

# Chapter 24

## (Re)acting to the COVID-19 Crisis in Hotels: The Perceptions of Portuguese Managers

**António Melo**

*Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal*

**Sandra Vieira Vasconcelos**

*Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal*

**Carla Melo**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3097-4108>

*Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal*

**Miguel Silva**

*Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal*

### ABSTRACT

*Aiming to provide an overview of the hospitality sector in Portugal amid the COVID-19 pandemic, in this chapter, the authors call on hotel managers and their perceptions to identify key dimensions and relevant crisis management practices within this unique setting. Supported by eight semi-structured interviews, it focuses on operations, human resources, and marketing, putting forward practical examples of the measures and changes introduced to create a safe environment for hotel guests and staff. Additionally, drawing from content analysis and the ensuing emerging categories, the chapter also provides relevant insights as to the most valued skills at this particular time. Standing out as key skills, adaptability, leadership, teamwork, and motivation are considered to be instrumental for businesses' sustainability and recovery, being the most valued by managers.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Over the last year, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major economic disruptions in global markets, having had a significant (and often overwhelming) impact on several industries, including hospitality and tourism. Faced with an unforeseen crisis, this industry has been directly affected by travel restrictions, the closing down of borders and overall lockdowns (Lai & Wong, 2020; UNWTO, 2020), which have not only had a negative impact on tourist perceptions, but, in some cases, also prompted closures or the dramatic reduction of all onsite activity, leading to significant losses both in revenue and jobs.

Providing an overview of the hospitality sector in Portugal prior to pandemic, this chapter sets out to collect and analyse hotel managers' perceptions as to the dimensions most affected by this outbreak, as well as their insights on the crisis management strategies used to respond to it. Drawing from the literature and supported by 8 semi-structured interviews, this exploratory study focuses on hotel managers' concerns and the approaches adopted as to mitigate the effects of the crisis, particularly on the following dimensions: Operations; Marketing & Sales and Human Resources. Based on a qualitative approach and content analysis, these dimensions emerged from the interviewees' responses and the ensuing codification process, having resulted in a comprehensive analysis that made it possible to establish the participants' initial concerns regarding the pandemics and the strategies implemented at their hotels. Aiming to collect a more personal view, interviewees were also asked about the most relevant lessons they have learnt and how this experience has shaped their opinions, namely regarding what they perceive as being the most relevant soft skills within this scope.

Overall, in addition to identifying key concerns, the authors were able to further contextualise the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on Portuguese tourism and hospitality, providing an inside perspective of hotel managers' resilience and their ability to adapt to challenging situations. By establishing the significance of innovative and creative managerial approaches and the importance of adaptability and teamwork, the authors aim to contribute to the further understanding of the ongoing situation and support further research that can ultimately assist managers in future crises.

## **BACKGROUND**

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals were recorded globally in 2019. An increase of 4% regarding the numbers recorded the previous year, being that the same growth rate was forecast for 2020. However, in January 2020, the continuous growth that marked the tourism industry for a decade (UNWTO, 2020), was abruptly halted by the declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) by the World Health Organization (WHO). Following confirmation, this health emergency caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, was officially declared a pandemic on March 11. Since then, the COVID-19 outbreak has had an overwhelming impact on global economy, bringing many constraints to several businesses and industries, including tourism and hospitality.

### **Impacts in the Hospitality Businesses**

The circumstances described above, have led hotel managers to re-think their managerial and operational strategies as to provide a safe environment for their customers and staff and assure their businesses'

22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:  
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/reacting-to-the-covid-19-crisis-in-hotels/284022](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/reacting-to-the-covid-19-crisis-in-hotels/284022)

## Related Content

---

### Film-Induced Tourism and Promotion of Tourist Destinations: An Exploratory Approach

Bruno Barbosa Sousa, João Abreu, Lara Marisa Santos, Vítor Silva and Ana Paula Figueira (2025). *Cases on Effective Destination Management* (pp. 125-140).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/film-induced-tourism-and-promotion-of-tourist-destinations/367679](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/film-induced-tourism-and-promotion-of-tourist-destinations/367679)

### Actor Network Theory in Tourism

Xuan Tran (2017). *Tourism and Opportunities for Economic Development in Asia* (pp. 261-269).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/actor-network-theory-in-tourism/176302](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/actor-network-theory-in-tourism/176302)

### How Do Online Reviews Affect Business Travelers' Accommodation Choices?: The Application of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

Faranak Memarzadeh, Shane Blum and Charlie Adams (2017). *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management in the Digital Age* (pp. 50-65).

[www.irma-international.org/article/how-do-online-reviews-affect-business-travelers-accommodation-choices/177122](http://www.irma-international.org/article/how-do-online-reviews-affect-business-travelers-accommodation-choices/177122)

### Impact of Leadership on the Relationship Between Innovation and Performance: Portuguese Hotel Sector

Cláudia Ferreira Leitão, Jorge Gomes, Denise Capela dos Santos and Bruno Melo Maia (2021). *International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management in the Digital Age* (pp. 29-49).

[www.irma-international.org/article/impact-of-leadership-on-the-relationship-between-innovation-and-performance/269290](http://www.irma-international.org/article/impact-of-leadership-on-the-relationship-between-innovation-and-performance/269290)

### Going to the Dark Sites With Intention: Construction of Niche Tourism

Bintang Handayani (2018). *Virtual Traumasces and Exploring the Roots of Dark Tourism* (pp. 50-66).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/going-to-the-dark-sites-with-intention/185812](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/going-to-the-dark-sites-with-intention/185812)