Crisis Management Strategies in the Hotel Industry: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract

This exploratory study focuses on hotel crisis management strategies, especially when handling problems resulting from pandemics, economic declines, natural disasters, terrorist danger and issues that risk the reputation of the brand. By speaking with experts and reviewing hotel guidelines and reports, this study discovers the main hurdles that hotel management team's encounter during crisis. The study analyzes how hotels coordinate their immediate and final actions during crises, with main themes being team collaboration, early risk assessment, making contingency plans, how to communicate inside and outside and the right use of resources. The results show that an organization's flexibility, ability to learn from experience and clear leadership are important for crisis response. Real-time decisions, training the workforce, involving stakeholders and using technology are given special significance for business continuity. Furthermore, the research shares the techniques and novel approaches of top hotels after they have faced crises and recovered. The aim is to create helpful advice for understanding and carrying out crisis management in the hospitality industry. Connecting field research with frameworks, the study adds new insights to the larger discussion about resilience and agility in organizations. By doing this, we support the academic community and give hoteliers and hospitality experts workable strategies to face today's unpredictable global challenges.
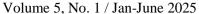
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Introduction

Crisis intervention covers much more than the actions you can see the emergency response teams do. It helps deal with unexpected issues that may harm hotel operations, workers or guests. Most effective crisis management takes three steps: (1) be ready before any crisis and have a plan; (2) act quickly when the crisis occurs to lessen harm and protect people involved; and (3) put protocols and regulations into place to look into the event, make those responsible answer and defend the reputation of the hotel.

After a crisis, serious and lasting results affect public image, guests' trust in the company and its ability to maintain smooth operations. A bad reaction to an

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incident can lose the trust of customers and harm how hotel is seen by others in the industry, both at the time and in the future. This means that response and recovery depend on each other and both supported by strong advance planning and the hotel's execution of its plan during a crisis.

Successfully navigate future crises, hotels need to do comprehensive risk assessments and construct thorough crisis management plans. This includes a thorough examination of weaknesses, the establishment of expert crisis management teams, and the development of guidelines to direct responses in various situations. The resilience and adaptability hotels exhibit in the face of crises are only possible with ample preparation.

Communication is a vital part of dealing with any crisis. If we want people to trust us, we naturally have to communicate with them, both within and without the business. In times of crisis, this part of our job is fundamental. Our public is anxious for information—sometimes for reassurance. We cannot satisfy either need unless we communicate with our key constituencies. Hence, the importance of both traditional and digital communication without the former we are cut off from current and potential customers, suppliers, potentially and current employees, others in the industry, and official bodies; without the latter, too, we are cut off from a share of our audience. Note that going digital does not usually eliminate the need to continue traditional communication; rather, it adds to it. Even if we have gone digitally in our communication, we should know the names of ten or twenty people in the old media who can help us if things get rough. We should make sure they have the beginnings of a relationship with us before we try to use them. Utilizing Technology for Immediate Responses As, we move further into the digital age of revolution, technology present an essential part in taking care of disasters. Modern systems repeatedly used in hotels for current monitoring, so businesses can see a situation and respond as soon as possible. Technology contributes not only in supervising but also in the internal communication part where the staff can easily plan what to do when everyone is on the same page.

The energetic and changing hotel industry requires clever management techniques to navigate a crazy quilt of challenges. From bewilderingly capricious guests to fickle investors, a sample of the challenges to be met include coping with economic downturns, dealing with natural catastrophes, warding off infectious diseases, protecting and projecting a hotel's hard-won reputation. Any of these is daunting, and we have not yet mentioned the sadistic pleasures that the tax collector provides.

Investigating crisis management in the hospitality field poses a critical inquiry, especially post-COVID-19 era. The hotel industry faces extraordinary problems these days, requiring well-established and practical strategies for a swift bounce-back. Many studies have paid attention to the applications of crisis management within the hotel business, most notably during the Covid crisis. In order

to demonstrate why it's important for crisis management programs to be comprehensive, Lai and Wong (2020) analyzed the crisis management practices in the hotel industry at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. By looking at how crises have affected the hotel industry and what has helped them bounce back, this article gives valuable insight for doing the same in a pandemic, according to Antón & Alonso-Almeida (2020). In addition, "Crisis management in the social media era: a case study of the health care sector" (Liu et al., 2015) demonstrates how the hotel industry has adapted to crushes by putting social media in the middle of a crisis management plan. Atasoy et al. (2022) emphasizes how crucial it is for each link in the chain to understand the hotel's policy of communicating in a crisis, and these authors additionally discuss some strategies that hotel managers can use to re-design the pandemic as a business opportunity, especially for chain hotel brands.

The hotel industry has long emphasized the necessity of active management in the face of disaster and catastrophe, according to the findings of Tuladhar (2016). This makes the case for a proactive segmentation in crisis management. Moreover, Polat and Seyfi (2023) showed, through their research, that there are various approaches to crisis communication in the hotel industry, especially with the advent of anti-COVID-19 initiatives. Šuligoj (2023) states the need for customized crisis communication. By dissecting the difficulties hotels face as they strive to avoid, handle, and solve crises, our research aims to comprehend the core dynamics of crisis management in hospitality. In times of both global instances and sudden changes, what we need the most are comprehension on a scholarly level, and adjustment on a corporate one.

Research Question

1. How crisis management strategies in hotels helpful in the time of crisis?
2. How these strategies supporting the organization?

Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To comprehensively understand the diverse range of crises faced by hotels, examining their nature, frequency, and impact.
2. To explore and analyze the crisis management strategies employed by hotels, encompassing preparedness, response, and recovery phases.
3. To assess the effectiveness of these strategies, gauging their contribution to organizational resilience and adaptability.
4. To derive practical insights and recommendations for hotels to enhance their crisis management preparedness and response.

Rationale for the Study

The hotel industry's vulnerability to crises, coupled with the need for continual adaptation, underscores the importance of this research. By gaining a nuanced understanding of crisis management strategies, this study seeks to contribute

to the body of knowledge within the field and provide practical recommendations for hotels to navigate and overcome challenges in an increasingly complex business environment.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform and enhance crisis management practices within the hotel industry. By identifying effective strategies and lessons learned from past crises, the research aims to contribute to the resilience and long-term sustainability of hotels, benefiting both industry practitioners and scholars.

Literature Review

Theoretical Frameworks in Crisis Management

The crisis management sector is always transforming and has many different aspects, focusing on learning the techniques and information possible through a range of theories. Although there are plenty of methods and theorems that can be used in this area, it is not just a serendipity. We will look into the examining sets of known methods and theories that stakeholders use. It will be the emphasis on importance and how much the stakeholders should know to be able to conduct an analysis on the subject.

Theoretical frameworks are a necessary aspect of crisis management as they give direction on how organizations will be able to handle different types of crises, including what we are currently going through with the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Bundy et al. (2016), the incorporation of several theoretical perspectives in crisis management result in enhancing practice and processes. It is important to implement a comprehensive framework that consists of public relations research, corporate communication, organizational behavior, strategies, and organizational theory so that certain crises can addressed and then managed. This shows that it is critical to have a full understanding of what a crisis is, and then how to handle one when it happens, and they cannot just view through the perspective of one view.

Additionally, Eid and Arnout (2020) performed a qualitative study on the Islamic aspect of management of a disaster, which leads to a model based on Prophet's Sunnah and the Quran. This way they have contributed a different view of the disaster management, which could consist of a good exposure for policymakers and practitioners. Vašíčková (2020) emphasizing the fact that urban disaster management should be treated seriously by regulating the management and having a rapid respond to overcome crisis, this way the theory should be applicable. Uncertainty reduction has been proven as an effective action to face uncertainty in anticipating the disaster, the civic engagement in this disaster management should be the priority for them to be convinced on what they are doing is right. Grace and Tham (2020) had given the urban disaster management in Quanzhou, China, could be the proper studied as an example urban disaster management other than in western countries. The truth of the

theory would tested from the perspectives of the practical community in the urban society who might have felt the advantages of the knowledge of t disaster management that had applied in China.

Crisis Types in the Hotel Industry

In order to produce direct and efficient methodologies designed to manage crises in the hotel industry, an analysis of the range of situations that a hotel might find itself in is an essential first step. This paper undertakes to explore, at length, the typology of crises that are an inherent reality in the world of hotels. Many different categories come under the purview of this analysis, namely; economic downturn, natural catastrophe, and public health scare, along with questions of reputation and consumer perception. Crisis management is a dynamic sector with many aspects and learning about approaches and techniques accomplished through several theoretical structures. Even with many approaches in crisis management, success not left up to chance. Through this study, we find out how different stakeholders have used various models and techniques to deal with crises. Stakeholder awareness and a deep understanding of how to respond to hospitality crises considered very important. These problems can stem from any number of sources, including customers, other incidents in the hotel, or even natural disasters. The most notable of these problems are illness-based problems, social media crises, and financial problems. Perhaps the most noteworthy of those in the past few years is the COVID-19 pandemic, as it has decimated the hotel industry, which used to be just a pandemic away from continued growth. Crisis management as a populace has become paramount in addressing the crisis (Lai, & Wong, 2020). Crisis management concerning pandemics has seen a significant reform and upgrade in comparison to that of the past as the world has seen it fit to address this problem maturely, and the pandemic has prompted a reevaluation of all U.S. global health security policies (Iftikhar et al., 2023; Lai & Wong, 2020). Crisis management, in particular, is probably the most sensitive, especially as it can really hurt a hotel's bottom line. If a hotel does not really address the situation immediately, then it could face some serious long-term effects of a viral incident associated with the hotel or hotel chain. Just based on what the world is currently going through, with everything from "eighteen months of bupkis hell" (Lai & Wong, 2020) to whatever. Pakistani journalist Sohail Shahzad says that the illnesses in hotels could see close to a Natural Catastrophe (Milićević et al., 2022). In every event, there are consequences and every consequence could include a catastrophe to the hotel, so contingency plans and leadership is required (Liu et al., 2015).

Previous Research on Crisis Management in Hotels

This section will conduct an extensive review of the literature with the goal of identifying the major findings, new trends, and gaps in our understanding of crisis management strategies in hotels. Past research on crisis management in the hotel industry has been primarily focused on the theoretical underpinnings of the topic; however, the body of empirical research and case studies available now allows for a

meaningful expansion of our understanding of this important topic. This will allow for a comprehensive theoretical grounding of the research that is significantly different from the current literature in the field that more commonly about crisis planning after 9/11 than the overarching plan for an unforeseen crisis in hotel management. This can be because it is quite often the first time the family has gone through a death and they have the knowledge and control of a family member dying. Therefore, it may case that the man had a medical condition that had caused him to die, the family could have asked his them to turner of the machine that was keeping him alive and those they wished for him to die and that would have been the law. It may also come down to what conversations he had had with his family previous his death.

COVID-19 has had a profound effect on the hotel industry with many articles conducting research over the last year on disaster preparedness in hotel management, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I found a few articles that directly compare and contrast how the pandemic has affected hotel operations and marketing services as they relate to crisis management to reduce damages, provide temporary shelter, and escape routes (Jiang & Wen, 2020). Another is we discovered the importance of government aid and how it affects the hotel industry in times of an external disaster. After reading these articles, we have found how the government aids the hotel industry in Lebanon for the COVID-19 pandemic. We also have looked into how COVID-19 has had an impact on crises in the hotel industry and specifically the hotel industry in Greece. Is there any Greece? Lastly, after reviewing the subject literature we were able to review disaster preparedness in hotel management and just how much planning for something that may not happen goes a long way.

How social media helps hotels deal with these issues has been researched a lot by scholars, especially when it comes to health issues such as bed bugs (Liu et al., 2015). Research on what a hotel should do when there is a disease breakout has made people realize how important it actually is to and really try to understand what the crisis and stages of dealing with the crisis are: prepare, react, recover, prevent (Fung et al., 2020).

A research study from Atasoy et al. (2022) investigates what big chain hotels did about the COVID-19 disaster. They found that if a hotel uses surgeries to tell people what's what when trouble starts and then tries to keep saying what's what till the trouble goes away, that hotel can come out at the other end with more fame than it had when the trouble started

Methodology

Qualitative Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach to understand hotel industry approaches to crisis management. Because of the depth and situational differences in crisis events, qualitative research helped paint a clearer picture of how they are

actually addressed by organizations. This approach allowed us to study key points of individual experience and common practices in the educational sector (Fusch et al., 2018). Using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis helped us find insights that cannot easily discovered through just using data.

Hospitality managers must be agile, coordinate many levels and respond to changes in a crisis. As a result, hearing from hotel staff and managers helped the study capture the challenges and strategies used by organizations in real crises (Pavlatos et al. (2020). It was important to use a constructivist method to analyze how staff deals with unexpected events according to how they understand their reality.

Data Collection

Employees occupying major management and operating positions at the selected hotels were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. Individuals with crisis-handling or crisis coordination experience were chosen for the research. Open-ended questions were asked to help participants review their experiences, decision-making and the practices their organizations use in crises. Along with employee interviews, document analysis helped by reviewing materials produced by the company after a crisis, its guidance on communication and its framework for handling crises. Having these documents gave a better understanding to the findings I found during the interviews (Alzoubi & Jaffar, 2020).

Data Analysis

To understand crisis readiness, response and recovery, data were analyzed by describing their patterns and themes with thematic analysis. They chose a six-phase approach from Barbe & Pennington-Gray (2018) data familiarization, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition and report production. In NVivo 12, we found that support for analysis made it possible to code and organize long chunks of textual data with more efficiency. NVivo made it easy to control my data, see how the codes related and develop main themes.

With this process, the researchers discovered common patterns from participants and documents which helped them better understand the strategies and policies guiding crisis management for hotels.

Empirical Findings

Crisis Scenarios Faced by Hotels

This passage provides readers perspective and understanding of different crisis management catered to various crisis encounters in the industry. It is critical to comprehend the presentation of the crisis management of various problems genres in the hotel industry. The criticality and esoteric insight is picked from the findings of Hao et al. (2020); Jiang and Wen (2020), which not only provide enriched understanding of the industry gambles after COVID-19, but also, gives a proper context of why that plays out the way it played. It contrasts the crisis management strategy — used very aptly; from the early days of distress to the pick of the Everest.

Crisis Management Strategies Deployed

Expanding upon the examination of crisis scenarios, the subsequent section delves further into the tactics of crisis management employed by lodging establishments. Further insights into the emergency procedures of hotels are gleaned through scrutiny of pertinent documentation and thorough interviews with key staff members. Beyond simply identifying and discerning these courses of action, we also explore resource allocation plans, (communication) protocols, proactive preparations, and cooperative maneuvers deployed by hotels during crisis times Examining these approaches, the study intends to shed light on the innovative and nimble strategies that hotels employ to ease the fallout of disaster. A thorough review of the crisis management strategies hotels use is essential for understanding their reaction to calamity. Relying on archival and interview data, a et al. (2022) offered an incisive examination of chain hotels' COVID-19 strategy responses. The study presents crucial empirical knowledge about the crisis management strategies that the accommodations industry uses. Furthermore, research efforts such as Liu et al. (2015) deliver crucial lessons about crisis management tactics with a specific focus on the deployment of social media, and the employment of multiple crisis management techniques in different stages of the crisis

Effectiveness of Strategies

The purpose of this part of the research is to judge the value of the techniques that hotels use to deal with crises. By making a close analysis of results including managers' assessments made after a crisis hits and by estimating just how well-prepared hotels are against disasters, the effort should provide an answer whether the techniques used by hotels are valid, to the point and keep disasters from getting worse. The measure of how good organizations, in this case, hotels, are at countering imminent danger, keeping business in full swing, making sure their interests are safe, and ready to withstand the future. Measures that could be taken in the future to help make it possible for hotels to do a better job against emergencies are discussed. It is vital to evaluate how well crisis management methods are working. Ghaderi et al. (2021) also provide empirical evidence to demonstrate that people in the Malaysian hospitality sector where, through and through, seeing for themselves that it genuinely worked for them, and the most impressive show was managers' attitudes towards the efficacy of the technique. They also analyzed what people believed made the method of choice effective in their study. Measures tailored are the needs of the business and consider as the best strategy to find the optimal solution in critical situations face during the business Saputra et al. (2022) provided insight because what they've addressed deals with the level of tailoring involved, up to the specific need of the firm.

Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

This section offers an in-depth examination and explanation of the real-life conclusions of an evaluation of disaster circumstances, management procedures, and the efficacy of these actions in the lodging sector. This debate targets establishing prototypes, patterns, and state-of-the-art perceptions that materialize from the evidence that fabricated and covers up these in a much broader setting. This is an informative and detailed report that isn't limited to a basic rundown of the discoveries; rather, we dive into the consequences and the background that have an impact on hotel disaster aversion. This examination will provide a map that will allow one to establish not merely the threats affiliated with steering away from disasters, and the rebuilding procedure post disastrous incidents in the hotel market to comprehend the study's significance, a close reading and evaluation of the evidence is necessary. This is particularly true when viewed through the lens of existing works on crisis management. A more comprehensive understanding of how hotels undertake crisis management can be achieved by also incorporating insights gleaned from Brinks and Ibert (2020); Lai and Wong (2020); Yacoub and Elhajjar (2021), who not only lay the theoretical foundation for a careful consideration and reading of empirical data but also enrich the crisis management literature in a way that eases the process of thorough assessment of the findings presented in the study.

Conclusion

In this study, I explored many ways hotels handle crises, pointing out main types of crises they may experience such as health events, disasters, slow economies, risks to security and situations on social media. After reviewing data and interview responses, the team found the most common factors in effective crisis management to be planning ahead, working together across departments, honest communication and choosing who to provide help and preparedness.

According to the findings, hotels have to create custom and flexible ways of dealing with various types of crises. If hotel design alternative plans to manage pandemic, cyber incidents, or other option that may cause to damage the reputation of the hotel, this show the hotel already is in condition to manage such crises. Jiang and Wen (2020); Lai and Wong (2020) proved that previous crises have influenced today's actions and trained institutions to improve their response strategies.

Moreover, the study proposes supporting both internal and external methods of sharing information, teaching staff about crisis management and forming partnerships to exchange resources when emergencies occur. Using digital and social media tools recommended for hotels to faster communicate and respond during an incident.

Even so, the research does have its weaknesses. Originally, only a few participants were involved, all from a limited location, therefore the conclusions might

not be relevant for other regions. Moreover, use of qualitative data can influence by people's views, yet thematic analysis made the analysis more objective and orderly.

Future Research Directions

Researchers might broaden the research area and gather results from several different methods to check their results. Other research topics might examine brand recovery after a crisis, the continuous impact on hospitality employees and the benefits of using artificial intelligence for improved crisis management. Researchers could also follow how hotels handle crises several times to understand how resilience builds gradually with every subsequent incident.

The findings add to what we know about crisis management in the hospitality field and suggest concrete measures that industry players can follow when dealing with changes and shocks.
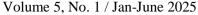
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APPENDIX 1: Interview questions

Introduction:
- Could you give a quick rundown of your duties and position within the hotel during regular business hours?
- What kinds of problems have you faced in your career and how long have you been involved in the hotel industry?

Crisis Scenarios:
- Could you share specific instances or scenarios where the hotel faced significant crises, such as natural disasters, public health emergencies, economic downturns, or reputational challenges?
- In your experience, how do different types of crises impact hotel operations, and are there any unique challenges associated with each?

Crisis Management Strategies:
- What proactive measures or crisis preparedness protocols does the hotel have in place to anticipate and respond to potential crises?
- Can you provide insights into the crisis management strategies the hotel has deployed during past incidents? How were these strategies formulated and implemented?
- How do communication protocols play a role in crisis management, both internally among staff and externally with guests and other stakeholders?

Effectiveness of Strategies:
- In hindsight, how would you assess the effectiveness of the crisis management strategies employed during specific incidents? What were the outcomes and lessons learned?
- How does the hotel measure or gauge its organizational resilience in the aftermath of a crisis, and what indicators are considered to determine the success of crisis management efforts?

Training and Development:
- What training programs or initiatives does the hotel have in place to prepare staff for crisis management scenarios?
- How often are crisis management training and simulation exercises conducted, and how are they structured to ensure effective learning?

Stakeholder Collaboration:
- How does the hotel collaborate with external stakeholders, such as local authorities, community organizations, or other hotels, during crisis situations?
- In your opinion, what role does collaboration within the hotel industry play in enhancing collective crisis resilience?

Reflections and Learning:
- Looking back at your experiences, what are the most significant lessons learned from past crises, and how have they shaped the hotel's approach to crisis management?

- Are there any areas within crisis management where you believe improvements could be made based on your experiences?

Closing:

- Is there any additional information or insights you would like to share regarding crisis management within the hotel industry?
- Thank you for sharing your experiences. Is there anything else you believe is important for us to know about crisis management in the hotel context?