DETERMINING THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES APPLIED BY HOTEL MANAGERS DURING THE OUTBREAK OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to determine the crisis management strategies that city hotel managers applied during the Covid-19 pandemic period. The data for the research were collected from the managers in Eskişehir, which is popular with city tourism. Findings may contribute to the literature by offering crisis management strategies that can be guiding for managers of other city hotels. Semi-structured interview questions as a part of qualitative method were used to collect the data. The interviews were held with 13 hotel managers between 25th September and 21th October 2020. Thematic analysis was used and three main themes and nine sub-themes were revealed. The findings showed that hotel managers felt the negative effects of the crisis in the hotels where they worked. Despite the fact that hotel managers were caught unprepared for the coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis, they managed to control the crisis process well with their knowledge, skills and experience. Managers adopted a reactive approach since there was no similar crisis situation before and made the necessary efforts to overcome the crisis. Suggestions were presented to researchers for future studies on the subject and to practitioners in the tourism sector on the development of crisis management strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic, which emerged in the Wuhan province of China in late December 2019 and caused millions of cases and the death of more than two million people worldwide, has been one of the largest pandemics in human history, threatening the entire world. By its nature, tourism is one of the sectors that are first affected by the global crises (Vaishar & Šťastná, 2020). Following the rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic around the world, adversities have occurred in the tourism sector, as in many other sectors. With the rapid spread of the pandemic, there has been a rapid increase in cancellations of trips, flights, and holiday reservations due to security concerns (Jin et al., 2021). Some measures taken to prevent the spread of the pandemic, such as the introduction of national and international travel restrictions, the closing of border gates mutually in many countries, the introduction of curfews and quarantine practices, the cancellation of events, and the closing of many businesses connected to tourism, have negatively affected national and international tourism movements and brought tourism activities to a halt (Baum & Hai, 2020; Bai, 2020; Čorak et al., 2020; Fotiadis et al., 2021; Fu, 2020; Gössling et al., 2021). Also, many accommodation establishments have stopped providing services due to the pandemic. Some accommodation businesses, on the other hand, went downsizing or completely closed due to the economic difficulties caused by the pandemic.

Effective crisis management makes it possible to overcome the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in tourism enterprises with the least damage, to avoid further losses in tourism and to turn the crisis into an opportunity. Since times of crisis are the times when managers are most needed, managers have a great role in managing the crisis. Skills that managers will exhibit in times of crisis save the business from falling apart and by eliminating the panic created by the crisis, ensure that this situation will be overcome as soon as possible (Demirtaş, 2000). In this context, managers should be prepared as if they would face a possible crisis at any time and prevent the formation of a crisis as much as possible. However, in some cases, crises are inevitable despite the proactive efforts of the managers. The Covid-19 pandemic, which emerged suddenly and did not give any signals before, exposed tourism businesses to an inevitable situation of crisis.

Among the tourism businesses, city hotels are among those which were most affected by the negativities of the pandemic. The ability of hotels to resist these adversities and to survive depends on the crisis management

strategies developed and implemented by managers. The literature lacks studies revealing how hotel businesses were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and determining the crisis management strategies implemented by city hotel managers during the pandemic period. In addition, proactive and reactive approaches adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis and the role of managers in managing the crisis have not been studied in the literature. Thus, understanding how hotel businesses were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and determining the crisis management strategies implemented by city hotel managers in the face of the pandemic emerge as an important research problem.

THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN TOURISM

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a big family of viruses that cause various diseases that are more serious than colds, such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). Covid-19 is a virus identified on January 13, 2020, as a result of research on a group of patients with respiratory symptoms (fever, cough, and shortness of breath) in Wuhan province, China, in late December 2019. Novel Coronavirus disease is caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus (TR Ministry of Health, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) classified the Covid-19 outbreak as an "International Public Health Emergency" on January 30, 2020, and due to the occurrence of Covid-19 cases in 113 countries outside China, where the pandemic started, and the spread and severity of the virus, defined it as "Global Epidemic (pandemic)" on March 11, 2020 (TR Ministry of Health, General Directorate of Public Health, 2020).

Several measures were taken in tourism destinations to prevent the spread of the virus through travel. The most important one of these measures is the introduction of travel restrictions for tourism destinations. Therefore, with the pandemic reaching a global dimension since the first case was detected, the majority of tourism businesses were closed and travel restrictions were imposed on all tourism destinations around the world. In order to prevent the spread of the pandemic, for the first time in the history of tourism, 100% of tourism destinations across the world (217 tourism destinations) had travel restrictions by closing their borders completely or partially and cancelling international flights (UNWTO, World Tourism Barometer, 2020a). This situation has caused serious declines in international tourist numbers and tourism revenues. Due to travel restrictions imposed because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the loss of income

in international tourism was recorded as $ 320 billion at the end of May (UNWTO, 2020). Also, in the first quarter of 2020, there was a significant decrease in the number of international tourists compared to the previous year. Available data show that the Covid-19 pandemic, which has had a great impact on tourism worldwide, caused a 22% drop in international tourist numbers in the first quarter of 2020. These data show that there was a loss of 67 million in the number of international tourists in the first three months of 2020 compared to the same period of the previous year. According to the data of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international traveling decreased by 70% in the first eight months of 2020 compared to the same period of the previous year. This decline from January to August 2020 shows that there were 700 million fewer tourist arrivals compared to the same period in 2019. At the same time, this decrease indicates a loss of 730 billion dollars in export revenues from international tourism. This figure constitutes more than eight times the revenue loss caused by the 2009 Global Economic Crisis (UNWTO, World Tourism Barometer, 2020b).

The emergence of the above-mentioned negative outcomes once again revealed the importance of crisis management in tourism businesses. Crisis management in tourism businesses is defined as "*the totality of the work done for detecting the dangers that could cause tourism and tourism businesses to fall into a crisis, taking precautions, and for the business to get out of the crisis quickly with the minimum loss and even to avoid any damage and to turn the crisis into an opportunity in case of a possible crisis*" (Göral, 2014, p. 421). Researchers generally divide the crisis management approaches into two groups; proactive crisis management approach and reactive crisis management approach. The proactive approach is based on a preventive perception that includes monitoring early warning signals, preparing for possible crises, and preventing crises from occurring (Glaesser, 2005). On the other side, reactive approach is the crisis management approach adopted in cases where the crisis actually occurs and the proactive crisis management approach is insufficient and tries to minimize the effects of the crisis on the business. In this approach, managers aim to eliminate the crisis, control the crisis, and overcome it with minimum loss by trying to eliminate the negative effects of the crisis on the business (İpçioğlu, 2013).

In the literature, there are studies on crisis management strategies applied by managers in the tourism sector. In a study conducted by Asunakutlu et al. (2003) in the context of pre-crisis preparation, managers mostly adopted strategies such as reviewing their business connections and debts, and reducing costs. Lai and Wong (2020) aimed to compare how hotel

managers reacted to the Covid-19 crisis at the initial and pandemic stage in Macau. According to their findings, in the first phase, priority strategies should be implemented in all pandemic prevention, pricing and maintenance practices and in two governmental assistance and human resources practices. During the pandemic phase, all pandemic prevention apps remain in the priority quadrant, but two pricing apps are downgraded. Hotels tended to force their workforce into unpaid vacations and delay office and system maintenance. Pavlatos et al. (2021) investigated crisis management practices in the Greek hotel industry in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and determined that government and marketing practices are considered more important than operation practices, cost reduction and pricing practices. In addition, there were differences in the importance and usage levels of the crisis management practices decided by the hoteliers according to the characteristics of the hotels. Yacoub and ElHajjar (2021) investigated how hotel managers in Lebanon are managing the Covid-19 crisis. Research findings showed that the level of preparedness of hotels to combat such a pandemic is low. The hotels focused on providing transparency to employees, providing adequate information and decentralized power to department levels in order to deal with the impacts of COVID-19. Another study was conducted by Anderson (2006) to investigate the crisis management practices of businesses operating in the tourism sector in Australia. The findings showed that businesses try to adapt quickly to their environment and changes, and that they use unpaid leave without firing staff with the human resources strategies they apply. In a study conducted by Seçilmiş and Sarı (2010), crisis management strategies applied by accommodation businesses during crisis periods were examined. According to this study, managers prepared a crisis management plan before the crisis and benefited from the decision-making techniques in the pre-crisis planning and during the crisis. However, majority of the managers did not form a crisis management team, did not attach importance to crisis management training and did not create early warning systems against crisis in enterprises. Israeli et al. (2011) conducted a study to investigate crisis management practices in luxury hotels in India, and it was found that they followed strategies such as reducing costs and increasing efficiency against crises. In another study by Bulgan and Aktel (2017), interviews were conducted with hotel managers in order to reveal the crisis management strategies applied in five-star hotels in Antalya. Study findings showed that managers took measures to increase productivity and they also attached importance to personnel in order to overcome the crisis. Lai and Wong (2020) investigated the hotel industry's responses to the Covid-19 crisis at the initial stage and during the pandemic

phase. In the first stage, some strategies were applied namely; pandemic prevention, pricing, care practices, grant-in aid and human resources. In the pandemic phase, crisis prevention efforts were continued, pricing efforts were decreased, hotel employees were directed to unpaid leave and the maintenance works of the hotel were postponed. At this stage, grant-in aid has a low priority. Based on the studies, it is possible to say that crisis management styles differ from country to country.

METHOD

The semi-structured interview technique was used in this research. The reason to prefer interviewing as the data collection technique in the study is that it is possible to obtain in-depth information on a particular subject, it is easier to examine the cause-effect relationship with the comprehensive information obtained, and it is easier to intervene in the unclear parts (Tutar & Erdem, 2020). This research aims to reveal how hotel businesses operating in Eskişehir were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and determine the crisis management strategies that hotel managers implemented during the pandemic period.

Sample

The sample of the study includes managers of 13 hotels with ministry and municipality certificates, who provide services in Eskişehir and volunteered to participate in the study. Snow-ball sampling method, which is one of the non-probabilistic sampling methods, was used in the research. The data were collected by interviewing the managers face-to-face (12) and through the online interview program Zoom (1) between 25 September 2020-21 October 2020. An appointment was requested from the hotel managers on phone by the researchers, and considering the availability of the managers, the interviews were initiated. All interviews were conducted in the managers' offices, and one interview was conducted online via the internet.

Located in the Central Anatolia Region and neighbouring Turkey's capital Ankara, Eskişehir is a province with 888,828 inhabitants as of 2020. Eskişehir has the characteristic of a continental climate due to its geographical conditions, elevations, landforms, and distance to the sea. Founded by Phrygians by the Porsuk River in the first millennium before Christ, Eskisehir is one of Turkey's most important intersections. Eskişehir, which has brought up historical figures such as Yunus Emre and Nasreddin Hodja, is also famous for its Meerschaum and hot springs that are good for

various diseases. Eskisehir aims to be an important tourism attraction centre with its natural beauties, cuisine and shopping opportunities as well as its cultural richness (Eskişehir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2021). Especially in recent years, Eskişehir has started to gain momentum with domestic tourism and city tourism. Historical Odunpazarı Houses, which are Eskişehir's oldest settlements, events organized throughout the year (festivals, theaters, performances etc.), Porsuk Stream, Kent Park where various recreational activities can be performed, Sazova Science Art and Culture Park, museums in the city (Yılmaz Büyükerşen Wax Sculptures Museum, Kurtuluş Museum, Meerschaum Museum, Contemporary Glass Arts Museum, Eskişehir Eti Archeology Museum, Yunus Emre Museum etc.) are among the main factors of Eskişehir's acceleration in city tourism (Çoban et al., 2019). Eskişehir's tourism supply is generally oriented towards city tourism. Therefore, the suggestions developed in this study can easily be applied in other city destinations. In addition, it is known that Eskişehir Tourism Association, which is an initiative that made important efforts for the development of tourism in Eskişehir province and a significant part of members of which consists of hotel managers, collectively struggled against the pandemic before, during, and after the pandemic and acted quickly regarding the measures that could be taken. However, what difficulties faced by the members of the association in the face of the pandemic and what kind of crisis management strategy they implemented are not known. The perspective of the managers of the hotel businesses operating in Eskişehir on the subject and the effects of the pandemic on these businesses are the objects of curiosity. Table 1 contains general information about the hotel managers who participated in the interview.

Table 1. *General Information on Hotel Managers*

Participants	Age	Education Level	Crisis Management Training	Total Experience in the Tourism Sector (years)	Working Time in the Hotel (years)
P1	42	Bachelor's Degree	Yes	30	4
P2	41	Bachelor's Degree	No	21	5
P3	43	Bachelor's Degree	Yes	23	4
P4	35	Bachelor's Degree	Yes	15	1
P5	36	Associate Degree	No	20	1
P6	36	Associate Degree	No	13	11
P7	38	Bachelor's Degree	Yes	21	7.5
P8	50	Bachelor's Degree	No	34	10
P9	43	Bachelor's Degree	Yes	24	5.5
P10	29	Bachelor's Degree	Yes	9	4
P11	27	Bachelor's Degree	No	7	7 (months)
P12	47	Bachelor's Degree	Yes	25	2
P13	47	Bachelor's Degree	Yes	28	3

Data Collection

In order to get in-depth answers from the participants, it was decided to use semi-structured interview questions in accordance with the purpose of the research. Semi-structured interview questions were prepared as a result of a comprehensive literature review on the field of crisis management. In order to ensure the content validity of the research, the opinions of five academicians who are experts in the field of management and crisis were consulted while creating the interview questions. As a result of the additions, corrections, and changes made on the interview questions by considering the expert opinions, the statements that were thought to represent each question best were added to the interview guide.

The interview guide consists of three parts. In the first part, there are questions to find out the general information of the participants such as age, educational status, training received in the field of tourism, experience in the tourism sector, current position in the hotel, year of operation in the relevant hotel. In the second part, there are questions about the general information of the hotel such as how many stars the hotel has, the type of the hotel in terms of its legal characteristics, the number of years the hotel has been providing service, the total number of staff and the total number of rooms in the hotel. In the last part, there are 14 open-ended questions aiming to reveal how hotel businesses were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and to determine the crisis management strategies hotel managers implemented during the pandemic period. When answers to all the questions were sufficient in the interviews and the data started to repeat itself, the saturation point was reached and the data collection process was ended (Tutar & Erdem, 2020).

Credibility of the Data

McMillan (2000) explained that the most important criterion used in the evaluation of qualitative research is the reliability and credibility of the data obtained in the research, the analysis of these data and the results. Validity in qualitative research means that the researcher handles the matter of fact s/he is researching as it is and as objectively as possible (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Reliability in qualitative research generally means stability in the answers of more than one coder in the data (Creswell, 2020). Within the scope of this research, first of all, the purpose of the research was stated clearly and the research method most suitable for this purpose was chosen in ensuring validity and reliability. Then, semi-structured interview questions were prepared in accordance with the purpose and method of the research. The

content validity of the study was ensured by benefiting from the opinions of academicians who are experts in their field. A pilot interview was held with a participant in order to test the comprehensibility of the interview questions, which were revised by considering the expert opinions. In the research, reliability was increased by using a voice recorder during interviews to prevent possible data loss. Also, quotations were taken from the responses of the participants and the reliability of the study was increased by giving the quotations as they were without adding anything. In addition, explaining each step of the research in detail to the participants was also effective in increasing the reliability.

Analysis of the Data

After the data collection process was completed, the data obtained were transcribed directly with no changes. However, the colloquial language, which is difficult to understand, has been translated into academic language while the research findings are being reported (Kozak, 2014). The texts were reviewed by the researcher to prevent any erroneous information. The names of hotel managers were hidden and codes were given such as P1 and P2 for each participant.

A qualitative approach was chosen for the study and thematic analysis was used to analyze the transcribed interview data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes the data set in (rich) detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A five phases approach suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used while conducting the analysis. The first phase involved researchers' familiarization with the data set. This means the researchers repeatedly read the data searching for meanings and patterns. This phase paved the way to determining indicators. In this phase, the researchers tried to organize the data into meaningful groups and attached labels to each group in relation to the research questions. After all the indicators were determined, the researchers sorted the similar indicators into themes (Phase 3). In the fourth phase, themes were checked to ensure that data within the themes cohere together meaningfully (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By this means, all themes were reviewed and refined. The last phase consisted of defining and naming themes. In addition, direct quotations were used to reflect the views of the participants.

FINDINGS

Three main themes and nine sub-themes emerged from the interviews. Table 2 outlines the themes and sub-themes, its indicators (words and phrases taken from the interview transcriptions) and a definition and description of each.

Hotel Managers' Perspective on Crises

The perspective of hotel managers on crises is explained under three headings by the necessity of crisis management works in tourism businesses, whether the managers have a crisis scenario or a crisis management plan, and whether the managers have a crisis management team to be assigned at the hotel during the crisis.

The Necessity of Crisis Management in Tourism Businesses

All managers argued that crisis management works are necessary in tourism businesses and that crisis management is possible with crisis management works. P1, who thinks that crisis management works are necessary for tourism enterprises and that crisis management works in hotels are hotel managers' duty, expresses his thoughts on this issue as follows: *"A general director or manager in tourism businesses must know crisis management strategies. Thus, of course, it is possible to manage crises ... "* Arguing that managers should always be prepared for the crisis, P4 expresses his opinions as follows: *"Managers must always have an opinion, an idea and an action against the crisis. Businesses will have trouble if the managers only think about the moment and do not foresee what tomorrow will bring. "*

Preparedness for the Crisis

Eight hotel managers interviewed had a pre-prepared crisis scenario or an emergency action plan in the face of a possible crisis, while five hotel managers did not have any crisis scenario or emergency action plan. Stating that they have an emergency action plan for a possible crisis in their hotel and that they are regularly updating these plans, P13 expressed his opinions on the subject as, *"We have standard operating instructions issued by our hotels. For example, we have a written standard of about 80 pages on Covid-19; it is about what we need to do. Our emergency action plan is included in these standard operating instructions. And it is regularly being updated ... "*

Table 2. *Summary of interview data thematic analysis*

1. Themes and Sub-Themes	2. Indicators	3. Definition and Description of Themes
Hotel Managers' Perspective on Crises -The Necessity of Crisis Management in Tourism Businesses -Preparedness for the Crisis -Having a Crisis Management Team	One of the duties of managers, necessity of having an opinion against the crisis, necessity of making long-term plans, the need for written procedures and instructions, the importance of staff training, crisis management activities make personnel more self-confident, the need to have an emergency action plan and crisis scenario, constantly updated procedures, measures/manifestos taken on a business basis, having a crisis management team, predefined job descriptions such as communication/spokesperson/secretariat, occupational health and safety training, all personnel must have crisis management awareness, staff assignments on crisis management.	This theme reveals hotel managers' point of view on the necessity of crisis management practices in tourism enterprises, their preparedness for a possible crisis (whether managers have a crisis scenario or crisis management plan), and whether they have a crisis management team that can be assigned in a possible crisis. This theme offers an overview of crises.

Crisis Management Practices of Hotel Managers
Approach Adopted Against the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic
Strategies Implemented in the Face of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic
    -Strategies About Human Resources
    -Strategies Regarding the Energy (Saving)
    -Strategies on Food & Beverage
    -Marketing Strategies
-Measures Taken in the Face of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic
	Reactive crisis management approach, the obligation to temporarily close hotels, stoppage of service, employing staff for equal periods of time, getting illness report for staff, benefiting from the short-time working allowance and unpaid leave of the personnel, using energy-saving light bulbs, placing guests on the floors according to the occupancy rate, air conditioning, saving electricity, converting the open buffet breakfast into a plate breakfast, preferring single-use products for breakfast, announcing the applications within the scope of coronavirus (Covid-19) to the guests from various channels, obtaining the Safe Tourism Certificate, additional measures taken in addition to official measures for hygiene and safety.	This theme reveals which approach (reactive or proactive) hotel managers adopt in the face of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, which strategy they follow in terms of human resources, energy saving, food and beverage and marketing and which measures they have taken in the face of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

Consequences of the Crisis for Hotels and Inferences -Negative Consequences of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic for Hotels -Positive Consequences of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic for Hotels -Inferences Hotel Managers Obtained from the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic	Economic and psychological problems, the process of learning, evaluation and gaining experience for managers, allocating time for seasonal works of the enterprise, holding online meetings, lessons learned from the crisis, greater attention to hygiene and safety, recognition of missing or wrong work, understanding in which areas the business is successful, understanding the necessity of making long-term plans, understanding that crises will also lead to opportunities, once again understanding that tourism is vulnerable to crises, understanding the necessity of having a strong financial structure in the face of possible crises in tourism.	This theme reveals what negative consequences the coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis has caused for hotels, whether the crisis has any positive consequences for hotels, and what positive consequences, if any, are, and what inferences hotel managers have drawn from the crisis.

Having a Crisis Management Team

Apart from one hotel, all hotels had a crisis management team that hotel managers can assign in case of crisis. Hotel managers who had a crisis management team in the hotels they work at, stated who the crisis management team consisted of and what activities this team is engaged in as follows: *"We have a national and international crisis management support team. We have a crisis management team against a possible crisis (armed action, fire, detention, robbery, accommodation of a wanted criminal, etc.)* (P9). Stating that the crisis management team consists of department managers, hotel managers communicate their opinions as follows: *"Absolutely. It consists of all department managers of the hotel. There are also a few active staff members included. All department managers are given written notice about what needs to be done before. Their training is provided by occupational health safety experts and hotel managers. Later, these situations are practiced"* (P4).

Crisis Management Practices of Hotel Managers

The crisis management practices of hotel managers were explained in three stages according to the approach adopted in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic in hotels, the strategies applied for the pandemic, and the measures taken.

Approach Adopted Against the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic

Most of the managers (12) have experienced a crisis originating from Covid-19 in the hotels they work at. On the other hand, the 13th manager stated that, with the effect of the special measures (manifesto) applied in their hotel chain, their guests felt safe, that they did not receive any reservation cancellations, and therefore they were not affected by the crisis. In this context, all hotel managers have adopted a reactive approach and tried to manage the crisis in the best way by prioritizing the health of guests and employees in order to overcome the negative effects of the crisis with the least damage to their businesses.

Among the hotels where the meetings were held, all managers, except for two hotel managers, stated that they decided to close their hotels temporarily between March and June of 2020 particularly when the pandemic was intense. Stating that they had a crisis in their hotels due to the Covid-19 pandemic and had to close their hotels, P1 expresses his opinions on the subject as follows: *"We experienced a difficult period when the pandemic first appeared in Turkey. As such, we had to decide to close the hotel in*

the first place, like everyone else. During this period, we closed our hotel for three months for reasons not caused by us". Some of the managers of hotels that were closed during the pandemic added that they hosted healthcare professionals free of charge in their hotels. P3 states that they kept their business closed and hosted healthcare personnel in this process as follows: *"Our hotel was closed from March to June. We provided free support to healthcare professionals from the end of March to June. Nearly 60 of our rooms were used by doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals"*.

Strategies Implemented in the Face of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic

In order to understand what strategies the hotel managers were following in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, the managers were asked the question *"What strategy did you follow for the coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis?"*; and the answers were analysed. In this context, the managers explained what activities they have undertaken for the crisis on behalf of their hotels and what strategies they followed in the face of the crisis.

Strategies About Human Resources: The managers stated that they followed various strategies regarding human resources during the pandemic and benefited from some rights granted to them by the state. Stating that they had the staff work for equal periods, got reports for them, and benefited from short-time work allowance and unpaid leave. P1 conveys the strategies they followed with the following words: *"Due to the pandemic, to be fair, we have one team working for 15 days and the other team for 15 days. We try not to make anybody suffer by solving the problem with a partial work allowance. We have not fired anyone"*. Arguing that personnel expenses are one of the biggest expenses for hotels, P13 stated the strategy they followed regarding the personnel during the pandemic process as: *"We work with a staff according to occupancy as much as possible, and have the rest benefit from short-time work allowance"*.

Strategies Regarding the Energy (Saving): Hotel managers also followed some saving strategies in various ways. Here are some opinions of those managers: *"Formerly, the whole hotel was lightened with a single switch, now we have made it floor by floor. We place the guests floor by floor. When the first floor is full, we take guests to the second floor. Therefore, we make costs according to the work, and when this is the case, we somehow manage to go at par"* (P1). Similarly, P5 expresses that as the rooms are occupied, they place the guests on another floor: *"During the Covid-19 process, we tried to go by occupying floor by*

floor. We had completely turned off the energy of the other floors. We operated not industrial machines but our small machines in laundries".

Strategies on Food & Beverage: Most of the hotel managers interviewed state that, with the normalization process, they have transformed the breakfast service they normally give as an open buffet into a plate breakfast. Some of the opinions of the managers, who stated that serving breakfast as a plate service has caused reductions in their costs, are as follows: *"We removed the buffet. We gave it in the form of a breakfast plate. But the number of products we can put on the plate is limited. For this reason, there was a decrease in the costs of the buffet"* (P5). Similarly, P1 states that they switched to plate service and this reduced their costs: *"One of our biggest cost items was the breakfast buffet. During this period, there was a significant decrease in our breakfast costs when we made the breakfast items for single-use"*.

Marketing Strategies: Managers announce the measures they have taken and the applications they have put into action on behalf of their hotels due to Covid-19 in various channels. Some of the statements of the managers, who stated that they announced the measures they took in their hotels to the guests and companies in various ways, are as follows: *"We followed the marketing strategies in this process. We shared and advertised the measures we took regarding our hotel on our hotel's website and social media accounts* (P1). P5 states that they announced the measures they took to the companies via mass e-mail and reduced room prices due to the crisis: *"We announced the measures we took regarding the hotels to the companies we worked with by mailing. We lowered the prices of our permanent guests because we did not have an open buffet. We reflected the low cost to our guests too by lowering the room prices"* (P5). P10 expresses the advertising and promotion strategy they make to make guests feel safe with the following words: *"On our hotel's Instagram page, we posted everything to reassure our guests by showing how we disinfect our rooms, what kind of precautions are taken in our hotel, and what we do"*.

Measures Taken in the Face of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic

Most of the hotel managers (11) received the Safe Tourism Certificate and, in addition to this certificate, they also took various measures themselves in the face of the pandemic for their businesses. Hotel managers who did not receive a Safe Tourism Certificate stated that they implemented the measures they took by themselves. Safe Tourism Certificate ensures that high-level health and hygiene conditions are met in airlines, airports and other means of transport, accommodation, and food and beverage facilities (Turkey Tourism Promotion and Development Agency, 2020).

The majority of managers stated that they started to implement the items in the Safe Tourism Certificate before the certificate was issued. P7 expressed his opinions on the subject as *"Before the certification program was compulsory, we made all our informing, preparations and prepared our visuals. We immediately switched our open buffet to breakfast plate service. We put disinfectant at the entrance of all our restaurants"*. Similarly, P1, stating that they had already implemented the items in the certificate, also states the additional measures they have taken in addition to the certificate as follows: *"We had already started to apply the things that the state requires us to practice in our business. Apart from that, we removed the carpets and made ceramic parquets to be hygienically healthier when wiped. We have turned everything that you can think of to be touched by human hands into a disposable product. Disposable cheese, honey, cutlery, personal hygiene sets, etc... We switched to disposable paper cups. The gloves, masks, helmets of the personnel... We started to practice these before they were enacted by the law.* P3's views also support P1's: *"We received the Safe Tourism Certificate. We have taken precautions by ourselves without anyone telling us anyway, by maintaining social distance in terms of hygiene, using masks, and various protective clothing. During the period when our hotel was closed, we ensured the hygiene of all rooms by bringing companies from outside, from ozonation to other methods. We retrained all staff on what chemicals should be used and on clothing"*. P12 expresses the measures they took within their own organization in addition to the Safe Tourism Certificate as follows: *"As from the opening of the hotel, we have disinfectant, temperature measurement system and floor disinfectants in the hotel starting from the entrance. We clean the luggage of our guests with various disinfectants. We have plexy (plastic glass) barriers in the lobby area and reception. Even the pens, the guests sign with at the reception, are kept in a device that is cleaned with ultraviolet rays. Our rooms are kept for 24 hours after the use of the previous guest and then served. The hotel is disinfected by fogging method during the day"*.

The managers who stated that they have not obtained the Safe Tourism Certificate since hotels with less than 50 rooms are not required to obtain it, express the measures they have taken on behalf of their hotels as follows: *"We took measures ourselves. For example, we pulled security tapes, warnings were placed in various parts of the hotel, we had all our employees trained by companies, and we gave training ourselves. We put distance between tables in restaurants"* (P5).

Consequences of the Crisis for Hotels and Inferences

The consequences of the crisis for hotels and inferences are explained under three headings as the negative consequences of the crisis for hotels, the

positive consequences of the crisis for hotels, and the inferences of hotel managers for the crisis.

Negative Consequences of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic for Hotels

Crisis in hotels has caused negative consequences mostly in terms of economy and psychology: *"Our employees were very affected psychologically. There was anxiety and fear. But as they went through it, they saw that everything is actually about the correct measures taken. But we were affected most negatively in terms of economy"* (P5). P10 stated that the crisis had more severe consequences psychologically for them: *"We were affected economically, but also psychologically. Its psychological extent was much heavier than its economic extent. Even when the guest coughed a little, our staff had the feeling: "I wonder if the guest had Covid?". Since a few of our staff did not want to go to their homes during this period, we had them sleep in the hotel so that they would feel comfortable. I even had staff with anxiety disorders. Two of my staff will use antidepressants for anxiety disorder for a while"*. P11 expresses the negativities they have experienced in economic and psychological terms with the following words: *"Regular guests stopped coming. Disinfectants and masks were an extra cost for us. We were also negatively affected in terms of the psychology of the staff. We agreed with a hospital, and we said that we could have them take a test there if they wanted. I can say that it affected us psychologically and economically the most"*.

Positive Consequences of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic for Hotels

It is seen that the crisis has positive consequences for businesses in terms of learning, evaluation and gaining experience, and allocating time for seasonal works of the business. Stating that they have learned from the crisis, P1 expresses their thoughts as follows: *"We learned how it should be not to catch a crisis like this suddenly again, that there should always be a saving and capital aside, and how we can motivate employees"*. P9 states that the crisis has contributed to hygiene and cleanliness: *"This process has contributed to the customers and staff to pay more attention to cleaning and hygiene rules."* P13 states that the use of technology during the crisis has had a positive contribution and that the crisis has been a learning process for them as follows: *"For example, we learned that 17 hotels could hold meetings without gathering in a place. Zoom has now begun to be in the centre of our lives. We learned what we can do, how fast we can move, and all"*. P11 states that the feedback from guests has been a positive consequence for them: *"The guests come and stay, and then they make comments on us such as 'The hotel was very clean, we were very pleased even though it was in the pandemic period' or 'It had a*

Safe Tourism Certificate and that relieved us very much'. In this way, we understand that we are on the right track and we provide a clean service. Since we know what to do if we encounter such a situation in the future, we will not approach with concern".

Inferences Hotel Managers Obtained from the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic

Regarding the inferences that hotel managers have made from the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, P9 states that they once again feel that tourism is a fragile sector with the following words: *"I think one of the best teachings given by this process is that good feasibility must be done and you must have a strong financial background before investing in fragile sectors without having a strong financial structure in general".* P12 expresses his opinions on the subject as follows: *"We realized our shortcomings. The fact that the things we have done well are also noticed by the guests will guide us in our investments and various activities in the future. When we go over the things we do well, we will get better numerical results".*

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to the results obtained from the study, all hotel managers argue that crisis management works are necessary for hotels and thus, crises can be controlled. Hotel managers argue that when managed well, crises can be opportunities for businesses. Most hotel managers have a written crisis scenario (emergency action plan) that clearly states who will participate, what activities will be carried out, and what the instructions are in case of a potential crisis. Managers who do not have a pre-prepared crisis scenario create an emergency action plan during the crisis. In addition, managers have formed a specific crisis scenario and a crisis management team for Covid-19.

All hotel managers have adopted a reactive approach and tried to manage the crisis in the best way by prioritizing the health of guests and employees in order to overcome the negativities created by the crisis with the least damage to their businesses. Regarding the management of human resources, the managers made use of the rights granted to them by the state and enabled the personnel to benefit from the short-time working allowance. Contrary to these results, the study conducted by Salem et al. (2021) stated that 7800 out of 20,000 employees were asked to leave unpaid leave and their salaries were cut during the pandemic process in the five-star hotels in Egypt. In addition, hotel managers in our study have followed

an energy-saving strategy without compromising the health, safety, and comfort of the guests throughout the pandemic period. Switching to plate service instead of the open buffet in food and beverage strategies caused an increase in costs in some hotels and a decrease in costs in others.

Managers have advertised the measures they have taken within the scope of the Covid-19 pandemic, the strategies they have implemented, the procedures they have followed, and the hygiene standards in the hotels they work at visually and in written form to their guests in social or corporate mediums. This situation, which is supported by previous works, has positively affected the image of the hotels. A similar marketing strategy was followed by hotels in Egypt (Salem et al., 2021). It was concluded that hotels, in cooperation with cleaning companies, apply cleaning and disinfection processes in front their guests in order to strengthen their "clean and safe" image. A study conducted by Kılıçdere (2017) on the determination of crisis management practices of travel agencies, showed that travel agencies implemented a marketing strategy by increasing their advertising activities in the management of the crises experienced in 2016. On the other hand, Lai and Wong (2020) concluded that during the Covid-19 pandemic process, managers reduced their marketing activities in hotels.

It was observed that many of the managers had already implemented various measures taken by themselves on issues, such as social distance and hygiene, before obtaining the Safe Tourism Certificate. In addition to the negative consequences of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in hotels, there are also some positive consequences. Due to the crisis, learning, evaluation, and gaining experience for managers and staff, understanding the importance of keeping staff morale and motivation high and the need to have savings that businesses can use in difficult times, paying more attention to hygiene and cleanliness in hotels, increasing use of technology in hotels, holding meetings online, the positive comments made by the guests, doing seasonal works during the period when the hotels were closed, and creating a period of time to eliminate the deficiencies in the hotel are among the positive results of the crisis for the hotel. It has also been revealed in studies on the subject that the Covid-19 pandemic has positive consequences for tourism. In a study conducted by Everingham and Chassagne (2020), it was pointed out that as well as the negative consequences on national and international travel due to quarantine practices, job losses, and public health concerns, the Covid-19 crisis had positive consequences in terms of creating opportunities for different planning of tourism in the future. Also, Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) argues in the study that the Covid-19 pandemic offers an opportunity in

terms of evaluating sustainability for the tourism industry. The study by Smart et al. (2021) pointed out that Covid-19 crisis has some positive consequences. Contactless check-in/out practices, disinfection of all rooms with machines, and the use of medical disinfectants to disinfect air-conditioning units are among those positive consequences.

Hotel managers, despite the uncertainty and chaotic environment, have tried to manage the crisis effectively by intervening immediately in the situation and taking necessary measures from the time the first case in Turkey occurred. The managers, in addition to following the instructions of the relevant ministries and official institutions, have taken into account the standards and procedures they have prepared within their organization and managed to control the crisis by prioritizing both guest and personnel health. There are studies in the literature that support these results. For example, Pavlatos et al. (2021) stated that in addition to the changes brought about by the health protocols in Greek hotels, managers carried out some additional activities to ensure hygiene and safety of employees and customers. It was seen that the managers felt the negatives of the crisis in the hotels they work significantly. Hotel managers managed the process in the best way by adopting a reactive crisis management approach since there had not been a similar crisis situation caused by an pandemic that affected the tourism industry to this extent before. It has been observed that managers have crisis management plans, they keep them in physical files and folders, but these plans do not contain information about the actions that can be taken when a risk of pandemic disease such as COVID 19 occurs. In other words, the crisis management plans and strategies of managers do not cover the Covid-19 crisis. Therefore, although hotel managers were caught unprepared for the Covid-19 crisis, which emerged unexpectedly, they managed to control the crisis process with their knowledge, skills, and experience and made the necessary effort to overcome it with the minimum damage to the hotels they work at. Also, Eskisehir Tourism Association, which makes important efforts for the development of tourism in Eskisehir and a significant part of members of which mainly consists of hotel managers, has tried to manage the crisis process effectively by acting in unison with the managers from the beginning of the pandemic. Thanks to the active communication network and effective communication of the group, every new development was shared with the group, and action was taken with the common mind around the measures and solutions that can be taken. In this context, it is possible to say that the unity and solidarity in Turkish culture has an important place in the effective management of the crisis process. At the same time, managers have learned important lessons

from the crisis they experienced and, in some cases, turned the crisis into an opportunity. Managers, who have taken the crisis under control, currently continue to provide services by adapting to the conditions required by the new normal and continuing their crisis management works.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICE AND LITERATURE

Based on the results obtained from the interviews with the participants and the field experiences of the researchers, suggestions were made for practitioners and researchers. Although the measures taken during the pandemic are sufficient, these measures should be updated according to the circumstances and changes in tourist behaviour should be monitored constantly. During the pandemic period, the use of technology has increased, and significant developments have been experienced in the fields of digitalization and automatization. Tourism businesses should also benefit from these developments and businesses should implement smart applications that provide convenience in many areas (smart disinfectant and thermometer devices, online check-in/out services, mobile applications, smart menus, etc.). Businesses should also follow innovations in informatics and technology to improve their online sales, advertising, and marketing channels. In addition, in order to manage the crisis process more effectively, it may be suggested to establish a Tourism Scientific Board that consists of tourism academics and industry stakeholders.

Hotel managers providing services in city hotels were included in the scope of this research. Since the crisis management practices of managers may differ in coastal hotels, further studies can be conducted on hotel managers who provide services in resort hotels. This study can also be carried out in other tourism-oriented sectors such as food and beverage, aviation, travel agency, and the strategies implemented by managers in other sectors related to tourism can be revealed.

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