

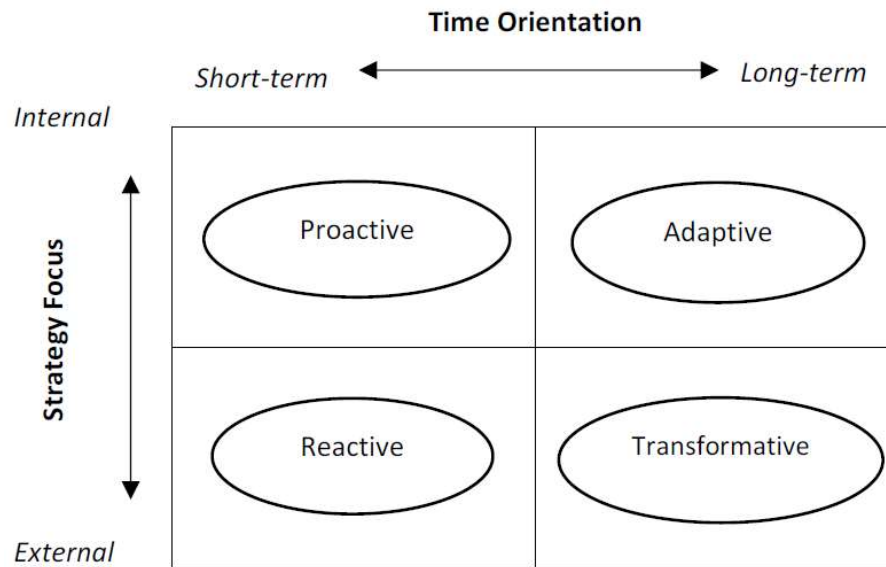
*Anna Farmaki and Dimitrios Stergiou***CSR as a resilience tactic during the COVID-19 pandemic: Insights from the hotel sector**

The adoption of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become commonplace in the hospitality industry. In particular, many hotels view CSR as a competitive necessity that offers numerous benefits including improved financial performance and stronger stakeholder relationships (Ghaderi et al., 2019; Kucukusta et al., 2019). The importance of CSR is elevated at times of crises, as CSR activities have been argued to provide protective effects against stakeholder perceptions at times of uncertainty (Shin et al., 2021). COVID-19 is the most recent example of an external crisis that has not only impacted global tourism by bringing travel to a standstill but has exerted tremendous effects on the operations and strategies of hospitality and tourism companies. In this context, it has been argued that the pandemic also offered a great opportunity for businesses to (re)develop their CSR practices (Aguinis et al., 2020; Carroll, 2021) and move towards a more genuine and authentic CSR that addresses urgent global social and environmental challenges (He and Harris, 2020). Indeed, as Crane and Matten (2020) stated, COVID-19 highlighted the social obligations of businesses. For instance, how companies dealt with staff, served customers and contributed to containing the spread of the virus emerge as significant in understanding the potential resilience tactics of companies during the pandemic.

Drawing from the COVID-19 pandemic, this study aims to examine the responses of hotels to the challenges brought about by the pandemic. In doing so, we follow a qualitative research approach and performed interviews with hotel managers based on the island of Cyprus. Cyprus has been highly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as it relies on tourism for economic survival. Specifically, tourist arrivals to Cyprus decreased by 83.4% in 2020 (the peak of the pandemic) leading to a subsequent 90% fall in tourism revenue (Farmaki and Pappas, 2021). As such, Cyprus offers an interesting context for studying hotel responses to COVID-19. Overall, 12 interviews were performed with managers of 3*, 4* and 5* hotels on the island. The sample was selected based on purposive sampling with industry experience, position and knowledge of the subject being key selection criteria. Data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) whereby three rounds of coding were employed as prescribed by Gioia et al. (2013).

Although analysis is still ongoing, preliminary findings indicate that hotel managers adopted a series of response strategies to withstand the pandemic. These strategies can be categorised into four distinct areas in accordance to their time orientation and internal/external focus and labelled as reactive, proactive, adaptive and transformative (figure 1). Evidently, significant theoretical and practical implications may arise that will not only advance existing knowledge on CSR as a crisis management tool in the hospitality sector but also enable managers to incorporate CSR in their crisis contingency plans.

Figure 1: Resilience tactics



Keywords: CSR; Covid-19; Resilience; Hotels

References:

Aguinis, H., Villamor, I. and Gabriel, K.P. (2020). "Understanding employee responses to COVID-19: a behavioral corporate social responsibility perspective". *Management Research: Journal of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management*. Ahead-of-print.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77-101.

Carroll, A.B., (2021). "Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the COVID-19 pandemic: organizational and managerial implications". *Journal of Strategy and Management*. Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 315-330.

Crane, A., and Matten, D. (2020). "COVID-19 and the future of CSR research". *Journal of Management Studies*.

Farmaki, A., & Pappas, N. (2021). Poverty and tourism decision-making: a chaordic perspective. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. Ahead-of-print.

Ghaderi, Z., Mirzapour, M., Henderson, J. C., & Richardson, S. (2019). Corporate social responsibility and hotel performance: A view from Tehran, Iran. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 29, pp. 41-47.

Gioia, G. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), pp. 15-31.

He, H. and Harris, L., (2020). "The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on corporate social responsibility and marketing philosophy". *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 116, pp.176-182.

Kucukusta, D., Perelygina, M., & Lam, W. S. (2019). CSR communication strategies and stakeholder engagement of upscale hotels in social media. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 31(5), pp. 2129-2148.

Shin, H., Sharma, A., Nicolau, J. L., & Kang, J. (2021). The impact of hotel CSR for strategic philanthropy on booking behavior and hotel performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Tourism Management*, 85, 104322.