The International Hospitality and Tourism Student Journal

The Impact of Covid Crisis Management Strategies on Small Family Run Countryside Hotels: The Case of Hotel Bernerhof

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Abstract

Crisis management has been explored through different industries concerning different types of crises, but there haven't been many studies done when it comes to crisis management in the hospitality industry. There has been even less research found on crisis management regarding the small family run hotels. In order to fill those gaps, the researcher is conducting research in the field of hospitality, using Hotel Bernerhof, a small countryside family run hotel, as a case study. This paper aims to explore the COVID-19 crisis management strategies of Hotel Bernerhof. Stakeholders have played a crucial part of the crisis management strategies, as well as flexibility and adaptability of the business. The researcher is more focused on long term results and sustainable recovery rather than on short term results. Therefore, hospitality resilience is explored alongside crisis management and strategic management. The researcher has chosen the Qualitative approach with in-depth interviews and reviewing of existing documents as a form of data collection. The researcher suggests more research to be done exploring Tailored crisis management strategies, Flexibility and Adaptability of a business.

Keywords: Crisis management, Strategic management, Hospitality resilience, Stakeholder involvement, External factors, Sustainable growth

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background information

With the improvement of the transportation, accessibility, infrastructures, and demands of people, tourism has been growing sharply and is considered as one of the largest in the world (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2013). Hotels are a crucial part of the travel and tourism industry that provide accommodation for the incoming tourists in the country. Small and medium hotels in particular, defined as companies with less than 150 employees, contribute significantly to the overall tourism industry in Switzerland (Fernandez, 2019). According to Peters (2012) and Chan (2011),

small and medium hotels, such as family-owned hotels, play a crucial role by generating employment and foreign exchange in Switzerland. Specifically, they comprise 81% of businesses registered in Switzerland and contribute significantly to the country's GDP (Fernandez, 2019). An overview of the tourism industry management is therefore only representative when the advantages and challenges of small and medium businesses are evaluated.

In general, crisis management can be defined as "measures of all types which allow a business to cope with a suddenly occurring danger or risk situation in order to return as quickly as possible to normal business routine" (Scherler, 1996) and

it is a crucial component of the tourism and hospitality industries, to apply in all destinations and organisations level (COMCEC, 2017).

In Switzerland, tourism and hospitality has a strong contribution to the economy (Le, 2020) and increased the tourism rate sector in GDP to 8.7% in 2019 (World Bank, 2019), witnessed approximately 63.4 billion USD in revenue and over 11.8 million tourists in 2019 (CEIC, 2020; Travelmag, 2020). When the pandemic began to spread to European countries, Switzerland hospitality was strongly affected by the disease (Switzerland Ministry of Tourism, 2020). The author has chosen the hotel Bernerhof, Grindelwald in Switzerland as a case study to easily analyse and clarify the aim of this paper. In addition, this paper will focus on issues in crisis management and future hotel recovery plans based on ongoing real-world issues such as low interest and involvement by stakeholders; Planning with pre-Covid-19 marketing strategies aimed at recovery has not yet been implemented.

1.2   Rationale of the study

Crisis can be caused by many different causes, such as; economical, natural disaster, manmade etc. Multiple studies have been made based on the economic crises, but when it comes to the pandemic the sources are limited (Wai Lai and Chou Wong 2020). Even though COVID-19 crisis is not the first crisis caused by a pandemic there is still a lack of research based on it. Not only do Wai Lai and Chou Wong (2020) realise that there is a lack of research, but they argue that there should've been more given the SARS outbreak back in 2002. When the research is present it argues that the government should have some impact as well, in a study by McKercher and Chon (2004, cited by Wai Lai and Chou Wong, 2020) it is stated that the government should be responsible in looking after the exaggerated circumstances that affect the tourism industry. Therefore, the research of hospitality strategy in COVID-19 is essential for this time to gain understanding for the hospitality stakeholders in solving the turbulence and recovering the industry. Moreover, these facts the author believes that further research into crisis management strategies would be helpful for all hospitality sectors, especially small countryside family run hotels.

1.3   Research aim and objectives

Aim of this research paper is to explore the COVID-19 crisis management strategies for small family run countryside hotels in the case of Hotel Bernerhof in Grindelwald.

To fulfil the aim of this study following objectives will have to be met:
-          To identify what external pressures that influence small family run countryside hotels will influence crisis management strategies in the case of the Bernerhof hotel
-          To identify key influencing factors from COVID-19 on the management of the crisis at Bernerhof
-          To analyse the resilience practices of Bernerhof post COVID-19 recovery for sustainable growth

Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical background

2.1.1 Crisis Management

Pursiainen (2018) states that the idea of a crisis can be applied in multiple ways relying on the discipline, field or context. "From a corporate point of view, a crisis can be seen as a turning point that can lead a company in either a better or worse direction" (Fink, 2002, cited by Pursiainen, 2018). Following Pursiainen`s statement that the idea of a crisis can be applied in multiple ways it can be said that the current COVID-19 outbreak has caused a crisis in the hospitality and tourism industry. Unfortunately, this crisis didn't turn companies for the better especially hotels and tourism related companies. According to UNWTO (2020) the very recent still ongoing COVID-19 outbreak has vastly reduced tourism, which directly decreases hospitalities chances of survival. Considering this turn of events, hotels must have taken actions to reduce the impacts of the crisis and re-establish the order after the crisis is finished. In order to recover from the crisis as soon as possible many have the crisis management plan. According to Ritchie (2004) in his simplified version of managing a crisis there are three basic steps to follow: prevention and planning, strategic implementation, resolution, evaluation & feedback. On the other hand Kash and Darling (1998) believe that even with a crisis management plan the managers who do not undertake the situation of a crisis seriously will be in a much worse position, when the crisis occurs, than those who address the situation on time and with utmost solemnity.

For Shepherd (2003) an endurance of a family-owned business is directly linked to their manforce and financial resources. In an article written by Gudmonson and Danes (2013, cited by Engeset, 2020) it says that if a family works together and uses their internal resources it helps to build trust, strengthen internal communication and cast partnerships. Engeset (2020) also mentions that not only is it important to have manpower and financial resources but the trust in

the team. Another pair of researchers has also found that a human form of capital invested in your staff, such as: involvement, tutoring, expertise and respect, is the foundational form of capital (Brewton et al., 2010; Danes et al., 2008). According to Mzid, Khachlouf and Soparnot (2018) social form of capital is the major one, but still find that the combination of three: social, financial and human is the key to maintaining a family run business.

2.1.2 Strategic management

According to Omalaja and Eruola (2011) strategic management is viewed as management of three subjoined components: strategy development, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation. According to Meyer et al. (1990) a portion of broken changes such as a COVID-19 pandemic requires an entrepreneurial reaction. After the pandemic has passed, longer term strategic changes may be required to navigate the competitive landscape that has emerged in the "New Normal", that has resulted from technological, sociopolitical, and institutional changes (Ahlstrom et al., 2020). In order to understand how the strategic management theories help companies assist the "New Normal", Hitt et al. (2020) inspected two major strategic management theories that have been dominant in the past thirty years. First theory is Resource-Based theory; according to resource-based theory, resources that are precious, uncommon, difficult to duplicate, and non-substitutable are the best for a company's long-term success. These resources can lay the groundwork for the development of firm skills that will translate into better over time (Edwards, 2012). Hitt et al. (2020) stated that many companies have been successful in short term adaptation to the pandemic, however, in the long run, they will almost certainly necessitate new resources and methods of application. As a result, resource management becomes even more critical. Second theory is Agency theory. The idea of agency theory is used to describe and address problems in the interaction between company owners and their agents. The most frequent example is the connection between investors, who act as principals, and business executives, who act as agents (Kopp, 2021). As a result, theory is expected to become increasingly relevant in the post-pandemic period, complementing agency theory. Short-term shareholder profits may be less essential than protecting the company's image and integrity, as well as taking steps to safeguard the company's long-term value creation potential, especially in the New Normal climate. Firms also demand agility in order to successfully develop and implement future strategies, which necessitates

fluidity, velocity, and attitudes that promote inventive thinking and endurance.

2.1.3 Hospitality Resilience and a disaster resilient hotel

Resilience is theoretically defined as the method and process of an organisation that has the ability to renew and maintain its image and redress the procedure and structure when facing the upheaval (COMCEC, 2020). Organisational resilience has been assessed as an important structure to keep an organisation operating reliably in all times and changing contexts over time (Burnard & Bhamra, 2011). The crisis will be played out according to a life cycle model with the sequence starting from the discovery of the nature of the problem as well as the process of resolving each stage of the crisis (Broker-Bullying, 2020; Karoulia et al., 2015; Fabry and Zeghani, 2019). On the other hand, resilience has been defined in different ways based on different sectors and industries and especially on the scope of that sector and industry (Fabry and Zeghani, 2019). Therefore, the author will focus on hospitality resilience through the crisis management process.

Understanding hospitality resilience's concept is a vital task, consequently, before evaluating a specific industry resilience in a specific crisis (Covid-19 pandemic), the author will briefly investigate the urban resilience concept which is the basic knowledge for hospitality resilience (Ntounis et al., 2020). According to Meerow et al. (2016) and Wardekker et al. (2020), based on multidisciplinary and applicability to different fields, urban resilience is expressed dynamically with its open boundaries under the capacity of urban apparatus as well as the engine and system to constitutes "ecological" and technical networks on the scale of time and space (Ntounis et al., 2021).

In terms of disaster resilience in the hotel sector, its concept emphasises the evaluation stage, the quality of quick recovery from upheaval and uncertainty, and responsiveness in operation systems against sudden crises to maintain the development (Kallioras, 2011; Karoulia et al., 2015). Furthermore, Foster (2006) and Hill et al. (2008), described the resilience from hotel perspectives through prevention, preparation, response and recovery process during and after the crisis to reduce the influence of that. From several studies, the concept of disaster resilience in the hospitality sector is closely related and compatible with six different aspects of capital and is built on the concept of urban resilience (Becken, Mahon, Rennie, & Shakeela, 2013; Biggs et al., 2012; Espiner & Becken, 2013; Holzinger & Laughlin, 2016). Moreover, it has been described as an important factor with conceptual diversity with 6 aspects: economic; social; human;

physical; natural; and cultural capitals with the stability to cope with crises, prevent potential risks, and recover from impacts. In recent years, resilience has been prioritised in the hospitality and tourism industry in general as well as in hotels in particular (Simme and Martin, 2010) to specific crises, especially health-related crises to address strategies that sustain development and support the recovery and response phases (Ntounis, 2021; Kongoley, 2015; Chen et al., 2020). It is clear that the nature of resilience is complex and diverse, therefore, Brown et al. (2018) identified the types of capital in hotel resilience based on the studies of Davoudi (2012), Pisano (2003) and Folke (2006) to understand its concept applied in "Building disaster resilience for the hotel sector model" and note in different aspects (Brown et al., 2018; Becken, 2013; Gunderson and Holling, 2002; Pisano, 2012) (Fig. 1).
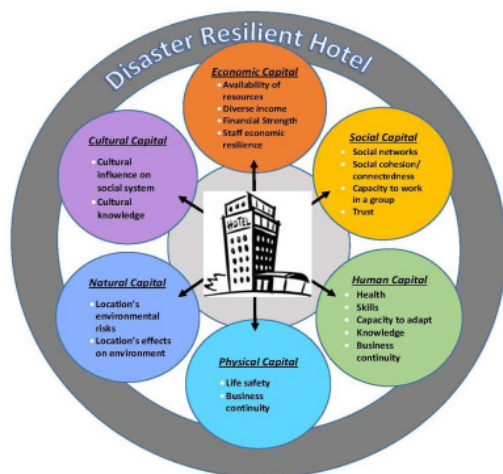

Fig. 1. Building disaster resilience for the hotel sector model; Adopted from Brown et al. (2018)

Although the concept of resilience is complex and varied, it is a system or long-term strategy that should be fully considered in light based on six different aspects when applying it to hotels (Bellwood et al. et al., 2004; Gagan et al., 2021) so that it can adapt to any situation, but it is increasingly avoiding the use of the phrase "recovery", choosing instead to use a new concept such as "renewal, regeneration and reorganisation after a disturbance".

King et al. (2021) believes that this transformation is crucial when applying in the case of the post-health-related crisis, especially in the case of COVID-19 when a crisis manager or hotel manager focuses on "returning to normal". In addition, when the pandemic occurs, it is not possible to recover the situation to before in a short-term, nevertheless, Hotel managers should investigate and consider the crisis as a feasibility

study in hotel reconstruction and promoting sustainable resilience (King et al., 2021).

2.2 Review of existing empirical research

2.2.1 Crisis management: process and recovery

Usually, big hotel chains have their own standardised crisis management plans, but some smaller hotels, in particular family run hotels don't have their own plans (Sweeney, 2020). Synthesising from previous empirical research, Sweeney (2020) summarised by issuing a number of steps in order for small hotels to form their own crisis management plan.

As a first step, it is important to establish your onlookers. Those are the people that you will be reporting to eg. stakeholders, customers, employees… Second step is to quickly report any disaster that has caused a crisis. It needs to be reported quickly and truthfully to the onlookers. Third step is to show empathy. It is very important for your employees and customers to recognise that you care. It will provide them with a sense of security. Fourth step is to respect the law. Enforce social distancing and wearing of the masks. If seen as unprofessional it may raise a sense of fear for your customers and employees. Fifth step requires you to examine your technicalities. Make sure that IT support is available if needed as well as other operators that you might require. Sixth step is to update or create, if not present, your social media accounts. Providing your customers with accurate and useful information and maintaining your brand's reputation. Seventh and final step is to make sure that no false information is spread. In times of crisis sometimes it is easier to say inaccurate information for a short-term solution. Doing that creates a risk of forming a crisis within a crisis.

The author of this "manual" believes that following these steps the creation of your own crisis management plan should not present a problem. While on the other hand Dagnachev Leta and Chu Chan (2021) criticise most of the existing post crisis management plans because they focus more on getting back to normal than preparing and adjusting to possible similar future situations.

On one hand getting back to normal is an extremely important and unavoidable part of the post crisis management plan, preparing for the future possible similar situations cannot be neglected. Their concerns are more than justified given the unstable situations with COVID-19. Where one month everything goes back to normal and the next one there is another wave and the restrictions are back on. According to Ritchie (2004) the crisis consists of three basic

stages such as: pre, during and post. In the pre-disaster part, it is usually determined the stage of preparedness for the disaster and in the post-disaster part the researchers try to thoroughly investigate the learned lessons and to ease the future disaster management. The problem of many crisis management researches conducted is that they have been conducted post-disaster which lacks the quality information in the mid-disaster part which is unquestionable the most important part. In a study conducted by Dagnachev Leta and Chou Chan (2021) most of the hotels have divided sectors in which they had different approaches. For example, in the HR sector they offered unpaid leave, started replacing high paid with low paid employees, reduced the number of working days, implanted technological solutions to reduce human involvement etc. On the other hand, in the marketing sector, initially the hotels started investing more in promotions when they thought the crisis was going to be a short term one. Upon realising it was going to last longer than expected they saved the marketing budget for the post crisis part because they realised that investing in the budget mid-crisis was a loss of money. In a study conducted by Kraus et al. (2020) it is found that once the COVID-19 started, family enterprises started the discussions with the stakeholders and other employees to see where they can cut their fixed expenses. For most of the companies, staff costs and rent were the biggest expenses that had to be brought down if they wanted to continue with work. In order to cut the costs, some family-owned businesses have consulted with their employees in hope to regain some useful information while others have been cutting on the employment and postponing any sorts of investments. In order to safeguard the operations some have been practising the work from home technique. While for some employers that form of working is feasible, for others e.g., hospitality employers, is not. Hospitality employers have proceeded to seek financial support from the government. In Switzerland employers have the right to seek the help from the government to cover their employee's salary up to 80% (Work.swiss, 2020). This enables the employers to save the money on salaries and employees have some sort of version of work from home, as regardless of their work attendance they get paid 80% of their original salary. this does not apply if an employee has worked 100% in that case, they are paid 100%. In an article issued by HotelBusiness (2020) the Bureau of Labor Statistics in Washington states that in April (2020) in the USA over 7.7 million people in the Hospitality sector were left jobless. The American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) issued a: "Roadmap to Recovery" in which they demand financial help from the Congress. In hope for recovery AHLA is asking the Congress to deduct taxes for hospitality workers, assist with pay check etc. From the data that is shown, the researcher concludes that in another case that is very similar to the ones shown before the business owners are powerless in resolving the crisis themselves, therefore are seeking help from a governmental party.

2.2.2 Corporate resilience

According to Lee et al. (2013), the concept of resilience is diversified, used to demonstrate and investigate systems and people in the process of managing and responding to the pressure from crises. The purpose of Ntounis' (2020) research is to analyse the hospitality stakeholders' resilience during the pandemic with England as an example. It mainly analysed the importance of resilience in three aspects: business, governance and adaptive capacity of hospitality stakeholders. Through different concepts of resilience and stakeholders in the tourism industry, the author has observed and compared each concept to determine the effectiveness of crisis management in the response and innovation phase. In this study, applied to resilience theory, Ntounis focused on the human aspect of the adaptive capacity of the stakeholders based on their personalities while affected by the circumstances of the crisis. As Hall et al. (2018) study, he observed that definitions of resilience from different perspectives were lacking the fundamental ability of a complex and ambiguous problem (Bodin and Winman, 2004; Carpenter et al., 2001; Klein et al., 2003; Rose, 2007; Fie, 2020). According to Brouder (2017), Luthe and Wyss (2016), the resilience theory will develop the abilities to deal, adapt and manage the crisis and its impacts. Furthermore, due to the impacts and circumstances of crises, it is reasoned that connection and communication extension will support and influence the sign of resilience and help the hospitality stakeholders gain knowledge (Fie, 2020; Dahles and Susilowati, 2015). Therefore, in the paper, Ntounis also emphasised the importance of flexibility, adaptation, communication and diversity as well as funding preparation, and long-term emergency resilience strategies. By choosing England in the novel disease as the case study because of the growth of the hospitality industry in this city and its strict, tight policies towards the restriction and response to COVID-19, Ntounis (2020) concluded that the disease is seen as a sign for all stakeholders to be aware of the momentousness of building the resilience and prioritising the sustainability of the hospitality industry in general and hotels in particular (Hall et al., 2018).

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Aim and objectives

Aim of this research paper is to explore the COVID-19 crisis management strategies for small family run countryside hotels in the case of Hotel Bernerhof in Grindelwald.

To fulfil the aim of this study following objectives will have to be met:

- To explore how external threats may inform small family run countryside hotels to moderate crisis management strategies in the case of the Bernerhof hotel
- To identify key influencing factors from COVID-19 on the management of the crisis at Bernerhof
- To analyse the resilience practices of Bernerhof post COVID-19 recovery for sustainable growth

3.2 Research Design

According to Davies (2003), it is identified three main research methods are qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method which combine both qualitative and quantitative but not many authors apply this type of methods. Considering the aim and objectives of the research about health-related crisis management and the response of the primary research in hotel Bernerhof, the qualitative research approach will be applied to support the author in having critical insights (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Qualitative research collects data and investigates the information from the intangible to explore deeply from the perspective of individuals or group to the aspects of the human, social issue which is questioned in the emergency situation (Mack et al., 2005), which matches properly with the concerned problems of this research: the pandemic and hospitality industry in general and small family run countryside hotels in particular. Moreover, according to Curtis et al. (2000) and Morse (1994), the qualitative method is important and necessary for health-related studies in order to develop the knowledge of health-related crises or issues, hence, the author will use a constructivist paradigm. According to Honnebein (1996), a constructivist paradigm argues that people form their own opinion or comprehend knowledge of certain situations only by experiencing them first and then analysing the experience. In this paradigm data is usually being collected from interviews, through observations, document reviews and visual data analysis (Kalender, 2007). Spending enough time with participants in their natural contexts, researchers feel self-assured that they have captured useful information for the study (Adom, Yeboah &

Ankrah; 2016). Given the previously stated facts it is best for this paper that a qualitative research method is used and a constructive paradigm is present. Supporting authors personal believes, Cashman et al. (2008) & Hein (1991) say that: ˝It is based on the analogy or basis that people form or construct much of what they learn through experience˝.

3.3 Sampling

According to Taherdoost (2016), in order to collect a suitable sample to answer the research questions the researcher should collect the samples from a legitimate source. The sampling method that is going to be used is the non-probability sampling method. As the qualitative approach is used, according to Taherdoost (2016) the most suitable method is the non-probability method. As this research focuses on real life situations and phenomena according to Yin (2003) it is more appropriate to use a clear rationale rather than the accidental sampling. After choosing the non-probability sampling there are four possible methods; quota sampling, snowball sampling, convenience sampling and purposive or judgmental sampling. As the small family run countryside hotels are not easy to access, therefore, the most effective sampling method for this research paper would be the purposive or judgmental sampling method. To follow up on the claim the samples that will be used are going to be the general manager of the Bernerhof hotel as well as the front office manager. Choosing them as specific samples very well connected to the case would make the data collected, the most credible. Besides the front office manager and the general manager, who are strongly invested in the daily operations, the researcher has chosen the two owners as stakeholders as well to use as a sample. Even though the owners are not included in the daily operations, the researcher, following Taherdoost's claim (2016), believes that they are a source of information which needs to be included and their involvement is of great importance.

3.4 Data Collection

In order to get the most accurate data and explore the crisis management strategies for small family run hotels in the case of hotel Bernerhof, the researcher will be using in-depth interviews as well as analysing existing documents. According to Showkat and Parveen (2017) in-depth interviews are not just the most effective way of collecting primary data in qualitative research, but there is an intention of finding thorough specifics of the interviewee's previous involvement and attitude towards the subject. To support this argument Ritchie and Lewis (2003) claim that

unstructured, otherwise known as, in-depth interviews are one of the most fundamental data collection methods for qualitative data research. These existing documents are frequently an important source of context and history that can help us as researchers better understand the complexities of what we study by providing data triangulation to first-person accounts. In this sense, existing data (also known as archival data or existing documents) serve to supplement the types of data that the study generates through data collection from study participants (Ravitch and Carl, 2015). In order to accumulate unbiased information, the researcher will be examining the samplers in a neutral place, such as a local coffee shop or a restaurant. It is of highest importance to make the samplers feel comfortable in order for them not to feel pressured to give a certain type of information. Documents bearing witness to past events provide all chronology and background information. Such details and vision can aid researchers in identifying the causes of particular difficulties and can show the circumstances that have an impact on the phenomena being studied. A researcher may use information from documents, for instance, to contextualise data collected from interviews (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, in-depth interviews as well as analysis of existing records are the most suitable method of gathering information in order to achieve the objectives of this research paper.

3.5 Ethical Issues

According to Creswell (2014) researchers conduct the data from people and about people. In order to protect the participants of the research and the research itself, researchers must consider the ethical issues that may arise during the process (Creswell, 2014). Besides these concerns, researchers' own bias should be considered as an issue. Additionally, informed consent is an ethical and legal precondition for human-participant study (Lokesh et al., 2013). Thus, the author would require participants to sign a consent form which includes a statement of agreement to participate, a statement about confidentiality, anonymity and confirmation that there is no obligation to take part. It is beneficial for both sides since everything is clear and no obligation occurs. Moreover, authenticity of the information is essential in developing the comprehensiveness of the research. For research purposes only, the interview will be recorded, so the author has to be aware of data security and protect the participants' rights. In addition, to diminish the ethical issues feasibilities, the questions will be selected and investigated cautiously.

3.6 Data analysis

The researcher is using a qualitative approach to explore different Covid-19 crisis management strategies of Hotel Bernerhof. After collecting all the data through in-depth interviews and reviewing existing documents the collected data will be analysed. In-depth semi-structured interviews provide some distinct obstacles in this regard. Considering these factors, as well as the fact the researcher carries out exploratory research with complex interview data, the researcher is following a combining technique that emphasises units of value rather than existing units of some kind. Coders designated every section of the text, regardless of length, as a codable unit where they felt the code applied (Campbell et al., 2013). The meaning unit may be the ideal one to examine in exploratory research and study using complicated interview information, such as ours because it is not as prone to decontextualize information as the participant says (Garrison et al. 2006). Document analysis is a methodical process of analysing or examining documents, both written and digital (computer-based and Internet-based). Document analysis, like other qualitative research techniques, involves the inspection and interpretation of material to derive meaning, acquire insight, and develop empirical findings (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007). Document analysis is often utilised alongside other qualitative research methods as a form of triangulation (Denzin 1970, p. 291). Thematic analysis is a type of pattern detection inside data, with new subjects provided as analytical categories (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The procedure entails an in-depth review and evaluation of the data. The researcher examines the selected information more carefully and conducts coding and category-building upon the information's features to find themes relevant to the phenomena. The researcher examines the chosen information more closely and conducts coding and group development according to the data's attributes to find themes relevant to the phenomena. Predefined codes may be used, particularly when the analysis of documents is performed in conjunction with other research methodologies in the study (Bowen, 2009).

3.7 Trustworthiness

The researcher aims to deliver the most accurate information. In order to do that the researcher is using the triangulation technique as well as member checking. The qualitative researcher is required to rely on several (a minimum of two) forms of evidence, seeking agreement and verification through the use of various data sources and methods (Yin, 1994). Triangulation is the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. The researcher intends to generate proof that promotes trustworthiness by

triangulating data. By reviewing data acquired using various methodologies, the researcher can confirm results throughout data sets, reducing the influence of possible biases that could appear in a single study (Bowen, 2009). Furthermore, Campbell et al. (2013) believe that both solo and team coders may consult those who participated directly during analysis (a procedure known as "member checking") to validate the findings thus far. Even if the researcher is not working on the same project as the colleagues, sharing coded field note parts and discussing coding and analysis issues generates constructive criticism and may even help you, as well as others, to obtain more connections within categories in progress.

3.8 Limitations

It is important to understand bias in order to avoid faulty results conducted by our research. There are many reasons as to why is it important, first and foremost it appears in all research through research designs and can be tough to eliminate, secondly it can occur at each stage of the process and lastly, it impacts the validity of the research findings and misinterpretation of the data could have negative impacts on the study (Smith and Noble, 2014). To begin with, this research paper focuses on a family-owned hotel in a Swiss rural area, the methods of acquiring data are in depth interviews and revision of existing documents. In depth interviews might contain both researcher and respondent bias. Respondents might feel inclined to give a socially or politically correct answer instead of stating their own opinion, that would be Social desirability bias. There are some limitations with the object of the study. As hotel Bernerhof is a small family-owned hotel, most empirical findings were applied to bigger hotel chains, therefore there might be some gaps in applying the theory to the object of the study.

Chapter 4. Discussion

4.1 Introduction

As a result of the recent pandemic, small and medium sized hospitality enterprises have been forced to adapt their crisis management strategies, coming up with strategic innovations (Bianchi, 2022). Owners and managers can innovate by spotting and taking chances in situations of crisis because small and medium enterprises are by default entrepreneurial and adaptable (Grilli, 2011). In this chapter the author will illustrate the impact of Covid crisis management strategies and their influence on small countryside family run hotels. As a result of primary research not being conducted, following information will be based upon literature review and findings conducted by the author.

4.2 To explore how external threats may inform small family run countryside hotels to moderate crisis management strategies in the case of the Bernerhof hotel

Strategic management is considered as the management of three connected components: strategy development, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation (Omalaja and Eruola , 2011). While these are the fundamental processes: flexibility and adaptations, that are appropriate for the severity of a crisis or disaster and acceptable to the stakeholders, should always be allowed (Ritchie, 2004). Being a family-owned hotel, Bernerhof's stakeholders should show more dominance and initiative, it is assumed that this would improve the overall crisis management strategy. This could be supported by the findings of Chua et al. (1999) which state that the theoretical substance of a family business is found in the vision of its dominant family members. The objective must be to use the business to benefit the family—possibly spanning multiple generations. In this approach, the firm's vision (or objectives and goals) and behaviour are distinguished from those of nonfamily enterprises and those in which family connection has no bearing on operations or future development. In this case, it could be expected that hotel Bernerhof constructs its crisis management strategies and tailors them according to the stakeholders' values and objectives. Typically, major hotel chains have established standardised crisis management procedures, while some smaller hotels, particularly family-run hotels, have none (Sweeney, 2020). On the other hand, Dagnachev Leta and Chu Chan (2021) condemn most existing post-crisis management strategies because they focus on returning to normality rather than preparing for and responding to potentially comparable future events. It may be more beneficial for the Bernerhof hotel to focus on the potential similar future external pressures which might leave the same effect. It is also advised that the stakeholders of the Bernerhof hotel get into deeper involvement in order to understand the importance of crisis management and the severity of its strategies, as well as the necessity of entrepreneurial solutions. Meyer et al. (1990) believe that a percentage of breaking changes, such as a COVID-19 pandemic, demand an entrepreneurial solution. To survive a crisis, enterprises must devise strategies for dealing with short-term disruptions and significant unpredictability. Following the pandemic, longer-term strategic changes may be required to manage the competitive landscape that has evolved in the "New Normal" as a result of technical, social, and institutional developments (Ahlstrom et al., 2020).

4.3 To identify key influencing factors from COVID-19 on the management of the crisis at Bernerhof

According to Shepherd (2003), the longevity of a family-owned business is closely related to its workforce and financial capacity. Engeset (2020) also emphasises the need to have not just personnel and financial capacity, but additionally confidence in the team. It is recommended that the management of Bernerhof hotel and stakeholders try strengthening the team spirit, as well as minimise fixed expenses as a response to the current crisis. According to Kraus et al. (2020), once COVID-19 took effect, family businesses began discussions among stakeholders and other staff to determine where they could minimise fixed expenses. Worldwide, the hospitality industry has faced many cuts regarding manpower and it may have been the greatest threat to the industry so far. According to HotelBusiness (2020), the Bureau of Labour Statistics in Washington reported that more than 7.7 million labourers in the hospitality industry were unemployed in the United States in April (2020). It may be that the Bernerhof Hotel, amongst other businesses in Switzerland, had one less aspect to consider due to the financial governmental aid package for the COVID-19 crisis. Employers in Switzerland possess the ability to seek funding from the government to pay their employees' salaries up to 80% (Work.swiss, 2020). Due to the financial aid, the management and the stakeholders might not realise the significance of the factors involved in crisis management. As a result, managing resources is becoming increasingly important. To operate in today's continuously changing market environment, organisations must have or fast develop dynamic abilities to more effectively handle their assets (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007). In addition, it may happen that management practices after the crisis would not apply as they have in the period during the crisis. Kash and Darling (1998), feel that even with a crisis management plan, managers who do not take the circumstance of a disaster seriously will be in a much worse position when the crisis happens than those who face the issue on time and with utmost seriousness. The management of the Bernerhof Hotel should also consider the effects of the crisis on the tourism industry in general, which means substantially fewer tourists for an uncertain period of time. According to UNWTO (2020), the COVID-19 outbreak has significantly affected tourism, which directly reduces hospitality businesses' chances of survival. The management and the stakeholders of the Bernerhof Hotel should carefully consider their management strategies, which include: managing their resources and workforce according to the previously mentioned recommendations. When done correctly, they should avoid the negative influencing factors that the COVID-19 crisis might bring.

4.4 To analyse the resilience practices of Bernerhof post COVID-19 recovery for sustainable growth

Lee et al. (2013) claim that the idea of resilience is diverse, and it is used to illustrate and explore both processes and individuals in the procedure of handling and responding to crisis pressure. After the recent crisis (Covid-19) Bernerhof hotel must have experienced a great amount of pressure to get back on track. Therefore, the author assumes that stakeholders should pay more attention to the processes of adequately responding to the pressure of the crisis. In addition to that, careful management of the staff is needed as they will be responding to the crisis as well. Simme and Martin (2010) claim that in recent years, the hospitality and tourism industry in general, as well as hotels in particular, have prioritised resilience to specific crises, more attention has been given to health-related crises, and have implemented strategies that endure growth and encourage both the recovery and answer phases (Ntounis, 2021; Kongoley, 2015; Chen et al., 2020). Furthermore, Foster (2006) and Hill et al. (2008) identified hotel resilience as a process of prevention, preparation, response, and recovery during and after a crisis that minimises its impact. Therefore, to achieve sustainable growth after the disaster, Bernerhof Hotel should consider the previously stated elements when preparing a strategy for assessing future disasters. Fie (2020) and Dahles and Susilowati (2015) suggest that because of the effects and circumstances of crises, it is assumed that the extension of connection and communication will support and affect the sign of resilience and enable hospitality stakeholders to learn knowledge. As a result, Ntounis (2020) highlighted the significance of flexibility, adaptation, communication, and diversity in the paper, as well as finance preparation and long-term emergency resilience initiatives. To sustain healthy development in future crises, Bernerhof Hotel should focus on increasingly rejecting the term recovery, preferring to employ a new notion such as renewal, regeneration, and reorganisation post a disturbance. Furthermore, when a pandemic happens, it is not possible to return to pre-pandemic conditions in the short term; moreover, hotel managers should research and view the emergency as a feasibility evaluation to rebuild and develop long-term resilience (King et al., 2021). Considering their long-term strategies, previously stated notions would leave a more positive impact on the whole team, as there wouldn't be pressure to get back to the progress before the crisis, but try to reorganise and regenerate in the fastest and most sustainable way possible. The researcher believes that post-crisis

there should be an updated approach to leading the hotel as new circumstances have arisen and the old rules and policies won't apply anymore. Therefore, the focus shouldn't be on recovering, which would emphasise getting back to the way it was before, but on regenerating and reorganising.

4.5 Conclusion

In a family-owned hotel like Bernerhof, strategic management includes multiple challenges, such as actively involving stakeholders, emphasising preventive crisis management, managing finance and staff resources, and being flexible in resource management. The COVID-19 pandemic's unique challenges emphasise the importance of cautious planning and resilience. Effective communication, adaptability, and an emphasis on regeneration and reorganisation rather than just recovery are all required. In summary, Bernerhof Hotel should take a holistic, forward-thinking strategy for crisis management that includes all of these components. This will not only assist the hotel in recovering from crises, but it will also assure its long-term success and adaptability in a changing commercial scene.

Chapter 5. Conclusion and recommendations

The researcher aimed to explore the Covid-19 crisis management strategies of small countryside family-owned hotels. For the case study Hotel Bernerhof in Grindelwald was chosen. As it is a family-owned business, located in the countryside of Switzerland, Hotel Bernerhof served as a great example. To achieve the three objectives, the researcher has used three theories: Crisis management, Strategic management and Hospitality resilience. As a result of the recent pandemic, hotel businesses were forced to adapt their crisis management strategies to deal with short term disruptions and come up with long term recovery strategies. In order to come up with the strategies the researcher has found significant importance in the three interconnected elements of strategic management: strategy development, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation. This has proved to be the fundamental essence of "getting back on the track". In addition to that, flexibility and adaptation played an important role, as these two factors have shown severe importance during the crisis or a disaster period. Flexibility and adaptation have shown to be important factors in all three theories: crisis management, strategic management and hospitality resilience. Moreover, in hospitality resilience, the researcher has discovered that with adaptation and flexibility, financial preparation is another crucial aspect to consider. The previously mentioned aspects are the key in sustaining healthy development during future disasters. Stakeholder involvement was also found as a crucial role exploring all three objectives. In crisis management, stakeholders were to take a proactive and a dominant role in order to integrate the crisis management strategies with the companies' beliefs and values. With Bernerhof Hotel being a family-owned business, the dynamics and their culture has shown importance in shaping their vision and creating future objectives. This could be achieved by developing trust and teamwork among employees. When conducting deeper research, the author found the need to maintain strong ties and excellent interaction during and after a crisis, as these elements promote resilience and encourage the exchange of data across hospitality stakeholders. To support the previous, crisis management, alongside with strategic management, is an inevitable aspect to consider as shown in the case of Hotel Bernerhof, crisis management strategies should be tailored to the business, rather than copying the industry's crisis management strategies. Tailored crisis management strategies are easier to implement to hotels' unique vision and values.

This study gave insight into understanding which strategies and theories could be applied for managing a health-related crisis in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the importance of interlinking the three theories: crisis management, strategic management and hospitality resilience as the inevitable component in regenerating after the crisis. This research paper gave insight into all three of the theories, but more importantly, it has shown that using only one of those theories will not be sufficient enough in managing a crisis. In this sense this study shows how applying the best aspects of each theory is the correct way to manage a crisis. Crisis management and strategic management theories were insufficient on its own as they were focusing on short term improvements, rather than sustainable long-term regeneration. Therefore, the researcher introduced hospitality resilience as an additional theory to properly investigate the objectives.

More research on this topic would be greatly appreciated by the author, as it is never enough to find out more about concerning issues. There hasn't been much evidence found about tailored crisis management, therefore the author suggests researching further in that area as it will be beneficial when considering crisis management strategies for the future. Shifting to normality has been found to be insufficient on its own, therefore a proactive approach which would prepare the companies to respond to similar future disasters is needed. The author suggests exploring hospitality resilience further, especially the concept of regeneration and renewal which appear to be a better substitution for the recovery

step. Aspects such as stakeholder involvement, flexibility and adaptability have shown to be of vast importance, therefore, when conducting further research, those should be key elements of consideration. In addition, when conducting further research on this topic, researchers could try the opposite approach, the quantitative approach. Researching the same objectives as this work to determine further aspects related to the researcher's goal. In addition, the more researchers decide to explore this topic, the trustworthiness of this paper will benefit.

[1] Furthermore, crisis management is the responsibility of all involved stakeholders and organisations to develop strategies for solving and lessen the effects of the crises (Martens et al., 2016). According to Noel, Bruce and Eric (2008), tourism and hospitality recovery is an important step in crisis management with challenges in solving and reorganising the operation back to normal. Moreover, hospitality and crises have a close relationship, especially health crises, therefore the key factor in solving the difficulty and creating the effectiveness (Burkle, 2006).

[2] The author finds that the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic is unpredictable, especially for small family run countryside hotels, which are still in the process of preventing new waves.

[3] Engaging in further research the author hasn't found many results for big chain hotels, let alone small countryside family run hotels.

[4] Researching more into this field would not only be helpful but most probably needed in the nearer future.

[5] Even though these are the basic steps, Ritchie (2004) says that there should always be room for flexibility and adjustments that are suitable for the level of a crisis/disaster, acceptable for the stakeholders etc.

[6] The trust seems to be the foundation that leads to discovering new opportunities and assets.

[7] In a process of strategic management companies are trying to determine their objectives and future plans to achieve these objectives.

[8] Which are similar to the causes of environmental jolts explained by Meyer et al (1990).

[9] To operate in the current environment, which involves a rapid evolving market environment, businesses must have or rapidly create dynamic skills to better manage their money (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007).

[10] In the post-pandemic period, organisational hybridity, which is defined as the integration of many methods, logics, and structural forms (e.g., structural flexibility) to handle complex issues, may be necessary to better manage resources and stakeholders.

[11] The urban resilience concept enables rapid and efficient stability to renormal and adapt to constraints in volatility, therefore, the impacts on the situation can be reduced (Meerow et al., 2016; Ntounis et al., 2021).

[12] Furthermore, Lew (2014) emphasises that the relationship between resilience and hospitality becomes closer after a case study investigation instead of a theoretical one (Fabry and Zeghani, 2019).

[13] The comparison of different stakeholders in the hospitality industry based on the theory and concept of resilience provided Ntounis with greater insight and clarity on the impact of COVID-19 on various scales of hospitality.

[14] Besides, as the main evidence collection 'instrument' (Arianne et al., 2015), the author will support this paper inductively with the concentration on the significance of individuals as well as to specialise the complexity of the issue. Considering that the large and complex data is contained and explored, the characteristic of qualitative digging on a problem will help the researcher identify deficiency in-depth outcome more easily than quantitative method (Silverman, 2010).

[15] Maxwell (1996) states that choosing specific locations, people, or events on purpose in order to provide crucial information that cannot be learned from other options is known as judging or purposive sampling. To support this claim Taherdoost (2016) explains that when a researcher believes that certain cases or individuals should be included in the sample, they will include them.

[16] In order to extract meaning, produce empirical knowledge, gain insight, and document analysis, like other analytical techniques in qualitative research, demands the examination and interpretation of data (Bowen, 2009). In order to support the analysis of the existing documents, the researcher refers to Ravitch and Carl (2015) who believe that naturally occurring documents are those that exist in a group or organisation without the researcher's involvement, facilitation, or instigation. These existing documents are frequently an important source of context and history that can help us as researchers better understand the complexities of what we study by providing data triangulation to first-person accounts.

[17] Israel and Hay (2006) state that ethical concerns nowadays are frequent and come in the form of: personal disclosure, authenticity and the credibility of the report.

[18] According to Creswell (2014) during the process of gathering the data, the researcher should avoid deceiving the participants, make sure all of the participants are being treated the same, etc. Sanjari (2014) pointed out that the relationship of participant and researcher is important, so the author will put more effort into

improving knowledge of their fields and building a trust with the participants (Israel and Hay, 2006).

[19] In-depth interviews frequently require numerous units of evaluation that are sometimes not immediately recognisable (Campbell et al., 2013).

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