



“MBA”

“Postgraduate Course”

Postgraduate Dissertation

“Leadership in times of Crisis : Evidence from the Food and
Beverage sector”

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Patras, Greece, May 2026

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“Leadership in times of Crisis : Evidence from the Food and
Beverage sector”

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Abstract

Leadership and crisis concepts are multidimensional. When leadership occurs inside a crisis period, company's viability, employees' performance and communication's reliability are under pressure. Our study presents leadership definition, traditional leadership theories and styles, crisis concept and crisis types, characteristics and primary causes. Additionally, it presents a literature review of crisis management in Covid-19 pandemic, and its impact in Food & Beverage Industry (FBI). In the Case Study, we present the results of an survey made by a questionnaire fulfilled by two managers of a Greek Subsidiary company in the Catering sector. Aim of the questions was to find and analyze the leadership style, the leader's traits and leadership actions taken to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic from a leading company in the industry using Thematic Analysis (TA) as tools analysis. According to our findings, within the company, during the crisis, the Transformational Leadership Style with different approaches prevails. Additionally, there were a modeled prototype that managers had followed during the crisis. Some common characteristics were the priority to human factor, the research of reliable source of data, one spokesperson to stakeholders to avoid mess, the psychological empowerment of locals and employees, the transparency and clarity in communication and the visibility and presence of the leader throughout the crisis. Some differences were the degree and basis of delegation of duties and tasks and the provision for different actions in future crisis. The findings are consistent with the so-far, known bibliography about leadership style, actions, and strategies during crisis.

“Η Ηγεσία σε περιόδους Κρίσης : Στοιχεία από τον κλαδο τροφίμων και ποτών”

(in Greek)

“Χαμψας Ελευθεριος”

(in Greek)

Περίληψη

Οι έννοιες της ηγεσίας και της κρίσης είναι πολυδιάστατες. Στις περιπτώσεις που η ηγεσία καλείται να πραγματοποιηθεί σε περιόδους κρίσης, η αξιοπιστία της επικοινωνιάς, η οργανωσιακή απόδοση των υπαλλήλων και η βιωσιμότητα της επιχείρησης βρίσκεται σε κίνδυνο. Η μελέτη αυτή παρουσιάζει τον ορισμό της ηγεσίας, τις βασικές θεωρίες και στυλ ηγεσίας, την έννοια της κρίσης, τους τύπους των κρίσεων, τα χαρακτηριστικά τους και τις βασικές τους αιτίες. Επιπλέον, πραγματοποιείται μια βιβλιογραφική παρουσίαση της διαχείρισης κρίσεων στην περίοδο της πανδημίας του ιού Covid-19 στον τομέα του Food & Beverage στην Ελλάδα. Στο δεύτερο μέρος, διενεργείται μία συντέντευξη μέσω ενός ερωτηματολογίου σε δύο μανατζερ ηγέτιδας θυγατρικής εταιρείας Catering στην Ελλάδα. Το ερωτηματολόγιο εστιάζει στην εύρεση του στυλ ηγεσίας που εφαρμόστηκε και στην ανάλυση των χαρακτηριστικών και των ενεργειών του ηγετη κατά τη διαχείριση της κρίσης της πανδημίας του Covid-19 χρησιμοποιώντας την Θεματική Ανάλυση ως τεχνική ανάλυσης των ποιοτικών δεδομένων. Σύμφωνα με τα αποτελέσματα της μελέτης, το στυλ Ηγεσίας που επικράτησε στην επιχείρηση κατά τη διάρκεια της κρίσης είναι το Transformational με διαφορετικές προσεγγίσεις ανα τμήμα. Επίσης, διαπιστώσαμε ότι υπήρξε κάποιο μοντελοποιημένο πρότυπο στη διαχείριση της κρίσης με βασικά σημεία, όπως η προτεραιότητα στον άνθρωπο, η αναζήτηση εθικων πηγων δεδομένων, η υπαρξη ενος αντιπροσωπου προς το κοινό, η ψυχολογική ενδυνάμωση των υπαλλήλων, η διαφανεia και η καθαρότητα στην επικοινωνία, η υποστήριξη και η παρουσία του ηγέτη κατα την κρίση, κ.α.. αλλα και διαφορές όπως η διαμοίραση εργασιών και ευθυνων και οι προβλέψεις για μελλοντικές δράσεις. Τα συμπεράσματα αυτά τα βρίσκουμε σύμφωνα με τη έως τώρα γνωστη βιβλιογραφία.

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List of Abbreviations & Acronyms

Abbreviations & Acronyms

AI Artificial Intelligence	28
BoD Board of Directors	16
CM Crisis Management	16
CMC Crisis Management Comittee	16
EI Emotional Intelligence	28
ESG Environmental Social and Governance	12, 13
FBI Food & Beverage Industry	vii
TA Thematic Analysis	vii

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Over the last decade, the commercial world and the planet in general have been confronting condensed and demanding challenges due to a large number of crises, such as the financial crisis of 2008, the environmental crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukrainian – Russian war. The occurrences that put under risk the operation or the viability of an organization are called crises (Riggio et al., 2023). Even though these crises seem separate, at first sight, they have enough similarities that have shocked global economy, global markets, questioning simultaneously the food safety, the food security and the environmental sustainability. These shocks have to be confronted by organizations’ managers. Those employees that have to influence and motivate other employees to conquest common goals and sustain viability inside a crisis. This process is crisis leadership.

Given those circumstances, leaders are needed to adapt their leadership skills or approaches to minimize the impacts of crisis to maintain business viability. However, this is not always so easy, profound, and transparent and that is the reason that makes the relevant research so significant and necessary. There is a large literature on crisis management that efforts to assist business leaders on the way to handle crises (Mitroff, 1994; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Stanley et al., 2022). However, there is shortage regarding the means by which managers act as leaders inside a crisis within an organization. Even though past studies had explored the connection between leadership style and organizational performance (Samad, 2012; García-Morales, 2012), few of them had studied leadership nature, skills, challenges, and opportunities during a crisis.

In our study, we try to identify sequences and conduct comparisons and contrasts between different leadership styles, different leadership strategies and different leadership actions and manager provisions during Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic consisted a great opportunity to study leadership in under pressure. It was an massive stress factor that had a severe impact on personal, social, and organizational structures (Kuntz, 2021). We chose to approach the above applying the discussion into the dynamic environment of the Greek Food & Beverage Industry (FBI). Additionally, there is limited evidence about the Greek Food & Beverage Industry that we study here.

Two identical, own-created questionnaires were fulfilled by two managers of a Greek-Subsidiary Catering Company named Newrest, one male from commercial and one female from procurement department in order to compare and contrast their leadership characteristics. The study is divided into two extend sections, the Literature Review and the Case Study. The Literature Review section is divided into the theoretical review of leadership theories and styles and the theoretical review of crisis leadership and leadership crisis during Covid-19 pandemic in the Food & Beverage Sector. The Case Study consists of a SWOT analysis, a PESTEL analysis, and a THEMATIC analysis of the questionnaires' replies we received. At the end of the study, we present our study limitations, the scientific findings derived from the THEMATIC analysis and, finally, make recommenations for future study.

Lastly, it is crucial to highlight that Covid-19 pandemic hit Greece after another ten-year-old financial crisis, making the task more difficult for the leaders of organizations. The central research question is “What type of leadership style and practices did that leader follow to overcome the pandemic crisis? Is this a prototype?” Its aim is to articulate how leadership flexibility assists in overcoming the crisis. The questions were formulated in a way to assist the analysis of the nature of leadership, the challenges the managers have faced, and, finally, the lessons learned through this test.

1.2 Purpose

The complexity and significance of leadership management has been observed by Wehrich et al. (2008). Despite the fact that leadership as a topic is well-studied, there are still many exciting aspects that can be investigated (Day & Antonakis, 2012). Positioning a leader during a severe crisis, however, is a difficult and multifacet task to deal with. Nyenswah et al. (2016) stated that leaders play a major role during a crisis, providing that they are the connecting parts between employees and businesses. This is why we tried to investigate leadership directly from leaders' experiencies during a severe crisis. Real replies could be an effective way to extract significant knowledge for different leadership strategies inside a crisis period. We provide insights into leadership concept and nature, actions, provisions, and challenges in a pillar industry for the Greek Economy, the Food & Beverage Industry. We focused our study on a leading Greek subsidiary company of the sector named Newrest Hellas.

1.3 Structure

In Chapter 2, we present a review of traditional leadership concepts, theories, and styles.

In Chapter 3, we present a review of crises leadership theories and practices.

In Chapter 4, we present a review on crisis leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In Chapter 5, we present the Case Study.

Chapter 2: Leadership Theoretical Review

2.1 Traditional Leadership: Theoretical Background

Constant change is a characteristic of modern world. As a result, sustainable development is the utmost concern. Organizations and people are struggling to synchronize with rapid changes that occur and the following challenges. This situation offers, however, a vast number of businesses opportunities and also a crisis context. According to Friedman (2008), every type of crisis, from environmental to financial or political are impacting organizations. Consequently, crisis management has been identified as a major aspect of managing organizations and the ability of leading an organization during a crisis is a huge test on the leader's character. Leadership is globally recognized as an effective approach to managing the challenges and opportunities. Different styles affect the management of a crisis and the effectiveness of company's navigation through difficult times. The appropriate leadership style is challenging to be defined and no single one of them can be deemed superior to others.

2.2 Leadership Concept

Leadership has received numerous definitions providing its elastic nature that has been identified in all fields of human endeavors.

Common or certain goal attainment

Leadership is a process that impacts a group of people towards the realization of goals. According to Nye (2008), leadership is the process of assisting a group in formulating and attaining common objectives. According to Akinbode & Fabgohunge (2012), leadership is the process of influencing the actions of a person within a group with the consciousness of an eagerly common goal attainment in a given circumstance. Similarly, Northouse (2021),

defines leadership as a process where an individual influences a team to fulfill mutual goals. Also, Alipour et al. (2013) posit that leadership is seen as the way to impact followers through a procedure to accomplish common objectives.

Capacity to transform and rouse a futuristic vision

Fasola et al. (2013) argue that through leadership a mental picture of the future is formulated and guided without at the same time prohibiting a more elevated performance advancing organizational and interpersonal practices. Similarly, Ogbah (2013) states that leadership is the way that the leader rouse and transform a vision to its subordinates to achieving the organizational objectives. Armstrong & Taylor (2014) stated that leadership is the act of promoting followers to excell to accomplish the vision.

Vision development and members motivation to drive to organization's performance

Bass (1990) defined leadership as an interplay between two or more members of a team that frequently reassess the conditions and perceptions, and expectations of involving parts. Leadership takes place when one person can change the competencies and create motivation of others inside the group. This action can be placed by any person of the group in some extend.

Saleh et al. (2018) stated that a leader can pursue team members to attain predefined goals with enthusiasm. It is about a human factor which bonds group members together, upgrades their performance and guides them towards mutuals objectives.

In other words, Abasilim (2024) defined leadership as a distinguished activity or amount of activities that occurs within a group of persons and this contains a leader and his followers that eagerly believe mutual objectives and cooperate to attain them. This leads to an endless debate on the divergence between leadership and management.

Leadership is a crucial “Branch of the Management”. A good manager is called to implement an effective planning, organizing, controlling, and leading to manage disasters.

2.3 The Distinction between Leadership and Management

Daglish & Miller (2010) stated that management is an defined tools and techniques set based on reasoning and testing. It holds distinctive expertises such as planning and budgeting. Leadership consists of having a business vission, creating a plan for a alternative

future, and having the map to reach there. Management is organized and rigid practice.. It is about a set of methods and instruments that are used in specific situations based on experimentation and logic. In contrast to Management, Leadership’s primary responsibility is to create organization’s vision. Decoding that dichotomy, we can conclude that management individuals excel at executing assignments, while individuals in leadership prioritize the decision making process to achieve common aims and organization merits. Leaders are vision creators and innovators (Ogona et al., 2022). Both roles are unique, distinct, with some similarities in dealing with people, one does not surpass the other, and both of them are helpful and necessary to organization for the achievement of organization’s success using influence and inspiration.

2.4 Historical Evolution of Leadership Theories

Leadership is constantly generating confusing debate due to its multi-dimensionality and the complexity of the subject. Bennis (2009) has noted that it is about a well-studied topic in social sciences but limited comprehended.

The Trait Era includes The Great Man Theory (1840s) & The Trait Theories (1930s – 1940s)

In the primitive years of leadership study (19th Century), the interest of researchers was focused on the inherent attributes of the leader and on the personality qualities and characteristics that can be proved effective for a leader.

The Great Man Theory (1840s) has as core belief that leaders are born and not trained or practiced. As a result, only gifted persons with unique characteristics could be effective leaders and shape the pages of history. Figures such as Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte and Mahatma Gandhi (Cawthon, 1996; Dziak, 2019).

Traits theories argue that leaders can be born with innate characteristics or can be made through training and practice (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2017). Jenkins (1948) declared two kind of traits. The first kind is the emergent traits which are those are dependent upon heredity such as height, cleverness, and self-confidence. The second kind of traits are the effectiveness traits which are those dependent upon experience or learning such as charisma (Ekvall & Arvonen, 1991). The ultimate aim is to find the right combination of traits. Max Weber defined charisma as a powerful force that could create entirely new orientation for the organization among followers and their devotion to leader that perceived to have

supernatural powers. The terminology and the following research in the mental, physical and personality traits that separate non-leaders from leaders showed that only minor variances exist between followers and leaders (MacGregor Burns, 2003). However, there was little advantage in continuing with this approach and consequently it was abandoned. Nowadays, the corresponding example tool of trait theory is psychometric tests that are used for estimating personal performance and team development.

Behavioral Era: Behavioural theory (1940s-1950s)

It is the evolving theory of trait theory. Behaviorual theory argue that at most parts, leaders are made and particular behaviors can be taught to ensure better leadership results (Johns & Moser, 1989; Denison et al., 1995). It focuses on the leader behavior and not traits or characteristics. However, it does not involve the situation and the environment.

Relevant research has identified specific behavioural leadership patterns labelled as styles (Johns & Moser, 1989). Every style does not fit to every leader or every situation. And every leader select the style that feel more effective. Yukl (1989) distiguated three leadership styles. The first is called Democratic. Employees serving with democratic leaders show high degree of satisfaction, creativity and motivation. They work with greater eager and willingness independently, maintain better connections with their leader. The second is the Autocratic. Leaders focused on greater quantity of production. And the third one is called Laissez Faire. This leadership is relevant when the team is highly skilled and motivated.

Situational Era: Contigent and Situational Theories (1960s)

In this era, the environment plays the vital role in leadership (Yurii et al., 2018). It proposed that there are number of variables with dominant the situation that can be determining in adapting the appropriate leadership style, rather than traits or behaviours of leaders. Generally, leaders do not alter the dynamics but it is the employees within the organization that change.

Contingency theories, as a result, is a behavioral theory that propose that there is no an ultimate way of leading an organization and that the level of effectiveness of leadership style is dependent upon the situation (Greenleaf, 1977).

According to the theory supporters, the leader subordinate relationship is vital in identifying the leadership. Even if, situational leadership emphasizes on leader, it also focuses and be

adaptive into group dynamic. Lastly, Situational leadership suggests that leadership style should be aligned with the subordinates maturity (Bass, 1997).

Feidler & House (1994) categorized two significant styles. Firstly, they pointed out that consideration for people. Consideration is referred to the confidence that leader engenders in his subordinates. And secondly, the commencing structure. Commencing structure is referred to the leader's structures, directions and definitions on the accomplishment of the mission. The autocratic leader decides without involving his subordinates, while laissez-faire and democratic leader accesses his followers and then takes his decision.

New Leadership Era: Transactional Theories (1990s) and others (2000s)

In this era, the multidimensionality of the concept is identified (Van Seters & Field, 1990).

Rapid world changes, technological innovation and the increased globalization urged the emerge of leadership theories away from the traditional ones. According to new theories of this era, leadership is defined as unidirectional, top-down influencing process with complex interactions between managers, subordinates, and the situation as a whole. Additionally, these theories focused on the hidden leadership capacities of the followers (Benmira & Agboola, 2021).

In this era, two fundamental and popular theories prevail. Transactional and Transformational. They also birth approaches like the Lean Strategy (Collis, 2016) and Agile methodology (Coddington-Lacerte, 2020) to face more complex environments.

Transactional leadership is based on the authority to motivate employees. Leader-followers relations were founded upon a number of agreements (House & Shamir, 1993). There is a bidirectional relationship between leaders and their subordinates. The leader exchanges rewards for the effort of the follower and punishes him in case of failure. Bass & Avolio (1994) found a positive effect when subordinates were rewarded or recognized for accomplishing goal. The rewards include promotions, bonuses, salary increases for work achievement. The leader could also focus on minimizing of errors, avoidance of responses and delay in decision making. It works best in mature organizations with defined structures and aims in order to direct them. In active form, we regard leaders who constantly monitor their followers' performance and intervene preventatively (Bass & Avolio, 1997).

Transformational leadership is separated from the previously stated theories because its alignment to a superior idea that empowers the involvement of subordinates in activities and procedures so it will yield social dividend (House & Shamir, 1993). In Transformational leadership, leaders encourage, inspire and motivate followers and embrace morality for both parts sharing common values, beliefs, and goals. According to Bass, leader capacity to influence followers to re-order their needs and strive for higher order needs is the key of the theory, conforming the Maslow (1954) higher order needs theory. Leaders and followers should put aside personal interests for the benefit of the group (House & Aditya, 1997). The ethical aspect of transformational leadership further separates it from other theories.

Transformational leaders should recognize the need for change, obtain agreement and commitment, shape a vision and embrace it (MacGregor Burns, 2003). This leadership is to improve subordinate consciousness, ethos and competences by giving significance to their work. According to MacGregor Burns (2003), leaders with vision appeal their subordinates dragging them upon higher-scaled needs and purposes.

The continuously evolving shaping of leadership theories drove to the development of shared, collective, and collaborative leadership practices (Kukenberger & D’Innocenzo, 2020; Lee-Davies, 2013).

These theories promote that the success in an organization is a result of coordination in leadership rather than top-managers success. Servant leadership is the most popular of these theories, pointing out the significance of followers. Servant leaders support their team members and are concerned with serving people first (Eliot, 2020).

More lately, the theory of inclusive leadership approach emerged, embracing a person - centered approach by which via a dynamic relationship followers are empowered to become leaders (Thompson & Matkin, 2020).

Finally, contemporary leadership theory takes a wholistic view, taking under consideration the contextual interactions that take place across an entire social system, including complexity of contemporary world (Rosenhead et al., 2019).

In the following paragraph, we focus on the attributes of Transactional & Transformational Leadership Styles, the most usually applied leadership styles in recent years and most well-studied ones.

2.5 Transactional & Transformational Leadership Styles

Transactional Leadership Style

Transactional leaders are exchange tangible rewards for the work and loyalty of followers. They operate more passively than transformational leaders and they are more concerned about processes rather than forward-thinking attitude. Transaction leaders are used to concentrate on contingent reward or contingent penalization. Contingent rewards are provided when the set of goals are accomplished on-time while contingent penalization is applied when standards are not fulfilled. Both are used to gain minimal compliance from the followers from leaders (extrinsic motivators). That kind of leaders are used to work within existing environments and negotiate to attain goals. Transactional Leadership is basically passive and associated behaviors are tending to maintaining the status quo and set the criteria for rewarding followers. Contingent rewards is used in order to become the performance expectations clearer to followers and as a means of appreciating their good performance. Leaders of this type believe in contractual agreements as principal motivators (Bass, 1985). In order to detect deviations in their followers' behavior, transactional leaders use management-by-exception. The application of the two types of management-of-exception is dependent from the situation and the context.

- I. *Contingent Reward.* These types of leaders are expected to show direction to their employees so the job gets done. The style encompasses performance-based material rewards, goals and direction setting, reciprocity, and confidence building inside the team.
- II. *Active Management-by-Exception..* These leaders have an inherent trust in their workers that they can finish their tasks to a satisfactory level. According to Bass & Avolio (2004), in this type of leadership excessive goals is not the point. On the contrary, if target is achieved, the system has worked, and all is satisfied. There is inside it a little sense of risk taking. To sum up, the active management-by-exception includes trust in followers, limited communication, maintenance of status quo and lack of confidence.
- III. *Passive Management-by-Exception.* The style in which specific agreements are avoided by the transactional leaders and there is a failure in providing goals and standards for achievement by the staff. Sometimes, the leader waits the things to go wrong to intervene (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Transformational Leadership Style

Transformational Leadership can be seen as an exceptional case of transactional leadership as both of them involve the accomplishment of goals and tasks (Hater & Bass, 1998). Transformational leadership is connected with encouraging results on organizational levels. It is proactive, enthusiastic and include a sense of mission (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013).

According to Bass (1985), transformational leaders tend to embolden subordinates to cover higher-ordered needs like self-actualization, and self-esteem, and to motivate them in the direction of sacrificing personal interests over the achievement of organizational goals. According to Jung et al. (2008), Idealized Influence inspired leaders can generate a sense of shared risk-taking among their followers. Inspirational Motivation offers subordinates to achieve the defined goals, while, Intellectual Stimulation helps creativity of workers in problem-solving situations. In this style of leadership, the meeting of followers' needs, their empowerment, their personal growth and self-efficacy are high in leader's agenda. Cummings et al. (2010) observed that transformational styles of leadership have more encouraging results than autocratic leadership styles.

- I. Idealized Influence is a characteristic that make him preserved as a role model by his followers. An alternative term is Charisma. Idealized Influence is inspirational in nature as it constructs attitudes about the significant things in life and is related with charismatic leadership (Yulk, 1999; Shamir et al. 1993). This leadership manage to instill self-confidence onto others by their demonstration of confidence, prepare them to make self-sacrifices, and undertake exceptional goals rousing a role-modeling behavior (House & Shamir, 1993). House & Shamir (1993) highlighted that maintaining self-esteem powerful and pervasive social need. Charismatic leaders through regular communication present themselves as a role model and encourage followers towards the achievement of company's mission and goals going beyond inner conflicts. Such leaders are learning leaders. Summing up, its fundamentals are role-modeling, articulation and values creation, sense of purpose, meaning, self-esteem, self-determination, emotional control and confidence in the followers.
- II. Inspirational Motivation targets at the principle of organizational existence, instead, of the personality of the leader (Bass & Avolio, 2004). The leader encourages the followers in the organizational pursuit to draw the best of them, rendering them more

autonomy to make decisions without supervision and providing them the tools to make decisions. Within this context, leaders set higher standards and encourage their followers to develop beyond the normal situations for their own and organization's growth (House & Shamir, 1993). Successful leaders are there to inspire, reward, correct, motivate, or replace their followers, if they fail. To sum up, leaders with inspirational motivation behavior create vision, establish communication and manage challenging workers by giving them autonomy.

- III. Intellectual Stimulation demands the leader to remain calm, balanced and rational when they deal with complex problems and to embrace similar competences to their workers. They develop problem solving techniques for making complex decisions easier for their workers reflecting a mutual consensus between followers and leaders. According to House & Shamir (1993), leaders with this leadership approach require first to unravel the complexities of the challenge, then, develop sense of direction towards, and, finally, to encourage active employees' involvement in the work. Key aspects are creativity, rationality, consensus decision-making, effective coaching, supporting and involvement.
- IV. Individualized Consideration where followers are recognized as primary factors. Leaders display concern for their subordinates' needs and are responsible for the development of the desired work-place behavior. They fluctuate from participatory to autocratic style. Key aspects are the individualized consideration technique that consists of reassurance, caring for, coaching, and open and consultative approach.

Chapter 3: Crisis and Crisis Leadership: Theoretical Review

Crisis is considered as an event or a period that leads or can lead into a disrupt in stability or a dangerous situation which affects an individual, a team or the society as a whole. Crises can impact human or environmental conditions especially when they take place without or with minimum warning. A crisis can be economic, political, environmental, social, military or hygienic.

From the ancient years until today, humanity faces crisis periods. Such examples are the Persian Wars, the Cholera pandemic in Medieval years, Oil crises, and the Cold War. Thought these phases, leaders called to take actions for the protection of the society.

3.1 Definitions of Sustainability and Resilience in Business

Before conducting the literature review, it is critical to define the terms of Sustainability and Resilience in corporate context. Sustainability assists retain investor commitment, which in crises strongly enhance recovery and Resilience (Mellado-Garcia et al., 2026).

Corporate Sustainability performance and legitimacy

Corporate are designed to operate within a set of cultural and social norms that define their creation, and management (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). Legitimacy is born by the firms' conformance to these norms (Bansal & Clelland, 2004). Recently, corporates are expected to demonstrate legitimacy across Environmental Social and Governance domains (ESG) (Delgado-Cebalos et al., 2023). Firms that adopt and communicate sustainability initiatives manage to gain, pertain, and defend legitimacy among their stakeholders (Zheng et al., 2015), ease access to financial and social resources, enhance governance support for strategic initiatives (Aguilera et al., 2021) and increase firm's adaptability in uncertain contexts (Bansal & Clelland, 2004).

Organizational resilience and legitimacy

Organizational resilience reflects the firm's capacity to reconfigure resources, adapt its routines and sustain core operations while responding to an environmental turbulence (Williams et al., 2017). In other words, it reflects the adaptive capability of the firm to restore stability despite disruption (DesJardine et al, 2019). Resilience focuses on the procedures businesses survive (Van Der Vegt et al., 2015). Legitimacy is vital for higher

credibility, easier access to resources and more cooperative relationships with external parts (Suchman, 1995). These facts can offer faster mobilization of capital, knowledge, external resources and networks when crises arise. Sustainability, additionally, is relevant because it generates legitimacy signals. This can lower asymmetry information and provide positive messages about the viability of the firm (Crossley et al., 2021). Legitimacy, also, acts as a social evaluation mechanism that links ESG performance to resilience. Previous literature suggests that legitimacy can be a measure to avoid crisis (DesJarnine et al., 2019). But even more significant is the finding that when a corporate crisis arises, when firms intensify ESG efforts could compensate by amplifying legitimacy, and by reassuring investors about managerial intent and future resilience (Mellado-Garcia et al., 2026).

3.2 Definition of Crisis

The origin of “crisis” derives from the Greek infinitum “krinein” (engl. “To decide”). “Krisis” (engl. “decision”) means the crucial decision or the turning point used mostly to describe the critical point of an illness within medical context. In late Middle Ages, it denoted “a decisive moment”, that is, a crucial moment that a decision must be taken.

Crisis concept is multidimensional and may be defined in several ways according to the context and the field under consideration. Generally, it is referred to a situation which is difficult to be predicted or defined – a period of anomaly - and may concern the individual, organization, society, institutions, or international environment, and, often, works as a test for the system’s stability (Stuckler et al., 2009; Maes et al., 2010; Crouch, 2014; Chernobov, 2016).

Rosenthal & Kouzmin (1997) described crisis as sudden situations that are threatened by serious hazard, doubt and a sense of immediacy.

Coombs (2010) defined crisis as a severe and unpredictable threat for the expectancies of stakeholders and for the operating process of an organization that can have negative results if mishandled.

Gibson (2012) defined crisis as a management failure to reply correctly to an issue, an emergency or accident, that demands a on-timeresponse and communication.

Okumus & Karamustafa (2005) said that crisis is a large-scale, swift event that is likely to have damaging consequences. This events and its outcomes may devastate an entity and its workers, its merchadices, services, financial situation and reputation.

Ahmed (2006) described crises as surprise events that interrupt routines, and their route of events comes with a feeling of control loss, media interest upset, large number of speculations, and the spread of unfavorable rumors.

Fearn-Banks (2007) indicated that crisis as mega event with an adverse impact on the organization or industry survival.

Mitroff (2001) defined crisis as the effect of unexpected disruption in the activity of an organization.

Pearson & Clair (1998) present a multidimensional crisis definition. An organizational crisis is a low-probability but high-impact event that is perceived by crucial stakeholders to severely threaten the viability of the organization and is experienced as threatening by individuals. Ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution will lead to disillusionment or loss of physhic and shared meaning, and to the shattering of commonly held beliefs and values and individuals' basic assumptions. Being inside the crisis, decision making is under pressure due to time constraints and subjected to cognitive limitations.

Summing up, a crisis can be stated as a sudden or abnormal situation that severely threatens the normality of enterprise functionality, put in question the basic values of the organization, impacts the credibility and efficiency of the entity and remain out of the control of the managers.

3.3 Characteristics of Contemporary Crises

Modern crises are characterized by complexity, dymanic relations, transboundary and cascading effects which make their resolution even more challenging and demanding (Ansell et al., 2010). Modern crises can transcend (i) geographical boundaries, (ii) functional and (iii) temporal boundaries with their results to consist of “ a global shock”. They can originate from a specific system and finally impact as a snowball other systems, functions, and infrastructures. Lastly, contemporary crises are not one-off episodes but, on the contrary, they may have a long-term effect on system's operation (Faola, 2016).

3.4 The Causes of Crises

The main causes of crises can be classified into two major categories, internal and external.

Internal sources of crisis result from the organization’s activity, structure, processes and culture. The most usual internal sources include:

(i) management errors, (ii) financial difficulties, (iii) internal conflicts, (iv) ineffectiveness of processes, and (v) lack of innovation.

External sources result from organization’s environment. The most usual include:

(i) modifications in the economic environment, (ii) modifications in technological environment, (iii) modifications in the social environment, (iv) natural threats (Koutsoukis & Farantos, 2015).

3.5 Classification of Crises

According to their features, nature and reactions, crises can be classified as Socio-Political, Crises after Disasters, Economic Crises and other types of crises:

Social-Political Crises. In these crises, the social and political features prevail. Such crises can be international affairs crises e.g. the disruptions in relations between independent states which are characterized by threat to the values of humanity, limited time for resolution and increased probability of military operations (Wilkenfend et al, 1995). Furthermore, they may be referred to institutional malfunctions in the governmental operation (Hay, 1999). Additionally, they may occur due to conflicts between supporters of a democracy and a dictatorship (Boin et al., 2005). Moreover, they can be crises of civil unrest and the crises of contagious diseases that impact individuals and society (Olson, 2009). Crises related to security such as air-traffic control and terrorist attacks (Hendrics, 2013).

Crises after Disasters. Disastous incidents include natural disasters, floods and wildfires, industrial accidents, fires, loss of control of laboratory experiments and famine or epidemics (Rozenhal & Kouzim, 1997). They constitute a devastating threat to citizens’ lives and properties and as a result they have a severe footprint on global economy. They are linked to the deterioration of natural environment and endangered species and demand a high degree of preparation for their confront (Georgopoulou, 1997).

Economic Crises. Economic crises are known from the ancient world. They impact individuals' income and property, It is a period of decline in a long-term period of stable growth (Boin et al., 2005). The crisis treatment came from requiring necessary short-term capital and taking difficult long-term financial decisions (Kindleberger & Aliber, 2005; Laeven & Valencia, 2008).

Other Types of Crises. Such crises can be emotional crises which include the risk for our mental health. A personal crisis is a period of disturbance that follows and precedes a period of mental stability (Boin et al., 2005).

3.6 Crisis Management

Crisis Management (CM) is a systematic effort from the members of an organization, along with the external stakeholders, to avoid crises or at least manage effectively those that has happened (Boin & t'Hart, 2003). In simple words, the way that a crisis is prevented, decreased or resolved is called Crisis Management (Ritchie, 2004; Baldwin, 1979; Jacques, 2009). By minimizing of risk and uncertainty, crisis management aims to control every situation, according to Christensen et al. (2016).

Managing a crisis is complex and includes serious decision-making procedures especially under pressure and time constraints (Ansell & Boin, 2017).

Crisis management is, also, an analysis of all threats that can impact company in order to lessen the insecurity and take all measures before the burst of the crisis and to provide security to employees when the crisis occurs and finally to keep company's image intact and financial situation healthy (Shivakumar et al., 2011, Johansen et al, 2012; Gruber et al, 2015; Christensen et al., 2015).

The Board of Directors (BoD) of each company must organize a Crisis Management Committee (CMC) (Unlu et al., 2010; Gruber et al, 2015; Christensen et al., 2015).

3.7 The Phases of Crisis Management

Traditional scholars depicted a 3-Stage-Model (Coombs, 2007; Mitroff & Anagnos, 2001; Pearson & Chair, 1998). The three stages include: the pre-crisis, mid-crisis, and the post-crisis stages. In each stage, management activities are allocated to them to handle the distinguishing traits of each stage.

Pre-crisis Stage. According to the traditional crisis theory, this is the most extended stage and the stage where the crisis can be averted completely. Mitroff (1994) named it as the best form of Crisis Management, focusing on four areas. Firstly, the managers’ perception of the crisis and the organizational experience of crises are vital to forming the foundation of an effective Crisis Management system. Secondly, in this stage, it is crucial the crisis signal detection. Thirdly, prevention and contingency plans are recommended. Below, we will discuss further the four stages.

Pearson & Clair (1998) argued that top-management perceptions and beliefs about the risk will foster or delay the development of effective Crisis Management strategies. According to Kovoov-Misra et al. (2000), the most uniform the academic background of executives, the most flexible to subjective opinions are the Crisis Management program. Additionally, they argued that executive opinions are based upon existing organizational structures and previous experiences.

Signal scouting is the following crucial phase in the pre-crisis stage of traditional Crisis Management. It includes cues and signs of a looming crisis. Mitroff and Agagnos (2001) argued that all crises produce such signals, even though they can be hidden by white noise, and their identification is part of Crisis Management. Moreover, they presented two dimensions of signals. First, the signal that originate from technical elements (e.g. devices) or people and, secondly, they can be external (presented by communities or groups) or internal (presented by employees or company-owned instruments). Signals volume must exceed an intensity threshold to activate alarming mode. Signals should be analysed together to generate a wider picture of the situation. Stakeholders interpret these signals according to their cognitive maps and their hierarchy of importance.

However, predicting a crisis is not enough to avoiding a crisis. Effective traditional Crisis Management seeks to minimize the risk of a crisis before it occurs. For example, in case a company has to deal with a technological crisis, it has been recommended to upgrade the existing organizational system and improve structural system (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). All business, however, should have developed a plan appropriate and tailored for organizational characteristics for the way they would deal with unpredictable and upsetting events (Spillan & Hough, 2003). They should also communicate this plans to external stakeholders to create alliances and empower coordination (Mitroff & Agagnos, 2001).

Traditional literature recommends employees training via simulation exercises for these pre-constructed scenarios (Boin et al., 2004). A good crisis scenario should demonstrate the positive and the negative results to an organization from the crisis. Additionally, the plan should break down organizational systems that are considered as effective and re-evaluate them (Mitroff & Anagnos, 2001). Boin et al. (2004) noted that institutional crisis simulations assist in understanding the long-term driving forces behind the crisis roots.

Mid-Crisis Stage. Traditional literature tends to focus on communication and coordination among stakeholders in the mid-crisis stage.

Coombs (2007) argued that Crisis Management should focus on quick, accurate, and consistent communication with all stakeholders. The incident management team are those who face urgent problems following the crisis. They communicate with the liaison officer's team and transfer processed information to the senior team. Seniors see crisis from a strategic view and are responsible for decision making and resource allocation between organizational groups. These three levels constitute a crisis infrastructure (Smith, 2004).

Regarding to external communication, traditional literature directs the way to handle the press, consumers, or other stakeholders. Impersonal or technical language should not be appropriate (Coombs, 2007). Moreover, a particular press communication strategy should be selected and implemented.

Post-Crisis. The end of crisis will provide the organization with both positive and negative outcomes. If the organization manage to survive from the crisis, it will emerge with experiences of what went good or what failed, which presents an opportune period to improve and restructure the existing systems (Carmeli & Schaubroeck, 2008). The “learning from the crisis” notion have extensively researched by traditional researchers (Smith & Elliot, 2007). This experiences prepare entities for upcoming crises. Consequently, this process should be continuous (Pearson & Clair, 1998) and not inflexible, reductionistic or narrow. People should not focus on learning technicalities instead of usefull learning or prioritizes only the problematic parts which were well-defined or easeier than others. Lastly, Smith & Elliot (2007) noted that core values and beliefs could be a future barrier of denial and a biased investigation of the crisis roots and results for the organization.

3.8 Managing a Crisis by phase

Pre-event. In this phase, the organization’s focus should be both on preventing a crisis from occurring and on preparing the respond to it. Here, the company probes for potential sources of failure in its operations and identifies the attributes of the surrounding area and communities.

Two goals:

1. Find points of stress in the operation that might be minimized through new procedures or technology advances, decreasing the risk of failure.
2. Preserve an up-to-date record of the physical and social conditions of the operation.

It is a crucial face and the right time for a corporate culture to set up. Employees should feel free to report failure in order incidents to be contained quicker. Additionally, a fast and agile decision-making environment protects from escalating detected incidents to worse events.

People should have clear picture and understanding of the big picture and an incentive system to promote them help in avoiding disastrous consequences.

Furthermore, organizational structure can increase responsiveness or impede it. Managers should not concentrate all decision making authority to few hands in order to increase productivity and decentralize risks. The staff, moreover, should be empowered to make decisions with decentralized management.

Regarding communication, it is vital to build channels to all stakeholders and channels. Examples of crucial parties are government agencies and local community.

Crisis. The second phase begins with the burst of the incident and encompasses all of the actions taken as a first response. High-quality and fast decisions are crucial. During this phase, managers and staff from other departments join the already formed crisis-response team to produce better responses.

In this phase, the guideline principle should be transparency. Companies must be transparent to their staff and third parties. The last should be informed of all actions being taken and they should be given guidance on how to cope with the crisis shocks. The more sufficient the information, the less the damage and costs will be counted. Transparency, also, increase the time that company can dedicate to actual crisis-response instead of community reassurance.

Post-event. Since the situation has been stabilized and improved, the final phase of crisis management begins.

Priority of this phase is to assess the total impact of the event, counting environmental, infrastructure-wised and social losses. These numbers should be compared and contrasted with those of pre-event phase.

The analysis must be disclosed, showing the actions and plans that should be taken to restore the area to its previous state. In this phase, company can take hold of the narrative, in order to limit the impact of media inaccurate or misleading information.

All level staff should be aware of all plans and a the communication strategy should be concrete and collectively known throughout the organization.

Transparency is crucial in this phase as well. Recovery and compensation actions should be public and regular progress reports should be issued (Kearney.com, 2022).

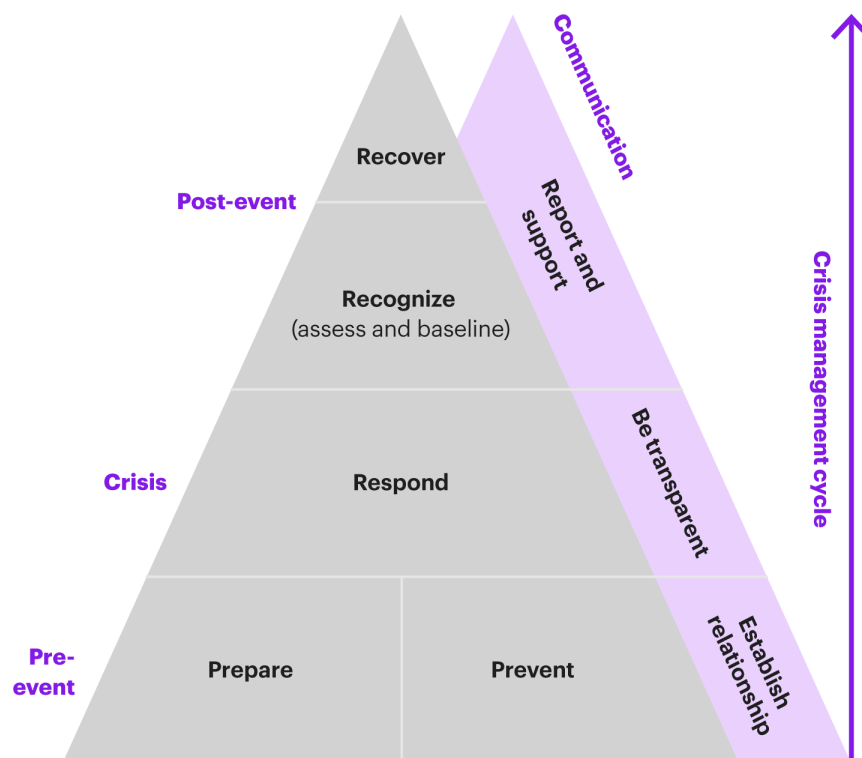


Figure 1: Managing a Crisis requires moving through three phases

3.9 Recommendations for Crisis Leaders

Crisis leadership is a multifaceted endeavor (Wisitigars & Siengthai, 2019). It necessitates an intergation of emotional intelligence, ethical consideration, skills, reassurance and inspiration.

Prioritize Ethical Deliberation

Prioritize to ethical decision-making fairness, integrity and transparency would assist in retaining reliance and operate a guiding principle in a crisis period.

Invest in Emotional Intelligence

This action is moving towards the better understanding and managing of their own and team emotions. It is vital for team cohesion and morale.

Promote People Resilience and Wellbeing

Leaders must provide resources for stress management, resilience fostering and self-caring encouraging.

Inspiring and Motivating their Teams

Besides motivating and inspiring, leaders should articulate the meaningfulness of their efforts.

Adopt Crisis-Specific Strategies

Crisis Leaders must formulate unique strategies for confronting the crisis. In the same time, they must remain flexible and open to adjusting approaches.

Implement Effective Communication Strategies

Crisis leaders should be adept at delivering timely, empathetic, and clear messages to multiple stakeholders.

Develop Key Competences

Crisis leaders should diligently focus on developing key competences. Crisis leaderships workshops training helps them in improving these skills.

Build Collaborative Stakeholders Networks

Crisis leaders should anticipatorily support the building of collaborative networks with various stakeholders such as Non Governmental Organizations, governmental agencies, community organizations, etc. Such cooperations assist in information exchange, resource sharing, and collective problem-solving in crisis time.

Chapter 4: Crisis Leadership during COVID-19

4.1 Theoretical Background

Attempting to understand the effectiveness of crisis management, it is interesting to study the process of leadership and deliberation in the case of Covid-19 crisis.

This study can reveal leadership dynamics and key factors to successful outcomes and to the development of public policies and governance structures that back productive crisis management. Additionally, this can assist in avoiding future crises in public health, economy, and society generally.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented challenges for leaders around the globe requiring them to navigate uncertainty, show rapid adaption to changing circumstances and manage team remotely.

In 2020, Mitroff & Anagnos (2001) highlighted the weight of productive leadership during crises and proposed fundamental competences and responsibilities. They argued that crisis leaders must have strong decision-making skideliberation, communication skills, and a complete comprehension of the crisis. Furthermore, they must establish and sustain solid professional bonds with stakeholders.

In 2019, Duan et al. (2019) provided an insight of crisis leadership in China along with phenomenal obstackles that Chinese leaders confronted during the pandemic. They had to navigate sophisticated political and cultural difficulties that majorly impacted their decisions and communications.

In 2021, van Prooijen et al. (2021) examined the impact of crisis leadership on followers' outcomes. They argued that crisis leaders who are perceived as effective and trustworthy can enhance followers' perception of community and loyalty to the company.

Boin et al. (2020) stated that successful leaders during Covid-19 pandemic are able to communicate plainly and habitually, make high pressure choices, and build credibility among public. Also, it is highlighted the need for transparency and honesty in communications and calamity under pressure.

Hossain (2021) points out the significance of empathy during the Covid-19 pandemic. Crisis leaders should comprehend the peculiar circumstances endured by various stakeholders and manage to communicate and respond to their needs.

According to Wang et al. (2019), the significance of strategic thinking in crisis leadership during the pandemic is provoked. They argued that leaders in a crisis need to be ready to act in multiple scenarios and adapt quickly to changing situations. They need to be proactive in identifying potential risks and taking immediate actions to mitigate them.

According to Asgary et al. (2021), evident and regular communication to the stakeholders drives to successful crisis management. Communication strategies include omnichannel where communication channels such as social media, email, and press conferences are seamlessly integrated and be equally approached.

According to Alishahi et al. (2021), the importance of disaster recovery plan and proactive activity to mitigate risks before they occur is highlighted. Empathy and emotional intelligence play a vital role as well.

Liu et al. (2021) supported the previous finding. They, also, gave evidence that effective crisis leadership includes concerns of different stakeholders' consent, enduring transparent decision-making process, and showing empathy to mostly affected. Additionally, company stakeholders e.g. public healthcare providers, Non Gonermental Organizations, and community groups have to collaborate and cooperate in harmony. This prerequisites information and resources sharing, coordinating responses and innovative solutions development.

Boin et al. (2017) provided a collection of practices and acts to apply during a crisis. These can include proactive attitude in spotting the risks and reducing them, clear and transparent communication to the stakeholders, building and sustaining relationships with the majors and adapting themselves to change.

Linnenluecke et al. (2020) described crisis leadership as a mixture of skills such as resilience, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking, and stakeholder management. According to them, such a leader must be qualified technically (e.g. logistics and operations), be competent on soft skills (e.g. managing emotions), and be able to build trust with stakeholders.

To sum up, all the previous studies indicated that crisis leadership during Covid-19 pandemic requires a demanding blend of apparent and limpid communication, effective deliberation, empathy, emotional intelligence, strategic thinking and proactive risk management. These skills should be balanced with adaptability to the changing needs of the crisis.

4.2 Food & Beverage Industry

A fancy restaurant in the city center, a cozy café and a food truck is all of them parts of Food & Beverage Industry. An industry full of diverse tastes and preferences but also a powerhouse of opportunity. It is about an industry which aims to create memorable experiences, explores cultural nuances and becomes part of an evolving business landscape. Food & Beverage Industry is one of the widest and most dynamic business sectors globally. It encompasses every activity from food production and distribution to retail and hospitality. Food and Beverage industry is a major pillar in the EU economy. Its significance derives from both the delivering of safe, nutritious, and enjoyable goods to consumers and its role in employment and economic growth. In 2022, more than 300,000 enterprises composed the industry and they accounted for 10.9% of overall manufacturing value added. This was the largest manufacturing industry in the EU. Additionally, the industry occupies 4.7 million direct vacancies and 3.5 million indirect vacancies in EU agriculture. Last but not least, the industry ensures the innovation, food quality and food safety as the key factor in the transformation to final products. It is expected that the sector will carry on its significant energy intensity improvement trend through 2050, driving to decreasing energy consumption even as the production will continue to grow (Tidjani et al., 2025).

Food & Beverage Labor Market & Challenges

Growing Industry: Food & Beverage Industry is rapidly growing. However, profitability fluctuations are vital to be faced.

Changing Customer Preferences: Consumers are heading towards healthier, more sustainable, ethically sourced products.

Increased Competition: Required differentiation via uniqueness, flawless customer service, and successful branding.

High Staff Turnover Rates: Due to the demanding work conditions, staff changes are frequent.

Skills Shortages: Managers in Food & Beverage Industry struggle to find trained professionals

Wage and Work Conditions: Balancing profitability with fair pay is vital in Food & Beverage Industry.

Sustain Freshness: Product freshness maintainance and rising ingredient costs are critical factors regarding efficiency and customer satisfaction.

Automation & Technoloical Advances: Balancing between tech solutions and traditional job opportunities in the industry is challenging providing that human contact is important in the sector.

Food Waste & Supply Chain Disruptions. Requires successful stock management, satisfactory local sourcing, and flexible supply chains.

Future Trends: The industry should be familiarized with plant-based products, AI-driven personalized customerexperiences, increased automation, and fusion cuisines as well (enatega.com, 2025)

4.3 Food & Beverage Industry Dynamics

Industry dynamics include driving and restrains, challenges and opportunities (marketreportsworld.com, 2025).

Greek Food and Beverage market has a great driving factor: Tourism and Cultural Heritage. Tourism Industry performs a full-size operation utilizing Greek food and beverage markets. The connection between the notion of Greece as a top vacation destination and gastronomic tourism, the increasing trend for Mediterranean diet, along with Greek rich culinary heritage, skyrocket the interest and finally the market for Greek food products worldwide.

On the other side, however, the climate change inflences negatively the agricultural productivity in Greece. The continuously rising temperatures and the often and extreme climate catastrophs e.g. droughts and floods seriously threaten the quality and quantity of traditional products like olives, grapes and citrus fruits. This fluctuations also impact exports of products that rely on consistent high-quality result.

Recent years the global interest for healthier nutrition and fitness-aware eating has enhanced the popularity of Mediterranean Diet, in which Greek traditional products are fundamental. The Mediterranean Diet popularity abroad creates new horizons for Greek labels to expand. However, restrictions, limitations and inefficiencies degrade the total product. Logistics and transportation issues can reason delays and increase costs. The loss of modern garage centers and streamlines distribution networks limits the duration of items like fruits, vegetables and seafood. A major investment in infrastructure is vital in order to cover the increasing demand for Greek products abroad.

4.4 COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts on Consumer Food Behaviors in European Countries and Greece

Strict lockdowns, medical protection measures, and remote work along with decreased incomes and extra free time on consumers' hands led to severe changes in consumer attitudes and behaviors. COVID-19 has undeniable change the consumers' way of thinking about purchase, plan and consume their food and beverage as food has more significance and cooking matters more. This change was almost overnight. There was an increase in consumption of food products and the need for seek for sustainability and healthy habits can be categorized amongst positive trends. Crisis opportunity is the need for innovation in order to meet novel consumers' needs such enjoying home-cooking, paying more attention to packaging and online shopping tailoring. According to the study, there is still the hope among consumers for better access to affordable food compatible to sustainability and health. Another opportunity for the industry can be the building of a better food system from farm to fork. The solutions will be based on collaborative, cross-sector partnerships (European Institute of Innovation and Technology, 2020).

4.5 Leadership Strategies applied in Food & Beverage Sector during COVID-19 Pandemic

Covid-19 pandemic led to millions of infections and deaths globally, transforming what we thought as normality, and influencing society, health systems, governmental policies and businesses. Food & Beverage sector received the outcomes of this socioeconomic “Black Swan”.

Labor problems such as the lack of workers because of illness or lockdowns led to shutdown of factories, food shortages on shelves and stressing of cash flows for active businesses. Actually, we were on a turning point for a global recession lacking crucial information for recovery.

In 2025, Food & Beverage Industry shapes a continuously changing and evolving landscape. The key matters such as sustainability expectations, AI-driven operations, changing consumers tastes and behaviors and a shifting workforce prioritization system demand modern F&B leaders. The lesson of Covid-19 crisis was the rewriting of rules in leadership.

Key success factor was adaptive leadership built on vision, flexibility and ability to inspire people towards shared aim.

- Add Purpose to Vision

In recent pandemic crisis, KPIs or revenue targets-based leadership proved to be inadequate. Crisis leaders tried to articulate a “why” approach at every business level. Generally, purpose energizes people, attracts compatible talent and provides context for each decision. Why it matters for consumers should be conceptualized by leaders in the beginning and employees later. In this context, *sustainability and health issues* became the new vision regularly communicated using town hall meetings, software ecosystems and their feedback channel to build consensus from every stakeholder (businesses, consumers, health organizations, governmental bodies, agri-food producers, technology innovative entrepreneurs, biology scientists, pharmacists, retailers, food security scientists, etc.).

As a result, *innovative technologies to make the food sector sustainable and health-oriented are vital..*

During pandemic, the immune system protection was a priority for consumers. Consumers were interested in healthy, organic, functional foods and superfoods. Food companies were launching products with bio-actives as immune-boosting agents (Galanakis et al., 2020) that encompass crafting collaborations between governmental bodies and academic institutions to fulfill consumers’ needs. (Koe, 2020a, 2020b).

Additionally, the pandemic drove to instant shortage of relevant data about consumers’ preferences and bottlenecks in post-lockdown period (Rowan & Laffey, 2020). The risk for food fraud was increased while finding convincing evidence about the real health benefits

of nutraceuticals and functional foods became critical. This gap emerged the data analytics digitalization and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to back the real time needs of food industry, smart agriculture, supply chain and food security (Bacco et., 2019).

Furthermore, since consumers have tasted rehydrated products and compared them with fresh food, the change in habit was inevitable. Companies are also experiencing a rapid increase in the need for plant-based ready meals (Askew, 2020e) and alternative protein sources to meat and dairy products.

Moreover, it is noticed an explosive increase in online food trade. Top brands raced to face the new trend creating opportunities for innovators e.g. online retail and deliveries (Rowan & Laffey, 2020) and novel, innovative packaging solutions.

The Covid-19 upset shaped disturbing technologies emerged from entrepreneurs, start-ups, small and medium sized companies, which were willing to produce tiner, lighter, cheaper, more agile products (Rowan, 2019).

Figure 2 depicts the various innovations within Covid-19 pandemic era.

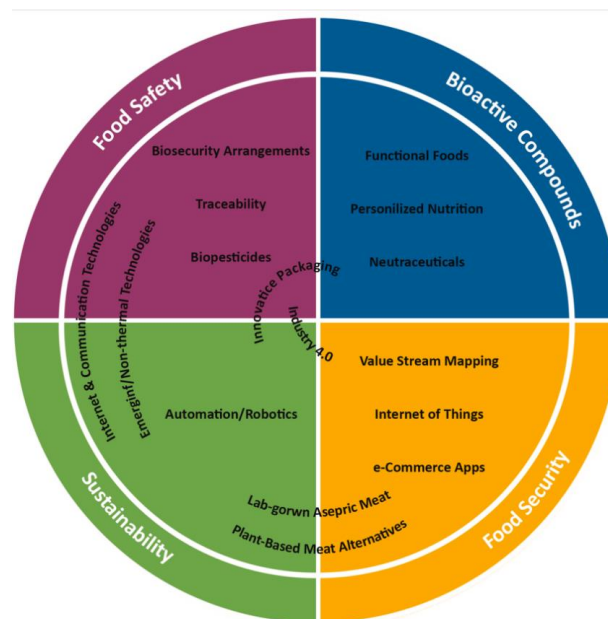


Figure 2: Innovations and disruptive technologies to tackle challenges of the four directions affected by COVID-19 pandemic (Galanakis et al., 2021)

- Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional Intelligence is the attribute that distinguish leaders nowadays. Contemporary leaders should be both operational savvy and able to motivate, support, and develop highly

diversified teams. Crisis leaders should be able to create an inclusive place to thrive. A corporate environment where everybody is heard. Leaders infused empathy and active listening into daily interaction. For example, according to relevant studies, Covid-19 and its financial impact decreased gender equality. It is estimated that women's jobs are 1.8 more vulnerable to this crisis than men's jobs. Women make up 39% of global employment but account for 54% of overall job losses. This is because the virus is majorly increasing the burden of unpaid care, which is disproportionately carried by women. According to McKinsey study (McKinsey, 2020), 25% of women in workforce were considering to minimize their working hours due to increased demands at home and work stress. Home-schooling was a demanding aftermath of crisis lockdown. Additionally, the pandemic exacerbated workplace microaggressions and burnout became rife. Another kind of innovation during pandemic was remote work. The situation blurred the line between work and home life. Leaders that actively addressed gender disparities and new working routine rose to the top during the crisis. Most of the times, they implemented flexible shifts, provided mental health support to their employees. Conversely, those that did not adapt their policies saw high turnover rates and lower employee morale. The future is inclusive, and it starts with the steps we take today (Appelbaum & Emadi-Mahabadi, 2021).

- Communication

In changing economy, clarity in communication is crucial. Effective communication is a cornerstone of organizational success, employee engagement, decision-making, and overall efficiency (Hart, 2012). Food economy creates systems which existence depends on effective communication.

Shannon & Weaver (1949) conceptualized communication as a linear process, emphasizing encoding, transmission, and decoding. At the same time, they recognized the role of noise and distortion. Likert (1967) introduced participative management concept, pointing out the significance of open communication channels and trust-based relationships in organizations. Communication must be clear and bidirectional to foster employee satisfaction and engagement, cultivating a collaborative workplace. Katz & Kahn (1978) suggested that communication can be described as a dynamic process that gives organizations the opportunity to address external challenges. Although leadership is recognized as a crucial factor, further research is needed to define the way the various managerial approaches impact communications across different workplaces (Jaupi & Llaki, 2015).

Grigoriou et al. (2025) concluded in severe challenges in internal communication, such as tensions between emotional and rational approaches, insufficient information sharing, and person-centered management practices, leading to employee frustration. Despite applying total quality management principles, employees reported dissatisfaction with recognition and lack of two-way communication. Additionally, external communication efforts, especially transparency failed to fully build trust due to limited adherence to transparency principles. Nevertheless, internal communication has been improved adopting professional standards and feedback mechanics and tailored communication strategies.

- Strategic Thinking

One key approach under this concept is the encouragement of teams to be alert for primary signals such as ingredient shifts, wellness & health pivots. Strategic acumen remains a principle. Successful companies moved from traditional operation to contactless services, expanded home meal replacement and AI-technology advancements such as Data-Driven Decision Making. For example, restaurants shifted to delivery-only models reducing overhead costs associated with dine-in spaces.

Furthermore, a strategic move was the issuance of scenario plans for “what ifs” for new competitors or/and regulatory changes. Strategies like multi-sourcing and localization of supply chains were satisfactory tools (Politz, 2020).

- Technology and Automation

Crisis leaders had to manage not only a digital transformation but an place where people and technologies will work together for maximum results. Great investments were made in training and skills upgrading in order every employee level benefit. Home-office skills training was a paradigm (Politz, 2020).

- Embracing new leadership structures

Modern leadership demands team member empowerment, delegation of authority and experimentation encouragement. Cross-functional team organization and remote collaboration are tools that have disrupted the traditional management pyramid. Leaders should provide often, career growth opportunities and recognition (Politz, 2020).

- Sustainability, Transparency & Social Purpose

As it is mentioned in the previous section, consumers directed their choices to more healthier products looking at product ingredients more thoroughly. Additionally, the labor practices

in the industry became more transparent. Successful leaders had in mind that they wanted to build something that would be a positive influence in people’s lives and offer innovation., giving back to communities via focused social initiatives (Politz, 2020).

Chapter 5: Case Study

5.1 Case Study: Newrest Hellas

A case study is a methodological research approach that is used to produce an in-depth comprehension of an issue or phenomenon in a bound system. It requests in-depth investigation conducted into a person, a team, or an event. It may include multiple data sources such as interviews, observations, or documents. A case study tend to focus on gaining derailed and nuanced understanding of a subject matter and to produce new theories or insight (Coombs, 2022). This is also this study’s methodology.

In previous sections, the leadership and crisis concepts were developed, leadership theories and practices during crisis periods were analyzed, the Covid-19 pandemic impact in Food & Beverage Industry and consumers’ preferences were described along with the immediate leadership actions taken. Now, we have stated the problem and research questions, it is the time to select the specific case to focus on.

The choice was far more than random. It was targeted for the following reasons:

1. Purpose of the study is to investigate “how” leaders navigated the challenges during pandemic.
2. Purpose of the study is to observe, gather and analyze in-depth opinions, feelings and experiences and not only to emphasize in operational variables or to answer questions with verification hypothesis tests.
3. Purpose of the study is to provide new or unexpected information about the subject as the proposed practical measures may be a solution or an opening up for new avenues for research.
4. Purpose of the study is to collect reliable and sincere answers reducing selective bias.
5. Purpose of the study is to identify “soft” skills and “relationship-oriented” leadership styles that ensured company’s success through crisis.

The investigated company in this study is Newrest Hellas. According to their Published Data (newrest.gr, 2026), Newrest Hellas is the Greek subsidiary of the global Newrest Group, a leading catering group, activating in 49 countries worldwide. Newrest Hellas is a major player in the Greek market, particularly focusing on airline catering and contract catering

with significant clients from multinational companies, healthcare institutions and large private companies.

Duties:

- Catering the staff of companies, organizations, and industries
- Airline and Rail catering
- Retail catering in airports and road rails
- Catering services and support services in distant areas
- Buy-on-board and Duty-free Catering

Newrest Hellas has 6 production units with the central one in the International Airport of Athens. The rest are located in Thessaloniki, Chania, Heraklion, Corfu, and Rhodes.

According to Published Financials (newrest.gr, 2026), Newrest Group showed a turnover of 2.5B Euro in fiscal year 2023-2024 and 60380 employees globally in 53 countries, being the largest independent airline caterer worldwide.

Newrest is 96.5% management-owned while the left equity is held by a private investor. Founders of the parent company are Co-CEO's Olivier Sardan and Jonathan Stent-Torriani.

Basic attributes of Newrest performance can be classified into catering, logistics and facility management services. Each of them is conducted with an innovative quality assurance approach meeting local standards in food safety and environmental sustainability relied on ISO standards. As far as company's employee's quality of life is concerned, the company has designed new style venues to ensure a healthier lifestyle.

Reactive and very adaptable employees via high-performance and versatile teams, trained in agile working environments ensure Newrest teams' agility.

Last but not least, targeting to internal innovation and digitalization, it explores new trends and new consumer experiences.

5.2 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats) Analysis is vital to comprehend the holistic environment that the company is operating into.

Strengths

- **Powerful Market Position.** Newrest Hellas is part of a well-established, global player and possesses in the same time a leading position in Greek market, particularly in in-flight catering and contract catering.
- **Diversified Portfolio.** As it is mentioned above, the company is active across all catering segments. Newrest has developed a solution named 360° by Newrest. Newrest positions itself as service integrators and offers solutions beyond catering such as technical facilities management, cleaning services, laundry services, pest control services, water supply or waste management.
- **Menu Customization & Diversity.** It provides 100% customizable solutions based on clients' needs in a multi-service expertise mode. Its chefs prepare healthy and environmentally sustainable meals with passion .
- **Highly-trained Staff.** Through versatility in teams, Newrest manage to retain adaptable and reactive employees.
- **Strong reputation & Reliability.** Since 2017, it has provided market a contractual alternative based on full operational and financial transparency. Giant American and European airlines have chosen to work with Newrest.
- **Specialty Brands & Digitalized Solutions.** The group uses proprietary retail brands (e.g. Daily Break) and integrated digital tools like Winrest ERP system and Calypso for HACCP compliance and operational traceability.
- **QHSE Focus.** They adopt “I Care!” Program. An advanced quality assurance program covering food safety and environment sustainability.
- **Robust Corporate Structure.** Newrest Hellas as subsidiary benefits from a strong, decentralized operational management structure with shared international standards applied to local variations

Weaknesses

- **Complexity in Daily Operations.** The widespread range of sectors that are managed by Newrest may lead to confusion in daily operations, control systems and logistics.
- **High Staff Turnover.** The retention of highly-trained and enthusiastic staff is challenging both inside the industry and the company.
- **Dependence on Contracts.** Clients' contracts in contract catering is upon their activity levels rather than direct sales.

- Dependence on Seasonal Events. Especially, in aviation industry, revenue often fluctuates from peak seasons (summers or holidays) to off-peak periods, making cash flow management challenging.
- Narrow Profit Margins. Factors like high industry competition and rising food costs lead easily to thin margins, and finally, making the business more vulnerable to increased prices.

Opportunities

- Rapid Air Travel Recovery and Expansion of Tourism in Greece. Tourism industry can be classified as a horizontal economic activity instead of other activities of production and supply of products. To make it clearer, we can use the example of the metallurgical sector that is made up of companies producing metal products. In contrast, tourism activity is correlated with many other economy sectors such as transport e.g. air and bus transfers, hotel accommodation, catering, entertainment and consumption of goods. As a nutshell, tourism involves many different parts of the social and productive fabric of each country. Tourism plays a vital role in every country's GDP and employment. During the years of the economic crisis, it was a buffer against recession and unemployment leading to positive growth rates. Additionally, during the COVID pandemic and due to the governmental measures, that were taken to minimize its spread led to a vast reduction in tourism worldwide and in Greece both in touristic and not areas. The rapid recovery of tourism in 2021 and 2022 in Greece as a world-class tourist destination led in parallel to a rapid recovery of GDP and economic activity. Characteristics of the sector is the high seasonality but wide dispersion of tourist destinations throughout the country. The continuous increase in aviation industry and cruises industry provides a direct opportunity for expanded in-flight and concession catering contracts.
- Airline Competition and Service Differentiation. Airline companies recently adopt strategies that enhance inflight dining services from ordering processes to serving methods. As a result, premium carriers provide top-tier services at premium prices for business and Business-class clients, whilst economy class ones receive cost-effective solutions. By this differentiation, tier-based onboard services are created differentiate brands competition.

- Cultural Diversity & Dietary according to Accommodation. Airline companies design meals understanding the destination taste tradition, particularly for international flights to regions with diverse food habits such as the Middle East. Opportunity for renewal of contracts with airlines with high-quality catering is open.
- Contract catering is Rising. New specialized sectors like oil and gas remote sites and private healthcare in Greece are blooming sectors.
- Digital Transformation. An innovative digitalization ecosystem is cultivated to benefit guests, clients and employees. Historical data and real-time contributors such as weather conditions, flight schedules and local events can be analyzed by AI-powered forecasting systems. Their introduction will greatly optimize inventory management. Additionally, interpreting customer behavior such as browsing history and purchase patterns enable caterers to offer customized dining experiences that increase passenger satisfaction and revenue streams. Furthermore, technologies like contactless ordering can streamline service efficiency, reduce crew workload, minimize last-minute substitutions during flights and enhance healthcare routines. Also, AI-driven supply chain optimization tools can check the freshness of the meals ensuring the optimal quality during the service. Lastly, predictive analytics can observe vital food trends and dietary shifts towards plant-based, allergen-free and sustainable options enabling catering providers adjust menus proactively reducing unsold inventory.
- Strategic Partnerships with Local Suppliers and Sustainable Alliances. Partnering with local farmers for fresh, organic ingredients to appeal to sustainability-sensitive consumers. Such partnerships enable bulk purchasing, and as a result, cost savings, standardized catering services and consistent quality. A key goal in their 2023 CSR Report.

Threats

- Financial volatility & continuously rising costs. Economic environment is unstable the last decades. Excessive inflation, rising energy and logistics costs have impacted profit margins especially in fixed-price contracts.
- Intense local competition. Established lower-cost providers may consist of a problem for the entity.

- Shifting Consumer Trends. Through the last years, rapid changes in consumers food preferences such as a demand for more plant-based, organic, or sustainable meals have raised.
- Reputation Management. Negative social media or review platforms’ critics should be managed delicately in order not to deter potential clients.
- Global health events. COVID-19 consisted of a major threat that impacted the catering industry worldwide. Pandemic caused the ban of mass gatherings where the industry thrives. The industry had to adapt in order to survive. Catering depends on large-group events being in the same place such as weddings, baptisms, conferences, etc. The pandemic prohibited such groupings for health standpoint. Also, travel restrictions drastically reduced in-flight catering demand during COVID pandemic.
- Stringent Regulations. Stricter food safety (HACCP) and health regulations demand intense investment in compliance.
- Weather Conditions. Poor weather conditions or even worse climate change effects have a severe impact on outdoor activities, which compromises a large portion of catering revenue.
- Technology shifts. Newrest should be able to adopt immediately and smoothly new technology like online ordering platforms to maintain the competitive edge.
- Staff turnover. The hospitality and catering workforce is typically young, mostly feminine, with migration background and temporary, seasonal and part-time employment prevails. Last but not least, catering sector is characterized by poor working conditions such as job insecurity, intensive work stress, suffering well-being conditions, poor work-life balance and emotional exhaustion (Gautie & Schmitt, 2010).

5.3 PESTEL analysis

Political Factors

- Travel Bans: The implementation of global and local restrictions in flights from the Hellenic government and IATA affected directly a large portion of Newrest Hellas turnover in Athens International Airport and local airports (New York Times, 2020).
- Governmental Grants. The company was benefited by governmental supportive measures like temporally suspension of employment contracts, SYN-ERGASIA

action, etc. and they managed to capitalize on retaining job placements during lockdowns.

Economic Factors

- Revenues for in-flight catering were declining due to the rapid decrease in passenger movement in aviation industry.
- The second phase of pandemic was characterized by increased raw material costs and rising energy costs. This resulted in reduced profit margins for the company.
- On the contrary, Covid-19 pandemic led to health institutions hyperoperation that needed more extended contract catering.

Social Factors

- Remote work practices during the lockdown changed drastically the consumers eating and dining habits influencing not only the turnover, inventory, food safety, food packaging, and food waste but also the menu of catering industries since then.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers became more sensitive about health and safety attributes of food & beverage products. This led the company to communicate more strict hygiene protocols.

Technological Factors

- Digitalization. Contactless ordering and supply chain technologies were implemented to avoid the virus spread.
- Innovative packaging was introduced to retain the freshness of the meals.

Environmental Factors

- The increase in one usage plastic bags was in contrast with Newrest commitment for limitation of its environmental impact.
- Despite the crisis, the company continued to has as its core the sustainable development.

Legal Factors

- The company showed strict compliance with the new regulations, and the novel hygiene Protocols in workplaces and in meals production.
- The company adjusted flawlessly in multiple changes in Labor Legislation such as remote work and special leaves.

5.4 Participants Descriptive Data

We conducted a survey via questionnaire we created and fulfilled by two managers of Newrest. Here is the Participants Information Table.

Number	Date	Gender	Age	Department	Position	Years of Experience in the Position
Participant 1	2/5/2026	Male	43	Commercial	Manager	8
Participant 2	18/6/2026	Female	40	Procurement	Manager	5

Table 1: Sample Identity

We chose a diverse sample as far as the gender, the age, the department, the position, and the years of experiences in the position are concerned in order to have a multifaceted aspect of a leader personality. In simple words, we would like to have a view of point of different personalities and professional experiences during the crisis. An element that might have influenced the leadership styles and strategies through the crisis. For instance, the leader with the less experience in the position at the crisis period might be more effective dealing with employees' performance in time.

5.6 Questionnaire, Questions & Quotes

Below we present the questions made to managers and the received quotes.

Did you have doubts after a decision?
Participant 1
I based on the fact that crisis decisions are made with limited data, and we tried to do the best at the time. Avoiding “second-guessing” helps you first support your choice. Then stakeholders will follow.
Participant 2
Sometimes yes. But I did honesty the best I could based on the available data and the general climate
Do you use any specific training or simulation for identifying a potential crisis?
Participant 1
What-If analysis evaluating potential responses by simulating the outcomes of different in-real time.
Participant 2
Crisis-based real life scenarios
Had you to communicate difficult or sensitive news during crisis, what was your approach?
Participant 1
I concentrated on the structure of the message. The same information was used across all available channels to avoid confusion. Under pressure, short messages that show caring are ideal. Lastly, I tried to include guides of action after the receipt of information.

Participant 2
Sensitive information is hard to be delivered. I was trying to be on his/her shoes and show emotional intelligence personalized my attitude according to the receiver of the message
How did this experience influence your approach to developing crisis protocols going forward?
Participant 1
We introduced continuous improvement loop protocols that are treated as “living documents” that are regularly tested through simulation and updated.
Participant 2
Much many simulation scenarios with extreme cases
How did you adapt your leadership style to meet different team members’ needs?
Participant 1
Moving away from consensus-driven decisions to an autocratic style to reduce chaos. Along with clear communication and emotional intelligence we managed to serve team members’ needs.
Participant 2
I tried to be along with my people. To calm them down, to navigate them during the crisis, to be supportive.
How did you assess the information with regards to its adequateness?
Participant 1
Unfortunately, existing information during pandemic was upsetting, inadequate and sometimes conflicting with vast amount of rumor. It limited my knowledge in published data. It would be crucial to have more tools such AI predictions in the preliminary phase of the crisis
Participant 2
Clinical Data and Published Numbers are the safest source of information due to the excessive rumors
How did you balance short-term to long-term structural improvements?
Participant 1
An approach that worked was the division of the responsibilities. A team is dedicated to manage immediate crisis while other focuses on long-term recovery.
Participant 2
Both must be equally weighted during this phase
How did you bring others along with the changed direction?
Participant 1
I tried to constantly communicate why the change is happening. It was not only the lockdowns that was the problem, the consumers’ behavior had changed rapidly and drastically. I tried to collaborate with bodies like healthy institutions and pharmaceutical enterprises to learn more about the clinical behavior of the virus. Additionally, I insisted on listening to the feedback even though it was not easy at that time.
Participant 2
It was part of my job to bring others with this new direction. Consecutive briefings and summarized data was my tools
How did you communicate the situation to stakeholders to avoid panic?
Participant 1
I tried to be accurate about the level of the knowledge I had throughout the crisis period, avoiding extravagant fact, panic and rumors, enhancing trust to my words.
Participant 2

To superior levels of stakeholders I tried to be accurate and calm. To employees I tried to be indulgent and understanding. To external stakeholders I tried to be cooperative and diligent
How did you convince others to take action before the crisis break out?
Participant 1
It was a difficult task. There was unawareness of the possible results of any action taken. Multiple personal and team meetings were needed to make even small steps.
Participant 2
Step-by-Step by showing convincing data
How did you decide about the expertise you need in a crisis?
Participant 1
Cross-functional understanding is key soft skill for future crisis. I was needing expertise from various sectors. Public Health, Aviation, Food & Beverage, Catering, Government, etc.
Participant 2
Expertise should be come from various and sufficient expertise
How did you determine when it was appropriate to shift from crisis to recovery mode?
Participant 1
When the demand for emergency services was being reduced such as gathering and air travelling were allowed with no boundaries.
Participant 2
There was normality in pricing and flights demands
How did you determine which rules or protocols could be bent versus which were essential?
Participant 1
Separating them to non-negotiable like life and safety, legal and ethical compliance, and adaptive like innovation.
Participant 2
People-oriented are vital
How did you ensure that the message had been correctly understood?
Participant 1
I ensured consistency across all departments. I decided to be the company’s spokesperson to all communication channels to avoid confusion and contradicting information.
Participant 2
There was a common-accepted spokesperson which talk to all communications channels to avoid a mess
How did you handle your accountability in failures during the crisis?
Participant 1
Future team building prioritizes rebuilding psychological safety, trust and connection rather that enjoyment.
I used to admit my errors immediately before others did it. I believe that this is a sign of strength and builds trust.
Participant 2
It is impossible not to admit my mistakes during hard times and uncertainty. I do it consisely and I provoke my followers to do so
How did you help people to understand what has happened before they move forward?
Participant 1
I prefer extracting key takeaways e.g. key themes and major points necessary to understand the narrative of the crisis.
Participant 2

I organized conferences showing the route of facts with numbers and people stories
How did you identify the first signs of the crisis and how did you assess them?
Participant 1
As we work with aviation industry, we knew that virus appearance in Greece would be a fact. Since the patient-0, we were watching official pandemic records, data, and guidelines from foreign countries that were proceeding in crisis phase. Gathered data assessment was at the beginning personal task in this phase of crisis. In the initial phase of the crisis, there were a lot of flight cancellations and worried passengers
Participant 2
Since February 2020, we had marked a sudden wave of flight cancellations in the Asia-Pacific region. We faced massive surplus inventory and cancelation of ongoing purchasing orders. It was something unprecedented and it made a splash. The department had a briefing for the new guidelines to be followed.
How did you maintain your credibility about the limits of knowledge?
Participant 1
Firstly, by admitting uncertainty and explicitly stating limitations to stakeholders.
Participant 2
With no false messages to them on purpose
How did you manage to balance the need for rapid actions against thoughtful decision-making?
Participant 1
I tried to focus my energy only on what I could control to protect myself from overwhelming with catastrophic scenarios. I tried to set long-term goals avoiding the trap of immediate actions without a broader strategy. The plan was to calm travelers being coherent with public health government bodies guidelines.
Participant 2
It is hard to shift everything in job immediately. I followed the line of the numbers. I acted with mathematical logic according to scenario-based plans
How did you prioritize the needs of stakeholders?
Participant 1
I prefer a segmentation by Impact and Urgency. That means a mapping according to those who can affect the outcome of the crisis. The most affected is the priority.
Participant 2
I preferred to communicate my messages firstly to those stakeholders that they are affected the most by those news
How did you rebuild trust with stakeholders affected by company's mistakes?
Participant 1
By taking full responsibility for the mistakes done and making visible, long-term changes to internal policies.
Participant 2
Covid-19 was a severe crisis. But we must learn from it. Only if managers learn their lesson they could rebuild trust with stakeholders
How did you recognize the need for adaption? Any signals?
Participant 1
During the crisis and the unavoidable measures, our turnover and revenues had changed drastically. Employees' stress was rising. They worried about the resilience of the firm and their stability. This has affected also their organizational performance.

Participant 2
Flights demand was reducing, contracts were cancelled, inventory and raw material pricing was altering, and freshness of the meals was not the point any more. The need for change was obvious
How did you recognize when your stress was affecting your leadership?
Participant 1
Sometimes my decision-making was rigid rather than adapting to new, complex information.
Participant 2
Sometimes I became more strict and impatient with my followers
How differently would you prepare yourself emotionally for a future crisis?
Participant 1
I would make stress a friend not an enemy. I wouldn't let myself without plans for future crisis. Planning is the best stress relief project.
Participant 2
Everybody was influenced by this pandemic psychologically. Generally, most of us became more stress-tolerant and brave
How differently would you prepare yourself ethically for a future crisis?
Participant 1
I would plan an ethical sharing project where sustainable, community-wide support would be shared instead of panic.
Participant 2
I think that panic and hate is the most devastating ethical concerns for a future crisis. I am trying to work on these negative feelings
How do you decide which responsibilities should be delegated or not?
Participant 1
According to risk level. I prefer not to delegate high-risk activities (an irreversible mistake is possible), such as safety-related decisions or legal-related approvals.
Participant 2
I believe in my people. All of them are adequate and sufficient. I choice to delegate responsibilities according to the level of experience and match of the subject matter
How do you support team members when they were struggling with their responsibilities?
How do you ensure coordination?
Participant 1
I chose to be visible and available. Always present and supportive. I am there to support them, to guide them, to refill their energy. I believe that employees react positively to actions like those.
Participant 2
I support them with paradigms. I give examples and guidelines
How this affected your future team building?
Participant 2
My people were prove worthy of the tasks. So I think I had implemented a good team building plan based on solid personality traits
Personally, how did you stay motivated?
Participant 1
I prefer to stay on my own routine and set small, attainable goals. Everyday routine maintenance is vital.

Participant 2
Personally, I prefer to be more prepared as a professional. So, I am doing my best to organize my assignments
Were there proposed different ethical course of action? Was there any tension?
Participant 1
Protection of peoples’ lives, health, and safety. We did the best possible to that direction. Not significant ones. Initial tension was overcome.
Participant 2
Not really
What did COVID-19 pandemic teach you about planning for uncertainty?
Participant 1
A necessary shift from rigid plans to more agile and collaborations. Multiple plans should be in company’s shelves with different degrees of probability and difficulty.
Participant 2
Planning was not generally impressive before Covid-19. After this we have learned to be aware for primitive signs of a crisis and not so doubtful about its happening
What did you do differently if faced another completely novel crisis?
Participant 1
I would focus on the empowerment of local teams, delegating authority to those on the front lines.
Participant 2
I would focus on the empowerment of my followers on psychological level
What did you learn through this recovery process about organizational resilience?
Participant 1
Surely, the need of a proactive risk management investing in early warning systems.
Participant 2
Organization is based on the power of their members. Their resilience is based upon their people resilience.
What strategies were more effective for maintain your composure and calmness providing that the seriousness of the situation?
Participant 1
I was turning to authenticity. It’s a way to free from stress in highly demanding moments.
Participant 2
I tried to stay away from mass media rumors
What strategies were most effective in maintaining forward thinking?
Participant 1
I prefer to implement a transformational kind of leadership with tones of support to our employees and their concerns. All appropriate measures were taken with diligence and willingness. Additionally, personal discussions were taken place to destress them. I think we had a great collaboration during crisis.
Participant 2
We were all trying to thinking forward in my team during the crisis. Personally, I tried to be a model of this for my followers
What techniques did you use to align competing interests? What if they were unhappy?
Participant 1
We had ensured that all stakeholders had received the same information at the same time to prevent confusion and rumors. Identify and categorize stakeholders by influence and

interest to prioritize. For me, it was vital to be articulate not to make everybody happy at that moment.
Participant 2
To align competing interests, we were trying to show them data adequate enough to persuade them. In cases of conflicts, the necessity of the act had priority regardless the cost
What values guided your decision-making in this situation?
Participant 1
Aligning with core values such as authenticity, transparency, safety, and service.
Participant 2
Transparency, people-oriented approach, mathematical-driven movements
What was your first priority when the crisis was here?
Participant 1
Our first priority was the people. The Greek citizens, the consumers of our products, and our employees.
Participant 2
Every department had new goals but the people was a major bet. It was the most difficult task to deliver.
What were the preliminary signs of the crisis?
Participant 1
As I said, there was a step-wise reduction in departures before total lockdowns
Participant 2
Flight reduction and fear for travelling
What were the principles or values that guided your decision-making?
Participant 1
Transparency and Honesty. I strongly believe in open communication, even in times that all answers are not available, it is crucial to maintain credible. To be honest, we were talking about people's lives.
Participant 2
Clarity and calmness. Decision making must be based on clear results and people who take the decision must remain calm
What would you do different in the future?
Participant 1
I strongly believed that if a plan for something like that existed, the reactions would be different at least at the early stage. Additionally, a more rounded-informed leadership could be beneficial in a competitive and stressful environment.
Participant 2
I would be more confident with my decision making and followers support
What would you do differently in managing these relationships in a similar situation in the future?
Participant 1
I would choose to be an even more active listener for the underlying fears or needs of each part rather than just hearing their demands.
Participant 2
I think that preplanning in relations may add time and reduce effort during crisis
What would you do differently in this stage in a similar future crisis?
Participant 1

I would have created and communicated a consistent message across the organization to ensure everybody’s satisfaction.
Participant 2
I would do quite the same movements. It’s a difficult stage without prior knowledge
Which are the signs of low team morale during crisis?
Participant 1
From my experience, low team morale is accompanied with withdrawal and silence. The fear of the unknown makes employees having more intrusive thoughts. This result to a distance between leadership and followers.
Participant 2
According to my experience, people are afraid of the unknown. Low team morale is inevitable in such circumstances. People became more emotionally unstable and volatile. Emotions such as fear, empathy, hate, stress are very increased

Table 2: Questionnaire Questions & Quotes

5.5 Qualitative Analysis on Data received via Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis is a powerful tool for gaining insights into the patterns of meaning that exist within a set of qualitative data. Thematic Analysis is adaptable and usable in various theoretical frameworks and research paradigms. Thematic Analysis is systematic approach to examining data aiming at discovering, characterising, explaining, providing evidence for and making connections between different topics. We chose the realistic approach of the method which tries to grasp the core of reality examining social concerns, showing human connections and delving into the intricacies of the human experience (v,Sandhiya & Bhuvaneswari, 2024).

Before we explore the specific steps of Thematic Analysis, we have to define themes. A theme can be defined as a modeled reply or meaning that stems from the data and it is helpful in answering the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Below we present a Table that shows the 14 Themes and the 44 Sub-Themes we created from the data.

Leading through crisis period	Decision- making under pressure	Communication of Difficult Information	Adaption to Evolving Crisis	Maintaing teal morale and productivity	Coordinaton of Stakeholders with different priorities	Delegation and Coordination of efforts to followers
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Action - Recognition of Nature and Scope of the Crisis	Action - Evaluation of limited Information	Action - Approach to sensitive communication	Awareness - Recognition of need for change	Strategy - Manager motivation	Strategy - Prioritization of Stakeholders	Action - Delegation of Responsibilities
Action - First Priority	Concern - Principles or values guided your Decision - Making	Action - Securization of understanding of a message	Actions - Alignment of Others	Awareness - Signs of low team morale	Actions - Alignment of different interested Stakeholders	Action - Support to the followers
Action - Balance Rapid Actions	Concern - Doubts after a Decision		Provision - Aftermath about planning for future crises	Strategy - Adapt leadership to meet needs	Awareness - Future different actions	Action - Ensuring Coordination
Action - Communication with Stakeholders				Strategy - Maintaining forward thinking		Strategy - Future team building
Provision - Different Actions in Future						

Accountability of mistakes	Management of emotions under pressure	Management of ethical dimensions of crisis	Recognition of crisis symptoms and actions	Analysing the way to recovery	Knowledge during Crisis	Lessons Learned from Crisis
Action - Accountability in failures	Awareness - Emotions that affect leadership	Strategy - Values guided decision making	Awareness - Recognition of crisis symptoms	Action - Shift from crisis to recovery	Action - Choices about Expertise	Strategy - Training or Simulation for Future Crisis
Strategy - Rebuilding of trust	Strategy - Maintaining calmness	Action - Different Ethical Approaches	Strategy - Conviction of others to activate	Action - People consciousness of the facts	Action - Credibility despite limited Knowledge	Strategy - Prioritization of protocols
	Provision - Emotional preparation for future	Provision - Ethical Preparation for Future	Provision - Different future actions	Action - Balance of Short-term and long-term improvements	Provision - Managing a completely novel crisis	Provision - Changes in protocols after the crisis

				Provision - Lessons about organizations resilience		

Table 3: Themes Scheme

We used the Open Coding method to identify patterns in a dataset which will analysed and categorized into themes. This method offers flexibility and creativity in the coding process let us explore different intepretations and meanings within the data.

Working in Excell, we gathered and analyzed the replies coding them and creating connections between them as we see below. For the Participant 2, in the theme of “Accountability of Mistakes” and the sub-theme “Action – Accountability in Failures”, the Codes are “consisely admit mistakes” and “provoke followers to do so”.

Participant 1
Accountability of mistakes - admit errors immediately before other did it - making visible, long-term changes to internal policies - strength and trust sign - taking full responsibility for the mistakes Adaption to Evolving Crisis - affected performance - changes in turnover and revenues - collaboration with health bodies - consumer behavior had changed - employees' stress was rising - learn about virus - listening the feedback - multiple plans - shift from rigid to agile collaborations - why change has happened - worried about company's stability and resilience Analysing the way to recovery - demand for emergency services was reduced - division of responsibilities - extract key takeaways - need of a proactive risk management

one team to manage crisis

one time focuses on long-term goals

Communication of Difficult Information

avoid confusion and contradicting information

consistency across all departments

guiding actions

one spokesperson

short messages

showing caring

the structure of message is important

Coordination of Stakeholders with different priorities

all stakeholders same information at the same time

categorized stakeholders by priority

face underlying fears

impact and urgency

more active listener

prevent confusion and rumors

the most affected is the priority

Decision-making under pressure

avoid second guessing

credibility

only published data

open communication

tools such as AI

transparency and honesty

upsetting, inadequate, conflicting information

vast amount of rumors

Delegation and Coordination of efforts to followers

delegation according to risk level

guide

not delegate high risk and safety and legal related approvals

present and supportive

rebuilding psychological safety, trust and connection

refill energy

visible and available

Knowledge during Crisis

admit uncertainty and stating limitations

cross functional expertises

delegating authority

empowerment of local teams

Leading through crisis period

assessment was a personal task

avoid catastrophic scenarios

avoiding extravagant fact, panic and rumors

be accurate about the level of the knowledge I had

broader strategy plan

calm travelers
coherent with public health bodies
created and communicated a consistent message across organization
ensure everybody's satisfaction
flight cancellations
official records, data, guidelines from foreign countries
people was priority
set long term goals
virus would be a fact
worried passengers

Lessons Learned from Crisis

loop protocols that are treated as “living documents”
safety, legal, and ethical compliance
what-if scenarios

Maintaining team morale and productivity

clear communication
collaboration
decompress
distance between leadership and followers
emotional intelligence
fear
intrusive thoughts
moving from consensus-driven decisions to an autocratic leadership style
personal discussions
serve team's needs
set attainable goals
stay on my routine
support to employees
transformational kind of leadership
withdrawal and silence

Management of emotions under pressure

decision making became more rigid
make stress a friend not an enemy
turn to authenticity

Management of ethical dimensions of crisis

authenticity, transparency, safety, service
not significant tensions
plan an ethical sharing project
protect people lives, health, and safety
sustainability instead of panic community-wide

Recognition of crisis symptoms and actions

departures reduction
multiple personal and team meetings
rounded-informed leadership could be beneficial
unawareness of the possible results

Participant 2

Accountability of mistakes

- consistently admit mistakes
- leaders learn from crisis
- provoke followers to do so

Adaption to Evolving Crisis

- be aware of primitive data
- consecutive meeting with summarized data
- contracts cancelled
- increased costs
- meal freshment not the point
- not doubtful of crisis burst
- reducing flight demand

Analysing the way to recovery

- conferences showing the route of facts and people stories
- equally weighted
- normality in pricing and flight demand
- people resilience

Communication of Difficult Information

- a spokesperson to avoid mess
- emotional intelligence
- personalized to receiver

Coordination of Stakeholders with different priorities

- actions has priority to cost
- adequate data to persuade them
- preplanning offer time and reduce effort
- the most affected stakeholder is the priority

Decision-making under pressure

- clarity and calmness
- clinical data and published numbers
- excessive rumors
- sometimes doubts

Delegation and Coordination of efforts to followers

- believe in people
- delegation according to experience and subject
- give guidelines
- solid personality traits
- support with examples

Knowledge during Crisis

- employees' psychological empowerment
- no on purpose false message
- various and sufficient expertise

Leading through crisis period

- accurate and calm to supervisors
- cancellation of orders
- cooperative and diligent to external stakeholders
- crisis made a splash

departments briefings
follow the numbers
guidelines to be folowed
indulgent and understanding to employees
inventory surplus
not immediate actions
people was priority
same movements
scenarion-based plans
sudden wave of flight cancellations

Lessons Learned from Crisis

simulations
crisis-based scenarios
people-oriented protocols

Maintaing teal morale and productivity

be supportive
calm people down
emotional unstable
emotional volatile
empathy
fear
hate
model for followers
navigate them
organization of assignments
stress

Management of emotions under pressure

stay away from mass media
stress-tolerant and brave
strict and impatient with followers

Management of ethical dimensions of crisis

mathematical-driven solutions
no tensions
panic and hate
people-oriented approach
transparency
working on negative feelings

Recognition of crisis symptoms and actions

departures reduction
fear
more confident with the decision making proccess
showing convincing data

Table 4: Codes by Themes

5.6 Evaluation of results

Analysing and comparing and contrasting the findings, we can extract significant results regarding the leadership styles, strategies and actions of these two leaders.

Leadership style describes the manner and approaches a leader use to provide direction, implement plans, and motivate people to deliver. Below we concentrate the most relevant sub-themes to leadership style and summarize the codes identified by participant, to shape an opinion about his/her leadership style based on the theory presented in the previous chapters.

Participant 1 Action - Accountability in failures admit errors immediately before other did it strength and trust sign Action - Delegation of Responsibilities delegation according to risk level not delegate high risk and safety and legal related aprovals Action - First Priority people was priority Action - People consiousness of the facts extract key takeaways Action - Support to the followers present and supportive visible and available Strategy - Adapt leadership to meet needs clear communication emotional intelligence moving from consensus-driven decisions to an autocratic leadership style serve team's needs Strategy - Maintaining calmness turn to authenticity Strategy - Values guieded decision making authenticity, transparency, safety, service Participant 2 Action - Accountability in failures consisely admit mistakes provoke followers to do so Action - Delegation of Responsibilities believe in people delegation according to experience and subject Action - First Priority people was priority Action - People consiousness of the facts conferences showing the foute of facts and people stories Action - Support to the followers
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support with examples

Strategy - Adapt leadership to meet needs

- be supportive
- calm people down
- navigate them

Strategy - Maintaining calmness

- stay away from mass media

Strategy - Values guided decision making

- mathematical-driven solutions
- people-oriented approach
- transparency

Table 5: Codes relevant to Leadership Style

The Participant 2 is a Transformational leader with idealized influence approach. She believes in her followers. She delegates to them responsibilities and power and insist on supporting them, providing them knowledge with example and have them as priority.

The Participant 1 is a Transformational leader with an intellectual simulation approach, remaining calm and rational but on the same time having people as a priority as well.

After examining the separate actions of managers during the crisis, we conclude to the following summarized Tables.

In Sensemaking process, both Participants regnogized the upcoming crisis by economical, financial, statistical, and accounting records of the company and internationally published information.

Action - Recognition of Nature and Scope of the Crisis
Participant 1 - Leading through crisis period - assessment was a personal task - flight cancellations - official records, data, guidelines from foreign countries - virus would be a fact - worried passengers Participant 2 - Leading through crisis period - cancellation of orders - crisis made a splash - departments briefings - guidelines to be folowed

inventory surplus sudden wave of flight cancellations
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Table 6: Recognition of Nature and Scope of the Crisis

In Facilitating Learning to shift from crisis to Recovery, both of Participants are based on financial data and statistical shnages.

Action - Shift from crisis to recovery
Participant 1 Analysing the way to recovery demand for emergency services was reduced
Participant 2 Analysing the way to recovery normality in pricing and flight demand

Table 7: Shift from crisis to recovery

In Decision Making Proccess, both Participants decided to be informed by published and reliable sources of information and to avoid excessive rumors and mass media panic.

Decision-making under pressure
Participant 1 Action - Evaluation of limited Information only published data tools such as AI upsetting, inadequate, conflicting information vast amount of rumors Concern - Doubts after a Decision avoid second guessing Concern - Principles or values guieded your Decision - Making credibility open communication transparency and honesty
Participant 2 Action - Evaluation of limited Information clinical data and published numbers excessive rumors Concern - Doubts after a Decision sometimes doubts Concern - Principles or values guieded your Decision - Making clarity and calmness

Table 8: Codes relevant to Decision under Pressure

Principles like clarity, open communication and transparency, calmness, credibility and honesty are crucial and vital guidelines for them. In their effort to align stakeholders with different interests, priority have these ones who were most affected and actions are more significant than costs. For the Participant 2, preplanning would be a useful future tool in that field while for the commercial manager, a deeper understanding of underlying fears and a more active listening, would be beneficial.

Coordination of Stakeholders with different priorities
Participant 1 Actions - Alignment of different interested Stakeholders all stakeholders same information at the same time categorized stakeholders by priority prevent confusion and rumors Awareness - Future different actions face underlying fears more active listener Strategy - Prioritization of Stakeholders impact and urgency the most affected is the priority Participant 2 Actions - Alignment of different interested Stakeholders actions has priority to cost adequate data to persuade them Awareness - Future different actions preplanning offer time and reduce effort Strategy - Prioritization of Stakeholders the most affected stakeholder is the priority

Table 9: Codes relevant to Coordination of Stakeholders with Different Priorities

Communication of difficult information was a key aspect of the crisis. The Participant 2 gave priority to emotional intelligence and personalized messages in her strategy, while the commercial manager chose to give priority to the structure, the length of the messages and the caring attitude of the messages. Both Participants decided to have one spokesperson to avoid mess in communication and ensure consistency.

Communication of Difficult Information
Participant 1 Action - Approach to sensitive communication short messages showing caring

the structure of message is important Action - Securization of understanding of a message avoid confusion and contradicting information consistency across all departments guiding actions one spokesperson Participant 2 Action - Approach to sensitive communication emotional intelligence personalized to receiver Action - Securization of understanding of a message a spokesperson to avoid mess
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Table 10: Codes relevant to Communication of Difficult Information

Furthermore, there is a difference in the way the two Participants delegate and coordinate their followers during the crisis. The Participant 2 delegated responsibilities according to experience and subject matter of the problem, while the Participant 1 delegated responsibilities according to the risk level and avoided to delegate high risk, safety-concerned and legal related approvals to followers. Both were aware of giving guidelines and being present and supportive. For their future team building processes, they would give priority to personality and psychological traits of the team members.

Delegation and Coordination of efforts to followers
Participant 1 Action - Delegation of Responsibilities delegation according to risk level not delegate high risk and safety and legal related aprovals Action - Ensuring Coordination guide refill energy Action - Support to the followers present and supportive visible and available Strategy - Future team building rebuilding psychological safety, trust and connection Participant 2 Action - Delegation of Responsibilities believe in people delegation according to experience and subject Action - Ensuring Coordination give guidelines Action - Support to the followers support with examples

Strategy - Future team building solid personality traits

Table 11: Codes relevant to Delegation & Coordination of Efforts of Followers

Lastly, there were no different ethical approaches inside their departments to face during the crisis. Their priority was to protect people lives, health and safety. The Participant 2 focused on logical solution, transparency and people-oriented approach while the Participant 1 focused on authenticity, transparency, safety and service. Participant 2’ s ethical preparation for future is to work on negative feelings like hate and panic, while participant 1’s ethical preparation was to plan an ethical sharing project enhancing sustainability instead of panic.

Management of ethical dimensions of crisis
Participant 1 Action - Different Ethical Approaches not significant tensions protect people lives, health, and safety Provision - Ethical Preparation for Future plan an ethical sharing project sustainability instad of panic community-widely Strategy - Values guieded decision making authenticity, transparency, safety, service Participant 2 Action - Different Ethical Approaches no tensions Provision - Ethical Preparation for Future panic and hate working on negative feelings Strategy - Values guieded decision making mathematical-driven solutions people-oriented approach transparency

Table 12: Codes relevant to Management of Ethical Dimensions of the Crisis

Comparing the general strategy of the two Participants to deal with the crisis, we present the following Table 12.

Participant 1
Accountability of mistakes Strategy - Rebuilding of trust

making visible, long-term changes to internal policies
taking full responsibility for the mistakes

Coordination of Stakeholders with different priorities

Strategy - Prioritization of Stakeholders
impact and urgency
the most affected is the priority

Delegation and Coordination of efforts to followers

Strategy - Future team building
rebuilding psychological safety, trust and connection

Lessons Learned from Crisis

Strategy - Prioritization of protocols
safety, legal, and ethical compliance
Strategy - Training or Simulation for Future Crisis
what-if scenarios

Maintaining team morale and productivity

Strategy - Maintaining forward thinking
collaboration
decompress
personal discussions
support to employees
transformational kind of leadership
Strategy - Adapt leadership to meet needs
clear communication
emotional intelligence
moving from consensus-driven decisions to an autocratic leadership style
serve team's needs
Strategy - Manager motivation
set attainable goals
stay on my routine

Management of emotions under pressure

Strategy - Maintaining calmness
turn to authenticity

Management of ethical dimensions of crisis

Strategy - Values guided decision making
authenticity, transparency, safety, service

Recognition of crisis symptoms and actions

Strategy - Conviction of others to activate
multiple personal and team meetings
unawareness of the possible results

Participant 2

Accountability of mistakes

Strategy - Rebuilding of trust
leaders learn from crisis

Coordination of Stakeholders with different priorities

Strategy - Prioritization of Stakeholders
the most affected stakeholder is the priority

Delegation and Coordination of efforts to followers Strategy - Future team building solid personality traits Lessons Learned from Crisis Strategy - Priortization of protocols people-oriented protocols Strategy - Training or Simulation for Future Crisis crisis-based scenarios Maintaing teal morale and productivity Strategy - Maintaing forward thinking model for followers Strategy - Adapt leadership to meet needs be supportive calm people down navigate them Strategy - Manager motivation organization of assignments Management of emotions under pressure Strategy - Maintaining calmness stay away from mass media Management of ethical dimensions of crisis Strategy - Values guieded decision making mathematical-driven solutions people-oriented approach transparency Recognition of crisis symptoms and actions Strategy - Conviction of others to activate showing convincing data

Table 13: Codes relevant to Managers’ Strategies during the Crisis

Last but not least, we must compare and contrast the provision of managers for future crises.

Provision - Aftermath about planning for future crises
Participant 1 Adaption to Evolving Crisis multiple plans shift from rigid to agile collaborations Participant 2 Adaption to Evolving Crisis be aware of primitive data not doubtful of crisis burst Provision - Changes in protocols after the crisis Participant 1 Lessons Learned from Crisis loop protocols that are treated as “living documents”

Participant 2 Lessons Learned from Crisis simulations Provision - Different Actions in Future
Participant 1 Leading through crisis period created and communicated a consistent message across organization ensure everybody's satisfaction Participant 2 Leading through crisis period same movements Provision - Different future actions
Participant 1 Recognition of crisis symptoms and actions rounded-informed leadership could be beneficial Participant 2 Recognition of crisis symptoms and actions more confident with the decision making process Provision - Emotional preparation for future
Participant 1 Management of emotions under pressure make stress a friend not an enemy Participant 2 Management of emotions under pressure stress-tolerant and brave Provision - Ethical Preparation for Future
Participant 1 Management of ethical dimensions of crisis plan an ethical sharing project sustainability instad of panic community-widely Participant 2 Management of ethical dimensions of crisis panic and hate working on negative feelings Provision - Lessons about organizations resilience
Participant 1 Analysing the way to recovery need of a proactive risk management Participant 2 Analysing the way to recovery people resilience Provision - Managing a completely novel crisis
Participant 1 Knowledge during Crisis delegating authority empowerment of local teams

Participant 2

Knowledge during Crisis
employees' psychological empowerment

Table 14: Codes relevant to Managers' Provisions during the Crisis

In simple words, the Participant 2 noted that the leader should be aware from primitive signs of the crisis and not be doubtful about a possible crisis. Participant 2 would like to be more confident about her decision making process, to work with negative feelings, and to empower people. She thinks that the crisis made people more resilient and stress-tolerant. For her simulations for future crisis would be a beneficial tool. The Participant 1 noted that a rounded-informed leadership could be beneficial for future crises. Additionally, he would plan an ethical sharing project and implement a proactive risk management scheme. He would like to empower local teams and delegate more authority to followers. He aspires to make stress a friend and not an enemy in the future and shift from rigid to agile collaborations. Lastly, he would like to creat loop protocols that would be treated as “living documents” inside the organization.

5.7 Discussion

Summary of findings.

Leadership Style findings

We could concude that both leaders set as priority during the crisis the human factor in comparison to costs or conflicting interests from stakeholders.

Both of them based their analyses and decisions on concrete, published and reliable data.

Both are transformational leaders but with different approaches. They are supportive and present to their people. They believe in mathematical and AI-technology tools for decision basis and provisions, as well as preplanning procedures. On contrary, they choose different levels of delegation of responsibilities to their followers. Lastly, the Participant 2 is more people-focused while the Participant 1 adds risk management procedure as well.

We can conclude that there was a common line of action among participants or maybe all the managers of the company with some differentantion based on the followers and leaders characteristics and capabilities. As a result, transformational leadership seem to be more beneficial for this catering company's resilience and survivor through Covid-19 Crisis.

Leadership Actions Findings

Sensemaking and Shift to Recovery were based for both Participants to concrete, financial, economic, and statistical data.

Principles like clarity, open communication and transparency, calmness, credibility and honesty are crucial and vital guidelines for them *in decision-making process*.

Communication representative is one spokesperson to avoid mess and misunderstanding. They chose open and clear communication patterns.

Delegation of tasks and responsibilities is an area of contrast as the Participant 1 delegates authority based on risk level, while the Participant 2 does so based on previous experience and subject matter.

Ethical dimensions handling differs between Participants. Auntenicity and Transparency are guidelines for the Participant 1, while people oriented solutions and AI-driven solution are guidelines for Participant 2.

Leadership Strategies

There is generally a convergence in leadership strategies during the crises. The Participants choose to build future teams based on people psychological competences, to maintain calmness throughout the crisis, be supportive and visible to their followers, and stay away of mass media panic.

Leadership Provisions

Managing a completely novel crisis, the Participants reffered as essentials, the empowerment of local communities, the delegation of authority, and the psychological empowerment of employees.

Response to Study Question

Study Question: “What type of leadership style and practices did that leader follow to overcome the pandemic crisis? Is this a prototype?”

According to our results, **Transformational Leadership** is used when facing a crisis in this company. Additionally, there is a **common prototype of leadership plan** based on common activities and beliefs of managers during the crisis, despite some differences might based upon the leader personality.

These results are consistent with the so-far, relative, known bibliography about the Crisis Leadership Styles, Actions, and Strategies presented in various papers (Riggio & Newstead, 2023; James & Wooten, 2010; Mitroff, 2007).

5.8 Limitations of the Study

In spite the fact that, in qualitative research, the determination of sample size is contextual and partially dependent upon the scientific theme that is investigated (Boddy, 2016), a limitation of our study could be the sample of Participants (2 questionnaires fulfilled). However, the size of the sample might be a threat to the validity and the generalizability of study's results (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

A second limitation might be the way we constructed the questions of the questionnaire. We avoided technical terms, slang, and abbreviations and tried to form the more possible attractive and less possible susceptible questions, that would not guide to a leading reply (Ranganathan & Caduff, 2023). However, there may be some degree of subjective formation in order to focus on desirable topics for discussion.

Furthermore, we have to have in mind that participants may filter their replies to appear more favorable or adhere to social and professional norms. Moreover, they may have tended to state answers regardless of their true feeling. Lastly, they have been 4 years since Covid-19 crisis and the recall bias is present. Participants may have forgotten or misremembered past events. As a result, faulty data have been received and analysed.

5.9 Recommendations for Future Studies

The primary recommendation for a future study would be the increase of sample size. As the number of participants grows, the findings would become more representative and accurate. In addition, the expansion of the survey to multiple companies may be beneficial as well.

Furthermore, a good recommendation may be a cross survey with employees of the departments that participated in the survey in order to cross check the validity of leaders' answers.

Lastly, future studies may be more inclusive in the structuring of the questionnaires questions. New topics could be added, such as the correspondence of followers they

received during the crisis. Their inefficiencies or strengths could be noted in order to understand the leadership styles and choices at the maximum.

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Appendix A: “Title of appendix”

Appendix B: “Title of appendix”

Author’s Statement:

I hereby expressly declare that, according to the article 8 of Law 1559/1986, this dissertation is solely the product of my personal work, does not infringe any intellectual property, personality and personal data rights of third parties, does not contain works/contributions from third parties for which the permission of the authors/beneficiaries is required, is not the product of partial or total plagiarism, and that the sources used are limited to the literature references alone and meet the rules of scientific citations.