

Factors that Help Catering Outlets to Survive During Pandemic: A Case Study of Malta

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Abstract

The study seeks to determine the factors that help catering outlets survive during a pandemic, as observed and witnessed in Malta. The study is significant both in theory and practical aspects because it facilitates the discussion on how the catering and hospitality sector can keep safe from the harmful effects of future pandemics. In practical aspects, the study will offer a plan that can in the future be used to offer support and aid to the various sectors, especially to the catering and hospitality sector during a pandemic. Unlike it has been handled in the past, through this study, it will be possible to know which factors are of value in aiding the organisation survive the pandemic and which are less important than relying on and focusing on the most important ones. Qualitative research relies on online surveying as the primary data collection method. The sample used was selected and sampled using purposive or judgmental sampling. The sources that best fit and best offer results to the research questions are conveniently integrated into the study. Results from the study show that leadership practices, managerial practices, decisions, and skills alongside technological innovations collectively have a role to play in the survival or lack of survival of organisations in the catering and hospitality sector.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The dissertation assesses the factors that help catering outlets survive during the pandemic. The past few years have been challenging for the business community worldwide due to the curfews and other restrictive measures. Of the many businesses that have suffered, the hospitality and catering industry has undergone immense challenges, with many forced to close down. Getting to project the factors that would be supportive to catering outlets to survive during a pandemic is, therefore, a discussion that is timely and one that will facilitate the outlets in this industry to change their approaches so that they do not end up experiencing the harsh and challenging economic conditions that come with a pandemic.

This first chapter performs the introduction to the dissertation. It will address introductory issues that will allow the laying of groundwork for what is to be anticipated in the rest of the dissertation. Some of the sections included herein include the background to the study. This will track the process leading to the current state of the hospitality and catering outlets. The problem statement will pinpoint and respond to why this study is necessary. The purpose of the study, the significance, and the objectives will all discuss this central topic of determining the factors that help catering outlets survive during the pandemic.

Even when we know that the pandemic affected every catering outlet in Europe and many parts of the world, there is no doubt some outlets have not struggled as much as others have. In Malta, there are catering outlets whose revenues have blossomed during the pandemic, a reality many would not anticipate. Therefore, the

study will do more than assess the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sector but dig deeper into providing a lasting solution on how such outlets can survive amidst such tribulations.

1.1 Background to the Study

The Covid-19 virus emerged in Asia in 2019, and it quickly turned out to be a threat to the world. Within a few months, Europe and the rest continents were trapped in the fight against the virus. Ciotti et al. (2020, p.366) note that many governments' mitigation approaches were centred around human movement and interactions management, considering the virus' primary method of transmission is through contact. Therefore, restrictions in public places and curfews became priority measures. Flynn et al. (2020, p.674) explain that in England, the first two cases arrived in the country in January 2020, which was close to two years after the outbreak. The arrival announcement was followed by soaring figures of patients throughout the country's major cities.

About two months after the first case was reported in the UK, the government announced the first lockdown in March. This was the first "stay at home" order from the government. It had a disruptive effect on the catering sector in the country. Keogh-Brown et al. (2020) note that in 2020 alone, the UK economy lost about 40 billion pounds due to the effects of Covid-19. Many of these losses could be traced to the hospitality and catering industry. Forty billion pounds loss is close to 2% of the national GDP. These are huge figures that demonstrate the height of the problem. Kim and Liu (2022) confirm the effects of the pandemic in the sector go beyond revenues and purchases. Purchasing behaviors and patterns are what sustain any business. After a business has understood its customers purchasing behaviors, projections and estimations of the business's future can be made. But as Kim and Liu (2022, p.104416)

explain, the current status of the UK's hospitality and catering sector is such that businesses are struggling with establishing new assessments of their customers. Hussain, Mirza, and Hassan (2020) demonstrate how human behavior has been affected during the pandemic beyond the business continuum and beyond the hospitality and catering sub-sector. These behavioral effects replicate in all business contexts, including the hospitality and catering sectors.

Therefore, individual business organisations operating catering outlets in Malta and beyond have suffered significant disruptions due to the pandemic. Some catering outlets, especially the young and budding enterprises, have been forced to close. Some have, however, managed to salvage themselves and restore normalcy today owing to the post-pandemic reliefs.

This dissertation places itself amidst all these by acting as a bridge between the catering outlets glaring at an uneventful closure and those that have managed to blossom despite the odds. By this study pinpointing the factors that determine whether the catering outlet will survive or not during a pandemic, managers of these businesses will find gaps in their ventures that they need to bridge if they are to survive. The Covid-19 pandemic is essentially a natural issue meaning nothing stops another similar pandemic from hitting us again in the future. However, due to the insights that will have been generated from this study, it will be possible for businesses to approach such situations with an informed mind.

1.2 Problem Statement

The devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have attracted extensive research, most of which has focused on presenting or acknowledging the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in the business sector. Even in the hospitality and catering

subsector, many discourses tend to quantify the effects of disruptions witnessed without focusing on other angles, such as assessing what restaurants and other catering outlets would do differently if they were to survive the pandemic. It is significant to acknowledge that the pandemic brought by Covid-19 is the first of its kind in terms of extent and magnitude when assessing the impact to be witnessed in recent years.

Research plays a vital role in developing lasting solutions to socio-economic and socio-political problems such as the pandemic. Through effective research, solutions to problems can be presented upon which governments and organisations can act to ensure there is the realisation of compelling outcomes. However, this has not been exhausted in the current context, especially when considering the hospitality and catering contexts. Many of the discourses available tend to be more declarative of the problem and acknowledge its existence without spending time exploring the various mitigation options available.

Presently, the determining factors of catering outlets' survival in a pandemic are still unknown. Due to this gap, this discourse will research, discourse, and present data on the specific factors that can help catering outlets survive during a pandemic. The cost effects of Covid-19 in the catering and hospitality context are huge. Some businesses have been forced to close down with minimal hopes of returning to business. This study will effectively prevent such extreme losses from being realized, considering it will unearth some of the factors that if catering outlets consider, they will succeed in surviving the pandemic.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to determine the factors that help catering outlets survive during a pandemic. The research will take a qualitative approach to analyse bibliographic literature assessment and online surveys as the primary data source; therefore, the two significant variables to be assessed in this study are catering outlets and the pandemic. The survival of catering outlets depends on their reactions during the pandemic. That makes the pandemic an independent variable while these catering outlets are dependent. The choice of the research approach has been motivated by the fact that the research will be focusing on gathering two types of data; the abstract data, which will be collected through the questionnaires, will guide the research in understanding how various catering outlet managers have managed the pandemic and how the experience has been. The questionnaires will target the successful catering outlet managers and workers and those who failed to recover after lockdowns. The same kind of data will be complemented by the works of literature that will be put into context. This does this research qualitative research but is mixed when assessing it in terms of the types of sources used. Online surveys are primary, while published literature is secondary. Other data sources considered and used in this study include case studies and bibliographic searches. An assortment of sources used in this study will ensure that findings are sought from as many sources as possible; the more sources used, the higher the number of participants that will be featured, thus high efficiency. This adds to the strengths of this study because if many catering outlet managers are considered and featured, it means that the factors that will be realized in the long run will have worked on the majority, thus increasing the probability of them also working in a particular context in future.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 Broad Objective

The broad objective of this research is to determine the factors that help catering outlets to survive during pandemic.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives studied in this research therefore include the following:

1. To determine how restaurant leadership practices affect the restaurants and hotels during a pandemic.
2. To assess the place of management practices in affecting restaurants and hotels during a pandemic.
3. To identify the role of technology and innovation in easing the effects of the pandemic.

1.5 Research Questions

Therefore, the specific research questions guiding this research include:

1. How does restaurant leadership practices affect restaurants and hotels during a pandemic?
2. How does different management practices affect the performance of restaurants, hotels and catering outlets during a pandemic?
3. What role does technology and innovation play in easing the effects of the pandemic in the hotel and catering sector?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The hospitality and catering industry is a rich source of revenue in many countries because it offers accommodation and other essential services that one cannot get, especially when they are away from home. But like any business, the goal

of this sector is to yield as many returns and profits as possible. However, in times of the pandemic, stay-at-home orders and lockdowns usually mean that the hotels and restaurant lose customers. But then the business has to continue running until there is normalcy. The many employees in this sector will have to be sustained through such storms because laying them off would mean lowering the individuals' and their families living conditions. Georgina, Niamh, and Susannah (2022) explain that in 2019, the UK's hospitality sector generated an economic input of close to 60 billion pounds reflecting between 3 and 5 percent of the businesses in the UK.

There is a close association and connection between the situation in the UK and Malta. But the pandemic struck, forcing the industry to face adverse effects. Some were forced to close down, while many were limited in terms of the hours of operation. The wholesome imposed measures, however, had the most significant effect of lowering demand for hotel and hospitality services. There are, however, those that were affected more than others; for example, late-night businesses in this sector, including nightclubs, suffered the most due to the night curfews and the disallowed public gatherings (Georgina, Niamh, and Susannah, 2022). But as I have indicated, the level of effects felt by businesses differed. Some were hit more than others. This is the motivating factor for this research. The goal is to determine why these differences existed and how those struggling to get back to business today cannot undergo the same challenges in the future. Studying this will be essential because it will mean businesses operating in the hospitality and catering sector will acquire direct yet significant lessons that they can apply in salvaging their businesses. From the objectives, the research focuses on three areas: management, leadership, and technological innovations. These are central factors that will be confirmed in this study and that businesses will find helpful. The study is therefore significant because it is out

to solve a problem affecting many businesses today. It is also increasing human information concerning how to react to pandemics and disruptive natural events that threaten the business. Due to this study, it will be possible for businesses operating in this sector to have more confidence when future pandemics and crises occur.

1.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter has introduced the dissertation, presented the background of the study which has contextualised the research in the research location. The problem statement has offered a candid and critical outline of the problem under study while purpose of the study has offered an argument why the study is necessary. There is also the study objectives, research questions and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The chapter reviews relevant literature on the business aspects of hospitality and catering outlets as affected during the pandemic. Reviewing such literature is significant as it facilitates the integration of the concepts and findings highlighted in these studies. Integrating these concepts and issues as discovered will ensure that this study addresses the research problem by putting all the existing information into context. The chapter will be handled in sections beginning with the underpinning theory, leadership and management in the hospitality and catering outlets, hospitality sector management practices and considerations, technology and innovation in hospitality, and other theoretical concepts.

It is worth noting that the research seeks to identify the factors that help the catering industry survive the current pandemic crisis. The effects of the pandemic, especially in Malta in this sector, began when the Covid-19 virus case was discovered in the country on 7 March 2020. From this moment, speculations on a challenging future for the sector became a reality a few months later when the government announced measures barring movement and access to public places. The hospitality sector is one of the most publicly accessed spaces follow the Legal Notice 76 of 2020 Closure of Public Order on 17 March 2020—limited access to these public spaces translated to massive losses in the sector. However, in Malta and beyond, many catering outlets devised new ways and approaches and thrived regardless of the pandemic. This implies that there are considerations that, if applied, can translate to positive outcomes for the sector despite the pandemic and its effects.

2.1 Social Systems Theory

The Social Systems Theory was propounded by, often shortened, Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim and developed the Systems Theory in the 19th century. Jackson (1985, p. 136) notes that the theory analyses models involve in the world as the society adapts to changes in environmental conditions. The theory argues that society comprises units or systems that coexist and collaborate to ensure the success of the broader system, which is the general society. Some of these systems include social status, social roles, social networks, organisations and groups in society, relevant societal institutions, and the broad society. Friedman and Allen (2011, p.3) explain that biopsychosocial assessment and the development of intervention strategies call for establishing the relationship between an individual or an organisation in the broader social context. The theory then makes sense in the end that it creates a practical approach when seeking interventions and mitigation strategies for a problem affecting an individual within a broad social context.

This theory fits in this study in many ways. Firstly, the theory acknowledges society as a unit that is made up of many systems brought together and coexisting to create a comprehensive system. Malta's hospitality and catering can be considered a comprehensive system whose success depends on how the unit systems exist and how they relate to each other. Some of the individual systems highlighted by Friedman and Allen (2011, p.3), including social roles and social networks amongst others, are replicated in the hospitality and catering sector, where various stakeholders have different roles that they play and through which they contribute to the success of the broader success of the industry. What the pandemic did was disrupt the normal operations of the system. That then calls for adjusting the standard operations of the unit systems, which will ensure adaption to the new order. This way, this theory fits in

this study because its arguments concerning social systems can be traced and identified in the sector.

2.2 Hospitality and Catering Industry Leadership Practices

Leadership practices have central when assessing the position and the success of the hospitality and catering sector. Tromp and Blomme (2014) explain that customer service occupies a central position and significance in the hospitality industry. When the service delivery in the sector is excellent, then there is no doubt the catering outlet venture will equally thrive. Knani (2014, p.1) connects the hospitality sector with ethical practices. He argues that in this industry, unethical practices are bound to occur knowingly or unknowingly. Still, through practical leadership skills in the organisational teams, such hurdles are bound to be overridden. Knani (2014, p.1) makes an interesting observation on the role of ideal leadership practices resulting in ethical practices in the hospitality and catering sector. He notes, “research confirms that a positive ethical climate nurtures a healthy organisation by an increasing manager and employee job satisfaction, embracing customer experience, and increasing the organisation’s profits” (p.1).

Dai et al. (2013, p.760) examine the connection and relationship between transformational leadership and organisational justice, trust, organisational commitment, and customer behavior in the context of international tourist hotels. Their research uses questionnaires. Findings confirm that leadership style affects the success and reputation of an organisation. Dai et al. (2013, p.772) explain that transformational leaders in the industry induce trust in their employees, improving the organisation’s commitment to attaining desired results and outcomes. This study is relatively significant because it confirms the centrality of leadership practices in influencing performance in the hospitality and catering sectors. However, many of

these discourses tend to be more specific to transformational leadership as the ideal leadership style. Worsfold (1989, p.153) explains that many hotels and restaurant managers are more autocratic than democratic and liberal. Does this imply the industry is not handled optimally, considering the many benefits of transformational leadership? Fiedler (1967) identifies the contingency model as central to leadership effectiveness. This, in simple terms, is the view that there is no standard and wholly acceptable leadership style as each leadership style is determined in terms of its effectiveness by the situation at hand. Considering this, the hospitality industry and the many dynamics, especially those witnessed during the pandemic, would mean no standard leader would handle all the restaurants and catering outlets in a particular manner. Instead, depending on the situation in the related area of operation, such as the locality, the country, or the region, every leader will apply what they consider ideal in their context. However, this view would prevent this study from progressing any further, considering it justifies the leadership style of even the leaders in the outlets that failed or those struggling to resume business. Despite the differing positions among scholars concerning effective leadership practices, there are standard traits central to effective leadership. Brownell (2010, p.364) identifies integrity, courage, trust, and respect for both the customers and employees as foundational attributes that determine the success of the business and business leaders.

2.3 Management Practices in Hospitality and Catering Industry

The tourism, hospitality, and catering industries are multidisciplinary sectors in which the nature of activities handled therein cannot be left to a single discipline. The management of the sector, therefore, calls for an interdisciplinary approach. Weaver and Oppermann (2000, p.24) explain the role of academic research in enhancing hospitality management using the academic discipline, which is part of the effort being

enhanced and propagated through this research. While the duo focuses on tourism as an industry, there is a close connection between the tourism industry and the hospitality and catering industry. Assessments made in the tourism industry are primarily applicable in the hospitality and catering sectors, especially when assessing how the two industries are managed. According to Harbourne (1995), management of the industry should focus on employee attitudes, job satisfaction, loyalty, and complaint management for successful management of the sector. These issues are what Harbourne (1995) considers the most important when undertaking or assessing what constitutes ideal management of the sector. In the pandemic context, discourses agree that the realized disruptions have changed how the sector was initially managed by presenting new challenges for sector managers. Kaushal and Srivastava (2021, p.102707) explain that the hospitality industry, alongside the tourism industry, thrives solely when they have high visitations, with many of the managerial functions, including employee satisfaction, being geared towards having the best teams that will offer the best services such that the customers will increase their subsequent visits to the relative specific industry. But with the pandemic, discourses confirm this changed, making it problematic for industry managers to increase service delivery options to their employees while there are minimal or no visits.

Fonseca et al. (2021, p.162) explain that in the catering industry, managers during the pandemic focused on attempting to raise revenues that would be enough to maintain fixed costs such as wages and rent. When assessing these actions from a management point of view, the dedication of some businesses to ensuring they raise revenues enough to sustain their employees' salaries and rent amongst other fixed costs is a demonstration of the managers' intended dedication to attaining the most value to their outlets by ensuring they safeguard the interests of their employees and

the core needs of their businesses, especially the venture's fixed costs. Therefore, no matter the circumstances, employee interest prioritization is one of the many practices that successful ventures operating in the industry have undertaken. Discourses agree that the dedication to the employee is significant as it affects customer flow. Price (1994, p.47) states that poor personnel practices affect tourism and hospitality markets. A similar argument is posed by Waller and Abbasian (2022). The two conducted a qualitative questionnaire-based study on 30 senior hotel managers in four-star chain hotels in London and Stockholm regarding how they implemented crisis management techniques while responding to the pandemic. The study reveals managers who focused on crisis management techniques reduced the economic impacts they would have suffered. This points to the use of crisis management techniques as viable mitigation approaches.

2.4 Technology and Innovation in Hospitality and Catering

Technology and innovation provide a viable avenue for businesses to provide better services without interacting physically with clients. Even before the pandemic, the adoption and transition to technological adoption was a rife idea among many businesses in the hospitality sector. Zhu and Zhang (2021) explain that many Chinese small hospitality businesses transited to the digital space to bridge the physical contact gap created by the restrictive pandemic measures. Many functions and benefits come with using technology in the hospitality and catering sector. Whitaker (1986, p.95) explains that research on applying technological innovations in the hospitality and catering sector can be traced to the post-Industrial Revolution era. Within 2 to 3 years of publishing the research paper, he acknowledges computer applications to have increased in the hospitality and catering industry. This confirms that technology has long been a preferent idea that has always been thought to yield beneficial outcomes

for the sector. Sharma et al. (2021, p.103180) note that the natural technological innovations that hotels developed during the pandemic have been beneficial and effective in propagating the efficiency and effectiveness of the hotels. However, the performance and actual outcomes of the various technologies and consequent innovations vary (Sharma et al., 2021, p.103180). The study finds innovations in products to have been most rewarding and competitive. This, however, implies that there could be many more kinds of innovations that have been devised other than product-based innovations.

Lau (2020, p.500) notes that in China, businesses, in general, were more open to adopting live streaming and live conferencing to replace boardroom meetings. Other organisations, including those operating in the hospitality and catering sector, revamped their internet quality by adopting WI-FI 6. Artificial intelligence, facial recognition, robots, and 5G technology transformed the quality of services offered through the digital space in China during the pandemic (Lau, 2020, p.500). These technological options have been developed and used in many hospitality businesses in China. However, China's technological innovativeness and viability could be a lead factor why it has not been problematic for the businesses in the country to adopt these innovations. Shin and Kang (2020, p.102664) note the pace of technological innovations in the hospitality and catering sector during the pandemic. The primary function or role that technology and innovations play in this context is that it helps to reduce the perceived health risks associated with normal hotel operations characterized by physical and interpersonal interactions (Shin and Kang, 2020, p.102664). Social distancing, for instance, and enhanced cleanliness have been boosted and improved during the pandemic courtesy of technology. Breier et al. (2021, p.102723) explain that in England, many businesses that were allowed to operate had

to demonstrate their level of preparedness to meet the regulations set by the government. Technologically innovative agencies reaped immensely as they were more able to demonstrate this potential than those less prepared.

2.5 Theoretical Concepts

There are three theoretical concepts that have come up very significantly in the assessment of the discourses assessed herein. The three include loyalty, customer experience and employee engagement and relationship.

2.5.0 Loyalty

Loyalty in business and especially in the hospitality and catering industry, evokes two meanings: consumer loyalty and employee loyalty. These two are central to the business, especially in a crisis. Uncles, Dowling, and Hammond (2003) define customer loyalty as repeated purchases. In the hospitality and catering industry, repeat purchases translate to a customer making a purchase or visiting the business in more than a single case. Many of the discourses evaluated herein, be it in the leadership, management and technology, and innovation aspects, agree that these efforts and pursuit of ideal practices are geared towards appealing to as many customers as possible and influencing their subsequent choice of the catering outlet in question. Therefore, customer loyalty is assessed in the literature as a central target for business owners. On the part of employees, employee loyalty is equally significant. Lakshmi and Shareena (2020, p.1327) join many scholars assessed herein in agreeing that employee loyalty dropped during the pandemic, especially in the Malta's hospitality and catering sector. The literature examined herein cites the drop to have emanated from challenges in the sector to meet fixed costs. With no guarantee of wages and closure of many hospitality-based businesses, it is justifiable that many employees lacked justifying reasons for their loyalty to the business.

2.5.1 Customer Experience

Customer experience refers to customers' attitudes, views, and perceptions about the quality of service they receive in the context of hospitality and catering. Positive customer experience leads to employee loyalty. Successful catering outlets that succeeded in sailing through the pandemic pursued a reputable customer experience. One of the approaches that have been lead factors supporting these businesses to achieve this include the use of technology and innovations. However, as noted, the expensive nature of the technological application is the central reason for its low adoption in many catering outlets. Bonfanti, Vigolo, and Yfantidou (2021, p.102871) confirm that in a study seeking to assess customer experiences in the hospitality and catering sector during the pandemic, findings show many customers recorded negative experiences, many pointing out the strict policies guiding catering outlets such as social distancing to be the main reason for their responses. However, in the cases where technology was used in service delivery, the customers' responses were more favorable. This information confirmed the function of ideal management and leadership practices and the integration of technology and innovations in influencing the customer experience.

2.5.2 Employee Engagement and Relationship

Dube, Nhamo, and Chikodzi (2021, p.1487) explain that the Covid-19 pandemic crippled the hospitality industry. The industry's stakeholders include employees, among others, who are as critical as those assessed above. Many discourses have also singled out employee engagement and relationships across the three thematic areas as an issue of concern, which holds value in discussing the factors that help catering outlets survive during a pandemic. Hospitality and catering outlet managers must focus on employee engagement and relationships. One of the reasons for poor

customer experience offered by customers, poor employee service was an equally significant reason. The pandemic struck even employees, with some being claimed by the pandemic. All these meant strained relationships among themselves and with their employers. All of these translate to adverse reactions to the customers whose views are replicated in such studies as the one pointed out above. Yeon et al. (2021, p.104321) use the US context to assess whether social responsibility affected performance in the hospitality and catering sector in the country. The research responds in the affirmative on the role of social responsibility, especially in impacting employee relations. Therefore, discourses agree on the fact that ideal industry management practices, effective leadership, and application of technology and associate innovations do, in the end, count to the business' social responsibility to its employees, which in the long run counts as it affects employee engagement and employee relationships that contribute to positive customer experience and loyalty.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed relevant discourses relating to factors that facilitate business units in the hospitality and catering industry to survive during the pandemic. Some of the sections assessed herein include the social systems theory, leadership practices, management practices, technology and innovation and relevant theoretical concepts.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The chapter assesses the methodology that the research employs in investigating the research problem. Some of specific sections to be studied under this chapter include the review of data collection methods used in the study, examination of the primary and secondary data in terms of its strengths and weaknesses, the sampling criteria, pilot study, methods of analysis and limitations of the study.

3.1 A Review of Data Collection Methods

This study seeks to determine the factors that help catering outlets survive during the pandemic. Therefore, the research takes a qualitative approach in the most relevant group of people to the researching. The nature of the problem has necessitated the decision to use this approach under research and the type of desired outcomes it seeks to yield. This research targets customers, catering outlet managers, and hotel and restaurant industry leaders. What is expected from these individuals and like sources are their views on what they believe has been the most significant supporting reasons for the successes that their unique industries have registered during the pandemic. Also, even for those that have failed to register remarkable progress, the goal will be to see what they think they would have done to ensure they handled these facilities differently. In this case, the target groups' views, opinions, and responses will formulate central factors that can be said to be responsible for the remarkable or otherwise not so remarkable progress that has been registered in the sector. Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey (2016, p.498) note that when the kind of data anticipated is general data or information on the attitudes, views, beliefs, or

preferences of the people required, then it is suitable to use a qualitative approach. The researcher's intentions are consistent with the description of this kind of data, thus the decision to use a qualitative research approach. More rational justifying reasons for using this approach can be found in the descriptions offered by scholars regarding the quantitative research approach and when it is to be used. Sukamolson (2007, p.5) notes that when using the quantitative method of researching, the goal is to integrate the in-depth scientific details on the relevant problem. This is not the intention of this study in that while the study seeks to unearth the factors that determine the survival and success of the catering outlets during the pandemic, it doesn't intend to assess these using scientific models. Therefore, the qualitative research approach is most suitable for this study.

3.2 Types of Data

This study intends to collect and utilize both primary and secondary data. A blend of the two is necessary to balance the limitations of each of the models, which will be addressed and catered for by the alternative data source. Therefore, when both types of data are used, the sources and data become complementary, thus aiding in developing a compelling argument. Rabiński (2003, p.43) identifies specificity, precision, and accuracy as critical pillars guiding the choice of primary data, while elements guiding the selection and choice of secondary data include generality and breadth. The two data types used in this study are discussed in detail.

3.2.1 Primary Data

Primary data utilized in this research on the factors that help catering outlets survive during the pandemic will be obtained through online questionnaires. The questionnaires will be disseminated online to individual managers and employees who have been part of the hospitality and catering industry, especially during the pandemic.

The reason is that these participants have a closer and clearer objective view than other population, who is either not paying attention, or have an subjective or bias view. Two types of target respondents will be identified and targeted in this case. The first category comprises those whose catering outlets survived in the post-pandemic period and those whose businesses bounced during the pandemic. Through having these two categories featured in the study, it will be possible to make a comparison between what these two broad categories have done right or what they have failed to do so that a clear plan of what differentiates the successful businesses from the unsuccessful ones will be found and put to context. The research also targets responses from both employers and employees in Malta's domestic hospitality and catering sectors. This primary data will be critical in boosting the quality of the outcomes yielded in this study. Hox and Boeije (2005, p.594) discuss social surveying as a primary data collection method. Questionnaires, primarily online questionnaires, can be considered a social surveying approach because the consideration and focus are on collecting the views, perceptions, and attitudes of the target population. Therefore, the greatest strength of using primary data is that it is stronger because it is obtained directly from the source and thus is more credible.

3.2.2 Secondary Data

Due to the nature of this research question, it is not possible to pre-empt wholly the factors that help catering outlets to survive during the pandemic by solely focusing on primary data collection methods. Instead, there is the need to factor in what other scholars have assessed and found to be the lead factors for the different contexts they have majored on but relevant to the research topic under assessment. Therefore, the position and function of secondary data amidst these discussions and in the pursuit

for pre-emptive articulation of the relevant factors, the use and focus on secondary data becomes almost necessary.

3.3 Sampling Criteria

The pandemic has changed many way of livings, and even the methodologies in doing research, for the restrictions has stopped people from meeting face to face, making the ordinary interview nearly impossible, but by the same token, people uses more social media during the shutdown period for both working and leisure purposes, which makes the online survey more popular and accessible to more people.

This research seeks to determine the factors that help catering outlets survive during a pandemic. Three primary data sources will be used in the study: questionnaires, case studies, and literature analysis. The samples used in this study for the three data sources are purposive and judgemental sampling. For the questionnaires, the goal is to collect primary accurate and relevant data on what those affected first-hand by the pandemic in the catering outlets and restaurants did or failed to do, resulting in the disruptive effect they experienced in their setting. It would not be conclusive to study such an inherent concept using random sampling criteria or other alternatives because of the high number of population samples that will probably be found. Through judgemental or purposive sampling, it will not be problematic to focus on the cases that will generate the most required information instead of having a large pool of data sources, some of which will not be varied. By this, the research implies, for instance, that the target bis to feature both the successful catering outlets and the struggling ones, the large and the small ones and such variations. Such precision would not be attainable if random sampling and its alternatives were used. The same sampling criteria are used in the case study and literature analysis. The researcher intends to assess sources most relevant to the research on the factors that help

catering outlets survive during a pandemic. Purposive sampling is the most suitable sampling approach to be used in this case because of the assumption that the researcher's centrality in the selection of samples will ensure the cases and the literature works selected and integrated into the study comprises those that are most connected to attaining the study objectives. According to Marshall (1996, p.522), qualitative research, in most cases, attracts the use of purposive sampling criteria because of the nature of qualitative research and the relevance of having the researcher at the centre of determining its trajectory on whose views, attitudes and opinions matter most and which matter least.

3.4 Pilot Study

Before rolling out this study, the researcher intends to undertake a pilot study to determine the feasibility of the research approach. The pilot study will use five sources, 2 cases, and 5 data sources in each of the three areas; the questionnaires, the case study, and the literature analysis. The objectives of this study will be the guiding principle in the pilot study as it will be the primary consideration in the actual study. Therefore, the goal will be to determine the place and type of leadership approach that leaders in the assessed cases, from the sample used in the questionnaires and what the literature says, is the role or the type of leadership approach that would be most suitable during the pandemic in the catering outlet sector. The information from the three will then be studied individually before being corroborated to formulate a wholesome conclusion. The second area of focus is the suitability of the various management practices such as employee management and crisis management and how they positively or negatively affect the performance of the catering and hospitality sector during the pandemic. Finally, the focus will be on technology and innovation as a stand-alone point, especially the way technology and innovation will have affected

the sector from the questionnaires' perspective, case analyses, and outcomes from literature analyses.

3.5 Methods of Analysis

Data analysis methods are critical in determining the quality of outcomes the research yields. The primary method of data analysis used in this case is the narrative analysis, especially for the questionnaire and case study data sources. The choice of this approach is motivated by the nature of this research. Belotto (2018) explains narrative analysis as the process of analysing and making sense of the narratives that sources provide. In the questionnaire and case study, the featured sources will yield information touching on the various aspects of their catering outlet environment during the pandemic. Since this information will be explained in varied forms, it will be the role of the researcher to analyse what these narratives represent and how differently the cases and patterns observed varied from one case or one outlet to the next. However, the research will use a content analysis model for the literature analysis. Belotto (2018) defines content analysis as a pattern evaluative approach through which such aspects as the frequency of actions and phrases, degree of impact, and associate aspects will be assessed. Therefore, two data analysis methods will be used because of the varied nature of the samples and sources used in the research.

3.6 Limitations

No research methodology is wholly accurate. Undoubtedly, flaws will always pop up, but the self-moderation of these challenges from within the research ultimately determines how strong and reliable the research becomes.

In this study, the research methodology is relatively monotonous, due to the outbreaks of pandemic have caused the plan of having face to face interview

impossible. The online survey has its short-comes- due to the interviewer is not present in front the interviewee while doing the survey, the interviewee may not complete all questions, or may answer the questions perfunctorily. Secondary, although the questionnaire is shared into domestic professional groups on social media, even when it was completed by a local business participant, but there's no guarantee that it is from the experience he had while doing local business. And the last point of view is that a face to face interview may generates more delightful idea, not only limited to the choices provided by the qualitative survey. Therefore, the methods used for research are the first challenging aspect of the study considering quantitative approaches are more substantial in terms of the quality of outcomes they yield due to their inclusion of scientific methods.

Regardless, the current use of qualitative data is justifiable and consistent with the issue under study. Also, the study as assessed is focused on working on and around the objectives. There could be significant alternative factors that would be helpful to catering outlets suing the pandemic. Still, the research might not cover them because it will focus more on meeting the objectives. However, the research is a starting point from which other studies can be built to cover any of the areas that will not have been addressed. This will be captured in the last chapter, where the research will offer an advisory on the role of this study in contributing to future research.

3.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter has outlined the methodology used in the study. Some of the sections discussed in the study include the data collection approach, secondary and primary data, the sampling criteria, pilot study, the methods of analysis and the limitations of the methodology applied.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Discussion of the Results

4.0 Introduction

The chapter intends to report the findings obtained from the research seeking to determine the factors that help catering outlets survive during a pandemic. The research uses online questionnaires as the primary method of data collection with specific references made to cases of two types; those that survived the harsh pandemic situation in Malta and, in some cases, in the UK and those organisations and catering outlets whose pandemic effects were direr and thus could not allow them to progress and go through the pandemic. The chapter is organized in sections consistent with the research questions. It, however, will report the general elements of the population featured in the research.

4.1 Description of the Findings

The online survey questions were created and formatted through online forms. They were structured into sections to cover the introduction to the questionnaire encompassing prompts on the demographic characteristics of the respondents and prompts specific to the first research question on how restaurant leadership practices affect the restaurants and hotels during the pandemic. The other section sought results and findings on what the respondents considered to be the place and role of management practices in affecting restaurants and hotels during a pandemic. The other sections, which were to the end in the context of the structuring of the questionnaire, sought to assess the role and place of technology in alleviating the adverse effects of the pandemic.

A total of hundred respondents were captured in the research. Respondents were, however, allowed the flexibility of filling the sections they were comfortable with most. There was, therefore, a variation in the number of responses realized in the descriptive sections of the research, for instance, the sections seeking to factor in the justifying reasons for a particular trend. Of the hundred respondents, 51 were male, while 45 were female, with four respondents identifying as not being male/female. Most of the respondents were between 18 and 30 years old, with 81 respondents falling in this category. Seventeen respondents, on the other hand, reported being between 30 and 50 years, while two respondents were above 50 years. The majority of the study respondents were experienced as employees in the catering and hospitality sector while employers were 32, employees were 68.

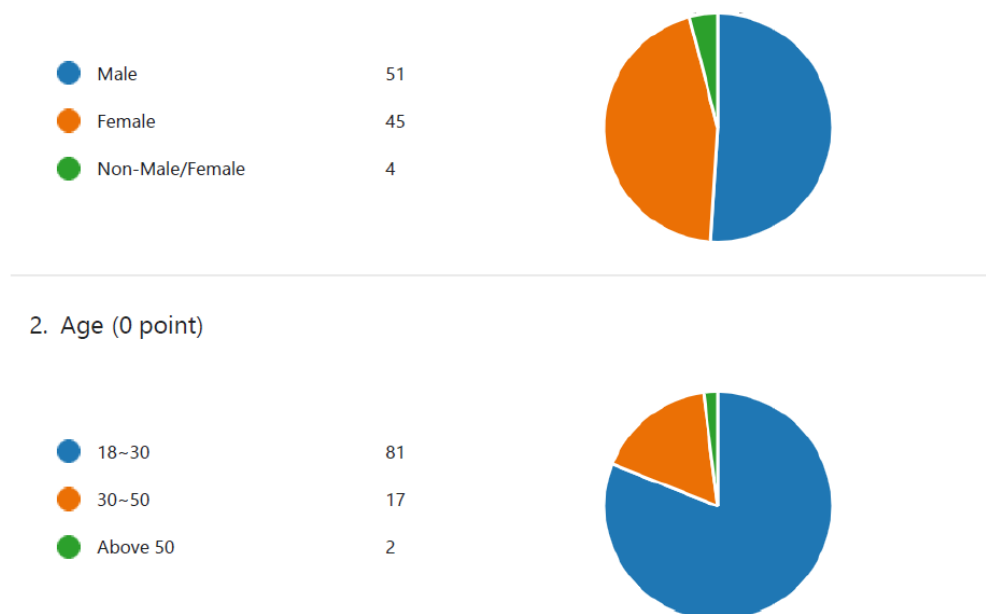


Figure 1: Demographic summary of the Respondents. (Gender and Age)

4.2 Data Analysis Procedures

The data obtained from the research was arranged and analysed consistent with the research question. As framed in chapter one, each research question was used to assess whether or not the findings satisfactorily answered this prompt. Thus, there would be an identification of the gaps and inconsistencies in the same context. Therefore, the results presented herein are arranged and organized according to the research questions and the focus themes that were pursued and sought by coining these research questions. For instance, the first prompt assessed leadership and how it affected how catering and hospitality units survived or were generally handled during the pandemic. The second prompt will feature management and managerial practices and whether or not these affected the survival mode and survival rate of catering units. The third prompt studied the role of technology and technological adoptions in the sector in alleviating the effects of the pandemic in the catering and hospitality units. Therefore, while relevant themes such as leadership, management practices, and technology can be identified and consequently used herein, they are consistent and subjects obtained and ideally extracted from the research questions. Therefore, the data herein was analysed using the research question with the thought and mind that since the questionnaire was constructed based on the research question, then reportage of the findings would be best befitting if there is a consistent consideration of the research questions versus the research outcomes and data as obtained.

4.3 Findings

4.3.1 How Restaurant Leadership Practices Affected Restaurants and Hotels during the Pandemic

4. Do you think leadership practices affect how restaurants and hotels handled the pandemic? (0 point)



Figure 2: Summary Findings on Leadership

When asked whether they considered leadership practices to be consequential in determining how restaurants and hotels are handled during a pandemic, they responded in their majority that leadership practices indeed affected the survival or failure of restaurants and hotels during a pandemic. 82 out of the 100 respondents in affirmation, while only 18 responded with a no. Respondents had different responses to offer when asked to provide a rationale to support their view. The most outstanding responses considered leadership experience to be a preliminary determination of how one would handle such a crisis. This means, in their view, respondents would rather have an experienced leader take charge than an inexperienced one due to the differences in decisions.

Communication was also one of the factors that the respondents viewed to be more primary, 55% of the response stated this trait of leadership as “very important” arguing that respondents with good leadership skills would know how to communicate

to avoid panics. Another notable aspects is that, Mansia & Hørup (2021) finds out the pandemic have accelerate the leadership dynamics shifting in restaurants, from c&c (command and control) to flat leadership type, which means more collaborative, and everyone in the team matters. The results may, in another points of view, shows that during a crisis, everyone weights the same from a dishwasher to the head of the chef.

The researcher sought to put leadership practices into context by narrowing down on traits ideal for a leader, including resilience, empathy, communication, and influence. Many of the respondents viewed the respondents as having been either very important or moderately influential. On the question of whether the respondents could identify these traits in the various leaders who were at the heart of handling them during the pandemic, 77% admitted to having witnessed the four traits in their leaders. In contrast, 23 respondents could not identify these. Though leaderships influence organisations imperceptibly, it is still ideal for the team to identify the traits of leadership. Demonstration of a strong leadership assures the team mentally and financially. One response thinks good leaderships 'encourage their staff' and 'help the business get through difficulties'

To further extend the outcomes, the respondents were asked to justify the significance of these traits as manifested in their leaders in the case where they could identify them or what they thought the traits could have done to support them survive the pandemic. The responses were largely positive and in the context of viewing leadership as a guide to implementing suitable measures.

4.3.2 The Place of Management Practices in Affecting Restaurants and Hotels during a Pandemic

The following survey questions sought to assess and respond to the second research question asking about the role of management and ideal management practices in alleviating the effects of the pandemic on individual organisations within the hospitality and catering sector. The first prompt asked respondents whether they considered the organisations they worked with to have been well managed during the pandemic or not.

9. Do you consider the institution you worked with to have been well managed during the pandemic crisis? (0 point)



Figure 3: Findings on Management

A majority of the respondents, 75%, admitted that their organisations were well-managed, while 25% responded negatively. On further inquiring why or why not they viewed their organisations as well-managed or otherwise, responses obtained show different managerial practices that were implemented that are consistent with their responses. For instance, those that considered their organisations to have been well-managed cited, among other issues, the fact that there were better regulations that were put in place that favored them. This shows that such manger implements management with employee engagement in mind, meet employee needs, and

consider how to maintain employee loyalty. While those that viewed their organisations to have been less well-managed cited salary cuts and loss of jobs to have been primary reasons for the same. Other notable reasons offered include the failure of the organisation management to put in mind and consider employee health issues. However, more critical were findings among the category that considered their organisations less appropriately managed due to total close downs. The researcher sought to narrow down different managerial practices that affected the 25% of the respondents who considered the organisations they worked with to have less adequately managed and, by extension. This 75% of respondents considered their organisations to have been appropriately managed. Salary cuts, loss of jobs, loss of colleagues due to death caused by the pandemic, reduced working hours, and total close-downs were some of the management-based decisions assessed. Forty-one respondents were affected by salary cuts, 25 by job losses, death of colleagues affected 11, reduction in working hours affected 15, while total close downs affected eight respondents. Responses also show that mass redundancies and layoffs of these measures should have been handled differently. Some cited salary cuts as not being a practical approach to countering the problem. Therefore, according to Harbourne(1995), A successful management should always focus on the employee's working attitude, working satisfaction, loyalty and always attend to employee's complain Yet pay cuts, redundancy, reduced working hours and shutdowns can affect employee attitudes and satisfaction, and thus employee performance. According to the Annual Report of Corinthia Malta, in order to reduce costs, the company have shut down some departments and hotels, to ensure that layoffs are not carried out, and share the difficulties with all employees. This is a good case for managing under a pandemic, securing employee benefits without compromising hotel revenue to build

employee loyalty. Therefore, under the pandemic, the hotel or restaurant industry should be managed rationally on the premise of employee engagement, satisfaction and loyalty, which is a factor to ensure its survival.

4.3.3 The Role of Technology and Innovation in Easing Pandemic Effects

The survey asks what technology and innovation in the hospitality and catering industry does in mitigating the effects of the pandemic. This question was designed to derive whether and how respondents felt technology and innovation were helpful. The most prominent answer is "This is important because the nature of service is direct contact, and innovated technology will change the way of interact, hence help ease the pandemic from spreading. Such as: artificial intelligence, robotic services, self-service, etc." It is well known that COVID-19 virus spreads through close contacts, often through droplets released when talking, sneezing, and coughing from a infected(Gomes, 2020). The Maltese Government practice the rules of less direct contact as many other EU countries. Disposal items are largely used, many restaurants applied the use of QR code. Bemporat (2021) says the QR code application is emerging in 2020 as a way to reduce customer contacts. It allows customers to order or pay bills directly by scanning a QR code on their mobile devices, which is a contactless service. In addition to this, it has another benefit- to improve the customer experience, which can go a long way in keeping hotels and restaurants afloat during or even after the pandemic. Moreover, the questionnaire also includes such questions. Therefore, technology and innovation are conducive to bringing new improvements to hotels and restaurants, reducing direct contact between service providers and customers, thus achieving the effect of mitigating the pandemic.

Respondents were also asked prompts that sought to contextualize the place of technology and technological innovations in alleviating the effects of the pandemic in the hospitality and catering sector. The first level of assessment was based on whether the relevant organisations adopted technological innovations to cover up for the effects of the pandemic. 57% of the respondents affirmed that their organisation implemented new technological remedies to cover the pandemic effects, while 43% did not. The questions' responses can exam the fact that the hospitality businesses can improve their survival during tough time via innovation and technology. However, it is found out not every enterprise is applying innovation.

14. Did your organization adopt technological innovations to cover up for the effects of the pandemic measures? (0 point)

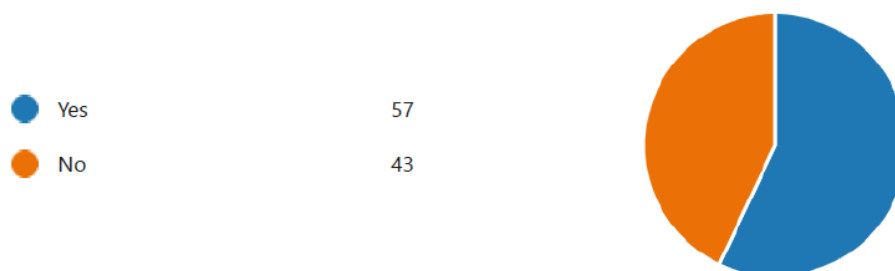


Figure 4: Summary findings on technology

The research further sought to narrow down the various innovations adopted. Some of these include e-marketing and e-delivery approaches. Online ordering, online selling, establishing an online board of many hotels pooling and sharing customers, online booking, and online data analysis approaches were also identified and reported. Online meetings using virtual assistance software were also used to compensate for the limited physical space due to the need to counter the spread of the virus were also noted and reported. There are innovative technologies that have greatly aided the

survival of the hotel and restaurant industry during the pandemic, such as promotional online marketing and the e-payment. The survey has received plenty of answers mentioning "delivery services" in e-marketing. Take out and delivery as the new ways of sales in the restaurant industry, which fulfills cravings for dishes from favorite restaurants while people are closed at home (Peñarubia, 2020). Quarantines, curfews, and shutting downs of establishments have led to restaurant cravings during the pandemic and has further led the technology's innovation imminent. During the pandemic, food delivery services are on the rise. Such as Bolt Food, Wolt in Malta has been growing rapidly and has become popular among both the restaurant industry and customers. This technological innovation has helped many restaurants survive the pandemic. However, Peñarubia (2020) stated that food delivery services also contribute to food waste and virus transmission. Improvements to the existing technologies and innovations are still new and challenging for the hotel and restaurant industry.

94% of the total respondents responded to the question of the kind of help and support that the newly implemented approaches yielded for the sector. Responses varied in the category, but overall, the remedies and technological alternatives led to the maintenance of the customer base, countered unemployment to a significant degree, and boosted and solidified sales, among other relative responses. To the extent of last query, there is response such as "The way of electronic marketing and artificial intelligence is conducive to expanding the marketing circle and increasing the cash flow of enterprises, thus forming a virtuous circle of sustainable development of the hotel and catering industry. Another respondes also states "This is a good way to cope with staff shortages and at the same time ensure that the business operates. It is an innovative way of providing services that is more conducive to attracting

customers.”The negative emotions are irreparable from the pandemic, and quarantine policies under the pandemic may create a shortage of human resources. Under this circumstance, certain technological innovation is beneficial to improve people's work enthusiasm, even overcome the shortage of human resources and maintain the normal operation of the enterprises. This is also a way for leaders to improve the employee engagement. Innovation can also achieve the effect of attracting customers and improving customer experience (Monga & Consultant, 2020). Because both e-commerce and online services are innovations in improving customer experience, which is the essential needs during the pandemic. Those who responded against seeing the value of technology also offered their reasons for the same. Most of these are those whose organisations closed down regardless of the technological alternatives implemented. But despite the variances, the majority of the respondents agreed that technology has a place and a role to play in maintaining a customer base, sustaining sales, avoiding closedowns, and thus ensuring there is continuity of the businesses even in the midst of the pandemic.

4.4 Summary

Overall, the findings show that more males than females and non-male/females combined participated in the study, most of whom were below 30 years old. Most of the findings were obtained from employees, which is relatively significant in this study because it allows the study to assess the factors that help catering outlets survive during a pandemic from the lens of the most vulnerable group, the employees. The study assessed three significant factors hypothesized to be the most fundamental for an organisation to survive in a situation such as the pandemic. The three include leadership practices, management practices, and technological innovations.

Regarding leadership practices, there's some new findings over the expectation when designing the survey questionnaire, the research finds out that leadership plays an important role in the tough time of pandemic, not only the transformational leadership outcome other types as expectation, but also the demonstration of leadership traits comforts people. Findings show that most respondents agree that leadership practices impact how restaurants and hotels survive or fail during a crisis as broad and extensive as Covid-19. Some of the most notable leadership traits that respondents identify as being most supportive and thus primary concerning alleviating the effects of the pandemic include resilience, empathy, communication, and influence, all of which are identifiable with transformative leaders. Most respondents also admitted to having experienced the traits mentioned earlier in their organisational leaders.

Regarding management practices, respondents also highlighted that they considered management practices to have played a role in the consequent modes of survival registered in their organisations. These managerial practices and actions that affected them include salary cuts, loss of jobs, loss of colleagues, reduced working hours, and total closedowns, all of which were manifested in the individual organisations to different degrees. Management should take into considerations of employee's attitude, loyalty and engagement.

Regarding the technological innovations were also assessed and were found to have been central in catering and hospitality organisations. Innovative Technology ease the pressure from the pandemic and improve employee's working efficiency. The technological advancements allowed these organisations to stay in business. However, some organisations did not implement any technological advancements, especially those that closed down in their entirety.

4.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter has reported findings obtained from the study. The chapter has been organized in sections including description of findings section where results have been presented. The data analysis procedures section has discussed the method of analysing data that is best befitting while the results bit and the findings summary have all outlined the actual findings as obtained upon administration of the research methodology.

Chapter 5

Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.0 Chapter Introduction

The chapter is the final chapter of the dissertation that seeks to discuss, conclude and propose different recommendations that can be adopted by organisations in the catering and hospitality sector if they are to avoid suffering adverse effects of a pandemic. The chapter will outline the summary of the study, summary of the study findings, implications of the study and the recommendations of the study.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The research sought to determine the factors that help catering and hospitality outlets to survive during a pandemic, such as the pandemic caused by the spread of coronavirus using the context of Malta. The researcher identified three primary research objectives and relative research questions that have been used to guide the discussion on the factors determining whether a catering and hospitality organisation will survive during a pandemic. The three include the determination of the role that leadership practices play in the survival of organisations in a pandemic, the second one is an assessment of the place of management practices in affecting restaurants and hotels, and the last one is an assessment of the role that technology and technological innovations play in enabling the survival of a business during a pandemic especially businesses operating in the hospitality and catering sector. The researcher focused on Malta and, by extension, the UK which offered a comparative approach. The value of this study has also been discussed primarily in the introductory chapter. The discussion argued for the research question considering that the pandemic that the world is recovering from is an example of a natural crisis that is mainly inevitable,

meaning it can reoccur in the future. Therefore, equipping the sector, especially when considering the role that this sector plays in the economic wellbeing of the globe, would be important for the globe. This would be helpful because it will mean that the world will be better equipped with the strategies and ways of mitigating similar issues as they are bound to come up in future. The research uses online surveys as the primary mode of data collection. Upon administration of the study, findings show that leadership practices, managerial practices, decisions, and technology all play a role in helping catering and hospitality organisations survive and mitigate the devastating effects of a pandemic.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The findings obtained in this research were assessed and analysed based on the three research questions. The first primary category of findings relates to leadership practices' role and function in mitigating the pandemic's effects. The study of a hundred respondents comprises employees and employers with experience working in the hospitality and catering sector in Malta. The respondents were asked their views on the question and the position of leadership practices in improving the industry during a crisis. The majority admitted that leadership practices did impact the quality of outcomes realized in the quest to improve how hospitality and catering outlets are handled. Among other issues, responses identified resilience, empathy, communication, and influence as the primary traits that an ideal leader would and thus should possess during a pandemic for them to offer an idealized experience in the hospitality and catering sector during a pandemic. The majority of the respondents admitted witnessing the traits in their organisational leaders.

Management practices were also assessed with regards to whether they have a role and impact on whether catering outlets survive or fail to survive during a

pandemic. Respondents were asked whether they believed management and management practices to be relative factors that affect the survival or failure of hospitality and catering sector industries during a pandemic. Findings showed that most respondents agreed and viewed management practices as the centre of determining how an organisation operating in the catering and hospitality sector progresses during a pandemic. Further analysis of the findings on this factor revealed that most respondents considered a salary cut to be a decision that emanates from the management and that it affected 41% of the respondents qualifies as a managerial practice or decision. Other relative management decisions that affected the respondents include loss of jobs, death of colleagues, reduced working hours, and organisational and branch closedowns. Respondents had different views and assumed different positions regarding excellent handling of the situation based on the above-listed metrics. Many, however, were against salary cuts to ensure the organisation survives.

The final category of results that were obtained and consequently registered for analysis was assessing technology and the use of innovations to counter the devastating effects caused by a pandemic such as the covid 19 pandemic with regards to the way it affects the hospitality and catering industry. Respondents revealed that 57% of the organisations they worked with adopted different technological innovations during the pandemic, while 43% did not. The adopted innovations ranged from the marketing level to ordering and making inquiries, to actual delivery, and finally at the communication and feedback collection level. Software, big data, and virtual assistance technologies were used in this case. Findings also show that the most outstanding value and role of these technologies were that they ensured continuity of the business besides facilitating engagement and connection between the business

and its customers despite the measures barring physical interaction between the two shareholders. Therefore, while it was adopted by many organisations considering about 40% of the respondents reported not having any technological innovations in their organisation, it determines business continuity during a pandemic, especially in the catering and hospitality industry.

5.3 Implications of the Study

This study offers critical implications from both the practical application level and in theoretical perspective. At the theoretical level, the pandemic caused by the extensive spread of the coronavirus has hurt the global economy at an advanced level. Undoubtedly, the world has suffered the effects of this pandemic on different scores. As discussed in the theoretical framework, the global economy, like the national economy, comprises small unit systems, which we can reliably refer to as sectors. Each sector has a share of its contribution to the well-being and the general advancement of the broader economy. Researchers have not had enough time to critically look into the effects of the pandemic and offer what needs to be done or avoided in the event an organisation wants to survive through such a situation. Many of the available studies offer an exploratory view of the pandemic situation, considering they tend to present the effects of the pandemic more than they offer an extensive understanding of the things and guidelines that organisations can pursue if they are to make it through such a situation. What this study does is bridge this gap. Besides offering the broad approach of pinpointing specific factors; leadership practices, managerial practices, and technology use, the research offers a context; the hospitality and catering sector. Future research can follow up on this and test each of these so that we can know which of these factors is most helpful over the other during a pandemic.

Besides the theoretical implication, the research is a critical stride towards increasing the practical crisis mitigation strategies in the hospitality and catering sector. During the pandemic, governments worldwide, including in Malta, tasked different agencies with the obligation of identifying organisations, sectors, and industries of immense value that were on the verge of losing out and moving out of the market due to the pandemic. After such identities were made, the government had different stimulus plans to offer to these organisations with the hope and intention that by so doing, they would be protecting the economy from suffering further damage and harm. However, one would identify different anomalies when looking at the efforts made in this context. Some organisations were offered more aid and stimulus than needed, while others received less. The hospitality and catering sector is of critical value to the economy. It, therefore, goes without saying that the sector would have used a little more help and aid than they were offered. Through this research, the government and other economic support agencies and organisations will realize the areas and places where they would do more and accord more aid. For instance, while the place and role of technology are undoubtedly central in safeguarding businesses and protecting them from collapse and running out of business, many hospitality and catering organisations did not integrate and implement technology probably because of cost issues. In the future, therefore, the government and relative agencies would support the sector by offering technological know-how and technological support to the sector so that more businesses can continue reaching and offering their services to their customers.

5.4 Study Recommendations

Considering the results obtained from this study, it would be helpful for businesses in the hospitality and catering sector to take time and train organisational leaders on ideal leadership practices during crisis management. Findings herein show

that communication is one of the leadership elements most employees consider significant in times of a crisis such as the pandemic—as such, equipping organisational leaders with proper communication skills would, for instance, boost the kind and level of interaction between employees and employers which will consequently boost how the organisation survives through the crisis. This means that a lack of sufficient leadership skills and practices increases the gap between the organisation and the followers, threatening the organisation during these trying times.

Just like leadership, management, and managerial skills, practices and decisions play a critical role in the survival of an organisation in the hospitality and catering sector during a pandemic. As such, it would also be recommendable for catering and hospitality industry managers to have various skills and expertise in management. For instance, managerial practices and decisions have been exposed in the findings as the primary source of dissatisfaction for the employees, who are the majority of respondents assessed in this study. Results show that salary cuts, reduced working hours, and dismissal are all managerial-level decisions that impact the quality of outcomes that the business will register. Therefore, having experienced managers with expertise in hospitality and catering would be a positive aspect of the business.

The place of technology in ensuring continuity of business by facilitating interactions and connections between the business and customers is indispensable. As such, it would be helpful if organisations in the catering and hospitality sector in Malta train their workers and staff in technological know-how as a primary skill way early, even before a crisis. Consequently, consistent with this recommendation, it would also be supportive and helpful if catering and hospitality businesses integrate and adopt the technology of different organisational levels. Such adoption will come in handy when a crisis hits as technology will offer an alternative plan to continue

interacting with the customers, whether on standard communication levels, marketing, ordering, and delivering organisational goods and services.

Conclusively therefore, while the pandemic just like the one caused by the extended spreads of coronavirus not only in Malta but on a global scale, there is much that the catering and hospitality sector managers and administration units can do to position and ensure there is a sustainable and continuation in programs. This study has determined three of these factors. Organisational and sector leaders for instance have a role to play in guiding followers especially employees to experience the pandemic challenges with the hope and determination that things and the situation will be better. Management decisions should also be integrative in that the lower-level employees are consulted and explained to with regards to what a particular program, decision or measure means and why it is necessary. This will foster cooperation thus the success of the measures. Finally, technology is central and critical and should be emphasized earlier such that by the time a crisis as vast as a pandemic hit, there is a backup plan for the businesses.

5.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter is the final section that has outlined what the research has discovered with regards to the research topic. The chapter has discussed and outlined a summary of the study which has offered a generalised view and approach of the research from the introduction to the final bit, summary of the findings has offered a summarized view of the findings. There has also been the implications of the study and recommendations of the study.

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