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COURSE	International Business
REPORT TITLE	Crisis Management and Recovery in Hotels Used for Asylum Seeker Accommodation
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WORD COUNT	8,035
DUE DATE	14/12/2025
DATE SUBMITTED	13/12/2025

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Crisis Management and Recovery in Hotels Used for Asylum Seeker Accommodation

Strategies for Operational Resilience, Reputation Rebuilding, and Market Re-entry in the Hospitality Industry

Compiled by:

Karelis Cristel Ortega Jimenez

This project is submitted in part fulfilment of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in International Business.

Independent College

Dublin December 2025

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank sincerely all those who contributed to this project. Special thanks to all the mentors, all the colleagues, my friends, and my family who contributed to the project with their advice, their guidance and their encouragement. It was thanks to your support that this work has been accomplished.

Abstract

The hospitality industry has made significant contributions to economic growth and poverty reduction in society. However, in recent times, the industry has faced many crises which threatened its survival, like pandemics (COVID-19) and terrorism. There is a special situation in Ireland, which comes from the arrival of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. This means that hotels are required to host asylum seekers, while keeping the reputation and excellence of their brands and still running their businesses in a good way.

The research is about crisis strategic management in hotels that have been used to accommodate asylum seekers and their subsequent market re-entry. The research investigates hotel operational breakdown management approaches which use digital transformation to rebuild customer trust and gain market dominance after a crisis occurs. The research design was selected to allow the study of hotel perspectives about asylum seeker accommodation recovery instead of using statistical information. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with hotel managers to understand their experiences, challenges and strategies during and after hosting asylum seekers.

Five key themes are identified: crisis management strategies, operational impact of asylum accommodation, customer perception and trust rebuilding, digital transformation and technological innovation and competitive advantage and market re-entry. Hotels can achieve successful recovery through improved guest and local community communication and by enhancing their food services and beverage options and staff flexibility and technological

implementation for operational improvement and guest satisfaction. The research provides hotel managers with operational guidelines to build organizational resistance which will help them recover their brand image for sustainable market success following emergency events.

Keywords: Hospitality management, crisis management, asylum seekers, hotel operations, customer perception, reputational risk.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Hotels throughout Europe and Ireland have experienced an unexpected operational change by providing emergency housing for asylum seekers during humanitarian emergencies throughout the last few years. Nowadays Ireland faces a special situation because the arrival of migrants and refugees and asylum seekers brings new cultural diversity to the nation which transforms its migration patterns, but hotels found themselves in a challenging situation because they needed to fulfill their social duty to help vulnerable people while preserving their brand reputation and operational excellence and business continuity.

Hotels that re-enter the public market need to handle a complicated recovery journey which includes trust restoration and market competitiveness recovery and creative management approaches.

For this study, various methods were used to investigate how hotels bounce back from their time as refugee accommodation. Stories were collected from hotel managers and staff members who experienced the transformation firsthand and it was believed that their perspectives were revealing of the considerations and minor adjustments that have been made. This material was collected using semi-structured interviews that allowed interviewees to elaborate on any points in detail but their responses were still focused on the themes that were curious to me. The data was in the form of a set of individual stories because answers were based on experiences. Two kinds of hotels were spoken to, ones that were still occupied by asylum seekers and were in the

planning stages to go back to normal and ones that had already gone back to normal. This material combined with secondary material gathered from journals, government reports and publications with connections to the hotel industry underpinned the study. Insights to understanding hotel crisis management were provided by this approach and in turn insights into the study's findings were provided. Studies were deepened through databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate and ScienceDirect.

1.2. Rationale for the study

The research holds significance because it addresses an existing void in hospitality studies. Most crisis-management studies focus on natural disasters, financial crises, or public health emergencies, but very little attention has been given to hotels supporting asylum accommodation and the recovery process that follows. The research provides functional knowledge through manager interviews which enables hotel leaders and policymakers and hospitality students to understand successful post-crisis recovery strategies.

1.2.1. Research Question

1. What strategic management practices can hotels implement to successfully recover their brand and operations after being used as asylum seeker accommodations?

1.3. Research Aim, Questions and Objectives

- **Aim**: To examine crisis strategic management and recovery of hotels after use as asylum seeker accommodation.

    1. **Theme**: Crisis Management Strategies in the Hospitality Industry (Hotel Sector)
        - **Research Objective:** To navigate crisis management strategies employed by hotels that have been adapt for asylum seekers.
        - **Sub-research Questions:** What crisis management structures are most effective for hotels transitioning from asylum seeker accommodation back to regular operations?

    2. **Theme**: Impact of Asylum Seeker Accommodation on Hotel Operations
        - **Research Objective:**To study the impact of crisis communication and public relations strategies on the recovery of hotels after a crisis.
        - **Sub-research Questions:** How do hotels manage public relations in both phase, during and after the crisis of housing asylum seekers?

    3. **Theme**: Customer Perception and Trust Rebuilding
        - **Research Objective:** To explore how future guests perceive hotels after they have served as asylum seekers' accommodations, as well as part for repairing the confidence.
        - **Sub-research Questions:**what elements are most crucial to regaining prospective guests' trust?

4. **Theme:** Digital Transformation and Technological Innovation
    - **Research Objective:** To investigate how the digital transformation and technology innovation can help hotels after serving as asylum seeker accommodations.
    - **Sub-research Questions:** How can hotels utilize technology to regain their market position after serving as asylum seeker accommodations?

5. **Theme:** Competitive Advantage and Market Re-entry
    - **Research Objective:** To analyze how hotels can reclaim a competitive advantage and successfully re-enter the market after temporarily serving as asylum seekers' housing.
    - **Sub-research Questions:** How can hotels differentiate themselves in a competitive market after a crisis?

1.4. Information gathering & data collection

For this study, various methods were used to investigate how hotels bounce back from their time as refugee accommodation. Stories were collected from hotel managers and staff members who experienced the transformation firsthand and it was believed that their perspectives were revealing of the considerations and minor adjustments that have been made. This material was collected using semi-structured interviews that allowed interviewees to elaborate on any points

in detail but their responses were still focused on the themes that were curious to me. The data was in the form of a set of individual stories because answers were based on experiences. Two kinds of hotels were spoken to, ones that were still occupied by asylum seekers and were in the planning stages to go back to normal and ones that had already gone back to normal. This material combined with secondary material gathered from journals, government reports and publications with connections to the hotel industry underpinned the study. Insights to understanding hotel crisis management were provided by this approach and in turn insights into the study's findings were provided. Studies were deepened through databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate and ScienceDirect.

1.5. Expected Outcomes of the study

The main goal of this research is to find out what is the best way for hotels to resume their operations as hotel facilities, after being refugee facilities. The research investigates what are the important crisis management strategies that allow organizations to restore operations, while their employees adapt and their corporate image is improved. The results of the research will show ways for organizations to rebuild market trust and their market standing through leadership along with digital innovation and successful communication strategies. The research will provide operational knowledge for hotel staff members while at the same time improving hospitality studies by analyzing organizational resilience and crisis response and strategic planning.

1.6. Chapter by chapter Overview

The study is focused on hotels ways of recovery after using them as an asylum seeker center.

Chapter 1 - Introduction, the study explains the real problem of the research while demonstrating the significance of the report, through rationale for the study, research aim, questions and objectives, information gathering, data collection, and expected outcomes of the study. hotels have to figure out how to bring back their brand reputation, recover from the impact on their business operations and win back customers' trust, as per the report.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review: the theoretical framework with all information provided of previous studies response and hotels way of recovery and to these events reactions with some information that will give a good understanding in the broad field of hotel management and more precisely in the topic of crisis management.

Chapter 3 - Methodology: Explains the used methods in detail and the conduction of the research. Additionally, all information about the theoretical paradigm, philosophy employed, justification for the adoption of method, sampling technique and sample size, explanation of analysis method employed, and ethical considerations is provided in this chapter.

Chapter 4 - Findings & Discussion: In the following part include reputation repair and operational recovery, the results of all the conducted interviews with the participating hotels will be shown, explained, analyzed and compared to the literature findings.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion: Finalize the study with a relevant conclusion of this research. Recommendations for further researches that can help organisations not only rebuilt their trust but also improve operational performance in order to reach a sustainable post crisis recovery.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The chapter discusses how some of the hotels reacted to the unexpected crisis like providing shelter to the people who are looking for asylum and how they have recovered from it. The chapter also gives a review on the main crisis management theories, their aim during this time of crises that includes restoring the reputation and the quality of service and keeping communication wit the shareholders during this time.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1. Theme: Crisis Management Strategies in the Hospitality Industry (Hotel Sector)

Events such as natural catastrophes, economic crises, terrorist acts, disease outbreaks and political turmoils are regarded by the tourism industry as "crises." The literature presents various definitions of crisis because researchers fail to agree on its meaning (Leta, S.D. et Chan, I.C.C., 2021). The term crisis describes any negative incident which disrupts organizational or destination operations.

Crisis impacts hospitality more than any other business sector. Hotels and restaurants face constant exposure to crisis situations because they operate with direct customer contact and international service requirements that are easily disrupted by pandemics, natural disasters, or

cybersecurity threats (Ritchie, 2004). The sector's susceptibility to disruption exists mainly because of its heavy dependence on physical customer encounters and international operations which can easily be disrupted by crisis situations.

The hospitality industry experienced one of its most pivotal crisis management moments with the COVID-19 pandemic. A general unpreparedness across numerous businesses became apparent through the crisis which made business preparedness for emergencies an essential priority. Managers frequently needed to take immediate decisions in rapidly evolving circumstances although they often lacked appropriate tools and experience according to Giousmpasoglou, Marinakou and Zopiatis (2021).

Strategic frameworks serve as essential tools during this time. What's the difference between a crisis and disaster said Faulkner 2001 "A crisis stems from internal issues that possibly could have been prevented from occurring, a disaster is defined as the external result of circumstances that man can not control". Both are similar but different. The difference between the two is that organizations can predict and make early preparations for certain problems coming their way. According to Ritchie 2004, the model for the "Crisis management consists of three stages: pre crisis planning, crisis response and post crisis evaluation". This model explains the importance of a plan ahead of time while giving the appropriate responses to crises and learning from previous experiences. Other experts emphasize the need for preparing by highlighting factors such as implementing training programs, crisis communication plan, and the development of risk assessment systems (Israeli, Mohsin & Kumar, 2011). When facing a crisis hotels need to adapt so that their customers and staff understand the situation in a way that is informative and timely

to make the right selections (Henderson, 2007). The aftermath of the crisis involves rebuilding trust and using the information from the crisis to make future strategic plans.

Hotel management needs crisis planning as an essential tool to define the methods hotel managers use for protecting their guests' safety and comfort. This project aims to increase crisis awareness among hoteliers, their staff, investors, stakeholders, regulatory bodies, and students pursuing studies in hospitality management. Tourism operates as an industry which faces high vulnerability from small disruptions including political tensions, natural catastrophes, and epidemic outbreaks (Timothy, 2006, p. 19) thus making comprehensive crisis management plans necessary for quick response to possible threats. The development of an efficient crisis management plan demands complete knowledge of economic effects as well as analysis of different possible scenarios which may emerge.

2.2.2. Theme: Impact of Asylum Seeker Accommodation on Hotel Operations

Hotel facilities have become more widely used for housing asylum seekers because migration has increased while specialized housing facilities remain scarce in European regions and other parts of the world. Hotel operations experience various complex and often disputed effects when governments use hotels as a quick solution. Hotel owners who shift their operations from tourist services to asylum seeker shelter services face operational and reputational and financial challenges as well as unanticipated possibilities according to Devine et al. (2011).

Hotels that accept asylum seekers must transform their service methods when providing housing. The conventional focus on short-term guest experiences together with dining amenities recreational activities and tourism services transitions to long-term support for security and social services and community engagement (Lynch, 2020). The organization's new direction forces staff to move away, from serving short-term tourists toward assisting long-term residents who face emotional trauma cultural barriers and legal entanglements. Because working with asylum seekers can raise stress levels considerably their training now has to include communication and conflict-resolution skills (Smith & Dinesh 2022).

Hotels can be seen as fundamental spots that maintain border dynamics while simultaneously expressing the many contradictory aspects of how countries treat refugees and asylum seekers. Hotels are at the center of the current system in maintaining modern border operations, rather than marginal or residual spaces. The financial merits for hotels to take in asylum seekers is tempting, especially if the hotel is located in a rural area or suffering from lower occupancy. If the government gives adequate financial support to the hotels, these accommodation rates will increase during low season months for hotels (O'brien and Kerr 2021). This financial agreement can cause regular hotel guests to be turned away if the media and surrounding areas paint a negative image of the hotel. The hotel reputation can be diminished by this (Ordeal Fáilte Ireland, 2023). The way societies look at social matters determines the final result. Hotels that host asylum seekers are situated the nexus of political arguments and neighborhood squabbles. According to Lynch 2020 some members of the local community are "supportive of the prospect" while others worry about "impacting tourism and public risk." There is the issue with the hospitality business in how its conventional model is being challenged when hotels take in asylum

seekers. This requires organizations to reevaluate service priorities and foundational values and services offered. With this challenging situation, it can lead to inclusive and societally aware hospitality models, which can be invaluable to the changing global environment.

2.2.3. Theme: Customer Perception and Trust Rebuilding

During the COVID-19 pandemic and reputational crises, the hospitality industry has encountered various disruptions caused by the increase of global crises and demands and has the need to be able to build and regain trust through deliberate actions. The brand perceptions of customers arise from the service experiences and interactions with the hotel company and its brand, along with the communications and the visibility of online channels playing a key role on this. The fundamental nature of trust serves as an emotional component or driver and it is therefore necessary for the hospitality company to use strategic approaches and make transparency, consistency and empathy become central in the management to maintain trust. For organizations to reach long-term growth that can be sustainable, the key to achieve this lies in providing customer satisfaction, while managing properly the customer expectations given their interconnectedness. These critical elements of success, both play a crucial role in developing customer loyalty while reaching the company's retention targets. The hospitality industry and sectors, such as hotels or hotel groups, apply strategic initiatives in boosting customer satisfaction through the excellent service encounters delivered to hotel guests. Hotels place their customer relationships under trust, because this factor in essence impacts guest satisfaction for booking decisions but also for brand loyalty development (Han and Hyun, 2015).

The current situation requires intentional strategies to restore consumer trust because of the recent COVID-19 pandemic and data security breaches and service inconsistencies. The process of trust restoration demands more than operation recovery because customers need to see their perception of authenticity and transparency and their relationship with hospitality brands transformed (Jiang and Wen, 2020).

A brand's reputation forms through consumer experiences together with indirect feedback from online reviews and personal recommendations thus determines trust reconstruction (Sparks and Browning, 2011). Perceived safety along with effective communication and value alignment prove vital according to crisis research for restoring consumer confidence (Kim et al., 2021). The pandemic showed that trust returned to hotels because of clear hygiene procedures along with adaptable reservation rules and fast crisis response.

Nowadays customers form their own opinions and perception about businesses through different technological resources. Transparency on the digital platforms that hotels offer and the real time communication along with online reviews are very important for building trust. Customers today are looking for recommendations of their peers not the information that the brands give them. This is why hotels need to control the opinion of their brand (Jeon &Jang , 2011). The social responsibility along with ethical practices has become a very important factor. Hotels that implement and show their dedication to sustainability, inclusiveness and community are the ones that get rated with the most trust. This trust is mainly given by millennials and Gen Z guests (Martinez & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2013).

2.2.4. Theme: Digital Transformation and Technological Innovation

The change process depends on digital transformation and technology innovation which multiple industries use as their main drivers for change. The implementation of digital technologies across every business aspect leads to major operational and customer engagement changes according to Verhoef et al. (2021). An organization must integrate the new technologies along with process reengineering, cultural changes and continuous innovation to achieve complete transformation.

The combination of artificial intelligence (AI) with big data analytics and Internet of Things (IoT) and blockchain technology has created a fast-paced environment which enables industrial innovation. The new-age technologies allow companies to develop new products, optimize operations and make faster, data-driven decisions via real-time analysis (Vial, 2019).

Organizations need digital transformation to achieve operational excellence while gaining market leadership in manufacturing and retail and financial services sectors. The hotels suffer substantial operational transformation due to the fact that they adopt automation systems in conjunction with cloud computing and predictive analytics systems. Organizations can improve their resource management and pricing systems and service delivery operations through these technological solutions. A hotel needs to have technological abilities and its organization must be ready for change and its staff needs training and leaders must show digital transformation support to achieve successful digital transformation (Saura et al.,2022). The adoption of new solutions continues to face obstacles because staff members oppose organizational transformations and their ability to use digital tools remains insufficient. Hotels accelerated their implementation of

contactless solutions and health-oriented digital services because of their fast digital adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mobile key access together with touchless payment systems and chatbot assistance stands as essential technology for hotels to combat safety concerns while restoring customer trust (Shin and Kang, 2020). The implemented technologies address both short-term health requirements and generate long-term operational efficiency.

Digital transformation brings extensive benefits, but its implementation process tends to be complex and disruptive. Organizations face significant challenges due to change resistance together with unskilled personnel and outdated systems and disconnected digital strategies from business goals according to Hess et al. (2016). The challenges affect traditional sectors and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) the most because they usually do not have digital expertise and funding resources. Digital transformation requires both technological investment and strong leadership together with active employee participation and continuous organizational learning to succeed.

2.2.5. Theme: Competitive Advantage and Market Re-entry

The decision to return to a market requires multiple strategic elements which depend on initial exit causes as well as current market trends and organizational innovation capabilities. According to Benito and Welch (1997) companies should return to markets when market conditions improve or they have gained new capabilities to deal with previous challenges. Companies need to rebuild their brand reputation together with stakeholder trust in markets that have gained

new competitors because of their departure and lost customer loyalty. Strategic management exists on the foundation of competitive advantage which represents the specific qualities or capabilities that allow firms to perform better than their competitors.

Re-entering a market requires companies to develop a competitive advantage for success whether they step back strategically or face crises or market disruptions. Organizations must develop strategic market positions through cost leadership differentiation or focus to achieve sustainable market advantage according to Porter (1985) especially in dynamic and previously exited markets. Hotel businesses need competitive advantages to maintain their lasting profitability together with market resilience especially during market re-entry periods.

A hotel brand implements market re-entry as its strategic move to rejoin a market from which it withdrew. Market re-entry occurs because of changes in customer demand patterns and economic recovery as well as organizational changes. Market re-entry requires more than business continuation because it involves multiple aspects. The hotel industry needs to restart its efforts in building trust while redefining their value propositions and achieving market uniqueness according to Porter (1985).

The process of re-entering a market requires hotels to establish superior brand perception while introducing innovative service options. Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) explain that hospitality customers base their loyalty on the combination of service quality perceptions and brand trustworthiness. When a hotel or brand leaves the market, the reputation of that brand suffers. Hotels that are returning after a long period of time that were being used as asylum seekers accommodation should focus on better service, technological implementation and

service differentiation to get back into competition with other hotels. The ability to innovate how service is provided while improving customer experience is one of the basic keys to gain competitive advantage. Hotels use technological advances, like AI's service personalization, mobile check-ins or booking systems to entice tech savvy customers and increase the operational efficiency according to Buhalis and Leung, 2018. The differentiation of hotels has become mainly technological, especially in highly competitive markets, like city hotels or regions recovering from a tourism downturn.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In this section, the detail study's methodology will be explained including components such as pre-testing, validity & reliability, research instrument, study variable, study area, target population, sampling strategy, sample size, operationalizing study variables, method of data collection, data analysis techniques and logistical and ethical consideration.

3.2. Theoretical Paradigm / Philosophy Employed

The research philosophy guiding this study is interpretivism, which is the school of thought that explains how human beings perceive and make sense of the world and their actions. The interpretivism philosophy suits this study, because the purpose of the study is to investigate and find out how managers perceive and respond to the challenges of recovering hotels after they have been used as places of accommodation for asylum seekers. The interpretivism school of

thought is underpinned by the belief that social reality is formed through human actions and also personal life experiences and environmental settings lead to distinct realities (Saunders et al., 2019). The hotel managers in this research provided essential knowledge about crisis management and recovery through their individual perspectives. The research investigates multiple perspectives instead of searching for a single absolute truth to develop recovery methods based on identified patterns.

The research design employs qualitative methods because these methods enable researchers to perform open-ended interviews for exploratory studies. Scientists use research methods to study manager decisions and actions by observing real-world situations which link their behaviors to crisis management and organizational resilience theories (Creswell, 2014). The research establishes a complete contextual evaluation system to study hospitality sector strategic recovery methods.

3.3. Justification for the adoption of method

The qualitative research method matches the requirements because it allows to perform in-depth investigations about hotel manager experiences and their viewpoints. The research design selected allows it to study hotel perspectives about asylum seeker accommodation recovery instead of using statistical information. The research design included semi-structured interviews which enabled me to ask open-ended questions to managers who could describe their recovery management and reputation rebuilding efforts and their experiences with obstacles. The research method aligns with my interpretivist philosophy because it studies actual experiences

and their meanings rather than using standardized measurement techniques. The qualitative method enabled me to obtain detailed information which shows the actual situation of hotel recovery following a crisis.

3.4. An Outline of Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The research used purposive sampling to choose participants who would offer important information about the research subject. The sampling strategy involved hotel professionals who had first-hand experience dealing with the operations of their hotels or hostels, during or following the use as housing for asylum seekers; the use of Purposive sampling was required for this research because it allowed the researchers to select participants who could provide particular expertise about crisis response and recovery strategies. (Etikan et al.2016) The study had five participants who were working at different hotel properties in Ireland as General Managers and Food and Beverage Managers that had hospitality experience from 10 to 20 years and few were presently managing the hostels that are still accommodating asylum seekers and others had already converted their hotels for use as hotels again; it allowed researchers to consider both current and past crisis management techniques for immediate outcomes and historical perspective.

Code	Position	Setting	Experience	Main Theme Identified	Key Insight / Code
GM01	General Manager	Hostel – Co. Dublin (currently hosting asylum seekers)	15 years	Crisis Management Strategies	Faster decision-making and improved team coordination during crisis
FB01	Food & Beverage Manager	Hostel – Co. Dublin (currently hosting asylum seekers)	10 years	Impact on Hotel Operations	Shift from guest service to operational efficiency
GM02	General Manager	Hotel – Co. Dublin (used to host asylum seekers)	20 years	Recovery & Repositioning	Need to rebuild trust through visible cleaning standards and strong guest-facing communication
FB02	Food & Beverage Manager	Hotel – Galway City (used to host asylum seekers)	12 years	Customer Perception & Trust	Guests initially hesitant; restaurant redesign and menu innovation helped reposition image
GM03	General Manager	Hotel – Co. Dublin (used to host asylum seekers)	18 years	Competitive Advantage & Re-entry	Experience improved staff adaptability and flexibility during high-pressure operations

Table 1: Stakeholders interviewed for this study

Source: Author's own work (2025)

3.5. Explanation of Analysis Method Employed

The method employed was Semi-structured interviews were analyzed using a thematic approach based on the theoretical framework by Braun and Clarke (2006) because it allows extracting common themes from data. After transcription, the researcher read transcripts carefully several times in order to have a deep understanding of the data. They then identified key words and concepts that were grouped in thematic categories related to crisis management and communication, recovery, reputation restoration in relation to the aims of the study. Thematic analysis was appropriate as it allowed the researcher to understand both the collective experiences and specific opinions of managers working in hotels which were hosting asylum seekers. The method allowed researchers to follow a defined process while maintaining adaptability when working with qualitative information to answer their core research questions.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The research followed all ethical standards which the college established to protect participants from harm. All participants provided their consent for the study and received information about research objectives and their right to stop participation anytime and protection of their personal identity.

The study maintained its validity and reliability through my use of identical interview protocols for all participants and complete transcription of all recorded conversations to minimize errors. The analysis used only participant statements as data while keeping the analysis consistent

throughout the entire process. Informed Consent; submitted to interviewees prior to interview date. All interview recordings and transcripts were stored securely and password protected. Participants' names were replaced with codes to maintain anonymity and protect their privacy throughout the research process.

Chapter 4: Findings & Discussion

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from five semi-structured interviews with Irish hospitality managers in the present or past, working in hotels and hostels that hosted asylum seekers (coded as GM01, FB01, GM02, FB02, OM01). The findings were obtained through thematic analysis and are categorized in crisis management, operational impact, customer perception, digital transformation and competitive recovery. The primary data was compared with existing academic literature to discuss each theme and the chapter will conclude with the overall interpretation and provide practical recommendations for the sector.

4.2. Theme 1: Crisis Management Strategies in the Hospitality Industry

Research Objective: To navigate crisis management strategies employed by hotels that have been adapt for asylum seekers.

Research question: What crisis management structures are most effective for hotels transitioning from asylum seeker accommodation back to regular operations?

4.2.1. Qualitative findings

GM01: "Decisions had to be made quickly, centrally. Supervisors had more power to act on their own. Normally, decisions would take days or weeks but now we needed to act immediately."

FB01: "We simplified F&B operations. We stopped making big meals three times a day. We started doing buffet service. We had weekly rotating menus to help with cost, nutrition and cultural needs."

GM02: "We had clearer comms, more flexible suppliers and so we avoided shortages. If something went wrong we could go on smoothly as we had some back-up plans." FB02: "We did a short daily briefing and tasks were allocated clearly and staff felt motivated but workload was very stressful."

GM03: "The emergency checklists, the contingency plans were very useful, because they guided what we did with staffing and what we did with hygiene and how we coordinated with the residents."

Positive & Negative Findings:

- Positive Finding: Fast decision making, empowered staff, teamwork, contingency plans and flexible suppliers are positive findings.
- Negative Finding: Staff stress and fatigue, emotional exhaustion and the reactive management in hotels without prior plans.

4.2.2. Discussion

Based on the interviews, the hotels had to make immediate changes to respond to the crisis. As GM01 said, the decision making had become centralized and rapid and the supervisors had taken on more operational responsibilities. As FB01 said, the services had been simplified to large-scale catering so that the departments could feed many people and maintain culturally appropriate

and nutritious meals. GM02 said that clear communication was very important and having some backup vendors would prevent any disruption. FB02 said that the staff had accepted short meeting with some specific work assignments but their workloads were still heavy and the stress was still high, as seen from GM03. All these findings are consistent with the literature on hotel crisis management. As Leta and Chan (2021) said, a crisis such as a pandemic, a natural disaster or a political disruption requires an immediate and effective response. A hotel operates with direct customer contact and international service requirements which are easily disrupted, so a rapid decision making is necessary in an evolving situation. Giousmpasoglou, Marinakou and Zopiatis (2021) said that the COVID-19 pandemic showed how managers lacked the tools and experience for rapid decision making in evolving circumstances. Faulkner (2001) said that a crisis was different from a disaster as it was disruptive but it could be anticipated and mitigated by planning. Overall, it is shown from the interviews that hotels have relied on employee empowerment, strong communication and operational flexibility to survive the crisis, as said by FB01, GM02 and GM03. It is also shown that effective crisis management in hotels is dependent on centralized and rapid decision making, flexible operation, collaborative teamwork and preparation through training and communication strategies as said by Ritchie (2004), Israeli, Mohsin and Kumar (2011) and Henderson (2007).

4.3. Theme 2: Impact of Asylum Seeker Accommodation on Hotel Operations

Research Objective: To study the impact of crisis communication and public relations strategies on the recovery of hotels after a crisis.

Sub-research Questions: How do hotels manage public relations in both phase, during and after the crisis of housing asylum seekers?

4.3.1 Qualitative Findings

FB01: "The restaurant was entirely transformed. We had to switch to canteen-style meals, served three times a day. The steady work, to be fair, allowed the staff to get more organised and efficient, yet the work was less exciting and less varied."

GM01: "Housekeeping and front desk concentrated more on admin tasks than the customer experience. The staff found the environment stressful and felt they struggled to stay motivated."

GM02: "The staff learned to handle large groups of guests, manage menus that catered to a variety of diets and developed an awareness of cultural differences. Additionally, they developed better relations with the local suppliers. Despite this, the extra workload and stressful environment led a few employees to leave."

FB02: "The team was far more flexible and adaptable, able to solve problems quickly. However, it was a demanding environment and staff struggled to keep morale up."

GM03: "It turned out the facilities needed to be repaired more often. To make things a bit better, we were able to anticipate issues and prepare better for when things get really busy."

Positive & Negative Findings:

- Positive: Gained new skills by staff, improved teamwork, stronger relationships with suppliers, better operation efficiency, more high volume service.
- Negative: Higher costs, staff leaving because of the workload, there was a reputational risk if they failed in communication or PR, facility wear and tear.

4.3.2. Discussion

The second theme demonstrates how hotel providers experienced operational enhancements together with multiple difficulties after starting to house asylum seekers. On one hand, working on new ways of delivering services like a canteen model food provision have helped develop staff's efficiency, work as a team more effectively and develop their skills (GM02, GM03, FB01, FB02). Indeed this matches what previous studies suggest, when hotels cannot adjust quickly and become inflexible they will fail trying to provide a short-term tourist service instead of the kind needed for supporting residents in the long term requiring hotels to be flexible and solve problems ahead of issues unfolding itself (Smith & Dinesh, 2022) (Lynch, 2020). Furthermore, higher levels of collaboration within the staff group and better relations with suppliers illustrate some other opportunities pointed out by Devine, Higgins, Coates, Peacock and Cullen (2011), namely, the aforementioned organisations could acquire experience, learn new things and grow professionally thanks to dealing with operating issues.

Overall, as seen above discussing Theme 2, while hotel providers using space for accommodating asylum seekers improves operational performance in addition to growing specific capabilities, this does come along with several dilemmas related to aspects including workforce well-being, service experiences offered plus maintaining hotel buildings health.

4.4. Theme 3: Customer Perception and Trust Rebuilding

Research Objective: To explore how future guests perceive hotels after they have served as asylum seekers' accommodations, as well as part for repairing the confidence.

Sub-research Questions: What elements are most crucial to regaining prospective guests' trust?

4.4.1. Qualitative Findings

GM01: “I think the hardest part is making other people view us differently as well. That guests remember that this is still a hotel and not just any kind of long term stay”.

FB01: “Food. If you have good food for your guests they will have a much better feeling towards the hotel”.

FB02: “Maybe some guests worried at first But then we could also say that we help them when they needed us very much That can maybe make us known by more positive sides”.

GM02: “Working together with local organisations or something like a charity, to demonstrate what we actually did for people”.

Positive & Negative Findings:

- Positive: good food, warm staff, partnership with local organisations, clear information, refurbished facilities.

- Negative: still considered "accommodation for asylum seekers", guests were hesitant at first, some guests cancelled their booking at the beginning.

4.4.2. Discussion

The managers who participated in the research described their difficulties when trying to win back trust from previous hotel visitors who stayed at their facilities while asylum seekers were housed there. Still, many guests associate the hotel with asylum accommodation, impacting your booking at the start (GM01), staff told. When guests have a great experience eating here (F&B) they immediately think the place is welcoming and of good quality (FB01, FB02). The organization uses community partnerships to show its dedication to society which helps improve its public image (GM02). This is supported too by what is in the literature. Hotels need to establish trust through open communication and emotional understanding and they should maintain continuous contact with their guests; trust exists as an emotional response (Han & Hyun, 2015). After a crisis has passed, it's not enough for customers to know that operations are back up and running, they need to believe the hotel is honest with them, that it's safe and that it shares their values (Jiang & Wen, 2020). People in present times build their reputation through marketing declarations yet social media customer reviews create an equal impact on their public perception (Jeon & Jang, 2011; Sparks & Browning, 2011). Communication that is clear and safety that is perceived, are key to regaining customer confidence, just as they were throughout the Covid-19 pandemic (Kim et al.,2021). Hotels which show social responsibility through local community involvement receive positive guest feedback especially from millennials and gen z according to Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque (2013). Overall, then, this theme highlights how trust recovers

over time via friendly services, top-class food & beverage, honest dialogue and visibly active corporate social responsibility. Hotels can achieve market recovery through active human treatment of their former visitors which will help them regain their market position better than before.

4.5. Theme 4: Digital Transformation and Technological Innovation

Research Objective: To investigate how the digital transformation and technology innovation can help hotels after serving as asylum seeker accommodations.

Sub-research Questions: How can hotels utilize technology to regain their market position after serving as asylum seeker accommodations?

4.5.1. Qualitative Findings

GM01: "Overall, digital tools had a positive impact on our operations, particularly when it came to scheduling and communication."

FB01: "Apps were used to manage changing information regarding stock and staff shifts during the day."

FB02: "Having one integrated system for orders, inventory and rubbish collection will make all of these aspects simpler."

GM02: "Before we reopen, we're planning on giving them some sort of online training which I think would be beneficial because then they could learn at home as well at their own pace."

Positive & Negative Findings:

- Positive: Technology improved its planning operations and enabled better communication and stock management and staff development programs.
- Negative: Some staff took time to adopt the technology and it was found that smaller hotels lacked proper technology and resources to make the technology function properly.

4.5.2. Discussion

Some of the hotels used the digital tools to manage every day's activities so the task of management became easier. For example, as GM01 highlighted, the staff used an app to coordinate the shifts of the staff to communicate quickly. FB01 explained that the inventory and the rota app made easier the daily management of inventory and shift changes. GM02 said that many employees of the hotel could learn how to do the procedure to reopen the hotel from online platforms. FB02 said that to improve the efficiency even more, it would be good to integrate everything into a single platform. For example, to order, inventory and waste. It looks like we have in this hotel experience that of digital transformation, as stated in literature. In fact, as stated by Verhoef et al. (2021), to adopt the digital tool over all operation it will change how the organisation work and how it will interact with customers. In this case, the technology has supported better coordination between different things, has made easier the flow of informations and has helped the hotels to be more prepared during that stressful time. The use of app and online tool is in line with Vial (2019), who stated that modern technology such as AI and real time data tool has helped the company to make decision more quickly and to operate better. However, it was not all good. In some of the hotels staff has experienced difficulties in

adapting to new system, especially in hotels with fewer resources. This is in line with Saura et al. (2022), who said that the hotel needs a staff who has been trained, support from leadership and be ready to change to achieve the digital transformation successfully. The difficulties of adaptation and learning curve is in line with Saura et al. (2022), who said that unskilled worker and outdated system have slow down the technology adoption, especially in small and traditional business, as stated by Hess et al. (2016). In spite of these difficulties, technology have helped hotels to recover faster and get ready for reopening. This is what happen in this study. The hotels have used some of this technology but it can be said that all other technology that can improve operational smoothness and rebuild confidence guest can be useful for hotel. In conclusion, technology has been useful for hotels during the period of recovery because it has improved coordination, communication and efficiency. However, a successful implementation requires investment in training staff support.

4.6. Theme 5: Competitive Advantage and Market Re-entry

Research Objective: To analyze how hotels can reclaim a competitive advantage and successfully re-enter the market after temporarily serving as asylum seekers' housing.

Sub-research Questions: How can hotels differentiate themselves in a competitive market after a crisis?

4.6.1. Qualitative Findings

FB01: "Hosting asylum seekers helped us learn how to be more efficient in terms of planning ahead and being flexible. Overall, it was a positive experience for everyone involved."

GM01: "Our biggest struggle has been our reputation so people can actually see that were still open and ready to go"

FB02: "I think what could help you get your guests again would be perhaps community engagement to show they're invested in this area, ... And also maybe offering some packages such as co-working spaces."

GM02: "Maybe building up the fact that your restaurant is also something socially responsible too might also build your brand at least"

GM03: "We didn't invest any money on big advertisements, instead we utilised stories about us through social media and built partnerships to obtain our very first guests".

Positive & Negative Findings:

- Positive: The staff became more efficient and flexible in their work, there was an improvement in community engagement that has a positive effect on the reputation, the F&B skills became better on the operation.
- Negative findings: A negative perception lingers after past hosting, it will take time to rebuild a good reputation, there are those guests who will hesitant before engaging.

4.6.2. Discussion

Hotels need to address three main sets of challenges which include strategic and operational and reputational issues after they stop using their facilities for asylum seekers and decide to return to the market. Organizations need to understand their original market departure causes and evaluate their present operational abilities which solve their previous business performance problems to achieve successful market re-entry (Benito & Welch, 1997). In line with this view, managers interviewed stressed how important it was to both repair the hotel's reputation and have all staff ready to go back to full operation, noting that "guests want to know [that] our standards are back" (GM01).

Organizations need to create better market positions through service differentiation or cost leadership or focused marketing according to Porter (1985) to achieve success during market disruptions. Staff members demonstrated their ability to adapt and show confidence better since the hotel operated as an asylum center which led to potential long-term resilience improvements for the hotel (FB01). Hospitality businesses not only seek to recover but rebuild themselves with improved service provision which, respectively, helps rebuild customers' trust and redefine the offer (value proposition) provided by the brand (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000). The research through interviews showed that businesses need to fix their reputation problems while they work to change how people view them because these two elements determine market success (GM02; FB02). Research indicates that businesses need to develop solid brand trust because it helps them preserve customer retention during times of market change. The organization has the ability to develop new technological solutions which will enhance its food and beverage facilities and create personalized services and operational enhancements to establish distinctive market

positions (Buhalis & Leung, 2018). By combining upgraded skills among employees, technology deployment, higher levels of service provision and forms of community involvement, hotels will be well-equipped to compete for lost ground upon regaining access to the marketplace.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the summary of the findings, conclusions, as well as the study recommendations which also outline the recommendations made for practice, policy and further research.

5.2. Limitations

In this project, there are limitations that affect the general outcome of the research report. Most of the limitations were anticipated and the strategies to mitigate them were applied to preserve the integrity and quality of the project.

1. **Small Sample Size:** In the study of the five managers: two Food & Beverage Managers (FB01, FB02) and three General Managers (GM01, GM02, GM03) and while the two managers and three GMs have some insight into the five managers, there might be the lack of representation of some hotels that have been housing refugees, the sample might not be representative of other hotels.
2. **Subjective Perspectives:** The study was based upon personal experiences and opinions of the five managers. Their perception is influenced by memory, personal biases and emotions, that might have some effect in the objectivity of the results.
3. **Geographical Limitation:** The hotels included in the study are located in specific areas of Ireland. Results might not be representative of hotels in other regions or countries, where operational, cultural and legal conditions differ.

4. **Time Constraints:** The study reflects a specific period of time during and shortly after housing refugees. Long-term effects on the staff, guest perception and operational efficiency may not be observed.
5. **Focus on F&B and Management:** The study explores hotel-wide operations but it primarily focuses on F&B operations and managerial perspectives. Other departments (housekeeping, front desk, maintenance) may have faced different challenges that were not deepy explored.
6. **Limited Quantitative Data:** The research is qualitative and based on interviews. It does not include numerical data such as occupancy rates, revenue impact or food cost changes that limits the ability to measure the full operational and financial impact.

5.3. Conclusion

- What strategic management practices can hotels implement to successfully recover their brand and operations after being used as asylum seeker accommodations?

This study examined how hotels that hosted asylum seekers can recover their operations and brand, by looking at three General Managers and two Food & Beverage Managers. The findings are that strategic management practices are necessary for effective recovery. From the General Manager's point of view, making decisions quickly and centrally, having clear communication and empowering people in charge were key to operations running smoothly. Managers said that staff motivation, proactive maintenance of the facility and maintaining strong relationships with suppliers were important for operations to be stable. From the Food & Beverage point of view,

making operations simpler, changing the menu to meet people's dietary needs, managing large catering and training staff was important for efficiency, teamwork and flexibility. Both management and F & B staff said that rebuilding guest trust by means of service quality, renovation of the facility and community engagement was very important. Digital tools were used to help with the schedule, stock and communication and were only effective when used together with personal service. The challenges were staff fatigue, people leaving their jobs, reputation problems and the wear-and-tear of the facilities. In general the research shows that having flexible operations, empowering staff, clear communication, digital support and community-focused practices allowed hotels to recover from the crisis.

5.4. Recomendations

Finally, based on the experience of the general managers (GM01, GM02, OM01) and food and beverage manager (FB01, FB02), the following suggestions are recommended. We need to evaluate five different themes.

1. **Crisis management strategies:**
    - Allow your staff to make decisions during urgent situations.
    - The team needs to select one primary communication method.
    - Use simple emergency checklists for staffing, hygiene and supplies.
    - The team requires daily briefings which should not exceed one day to achieve team alignment and reduce team member stress levels.
2. **Impact on operations:**

- The organization needs to provide training to its staff members which should help them learn empathy and patience and cultural understanding skills.
- The facilities require scheduled inspections and maintenance to prevent equipment deterioration from occurring.
- The organization needs to bring back normal operations through training programs for staff members and construction work for their facilities.

3. **Customer perception and trust:**
    - focus on cleanliness, service quality, staff friendliness.
    - The hotel needs to demonstrate its dedication to the local community through these scheduled events which occur on a regular basis.
    - Pay attention to first impressions, presentation and the guest's experience.
4. **Digital transformation:** Use digital tools for scheduling, inventory and operations.
    - The organization needs to train its staff members who will learn how to operate technology systems effectively.
    - The systems need to improve existing human service delivery instead of taking its place.
5. **Competitive advantage:** Promote social responsibility and community engagement.
    - The hotel needs to develop flexible room options which will attract visitors who prefer different types of accommodations.
    - Use the lessons you have learned during hosting to improve efficiency.
    - The organization needs to restart its operations through a controlled system which will preserve its current high performance levels.