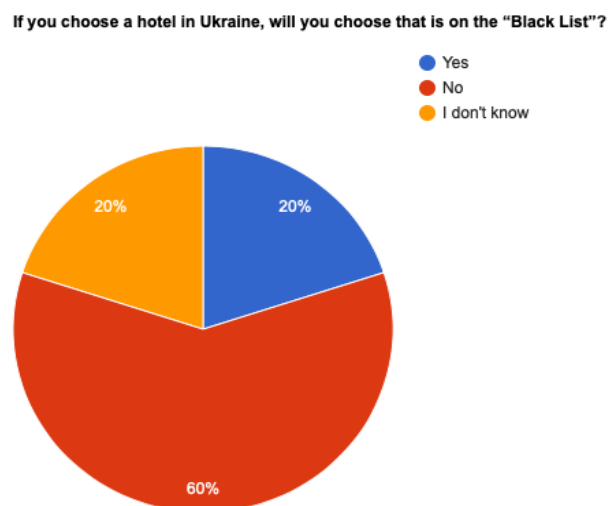
Figure 11. *Question № 7. If you choose a hotel in Ukraine, will you choose that is on the "Black List"? (Source: made by author, 2022)*

So, if potential guests have a choice between a hotel on the "Blacklist" and a hotel that is not on this list, then the majority will choose a hotel that did not inflate prices.

Conclusion

The main goal of this research was to determine the post realities for the hospitality business in Ukraine, how exactly the crisis affected the hospitality industry, what the hospitality business in Ukraine expects under various scenarios of the crisis, as well as to determine how certain hotel strategies during the crisis will be able to change the future choice of potential guests. The author used both a secondary and primary methods of collecting information. In the secondary method, the author analyzed many different sources of information that helped the author obtain high-quality information. In the primary method of collecting information, the author conducted a survey among 10 respondents from Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Norway and Italy with the aim to analyze the impact of the government's Black List program on the hospitality sector in Ukraine. Studies have shown that under different scenarios of the development of the crisis, hospitality business has various post realities. After conducting the study, the author can draw the following conclusions:

- The hospitality sphere in Ukraine during the crisis of 2022 suffered greatly and practically stopped its work.
- The different development of the 2022 crisis in Ukraine has a different influence on the post realities of hospitality business in Ukraine.
- With various scenarios of crisis development, the hospitality industry has different timelines for recovery and development.
- Majority of potential guests would prefer staying in the hotel not mentioned in the Black List, thus, hotels who exploited that short-sighted strategy in the future will lose profits.

As a result, the author can conclude that the crisis of 2022 in Ukraine very strongly influenced the hospitality industry, after it the hospitality will change irrevocably, and it will take a lot of time to restore tourism in the country.

Recommendations

The author can make the following recommendations for the hospitality business and tourism in Ukraine to recover after the 2022 crisis. First of all, in order to increase tourism in Ukraine after

the crisis, the government and the Ministry of Tourism must develop a certain strategy for the resumption of tourism. The other recommendations will be as follows:

- In order to resume the influx of tourists, it is possible to make memorable structures, museums, and not resume some buildings that have been destroyed, in order to open a new form of tourism in Ukraine (e.g. dark tourism).
- To develop a strategy for foreign tourists that would attract them to visit Ukraine.
- In the future, hotels will develop anti-crisis strategies that would allow all risks to be foreseen.
- Using the example of other countries (Lebanon, Israel) to introduce protective structures in hotels in order to protect people.
- Not to overcharge hotels at the peak of the crisis, since in the future, this may affect the reputation and loyalty of potential guests.
- In future develop hotel marketing campaigns using advertising with a message about safety in the hotels, which will help attract more guests.

Limitations and contribution for the future research

The difficulty in writing this research work is due to the fact that it is very difficult to find up-to-date information and statistics on hospitable business and tourism in Ukraine, and in general, some statistics was almost impossible to find.

Another problem was connected with the survey as it was quite difficult for the author to find respondents. Almost all sources were also taken from the Internet, since in the country in which the research work was written, it is almost impossible to find books and other sources in English.

This research work has a contribution to the future since it shows various options for the resumption of the hospitable industry in Ukraine, using the example of other countries.

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COVID-19 CRISIS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN HILTON HOTEL CAMEROON

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Abstract. The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown have hit the hospitality industry in the past few years. This outbreak has created a condition that forced most businesses to rethink their strategies. The enterprises had to change their ways to avoid bankruptcy. Among all, most businesses got closed and went bankrupt just a few months after the lockdown. On the contrary, some businesses managed to survive during the crisis. The purpose of this article is to get an insight into one of such successful businesses in Yaoundé, Cameroon. This paper starts with a review of Covid-19 and its impact on economics. In addition, the crisis management in hospitality is discussed. As it goes further, results of the primary data collection - an interview of the owner - will be given. At the final part, the author gives conclusions and recommendations for the chosen business organization based on the current research.

Key words: Covid-19, crisis management, Hilton Hotel, Cameroon, hospitality management

Introduction

Covid-19, also known as Corona virus, is a new strain of infection that emerged at the end of 2019 and has since spread to over 140 countries, with more than 250,000 confirmed cases around the globe. Since the first identified case in Wuhan China, the virus has rapidly spread across the global and on 11 March 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the corona virus outbreak a pandemic. According to the American Hotel & Lodging Association (2020), the hotel industry was the first to be negatively impacted by the pandemic, and will be the last one to recover, with nearly 3.9 million total hotel-supported jobs being lost.

The Covid-19 crisis is one of the most serious post-WWII issues that have occurred to people and businesses around the world. Over the past couple of years, many businesses, especially the hospitality industries have encountered many problems due to the Covid-19 crisis. These issues included declining customer numbers, cash flow, lying off some employees, and eventually bankruptcy. Out of all of them, one of the most important skills that became remarkable for

people was "crisis management". In this situation, companies that possessed that skill benefited, which not only allowed them to survive the crisis, but also made them grow and become more successful.

In the article the author will focus on crisis management at the Hilton Hotel. The importance of crisis management will be explained based on the author's experience and information obtained about the Hilton Hotel. The author will demonstrate how the crisis has affected Cameroon in general and the hotel sector in particular. Crisis management at the Hilton Hotel before and after the pandemic will be discussed. Finally, based on the results of the primary and secondary data collection some suggestions for the improvement will be stated.

Literature Review

The hospitality industry is one sector that has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic in Cameroon. The findings revealed that due to the COVID-19 pandemics, the hospitality industry experienced a drastic fall of more than 80% in event tourism which is one of the major sources of income. This has adversely affected the annual budgets of the hospitality industry and some proprietors resorted to salary reductions of their employees while others simply cut down the labour force which added to the already existing unemployment problems (Ngong, 2022). According to the Cameroonian National Institute of Statistics (2020), over 50% of companies cut employment. Companies that are more concerned: education (92%), hospitality and restaurant (71%), extraction (76%) (UNHCR, 2020). Those who succeeded in keeping their job were facing salary reduction. In a survey that covers the period of April to June 2020, on a sample of 225 companies, 14000people lost their job and 53000 are on technical unemployment (Duffin, 2020).

Like other global regions, the situation in Africa has progressively worsened in recent weeks as the Covid-19 pandemic impacts the hospitality industry. This has resulted in revenue per available room (RevPAR) declines throughout the continent (STR, 2020). While a handful of markets experienced occupancy growth for the week of 24 February, the weeks of 9 and 16 March saw significant declines in the key African cities shown below (see Fig.1).

African cities – Impact of COVID-19
Occupancy % change, Weekly data, Weeks ending 2 through 21 March 2020
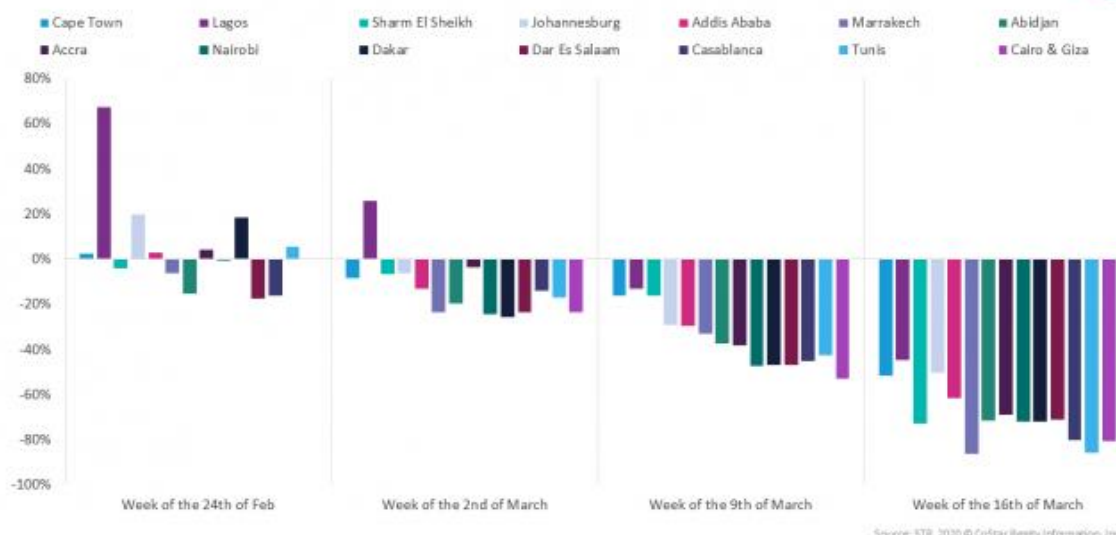
Figure 1. *Impact of Covid-19 on Africa hotel performance (Source: STR, 2020)*

Several economic sectors, notably tourism, transport and services have been particularly affected. According to a study by the Employers Association of Cameroon (GICAM), these sectors have seen a decline in activity of about 92%. Cameroon, which opted for partial lockdown, has recently lifted some restrictions in order to stimulate economic activity. Restrictive measures Following the report of the index case of COVID-19 in Yaoundé, Cameroon on March 6, 2020, the President of the Republic, Paul Biya, prescribed on March 17, thirteen measures to limit and control the spread of the virus in the country:

1. Cameroon's land, air and sea borders will be closed: consequently, all passenger flights from abroad will be suspended, with the exception of cargo flights and vessels transporting consumer products and essential goods and materials, whose stopover times will be limited and supervised: Cameroonians who wish to come back home should contact our diplomatic representations.

2. The issuance of entry visas to Cameroon at the various airports shall be suspended;

3. All public and private training establishments of the various levels of education, from nursery school to higher education, including vocational training centers and professional schools, will be closed;

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4. Gatherings of more than fifty (50) persons are prohibited throughout the national territory;

5. School and university competitions, like the FENASSCO and University games are postponed;

6. Under the supervision of administrative authorities, bars, restaurants and entertainment spots will be systematically closed from 6 p.m.;

7. A system for regulating consumer flows will be set up in markets and shopping centres;

8. Urban and inter-urban travel should only be undertaken in cases of extreme necessity;

9. Drivers of buses, taxis and motorbikes are urged to avoid overloading: law enforcement officers will ensure they comply;

10. Private health facilities, hotels and other lodging facilities, vehicles and specific equipment necessary for the implementation of the COVID-19 pandemic response plan in Cameroon may be requisitioned as required, by competent authorities;

11. Public administrations shall give preference to electronic communications and digital tools for meetings likely to bring together more than ten (10) people;

12. Missions abroad of members of Government and public sector employees are hereby suspended;

13. The public is urged to strictly observe the hygiene measures recommended by the World Health Organization, including regular hand washing with soap, avoiding close contact such as shaking hands or hugging, and covering the mouth when sneezing"(Republic, 2020).

Now these measures are no longer in force. According to African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation as of May 27, 2020, Cameroon had 5,436 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 1,996 recoveries and 175 deaths. In general, the corona virus pandemic has had a negative impact on the Cameroonian economy which has recorded losses of about 800 billion FCFA (approx. USD 1.3 billion) (ITUC-AFRICA, n.d.). It is obvious that such economic sectors as education, hotels and restaurants and commerce should receive special attention, as they have experienced the most severe employments losses. This calls for a differentiated support from the government to protect employment in these industries.

Crisis management refers to the practice of preparing for negative incidents, minimizing their damage and disruption, and getting an organization back on track as quickly as possible (Marker, 2020). Crises are inevitable in hospitality sector. Whether for geopolitical, social, financial, health, IT reasons or following a natural disaster, hotels must be able to face all these crises and limit the impact on their activity as much as possible. Together with such characteristics as agility, adaptability, flexibility and responsiveness, true professionalism in crisis management is required from the hotel staff with all kinds of crises that have impacted the activity the hotels, e.g. the death of a child in a pool in Greece and September 11 in 2001; the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami; influenza A (H1N1) in 2009; the Egyptian revolution, the Fukushima nuclear accident, the earthquake in New Zealand and the kidnapping and murder of four men, including two Frenchmen, at the Novotel in Abidjan in 2011.

The worst mistakes made are due to a delay in reporting information and to the lack of preparation concerning the members of the crisis units and during the public intervention of the leaders. All hotel structures must be well prepared and put in place a pragmatic, clear and shared crisis management system. The credibility of the company is at stake and to guarantee maintenance in operational condition, all the departments must be ready at all times. It's not when the crisis occurs that the questions should be asked. Instead, it is necessary, upstream, that the general management takes hold of this subject, raises awareness, trains all the employees involved in the crisis management (Lai&Wong, 2020).

In recent studies of crisis management in the hotel industry, researchers have examined how to develop a successful crisis management model. For example, Barbe and Pennington-Gray (2018) provided insight into ways of using social media for hoteliers to make crisis communication during a crisis.

To better understand Crisis Management Practices, it is necessary to recognize that a crisis consists of multiple stages, such as pre, during and post (Ritchie, 2004). The pre-disaster stage is before a triggering event and research in the pre-disaster phase aims to develop a state of readiness (Carmeli and Schaubroeck, 2008). Research in the post-disaster phase aims to critically examine the lessons learnt and facilitates the management of future incidents; however, the research aim in the during-crisis stage is different, it is to develop emergency management and contingency management (Sawalha et al., 2013). Counting the number of studies of crisis

management practices in different stages, most of the studies were conducted after the crisis. According to a survey from April 2020, carried out by Deloitte UK with more than 150 players in the sector, their main priorities today are to keep the cash flow of establishments afloat and to ensure the safety and health of their employees (Deloitte, 2020). Indeed, once the crisis has passed, the resilience of companies will be measured by the way in which they have succeeded in remobilizing the crucial element, guaranteeing their competitiveness: human capital.

In this emergency context, hotel organizations have put in place plans to adapt to the pandemic: these have and will have a significant impact on employees. It is possible to distinguish three main impacts of Covid-19: an impact on employment, an impact on working methods during and after the crisis, and finally an impact on local and remote management methods.

Developed in collaboration with medical experts and a wide range of hospitality businesses and organizations, "Travel in the New Normal" outlines the type of strong measures hospitality businesses will need to take to limit the risks associated with Covid-19. This guide aims to enable the hospitality sector to resume safely as states and communities ease physical distancing measures. Travel in the New Normal's advice focuses on six key areas where tourism businesses should:

- Adapt their operation, modify employee practices and/or reorganize public spaces to protect employees and customers.
- Consider the possibility of introducing contactless solutions, when appropriate, in order to limit the opportunities for the spread of the virus while allowing a positive tourist experience.
- Adopt and implement enhanced disinfection procedures specifically planned to combat the transmission of Covid-19.
- Promote screening measures, isolate workers who show symptoms and provide clients with health resources.
- Establish a set of procedures in accordance with official guidelines if an employee tests positive for Covid-19.
- Follow recommended practices for food services to respect the health of employees and customers (US Travel association, 2020).

The measures adopted today will shape the tourism of tomorrow. Public authorities must already reflect on the longer-term implications of the crisis. At the same time, they must succeed in the digital shift, support the transition to low carbon and promote the structural transformation that is necessary to forge a stronger, more sustainable and more resilient tourism economy. The crisis is an opportunity to rethink the future of tourism (OECD, 2020).

Methodology

This study focused on the impact of Covid-19 within hotel institutes in Cameroon and in particular the case of the Hilton Hotel. The author used both primary and secondary data to achieve the goal. Primary data collection involved an interview of the General Manager of the *Hilton* Yaounde *hotel, Cameroon.* For secondary data the author used reviews and articles of online resources such as www.ituc-africa.org, www.emerald.com and www.scholar.google to write this research. These data provide basic information and insight to understand the economic, psychological impact of Covid-19 and its statistical situation, particularly in Cameroon. In addition to this, the literature review part gives information on crisis management, especially in the hospitality industry.

Results

During the interview the GM of *Hilton* Yaoundé *hotel, Cameroon referred to the* Hilton CleanStay programme that comprises a range of measures, modifications, and schedules to protect the hotel's guests and staff. Broadly divided in several categories, the programme considers:

- Enhanced cleanliness in guestrooms.
- Modified housekeeping schedules and service
- New rules and enhanced cleanliness for public areas and amenities
- Guidelines on F&B service
- Hilton Honors App for contactless check-in and,
- Hilton EventReady.

Enhanced cleanliness in guestrooms implies that the housekeeping room protocol includes removing all used items like bedding and towels, a full clean of the room and bathroom including vacuuming the carpet, mopping, and wiping down all surfaces with hospital-grade

cleaners. Then, the Hilton housekeeping does an additional disinfecting step for the room's high-touch surfaces. After the room's cleaning is done, fresh linens and towels are put in.

For more guest comfort, the Hilton has gone out of its way to be discreet as possible. Guests are invited to tailor their housekeeping services to their comfort level for which purpose they need to call the front desk. Additional amenities such as linens and toiletries are available upon request, delivered in protective packaging and placed at the guest room door.

Guests will also find disinfecting stations with wipes and hand sanitizer available throughout Hilton properties. Additionally, both public and resort staff areas are cleaned at scheduled intervals, including hourly sanitization of high-touch areas like elevators and bathrooms. They are cleaned using approved commercial-grade disinfection products.

Changes to Hilton's restaurant service include the spacing of tables and chairs to promote proper physical distancing between guests while maintaining increased hygiene standards. Also, the resort or hotel will offer biodegradable, disposable dishware, and flatware upon request. Grab & Go, pre-plated and individually portioned options may be offered as alternatives to open breakfast and buffet service. Where in-room dining is provided, contactless deliveries may replace rolling cart deliveries. Also, Hilton encourages guests to take advantage of contactless food delivery by providing designated pick-up spots at each property.

Additionally, the hotel chain has stepped up its contactless game to a rarefied level with its app. With this, the guest can just walk into the resort, and then to his/her suite/ villa and unlock it with an NFC 'ding'.

Understanding the importance of flexibility, Hilton will work together with event organizers to align on shared event objectives, providing flexible pricing, space options and contract terms, and the Hilton EventReady Playbook, which delivers expert guidance and resources for solutions. Each meeting and event experience is backed by Hilton hospitality from dedicated team members who aim to meet and exceed customers' expectations from both the event professional and the attendees.

Another issue discussed during the interview, was the use of social media which is very effective for marketing, especially in times of crisis. When the author checked the hotel's Instagram or

Facebook page, he noticed a few things, including the lack of information, the lack of customers, and even the lack of activity on the hotel's innovation on social networks. This case prompted the author to suggest to owners to at least reposting of the stories of their customers who had lovely stays. The use of influencers and bloggers in Cameroon would be affective too. The Hilton Hotel could invite them to advertise the Hotel which would have an impact on increasing the clientele.

Conclusions

To conclude, the author would say that a crisis cannot be prevented. But when hotels face a crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic, they should simply try to adapt while avoiding hitting rock bottom.

The hotel industry has been a victim of this pandemic and in particular in Cameroon where certain hotels have closed their doors. But faced with this crisis, the Hilton Hotel has found some solutions to maintain itself despite the difficulties encountered.

In view of current trends, we notice that the hotel industry sector is gradually starting to come out of the crisis with the reopening of hotels, various measures being put in place to fight against the consequences of pandemic and customers who need relive good times.

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CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN CAMEROON: THE CASE OF HOTEL AKWA PALACE DOUALA

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Abstract. The aim of this research is to fine out the role and importance of leadership in crisis management with special focus on Hotel Akwa Palace Douala, Cameroon. The objectives were to gain an insight into what the role of leadership in a crisis, what leaders can do to prepare for a crisis and how leadership affects the workforce during a crisis situation. The purpose of this research is to identify the important processes and systems which should keep functioning for the smooth running of the industry despite the crisis and develop alternate plans. Four semi-structured interviews with four professionals in leadership positions at the hotel have been conducted in an attempt to deepen the insight into the topic of crisis management. As a result, it has been deduced that leadership and leadership behaviour in crisis management is of crucial importance, because leaders are responsible for the safety of not only customers but staff as well and they have to be able to keep the operations of the hotel functional while also keeping the hotel profitable.

Keywords: Leadership, crisis management, hotel industry, behaviour

Introduction

Good leadership is a crucial part of any organization or business and that is true for the hotel industry as well. Leaders within hotels have the responsibility to keep the multi-layered business on its feet and the employees committed to making good results and meeting the goals of the business. As such, good leaders are an invaluable asset to hotels. However, in times of crisis leadership becomes an even more prominently needed asset – often organizations with bad or insufficient leadership fall during a crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic has been devastating alongside other crises in the hospitality industries globally, as the usual flow of customers has stopped and travel has been restricted. Employees are worried for their jobs as many hotels have had to furlough or entirely dismiss workers and management is trying to adjust to the temporary and perhaps some permanent changes that have come with the crisis.

This article focuses on the leadership aspect of crisis management in the hotel industry on the example of Hotel Akwa Palace Douala. The purpose is to determine the importance of

successful, good leadership during a crisis situation in preserving the business and managing its employees. The research questions are as follows:

1. What role does leadership have in crisis management?
2. How does leadership affect the workforce during crisis?
3. What has to be considered by the leadership of hotels during crisis?

To answer the research questions, the thesis first defines what leadership means, introduces the most commonly used leadership styles as well as theories to give a basic understanding and a broader perspective of the topic. In addition, a theoretical framework for leadership behaviour and its effect on the workforce is introduced.

The article also looks into crisis management in hotels and its correlation with leadership. The effects of crisis in the industry are discussed to gain understanding of the crisis and its impacts.

Qualitative research is used in the form of semi-structured interviews of four professionals in leadership positions at the hotel, in an effort to deepen the insight into the topic and to gain knowledge from professionals who have managed the current Covid-19 crisis themselves. These interviews are analyzed, and finally the conclusions are presented and discussed.

Literature review

Leadership has been a constant research topic for many academics for decades and there are several definitions of it. There are as many definitions of leadership as there are people defining it (Gandolfi & Stone 2016).

It is remarked by McCleskey (2014) that the definition often depends on the situation being studied, type of problem presented or simply the interest of the researcher. However, there are some consistencies in each definition.

For instance, while Silva (2016) defines leadership as "leadership is the process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader to achieve common goals" and Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) define it as a social influence process in which the voluntary participation of subordinates is sought in order to reach the goals of the organization, they both agree in their definitions that social influence over someone or a group of people to achieve a common goal is an integral part of leadership.

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Many different factors play a role in how a leader leads. Some of these factors are personal traits, beliefs and philosophies of the leader. Other factors are more external, such as the training and education the leader has received, as well as the state and environment of the business they are involved in. Different styles might affect the organization's effectiveness or performance, and so it is important for leaders to know what style works for the people under their leadership.

Daniel Goleman (2002) created the Six Leadership Styles and found, in his research, that Leaders used one of these styles at any one time (see Table 1). Each of the Six Leadership styles comes from the use of Emotional Intelligence: Being acutely aware of the environment, his/her emotional needs and feelings and adjusting the style to suit the most appropriate setting. Knowing the theories of leadership allows leaders to make educated choices in their styles of leadership and gives them a deeper understanding of what styles and types of leadership to use in various situations, as well as what effects and consequences they might have. Often a different leadership style is required for a crisis situation – and different styles might be required for different crises. Let's discuss some of the most commonly recognized leadership theories.

Great man theories assume that the capacity for leadership is inherent, that great leaders are born not made. These theories often portray great leaders as heroic, mythic, and destined to rise to leadership when needed.

Table 1. *Leadership styles (Source: Eba, n.d.)*

Style	Description	When to use it	Weaknesses
Commanding / coercive	Dictatorship -"Do what I say"	In urgency – when time is scarce, and in crisis.	Members can feel stifled as they are treated as workers and not asked for an opinion.
Visionary / Authoritative	Mobilises people towards a vision	When a new vision and direction is needed	Lacks the ability to help team members understand how they get to a vision or goal.
Affiliative	Focuses on emotional needs over work needs.	Best used for healing rifts and getting through stressful situations.	Confrontation and emotionally distressing positions can be avoided
Democratic	Uses participation, listening to both the bad and the good news	To gain valuable input from employees and to gain Buy-in, when there is time to do so.	Can be lots of listening but very little effective action.
Pacesetting	Builds challenging and exciting goals for people,	When the team is already highly motivated and competent	Can lack emotional intelligence
Coaching	connecting corporate goals whilst helping people find strengths and weaknesses, linking these to career aspirations and actions	Coach, mentor and develop individuals when they need to build longer term strengths	Can come across as micromanaging.

Similar in some ways to Great Man theories, trait theories assume that people inherit certain qualities and traits that make them better suited to leadership. Trait theories often identify a particular personality or behavioral characteristics shared by leaders. For example, traits like extroversion, self-confidence, and courage are all traits that could potentially be linked to great leaders (Mango, 2018).

Situational theories propose that leaders choose the best course of action based upon situational variables. Different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for certain types of decision-making.

Behavioral theories of leadership are based upon the belief that great leaders are made, not born. Consider it the flip-side of the Great Man theories. Rooted in behaviorism, this leadership theory focuses on the actions of leaders, not on mental qualities or internal states. According to this theory, people can learn to become leaders through teaching and observation (Amanchukwu, et al., 2015).

Contingency theories of leadership focus on particular variables related to the environment that might determine which particular style of leadership is best suited for the situation. According to this theory, no leadership style is best in all situations (Khan, 2016).

Leadership researchers White and Hodgson (2003) suggest that truly effective leadership is not just about the qualities of the leader, it is about striking the right balance between behaviors, needs, and context.

Management theories, also known as transactional theories, focus on the role of supervision, organization, and group performance. These theories base leadership on a system of rewards and punishments. Managerial theories are often used in business; when employees are successful, they are rewarded and when they fail, they are reprimanded or punished.

Relationship theories, also known as transformational theories, focus upon the connections formed between leaders and followers. Transformational leaders motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance and higher good of the task. These leaders are focused on the performance of group members, but also want every person to fulfill their

potential. Leaders with this style often have high ethical and moral standards (Groves&LaRocca, 2011).

Crisis management can be very different depending on which industry and situation it is applied in; for instance, the crisis management protocols of the military forces differ largely from the crisis management of hotels, and have an entirely different context surrounding them. For the purpose of this research paper, the author focuses on crisis management in only the hotel industry.

Before defining the concept of crisis management, the word *crisis* itself should be exam- ined. It is derived from the ancient Greek words "krisis" and "krino", which respectively translate to "turning point" and "to decide". As such, a crisis is a turning point in the course of events where decisions of those involved will definingly affect the outcome in either a positive or a negative manner (Cunningham 2020). Crisis has been described as a change that is unexpected, unpredictable and unimaginable from a normal situation into a crisis situation (Roux-Dufort 2007). In addition, crisis management is the application of strategies designed to help an organization deal with a sudden and significant negative event, while maintaining business continuity. Crisis management involves implementing policies and procedures to defend, mitigate and prevent a crisis (Barney&Posey, n.d.)

Speaking of the types of crisis in the Hotel Akwa Palace Douala, the following ones can be identified:

- Conventional crises

They predictable, their effects are well-known and can be minimized effectively with planning and proper crisis management and safety policies. These types of crises are often   poorly managed systems and dangerous use of technology.

- Unexpected crises

They are unpredictable, but still sensitive to influences. Here, preventive measures are not carried out, because the possibility of such a crisis has not been thought of. These types of crises are also often related to technology and man-made machines.

- Fundamental crises

They are the most devastating group of crises in the hotel. They are not predictable, not influenceable. Their responses are not sufficient and preparedness cannot be achieved because these types of crises appear so suddenly.

- Intractable crisis

It is often difficult to prepare for these crises, there is a conflict of interest surrounding it that hinders proactive countermeasures. The effects and influences of intractable crises are often far-reaching, dangerous and sometimes irreversible. Numerous organizations and societies are affected and the most effective countermeasures come from political decisions and regulations, so it is extremely difficult for a single business or organization to put in place any countermeasures. Examples could be nuclear power plant accidents, climate change and natural disasters (Gundel, 2005).

Methodology

In this research, the qualitative method was chosen instead of the quantitative, because the research questions require a more in-depth understanding of the participants' opinions and thoughts instead of generating measurable data. Interviews offer an opportunity to explain subjective experiences and perspectives from the interviewee's point of view, as well as in- depth explanations, unlike many other research methods, such as polls or questionnaires.

There are three main ways of structuring an interview, which are structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Unstructured interviews are rarer and generally used in long-term field work (Jamshed, 2014).

Unstructured interviews resemble more a conversation than an actual interview. There are several types of unstructured interviews, such as non-directive, focused and informal conversation interviews.

In unstructured interviews the questions are not planned ahead of time. Structured interviews, in comparison, follow a rigid structure and the interviewer only asks the questions that were planned, without any follow-up or additional questions that might rise up during or after the interview.

In contrast, semi-structured interviews are those in-depth interviews where the respondents have to answer preset open-ended questions. Semi-structured interviews are based on semi-structured

interview guide, which is a schematic presentation of questions or topics and need to be explored by the interviewer (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

For this research, semi-structured interviews were used, which allowed the interviewer to get a deeper insight into the interviewee's thought process.

Results

The interviews were done in French for a better understanding since all the participants speak French, and the author of the article has translated them, as well as the answers, into English. Each of the four interviewees works in a leadership position at the hotel. The aim was to interview leaders from different hotel departments to get a broader perspective of the situation and to reflect the opinions, insights and thoughts of people who practice leadership at a hotel every day.

Interviews were carried out involving 4 professionals from various departments in the Hotel Akwa Palace Douala in Cameroon. The interviewees were as follows (see Table 2):

Table 2. *List of interviews (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

INTERVIEWEE CODE	COMPANY / DEPARTMENT	POSITION	REGION/LOCATION
INTER 1	Hotel Akwa Palace; Front office	Receptionist	Cameroon/DOUALA
INTER 2	Hotel Akwa Palace; F&B	Manager	Cameroon/DOUALA
INTER 3	Hotel Akwa Palace; HR	HR Manager	Cameroon/DOUALA
INTER 4	Hotel Akwa Palace	General manager	Cameroon/DOUALA

The interview was divided into four parts: procedures, crisis management, forecast and leadership and from it, the following answers were obtained for the interview questions:

1. What role does teamwork play in the concept of Crisis Leadership?

The success of a leader is based on teamwork. Planning, communication and execution of plans are conducted by the teams. During a crisis, a leader's success heavily relies on team preparation, cooperation, communication and execution. Teamwork, therefore, plays an important role during crisis leadership.

2. Is there really a difference between "leadership" and "crisis leadership", or is "crisis leadership" really not an individual but a group achievement?

This question had a unanimous agreement. All interviewees have suggested that a good leader is able to perform during crisis and in normal situations implying, in theory, that there is no crisis leadership. In practice, some seemingly good leaders tend to struggle and find it hard to make decisions involving the crisis. This can be due to the leaders having authority but no leadership skills. On the subject about crisis leadership as a group achievement, it was mentioned that a leader's achievements are through the individuals.

3. How do you plan to ensure that in the future your hotel is better equipped to react to and deal with other unexpected situations?

This might've been the most difficult question for the interviewees to answer, as by definition a crisis is an unpredictable and unimaginable situation, which makes it extremely hard to prepare for. It came up in the interviews that the most crucial task is to learn from what has happened in the past, make comprehensive procedures, manuals and action plans, as well as practice being ready for speedy and efficient reactions in the future.

4. Do you believe that charisma plays a role in crisis leadership? If so, can you teach someone to be a crisis leader?

Charisma does play a role in the success of a leader and to an extent in crisis leadership, although this is not true in all instances. Three of the interviewees cited Steve Jobs (ex-head of Apple Inc.) saying that his charisma contributed a lot to the success of Apple, even through turbulent

economic times. His personality made people trust him. Crisis leadership cannot be taught as opposed to successful leadership during times of no crisis. During a crisis, a leader can be successful by utilizing the leadership skills he/she has, complemented with previous experience and other individuals within the leader's sphere of influence.

In general, a future leader will have to become increasingly flexible, adaptable, be able to manage cultural diversity, be even more adept at change management and be disruptive enough to be creative, innovative to the point of becoming revolutionary. In more detail and focusing on the personal skills, namely the meta and social competencies, the survey has revealed that future leaders are more likely to shine if they display qualities more closely relating to traits and attributes such as: remaining calm and confident in face of provocation and adversity; seeking out and accepting additional responsibilities and; acting in an honest and trustworthy manner whilst being adaptive, flexible, open and willing to learn.

Conclusion

Good leadership is essential in the fluency of running operations in the daily working of hotels, as efficient leadership promotes higher employee satisfaction and motivation, which in turn generates a higher level of productivity in everyone's daily work. Leadership theory suggests that during crisis, transactional leadership style is common as leaders have the ability to tackle short term needs of the organization. Improvements are incremental and create a healthy organization which can continue to flourish after recovering from the crisis (Nemanich& Keller, 2007). Surviving a crisis requires the organization to focus what its best at and securing its market position. Leaders should be able to prevent and manage crisis, provide effective communication at the workplace, and encourage staff to face the tough times with courage, determination and smile, make them work as a single unit. It is the duty of the leader to provide a sense of direction to the employees during the crisis moment especially during the era of the Covid-19. A leader should be able to feel the early signs of crisis and warn the employees against the negative consequences of the same. It is his duty to take precautionary measures to avoid an emergency situation. A leader should be able to foresee crisis. Employees should be able to discuss issues amongst themselves and come to the best possible alternative to overcome crisis.

The findings of this research point at the fact that successful leaders during a crisis mainly look at the short term. The main goal is to survive the crisis. In order to do so, leaders focus on delivery, cost cutting, security of market position, the core business, targets, budgets, and planning. Although these are the main aspects, successful leaders also should consider some long term aspects such as opportunity and vision. The findings add these aspects to current theory and specifically define the differences in leadership during crisis and with no crisis.

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COVID-19 CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY ON THE EXAMPLE OF FLYZOO HOTEL, CHINA

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Abstract. This research aims to present an overview of digital transformation's involvement as a crisis management tool in the hotel business during the Covid-19 outbreak. The study aims to determine the role of digital transformation in improving hotel performance during crisis moments and the impact of hotel service digitalization on guests and management. The research is a quantitative study in which questionnaires were distributed to guests and management of the Fly Zoo hotel in China. The research findings show that digital transformation improves hotel performance, guest experience, cost reduction, and operational efficiency. Despite this, it has been discovered that digitalization affects staff turnover, which can be discussed additionally. Thus, when used appropriately as a crisis management tool, digital transformation enables organizations to overcome the unexpected crises, such as pandemics.

Keywords: Covid-19, Crisis Management, Digital Transformation, Hospitality industry, Fly Zoo Hotel

Introduction

The world is becoming increasingly interconnected as a result of globalization. Managing crises in an organizational context are known as "Crisis Management". No organization is impervious to all kinds of crises, and having a crisis management strategy that is both effective and innovative is essential (Coombs, 1999). Following the onset of Covid-19, research into the tourist crisis has been a prominent topic. In just two months, the epicentre of the outbreak shifted from China to Italy, Spain, and the U.S.

An organizational crisis can jeopardize an organization's goals and have far-reaching consequences for its relationships with stakeholders. Many across the board were obliged to expedite digital transformation since service employees had to work from home. Despite its advantages for hospitality, before the emergence of the Covid-19 epidemic, the digital transformation of many hotels did not seem to be on a strategic list. An in-depth investigation of Covid-19 Crisis Management and Digital Transformation in the Hospitality Industry will be the

core of this study. The main objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of digital technology on the hospitality industry during the Covid-19 crisis. Other objectives of the study include:

- To ascertain which digital technologies the hospitality industry uses;
- To determine the impact of Digital technology on management and employee performance;
- To evaluate the effect of digital performance on hotels.

Research Questions:
1. To what extent has digital technology affected the performance of the hospitality industry during Covid-19?
2. What are the digital technologies adopted in the hospitality industry?
3. How does digital technology affect management and employees' performance?
4. What is the positive and negative effect of digital transformation on society?

Literature Review

The term "crisis" lacks clear and consistent conceptual definition. Instead, there are diverse and frequently contradictory interpretations. "Crisis" comes from medical literature, where it refers to a dangerous state of an organism's health that it cannot get out of. Social scientists have used this basic medical analogy to talk about problems in the worlds of politics, economics, society, and culture.

Crisis Management (CM) is a word used to describe how an organization tackles a crisis. Many definitions of crisis management have been presented within crisis and disaster literature. Some organizations are crisis-prone while others are crisis resistant – they see culture as the main factor in this. Crisis management is a collection of organized and methodical processes through which organizations strive to identify and foresee impending crises. According to Shrivastava et al. (2020) CM has intrinsic trans-organisational origins that include social, cultural, and political aspects.

The unexpected epidemic of Covid-19 raced over the Chinese New Year. Many hotel owners temporarily closed or traded their hotels to survive. As per the China Hospitality Association (2020), China's hotel sector lost about 67 billion Yuan (roughly US$9.44 billion) in income in January and February 2020. Huazhu, the world's ninth-largest hotel group and China's 2nd

largest hotel group, temporarily closed a few of its hotels, with the number of hotels dropping from 2,310 in mid-February to 369 in the following month. BTG Hotel Group's quarterly revenue was 801 million Yuan (approximately US$112.86 million), representing a 58.80 percent YoY decrease (Hao et al., 2020).

Digital transformation has been identified as a significant hospitality trend. This movement will likely have significant impacts due to technology developments, emerging new tourist demand, and major business areas such as marketing and operations. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated this digital transformation resulting in a widening technology-mediated customer experience. Hotels' investment in digital customer relationship management has endowed customers' services with customisability and traceability. Industry giants like Ctrip, Alibaba, Xiaomi, Baidu, and iFlytek have shown high interest in developing artificial intelligence (A.I.) applications for hotels.

FlyZoo Hotel is widely recognised as the leader of intelligent hotels in China. In the Covid-19 era, hotels will be more agile and effective in attracting Generation-Y and Z customers and employees if they continue to implement digital and intelligent solutions. In general, comparative studies of digitalization interpret it as saturation of socio-economic space with digital technologies to improve the business model of communication interaction in the creation of cash flows and values. As for digital technologies (see Fig.1), they include ways to meet the needs of economic entities through classical and innovative technical means (Bovsh et al., 2022).
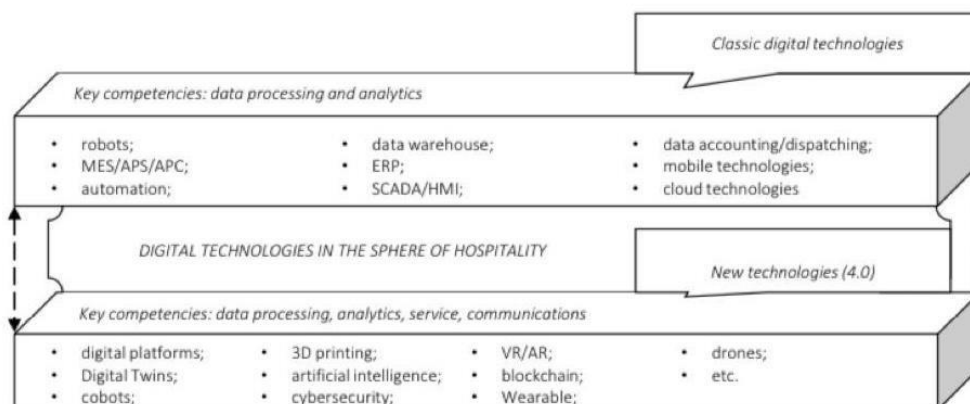
Figure 1. *Key digital technologies in the hospitality industry (Source: Bovsh et al., 2022)*

Methodology

Hotel firms require an integrated management-marketing-service digitalisation plan. The study's aim is to examine digital transformation as a management tool in the FlyZoo Hotel in Hangzhou, China, during a crisis (the Covid-19 pandemic). The Fly Zoo hotel, also known as the "hotel of the future", is a cutting-edge 290-room hotel was *built* by Fliggy, *Alibaba's* online *travel platform*, along with *other business units* such as *Alibaba A.I. Labs* and *Alibaba Cloud* (daxueconsulting.com, 2020). This hotel first opened its doors in January 2019, well before the global pandemic that began in its home country of China. A total of 51 respondents were sampled, with 50 being hotel guests and 1 being a manager of the Fly Zoo Hotel. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the data collected from the questionnaire. In addition, measurements like mean and standard deviation were utilised to demonstrate the function of digital transformation as a crisis management tool in hotels and visitor experiences.

Results

Over 55% of the clients are Chinese attesting to the big market of the nation to consume or enjoy the services it provides. Thailand, the UK, Germany, Portugal, and the rest of the world account for 45%.

Given the limits put in place by authorities to combat the spread of the virus, the pandemic has had a significant influence on these percentages.

Figure 2 depicts customers' experience at the Flyzoo Hotel, with 53 % of the clients being very satisfied with the digitalisation of the hotel, and 33 % of them satisfied, giving a weighted average of 4.27 and a standard deviation of 3.1. In comparison, 13 % of the respondents dislike the hotels' digitalisation. Thus, it is possible to conclude that visiting the Fly Zoo hotel gives the guest a life-changing experience as the environment is clean with top-quality services (see Fig.2).
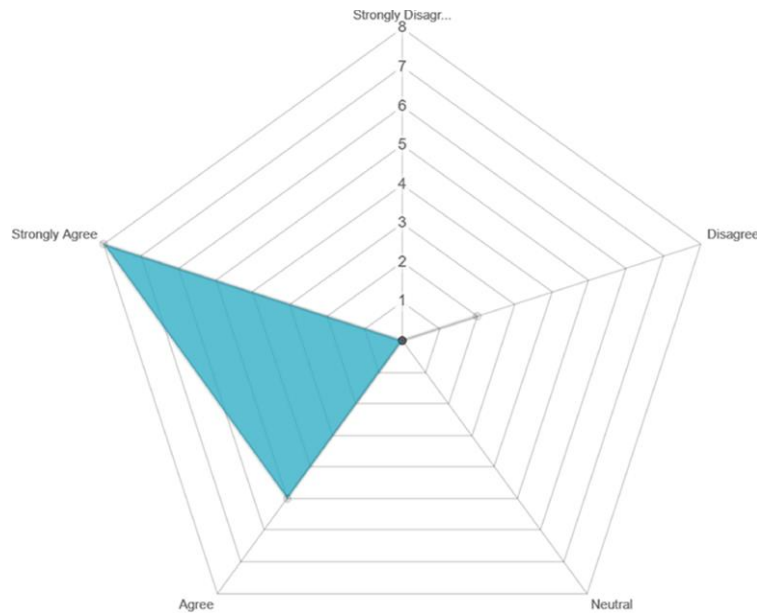
Figure 2. *Customer experience results of respondents at the FlyZoo Hotel (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

Figure 3 shows guests' responses to their experience with staff and robotics at the FlyZoo futuristic hotel. Over 33 % of guests strongly agree to enjoy the services rendered and the interaction of robotics; 27 % of the respondents agree to enjoy their experience making an average of 3.73 with a standard deviation of 1.67. In comparison, 27 % of the respondents were neutral on their use of robotics and their hotel services. Also, 14 % of the guest disagreed/strongly disagreed with their satisfaction with services and robotics. Some guests further declared it was too much for their liking (see Fig.3).
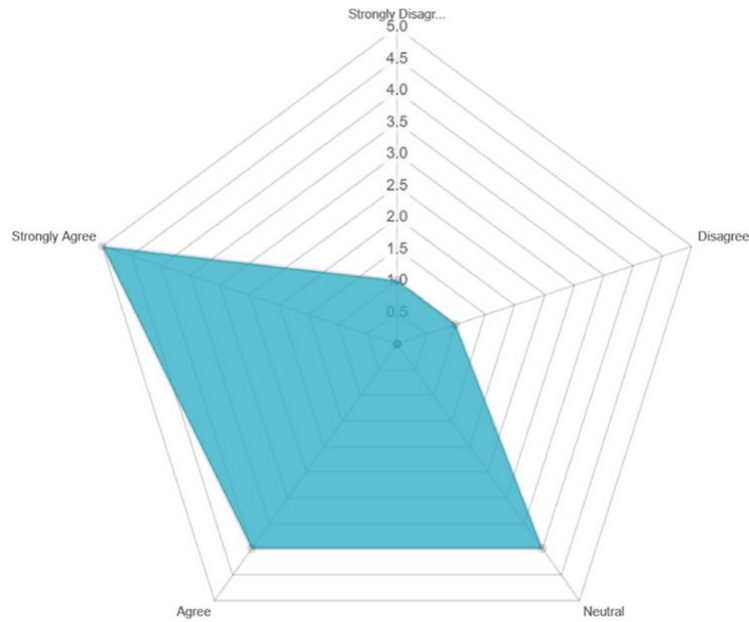
Figure 3. *Customer experience with staff and robotics at the FlyZoo Hotel (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

Figure 4 shows guests' adoption and technology usage at the FlyZoo digital hotel. Over 73% of the guests see the digitalization of the hotel easy to use and as the adoption of technology. On average, 3.53 guests adopt digital transformation and find it easy to use at FlyZoo Hotel, with over 4.15 having the probability of deviating from adopting digital transformation (see Fig.4).
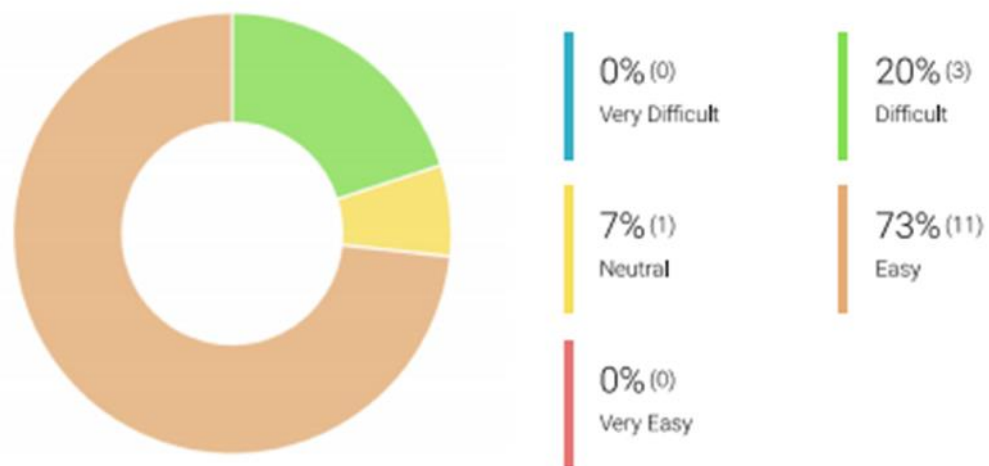
Figure 4. *Customers' adoption of digitalization (Source: made by the author, 2022)*

The findings from the response of the manager of the FlyZoo hotel China provide us with information on the staff to guest ratio before and after the pandemic, security measures related to digital technology using, staff adaptation to these technologies and how these technologies as a tool for crisis management enhanced the performance of the enterprise.

According to the recommendations of the World Tourist Organization, the optimum number of staff per 10 rooms in a three-star hotel – is 8 people; in a four-star hotel – 12 people; in a 5-star hotel – 20 people (Hung et al., 2010). The FlyZoo hotel is a five-star hotel, so the guest to staff ratio per room should be 1:20. However, given the rising usage of robots and digital transformation, the results of the research show that the guest to staff ratios before, during, and after the Covid-19 epidemic are 1:10, 1:4, and 1:8, respectively.

Furthermore, the research results demonstrate that using digital technology has minimized corporate costs and has enhanced the enterprise's productivity. At the same time consumer satisfaction has increased, security has got improved, as well as privacy conditions in using guest information. Also, during the pandemic, the digitalized system of the hotel enabled the hotel to continue operating smoothly with few challenges compared to others.

Conclusion

The research studies the effect of digital transformation on the performance of hotels during the Covid-19 pandemic. Findings from both secondary and primary sources prove that implementing digital technology at an enterprise enhances monitoring, quality of services, and data management and facilitates decision-making. The study's findings also have revealed that the effects of pandemics have accelerated adoption of digital transformation as a crisis management tool. In addition, findings show that digital transformation in the hospitality industry isn't just about apps and software; it's also about increasing the use of robotics in serving and catering to guests, which is consistent with previous research (Chan & Tung, 2019; Kuo et al., 2017; Li et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the study reveals that a blend of human and digital technology in the world today is vital for corporate growth and sustainability. The hospitality industry is an integral part of every economy that needs improvements to cater to unforeseen situations like the Covid-19 pandemic. So the adoption and implementation of social and environmentally friendly technologies are

essential for executives and staff. Hence, these economies restructure laws regarding the tourism sector and digitalisation to boost their national output. For further research, the study could be replicated for different hotels in China and beyond and the sample size could be increased. Future studies should be conducted to determine the mediating role of management adoption tendency on the relationship between digital transformation and hotel performance. The practical application of this study encompasses providing training for board members and employees.

Acknowledgments

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THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION AND ITS MANAGEMENT: CASE STUDY OF "OO SISTEMS" COMPANY

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Abstract. This article analyzes organizational change management in the fishing industry. The paper provides numerous insights into how companies manage organizational change, and how the practical value of organizational change can be maximized for the selected organization. The primary data collection includes conducting an interview with the director of 'OO sistems' and organization of a survey for 24 employees of the company. The secondary research involves studying of the literature on the chosen topic. The findings have revealed that employees believe that it is a crucial part for their company to implement changes, in order to get growth and positive outcomes. Also, looking at a company's financial success during four different years 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, the increase in profit can be seen, which means that the company uses several growth strategies, using evaluation and analysis processes, and building strong corporate culture, in order to grow and expand. Analyzing organizational change management is a very practically important task. Almost all firms experience organizational change at some point, therefore, it is very important for companies to know exactly how to conduct this process, in order to minimize negative effects and maximize the positive effects.

Keywords: organizational change management, sustainability, leadership, corporate social responsibility

Introduction

"The ability to convert ideas to things is the secret of outward success" (Beecher, n.d.). In today's world, it is hard to do things that were easily available in the past, due to the pandemic and its restrictions. This pandemic not only affected people's social lives but the economy as well. Many companies and enterprises are in serious trouble and risk bankruptcy, due to the Covid-19 virus causing low customer flow. Compared to pre-pandemic values, average sales by firms decreased by 27%, 65% of firms were forced to decrease wages, hours, or grant leave, and 34% of firms have increased their usage of the internet. Additionally, 11% of firms were forced to lay off employees (The World Bank Group, 2020).

Nowadays markets are regularly experiencing frequent changes, and the most successful companies are the ones which are able to regularly adapt to new developments in the economy and the market. The author's interest is in researching how organizational change in a company affects workers,

their employers, as well as social, economical, and environmental aspects. Author believes that researching this topic can be very useful for making choices regarding how to handle the transformational changes in the future, and how businesses may permanently change due to various circumstances.

The aim of this research is to investigate the importance of organizational change management and to develop the recommendations for the selected organization. The author has defined the main objectives:

- To provide sufficient theoretical background to the research, carry out literature review on organizational change and relevant studies.
- To conduct empirical quantitative and qualitative research, conducting a survey and interview for 'OO sistems' employees.
- To define areas in the selected organization and possible future challenges, where transformation and change might be needed.
- To analyze findings of the research and draw justified conclusions and recommendations.

The hypothesis for this research is as follows: if the company successfully implements organizational changes and manages transitions with appropriate techniques and methods, there might be beneficial effects for the company in financial indicators, employees' morale and productivity, and overall growth perspectives.

Literature Review

The research study conducted by Anyieni (2013) states that there are multiple key elements of the change management process that help and guide organizations towards success. Those elements of organizational change management are as follows: realizing, planning, controlling, monitoring, implementing, initiating, stabilizing company's change processes at both individual and corporate levels (Anyieni, 2016).

In the research study conducted by Kotter (1995), he stated that, in order to have flexibility in organization, there should be some willingness towards the change process. Unfortunately for any company, various unexpected internal or external circumstances can occur, resulting in creation of boundaries for organizational change processes. Those unexpected occurrences can

be reduced and overcome to some levels of extent, but not fully eliminated, if there is application of high quality information flow, performed by management.

In another research study conducted by Kanter et al. (1992), it was stated that, in order to have multiple partnerships and stable support, it is essential for an organization to form a strong coalition with employees, stakeholders and others. This implementation change step should be done in the first place according to the authors of this research study. Also, it was mentioned that a good leader needs to have the best leadership skills, such as, clear vision on various situations, be influential, cooperative, and be able to build productive and safe organizational culture (Anyeini, 2016).

In his turn Barrett (2006) claims that corporate culture plays an important role in organization and is considered as the reflection of its leaders' awareness. Overall it was stated that cultural transformation within the company begins only then, when there is leaders' individual transformation (Cekuls, 2015). Refusal and unwillingness to admit personal prejudices, habits, values and attitudes can significantly stymie the corporate culture transformation process (ibid.).

According to Stuart Hart (Hart & Milstein, 2003), the corporate sustainability process can be described as the strategic long-term approach for any organization. Companies are accountable for creating value for their stakeholders, impact and contribute to the society, as well as revising the trends of their negative impacts (Murphy et al., 2019).

In order to have a strong and stable organizational culture, every single member's idea or view needs to be heard. Also, companies need to listen and support their employees' assumptions, goals and values. Furthermore, a number of researchers, such as Deal & Kennedy (1982), Peter & Waterman (1982), Barney (1986), Fairholm (1991), Malphurs (1996), believe that organizational members' shared values, which their cultures encompass, contribute to the company's long-term performance (Cekuls, 2015).

Methodology

The author of this research has used both primary and secondary research methods. For example, for secondary sources he has looked at various theoretical frameworks and online published research studies, regarding his chosen topic for this research project. Multiple literature reviews

topics have been used and analyzed. To ensure high quality of qualitative research, the author used only reports, official websites, books, and research databases (Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Investopedia, Hotel Yearbook and etc.) When searching for reports, the following keywords were used: Transformational change, Digital Transformation, Strategic Management, Organizational change management and Organizational resilience. To obtain primary data 24 employees of 'OO sistems' company were surveyed and the director of the company was interviewed. The survey was used to collect quantitative data, while the interview provided qualitative data. The survey was made using Google Forms. Using this platform allowed the author to easily analyze the results of the survey. In order to ensure that the survey provides quantitative data, most of the questions are multiple choice questions. The survey consisted of 10 questions, nine closed-ended questions and one open-ended question. Additionally the author interviewed the director of the 'OO sistems' fishery company Olegs Nakipovs. This allowed for researching the firm's strategy, as well as their organizational management process. The interview was conducted in-person. The author asked Olegs Nakipovs 10 open-ended questions related to the topic of this research project.

Results

Analyzing the results of the interview with 'OO sistems' Director, Olegs Nakipovs, the following can be concluded. The company uses the SWOT analysis tool for identification of our strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats. Also, the company uses PESTLE analysis for the analysis of external factors. The employees in the company are informed on a regular basis. Every day, the board management has meeting with the leader of each department and informs them about any new changes as well as circumstances, and asks about the work culture situation in the company. It is important for the organization that every single staff member takes active participation in the change process. Each employee's voice and idea is heard and considered, regarding the situation.

Looking at the 'OO sistems' financial data the increase in multiple financial aspects can be seen. The reason for that is that the company implements several strategic management tools, has a strong corporate culture within the company and does well in organization and planning things out. Table 1 below shows revenue, expenses and profit of 'OO sistems' (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Revenue, expenses and profit of 'OO sistems' (Source: made by the author based on the interview with O.Nakipovs, 2021)*

	2014	2016	2018	2020
Revenue	6,400,000 $	16,000,000 $	25,600,000 $	35,200,000 $
Expenses (Salaries)	300,000 $	800,000 $	1,280,000 $	4,224,000 $
Expenses (Fuel)	3,200,000 $	8,000,000 $	14,685,000 $	19,755,000 $
Expenses (Vessel and Ship Maintenance)	1,750,000 $	3,575,000 $	4,900,000 $	6,100,000 $
AnnualProfit	1,150,000 $	3,625,000 $	4,735,000 $	5,121,000 $
NumberofEmployees	80	160	240	350

The main idea behind the employee survey was to find out what employees think about their management, how well they are informed about changes, whether they take part in implementing change, and if they are motivated and supported. The results of this survey will also provide the justification and validity of the director's responses during the interview.

The Figure 1 shows employees' responses to the question regarding the importance of organizational change. The vast majority of respondents believe that organizational changes need to be implemented in order to make for the growth of a company (see Fig.1).
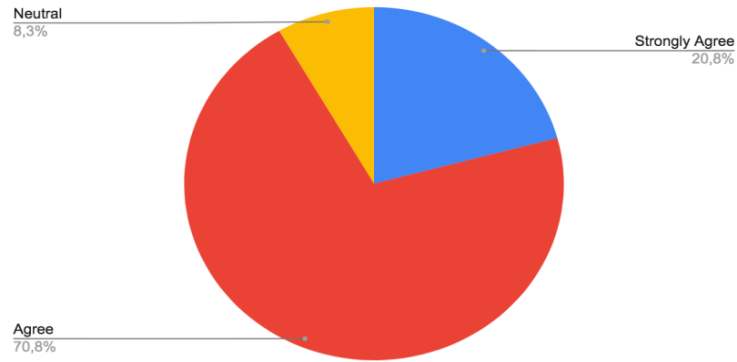
**Figure 1.** *Organizational change is necessary for any company (Source: made by author, 2021)*

The Figure 2 shows answers to the question about communication consultancy between employees and the management board, in relation to implementing changes. Based on the director's response during the interview process, in which he said that every single member of a company is informed on a daily basis and that they take part in implementing changes, the strong 70.5% of responses justified his words (see Fig.2).
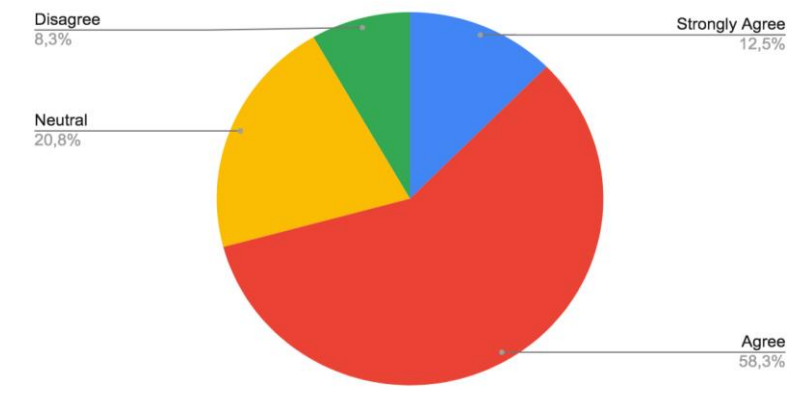
Figure 2. *Management takes effort to communicate and consult with employees before making changes (Source: made by author, 2021)*

The next question was about motivational and leadership tools that the management board applies to communicate the reason for the change. 78.2% of respondents agreed that the management is applying motivational tools and leadership techniques to communicate the reason for the change.
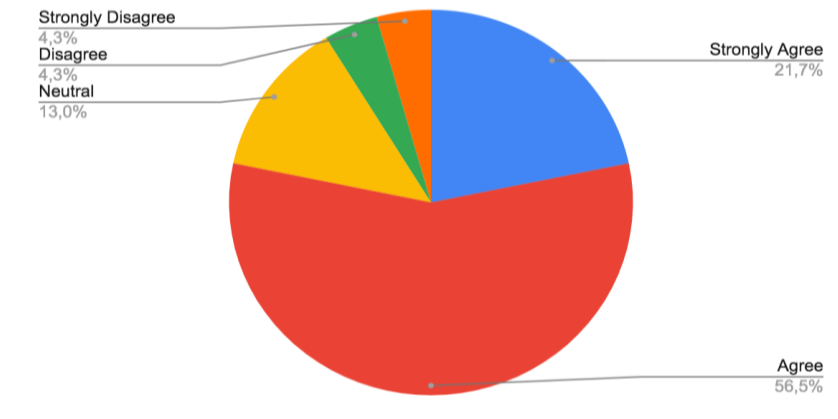
Figure 3. *Management is applying motivational tools and leadership techniques to communicate the reason for the change (Source: made by author, 2021)*

Since every department in a company is being updated and well communicated about the company's current and future action, the clarity rate increases among employees. This allows building trust and strong corporate culture in the company, which makes the implementation change process easier and effective.

Conclusions

There are a lot of factors and techniques that are crucial for any business to succeed. During the research process, the author has learnt new key aspects of organizational change management, discovered and analyzed drive factors, such as leadership and motivation tools, as well as their importance during the implementation phase. After conducting primary research, which included, the interview with the director of the company and online survey with 'OO sistems' employees, several conclusions can be made:

Firstly, the author's hypothesis for this research has been proven. According to the 'OO sistems' company director, each employee plays a crucial role in participation during the organizational change process. Each member from various departments has an ability to share his or her ideas, thoughts and provide suggestions, regarding the situation. Also, the director has said that each department is being communicated on the daily business, and believes that 'OO sistems' has a strong corporate culture. The same type of question was asked to 24 employees, who took part in an online survey. Over 70% of responses justified the director's answers during the interview

process. Employees believe that it is a crucial part for their company to implement changes, in order to get growth and positive outcomes. Also, looking at a company's financial success during four different years, the increase in profit and other financial factors can be seen, which means that the company uses several growth strategies, evaluation and analysis processes, and builds strong corporate culture, in order to grow and expand.

Thus, the research conducted has been very valuable and important. It has allowed the author to comprehend how the discussed company applies various leadership and motivational techniques for change management and how their implementation is important for growth and success in the future. Additionally, it has become clear that every single employee of the company plays an important role in its growth and development.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING COVID-19 CRISIS ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE RADISSON HOTEL GROUP

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Abstract. In hotels and other types of lodging businesses, there is a lot of interaction between clients and personnel. In order for these enterprises to be successful, close attention must be paid to these aspects: the accommodation of guests and the services that are required (such as food and beverage, cleaning, and activity planning), as well as the connections that develop between guests and staff members. To prevent the spread of Covid-19, all employees of the lodging industry should practice good respiratory hygiene, wear medical or fabric masks when necessary, and follow basic precautions such as hand washing, physical distance, and refraining from touching their eyes, noses, or mouths when exposed to the virus. Consequently, the focus of this study will be on the significance of handling the Covid-19 problem in the hospitality industry, and the Radisson hotel group will be examined. The ability to be prepared and have a strategy for any crisis in the hospitality industry is critical so that staff members can approach and handle difficult situations with a high level of confidence in order to minimize the impact on customer service quality.

Key words: Hotel sector, Covid-19, Radisson Hotel Group, Hospitality industry, employee practices.

Introduction

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, considerable measures to slow the transmission of the virus have been implemented, which has had a significant impact on daily life (Kim et al., 2021). Pubs, hotels, restaurants, and shopping malls, among other places of gathering, have remained inaccessible. It has been observed around the world that the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19), which was proclaimed in March 2020 and has had a social and economic impact on numerous sectors, notably tourism and hospitality, has produced a new reality that is being observed (Sharma et al., 2021). Because it is a highly contagious virus, Covid-19 quickly spread to countries all over the world, with the first recorded cases being in the United Kingdom in 2019. As a result of decreasing visitor consumption, hotels and tourist trips were subjected to restrictions and prohibitions, which resulted in the closure of some firms in this sector of the economy. The coronavirus outbreak has had a devastating impact on businesses throughout the world (Chan et al., 2021). A second wave of the coronavirus has compelled numerous countries

to implement a strict quarantine policy. In view of the current epidemic, the purpose of this study is to explore the history, present, and future of the hospitality business.

On the example of the Radisson Hotel Group, this article aims to do research on the subject of Covid-19 crisis management and discover successful crisis management strategies. Five types of crises, five stages of crisis management and other aspects that contribute to successful crisis management shall be identified in this article. Objectives the study is concerned with are the following:

- To conduct the literature review on relevant topics.
- To reveal the key concepts of crisis management.
- To study how the chosen enterprise has introduced different approaches to adapt to the consequence of the pandemic.
- To conduct the primary research.
- To analyze the collected data and write conclusions and recommendations for the selected organization.

The following questions will serve as the framework for the research:

- How do keep hotel workers safe during the Covid-19 crisis?
- How to solve low occupancy rate?
- How to make commercials and advertisements more accessible for clients?
- How to keep the business alive during the pandemic?

Literature Review

As the author's aim of the research was to find out the importance of managing the Covid-19 crisis on the example of the Radisson Hotel Group, the author has also analyzed the impact of Covid-19 on the hospitality industry in the world. Thousands of layoffs, many hotels succumbed (Canhoto and Wei, 2021). In Pakistan, around 20% of hotels will no longer be open. Approximately 40% of hotels are closed in the state. Those that are open work with low occupancy, ranging from 5 to 15%. The government has contributed very little to help save the hotel industry. Some measures helped the sector, but very little to satisfy and contribute more strongly to the hotel industry's recovery. The tourism economy wants to go back to what it used to be, and the government needs to get more involved. While the coronavirus pandemic has acted

as a precursor to several trends in hospitality, it has also left important lessons for hotel managers, and recognizing them is extremely important for those who want to stay active during and after this period (Burhan et al., 2021).

The immediate impact was a noticeable drop in revenue, as tourists and business travellers were unable to travel due to lockdowns or meeting customers via video conferencing. Added to this is the uncertainty associated with the current situation. Hotel managers cannot determine with certainty when travel restrictions will be lifted and whether customers will maintain the same level of caution for a later period (Zhang et al., 2020). Furthermore, social distancing could force hotels to use fewer rooms for the foreseeable future. A recent study showed that with a distance of about 3 meters between tables, restaurants could generate only 19% of revenues compared to pre-Covid levels (Mehta and Sharma, 2021).

In Dubai, one year after the start of this challenging period, consistent signs of recovery are beginning to be seen. The global occupancy rate of the facilities, which had dropped to a minimum of 13% in April 2020, rose to 46 % in April 2021. While global data shows an encouraging recovery, employment recovery has been faster in some countries than in others (Kenny and Dutt, 2021). Spain, China, and North America are the countries with the greatest increase in bookings, respectively by 62% and 51%, while in Europe the recovery stopped at + 18% in April 2021. Another important issue is the change in the objectives and services offered by the hotels. The pandemic has created new habits and ways of living, creating new traveller profiles. Therefore, the operators in the sector had to adapt and create an offer capable of responding to the needs of these new market segments. One of the main trends is flexible work, smart working or rather of "work from anywhere. " Taking advantage of new needs has also been important for hotels and has served as a springboard for recovery (Hidalgo et al., 2021).

Covid-19 implications are being seen across the hospitality industry in many areas, ranging from the types of guests that stay in hotels to the most popular methods of making bookings and the most sought after facilities (Jiang and Wen, 2020). To fulfil consumer demand while also managing the distribution and marketing of their products, the Radisson Hotel Group had to change their organizational structure, which was based on Covid-19 preventive procedures (Guillet and Chu, 2021). Clients and fans of this hotel chain are kept informed of all of the

company's short-, medium and long-term strategies. Guests and employees are also informed about the safety policies of the hotel through email and social media.

As a result of its partnership with Digital Marketing, the Radisson Hotel Group has an effective tool for combating the disease. A solution for communicating with guests in a way that minimizes the long-term consequences of the situation is being developed by the team. They are able to speak with one another even if they are thousands of miles apart because of technological advancements (Kwoket al., 2021). As a result, many people, particularly company owners of small and medium-sized enterprises, are concerned about the future. It is true that difficult times may emerge, but being prepared for these times will make all the difference when it comes to successfully navigating through a difficult moment (Joshi and Bhaskar, 2020). Services provided by the hotel, including check-in and out, as well as the food served on the premises, will alter in the coming years due to the implementation of more stringent sanitary regulations. Common dining spaces receive a higher level of attention in terms of food handling and preparation, as a result of which they are more attentive (Bharwani and Mathews, 2021).

The changes generated by the pandemic affect various aspects of the sector, from the profile of the guests to the preferred booking method and the most sought-after services. On the other hand, Radisson Hotel Group had to adopt a change of strategy to meet customer needs, adapting their structure based on Covid-19 prevention measures and managing their availability together with a change in distribution and marketing. Radisson hotel group keeps its customers and followers updated on their actions and measures being taken for the short, medium, and long term. The precautions hotels are taking to protect their team and customers are transmitted through email marketing and social media (Sharma and Kaushik, 2021).

The Radisson Hotel Group, which is already beginning to feel the impacts of the pandemic, has in Digital Marketing a strong ally to get through this crisis. They are designing communication strategies with guests that substantially reduce the long-term effects of the crisis. At that moment, technology helps them with the possibility of being closer, even from a distance (Joshi and Bhaskar, 2020).

Radisson Blu Latvija Conference and Spa Hotel in its turn reacted to the pandemic by decreasing human interaction to suppress the virus. The hotels made significant investments in cutting-edge

technology in order for guests to be able to access their rooms using a digital key. Because there is no requirement for a human to be present at the front desk, check-in is both safer and more efficient.

In order to keep future guests informed of the hotel's preventative strategy while Covid-19 is still active, employers may want to send an email to them explaining their preventative strategy, providing advice on what to expect during their stay, and providing links to frequently asked questions on the website (Mcmullan and Baum, 2011).

In order to ease overpopulation, resorts could sell to local feeder markets and encourage staying at a hotel to residents who are hesitant to go outside of their own country. People may be hesitant to go by plane, especially if the destination is in a disaster-stricken area, but if there are no other options they may be open to taking a short getaway in their own backyard (Radwan et al., 2011).

After investigating different types of databases, the author indicates that the hospitality and tourism sectors are among the sectors that were adversely affected by Covid-19. The impact of Covid-19 was realized when industries felt reductions in their revenue because business travellers and tourists were not allowed to travel due to lockdowns.

Methodology

To achieve the main goal the author of this research used primary and secondary research methods. The primary quantitative and qualitative research method was based on the survey. Survey was made for the employees of the selected company. The survey was not conducted on a group basis, but consideration was put on individual research whereby each respondent was supposed to provide information from their experience, which was done by asking different questions to the individuals to ensure the research target was fully achieved. The survey consisted of 10 open ended questions and 15 respondents were selected from Radisson hotel employees who have experience working in a pandemic. They had the opportunity to choose one of the proposed answers. It is because while conducting the study, random sampling would be involved and under this method the author would apply the qualitative content analysis as one of the qualitative data analysis techniques. The technique would be the best to conduct analysis of the data because it becomes easy to acquire insight from the data collected. This information was collected inside the premises of the Radisson Blu Latvija Conference & Spa Hotel, Riga.

Secondary research method is literature review. The analysis of such types of literature as books, brochures, reports, scientific and research articles was done. An example of the literature that was involved in the research is that by Canhoto and Wei which was published in the year 2021.The literature priovides clear information on how best crisis could be held as well as the related consquences. A lot of information right from when the pandemic broke out and how best it can be held to avoid negative consequences is clearly provided (Canhoto and Wei, 2021).The author of this research investigates crisis management methods, how to maintain it during the pandemic times and what steps the company takes in order not to lose profit.

Results

13 respondents who had served mostly for 3 years in the industry took part in the survey. Four of them were in HR and three from administration while the others were from the other category. However, the finance department, front desk, and housekeeping also got representatives 3, 1, & 2. These respondents offered insights on their perception about the pandemic. For example, the figure below shows that 6 respondents strongly agreed to have open discussions (see Fig. 1).
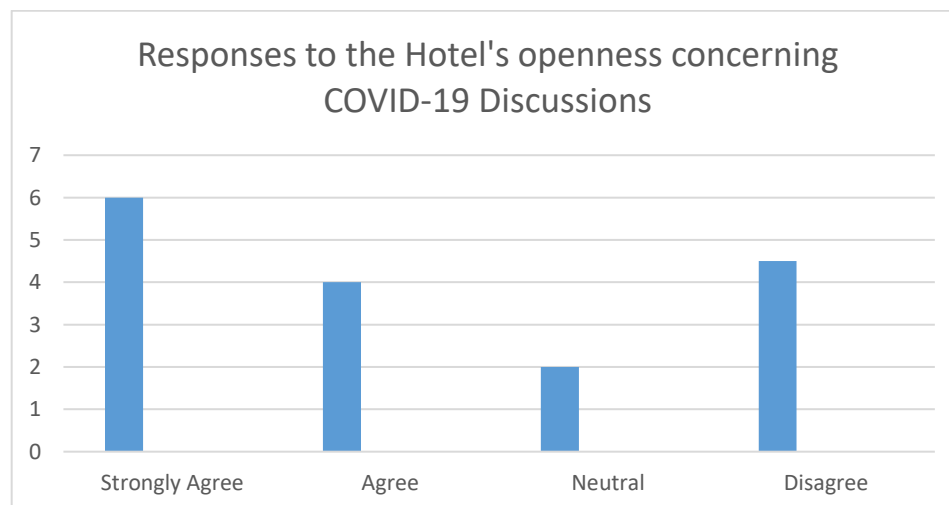
**Figure 1.** *Responses to the Hotel's openness concerning Covid-19 Discussions (Source: made by author, 2022)*

There are also reactions to the safety requirements that Radisson Hotel Group should implement. The results indicate 40% of the respondents (6) cited safety equipment as the effective safety solution. However, 4 respondents also cited deep compliance as critical safety measure (see Fig. 2).
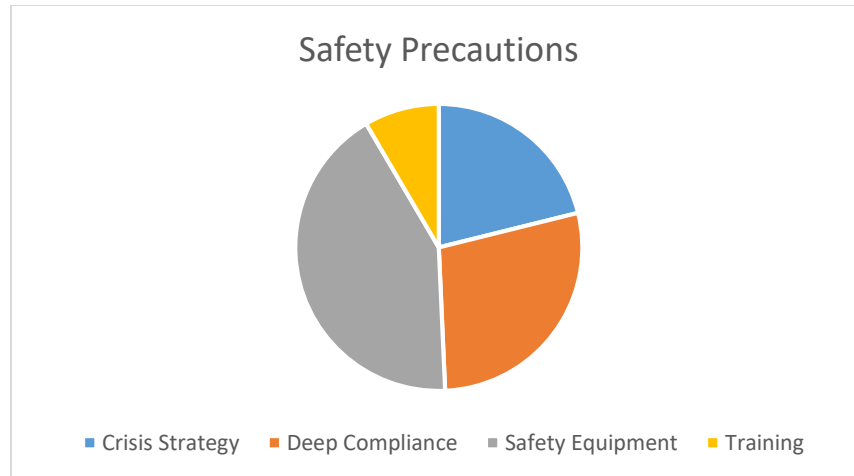
Figure 2. *Safety precautions (Soucre: made by author, 2022)*

Another essential area was regarding the response to the low occupancy rates. The pandemic had reduced occupancy because of the travel restrictions, lockdown, and social distancing. However, the respondents noted that with increased special packages and online presence Radisson Hotel Group can boost its occupancy rates (see Fig. 3).
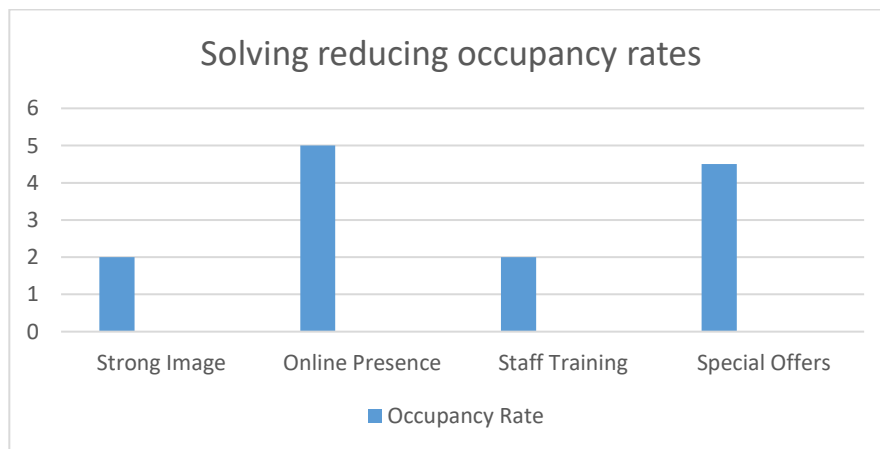
Figure 3. *Occupancy rate (Source: made by author 2022)*

The findings also indicate with a 40% support that Covid-19 generated unavoidable changes. However, there are ways to revamp from those changes with increased advertisements.
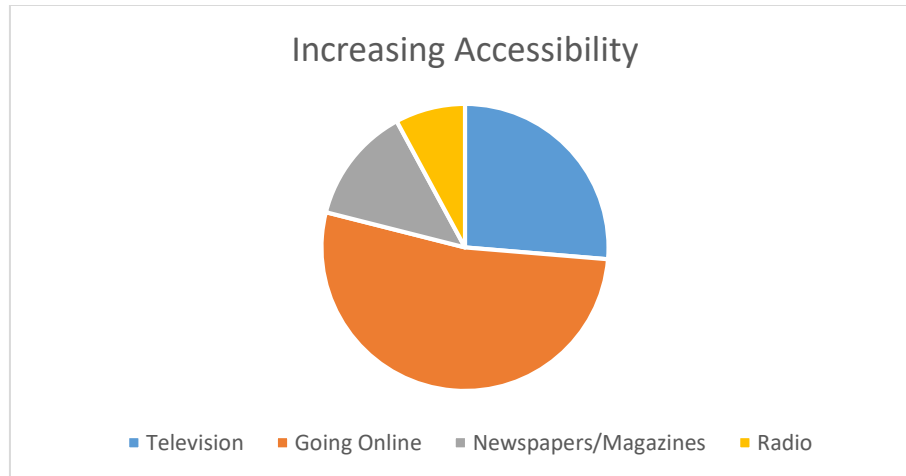
Figure 4. *Increasing accessibility (Source: made by author 2022)*

The results portray the highest response for online platforms with eight supporters. It suggests that online commercials or adverts will reform accessibility (see Fig. 4).

Conclusions

The results attained in this research propose that Radisson Hotel should distribute approved PPE among its entire staff. It is a recognized health protocol endorsed by the government, WHO, and other health organizations. It is stressed that workers' safety has been major change emphasized in the pandemic. However, compliance is also affirmed to be a safety mechanism that is needed among Radisson workers. Nonetheless, instituting administrative controls like flexible shifts, and healthcare assistance should alter their workers' behaviour. In addition, solving occupancy is another recognized factor. Six respondents suggested that Radisson Hotel has to introduce special packages to enhance its occupancy rate. Nonetheless, better online presence is another proposed action for higher occupancy. In addition increasing advert accessibility should be undertaken through robust online platforms. It is an updated measure and avenue relied on to enhance customer accessibility to hotel's adverts and commercials. In addition, to maintain business the respondents affirm that Radisson Hotel must embrace innovative activities, boost its online operations, and reform its business model. However, safety and healthy provisions have been underlined and as the strong measures for sustaining business in the trying times (pandemic).

A detailed literature review has been done on the Covid-19 impact on the hospitality industry. One of the measures that have been discussed in terms of the crisis management in Radisson hotel group is crisis planning which could make it easy to attain early signals before the situation could worsen. The aim of the research was attained after realizing that Radisson hotel had greatly been affected by the factors of the Covid-19 crisis and, thus, there was a need to involve measures on how best it could be handled.

Recommendations

Radisson Hotel needs to introduce prevention measures at its premises and not wait for the situation to accelerate and then only look out for measures. It is important because it helps to easily curb the ongoing situation. It is important because no matter how large or small their company is, hotel managers of all sizes can benefit from the practical advice provided in this study. It is possible to ensure that the hotel is prepared in the case of a crisis by keeping in close contact with guests and leveraging technology to strengthen hotel security, among other measures. Every interviewee stressed the importance of all present employees participating in secondary security activities while also offering excellent customer service and fostering local collaboration.

The author recommends the hotel to establish a standard for crisis management. As instances of how to deal with crises, interviewees cited incidents ranging from minor errors to acts of terrorism and unintentional deaths on the premises. It can be realized that in case such a measure would earlier have been implemented, there could not have been the heavy expenses that were involved. Coronavirus had a limited impact on the clientele of the Radisson Hotel Group, owing to the tiny number of Chinese and Asian travellers who visited the company. In all, revenues increased by 4.1 percent to €999.30 million for the fiscal year 2020, with like-for-like revenue per share increasing by 1.9 percent and Ebitda increasing by 59.3 percent to €165.2 million.

The hotel has to put strict measures on the health and safety regulations and requirements that have been put in place to protect guests and employees, and that are likely to be in place for many, many years to come. Bookings will no longer be as rigorous as they were in the previous years. The Radisson group is always developing and integrating new technology in order to stay abreast of the ever-changing world of travel laws and regulations. It could help to handle the

strange situation. It can be noted that The Radisson Company reported a 2.4 percent rise in revenue per available room (revpar) in the fourth quarter of 2020. In 2018, the number of hotels undergoing renovation or refurbishment increased by 8.8 percent. Having invested in the company in 2016, Radisson acquired a 49 percent ownership in the company, with the option to purchase the remaining 51 percent within four years and began operations. Towards the beginning of January 2020, the transaction was finalized.

Another recommendation is ensuring reduced expenses and expenditure restrictions to allow hotels to quickly adjust to an unforeseen economic downturn. Although the economic impact of Covid-19 is beyond the control of the hotel, taking steps to quickly and strategically implement expenditure management can mean the difference between life and death for the enterprise.

Limitations and Future Research

In regard to the research conducted, it is clearly realized that the crisis has been of a great disadvantage to the progress of the hotel since it created up limitations in the work progress. The research shows that the various weaknesses were realized and no achievements were being registered due to the crisis. The limitations therefore made the hotel to emerge as a weak one as management processes were no longer strong enough to handle the ongoing situation as normal. It can be realized in a way that crisis management from the standpoint of a hotel management professional was no longer considered. However, post-crisis research should look at whether or not similar strategies help to improve recovery rates in other parts of the world.

It is advised that in the future prospects, additional research could be conducted in different hospitality establishments to determine the significance of crisis management. However, priority should be given to the Radisson Hotel since it has shown a clear view of its experience and this would make it easy to track the ongoing situation and understand whether changes have been realized as a result of the recommendations that have been pointed and other crisis management strategies. It is because luxury hotels and resorts may employ different crisis management strategies than other types of hotels, and future research could examine the differences between the types of hotels.

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CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN RESTAURANTS IN RIGA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract. The article gives the analysis of crisis management in restaurants in Riga during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research is relevant as the whole world has faced a Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Companies are fighting and dealing with the Covid-19 crisis day to day. Especially the hospitality industry has been impacted negatively by Covid-19. Therefore, the aim of the research project is to explore and analyse how Covid-19 pandemic impacted restaurants in Riga, and how restaurants in Riga dealt with it. The research paper highlights a comprehensive review of crisis management literature, Covid-19 pandemic impact on restaurants in Riga, as well as analysis how well restaurants in Riga managed the crisis during Covid-19 pandemic. The research has shown that not always crisis has negative impact on business. Sometimes it can be seen as an opportunity. Crisis management skills play essential role in successful overcoming of the crisis.

Keywords: crisis, crisis management, Covid-19 pandemic, Covid-19 impacts on restaurants

Introduction

The author of this research has conducted research in the field of crisis management in the hospitality industry. The author has chosen to research how restaurants in Riga managed crisis during Covid-19 pandemic. The aim of this research is to investigate and analyse how Covid-19 pandemic impacted restaurants in Riga, as well as analyse and evaluate how restaurants in Riga dealt with crisis management during Covid-19 pandemic. The research has following objectives:

- To provide a comprehensive review of crisis management literature;
- To assess how Covid-19 pandemic impacted restaurants in Riga;
- To conduct primary research to analyse how well restaurants in Riga managed the crisis during Covid-19 pandemic;
- To state recommendations for the chosen business organisation/s based on the analysis of both primary and secondary research.

In order to accomplish the research objectives, the author completed a theoretical literature review, where theoretical part of crisis and its management, as well as influence of Covid-19 on restaurants in Riga were provided. Then the author carried out independent research using

qualitative methods of data collection. Two interviews with owners of restaurants were conducted. Research results will show how seriously Covid-19 has impacted restaurants.

Literature Review

Leta and Chan (2021) stated that crises in the existing literature of hospitality fall broadly into two types: macro-level and micro-level crises. Macro-level crises emerge from externally driven causes beyond the control of the hospitality industry, including economic recessions, health crises, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and political instability. Micro-level crises, on the other hand, involve service failures and organizational lack of competence that is firm specific.

Also, crises are divided into internal and external. Internal crisis are poor management, poor service, and low-quality products, but external crisis relates to economic, political, and health issues. The solution to internal crises involves corrective measures, but in external crises, entrepreneurs do not have control over the business environment and are, therefore, dependent on government support and measures to overcome the crisis as explained by Madeira, Palrão and Mendes (2020).

Every business or strategy should have risk management including crisis as one of the risks. Risk management plan identifies all the risks and determines what should be done if any of them occurs. The same with crisis management and its planning - everything should be planned so it is clear what should be the steps if unfortunate happens. According to Bundy et al. (2017), there are four stages in crisis management: crisis prevention, crisis preparation, crisis response and crisis recovery. Therefore, the crisis management plan is divided into parts: pre-crisis, mid-crises, and post crisis management according to Devlin (2007). Pre-crisis primarily focuses on two key topics: the level of preparedness and crisis planning strategies. In mid-crisis stage the company already feels impact. In this stage the company should take charge of the situation quickly, gather all the information they can about the crisis and attempt to establish the facts, make a crisis management plan and take the necessary actions to fix the problem. When crisis is under control, the post crisis stage comes. Post-crisis stage goals should be to recoup losses, evaluate the organization's performance during the crisis, as well as make any changes that were identified as being needed during the crisis.

Crisis management cycle is also called emergency management cycle or crisis life cycle. The crisis management cycle provides a framework for putting the interrelated or interacting elements into order and discussing issues, for instance, who should be doing what and when to successfully manage a crisis. Cycle shows that process does not stop, each stage of the cycle works with other to improve it by time (see Fig.1).
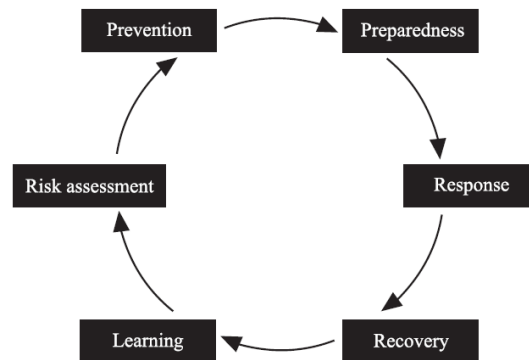
Figure 1. *The crisis management cycle (Source: Christer Pursiainen, 2017)*

On 13th March 2020 due to Covid-19 spread lockdown in Latvia was implemented. Restrictions were applied to all the gatherings, all public events were canceled and forbidden, people had to stay home during the curfew, restaurants and bars were closed and only delivery and takeout was allowed. Covid-19 pandemic led to temporary closure of tourism services. Not only whole industry was stopped, but even when they could work, they had to work with multiple restrictions as news portal LSM.lv (2020) informed.

Latvian broadcast *Aizliegtais Panemiens* and its journalists in 2020 did their research on how Latvia and other countries supported catering industry during the crisis, when the second wave of Covid-19 hit. In Latvia during the emergency situation due to Covid-19 when restaurants and bars were closed there were 3 types of supports – downtime benefits, subsidized jobs and one time subsidy for working capital. Downtime benefits were 70 % of previous gross salaries (situation was worse for those, who had partly salaries in envelopes). For subsidized jobs state paid 50 % of salary, but not more than 500 Euros. One time subsidy for working capital was 30 % of sum of all employee salaries in last three months – August, September, and October. To get

this support organizations overturn had to be 20 % less than average turnover in last 3 months, it was on the list of affected industries, and it could not have tax debt more than 1000 Euros.

In Estonia emergency situation in spring started one month later than in Latvia and restaurants and bars still could work during that. When it started there also were downtime benefits, but employers had to add 150 Euros to that. First 2 months downtime benefits were 70 % of gross salary, in the third month 50 % with maximum of 1000 Euros. During the research in November there were still no decisions made of new support systems, it was uncertain.

In Lithuania there were many restrictions during the second wave and there could only be take away meals. They also had downtime benefits that were differentiated for small salaries it was 90 % of gross salary with maximum of 607 Euros, bur for bigger salaries it was 70% with maximum of 907 Euros. Organizations were not happy about these downtime benefits because it made it hard to keep highly qualified specialists. As well as in Latvia in Lithuania there was a possibility to get one time subsidy for work capital for which there was 100 million Euros fund. This subsidy was calculated: 50 % from the sum of paid income tax of 2019, but not more than 200 00 Euros.

Covid-19 had several exacerbation waves, and restrictions were changed according to count of registered cases and possibilities of health system. During summer 2020 and 2021 catering outside on terraces were allowed with and without green passes, then when the autumn came and become too cold to dine outside, again only those with green passes could dine outside their home. Restaurants and bars these past years have been living without any certainty as Linda Zalane (2021) said. According to association of hotels and restaurants turnover in the industry 2021 was 40 % than a year before. That shows that even some of the industries have had their breakthrough out of crisis, hospitality industry is still living in the acute-crisis stage. What makes situation worse is the last of state support that is given for closed industries, but not those that work with a lot of restrictions according to Rīta Panorāma (2022).Various research highlighted that restaurants are one of the worst affected sectors as a result of social distancing measures implemented by governments all around the world announced Gössling, Scott and Hall (2020). LMS.lv (2021) published that according to date of State Revenue Service in 2021 economic activity ended and excludes from catering services registry were 453 organizations.

In the Encyclopedia of Tourism, restaurants are defined as "commercial establishments designed to serve refreshments and meals, which are either prepared fresh or partially produced elsewhere and finished in on-site" (Sánchez-Cañizares, 2016). Pandemic to restaurants and bars was a test of their resilience and creativity. Possibility to get through this crisis was linked to how successful they were before and their creativity. If restaurant or bar was successful before the pandemic and had enough finances to pay bills when having minimal income mostly, they survived, other was around this crisis form them was final. Creativity helped if they could find ways how to work with minimal contact with their customers and how to serve them food or dinks nicely just the same way as it was in their premises. Restaurants as part of the tourism system of a destination were urged to provide safe and secure dining experiences which meet new legal and social rules derived from the Covid-19 pandemic. Plenty of initiatives started to showcase the adaptation of restaurants to recover the demand. Innovation processes were carried out by restaurants in response to Covid-19 and how they have adapted their service provision to the new context explained Francesc Fusté-Forné and Asif Hussain (2020).

For example, little brewery in Riga called "Ziemelu Enkurs" offered their customers takeaway beer from tap in PET plastic bottles. This way beer did not go bad in barrels if they did not fill it in glass bottles and their customers still had a chance to enjoy their favorite beer even when the bar was closed. When delivered they called this service "Liferaft" and "Lifeboat" keeping the course about the sea and a name game meaning: "help them to stay afloat" as showed Facebook page of Ziemelu Enkurs alus darītava (2020).

Another creative and inspiring story is about restaurant "BURŽUJS". Jauns.lv portal (2020) shared that when lockdown was implemented their turnover in few days dropped by 80 %. Home delivery did not compensate it. To keep all the employees and not close the restaurant they came up with idea to make vacuumed food preparations that will need to be only warmed up before eating. Food like this can be stored in fridge for more than a week and tastes just like in a restaurant.

Since April 1st, 2022, restrictions have come to the minimum as they have been from the beginning of pandemic, despite that, employees and clients should have green passes according to Economy ministry (2022).

While some restaurants and bars were opening terraces in Riga, restaurant "*36. līnija*" located in Jurmala city with owner and chef Lauris Aleksejevs opened a mobile restaurant to be able work outside of that premises of his restaurant. This restaurant was parked by the Shopping Centre Spice. Owner Lauris said that it has been a good experience to be able changing places even that you need a permission to park your restaurant somewhere. Getting these permissions also has been a good experience with everything happen easy and fast. But also, revelation of his was that not for everyone it was possible because it needs finances that not everyone has especially during the crisis.

Obviously, each crisis brings about both negative and positive outcomes. Below there are some negative outcomes observed by the author.

According to estimates of Union of restaurants during the crisis already in 2021 around 10% of catering business had stopped their operations. In numbers these are 453 catering companies. These decisions to close restaurants and bars were based of the uncertainties if they will be able to work, if there will be enough income to cover debts that they were into and if there will be any state support and if that will be enough.

When restaurants and bars were fully closed in the beginning of pandemic and when they could work again, but not with full speed they were not the only ones taking the hit. All the vendors who profited of delivering materials and products for catering services had their orders falling to minimum. Not only businesses were having crisis, but also all the employees, their income changed, and their daily life was disrupted by not being able to work.

Increase of waste is another negative outcome. By wanting to keep everything sterile and delivering food plastic waste amount increased in every household, bar, or restaurant. Food boxes and buns were wrapped in plastic. Some places even decided that it is not clean enough to wash dishes and used plastic ones.

When restaurants and bars could not work for months and did not have enough income for paying salaries and support systems were still not in order a lot of employees were laid off. A lot of them had no choice but to find new job in industries that were still open or because of pandemic needed more workforce. After, when places opened and could work in some capacity, there was a problem to find new employees. In the beginning of summer 2021 restaurants and

bars were looking for waiters and chefs and it was a hard task. This problem is relevant every summer when terraces open, but this year it was not only a difficult challenge, but most likely an impossible one. Also, those who were still open to work still had their doubts if the employment will be stable or the same situation will occur again according to news portal lsm.lv (2021) shared information.

When thinking of crisis mostly what comes to mind is negative outcome, but as learned, where a danger is there is always place for opportunities. In spite of the abundance of negative consequences, there are some positive outcomes as well, mostly referring to digital modernization.

QR codes were an easy an effective alternative for printed menus. Also, some places not only placed menus under OR codes, but also went a step further and made an order system. This way it is easier to make changes in menus, each menu does not have to be disinfected after every customer and if also the order system was made, waiter does not have to take orders but only to bring them if orders taken by the bar customers do not make a queue and are in their fixed places.

More and more restaurants and bars are making more partnerships with delivery services Wolt Food and Bolt Wood. Positive outcome for the customer is that it is easy if all the favorite restaurants and bars are unified in one application. Positive outcome for the restaurant or bar was easy delivery logistics as Food Delivery Company Wolt (2020) declared.

While having a hard task to find employees it came with good news for those who were left to work in the industry. To have enough waiters and chefs' employers were willing pay more than before so waiters and chefs had increase in their salary. Restaurants and bars started to "repurchase" employees one from another by offering higher salaries as Linda Zalane (2021) shared.

New ideas how to keep restaurants and bars working during the pandemic could be integrated into these businesses later as when the crisis is over. These ideas could work as a great addition for business in future and help to get over the crisis. These were the possibilities that came from crisis, even though sadly it is rather clear that there were more negative outcomes than positive,

but also it is clear that every crisis management should look for more possibilities and positive outcomes.

Methodology

Data was collected from various sources to gain wide range of information. The author conducted primary and secondary research. Well known author books that are quoted on various papers about crisis management were used. Articles relating to crisis in hospitality industry, specifically to bars and restaurants were identified, compared and analyzed during the research. Articles from International Journal of Hospitality Management, Hospitality Journal, Journal of Management studies, Sustainability, Tourism Management, Journal of Sustainable tourism were studied, as well as websites lsm.lv and lvportals.lv, jauns.lv to find information about specific case studies about restaurants and bars in Riga. Numerous keywords, for instance, crisis, crisis management, Covid-19, pandemic, restaurant crisis, restaurants in Riga were searched using Google to find relevant information.

For the primary research the author conducted interviews with two restaurant owners in Riga. The same questions were asked in both interviews, but the answers were quite different. The first interview was conducted over the phone due to the intensive schedule, with entrepreneurs Ina Forande, who together with her husband, who is of Korean nationality, owns a Korean restaurant "Soraksans", which is located in the heart of Old Riga. The second interview was conducted with Andris Rūmītis, the owner of the popular restaurant "Hercogs". The restaurant is located in Riga, Marupe. The interview was conducted in the restaurant premises. Both interviewees agreed to participate in the interview, being informed in advance about data protection, including what the data obtained will be used for and to whom it will be made available.

Each interview included 11 questions – 2 of them closed-ended, 9 opened-ended questions. Closed questions allow respondent to choose from given answers, in this interview respondents rated given question in scale of five. Open questions are designed to collect opinions of people from the industry. The aim of the interviews was to get subjective opinions and facts that could be analysed through prism of theory to determine what was done right and what could have been done differently, as well as to find out the major challenges the crisis posed, the way the interviewees handled them and what the future predictions could be.

Results

After analysing interviews of both respondents, there is a noticeable difference in the success, consequences, and outcome of crisis management. Both restaurants are different and also managed the crisis differently in their restaurants. Andris, the owner of the "Hercogs" restaurant, has managed crisis more successfully. Namely, he developed new tactics, implemented new ideas that could help the business, worked with his staff as a team, focused on the power of social networks and used it to his advantage. In this case, the crisis gave the restaurant "Hercogs" new opportunities, as Andris mentioned in the interview: "Turnover is even better than it was before Covid-19 (...) Covid-19 even helped my business".

The situation of crisis management in Ina Forande's restaurant "Soraksans" of Korean cuisine is different than for "Hercogs" restaurant. Although many Latvians have liked this restaurant, a large part of the customers were tourists, especially from Asia. Due to the restrictions on Covid-19 all over the world, travel has been severely restricted, with serious consequences for the "Soraksans" restaurant during this crisis. The restaurant also tried to adapt by concluding a contract with the delivery company "Bolt Food", creating beneficial offers for customers, as well as trying to promote the company on social networks. Although the restaurant tried to cope with the Covid-19 crisis, the results were not so successful. As Ina Forande, the restaurant's owner, said in the interview, it would take the restaurant about two years to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Conclusions

Crisis management refers to the actions and communications that organizations systematically undertake to reduce the possibility of a crisis, mitigate crisis impact, and reestablish order after a crisis. While a crisis is a temporary event, crisis management is an ongoing and indeed essential activity even between crises. Restaurants are one of the worst affected sectors as a result of social distancing measures implemented by governments all around the world. Pandemic to restaurants and bars was a test of their resilience and creativity. Possibility to get through the Covid-19 crisis was linked to how successful they were before and their creativity. If restaurant or bar was successful before the pandemic and could pay bills when having minimal income mostly, they survived, others being in trouble. Every restaurant and bar has their own story how they worked

through the crisis and did crisis management. States come up with support systems to get businesses get through it and businesses had to become creative to work through this hard time.

Research results from primary research have proved that crisis can have a negative impact on business as well as positive. Two interviews with restaurant owners were conducted. As a result, one restaurant (Soraksans) faced problems and negative consequences from Covid-19 pandemic crisis, whereas the second restaurant (Hercogs) used crisis as a new opportunity and a chance to develop the restaurant business. That fact that one restaurant coped better with the crisis can be attributed to stronger crisis management skills, effective critical thinking. All business leaders should have the ability to manage a crisis in business, therefore, they must learn, gain knowledge about crisis management, know the theoretical part of crisis management. They must be ready to face crisis with confidence, do risk assessment, prevent or mitigate risks, and be aware of consequences.

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CRISIS MANAGEMENT AT THE RADISSON BLU LATVIA CONFERENCE AND SPA HOTEL DURING ECONOMIC DOWNTURN AND COVID-19

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Abstract. In this article the author explores the crisis management practices in the hotel sector globally and in Radisson Blu Conference and Spa Hotel in Latvia in particular during Covid-19 and economic downturn. Survey data, Internet resources and scientific articles have been used in the work.

Key words: Covid-19, hospitality industry, hotels, crisis management approach, staff awareness, sustainable development, crisis, crises management practices, activities in post crisis period

Introduction

A crisis can be defined as a significant threat to operations that can have negative consequences if not handled properly (Thompson, 2018). In crisis management, the threat is the potential damage a crisis can inflict on an organization, its stakeholders, and an industry. To achieve success during times of crisis, hotels must build a preventative plan, engage with workers and customers, and make essential changes to revenue management and digital initiatives.

The author will discuss the crisis in the Radisson Blu Conference and Spa Hotel in Latvia during Covid-19 and economic downturn. The author's primary motive is a personal interest she is a hotel employee, working as a waiter at the SkyLine Bar. The food and beverage department is a good example to take apart and analyze crisis management practices.

The main problem, which nowadays the hospitality industry faces is Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences. The numbers of health protection products, food packing and even regular napkins grow progressively on a daily basis. As a result, this leads to large unforeseen expenses and to a crisis, due to the high risks of losses. The survey has been prepared for hotel guests and potential customers, as well as the hotel employees for obtaining the most objective picture. For the same reason every interview is anonymous.The survey showed how respondents relate to the pandemic, the crisis and the difficulties that have arisen in that period of time. It also helps to see the dynamics during the pandemic and its recovery from the crisis environment.

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Methodology

The aim of the research is to explore the crisis management practices in the hotel sector globally and Radisson Blu Conference and Spa Hotel in Latvia specifically during Covid-19 and economic downturn. Research Methodology includes three main steps: research method (the evaluation research type and applied research method); primary research (questionnaire in the form of online survey); secondary research (literature review). Primary research will be implemented by the online survey for experienced guests and potential customers of the hotel, as well as the employees. Analysis of the online survey answers will allow the author to conduct the research about changes in the quality of life, on the opinion of the pandemic and changes in the service sector including hotels, restaurants and flights by plane. Secondary research will focus on studying literature on the topic from both books and internet resources. The other collected information can be described as qualitative and personal descriptive data, with no direct interviewing, but related to the author's personal findings and working experience in the Radisson Blu Conference & Spa Hotel Latvia.

Literature Review

The hospitality industry is a major part of the world economy. Broadly defined, the hospitality industry embraces a wide variety of accommodation facilities, from resorts and hotel complexes to Airbnb homestays; food and drinks services and facilities, including restaurants, fast food outlets, bars and cafes, coffee shops and nightclubs; and travel and tourism, such as package holiday tours and ocean and river cruises. At the same time, a hospitality offer is often an important component of a large variety of sporting, entertainment and leisure, events and venues (Jones & Comfort, 2020).

Socially, at a local level, coffee shops, cafes, bars and public houses normally provide important meeting places for millions of people every day, and such places are often important centers of social and community life. Here people meet to relax, to socialize, to share their daily experiences, to play simple card and board games and to watch televised sporting fixtures with fellow patrons. At the same time, for many people, the hospitality experiences they enjoy may be seen to be important in defining their identity. At one level, an individual's identity may, in part, be forged by regular ocean cruises, often perceived to visit exotic destinations and unique

environments, and at another level, identities may be shaped by performance prowess in sporting and leisure events, sports and fitness clubs and in games in café's, bars and public houses (Jaddout, 2020).

The Covid-19 crisis erupted uninvited and took countries completely off guard. Many persons were claimed to have died in the media. Something had to be done quickly. To slow the spread of the pandemic at the start of the crisis, nations implemented a variety of pandemic mitigation and containment strategies. Oxford Stringency Index allows us to see in the real time how stringency has evolved from various lockdown measures and how do they compare with the other countries (Baldwin & Weder di Mauro, 2020). The population's migration has been altered by the pandemic's mitigation measures. Google generated Covid-19 Community Mobility Reports (GMR) or the so-called Mobility Index to better observe the mobility changes related with mitigation efforts. The anonymous data was gathered from people's mobile phones under the condition that the "Location Service" function was turned on. The data demonstrates how, as the severity of containment measures has increased, people's mobility has decreased or changed in their everyday activities (Google, 2020). In 2020, tourism was among the sectors most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, due to the travel restrictions as well as other precautionary measures taken in response. In 2020, the number of nights spent at European Union (EU) tourist accommodation establishments totaled 1.4 billion, down by 52% compared with 2019 (Eurostat, 2021).

Results

It took the author more than two weeks to conduct a survey among colleagues, potential guests and already experienced visitors between 10.04.2022 and 16.04.2022. The topic of the study is the opinion of potential hotel guests and employees about the Covid-19 crisis and pandemic. The survey consisting of 18 questions was prepared and sent to 58 respondents using Google Forms platform.

The survey shows that respondents would prefer to stay in a Radisson Hotel Group hotel, mostly because they believe that the quality of service has improved, with the focus on food and beverage offers (see Fig.1).
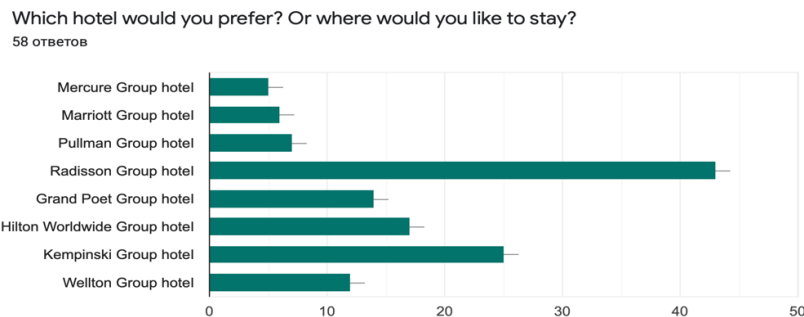
Figure 1. *Guests' opinion about hotel preference (Source: made by author, 2022)*

Speaking of the factors affecting customers' decision in the choice of the hotel majority of respondents (38.6%) mentioned positive feedback and recommendations, qualitative and good breakfast(24.6%) and low prices(19.3%). Sanitation to ensure safety at the hotel was an important factor only for 14% of respondents (see Fig.2).

What is the most important for you to make a decision to stay at the hotel during the pandemic?
57 ответов

- Sanitation to ensure safety at the hotel
- Low prices
- Qualitative and good breakfast
- Extra service for free
- Positive feedback and recommendations
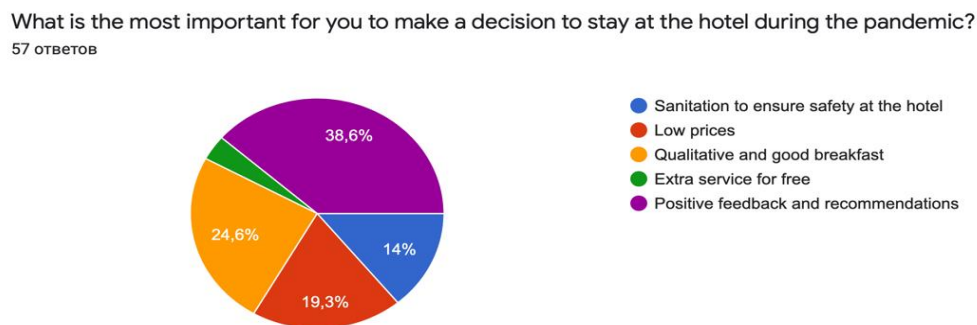
Figure 2. *Factors affecting customers' decision when choosing a hotel (Source: made by author, 2022)*

Customers believe that the quality has increased and for the same money now it is possible to receive more. Government issued financial support for some of the hotels, which was used to maintain basic needs while still maintaining high quality service and security. Nearly half of the people questioned (44.8%) claim that they felt safe staying in hotels during lockdown, which means that hotels have done a good job with implementing the Covid-19 guidelines for guest safety (see Fig.3).

Have you noticed quality decrease in hotel services since the pandemic?	1.Quality decreased 2.Same quality 3.Quality improved	17(29.3%) 15(25.9%) 26(44.8%)
Which changes in hotel services have you noticed during and after crisis?	1.Variety of services decreased 2.Variety of services increased 3.Food and beverages offers are more limited and worse 4.Food and beverages offers are better and more for the same price	5(8.6) 13(22.4%) 10(17.2%) 30(51.7%)

Figure 3. *Changes in the quality of hotel services during and after the pandemic (Source: made by author, 2022)*

Majority of respondents would welcome abandoning all Covid-19 related prohibitions, leaving only disinfection as workable measure (see Fig.4).
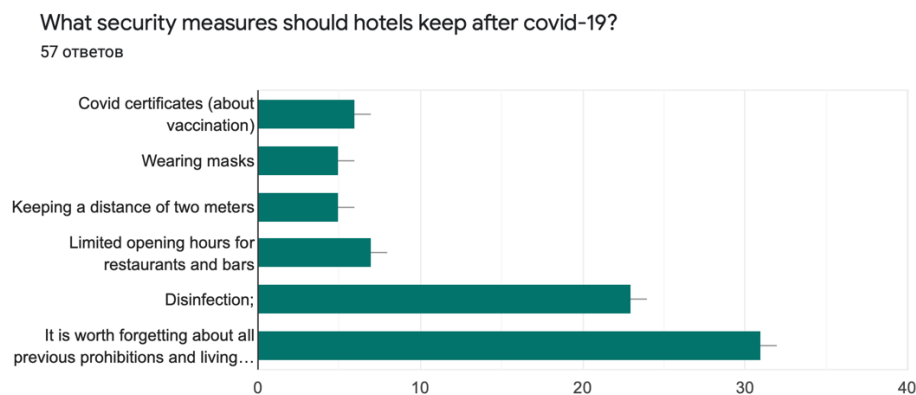
Figure 4. *Security measures hotels should keep after Covid-19 (Source: made by author, 2022)*

Interestingly, most customers tend to choose the 4 star hotels or downgrade from 5 star hotels to save some money, but some respondents would like to upgrade to a 5 star hotel, to receive the highest possible safety (see Fig.5).

What percentage do you agree to pay more for hotel services during the pandemic?	1.Plus 15%	9(15.8%)
	2.Up to 30%	7(12.3%)
	3.Up to 50%	7(12.3%)
	4.Up to 5%	11(19.3%)
	5.I do not agree to pay more, I will not go to the hotels	8(14%)
	6.In my opinion the prices on the contrary should reduce, that I would agree to stay in the hotel	15(26.3%)

Figure 5. *How much the customers are ready to pay for hotel services during the pandemic (Source: made by author, 2022)*

During the Covid-19 pandemic most hotels were closed due to the lack of business. Hotels that stayed open kept only a small amount of crucial staff members to keep the hotel functioning during low occupancy; therefore, these reduced staff teams had to cover more responsibilities while also following the Covid-19 guidelines. The survey was filled out by people who were in direct contact with the hotel business during the pandemic, such as hotel employees and regular hotel customers/potential customers. Majority of these people believe that the Covid-19 pandemic is over and they do not want to keep the current security measures.

Conclusions

Summarizing the research that has been carried out, it is possible to conclude that the pandemic has changed the lives of people and large hotel companies. Radisson Blu Latvia Conference & Spa Hotel was a good example of how to reopen the hotel after the pandemic, namely by reopening all internal facilities such as the bar (SkyLine) and restaurant (Lobby Bar).

The speed of economic recovery from the economic downturn caused by the pandemic in Latvia will depend on the duration and depth of internal quarantine measures, external environment, government support through monetary policy, investor behavior and possible changes in customer.

Recommendations

Upon completion of the research, the author decided to write and present her own recommendations for the Radisson Blu Latvia Conference & Spa Hotel. The hotel has had a consistently good reputation for many years. The main advantage is - unwavering stability to

improve the offer for guests. Therefore, the decision to train the staff on sanitary care was a praiseworthy number one. But it is worth noting that the hotel should devote more resources to developing technology. An innovative level of technology can provide a more memorable and comfortable stay for the main target audience - business travellers.

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THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND PLANNING FOR A POST-CRISIS PERIOD: THE CASE OF NEIBURGS HOTEL IN LATVIA

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Abstract. The research is devoted to analysis of Covid-19 crisis in hospitality industry. The consequences of this crisis are studied in relation to Latvian hotels in general and to the Neiburgs Hotel Latvia in particular. As the employee's cooperation with the administration is very important it was necessary to find out the awareness and readiness of the staff to different limitations, restrictions and working together in searching for new ways to protect the business, to satisfy the customers and to keep services on a high level, therefore the questionnaire was offered to the staff in Neiburgs Hotel. To understand the post-Covid-19 situation in hospitality industry in Latvia, the work of local hotels was also analyzed. Having studied the results, the author makes recommendations for hospitality industry in post-crisis period and suggests the ways to avoid bankrupting or other serious problems in the future.

Key words: Covid-19, hospitality industry, hotels, staff awareness, sustainable development, crisis, consequences, activities in post crisis period.

Introduction

A crisis is an unforeseen event that causes restlessness among the people of an organization. Different types of crises can happen to an organization, all of which require adept management to keep the company working toward its goals. Understanding crises and ways of resolving them can help the organization prepare for any type of situation.

A crisis is a sudden and unplanned event that results in the instability of an organization and can be caused by internal or external factors (Indeed, 2021). Reasons and lengths of crisis can be quite different. Therefore, any type of crisis can influence an organization; therefore, it is necessary to know how to overcome the obstacles and solve all problems in order to keep the company working. To prevent serious damage to the company, it is important to address the factors that instigated the crisis and prevent further escalation. Author's research is devoted to finding activities in post-crisis period to protect the company from failure.

The aim of the article is to find out and to analyze the hospitality sector response to Covid-19 crisis on the example of Neiburgs Hotel in Latvia. The following objectives were put forward:

- To conduct a literature review on relevant topics.
- To reveal the key concepts of the crisis management.
- To study how the chosen enterprise has introduced different approaches to adapt to the consequences of the pandemic.
- To conduct a primary research - survey for the selected organization.

For this research information about the Covid-19 crisis in different countries was taken from different sources. The experience of separate hotels and the whole chains which managed to survive during the crisis was analyzed and due to this studying, the recommendations were given how to overcome the problems and predict unexpected crises. Besides, this study provides a comprehensive review on the situation in the hospitality sector related to staff awareness, which is going to be provided by means of conducting survey questionnaires and analyzing it.

Methodology

The author used both, secondary and primary research. For secondary research the author used official database www.emerald.com. For the primary research the author sent questionnaire for the staff to understand issues they encountered with. Having analyzed the survey it is seen that there are serious problems but the staff tries to overcome the obstacles and continue the work successfully. The total collecting of information took a week from 15 till 25 December, 2021. First of all, the questionnaire was printed, and then the administration distributed the questionnaire among the staff. Namely, the papers were given to food and beverage manager of Neiburgs Hotel who spread them among the personnel. After filling the questionnaires they were collected and returned to the author. 10 respondents answered 11 questions but none suggested any advice or recommendations. The answers of respondent were measured in percentage points.

Literature Review

The hospitality industry is a major part of the world economy. Broadly defined, the hospitality industry embraces a wide variety of accommodation facilities, from resorts and hotel complexes to Airbnb homestays; food and drinks services and facilities, including restaurants, fast food outlets, bars and cafes, coffee shops and nightclubs; and travel and tourism, such as package holiday tours and ocean and river cruises. At the same time, a hospitality offer is often an important component of a large variety of sporting, entertainment and leisure, events and venues.

Traditionally, many of the elements within the hospitality industry have essentially been considered as luxuries, which people can enjoy when they have fulfilled the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Jones & Comfort (2020), for example, suggest that "a defining aspect of the hospitality industry is… that it focuses on ideas of luxury, pleasure, enjoyment and experiences, as opposed to catering for necessities and essentials". However, the Covid-19 crisis has called such a characterization of the hospitality industry into question (Gaille, 2020).

There are still no consolidated figures about the economic decline due to Covid-19 crisis at global level. However, various informed estimates vary between declines of 50 and 80% depending on the source and when the estimates were made. In July 2020, the European Travel Commission estimated a decline of over 50% in 2020. The total nights spent in tourist accommodation in the EU 2020 were 50% of the 2019 level, with domestic tourists at 67% and international at 30%. In October 2020, the OECD estimated a decline in international tourism of some 80% (Knezevic, Antonucci, Cutrufo, Marongiu et al., 2021) (see Fig. 1).

Figure 3.2   Change of nights spent in tourist accommodation 2020-2021
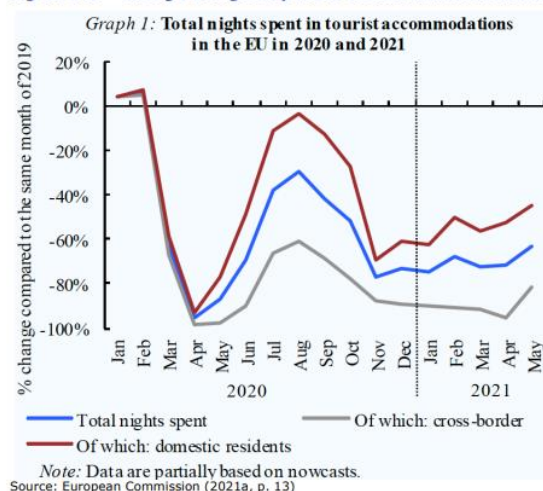
Figure 1. *Total nights spent in tourist accommodations in the EU in January 2020-2021 May (Source: OECD, 2020)*

The decline in tourism is not just driven by restrictions put in place by various levels of governments (local to national), but also by changes in tourist behavior. This can be seen in the decline of international flight bookings, hotel occupancies, hotel prices, etc. One picture of how these aspects changed in 2020 and 2021 compared to pre-Covid 19 times is shown in Figure 2. According to the UNWTO Tourism Recovery Tracker, in Europe, hotel searches where down by

68% in May 2021 compared to 2019 and hotel bookings by 73%. Other sources point to a reduction of bookings in the EU of 60% to 90% compared to previous years (OECD, 2020) (see Fig. 2).
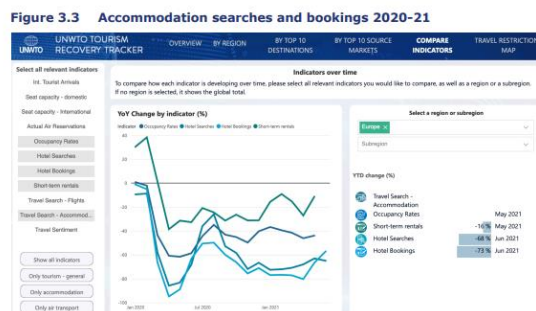
Figure 2. *Accommodation searches and bookings in January 2020-2021 May (Source: UNWTO, n.d.)*

Tourism in Latvia is considered as one of the country's economic development opportunities, priority service sector and significant source of export revenues, which increases country's gross domestic product. The tourist industry has a huge multiplier effect – its growth stimulates demand for catering, transport, healthcare, entertainment, and trade services (Monciunskaite, 2021). In January 2022 tourist accommodation establishments hosted 49.9 thousand Latvian residents, which is 63.3 % more than in January 2021. The number of nights spent by them comprised 86.8 thousand, and it rose by 45.3 %, compared to January last year. Latvian visitors stayed mostly in Riga (31.4 %), Jūrmala (17 %), Liepāja (6.6 %), Cēsis municipality (5.2 %), Sigulda municipality (4.2 %) and Daugavpils municipality (4.2 %). Most foreign visitors came from Lithuania (4.5 thousand), Estonia (3.6 thousand), Germany (3 thousand), United Kingdom (2.2 thousand), Ukraine (1.9 thousand), Russia (1.6 thousand) and Poland (1.5 thousand) (***Latvian Public Broadcasting, 2022).*** Most foreign visitors were hosted in Riga – 81.9 %, Jūrmala – 4.4 %, Liepāja – 2.8 % and Sigulda municipality – 2.6 % (ibid.) (see Fig. 3).
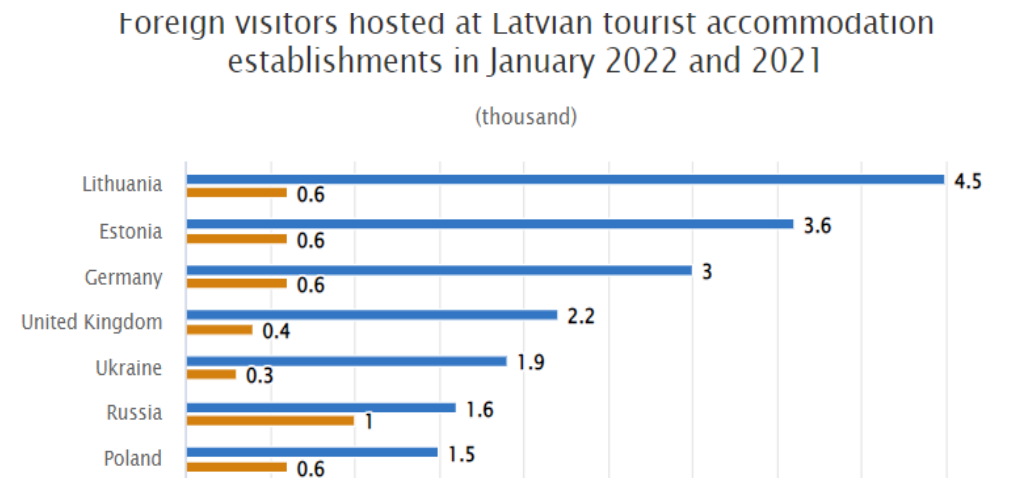
Figure 3. *Foreign visitors hosted at Latvian tourist accommodation establishment in January 2022 and 2021 (Source: Latvian Public Broadcasting, 2022)*

Because of Riga's tourist appeal, the hospitality industry is critical to the city. Before the epidemic, there was significant progress in the Latvian industry from 2017 to 2019. The number of hotel visitors has increased by 10.7 percent during 2017 (2 577 338) to 2019 (2 853 333) (CSB, 2020). In 2019, Riga received 1 697 156 tourists, accounting for 59.1 percent of all visitors in Latvia (csb.gov.lv, 2020). Russia (14.4 percent), Germany (12.5%), and Lithuania (10.8 percent) had the highest number of visits in 2019 (CSB, 2020). The average occupancy rate in Riga in 2019 was 58.9 percent, with the highest and lowest rates being in July (75.9 percent) and January (42.1 percent), respectively (ibid.).

Results

A key objective of this research is to investigate the hospitality sector response to Covid-19 and planning for a post-crisis period. For this purpose the survey questionnaire was offered to the staff of the Neiburgs Hotel Latvia (see Table 1). As during Covid-19 pandemic a lot of hotels were bankrupted or closed for a time, it was rather difficult to get a lot of information; therefore, the number of people involved in the survey was limited. The staff evaluated the situation correctly and together with the administration tried to maintain the work of the hotel and to supply the customers with high quality services without increasing the prices.

Table 1. *Questionnaire (Source: made by author, 2022)*

Question (1-11)	Variants of answers	Answers' value (points)
How long have you been working for this company?	• 5 and more • 3-5 years • 1-3 years • 6 months-1 year	7 0 2 1
What are your duties?	• Administration • Human Resources • Finance • Logistics • Food and Beverage • Front Office • Other	4 0 1 0 2 2 1
Do you think that changes are necessary for the company during crises?	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree	0 5 5 0 0
Communication and discussion of problems with the staff should be obligatory	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree	8 1 1 0 0
Transparency and clarity in explaining the reasons of changes by administration to the employees are vitally important	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree	6 4 0 0 0

Were your salaries reduced during Covid-19 pandemic?	• Yes • No	9 1
Did the number of employees become less?	• Yes • No	10 0
Did the qualities of services become worse?	• Yes • No	1 9
Did the prices of services become higher?	• Yes • No	0 10
Would you advise your hotel to your friends, relatives, etc	• Strongly agree • Agree • Neutral • Disagree • Strongly disagree	9 0 1 0 0
What other crises management methods could be used in the hotel you work for the hotel to survive?	• Write your own answer	1

The answers of the staff to the questionnaire show that the staff has been working in the hotel for more than 5 years, all ten employees were experienced and knew their field of operation very

well. Among the respondents there were four people from Administration, two from Front Office, two from Food and Beverage and a bookkeeper and a worker. All of them realize that changes are necessary, and the activities of the administration should be transparent for all the staff and the administration discussed all problems with the employees, therefore they referred to all changes in the hotel with understanding. The pandemic decreased the staff's salaries, the number of employees, but the hotel made its best to preserve the quality of services and the prices. The staff highly appreciates and is proud of their hotel and strongly advises it to other people. To avoid the consequences of any crises the administration and employees think together about new management methods which will help the hotel work successfully not only to survive but to work successfully.

Conclusion

The aim of this article is to find out and analyze the hospitality sectors response to Covid-19 crisis of the example of Neiburgs Hotel Latvia. Scanning the literature of relevant topics helps to understand concepts of the crisis management. The author conducted a survey among the employees and has come to the following conclusions. Companies should be prepared to sudden and unplanned crises of different types. As a hospitality industry is a major part of world economy the Covid-19 crises had a devastating impact of economics and society across the world. The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted some internal contradictions. Crises management can provide a consistent mechanism to deal with crises and increase the response to disasters. The tourism sector, extremely dynamic and constantly adopting to new demand, suffered greatly during Covid-19 crises because of lockdowns and restrictive measures. The Covid-19 crises in Latvia caused bankruptcy of some hotels and reduction of the staff. The Hospitality Industry currently faces uncertain future and it is difficult to make detailed practical, operational and strategic recommendations. Post-crises activities should be connected with digitalization rethinking marketing strategies and innovations. The survey arranged in Neiburgs Hotel has shown that in general the employees agree with the administration's work and understand the necessity of changes.

Recommendations

Having analyzed Covid-19 crises the author has come to the conclusion that these recommendations can help to prevent failure in hospitality industry in future. First of all it is necessary to stay as open to new ideas as possible. Besides, it is essential to remain optimistic and confident. Involving all the members of the staff in brainstorming is obligatory. In addition investing in digital future should be made by all means.

The value of having a far-reaching digital presence is recognized because it helps the direct bookings. To improve digital presence it is necessary to have a regular digital media schedule, look after the customers and let their opinion shine online, diversify the online distribution channels, invest into the own website and work on a direct booking strategy. In order to rethink the marketing strategy it is vitally necessary to work on the own digital marketing campaigns, find the right message for the audience, to establish synergies with other businesses and take advantage of tourism promotion initiatives.

To stand out from the competition, the hotel needs to show how it differentiates itself for the better. Finally, implementing innovative solutions can help work successfully; therefore, it is required to adopt touchless technology, optimize the revenue with day-use services, put the guest at the center of the strategy and stay for lookout for new trends.

Limitations and Future Research

This paper is limited in current data as it is rather difficult to find appropriate information about hospitality industry in 2022 as there is no deep and detailed research in hospitality industry regarding the level of decrease in this sphere yet. In terms of future research, there are numerous options. First and foremost, market research should look into consumer perceptions and companies' responses to new realities. Furthermore, it is possible to investigate stakeholder concerns about the hospitality industry before, during, and after the crisis. In order to determine the scope of the problems caused by the Covid-19 crisis, it is also necessary to investigate individual hotels and hotel groups in various countries. It is also necessary to develop employment-related strategies and programs. Moreover, it is necessary to research, analyze, compare, and disseminate the work of successful hotels.

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COVID-19 CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR IN RIGA: THE CASE OF RADISSON BLU LATVIA CONFERENCE & SPA HOTEL

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Abstract. The coronavirus pandemic and the strict self-isolation measures introduced in connection with it dealt a heavy blow to the hotel business. In this written work, the author will talk about the crisis during the pandemic and how it can be dealt with. Also, in this work, an interview with the administrator of the Radisson Blu hotel is presented.

Keywords: crisis management, Covid-19, hospitality industry, Radisson Blu Latvia Conference & Spa Hotel

Introduction

Crisis management is the management of an enterprise aimed at overcoming or preventing a crisis state, manifested in insolvency, bankruptcy, and unprofitability. It also implies the forecasting of crisis situations and the development of strategies for their containment and anticipation, and in the conditions of the crisis itself, the neutralization or minimization of its consequences.

The author decided to conduct a study on how the hospitality industry survived this pandemic. This was a global problem for all hotels and the author was personally interested to know how the enterprise was able to survive the crisis, namely what restrictions they had during the pandemic, how many visitors there were, etc. The author is sure that this research will help to find out and understand how the hospitality industry can change the approach to crisis management in the future.

The aim of this research project is to analyze how Covid-19 has affected the hospitality industry in Riga, more precisely, how the Radisson Blu Hotel Latvia has dealt with all this. To achieve the main goal the author of this research paper used primary and secondary research methods. The literature review about the Covid-19 in hospitality industry, Covid-19 and the ensuing design changes to hospitality spaces and recovery management plan for crisis have been

analyzed for this research. In addition to this, the author prepared a questionnaire for the Radisson Blu Latvia Conference & Spa hotel. The research objectives are:

1. To study the literature on the topic of crisis management;
2. To find out how the selected hotel suffered Covid-19 crisis and how it dealt with it;
3. To conduct primary research;
4. To draw conclusions and formulate recommendations for the selected hotel.

Literature Review

Economically, the hospitality industry is the source of a large number of jobs, and while precise numbers are difficult to gauge, some trade estimates convey an impression of the scale of the jobs involved. Such trade estimates suggest that, across the world the hospitality industry employs some 212 million people (Comfort, 2020).

Virus spread was unknown crisis type, and how analyses show there were not good predictions and qualitative plans for resolving problems. When the crisis hit, companies were mainly focused on business and money, and only, when significance of stakeholders started to grow organizations understood, why culture of company and its people are important. Corporate social sustainability has been viewed of an increased importance within the corporate field, and many of the leading companies in the hospitality industry have developed sustainability programs aimed to address governance issues and to design them into their business strategies, as well as environmental, social and economic factors (Katsadze & Milojevic, 2020).

In Europe, there were large hotel operating companies that have been as supportive as possible to their hotel teams, providing profit protection plans, business continuity plans and other useful guidance. While the problem is outside of the hotel's boundaries, hospitality professionals need to be clear on how to tackle these issues, which have an unpredictable expansion level. Under an emergency situation, we have to stand up for business continuity (Guerra, 2022). Verbeke (2022) suggests that the contactless communication will be favored and the use of apps will be intensified. Therefore, the guests should be more ready to perform a lot more pre-arrival and arrival activities on your own devices. App functions already in use today include:

- Opening your room door;
- Replacing the TV remote control and other commands in the room, (sound, light, blinds)

- Replacing physical menus;

- Calling the staff for table/room service;

- Virtual meetings with colleagues or with hotel staff ;

- Exchanging messages and information, e.g., emergency messages;

- Acknowledging physical presence in the premises (also useful for security reasons).

There are a number of measures a hotel can take to let guests feel more secure:

- The guests might find their room sealed after the room attendant has cleaned it so that they know that they're the first persons entering it;

- The guests might be informed of the type of products that have been used to clean and disinfect the surfaces;

- The guests will be able to indicate to the hotel that they do not want anybody to enter their room during their stay, possibly sealing the room themselves;

- They might find their remote control, if there is one, put into a sealable disposable bag that guarantees that they'll be the first to touch it after cleaning;

- The minibar menu could very well be augmented and the guests will be able to have masks, gloves, sanitation gel at their disposal in the room;

- Some guests may even ask for or receive equipment to clean some surfaces themselves;

- Bath linen could be presented in disposable bags;

- Staff will have to be retrained on the importance of these new ways of dealing with their daily activities (Verbeke, 2022).

Changes at the restaurant may include the following:

- Menus on screen displays, on boards or via apps;

- Tableware in sealable envelopes. Some restaurants are preparing for cutlery, glasses and table sets in disposable and sealed bags, like chopsticks in Japan;

- More staff in attendance and individual sealed food portions instead of large food containers (à la buffet style);

- Chefs reinventing menus to suit this reality;

- Customers entering the restaurant from one direction and exiting from another;

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- Restrictions on numbers of tables and people, affecting the layout and design of the establishment (Verbeke, 2022).

In the last 12 months, Covid-19 has continued to affect the industry with periods of lock-down, international, and local restrictions on movement and a situation of emergency due to financial difficulties. Decreased revenues have led to uncertainty in the whole hospitality and travel ecosystem. The operational and financial challenges, coupled with the timing and speed of recovery dependent on vaccination rollouts and acceptance showcases a wary timeline and return to "normal". The industry is at a turning point and leaders need to focus on recovery for the future (Deloitte, 2022).

The last few months have made a clean sweep of the past decades of hotel strategies. As of today, almost all of the experience acquired during these years has become nothing more than castles in the air. While it can be frustrating to dismiss such hard-earned and valuable insights, it can also be invigorating to start anew. By elaborating the right strategy, a hotel can be reopened on rock-solid ground and differentiate itself from the competition. While doing so, it is paramount to stay in the right mindset: stay as open to new/disruptive ideas as possible and remain optimistic and confident going through the crisis (Mauguin, 2022).

Since Covid-19 hit, digital booking has become an even bigger part of the overall volume. As physical travel agencies are closing one after the other, it is easy to understand that the already declining traditional ways to book hotel rooms are now doomed. Eventually, digitalization will take over the whole hotel booking market. To take advantage of this new status-quo, the hotel should absolutely pull every string to optimize the hotel's digital presence. Below there are a few tips on how to improve on that issue:
- It is essential to have a regular digital media schedule, to dedicate some time every day to posting content online and to use a social media scheduler to improve efficiency and save time;
- Looking after your customers and letting their opinion shine online is also important. The hotel can get listed on review websites and social media to improve its online reputation;
- It is possible to diversify online distribution channels: Even though OTAs' conditions are less than ideal, it is still important to be present on many of them to optimize the hotel's online presence. This kind of window can be a gateway to more profitable selling

platforms, particularly the hotel's own website. Indeed, almost half of the users that see the hotel on OTAs check the hotel's website for more information and possibly secure better deals;

- It is necessary to invest into the hotel's own website: far too often, hotels neglect the importance of a visually pleasing and efficient website. A platform should be well-organized with the right tools and pictures that ultimately convince its users to stay at your hotel. The investment put into enhancing online reputation is hardly ever wasted;

- Finally, it is important to work on a direct booking strategy: in line with the last recommendation, having good incentives for users to book directly on the hotel's website can significantly increase the margins (Mauguin, 2022).

In the face of one of the biggest crises in recent memory, the hospitality market needs to rethink how it operates and build anew. In the long-run, hoteliers will need to adapt to fit to the new status-quo and forgo any hope of going back to "normal". The expression "new normal" is being thrown around a lot lately, echoing that feeling. However, the new normal in the hotel industry is not what we are currently experiencing: it is what hoteliers choose to do with what they are being given. The hotels should aim to be part of this new normal by thinking like a visionary and making bold moves to adapt their strategy (ibid.).

Methodology

The main goal of this research is was to find out how to recover in the hospitality industry after the crisis that arose due to Covid-19. To achieve this goal the author of this research used primary and secondary research methods.The qualitative research method was based on the literature review and interview. For the research, the author had to prepare a questionnaire for the Radisson Blu Latvia Conference & Spa hotel. The questionnaire consisted of questions related to how the pandemic affected the hotel and how they recovered from it. Secondary research method is literature review. All the literature is taken from the Internet. This research paper focuses on how the pandemic has affected the hospitality industry and how the industry is coping with its aftermath.

Results

Radisson Blu Hotel Latvia is a family-friendly hotel offering a flat screen TV, a refrigerator, air conditioning in the rooms and free of charge Wi-Fi. The hotel features room service and a concierge. Plus, guests can enjoy a pool and breakfast, which have made this a popular choice among travelers visiting Riga. Parking is available for guests with a car. The questions for the interview and the answers can be seen below:

- How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected your hotel?

Of course, it did. In connection with the pandemic, airports were closed; thereby there were much fewer tourists. The local residents came to us only if a person fell ill with Covid-19 and he had nowhere to "sit out" quarantine. Accordingly, due to the low attendance of the hotel, the income decreased and there was a small crisis.

- Were you able to overcome the crisis?

As you can see, we were able to survive the crisis and continue to live well.

- Did you have any hotel restrictions during the pandemic?

Yes, we did. We took all the precautions, all the sanitary standards, everyone was wearing masks. All norms were met. Besides, we checked the temperature of all the guests with a non-contact thermometer. Workers worked strictly in gloves and they changed every hour. There were antiseptics everywhere and in every room.

- What advice can you give to other hotels?

Don't try to lower prices, as it will take you a long time to recover and build forecasts based on up-to-date data. In fact, it just takes time to recover from such a pandemic.

Conclusion

In summary, the main purpose of this research was to study the general concepts of the hospitality industry, crisis management in the industry and how the pandemic has affected the hospitality industry, as well as crisis management planning.

The research showed that the hotel industry has survived the crisis in the face of Covid-19. The main thing is not to give up and look for a solution. Covid-19 has affected not only the hotel industry, but other industries too. For recovery after a crisis, the most important thing is time.

The author is sure that with the right attitude and a competent approach, the crisis will only be an opportunity to identify weaknesses and make the necessary adjustments to the organization of work in time.

Recommendations

After analyzing all the research results, the author has come up with the following recommendations to prevent problems in the future:

- Test your own understanding of the market situation during a crisis by sharing information with colleagues, as well as discussing differences of opinion and formulating appropriate conclusions.
- Form and maintain professionalism at all levels, this will allow you to correctly respond to any problems and surprises during a crisis.
- Keep track of competitors and constantly make small adjustments as the market develops.
- Keep the main focus during the crisis on the main services - rooms, restaurant services, conferences, banquets.

Limitations and Contribution for the Future Research

It would be interesting to study individual hotels, hotel groups in different countries in order to find out the depth of the problems caused by the Covid-19 crisis. This research work can help to find options for how the crisis in the hotel industry can be avoided in the future.

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AN ANALYSIS OF POST-PANDEMIC BUSINESS RECOVERY STRATEGY IN GEORGIAN RESTAURANT "KHINKALNYA" IN "AKROPOLE RIGA"

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Abstract. The research aper gives the analysis of post-pandemic business recovery strategy of Georgian chain restaurant "Khinkalnya", which is located in a big shopping mall "Akropole Riga". It highlights the impact of Covid-19 on hospitality industry and restaurant businesses, describes the pandemic crisis worldwide as well as in Riga, and demonstrates how restaurants survived after pandemic which strategies "Khinkalnya" restaurant used after Covid-19 outbreak to get back on track in business. The first part explains overall situation in the market during and after COVID-19 pandemic. It also gives a review about possible innovations for business to recover and some theory. The second part provides information on the examined restaurant and analysis the conducted interview and questionnaire, which are critically evaluated and described in pie charts and diagrams. The third part states author's conclusions and recommendations for the restaurant.

Keywords: post-pandemic recovery, business strategy, Covid-19, lockdown

Introduction

In the last 3 years world of business in hospitality is suffering due to Covid-19 disease that caused global crisis. A lot of off-duty hours of pandemic led to closed enterprises. Among hospitality businesses accommodation/hotel sector was harmed the most, although some restaurants did not pass these tough times and lost everything, notwithstanding the fact that some types of them were able to operate on a delivery system mode by cooperating with other companies like "Bolt Food" or "Wolt". That kind of catering survived. However, everything during lockdown was depending on the country's governmental restrictions regarding Covid-19.

Nowadays, the pandemic is over and there are no more restrictions, but still hospitality industry is recovering from the past. National Restaurant Association made survey, where they found out that costs in food and beverage sector are higher right now than in pre-pandemic times in 88% of restaurants which they examined. Restaurant managers/entrepreneurs claim that business conditions will not return to normal situation (Adams, 2022).

Situation in Latvia, especially in Riga is not very bright as well. After Covid-19 the old town in Riga became almost a ghost-part of the city, because most of the cafes and restaurants did not survive big bills for electricity and rent, that they were forced to close.

This research article will focus on post-pandemic business recovery strategies in restaurants with an example of Georgian chain restaurant "Khinkalnya", which is located in Riga's biggest shopping mall "Akropole Riga". The topic is important to understand how chain restaurants in shopping centers like "Akropole Riga" survived after the pandemic period in Riga, Latvia. The author would like to know which recovery strategy was selected by the given restaurant and whether it has been successful or not. Namely, it would be interesting to find out which departments had been affected more than the others, which innovations had been used and how in general they managed to cope with Covid-19 crisis? Moreover, it is the student's personal interest of researching precisely "Khinkalnya" restaurant because she was working there for 4 months in 2022 after all Covid-19 governmental restrictions had been removed.

The research question is "How has business strategy of "Khinkalnya" Georgian restaurant in "Akropole Riga" helped them to recover after Covid-19 crisis?" The project aim is to analyze how Georgian restaurant "Khinkalnya" has recovered from Covid-19 impact and suggest ways of further business performance improvement.

Literature Review

Covid-19 is a coronavirus-caused respiratory illness. It is distinguished by temperature, cough, loss of breath, and it can proceed to pneumonia and respiratory failure (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Coronavirus started to spread actively in the world since December 2019 to March 2020. The highest peak of the disease was in the middle of March 2020, when almost everywhere in the world lockdown was announced by government.

In Latvia and all over Europe all restaurants were forced to be closed to save people's health. However, it was very complicated for entrepreneurs, because in some countries, government did not pay anything to private businesses, so they can survive during an official lockdown period.

Globally, we can look at Latvia's GDP growth in the last 10 years. From Figure 1, it is clear that in 2019, before the pandemic, index was 2.6. Nevertheless, in 2020 it dropped to -2.2 which is a

big downfall that cannot be observed in other last 10 years (see Fig. 1). It happened that way, because that year the borders between countries also were closed, and the import and export almost stopped. That all led to the negative impact on GDP.
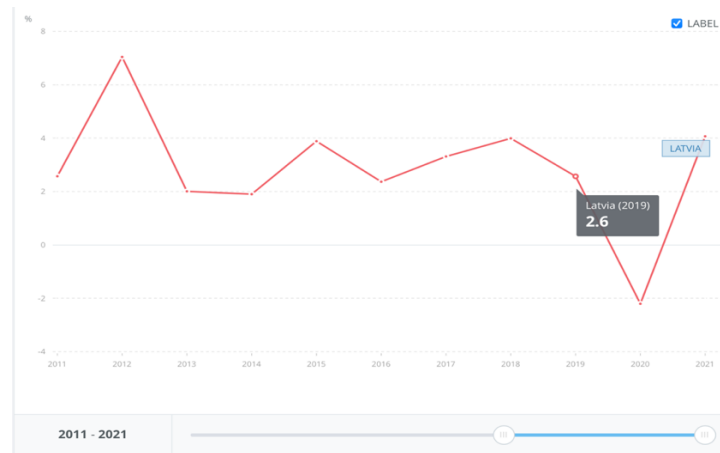
Figure 5. *GDP growth (annual %) – Latvia (Source: The World Bank, 2021)*

Big consequences of coronavirus and several lockdowns led to problems in running hospitality businesses. Covid-19 weakened the whole hospitality sphere worldwide. Although, during the complicated times everyone somehow tried to survive and thought of ways out. For example, among restaurants a new trend of delivery service appeared. It is when the restaurant could be closed for visiting, but was still working only to deliver their food to people's homes or for take-away. That is how most of the restaurants in Riga worked during the first lockdowns and nowadays some of them try to follow this kind of trend after the pandemic, to get more profit and get back on track. The most popular way to deliver meals is to cooperate with third-party organizations like "Bolt Food" or "Wolt", which precisely focus on delivery. Both brands in Latvia have updated their policy since the times of lockdown and started to cooperate with more restaurants.

Overall, cooperation was popular those times and most of the companies supported each other that way. Hotels were also thinking of new ideas, how to operate and not to lose everything. For instance, Riga Wellton Riverside Spa Hotel invited families or friends, who lived together to enjoy a closed diner in one of their hotel rooms. The idea was to organize a real dinner, like in a restaurant, with beautifully served table and a full menu, but in distanced mode. Another hotel "Roma", located in an Old Town offered rooms for free or for very low price for those, who got

sick because of Covid-19 and needed the place to isolate themselves from their families, to keep them safe.

Discussing restaurants again, in Latvia most of them moved to the shopping malls after the pandemic. It is much easier to be in the shopping mall because they always have their own marketing strategy and marketing team, which thinks all the time how to attract precise customers. Many businesses, which work separately in some kind of privately owned premises, have realized that they will fail by their own, because the location is hard-to-get and it is complicated to build marketing plan without good professionals (Kupčs, 2021).

Restaurant business after pandemic differs from the one that used to be before. Customer preferences of buying food and going out to the restaurants have changed in every part of the world. It is clear, that people missed going out for dinner, but on the other hand some Covid-19 habits will remain steady for a long time in our lives. Due to that, new trends and innovations in restaurants are strictly important to follow or otherwise the enterprise won't be able to thrive back to normal.

Customers' purchasing habits have been altered. The restaurant owners should consider new innovative ways of customer attraction to get back on track. For instance, they can use robotic waiters to bring meals to guests. It not only protects the health of customers and employees, but it also speeds up the food-serving procedure, particularly during busy hours. Dine-in is no longer recommended during the post-pandemic period because consumers prefer to avoid the infection. As a result, the presence of numerous service delivery options can be categorized as service innovation (Zamani et al., 2022).

In addition, any kind of innovation is a mechanism, which will provide a restaurant with very useful competitive advantage, when business can face uncertainty of economic situation that can occur at every second after pandemic period (Islam, Zawawi & Wahab, 2021). If innovation is not exercised, the issue will grow and create obstacles to improving the speed, precision, and efficiency of goods that can be conveyed with the aid of sophisticated technologies and knowledge in a specific area (Ming, Shao & Der, 2018).

Post-pandemic performance of some Latvian restaurants indeed is in a bad condition. Lithuanian projects like chain restaurant-pizzeria "Can Can" or "Caif Café" cafes did not survive on Latvian

market and had to close their premises. Furthermore, the aftermath of shutting down those two businesses could be the lack of bringing innovations into the plan of action.

"Khinkalnya" restaurant has been operating for 8 years; they have 90 restaurants in countries like Lithuania, Ukraine, Belorussia, Latvia, and Poland. It is the largest chain of Georgian restaurants in the world. "Khinkalnya" franchisee in Riga was opened in 2019. The menu differs a little bit from the original version and the average price for one check ranges from 5 to 25 Euros.

Methodology

The research uses primary and secondary data collection. For primary research the student prepared a questionnaire of 15 questions for employees of "Khinkalnya" restaurant, where she asked mostly about their work in the company after all lockdowns, how the environment in restaurant changed, for how long they have been working there and so on. Additionally, the author asked the staff about their opinion related to restaurant recovery after pandemic and with which factors they could grow and improve the business.

Moreover, the student conducted an interview with director/manager of restaurant to know the details of their operations before, during and after Covid-19, how they survived, what profit they had, what kind of recovery strategy they had/have and overall, in which state they are today. In summary, total collecting of information took approximately 1 week from 18.04.2023 until 25.04.2023.

The secondary data collection is composed of collected studies and Internet research papers related to the subject of this article. Online materials were examined using key terms such as impact of Covid-19, lockdown, post-pandemic business strategies, how restaurants survive after pandemic and Covid-19 crisis.

Results

From the interview one can understand that pandemic harmed the business very much. The restaurant even could not work during lockdowns on delivery services, because there was restriction by the government; all restaurants in shopping centres closed fully, due to the fact that shopping centres themselves were closed and there were no people, so no profit, except for the supermarkets providing food and essential commodities, inside those shopping malls. Therefore,

profit has declined almost on 80 000 Euros and until nowadays the "new normal" differs from the life before Covid-19 and year 2020. However, all efforts of the management team were useful and all changes in the restaurant have led to the slow growth of profit. For example, for the last 1.5 years the profit increased back to 43 500 Euros. Moreover, the restaurant manager told the author that after the pandemic there was one moment, when Akropole shopping mall turned off the lights in the restaurant, because restaurant did not pay electricity bill, because they had problems with the budget. Yet, the manager decided to give his own money to the restaurant and got all his staff members together to say that salaries would be paid a little bit later, than promised.

Judging by the answers, "Khinkalnya" chain restaurant in Riga is really trying to improve their business strategy in different ways. They have changed the design, removed "weak" positions from the menu, purchased more prestige Georgian wines, improved menu, increased prices, varied beverage menu and even started to sell wine and spirits by the bottles for "take away", like in a shop. They even created new shelves with these bottles of alcohol by the entrance of the restaurant, which also can attract new customers.

Another good advantage is that the restaurant manages to work with social media, yet in the author's opinion it is a mess, as they are doing it by themselves without special promotion or help of marketing professionals. They posted their first photo on Instagram on August 24, in 2022 and right now they have already 47 posts, but only 146 followers. Furthermore, activity under the posts is very low. In average, they have only 10-12 likes under each content creation. Such statistics tells us, that their Instagram profile is not developed the way it should be. There are also a lot of other factors, which influence their social media success. For instance, when you see their Instagram page it is hard to understand what the purpose is, because nothing is written in bio about the brand. In addition, they communicate on different languages: Russian, Latvian and English. For social media like Instagram is not the case of success. Every professional brand, which wants to gain followers and recognition, needs to decide on which one language they want to present information about themselves and in general identify the target audience to tailor the content specifically to them. "Khinkalnya" has beautiful photos, but it is not enough for success and all the photos on profile should be structured and thought through. Accordingly, the student

would recommend them to hire marketing manager or social media specialist, who can revive their Instagram activity.

Manager of "Khinkalnya" said that there were 13 employees working in café, however only 10 of them participated in the student's survey. In the Question 3 the author wanted to find out which position person, who fills in this questionnaire, is working on. It turned out, that there are only 2 people working as waitresses and 7 employees are cooks. In that way, the manager decided to save on hall workers, but invest more in the kitchen working force. Based on this information the student can assume, that there were no errors regarding the service from the manager's perspective, but maybe the kitchen needed more improvement and "hands" to provide more qualitative food quicker.

Everybody who had worked in "Khinkalnya", even before the pandemic restrictions, before March 2020, answered that they were paid during lockdowns, but only 1 person answering Question Nr.6 said, that his salary did increase after this all stopped and 2 people answered that their salary increased only "a little bit" (see Fig. 2).
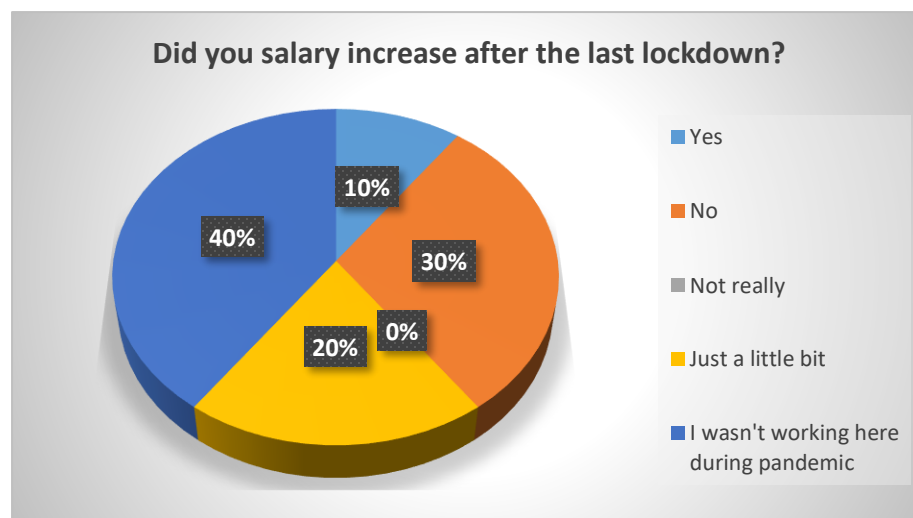
Figure 2. *Results of the Question 6 in questionnaire (Source: made by the author, 2023)*

The student allocated 3 multiple choice questions in the questionnaire, demonstrating employees' opinion about the situation of crisis and the way of surviving in it. For example, on Question 10: "Don't you think that the menu in "Khinkalnya" should be improved somehow?" 4 people noted

that they would add some new dishes/food to the existing menu and 2 answered that they would lower the price there (see Fig. 3).
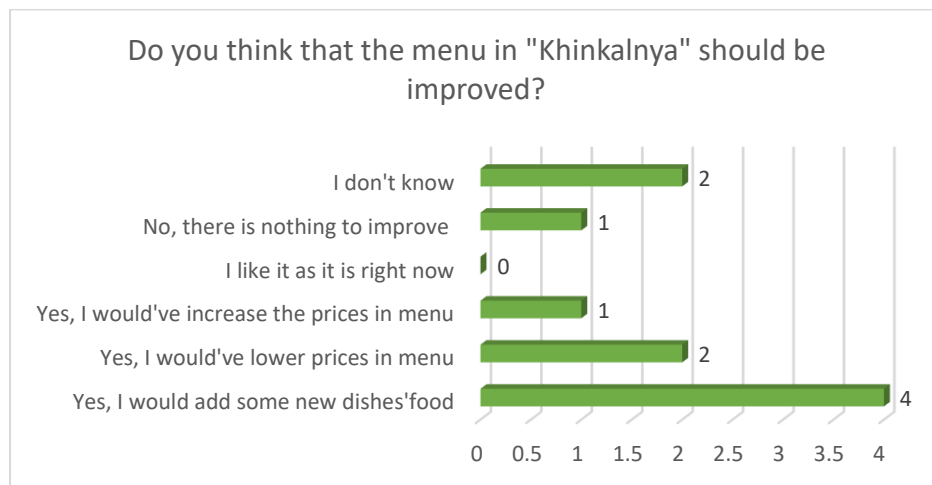
Figure 3. *Results of the Question 10 in questionnaire (Source: made by the author, 2023)*

Results for the Question 12 "Which aspects can help to recover restaurant business after Covid-19 pandemic?" were as follows: 31% of respondents answered that online and social media promotion can help the restaurant to recover. And 3 aspects like "cooperation with other companies", "improvement of restaurant service" and "advertisement" were marked by 17% of respondents (see Fig. 4).
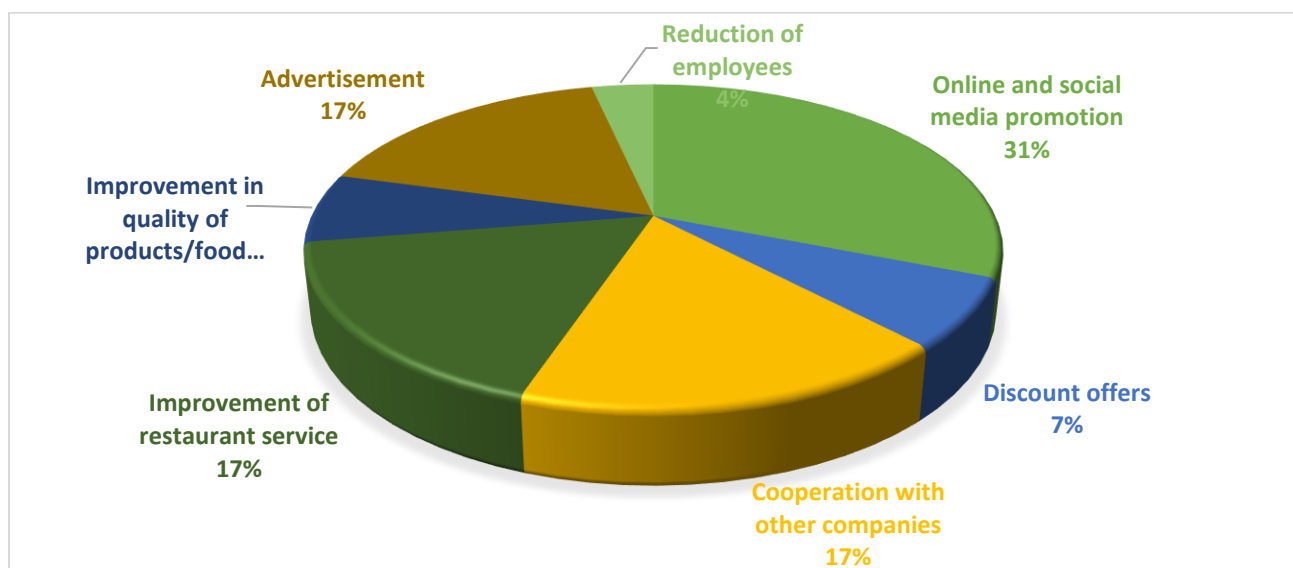
Figure 4. *Results of the Question 12 in questionnaire (Source: made by the author, 2023)*

Answering the Question 13 "Which innovations could be used in "Khinkalnya" to attract more visitors?" 39% of all answers were "active and coherent usage of social media" and 28% of respondents noted that innovations in design could attract new customers. Only a few people suppose that QR code menus could be an advantage (see Fig. 5).
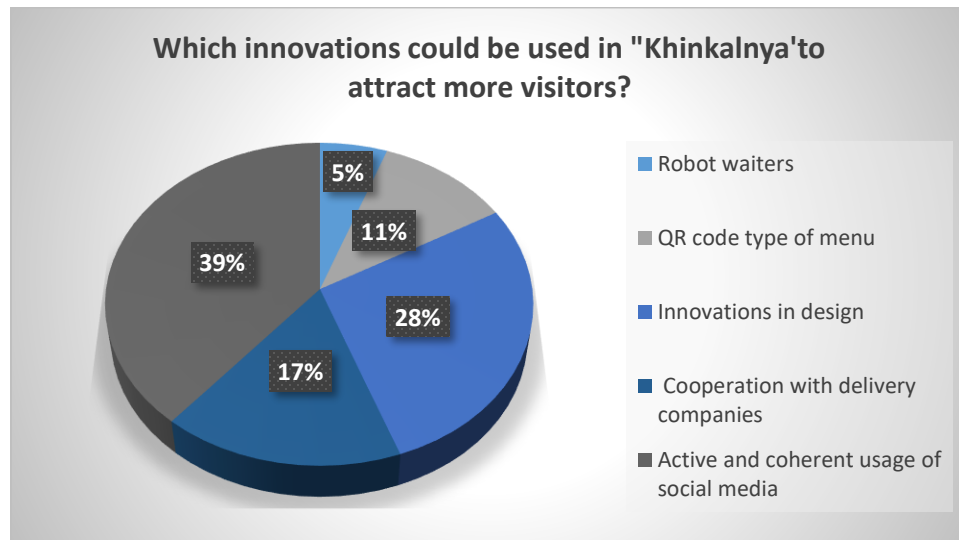
Figure 5. *Results of the Question 13 in questionnaire (Source: made by the author, 2023)*

Regarding the guest satisfaction, employees of the restaurant confessed that customers report them about their positive attitude on a regular basis. The fact that there are almost no complaints also witnesses this. Also, employees think that it is crucial for them if the restaurant promotes their business on social media nowadays.

Conclusions

A foreign chain-restaurant "Khinkalnya" is doing well after pandemic, comparing to other related businesses in Riga like "Can Can" pizzeria, which closed their restaurants in 2023, because they went bankrupt. At some moment "Khinkalnya", was on the verge of closing as well, because income was too low. However, the restaurant has survived the hardest times, the manager putting his money in business the last minute, when "Akropole Riga" wanted to turn off the lights in the premise and even the staff supported the fact that they would accept salary a little bit later than usual. Because of everyone's support and healthy relationship the company did not give up. Although, evaluating the whole situation and comparing "Khinkalnya" successful recovery with "Can Can" failure, one can state that this can be due to the fact that

"Khinkalnya" has one restaurant in Latvia, whereas "Can Can" had many and it was difficult to run them all.

Moreover, from an interview with the manager one can conclude that they really built a whole strategy of recovery which helped them to get profit back. Although, profit is not as high as it was before Covid-19, yet still it is growing more and more every month. Their business strategy consists of deep menu modification, adding new beverages like wine, changes in design, slow increase of prices on the products and opportunity to develop social media activity. All these new implementations helped the business to get back on track and did not allow them to lose their true customers. Nevertheless, in the student's opinion they do not attract more new guests than before, because their representation online is not very professional as it could be, plus they do not have any advertisement. The only way how they can be known for other people is via such delivery apps like "Bolt" and "Wolt" or in real life, through word-of-mouth. What is more, based on questionnaire results, most of employees think that it is important for restaurants to develop social media nowadays to recover from the pandemic.

In conclusion, the author will answer the main question of the research: How has business strategy of "Khinkalnya" Georgian restaurant in "Akropole Riga" helped them to recover after Covid-19 crisis? – Their business strategy helped the management of restaurant understand how necessary it is to change and improve every detail in business to move on and get out of the crisis. Therefore, all their small improvements have helped them until nowadays earn back their revenue with most of the guests being satisfied. However, the author thinks that the restaurant could do better by investing more in online promotion and advertising, as well as collaborating with professionals in this sphere.

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AN EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN "MAX CEKOT KITCHEN" RESTAURANT POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY

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Abstract. The article gives an evaluation of the role of employee training and development in "Max Cekot Kitchen" restaurant post-pandemic recovery. It highlights the importance of employee training and development, how the pandemic affected the development of the restaurant, what changes followed and what role employee development has played in this. The article provides a theoretical basis for further research, as well as a review of other studies on the subject, an analysis of the data collected, or rather a public survey and interview with the chef of Max Cekot Kitchen restaurant, as well as analysis of results, conclusions and suggestions for improvement based on the research data. The findings of this study could provide useful insights for Max Cekot Kitchen and other businesses in the hospitality industry on the importance of employee training and development in the post-pandemic recovery. The study also contributes to the existing literature on the role of employee training and development in the hospitality industry, providing a unique perspective on the impact of the pandemicon employee training and development practices.

Key words: Covid-19 crisis, employee training, post-pandemic recovery

Introduction

The hospitality industry has been one of the most severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. As the industry recovers from the pandemic, it has become crucial for businesses to invest in their employees' training and development to improve their performance and provide a better experience for customers. This study focuses on the role of employee training and development in the post-pandemic recovery of Max Cekot Kitchen.

The aim of this study is to analyze Max Cekot Kitchen's current employee training and development practices and assess their impact on the restaurant's post-pandemic recovery. To achieve this, a literature review was conducted to understand the importance of employee training and development in the hospitality industry. The main objectives of this study are to perform a literature review on the significance of employee training and development within the hospitality industry and to assess the current training and development practices at Max Cekot Kitchen restaurant by conducting interview with the chef. Additionally, the study aims to analyze

the existing training and development practices of other hospitality workers through a survey and compare the findings with the data obtained from Max Cekot Kitchen. Furthermore, the study seeks to examine the potential impact of the pandemicon the training and development of workers during this time.

Main research questions: What is the significance of employee training and development within the hospitality industry, particularly in the context of post-pandemic recovery? How does Max Cekot Kitchen currently approach employee training and development practices in response to the Covid-19 pandemic? What is the impact of employee training and development on the post-pandemic recovery of Max Cekot Kitchen? How has the pandemic affected employee training and development practices in the hospitality industry overall?

This study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a comprehensive assessment of the role of employee training and development in the post-pandemic recovery of Max Cekot Kitchen. The quantitative research method involves conducting a survey among colleagues and acquaintances to understand their views on employee training and development and how the pandemic affected their jobs. The qualitative research consists of conducting an interview with the chef of the restaurant to gain insights into the importance of employee training and development in the post-pandemic recovery of the restaurant.

Literature Review

The hospitality industry has been heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, with many businesses struggling to stay afloat due to the decrease in customer demand and the various restrictions placed on dining establishments (Rosenbaum & Nguyen, 2020). In response to these challenges, restaurant owners and managers have been forced to adopt new strategies and techniques in order to ensure their businesses remain competitive and profitable (Zhao et al., 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a shift in the perception of employee training and development in the restaurant industry, with many owners now recognizing it as a valuable investment in their business rather than a mere cost center. This change in mindset is driven by the need for highly skilled employees who can effectively adapt to changing circumstances and

provide exceptional service to customers in the post-pandemic era. Some restaurant owners viewed training as an expense rather than an investment in their business, as noted by Knechel and Salterio (2016). However, the pandemic has underscored the critical role of well-trained employees, as highlighted by Rosenbaum and Nguyen (2020).

The restaurant industry underwent significant changes during the Covid-19 pandemic, and safety measures were the biggest priority. The employees were required to follow new safety rules, such as changing gloves, wiping tables with fresh towels, and wearing masks to be effective. Managers had to ensure these rules were followed while also managing orders and staff. Restaurants faced new risks as high-traffic surfaces presented customers and wait staff with exposure risk. However, cleaning products, soaps, and sanitizers were in short supply since the beginning of Covid-19, making it hard for restaurants to find what they needed. Even customers had a difficult time finding them.

The pandemic has brought to light the need for stronger employee training and development programs in the hospitality industry in Latvia. A study by the Latvian Institute of International Affairs (LIIA) found that many employees in the sector lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to adapt to the changes brought about by the pandemic (LIIA, 2021). The Latvian government has allotted money to support employee growth and training in the hospitality industry in response to this need. The Ministry of Economics has launched a program to provide grants for employee training, with focus on digital skills and adaptation to new technologies (Ministry of Economics, 2021).

The type of educational and growth opportunities provided to workers in Latvia's hospitality industry has also changed as a result of the pandemic. Many employers are now placing a strong emphasis on educating staff members in subjects like online ordering platforms, digital marketing, and health and safety guidelines (LIIA, 2021). The role of training and development in enhancing employee motivation and engagement has also been emphasized in the literature. A study by Asif et al. (2019) found that training programs had a significant positive impact on employee motivation, which in turn had a positive impact on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The Covid-19 pandemic has presented unparalleled challenges for the hospitality industry, resulting in increased levels of stress and burnout among employees. However,

implementing effective training and development programs can serve as a valuable tool to alleviate these adverse effects and enhance employee well-being (Kapoor et al., 2020).

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the work. To gather quantitative data, a public survey was conducted among colleagues and friends to understand their attitudes toward training and employee development and how the pandemic affected their job.The survey questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions, allowing respondents to choose from a set of predetermined response options. The survey data were collected anonymously and analyzed using statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, with various kinds of charts being used for visual analysis.

In addition to the survey, an interview was conducted with the chef of Max Cekot Kitchen restaurant. The interview aimed to gain insights into the chef's perspectives on the importance of employee training and development in the restaurant's post-pandemic recovery. The interview questions were open-ended, allowing the chef to provide detailed responses and share personal experience and opinions. The interview data were transcribed, and thematic analysis was performed to identify common themes, patterns, and key findings.

A comprehensive review of theoretical materials such as books, internet publications, and various articles was undertaken too. This involved gathering relevant literature on employee training and development, on post-pandemic recovery in the restaurant industry and on other related topics. The literature review helped to establish a theoretical framework for the research, to identify knowledge gaps, and to inform the development of survey questions and interview prompts.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the role of employee training and development in the post-pandemic recovery of Max Cekot Kitchen restaurant. The survey provided numerical data and statistical insights, while the interview offered rich qualitative insights from the perspective of the chef. The literature review served as a theoretical foundation and contextualized the research within existing knowledge. Together, these methods have provided robust and multi-dimensional understanding of the research topic.

Results

The survey was conducted to collect data from different people to understand how the pandemic generally affected their job availability and working conditions. Most important it was to find out if any special training was used to train staff during and after the pandemic and to understand how necessary people thought training and employee development was.

A total of 35 respondents took part in the survey. According to the data received, 91.4% of all respondents were people in the age category of 18-24 years old. The survey was conducted on Instagram and was also sent to colleagues in person. There were 15 questions in total. The answers were collected in 2 days. Basically all the questions were in the form of multiple choice. The author's first thought was that most likely most of respondents had experience with different types of personnel training. Most of the respondents had experience in the hospitality industry, and to be more specific, most indicated that they had worked in restaurants as cooks and waiters, which fits the research topic perfectly.

Based on the survey data, several key conclusions can be drawn regarding employee training and development in the post-pandemic period:

- Majority recognition of training importance: The survey indicates that a significant majority of respondents (51.5%) consider staff training and development to be one of the most crucial aspects in the hospitality industry. An additional 30.3% rated its importance as 4 on a scale of 1 to 5. This suggests that people highly value the importance of training in the sector.

- Room for further emphasis and investment: While many respondents acknowledged the significance of training and education, the majority rated its importance at a moderate level (level 3). This indicates that there is room for further emphasis and investment in training and education initiatives. By prioritizing these areas, businesses can meet the evolving demands of the industry and ensure growth and success.

- Need for continuous learning and skill development: The relatively low percentages at levels 1 and 2 suggest that only a small proportion of respondents perceived no change or a decreased importance in training and education. This implies that the majority of individuals recognize the need for continuous learning and skill development, particularly in the context of business development and recovery after the pandemic.

- Adaptation to pandemic-related changes: The survey data reveals that the hospitality industry had to make significant changes in response to the pandemic. The most common change was an increase in health and safety measures (65.6%), followed by changes in service format (31.3%) and reduced staff or operating hours (34.4%). This highlights the industry's ability to adapt and make necessary adjustments to continue operating during challenging times.

Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of prioritizing employee training and development initiatives in the hospitality sector. By recognizing the value of training, investing in continuous learning, and adapting to changing circumstances, businesses can position themselves for growth and success in the post-pandemic period.

Based on the interview with the chef of Max Cekot Kitchen restaurant, several conclusions can be drawn to evaluate the role of employee training and development in the restaurant's post-pandemic recovery. The interview and colleague's opinion shed light on the importance of employee training and development in Max Cekot Kitchen restaurant's post-pandemic recovery. During the pandemic, the restaurant faced challenges in transitioning to take-away service and had to adhere to safety protocols upon reopening. The restaurant had a pre-existing culture of staff training, which played a crucial role in maintaining high standards and adaptability. Effective communication and a shift in staff work have fostered a positive work environment. Initially, there was a decline in tourist customers, but as restrictions eased, tourism gradually revived. The chef emphasized the significance of training and continuous development. Lessons learnt include the need for realistic expectations and efficient training strategies when reassembling the team.

Conclusions

Employee training played a crucial role in the restaurant's recovery by ensuring that the staff remained skilled, adaptable, and capable of upholding the restaurant's standards. While there were no special trainings specifically designed to revive the restaurant, the continued focus on training and development proved instrumental in maintaining quality. The restaurant's commitment to training extended beyond Covid-19-related measures. For example, training sessions on topics like Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) were conducted to

reinforce essential hygiene and safety practices. This training not only ensured compliance with health regulations but also instilled a strong sense of responsibility and awareness among the staff.

The pandemic has prompted a shift in the way the chef interacted with the staff. Recognizing the importance of effective communication during challenging times, the chef increased their efforts to engage with the staff on a deeper level. This included providing thorough explanations, offering motivations and giving clear instructions. This shift in staff work and communication was likely a response to the uncertainty and challenges posed by the pandemic. By establishing stronger lines of communication and nurturing a positive work environment, the restaurant was able to bolster employee morale and maintain a cohesive team throughout the recovery process.

Employee training and development are crucial in the hospitality industry's post-pandemic recovery. They enhance guest experiences, ensure compliance with health protocols, foster adaptability, keep pace with technology, and foster innovation. By investing in employees, businesses can thrive in a changing environment.

The chef has emphasized the crucial role of training and development in ensuring the success of the restaurant. Training is viewed as an integral part of the restaurant's operations, and it also helped a lot during the recovery period, because they had to train new employees as well as comply with certain restrictions in force, encompassing both directed training with specific tasks and continuous training for ongoing skill enhancement. Directed training provides employees with the necessary knowledge and expertise to execute their duties effectively, while continuous training fosters a culture of learning and improvement within the restaurant.

In general, more attention was paid to safety and health, as a result of which, the quality of service has increased. The pandemic has brought valuable lessons, particularly in relation to personnel management and expectations. The chef has discovered that despite investing in employees, there were uncertainties regarding their behavior and commitment during the reopening phase. Some employees did not return, driven by fear and skepticism about the recovery.

Overall, employee training and development at Max Cekot Kitchen is one of the most important aspects of the restaurant's development and recovery from the pandemic. But the trainings are

not specifically post-pandemic in nature, their purpose is to improve the work of the restaurant employees and to improve the quality of their services, i.e. in total they have not changed, if we compare them to the times before the pandemic. It is important to note that the attitude of the chef to his staff has changed, communication has improved, and the author believes that in connection with this chef began to teach something more often, explain his tasks, it's all training and probably without it would have taken more time to recover and develop.

Having interviewed the chef and from his own observations as an employee of the restaurant, the author has come to the conclusion that the training and education system in this enterprise is incredibly well developed. It is a well-honed system that does not fail, but works well. The chef trains the cooks and other staff, the sommelier trains the waiters regarding wine, and there are meetings every week to discuss various points after service. But for all that, the author will make some recommendations, for example, to continue to do various kinds of training as well, but to devote more time to developing the speed of the cooks, which will improve their work during service, during preparation, as well as reduce the expectations of the guests. The author also considers it important to hold trainings for the cooks about wine, as they should at least know what wine goes with the dish and in what glass it is served. It is also important to talk to the team more often and discuss problems and future goals.

The author would like to make recommendation to chefs from other restaurants. It is important to recognize the importance of ongoing training and development for the staff, to invest time and resources into equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to adapt to new challenges and meet evolving customer expectations. Also it is vital to assess the changes in the restaurant's operations and identify areas where specific training is needed. Paying attention to effective communication and management practices, provide explanations, motivations, and instructions to the staff, fostering a loyal and understanding relationship is necessary too. This can contribute to a positive work environment, increase productivity and staff loyalty. Additionally, it can be advised to encourage culture of continuous learning and skill improvement among the staff and to empower them to enhance their expertise, fostering a motivated and engaged workforce.

The main limitation of this study was the collection of information, as the main topic covers the time after the pandemic, which is actually happening now, and there is not enough scientific

research on the topic, especially in Latvia, particularly on the subject of training and development of employees.

To further expand the scope of the research, it would be desirable to survey more people working in the hospitality industry and conduct interviews with chefs from other restaurants in order to draw more precise conclusions. This requires more data and also the ability to compare different restaurants among themselves.

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THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN SUPPORTING POST-PANDEMIC HOTEL BUSINESS: THE CASE STUDY OF FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON KIGALI

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Abstract. This research aims to study the role of technology in supporting post-pandemic business on the example of the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali. The study aims to determine the role of digital transformation in improving hotel performance during crisis moments and the impact of hotel service digitalization on guests and management. The research is a qualitative study in which questionnaires were distributed to guests and staff of the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali hotel in Rwanda. It has been found out that when appropriately used as a crisis management tool, digital transformation enables organizations to overcome the expected, such as pandemics.

Key words: role of technology in supporting post-pandemic, crisis management, digital transformation

Introduction

The world is becoming increasingly interconnected as a result of globalization. We are now living in a 'global community', as the saying goes. It has profoundly affected how we live, act, and trade. Despite its many advantages, globalization has also brought several worldwide crises (Mena et al., 2022). The causes of the disasters can be anything from wars to political or economic issues to terrorism to transportation disasters to diseases. Managing crises in an organizational context is known as 'Crisis Management'. Because no organization is impervious to all kinds of crises, having a crisis management strategy that is both effective and innovative is essential (Coombs, 1999). To stay afloat, the management of most hospitality enterprises engaged the use of digital technologies as a crisis management tool to enhance performance and returns.

The Four Points by Sheraton chosen for this research has been employing technology to adjust to the shifting needs of their visitors and continue operating during the epidemic. Due to the impact of Covid-19 virus outbreak in the world hospitality sector was one of the most affected business sectors. Covid-19 crisis showed the vulnerability and how regulated and close-linked the sector is with the overall issues in the country and the world. Globally the hotel industry has been

greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and hoteliers are searching for methods to use technology to help their operations going forward.

Aim of the article is to study the role of technology in supporting post-pandemic business on the example of the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali. Research questions are as follows: How does technological advantage make for successful business advancement? What are the digital technologies adopted in the hospitality industry? What is the positive and negative effect of technology in Four Points by Sheraton Kigali?

Objectives of the study are:

- To review literature, articles and journals about Covid-19 crisis management and digital transformation in the hospitality industry;
- To find out the various technology used in the hospitality industry in the Covid-19 crisis;
- To investigate the role of the current technology in supporting post-pandemic business in Four Point by Sheraton Kigali;
- To find out the impacts of digital transformation on the human work force in the hospitality industry in general and at the chosen enterprise in particular.
- To design, collect and analyze primary data from Four Point by Sheraton Kigali;
- To provide conclusions and state recommendations.

Literature review

The Covid-19 epidemic has seriously affected enterprises all around the world, requiring them to quickly adjust to a new normal. Technology has been essential in facilitating these adjustments and assisting firms in regaining their footing.

The Four Points by Sheraton Kigali is located in the city's financial district of Rwanda in close proximity to several embassies. This convenient five-star hotel is the perfect base to explore everything Kigali has to offer. The Four Points by Sheraton Kigali features accommodation with an outdoor swimming pool, free private parking, a fitness centre and a terrace. Featuring a restaurant, the 5-star hotel has air-conditioned 154 modern rooms and suites with free Wi-Fi,

each with private bathroom. The accommodation provides room service, a 24-hour front desk and currency exchange for guests.

The Four Points by Sheraton Kigali is the case study used in this literature analysis to examine the role of technology in assisting post-pandemic company operations.

Digital Transformation: for businesses to survive and prosper in the post-pandemic era, digital transformation has emerged as a critical approach. The Four Points by Sheraton Kigali adopted digital transformation by integrating a variety of technology into every aspect of their business. Contactless check-in and check-out procedures, mobile keyless access devices, and digital payment alternatives were some of these technologies. While maintaining health and safety standards, these technologies reduced physical touch, increased productivity, and improved visitor experiences (Smith, 2022).

Remote employment and Collaboration: the spread of the epidemic hastened the uptake of remote work and online collaboration platforms. In order to allow workers to work from home and still maintain productivity and efficiency, The Four Points by Sheraton Kigali created remote work policies for specific job functions. To enable smooth communication and cooperation among team members, the hotel used video conferencing platforms, project management software, and cloud-based document sharing. With this strategy, the hotel was able to function effectively and keep guests happy during lockdowns and travel restrictions (Johnson, 2023).

Improved Client Engagement: in the post-pandemic period, technology has been crucial in helping businesses improve client interaction. The Four Points by Sheraton Kigali used social media channels, tailored email marketing, and virtual tours to interact with customers and advertise its services. The hotel was able to maintain brand recognition, give online customer service, and deliver customized recommendations to visitors by utilizing technology. These initiatives supported the hotel's rehabilitation and expansion by drawing in new clients and keeping hold of existing ones (Gomez, 2023).

Predictive Analytics and Data Analytics: for organizations looking to make wise decisions in the post-pandemic environment, data analytics and predictive insights have evolved into indispensable tools. The Four Points by Sheraton Kigali collected and analyzed guest information, booking habits, and market trends using cutting-edge analytics techniques. By using

these findings, the hotel might modify its marketing tactics, improve its pricing, and customize the guest experience to suit changing consumer tastes. The hotel was able to make strategic decisions, maximize income, and gain a competitive edge in the difficult business environment because to this data-driven approach (Chen, 2023).

Hotels and restaurants are embracing digital technology like sensors, linked devices, and data analytics tools to perform health and safety standards including temperature checks, contact tracing, and routine sanitization. Technology is not just boosting safety but also the guest experience in Rwanda's hotel sector. Hotels and restaurants are embracing digital technologies, such as chatbots, virtual assistants, and personalized recommendations, to deliver customized services and improve convenience. Thus, technology is crucially assisting Rwanda's post-pandemic hospitality industry. Technology is also assisting the Four Point by Sheraton Kigali and Rwandan hospitality organizations in adjusting to shifting consumer expectations and behaviour in a sector that is quickly changing by encouraging safety, improving guest experiences, and streamlining operations.

Methodology

This part discusses the research design, context, sample and data sources as well as data collection techniques. The research methodology will include qualitative research techniques.

The study aims to examine digital transformation as a management tool during the crisis (the Covid-19 pandemic) in the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali Hotel. In studying the role of technological transformation in the hospitality industry during the pandemic, the author has conducted qualitative research that enables the researcher to formulate significant conclusions. The study is focused on the management and guests of the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali hotel; the student used two sets of questionnaires to collect data for the primary research.

The sample size included hotel guests and staff. 19 respondents were sampled, with 10 being hotel guests and 9 being staff of the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali Hotel. The questionnaire consisted of 20 open-ended questions. It took the guests and the staff 2weeks to respond to the questionnaire

According to Burns and Grove (1999), data collection is gathering information using questionnaires, interviews or observation. According to Talbot (1995), if a researcher, wants to obtain information about attitudes, feelings, beliefs and perceptions that are not immediately observable the value of structured questionnaires cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, the data for this research was collected using structured questionnaires as a primary data collection tool.

For the secondary research, the author used research articles in the hospitality industry in Rwanda, descriptions of the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali as well as the works of various authors on the topic of crisis management and role of technology in supporting post-pandemic businesses, digital transformation etc.
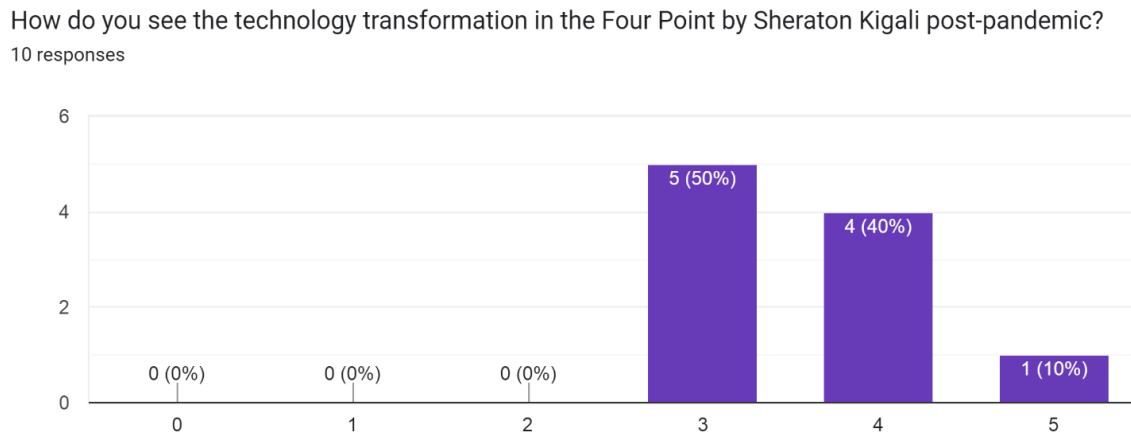
Results

This part deals with analyzing and interpreting the results from the data collected. Questionnaire analysis has been used in this part to address the study's objectives. The results will be presented in two sections in the same order as the questionnaires.

Responses of Customers. Based on the data from the survey of 10 respondents, the following conclusions can be made.
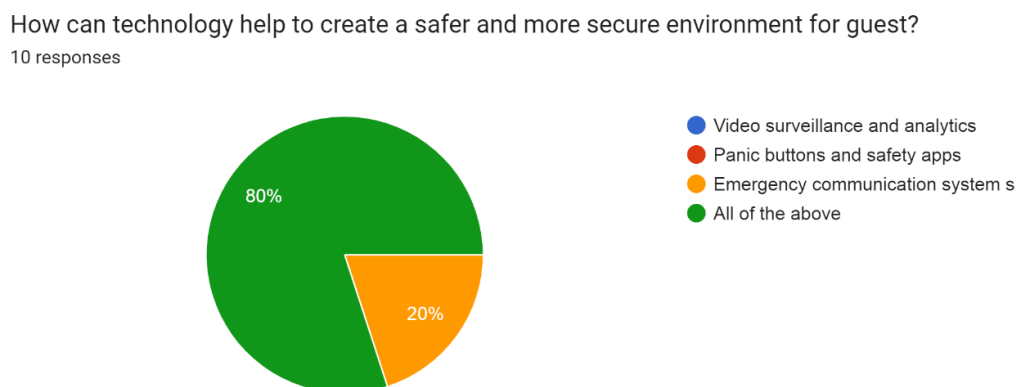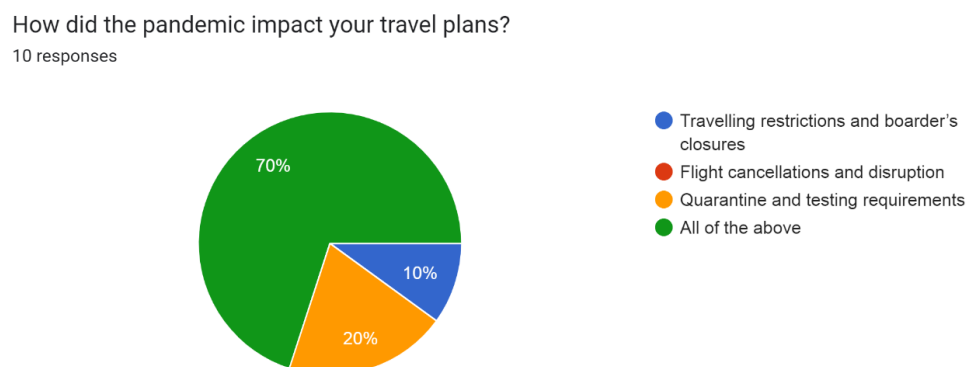

Figure 1. *Results for the question 'How can technology help create a safer and more secure environment* for *at the Four Point by Sheraton Hotel Kigali?' (Source: made by the author, 2023)*

Figure 1 shows how can technology help create a safer and more secure environment for at the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali (see Fig. 1). 80% of the clients selected all the various technology written and 20 % of them selected emergency communication systems.

How do you see the technology transformation in the Four Point by Sheraton Kigali post-pandemic?
10 responses

Figure 2. *Results for the question 'How do the guests see the technology transformation in the Four Point by Sheraton Kigali post-pandemic time?'(Source: made by the author, 2023)*

Figure 2 demonstrates how guests see the technology transformation in the Four Point by Sheraton Kigali post-pandemic time (see Fig. 2). Overall, 60% of the guests said 'very effective' to the services rendered with the technological transformation of the hotel, 40% of the respondents were neutral with their experience. This proves that the implementation of technology due to the pandemic was necessary to keep the safety of guests.


How did the pandemic impact your travel plans?
10 responses

Figure 3. *Results for the question 'How did the pandemic impact the guest's travelling plans?'' (Source: made by the author, 2023)*

Figure 3 shows how the pandemic impact the guest travelling plans (see Fig. 3). 10% were influenced by travelling restrictions and boarders' closures, 20% were affected by quarantine and testing requirement and 70% were impacted by all of the above. This shows that the pandemic affected many people from taking trips or leisure time.

Responses of Staff. The questions to the staff of the Four Points by Sheraton hotel Kigali dealt with the security measures related to use digital technology, staff adaptation to these technologies and how these technologies as a tool for crisis management enhanced the performance of the enterprise. Furthermore, use of digital technology has minimized corporate costs and has enhanced the enterprise's productivity. Hence, increased consumer satisfaction, security improvements, and privacy conditions in using guest information. Also, during the pandemic, the digitalized system of the hotel enabled the hotel to continue operating smoothly with few challenges compared to others.

How has the pandemic impacted your work at Four Points by Sheraton Kigali?
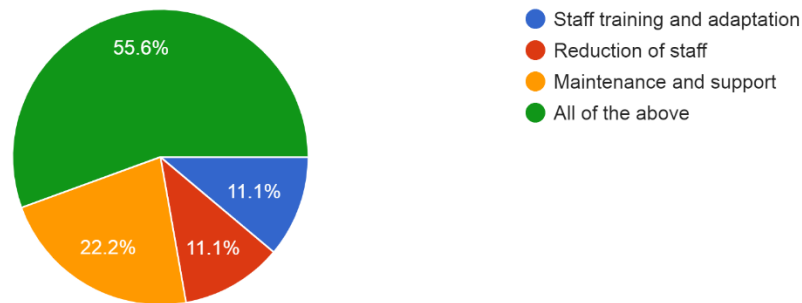9 responses
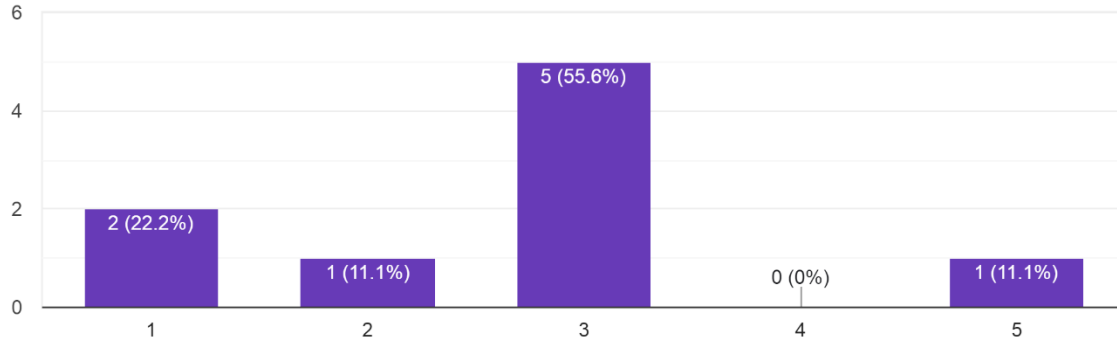
Figure 4. *Results for Questions'How has the pandemic impacted the work of staff at Four Points by Sheraton Kigali?' (Source: made by the author, 2023)*

Figure 4 shows how the pandemic has impacted the work of staff at the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali (see Fig 4). 55.6% of responds are neutral with the impact of the pandemic on their work, 11.1% agree to how the pandemic affected their work, 22.2% strongly agree with the pandemic making their working conditions difficult while 11.1% strongly disagree to the

pandemic affecting their work. This in general shows that the pandemic played a great role in influencing the working areas of the staff.

What are some of the challenges you have experienced in adopting the new technology tools in the workplace?

9 responses

- Staff training and adaptation
- Reduction of staff
- Maintenance and support
- All of the above

55.6%
11.1%
22.2%
11.1%

Figure 5. *Results for some of the challenges staff has experienced in adopting the new technology tools in the workplace at Four Points by Sheraton Kigali (Source: made by the author, 2023)*

Figure 5 shows some of the challenges staffs have experienced in adopting the new technology tools in the workplace (see Fig. 5). 11.1% of the respondents faced challenges in staff training and adaptations, 11.1% faced challenges in reduction of staff, 22.2% had problems in maintenance and support and the rest of the 55.6% faced challenges in all of the above. The staff faced a lot of challenges due to the implementation of new technology tool in the workplace.

What technology tools have you used to support your work during the pandemic?
9 responses
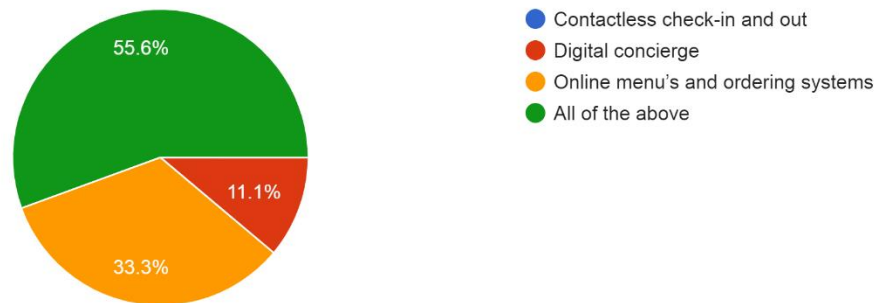
Figure 6. *Results for the type of technology tools the staff uses to support their work during the pandemic at the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali (Source: made by the author, 2023)*

Figure 6 shows the type of technology tools the staff uses to support during the pandemic at the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali (see Fig. 6). 11.1% respondents selected digital concierge, 33.3% were online menus and ordering systems and 55.6% choose all of the above. This showed that most of the staff was satisfied with the role technology played in keeping their customers.

Therefore, judging by the responds of both customers and staff it's possible to say that 50% of them approved of the new development in technology in the hospitality industry and the others didn't agree to the changes in the hospitality due to the fact that it reduced employability and not all customers are used to the new technology advancement.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to ascertain the role of technology in supporting post-pandemic hotel business on the example of the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali. The author's findings have proved that the role of technology in supporting post-pandemic reality enhances monitoring, quality of services and data management and facilitates decision-making.

Access to critical digital technology empowers executives to efficiently manage hotels and guests during the crisis. The obtained results are consistent with prior studies by the other scholars which prove that digital technology adoption at enterprises is beneficial to the companies.

The hospitality sector, especially enterprises like the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali, has been severely damaged by the Covid-19 outbreak. By enabling hotels to implement critical health and safety measures, improve guest experiences, and maximize operational efficiency, technology plays a significant role in assisting their post-pandemic recovery and adaptation.

This study has enhanced the student's understanding of the role of technology in supporting post-pandemic of the Four Points by Sheraton Kigali and how it boosts corporate performance in hotels when adequately and efficiently used. Additionally the research has found out that the less the age of the employee, the less difficult it is for them to cope with the new technologies. Consequently, the older the employee the more training is desirable. Furthermore, the study reveals that a blend of human and digital technology in the world today is vital for corporate growth and sustainability. The hospitality industry is an integral part of every economy that needs improvements to cater to unforeseen situations like the Covid-19 pandemic.

Therefore, all three research questions have been answered and it has been made clear that the adoption and implementation of social and environmentally friendly technologies are essential for hotel executives and staff.

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