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LEADERSHIP STYLE CHANGES AMONG HOTEL MANAGERS IN ESTONIA DUE TO COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Hospitality industry is a significant economic sector both in terms of GDP and the employment it offers. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative effect on the industry. In Estonia the number of foreign visitors was down by 57% and as a result tourist expenditure saw a drop of 67% in 2020 compared to the year before. The industry is not expected to return to pre-pandemic levels for at least three years. As there is no research done on the leadership styles of hotel managers in Estonia, this thesis aims to first understand which leadership styles were used by hotel managers in Estonia and to what exent has the COVID-19 pandemic changed it.

The qualitative study of 11 hotel managers and industry association leaders in Estonia revealed that prior to the pandemic hotel managers regarded business, self and people competencies all equally important. There is no one leadership style that was used, rather elements of transformational, empowering, affiliative and authoritative leadership styles were revealed through the analysis.

Hotel leaders found that the pandemic has not significantly altered their leadership style as they are currently operating in crisis management situation characterised by lack of personnel and uncertainty. As a result certain competencies have become more important for hotel managers to posess. These competencies include more complex decision-making, clearer communication, empathy, resilience, flexibility and fostering positivity, motivation and optimism. Whilst no signifiant change was declared, importance of empathy and people-centric competencies to continue post-pandemic were highlighted. Hotels part of bigger chains have had support and training resources readily available, however, those part of industry associations find that it has been helpful acting as a spokesperson and sensemaker of regulations.

Keywords: leadership, hospitality, COVID-19, hotel management, leadership behaviours

INTRODUCTION

Travel and tourism are often considered as the pillars of the economy for many countries. Travel and tourism have a considerable direct and indirect effect on the economy– in 2019 it accounted for 10.4% of the global GDP and 1 in 4 new jobs created globally is in the sector (10.6% of the jobs) (WTTC, 2021). In Europe 10.1% of the jobs were in Travel and Tourism and the sector represented 9.5% of the GDP in 2019, this dropped by 51% in 2020 to only 4.9% (WTTC, 2021). The tourism sector in Estonia is considered as an important factor of raising the country's competitiveness, export, and economic growth. Occupying 7.8% of the national GDP, it also contributes to 4.3% of employment nationally (as of 2018) (OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2020 Estonia, 2021).

The industry is thus significant globally and locally in Estonia. Hospitality industry is also one of the most precarious industries being heavily and easily affected by different social, political, environmental, and economic factors. Due to its low barrier to entry to work, it often provides employment to some of the more vulnerable classes of the society, making it an essential industry (International Labour Organization, 2010, p14). Travel and tourism industry are globally one of the hardest hit sectors, as countries have been forced to shut their borders to limit the movement of people since March of 2020. From record low hotel occupancies to plummeting stock prices of global hotel chains to over a million jobs lost, it is estimated that COVID-19 one of the biggest challenges for the tourism sector since World War II (Giousmpasoglou *et al*., 2021).

In Estonia the state of emergency was declared for the first time on March 8, 2020. Statistics Estonia shows that at that time there were 29 130 jobs listed in the tourism and food and beverage sector (unfortunately, no distinction is made in the statistics in hotels and restaurants), whereas on December 13, 2020 there were only 18 970 jobs recorded in the industry, which is nearly a 35% drop on the available jobs in the sector within the first ten months of the pandemic. On the same date there were 6140 people recorded unemployed in the sector, representing 11.4% of the total number of unemployed (Mis on saanud koroonakriisis majutuse ja toitlustuse alal töö kaotanutest? | Statistikaamet, 2021).

In addition, the number of foreign visitors coming to Estonia was down by 57% in 2020 compared to the year before. The expenditure of tourists was down by 67%, going from 475 million to mere 145 million euros (Foreign tourists spent 145 …, 2021).

A preliminary look into the future of hospitality management and its research by Gursoy and Chi (2020) indicated that people remain cautious to travel and that reopening does not bring customers back instantly (p527). People are looking for assurance by hotel companies on how their health and well-being is being guaranteed while staying in a hotel or dining out, and this was estimated to be the case even when the first vaccinations start (p527).

Currently 42.6 % of the population globally has been vaccinated (Ritchie *et al.,* 2021) and restrictions are starting to ease, which has allowed more of the travel to resume. However, in 2020 the global revenue of the hotel industry dropped by 46% (Karantzavelou, 2021) and is faced with a complex set of challenges. In order to attract customers and generate revenue, hotels and restaurants must have rigorous safety and cleaning plans in place. These in turn involve a higher expenditure on cleaning and staff training. In addition, people are looking for more digital solutions that would replace some of the face-to-face interaction to further reduce the risk. Therefore, the industry is required to increase its expenditure to generate revenue, while people's willingness and ability to pay has significantly lowered (Gursoy and Chi, 2020, p528). Moreover, despite the low barrier to entry for employment, the industry's precarious reputation has further found confirmation and as such finding and retaining employees who play an instrumental role in business success is increasingly difficult (ERR, 2021).

Therefore, how can the leaders of Estonian hotels ensure an influx of sufficient revenue and business continuity while making the necessary investments? The leaders of the sector must act consciously, navigating the complex set of challenges posed by the new reality. In addition, whilst the industry globally has suffered greatly, hospitality leaders must even more so consider the unique cultural, social, and psychological dimensions they operate in and the industry's niche locally (D'Auria and De Smet, 2021).

The hospitality industry, whilst showing some growth, is not predicted to reach pre-COVID-19 levels for another three years (Karantzavelou, 2021). Therefore, to ensure the continuation of hospitality and hotels, their leaders must adapt their leadership styles. The ongoing crisis imposes significant changes on how hospitality businesses operate (Gursoy and Chi, 2020, p527). In

addition, a study conducted already in 2015 by Entreprise Estonia revealed that there is a need to change leadership styles to adapt to the quickly developing Western society and to the expectations of new generations. However, the study also revealed that Estonian companies' leadership practices are falling behind Western-Europe and that within the leadership teams of different Estonian companies there is a standstill situation where leaders are comfortable and little to no emphasis is put on developing leadership and industry-specific competencies (EAS *et al.*, 2015, p61). Unfortunately, there is no updated study conducted since, however this further proves that it is important to understand leadership qualities required in different industries and how they have changed.

The impact of COVID-19 on the whole hospitality industry has been significant both globally and in Estonia, and the recovery will take years. The problem of this thesis is that there is no study dedicated to understanding the leadership style of hotel managers in Estonia, furthermore there is a gap in literature examining the changes in leadership styles of hotel managers due to the pandemic. Therefore, this thesis aims to fill that gap by providing understanding of the leadership styles of hotel managers in Estonia and its changes due to the pandemic. It also seeks to provide guidance on how to best support leaders in this shift.

The central research question is what kind of leadership style was used by hotel managers in Estonia and how has the COVID-19 pandemic changed it? This central research question is examined through the following research sub questions:
1. Which competencies are now deemed important for hotel leaders in Estonia to maintain organisational resilience?
2. What are the changes from pre-COVID-19 leadership style?
3. What support mechanisms have been put into place or are deemed necessary to support this shift and/or acquiring these competencies?

The first section of the thesis will provide a theoretical background. It will then present the qualitative methodology used for research and analysis in the second part. In the third part, analysis of the results will be presented along with suggestions.

The author would like to thank all the hotel managers who agreed to participate in the interviews and share their unique experiences and views of this challenging time for the industry.

In addition, the author would like to sincerely thank her supervisor Kristjan Jasinski whose continued support and guidance throughout the whole process has been extremely valuable to the creation of this thesis.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to investigate the leadership style and potential changes of the leadership style and competencies of Estonian hospitality leaders, it is first crucial to provide an overview of the theoretical background.

To begin with, the term leadership will be given an explanation based on the existing literature. Theoretical background will then give an account of classic transformational – transactional leadership theories. It will then discuss generational differences leadership theories and Goleman's typology of 6 leadership styles.

An overview of which leadership styles have been studied within the hospitality context will then be provided. The section will provide an overview of the work that has been so far conducted more specifically on COVID-19 effect on leadership. In order to further assess the leadership style change the theoretical section will also provide a framework for organisational resilience

In analysing the different leadership styles presented within this thesis, different competencies will also be discussed. Oxford dictionary defines competence as (1) "the ability to do something well" or (2) "a necessary skill for a particular job or task" (competence noun, 2021). In academic literature competence does not have an agreed definition, but Cohen-Scali lists a similar definition that competence is "the actual use of a particular aptitude in a given context" (2012, p12). In addition, Sanghi claims that the two main themes that have emerged in defining competence are on the one hand related to output and results and on the other hand referring to fundamental attributes that are deemed important to achieve these results (Sanghi, 2016, p8). For the purposes of this thesis, leadership and relevant competencies will be as such examined within the specific context and from the point of view of requiring certain specific attributes and skills to be successful in hotel management (output).

1.1. General leadership theory

This section will provide an overview of the general leadership theories. First, the term leadership will be explained, following by an account of transformational and transactional leadership theories. It will also discuss Goleman's typology as these have found more basis of discussion as contemporary leadership theories. An account of generational differences concerning different theories will be then provided.

1.1.1. Leadership

In order to understand different leadership styles and their impact it is important to provide a definition to the term. Although it is extremely challenging to provide one single definition to the concept as it was esitmated that at the end of the last century there were over 1400 different definitions in literature within the first decade of this century (Silva, 2016, p1). The idea of leadership has evolved over centuries from being viewed as a personality trait (Confucius; Takala, 1998; Carlyle 1994 cited in Silva, 2016, p2) to including the idea of a continual process to influence others towards a common goal (Stogdill, 1950; Zalzenik, 1977, Kotter 1988 cited in Silva, 2016, p3) to encompassing the role of followers (Drucker, 1996; Owusu-Bempah, 2014; Handy, 1992 cited in Silva, 2016, p2).

Barker (2001, p491) provides an extensive overview of leadership literature and draws a definition that leadership is "a process of transofrmative change where the ethics of individuals are integrated into the mores of a community as a means of evolutionary social development". This definition places importance on the community and social development of individuals as the ultimate goal. In a more recent review of leadership literature, Silva (2016, p3) provides a following definition to leadership "is the process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader to achieve common goals". Both definitions include an element of others and a progress towards something. Baker's conclusion on the leadership definition is moreso a means towards social development, having a wider beneficiary impact, however, Silva concludes the end result of leadership to be achieving common goals, claiming that emphasising the relevance of all three factors, leader, the followers and context, his defintion fits the modern concept of leadership.

Therefore, although leadership is a contested concepted and there is no one clear definiton, the key elements of leadership include "others" and an end result. Due to its more modern nature, for the purposes of this thesis, the definition coined by Silva will be the basis of further discussion.

1.1.2. Transformational and transactional leadership theories

Transformational - transactional leadership theory is one of the most researched theories over the past few decades. It was developed by Burns (1978) who is often considered to have conceptualised and put the basis on the leadership theory as a whole. This theory remains researched and relevant to this day mostly due to its proven positive impact on productivity at all levels and across different parameters of success (Ng, 2017, p385). This is equally the reason why it has been chosen as one of the base theories for this thesis.

Table 1. summarises these two leadership styles and provides an overview of the key characteristics of the two styles. This is elaborated as follows. Bass contrasted transformational and transactional leaders. A transformational leader encourages its followers to work collaboratively towards a common goal, beyond self-interest. Therefore, it is also often referred to as a vision-based leadership theory (Ng, 2017, p386) and as a result the followers of transformational leaders are often more aligned with organisational mission (p87). Transformational leader is focused on providing transformational opportunities and experiences, as well as advancement and developmental opportunities to its followers with a hope that they in turn will become capable and motivating leaders. The premise of the relationship within this leadership style is that both parties work together in a creative manner, learning and evolving (in Khanin, 2007, p9). A transformative leader is often considered a more principled and moral form of leadership, where the leader-follower relationship is always morally elevating, and the leader supports the followers in achieving potential they themselves considered unattainable (p10). Transformational leadership works on building a deeper level of connection and understanding between the leader and a follower, through sharing a vision and individual approach, it is also similar to the leadership approaches often praised and adopted in the contemporary workplace. Although, widely used and researched, the theory has often been criticised for the very reason that it is too fragmented and no common integration of different studies that would allow it to develop further (Ng, 2017, p402).

Table 1. Transactional and transactional leadership styles

	Transformational	Transactional
Basis	Vision-based	Exchange-based
Leadership style in summary	Encourages followers to work collaboratively towards a common goal, beyond self-interest	Leader sets clear goals and expectations and sets clear rewards for fulfilling these
Leader focus	Providing transformational experiences and opportunities to followers	Leader encourages compliance to organisational rules through rewards and punishment
Leader-follower relationship	Collaborative, creative, learning and evolving	Based on mutually beneficial transactions
Key factors	*Idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration*	*Contingent reward, active management by exception, and passive management by exception*
Key Behaviours	- Active portrayal of high level of competence - Effective use of authority and power to increase team performance - Talking about vision to encourage team to move towards goals - Energizing team through common optimistic and realistic vision - Communicating mission and purpose to align the team - Understanding everyone's unique potential and needs and encouraging them to develop and reach their full potential through critically evaluating their beliefs, ideals, and values.	- Poor and undesired behaviour corrected through discipline - In active management by exception leader is constantly monitoring and preventing any mistakes by correction before they happen - In passive management by exception the leader only gets involved when mistakes have already happened - Keeping stability in performance through task monitoring.

Source: Hargis *et al.,* 2011 and Odomeru and Ogbonna, 2013, compiled by the author

In contrast, the transactional leader bases the relationship with followers on mutually beneficial transactions, to get the desired results. The leader works on covering the basic needs of their

followers and often plays a mediating role between different groups to ensure the transactional nature is served to achieve goal (p11). In addition, transactional leadership is also believed to appeal to cover basic needs such as food, shelter, and need for affiliation. Leaders of that type are seen to be heavily concerned with profits and thus looking to maximise the productivity of employees for their wage (Bass 1990 in Tran, 2017, p 167). This leadership style has been criticised for being too process-based. Tran (2017, p178) supports the claim by arguing that transactional leadership focuses on short term growth.

Bass (1990) builds on and expands on Burns' transformational-transactional leadership paradigm. A study by Dimitry Khanin (2007) has contrasted and compared the two authors' approaches. Bass claims that these two types of leadership are not mutually exclusive, and leaders often dabble in both. Furthermore, transformational leadership is not necessarily always ethical or an elevating relationship and is dependent on the motivation of the leader. Ng (2017, p387) on the other hand points out that transformational leadership is described by several researchers as "a process of transferring positive affect from leaders to followers". Through this prism, Ng (2017, p388) also claims that this positive affective concern for employees' well-being promotes improved job performance. Khanin (2007, p22) noted that one of the key differences comes from the interpretation of the goal of leadership. Burns sees the goal of leadership theory to be the basis of creating mutual collaboration, whereas Bass' purpose for any leadership theory is to increase managerial efficiency. Thus, Khanin (2007, p23) concluded that the two approaches to the same leadership style stem from two different environments – Burns based his interpretations on political movements whereas Bass' interpretation of transactional-transformational leadership paradigm has roots in military operations. However, Bass (1990) has noted as well that the two are not mutually exclusive and that a leader should have both skills depending on the situation and phase of the company.

1.1.3 Goleman's Typology

A more modern typology of distinct leadership styles has been developed by Daniel Goleman deriving from a practical research conducted on nearly 4000 executive leaders. Goleman develops a typology six distinct leadership styles, which all fall on different spectrums of emotional intelligence. Drzewiecka and Roczniewska (2018, p163) argue that on the one hand Goleman provides a modern approach to his leadership theory basing it on practical research from the industry as well as emotional intelligence, however "it is considered a classic". This provides justification to the representation of this typology within this work as well.

The author has also argued in his review "Leadership That Gets Results" (Goleman, 2000) that effective leaders use all these styles depending on the situation. This idea has been supported by several leadership authors that effective leaders are able to adjust their styles based on the situation and context, including the father of transformational leadership Bernard Bass (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999, p206).

A summary of the six leadership styles is provided in a table in Appendix 1. The identified leadership styles by Goleman include coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting and coaching (Goleman, 2000). The coercive leader (has also been described as commanding), they provide little flexibility and inclusion, often with negative effects on organisational climate. These leaders work best in situations requiring a drastic change (p4). Authoritative leadership style provides vision and enthusiasm, they include the team to provide a common vision but allow for flexibility in determining the route (p7). The affiliative leader puts people ahead of organisational goals and understands that everyone has their unique strengths and weaknesses. Through keeping the team happy great results can be achieved (p8). The democratic leader builds trust among their followers to get their buy-in and respect, in doing this they keep the morale high, and people engaged (p10). The pacesetting leader sets very high standards for themselves as well as the team, constantly chasing for higher efficiency and a better way of doing things. In doing so, they are often apt to point out poor performers and demand more from them, destroying the organisational climate (p11). The coaching leader often takes the role of a counsellor rather than a boss, they coach their employees to achieve their personal and professional goals (p12).

Goleman (2000, p13) also points out that effective leaders who are able to swap between at least four of those leadership styles have the best outcomes in terms of business performance and organisational climate. Drzewiecka and Roczniewska (2018, p167) identified in their study that out of those leadership styles authoritative and coaching have a positive impact of employees' perception of constraints at work. Through the elimination of certain constraints employees portray more creativity and in turn motivation, which supports accomplishing common goals and strategies.

1.1.4 Generational differences

The effect of leadership style on different areas of business and work environment has been studied by numerous scholars. It has become evident that leadership influences followers from individual

job satisfaction to team performance and turnover (Anderson *et al.,* 2021, p246). This in turn plays an important role in the overall business continuity and organisational resilience.

Much like argued by Anderson *et al.* (2021, p246), one needs to be mindful of and take into consideration the values and mindsets of different generations. In other word, a leader needs to understand who their followers are. There are several different generations represented in today's hospitality workforce in Estonia, as illustrated in Figure 1. According to the generational divide provided by The Center for Generational Kinetics, four different generations are represented in this age spectrum – Gen Z (born 1996 – 2015), Millennials (born 1977 – 1995), Generation x (born 1965 – 1976) and even Baby Boomers (born 1946 – 1964) (Generational Breakdown: Info About All of the Generations – The Center for Generational Kinetics, 2021). Whilst most of the workers (by absolute numbers) in accommodation and food services in Estonia can be classified as Millennials (and baby boomers to some extent), among Gen Z the biggest proportion of employed is in accommodation and food services. This illustrates that there are several different generations represented in the workforce and as such leadership theories and leaders themselves need to be mindful of that. Similarly, Uhl-Bien *et al.* (2007, p298) have pointed out that majority of the leadership theories reflect a different time of economy, where production took precedence, whereas nowadays we are operating in an environment where a large part of our economic activity is based on knowledge transfers.

Figure 1. Employed persons by age group and economic activity in Estonia

TT0202: EMPLOYED PERSONS by Indicator and Age group. Accommodation and food service activities, 2019.
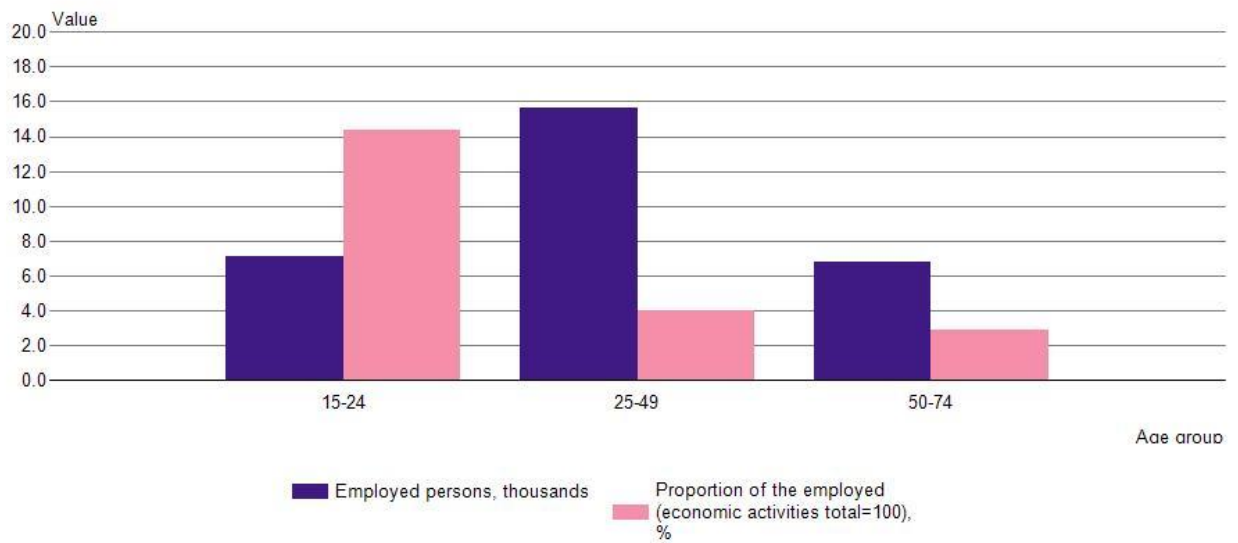
Figure 1. Employed persons by age group and economic activity in Estonia

Source: TT0202: EMPLOYED PERSONS BY AGE GROUP AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY (EMTAK 2008) (1989-2019), 2021

Millennials have a different approach to work from the previous generations. They value their personal needs above the work that needs to be done for someone else and show less employer loyalty. They are known to look for meaning and value in the work they do, place importance on work-life balance and the relationships created (Anderson *et al.,* 2021, p246). Therefore, the changes in the workforce need to be reflected on leadership styles adopted. Anderson *et al.* (2021, p246) examine the applicability of current leadership theories. Much like the drawbacks of different theories have been pointed out by them in regard to their applicability to new generations, they provide reasoning to update leadership theories to align with contemporary workplace needs. Therefore, the theory must not take into account the changes in generational attitudes and values, more so it must lend itself to situations like this, where the environment in which leaders operate has drastically changed, as is the post-pandemic world.

1.2. Hospitality leadership theories

Hospitality leadership theory studies all focus on very different aspects and relationships in the industry trying to make sense of the effect the leadership styles have. As the hospitality industry is heavily dependent on service employees, several studies have precisely focussed on this relationship, as presented in Table 2. They aim to explain which leadership styles are perceived the best by their employees, thus having an overall positive impact on employee retention, higher work morale, better standards etc which can all translate into higher customer satisfaction and in turn higher business continuity and organisational resilience. Therefore, these studies will be used as well to provide a theoretical background into hospitality leadership styles. This has been assessed through leader effectiveness, that is the leader's ability to lead and motivate the team to achieve desired goals. As such, we can draw a parallel between leadership styles which yield a higher leadership effectiveness and as such will be more successful in driving business continuity. However, the purpose of this thesis is to further examine whether this is applicable to the post COVID-19 hospitality industry leaders in Estonia.

Gui *et al.* (2020) explore the effect of transformational leadership on hospitality employees. They identify a positive correlation between transformational leadership and the organisation's long-term productivity, as such they propose using transformational leadership style trainings in hospitality for new managers (p2148). They also confirm that cultural differences have an effect in the transformational leadership effectiveness, for example, their study confirms that in individualistic cultures where transformational leadership is used, there is a stronger correlation between organisational climate, satisfaction, and performance (p2148). Hofstede's insights (Estonia - Hofstede Insights, 2021) classify Estonia as an individualistic country, therefore based on Gui *et al.* (2020) study, one could draw the parallel between transformational leadership and organisational climate, satisfaction, and performance.

Table 2. Summary of Hospitality leadership literature

Authors	Title	Key findings
Huertas-Valdiva, Gallego-Burin, Llorens-Montes (2019)	Effects of different leadership styles on hospitality workers	- Empowering and paradoxical styles have a positive impact on psychological empowerment, which is necessary for job engagement. - Servant leadership was not found as a precondition for psychological empowerment
Kara, Uysal, Sirgy & Lee (2013)	The effects of leadership style on employee well-being in hospitality	- Positive effect between transformational leadership and employee well-being
Schwepker Jr. & Dimitrou (2021)	Using ethical leadership to reduce job stress and improve performance quality in the hospitality industry	- Perceived ethical leadership reduces job stress and thus improves performance quality of employees
She, Li, Yang & Yang (2020)	Paradoxical leadership and hospitality employees' service performance role of leader identification and need for cognitive closure	- Paradoxical leadership has a positive relation to employee's leader identification and as such increases performance quality
Ling, Liu & Wu (2016)	Servant Versus Authentic Leadership: Assessing Effectiveness in China's Hospitality Industry	- Although both positively associated, servant leadership has a more direct and significant impact on promoting trust climate and positive work attitudes of employees.

Source: Compiled by the Author, all individual works refenced in bibliography

Testa and Sipe (2012) build on previous hospitality and tourism management competency models and emphasising the challenges of the ending economic crisis and the uncertainty of the industry, build their own competency model for service-leadership. They identify three key areas in which hospitality leaders' competencies must lie to have a positive impact on the business and the people. The identified competencies are categorised into business-savvy, people-savvy and self-savvy, each consisting of several sub-competencies (p652). Business-savvy competencies are divided into

planning, number wise, continuous improvement, strategic decision-making, systems thinking, technical service and results - oriented (p652). Under people - savvy they list competencies such as interpersonal, communication, expressive service, team orientation, coaching and training, inspiration, cultural alignment, and networking. And qualities are self-savvy are understood as accountability, professionalism, self-development, time management, spirit of optimism and change management (p652).

This study built on the previous competency models, however, also identified unique competencies placing more emphasis on service specific competencies. In addition, whilst previous competency models were heavily skewed towards business acumen, Testa and Sipe suggest based on their findings that a balance of the three identified areas may be required (2012, p656). As this is one of the newer studies on hospitality leadership competency models, it provides a more similar environmental context in which the study was carried out and as such provides a more relevant model for the purpose of this thesis.

Another study by Kara *et al.* (2013), examines the effect transformational and transactional leadership styles in hospitality have on employee well-being and quality of life. They suggest a positive link between transformational leadership style and employee well-being and quality of life. They emphasise the importance of employee well-being to standards, reduced turnover, and a higher business performance in the long term. As such, they suggest a positive impact of practicing transformational leadership in the hospitality sector to achieve better business results and therefore, providing a point of further investigation for the purposes of this thesis. The study is carried out among employees of 5* hotels in Turkey, thus its limitations in terms of scalability and wider applicability must be kept in mind.

One of the most applied leadership theories to hospitality leaders is the servant leadership style. In its essence it shares several similarities with transformational leadership style. The key idea is that leaders are motivated to serve their followers. It levels the relationship between the leader and the follower by offering an employee-centric and ethical approach (Brownell, 2010, p366). Brownell identifies servant leadership in increasing importance given the uncertain environment. Huertas-Valdivia *et al.* (2019) also make reference to servant leadership style. In a 2009 study Parolini, Patterson, and Winston (as cited in Brownell, 2010, p366) identified that there are five key differences distinguishing transformational and servant leaders; these differences are in the areas of "ethics, focus, motive and mission, development and means of influence". The main difference between the two leadership styles is the underlying focus of the leader for their actions, for

transformational leader it is the organisational goals, whereas servant leader's main motivation is developing their people as an end goal in itself (p367).

First clear principle of servant leadership is presumed to have been presented by Walker in 1986 (p14). Chon and Zoltan (2019) have also conducted a study emphasising the importance of servant leadership in hospitality, as the best approach to handle the social complexities of contemporary society, promoting ethical behaviour and employee appreciation (p3372). The study highlights how several hospitality companies have adopted servant leadership as part of their ethos, even written into their company policies, and as such attribute much of their success to it. These hotel companies include Marriott Hotels, The Ritz-Carlton (p3373). The Cornell Hotel School has even created an online program "practicing servant leadership" led by the pioneer of Servant leadership research in hospitality Judi Bownell (p3374). Chon and Zoltan (2019) conducted an extensive literature review on the servant leadership research within the hospitality sector and identified 38 publications, of which majority (n=22) is focused on accommodation (p375). This points towards the relevance of servant leadership style within the hospitality sector. It must be noted as a limitation of the examined publications in Chon and Zoltan's study that nearly all research was based on employees assessing their leaders on those elements. There appears to be a lack of research for hospitality managers to assess themselves and their peers on leadership qualities and competencies.

Another study has looked at the effect of different leadership styles on hospitality workers. Huertas-Valdivia *et al.* (2019) identified several types of leadership styles as their theoretical framework for analysing their effect on hospitality workers. Empowering leadership promotes employee autonomy in making decisions and taking more responsibility of their role. Leaders fostering empowering leadership style promote self-development, autonomous behaviour, and workers assuming leadership within their role (p404). As identified by the name, they empower their employees to make choices freely through showing trust and support for individual growth into leadership. Empowering leadership is often associated with a strong positive effect on psychological empowerment which leads to higher self-leadership, self-management, and self-efficiency. As such, it can be argued that empowering leadership fosters a psychologically safe workplace conditions where employees more engaged and as such it is likelier to yield stronger operational efficiency (p404).

Paradoxical leadership style (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.,* 2019, p404) allows to unite and find balance between the conflicting poles of conditions and demands of the company. As such paradoxical

leaders have to mitigate and integrate organisational and individual demands. Within everyday leadership this means allowing a degree of decision autonomy to individuals while retaining control over bigger decisions (Zhang *et al.,* 2015, p541). Zhang *et al.* (2015, p541) and Lavine (2014, p193) point to a potential positive impact on paradoxical leadership style on employees as frontline employees (who are often the determining parties for customer satisfaction and retention) are often conflicted with paradoxical decisions between company regulations and customising service for each customer. As such it is perceived that leaders practicing paradoxical leadership provide a good example of combining and integrating different interests into a balanced solution. Furthermore, paradoxical leaders are able to skilfully adapt their approach and demands for individual employees according to their skills and personal needs, while still maintaining a common standard for the team (Huertas-Valdivia *et al.,* 2019, p405).

1.3 COVID-19 effects on leadership

Although, hospitality is a hard-hit industry by the pandemic, little academic research has been yet published on the effect of the pandemic on specifically hospitality leadership. However, there exists literature which analyses the effect of COVID-19 on wider leadership and provides guidance to leaders to manage through the crisis. As such literature now exist from a variety of fields (politics and healthcare primarily) and several authors (D'Auria and De Smet, 2020; Forster *et al,* 2020; Orangefiery, 2020; Kaul *et al.,* 2020) suggest that this is an unprecedented crisis that requires a special approach, the author will omit classic crisis literature and will analyse the contemporary literature dealing with the COVID-19 crisis.

Gursoy and Chi (2020) conducted a preliminary study on the types of research needed. As previously pointed out in the problem statement, hospitality institutions are expected to adopt more digital solutions, the authors of that study point to the research need on the effect of using AI will have on operations, customers, and employees (p528). Equally, they suggest the research need to understand the different factors that impact the acceptance of the use of digital solution (p529), the adoption of which to the hospitality operations, they argue "will likely be integral in the near future" (p528). They argue that customers are not likely to return straightaway as trust is still low towards hospitality businesses and therefore, they insist that further research needs to be conducted urgently on what drivers will invite customers to return (p527). However, up until then, this duty falls on the industry leaders themselves. In their paper Gursoy and Chi (2021, p529) invite

academia to conduct further research to "generate new knowledge that can provide insight to the industry about how to transform their operations according to newly emerging customers' needs and wants due to COVID-19 pandemic".

The literature review of papers written on the effect of COVID-19 on leadership finds that several common themes emerge that are deemed necessary for effective management during crisis. Kerrissey and Edmondson (2020, p5) emphasize the need to go against basic human instincts and to act with urgency rather than wait for additional information. Indeed, Kaul *et al.* (2020, p812) also argue that leaders must act with a sense of urgency without delaying decisions to wait for more information. Yet, they must remain adaptable and willing to change course if the situation changes. Foster *et al.* (2020, p421) also bring out this point while adding that flexibility remains an important factor. D'Auria and De Smet (2020, p5) also refer to adaptive decision-making.

The second key element revealed in the literature is open and transparent communication (Kaul *et al.,* 2020; Kerrissey and Edmondson, 2020; Orangefiery 2020; Forster *et al.,* 2020; D'Auria and De Smet). During the crisis, open and honest communication is key. As D'Auria and De Smet (2020, p6) put it: "thoughtful, frequent communication shows that leaders are following the situation and adjusting their responses as they learn more. This helps them reassure stakeholders that they are confronting the crisis. Leaders should take special care to see that each audience's concerns, questions, and interests are addressed". As the pandemic is an unprecedented crisis to which most organisations did not have a prepared crisis plan; clear strong and open communication helps to mitigate this and foster collaboration (Forster *et al.,* 2020, p421). A survey conducted among US organisations revealed that employees assess honest and transparent communication during the pandemic as crucial (Orangefiery, 2020, p14). The study also revealed, that only one in four respondents received communications that was reflecting of three important leadership qualities which are clear messaging, admitting to now knowing the answers and showing openness for further discussions (p18). However, leaders assessed these elements of their communication on average 10 points higher than the employees (p17). This shows that communication is a complex matter that requires more mastery from the leaders as they themselves might assess.

Further common element revealed in the literature is to enable and empower the right people to make decisions as "…in crises characterized by uncertainty, leaders face problems that are unfamiliar and poorly understood. A small group of executives at an organisation's highest level cannot collect information or make decisions quickly enough to respond effectively" (D'Auria and De Smet, 2020, p2). Enabling others to act and creating collaboration through multidisciplinary

teams, facilitates relationships and creates an environment of trust (Dirani *et al.*, 2020, p381). In addition, within this scope of empowered decision-making, leaders must respond productively to mistakes, by focusing on the goal and not assigning blame when things go wrong (Kerrissey and Edmondson, 2020, p6). Kaul *et al.* (2020, p812) also argue that during crisis leaders should relinquish top-down control and opt for a mote flat structure of leadership that involves many. In addition, this allows to create a safe space for open discussion and ideas (Forster *et al.,* 2020, p421).

The pandemic is vast and impacts employees in many ways, as such leaders must act with empathy in everything they do as there is a lot of uncertainty (Dirani *et al.*, 2020, p383). As Forster *et al.* (2020, p421) point out "The demonstration of empathy is critical in crises in which human tragedy is frequent". This means portraying genuine care for one's employees through creating open channel of communication, providing guidance on resources available for support and encourage self-care (Orangefiery, 2020, p22). As such, Kaul *et al.* (2020, p822) tie this all together and argue that through inclusion and creating a space for idea generation, leaders foster purposeful communication whereby they can show empathy while also instilling assurance and confidence in team. More importantly, D'Auria and De Smet (2020, p5) acknowledge the amount of stress and mental strain exerted on leaders themselves during this time of crisis, and a such they emphasize that leaders should also be open to receiving empathy from others as well as look after their own well-being.

Other key behaviours and mindsets important during the pandemic as separately pointed out by the authors are the importance of retaining a positive outlook for the future, while remaining realistic (Kaul *et al.*, 2020, p822). D'Auria and De Smet (2020, p4) also point out that leaders need to be careful not to be overconfident in the start of the crisis but should promote positivity towards the end of the crisis to inspire the team. Dirani *et al.* (2020, p390) emphasize that leaders need to be able to foster and create organisational resilience. This means being open to innovative and creative ideas. Not all crises are the same and as such leaders need to be able to be flexible and agile in their responses to new arising challenges (p391). In addition, leader must be capable of constantly updating their knowledge on the situation for then to be able to adapt to new strategies (Kerrissey and Edmondson, 2020, p7), all the while they must keep their short-term decisions aligned with the big picture and keep a focus on the long-term (Kaul *et al.,* 2020, p812).

1.4 Organisational resilience

Another theory that provides a relevant framework to investigate the leadership style of Estonian of hotel managers and its changes due to COVID-19 is that of organisational resilience (OR). The most well-known framework for organisational resilience is created by The International Organization for Standardization – ISO. They define organisational resilience as "the ability of an organisation to absorb and adapt in a changing environment to enable it to deliver its objectives and survive and prosper" (ISO 22316:2017, 2021). Through this explanation it can be argued that each organisation's and thus its leader's goal is to ensure a high level of resilience through their actions and leadership. Equally, as the purpose of this thesis is to examine leadership changes during the COVID-19 and how hotel managers ensure business continuity, they must therefore ensure organisational resilience.

There is no one way to measure resilience and organisations can only be more or less resilient. However, the ISO framework provides specific areas that organisations should consider, specific actions in each of those categories and expected outcomes that can indicate to organisation's higher level of resilience (ISO 22316:2017, 2021). The general principles listed in the ISO to consider for OR are shared vision and purpose; understanding organisational context; effective and empowered leadership; a culture that supports resilience; shared information and knowledge; availability of resources; development and coordination of management; continual improvement; ability to manage and anticipate change (ISO 22316:2017, 2021). The actions and expected outcomes specific to each principle are listed in Appendix 2. However, leaders can have an influence on a number of those elements. Groenendaal and Helsloot (2020, p104) list that organisations with higher OR are adaptable to changing conditions, cohesive in preserving continuity, operating efficiently and contain diverse set of talents to enable innovation.

The theoretical section has given an overview of different leadership styles, looking at generational differences and the COVID-19 impact on leadership. This theoretical background also forms the basis of further qualitative research and helps to answer the research questions and the central research question - what kind of leadership style was used by hotel managers in Estonia and how has the COVID-19 pandemic changed it. The following sections will describe the methodology and present the analysis of research findings.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

In this section the author will give an overview of the chosen research methods for this thesis. The first subsection will give an overview and the explanation of chosen research methods and the sample. The second subsection will present data collection and data analysis methods chosen for this thesis.

2.1. Research methods and the sample

The research method chosen for this thesis was qualitative method. As Rossmann and Rallis (2017, p4) put it: "Qualitative research begins with questions; its ultimate purpose is learning". The aim of this thesis is to build knowledge and create understanding around the leadership experiences of hotel managers before and during COVID-19 and understand what the key changes have been in Estonian hotel managers' leadership styles and if at all. Through qualitative research the author aims to answer the research questions while seeking the answer's to "why" and "how" questions (Edmonds and Kennedy, 2017, p141).

The sample consists of Estonian hotel General Managers of hotels of different size and nature and one CEO of an industry association. The sampling type can be classified as convenience sampling as convenience sampling "follows the principle of easy access, easy to find or willingness to cooperate" (Õunpuu, 2014, p142). The author chose to conduct the research among general managers only as they are mainly responsible in ensuring business continuity through their management. In addition, using an employee assessment on leadership evaluation would not prove useful due to lack of staff members in the industry during crisis, staff being very new to the industry and a knowledge gap. Due to the small market size and limited access to high-position individuals in the sector, no further criteria in terms of hotel type or size could be applied to still reach a viable number of participants. However, to choose the participants the author contacted hotel managers based on the hotels list in Estonia from Tripadvisor (Estonia Hotels and Places to Stay, 2021) as well as using personal knowledge. In total 26 general managers and CEOs of the sector organisations were contacted via email to request an interview (online or on-site depending on the participant's preference). There were in total 11 respondents, with whom semi-structured interviews were conducted. The details of the sample participants are listed in Appendix 2.

2.2. Data collection and analysis of results

The chosen method for the data gathering was to conduct qualitative, semi-structured interviews with the participants. Semi-structured interviews allow to ask follow-up questions based on what has been said (Flick, 2018, p233) and fit the purpose of this thesis, which is to learn about people's beliefs, perspectives and make meaning (p241) of hotel managers experiences. The interviews were conducted in Estonian, as no non-Estonian hotel managers agreed to participate in the study. The author has decided to translate the data after the analysis of data (Flick, 2018, p239).

The semi-structured interview contained 16 questions (Appendix 4), and resulting from research questions the interview guide aimed to compare the pre-pandemic leadership to the current leadership style. As the definition of competence states, it is dependent on context. In addition, the standard for organisational resilience lists understanding the up-to date organisational context as one of the main principals (ISO 22316:2017, 2021). Thus, the first two questions aimed to create understanding of the context in which these competencies were used. Questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 are based on the general leadership theory and through determining important priorities and attributes aim to categorize the leadership style used. Questions 7 and 8 are based on Testa and Sipe's (2012) hospitality leaders' competency model to understand where the leaders' priorities lie and which competencies, they deem important. Questions 4, 6, and 8 also reflect the COVID-19 impact on leadership theory and aim to gain understanding on changes in priorities, attributes, and competencies. Questions 9 through to 12 are inspired by the servant leadership theory (Brownell, 2010; Huertas-Valdivia *et al.* (2019)). Questions 13 and 14 are control questions to questions 3 to 8, to understand how leaders themselves perceive their leadership style and the changes in it. Equally, these questions sought to unravel any further competencies and leadership elements not mentioned before. Questions 15 and 16 were also inspired by the COVID-19 impact on leadership and to understand changes in stakeholder management.

Interviews were conducted from 02.11 – 25.11 virtually via Microsoft teams (7 interviews) and face-to-face (4 interviews). The interviews varied from 32 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes in length. All interviewees were asked the permission to record the interview for data analysis purposes. The interviews were transcribed using Allumäe, Tilk & Asadullah *"Advanced Rich Transcription System for Estonian Speech"* (Baltic HLT, 2018). The transcripts were then further reviewed or any discrepancies and fitted into an appropriate format. In the first part of data analysis the transcripts were then read several times and color-coded based on research questions to identify

common themes. The purpose of qualitative data analysis of a text is to find parts of text with similar meaning, this includes words, mentions, expressions and sentences (Õunpuu, 2014, p183). Based on this different groups of analysis are identified and marked with an appropriate category name (Õunpuu, 2014, p183).

Based on the initial review of texts and highlighted key concepts, the author summarized the key concepts and quotes in a table for better overview (Appendix 6). The table was then used to categorize different themes and present them in the following analysis section.

3. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

In this section the results of the semi-structured interviews are presented and analysed based on the research questions. Recommendations and conclusions will be given in the last subsection of this chapter.

3.1 Pre COVID-19 leadership styles among hotel managers in Estonia

This section analyses the leadership styles and competencies that were perceived to be used by hotel managers in Estonia prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview guide contained several questions that were designed to gain an understanding of the perceived leadership style of a good hotel manager prior to the pandemic. The responses will be analysed and juxtaposed against the leadership theory as follows.

Testa and Sipe (2012) developed a service-leadership competency model post global economic crises of 2008 which found that at large all hospitality leaders' competencies can be categorised into three areas: business-savvy, people-savvy and self-savvy. Unlike previous models, that were skewed towards business knowledge, theirs emphasized a need for a balance between the three to have a positive impact on people and business. This was confirmed by the respondents who unanimously confirmed that basic leader competencies such as strategic thinking, financial management and people management are important competencies not only for a good hotel manager, but for leaders of all industries as stated that "leader qualities today are considered quite universal (…) and in the grand scheme of things, if you can manage a boot factory, what challenge does a hotel pose (…) because in general, managing is working with people, finances and planning strategies" (Hotel 2).

Portraying a high-level of competence is also relevant for transformational leaders (Table 1). Most interviewees also confirmed that having extensive industry background and a good understanding of different roles within the hotel, allows them to understand the company specifics and their team better "I perceive industry knowledge really important (…) it adds another competency, and you will know the specifics a lot better" (Hotel 8). Being self-savvy and managing one's well-being was also confirmed as an important quality for hotel managers as "self-leadership and self-motivation, or me are very important for a manager, especially for high level managers. Whether

we like it or not there is not much motivation around high-level managers (…) because it is lonely at the top" (Hotel 8).

Testa and Sipe (2012, p654) point out "(…) people-savvy behaviours are geared toward developing positive interactions with others. In the hospitality and tourism context such interactions or "moments of truth" will be commonplace and form the foundation for both employee and customer satisfaction". Being people-savvy was also held in high value as appeared from the interviews. All interviews emphasized the importance of good interpersonal skills and the need for hotel managers to "be a people person, towards your guests or clients as well as towards your team members, the internal clients" (Org 1). Under the people-savvy umbrella Testa and Sipe (2012, p652) also listed team-orientation as well and all hotel managers emphasize the importance of "setting an example for the team, being hands on and a team player" (Hotel 1) and "creating intradepartmental synergies and encouraging collaborations" (Hotel 2). This also aligns with transformational leadership as they also encourage collaboration beyond self-interest (Table 1). Therefore, Testa and Sipe's hospitality leadership competency model found confirmation in the research and Hotel managers in Estonia agree that hotel managers need a balance between people-savvy, business-savvy and self-savvy competencies, and none of those was emphasized more important than the other.

An interlinked quality to team-orientation that was revealed in the interviews is trust to provide autonomy to the team. In order to be a team player, the hotel managers need to "delegate, because this shows the person that you trust them" (Hotel 9) and "be there for your team and contribute thoughtfully, but not in a controlling way (…) because a person physically cannot do all the jobs alone, and that is why you need to trust your team" (Hotel 5).

Huertas-Valdivia *et al.* (2019) analysed different leadership styles within hospitality and listed empowering leadership style as one where leaders promote employee autonomy, fostering decision-making and taking more responsibility of their role. One interview explicitly confirmed that by saying that "the level of decision-making has been taken to the front line, and every employee within the realm of their area has to take the responsibility, and even a bit more, and no-one will be punished if they make a decision that goes above their usual limits" (Hotel 1). Hotel leaders understand the relevance of empowering front-line employees and the importance it has on individual autonomy and employee development.

Empowering leaders trust employees and support their growth into leaders themselves. The qualities of empowering leadership were confirmed in most of the interviews with hotel managers.

One hotel manager said that his goal is to "make myself unnecessary as a leader (…) and to achieve that I chase two things, autonomy (…) and mastery. And it is my job to help them develop these skills and competencies, that allow them to be autonomous. Along with autonomy, a level of responsibility must be given as well" (Hotel 2). One interviewee added that hotel managers are passionate about developing people into leaders: "I really love developing people, I am always extremely proud if one of my subordinates progresses successfully" (Hotel 4). Transformational leaders also develop their followers into leaders but do that through a common vision and purpose (Odomeru and Ogbonna, 2013, p356). Although, developing followers is an element of both transformational and authoritative leadership (Goleman, 2000), developing employees as an end in itself is also an element of affiliative and empowering leadership.

In addition, affiliative leaders build loyalty and strong relationships through inspiring and building trust (Goleman, 2000). Trust was confirmed also to be a key factor in good hospitality leadership while still "being there for them, thinking along, and try to motivate" (Hotel 5). The interviews confirmed that trust is an inter-linked quality to team-orientation, and it is needed to provide autonomy to the team. In order to be a team player, the hotel managers need to "delegate, because this shows the person that you trust them" (Hotel 9) and "be there for your team and contribute thoughtfully, but not in a controlling way (…) because a person physically cannot do all the jobs alone, and that is why you need to trust your team" (Hotel 5).

As listed in Table 1. One of the key behaviours for transformational leaders is to understand the unique strengths and potential of individual team members and to encourage them to reach full potential (Hargis *et al.*, 2011; Odomeru and Ogbonna, 2013). Developing on this idea, affiliative leaders possess high emotional intelligence and understand that individual needs come above standard tasks (Goleman, 2000). In general, interviewees confirmed that they need to adapt their approach based on the person as "you need to be able to understand their thoughts and wishes, and almost relate yourself to the person you are talking to*"* (Hotel 5). When it comes to performance reviews and setting goals, another interview confirmed that managers acknowledge that the standard templates of performance reviews do not work and "personal approach is what is really important" (Hotel 3). Therefore, this shows that leaders use both affiliative leadership style and personal approach as well as authoritative style to give both positive and constructive feedback on personal performance. One interviewee also added that "people are different, and you need to take individual strengths and weaknesses into account, don't make people do something that does not suit them all, let them to things they are good at" (Hotel 10).

Transformational leaders also use a vision-based approach to encourage collaboration towards this common goal (Ng, 2017, P386). Similar approach is used by Goleman's authoritative leader sets a vision and though enthusiasm maximises each individual's input into the big strategy. In addition, they give their teams flexibility in determining how to reach their goals (Goleman, 2000, p8). The analysis of the interviews revealed that several behaviours and competencies used by the interviewees themselves and that are perceived important for hotel managers coincide with this element of authoritative and transformational leadership. Hotel managers need to have the ability of ensuring each employee understand their role in the big strategy, this was clearly stated by one interviewee: "it would be good if you know how to express yourself in an inspiring way, as each company has their own strategy, then how do you word it so that it speaks to this particular employee, so that they understand what their role is in reaching the goals we have set" (Hotel 4). Authoritative leaders need to have empathy (Goleman, 2000, p9) and this was also evidenced to be necessary for hotel leaders even before the pandemic "a good hotel leader needs to be empathetic and a good communicator" (Hotel 5). The need for great communication skills and being a people person was echoed in most interviews, "you need to be a people person and stand up for your team" (Hotel 10). Furthermore, Goleman argues that authoritative leaders portray enthusiasm (p8), and the need for passion and dedication, love for the hospitality industry was also mentioned in interviews, as "it is not a 9-5 job, therefore a certain dedication is very important" (Hotel 2), "a hotel manager should do their job with a passion, hospitality and customer service should be their love, their hobby, everything needs to start from that" confirms interview with Hotel 1 manager.

3.2 Leadership styles and competencies of hotel managers in Estonia during COVID - 19

To gain insight into how the leadership style of hotel managers has changed during COVID-19, the author asked the interviewees to describe the current situation, about their current focuses, and how that has changed from pre-pandemic years. Furthermore, the author asked about which competencies they now see important.

The interviews revealed that several behaviours and competencies have gained more importance and complexity than they did before. Although certain qualities were not necessarily linked to the crisis and are important even post-pandemic (such as empathy and resilience), all interviews

confirmed unanimously that they do not see a fundamental difference in their leadership style or priorities as a leader, "the priorities have not really changed, what has changed is the pace" (Hotel 8). The "qualities of a good hotel manager are universal and relevant at all times" (Hotel 1) and "just the scales tip towards one or the other (skill) in time" (Hotel 5). Therefore, hotel managers do not see that the pandemic has fundamentally altered their leadership style, since they are currently still operating in crisis management mode, "we are a crisis company at the moment, like probably all our friends in the industry" (Hotel 4).

The analysis of the interviews reveals that the two main factors and challenges that have the biggest effect on the competencies of hotel leaders today, can be summed up as crisis management and lack of personnel, these are equally the factors that challenge organisational resilience, which is needed to ensure business continuity. Each of those results in a complex set of interlinked competencies required for leaders to navigate the current situation as revealed from the interviews. The key categories along with key ideas are summarised in the below Table 3 and further individually expanded upon in the below chapter.

Although each of the categories presented yielded several different categories, each with a complex set of key ideas, there exists an interdependency between these categories. Figure 2. represents a scheme of the interconnectedness between the different topics.

Table 3. Summary of analysis categories and key ides

Category	Key ideas
Crisis management	1. Survival mode in hotels 2. Uncertainty
Decision-making	1. Faster 2. Adaptability to change course quickly 3. More complex and dynamic 4. Tough decisions 5. Calculated decisions – short and long-term impact in mind
Communication	1. More frequent and intensified 2. Transparency and honesty 3. Willing to admit when lacking information 4. Well-argumented communication 5. Spread of communication – to front-line employees, other hospitality managers and stakeholders
Resilience	1. Business resilience – financial 2. More efficient processes 3. Resilience to respond to personnel crisis 4. Mental resilience – knowing mental and physical limits, well-being, and stress management
Empathy	1. Increased need for more empathetic approaches towards employees 2. Due to generational differences not necessarily COVID-19 3. Listening skills
Positivity, optimism, and motivation	1. Ability to find positive elements in little things 2. Motivate the team through positivity and optimism 3. Common purpose to motivate teams 4. Staff-satisfaction surveys 5. Providing reassurance and safety
Flexibility	1. Flexible in their approaches towards employees 2. Flexible in their role – to be in the front-line of helping out when there is a lack of employees

Source: Author's creation based on the analysis

Figure 2. Interconnection of key competencies
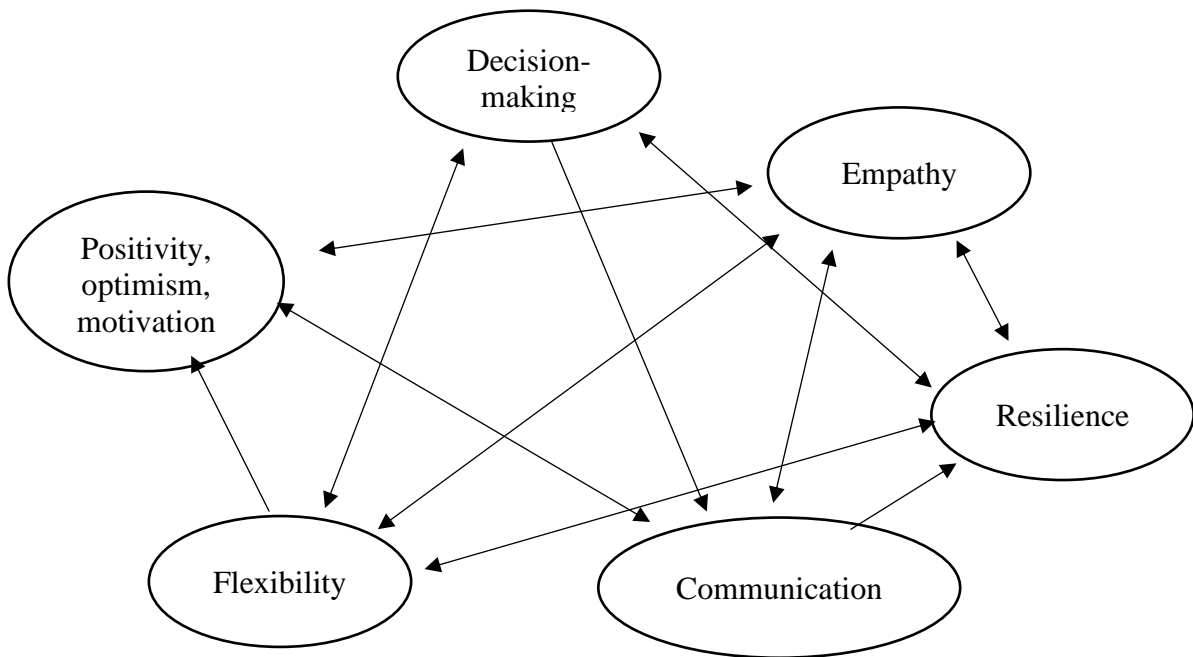
Source: Author's creation based on analysis

Resulting from the crisis decision-making has become a lot more dynamic and complex, it needs to take into account the short term context while keeping it aligned with long term strategies to ensure resilience (ISO standard, Appendix 2). The leaders need to be flexible in their decision-making, while communicating their decisions clearly and effectively. Open communication fosters positivity, optimis and motivation, as well as show empathy. ISO organisation resilience standard states that information sharing is one of the attributes of resilience (Appendix 2). In this schema clear communication also acts as information exchange and thus fosters resilience. Resilience is aslo interlinked with empathy as showing empathy towards employees and being open to reciving empathy, this enhances positivity, optimism and motivation in the team and as such helps foster stronger personnel relationships and thus maintain human resource resilience. This a biref summary of the links between the categories, the following section describes each category more indepth.

3.1.1 Crisis management

As the pandemic is still ongoing and new governmental restrictions are enforced, most respondents confirmed that they are still operating in crisis management mode. Half of the respondents explicitly pointed out that the main priority now is survival: "Main focus now is survival, and this

of course means not only the financial survival of the hotel and owners, but whether the company is able to preserve jobs and ensure the wellbeing of its employees" (Hotel 1). The ISO standard for organisational resilience defined OR as "the ability to adapt in the changing environment and survive and prosper". Therefore, it can be argued that within crisis management leaders are focused on ensuring OR. As such, hotel leaders in Estonia need possess crisis-management competencies as well as have an understanding how their leadership in this affects OR.

One of the key principles of ISO OR is understanding the up-to-date organisational context (Appendix 2). Along with crisis management, the other key characteristic of the current situation reflected in the interviews that affects the leadership style of hotel managers is the continuing uncertainty, "today we are in the situation, where even the general manager has no clue what the future holds" (Hotel 4). Similarly, the interview with Hotel 8 revealed that "the biggest challenge is in fact uncertainty, which is completely natural in this situation, but you have to be ready to react fast within your scope of means (…)". Most of the interviewees pointed out uncertainty as one of the key challenges now. However, in line with uncertainty they are constantly updating their understanding of the context "all hotel managers are updating Delfi news to see what new restrictions are coming" (Org 1). The following sections analyse each set of competencies individually.

3.1.2 Decision-making

Forster *et al.* (2020, p421) argue that during crisis it is important to remain flexible to new directions and act quickly as situation changes, rather than overanalyse and have the correct answer. The need to make quick decisions was confirmed in the interviews "*it seems that you* need to make faster decisions in crisis and take more responsibility" (Hotel 1). The manager from Hotel 8 said that there "is a lot more rapid reaction needed, but this is actually good!". Indeed, the context reveals that being able to make faster decisions, pushes the teams to be more agile which allows them to adapt to a new context faster "before we were used to having everything planned out and we'll execute when the time comes (…) but now you have to substitute your plans and react fast" (Hotel 8). This also aligns with two key principles of the OR framework, in which resilient organisations monitor the internal and external context and adjust their actions based on that, as well as respond to change in a flexible manner (Appendix 2).

In addition, for certain hotels fast decisions (along with stakeholders) meant that in the onset of the pandemic the renovation plans that were initially planned for later years, were pulled forward

(Hotel 2 and Hotel 9). Adaptability to the new situation is key as "…business-wise one of the most challenging things has been adapting (…) basically you need to rethink everything, you need to be super active, super aggressive, super creative, you need to come up with a new solution every day, to get business" (Hotel 6). In addition, the respondents said that the course of the pandemic over the past two years has been very unstable and among very low business periods, there have been busier periods, when restrictions were eased, and the number of infections was down. This also demonstrates the need for leaders to remain adaptable and flexible in their approaches.

The interviews reveal that decision – making in general has become a lot more complex and dynamic. Along with faster decision-making and adaptable approach, the interviewees agree that in the pandemic they have also had to make tougher decisions "during crisis, for sure, the number of difficult decisions you have to make, goes up drastically" (Hotel 1), mainly to guarantee the survival of a business as a whole. Indeed, the hospitality sector saw a 35% drop in the available positions from March 2020 to December 2020. "We made redundant, I think, about 40% of our employees. This choice was incredibly difficult" as confirmed by the manager of Hotel 3. One respondent said they made a conscious decision not to let anyone go (Hotel 8). On the other hand, respondents say that at the same time, their decisions have to be calculated. Kaul *et al.* (2020, p812) argued that in a crisis you must keep your focus on the bigger picture and understand how your short-term decisions fit into the long-term strategies. This principle was echoed in several interviews, Hotel 3 manager emphasized the importance of making calculated decisions, rather than acting on emotion. The interview with Hotel 1 manager also confirmed this - "(during crisis) you need to see things more in depth and further, you need to sense the short- and long-term effects of certain decisions.". Therefore, the decision-making has become more complex and hotel leaders need to act with urgency and be willing to make tough but calculated decisions.

3.1.3 Communication

Forster *et al.* (2020, p421) claimed that strong and open communication with all parties helps to mitigate through the crisis in the absence of crisis scenarios. The interviews also confirmed that as leaders the required communication has intensified on all levels. Hotel 2 manager confirmed this: "The more confusing the time, the more you quite likely have to communicate". In addition, the study conducted by Orangefiery (2020, p17-18) revealed that there is often a discrepancy in the level of quality leaders themselves assess they have in their communication and what is perceived by the employees. Most respondents, however, were aware of the shortcomings and the level of communication required is more than often offered "the communication part, that we always

consider really important, and that we do well enough, then now you notice, it is still not enough" (Hotel 8). D'Auria and De Smet (2020, p6) emphasized that during crisis communication it is important to maintain transparency and provide frequent updates, but also be open in communicating with what you know, and you do not know. Interviewees agree that as a leader you also need to be willing to admit if you do not have the information "yes (the communication) was rather honest, and (…) when you are in a difficult situation that is not dependent on you, and you either know or do not know, I have always believed there is no point to play dumb" (Hotel 2). In addition, in honest communication it is also important to paint a realistic picture, "open communication, yes, without embellishment, this is the most important thing, that you do not paint an overly negative or overly positive picture" (Hotel 6).

The level of complexity in clear and well-argumented communication has increased, and this is a competency that interviewees evaluate to have become more relevant as "the importance of communication skills has definitely become very valuable during the pandemic" (Hotel 6). This is also an element where one hotel manager assessed that further guidance should be provided to hotel managers on crisis management because "although it is well-known that during crisis the messages need to be clear and concise, orders short and easy to understand, it is not quite as easy in real life" (Hotel 7). Hotel managers have used different methods to ensure effective communication of the situation throughout the pandemic. Even though constant updates are coming from the government and people are in the information field, the analysis concludes that hotel managers, understand the importance of putting this information into their own context to communicate out to staff under their own name.

The ISO OR framework also lists maintaining close communication with stakeholders as one of the key activities to ensure OR (ISO 22316:2017, 2021). Intensified communication with all stakeholders was confirmed by all interviewees. Most hotel managers used emails to communicate official information to employees and stakeholders, with constant updates. Verbal communication was of course used in conjunction, however emails were used more "to ensure everyone gets the same information" (hotel 3). In addition, one interviewee specifically emphasized that all written communication was translated to Russian as well (Hotel 6). Therefore, hotel managers today need to have even stronger communication skills and strike a calculated balance in sharing open and honest communication, without creating confusion with mixed messages, which can be challenging due to the constantly evolving situation.

In addition, the frequency and spread of communication has highly increased as well. Employees expect to get constant updates from the hotel managers and for them to create a safe space for discussion and expressing their concerns as "(employees) want to just discuss things through, I will not have the answer to what further restrictions will come, but at least we get to discuss together (…)" (Hotel 6). Indeed, another interview confirmed that the frequency of communication with all employees has increased as "even though I've been in this hotel since the beginning, and of course talked a lot to my team, I don't think I have communicated with them as much over the years combined than over the last 1,5 years" (Hotel 5).

The line of communication in hotels usually goes from hotel managers to department managers and then to individual teams and employees, however this is also changing, and hotel managers need to maintain a closer communication with first level employees as "this has become extremely evident during the pandemic, maybe it was not as important before for a hotel manager that you personally communicate with all employees, but I've realised that today this is very important" (Hotel 3). The sentiment of having to communicate more with front-line workers than before is also confirmed in interview with Hotel 6 manager: "what has changed maybe is that you now have to give information to front-line workers and all the different teams beyond department managers too".

Another level of communication that has increased during the pandemic is that with other hotel managers. Kaul *et al.* (2020, p810) also claim that during a crisis the best leaders look outward for insight in better decision - making. Indeed, sharing information and knowledge is also listed as one of the key activities for OR (ISO 22316:2017, 2021). The interviews revealed a two-fold reason for increased communication with other hotel managers whether direct, or through industry organisations, one for the purpose of information sharing, on best practices or sector updates (Hotel 4, hotel 5, hotel 6) or general support of shared experience (hotel 6, hotel 7). The interviewee from Organisation 1 also confirmed that "the crisis has definitely brought us a lot closer together, and the communication has become a lot more frequent and lot richer in content". Therefore, as evidenced the need for hotel managers to communicate more, and to communicate more effectively has become increasingly important during the pandemic.

3.1.4 Resilience

Dirani *et al.* (2020, p390) define resilience as the ability to move ensure a business continuity post pandemic, so that the organisation is even better off than before the crisis. ISO OR framework

further states that organisations need to be able to respond to internal and external changes (Appendix 2). They note that on the one hand resilience requires adaptable and agile responses to arising challenges, on the other hand it is about being innovative and creative in one's approaches on how to come out of the crisis (p391). The need for this kind of resilience, was confirmed through the interviews. The financial challenges, as well as reputational challenges of the sector, condition the leaders to rethink how to keep the business afloat and attract new talent. One interviewee said that the necessity to avoid close contact of people allowed them to improve on their kitchen management processes and the adoption of virtual communication tools for commercial teams has made them more efficient, for example, "yes, definitely, there are some things we will take with us from this pandemic (…), a good crisis cannot be wasted, something needs to be picked up from here" (Hotel 8). In addition, the interviewee from Organisation 1 says that the crisis has given an opportunity for leader to critically evaluate their operations, and be open to innovative and creative solutions, and adopt technological solutions where appropriate to alleviate the lack of personnel, manage expenses and make operations more efficient.

The need for resilience is reflected of course in the need to respond to financial challenges, as well as solve the personnel crisis. The interview with manager of hotel 6 confirmed that, as they have taken an ambitious goal to become the best employer in the sector and this means reviewing every step of the employee experience: "Today it is much more difficult to find good people, and now we basically need to rethink our entire offering". Resilience was an evident need from the onset of the pandemic and the first lockdown, "we had weekly zoom meetings, to find ways how to stay in the picture, (…) and we tried to generate all sorts of ideas on what to do when we can once again reopen and should we do something differently" (Hotel 5). In addition, financial management was evaluated just as important before the pandemic but "it is evident that today managing expenses is in bigger focus. I've always paid more attention to revenues than expenses but today it is unavoidable that you have to spend as much as necessary and as little as possible" (Hotel 2). Ensuring revenues and financial survival requires thinking differently daily about "how to turn that euro into two" (Hotel 6).

On the other hand, resilience also means mental resilience. D'Auria and De Smet (2020, p5) argue that during the crisis leaders need to look after their own well-being as the built-up stress, strain and uncertainty in prolonged crisis situation can inhibit their abilities in making sound judgement and coping with the situation. Most respondents listed stress tolerance and strong nerves as necessary competencies for hotel managers during the pandemic. One hotel manager said agreed that "the stress-levels are very high, and now I have to deal quite a lot with my personal stress

management" (Hotel 7). Interviewees from Hotel 1 and 6 agreed that the requires you to know your mental and physical limits and that "finding internal motivation in crisis is always one of the most challenging things" (Hotel 6). In dealing with reduced revenues, lack of personnel and covering service tasks "the risk of burning out has become really apparent" (Organisation 1) among hotel managers. Therefore, resilience to handle difficult situations and manage one's stress levels has become more important and necessary during the pandemic. Furthermore, as Forster *et al.* claim, "the leader should model the importance of self-care, ensuring they are match-fit for the challenges by ensuring adequate sleep, good nutrition and adequate exercise" (2020, p421). An element of self-leadership is thus also more important for managers.

3.1.5 Empathy

Reynolds and Quinn (as cited in Wardman, 2020, p1110) describe empathy as encompassing "the inter-personal processes of shared situational awareness, understanding, and feeling that someone might have with others and can be important during a crisis to engender trust in leaders". Empathy is crucial during a crisis, especially in one where human tragedy is present (Forster *et al*., p421). Most respondents agree that empathy has become a lot more important now during the pandemic, *"often just calming people down and empathy have definitely become very valuable during the pandemic"* (Hotel 6). However, some respondents who assess empathy to be more important now than before did not attribute to this to the pandemic but to generational changes. "Those, who do not have empathy towards their team, are losers in this situation (…) today the sort of psychological counselling is extremely important in a leader's first aid kit, and this was not as apparent before, but of course this has changed in time with new generations coming on" (Org 1). Indeed, as Anderson *et al.* (p246, 2021) point out leaders have to be mindful to who their followers are, understanding that each generation carries different values and mindsets. Therefore, the need for hotel leaders to be more empathetic is likely not to yield post-pandemic.

Affiliative leaders put people ahead of tasks and goals, and they are closer their teams in terms of building deep and trusting relationships (Goleman, 2000, p8). This was also confirmed by another interviewee (Hotel 9) when asked what competencies are deemed more important "I wouldn't say necessarily it is due to COVID, but humanity and the sort of empathy, are what have become (more important) in the 2000s". Indeed, when asked what competencies they would learn more about or like to improve on, only a few said that they would like to learn more about psychology (Hotel 6 and hotel 7) because "if the main resource that makes you money is people, then it is very difficult if you don't get people's psychology" (Hotel 7). Another competency related to empathy that has

become increasingly more necessary is listening skill as "this is an incredible skill that you can constantly develop, that I myself am still learning, one thing is to listen, but another is to actually understand what is being said to you" (Hotel 7). Therefore, with the rise of more people-centric themes within leadership, it can be argued that the leadership style is also changing more towards affiliative, as leaders need to have higher emotional intelligence.

3.1.6 Positivity, optimism, and motivation

Dirani *et al.* (2020, p384) point out that during the pandemic positive reinforcement and showing further appreciation for employees' work are of paramount importance. Indeed, D'Auria and De Smet (2020, p6) also argue that during crisis leaders have to carry out an important part of their role and have a positive impact on their employees. The need for hotel leaders to have positivity and optimism was evidenced in most interviews as "in this situation, we try to find even the smallest things that have gone well and would give us joy, and then we give ourselves a big pat on the back" (Hotel 4). Although currently often challenging to find but "humour is part of the deal. There has to be some humour in every day, I've always said that when there is no humour in your days, it is time to call it quits with tourism. So far we have had it!" (Hotel 7). Therefore, finding little positives and bringing some light-hearted humour to the team, is crucial in a challenging time, and hotel managers "have to keep seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, hoping it is not a train" (Hotel 6).

Authoritative leaders are enthusiastic and motivate the team to deliver organisational goals (Goleman, 2000, p8). The interviews confirm the use of this leadership style as the unstable situation of the sector has left the workforce unmotivated and lacking, and there is a lot of anxiety among employees regarding their jobs, but managers cannot let that consume the workplace as certain results still need to be delivered. Therefore, this also poses a great challenge to the managers "as personally for me, motivating the team is an even bigger challenge (than financial well-being). Let's be honest, in this situation motivating the team is…I don't think there's another sector where it is as difficult" (Hotel 5). Today hotel managers recognise that they need to have a better understanding of how to motivate their teams with non-monetary means and instil trust in their people because "if we want to offer a positive experience to our guests, the person greeting them needs to be positive, and as such (…) we first need to provide a positive experience to them" (Hotel 3). Even though assessed challenging, the need to portray enthusiasm and motivate the team aligns with COVID-19 management and authoritative leadership theory.

Interviews reveal that there are several ways that managers are currently trying to alleviate the motivation crisis. In Hotel 5 this is done through common purpose in the company, where each year has a clear focus which includes a lot of different activities and competitions, which bring the team closer together. For example, within the green initiative for the current year, they assigned a green ambassador who was an employee with personal connection to the purpose. Hotel 3 offers their new employees an opportunity to spend a night in the hotel as a guest, which is also considered as a motivating factor. In addition, the manager of hotel 8 yearly training trips to other hotels of the company and says that "part of the happiness and joy in the work environment, is not only work but other motivational activities as well". Therefore, hotel managers have already realised the necessity of creative approaches to motivating people and some hotels have already implemented different means, however they recognise there are more opportunities.

In addition, some respondents say they conduct yearly staff satisfaction surveys to understand their team and know what to work on. Hotel 4 said that during the pandemic they have "conducted a pulse survey once a month during the pandemic, to constantly keep tab on the "temperature" in the team. And then we review these results in a public information session to plan activities and know what to do to make it better". Hotel managers today need to be people-savvy and understand how to motivate their teams as "hotel managers today, given that the most important factor is personnel, need be not so much as managers, but leaders who take the team along, who can keep them, constantly motivate and develop them so that you don't have to change the team every few months" (Org 1).

An important element of team motivation at the moment is providing reassurance and a sense of safety to the team as "people in our sector are concerned, they want reassurance that they are not going to get made redundant, whether they will have a job, whether they will receive their pay on time, this is important for them and it has to be said and reassured to them constantly. This has become extremely important during this period" (Hotel 5). Indeed, providing reassurance to the team creates another level of motivation as well because "if you're told that no matter what we will not stop operating, it motivates you and the team to do everything to get through this" (Hotel 3).

3.1.7 Flexibility

Kaul *et al*. (2020, p812) argue that effective leaders need to remain flexible to new courses during crises, Dirani *et al*. (2020, p383) expand on this and say that leaders need to become more flexible

towards employees. Increasing flexibility within a team is also identified as a characteristic of affiliative leaders (Goleman, 2000). The need for flexibility was confirmed in the interviews. The interview with the manager from Hotel 10 revealed that even though they perceived themselves to be flexible even before the pandemic, they had to become more flexible during the pandemic with certain departments working from home, "trust has increased and I have become a lot more relaxed about people not being here (…), that has definitely been a change". In line with motivation and empathy, hotel managers say that they have become more flexible towards their employees in creating a better working environment to those who are still in the sector: "you can change the working environment and maybe you don't have to chase every minute anymore (…)if the least you can do is reduce the workload a little bit and let them breathe more, so that they would feel that the pressure is not on from the inside as well as the outside". Therefore, whilst interlinked with several other qualities such as keeping team motivation and showing empathy, it is also important for hotel managers to remain flexible in their approaches to employees.

Another way in which hotel managers are required to be more flexible is in being more hands-on than before: "One clear thing, that has changed now, that was less common before, is that hotel managers are helping hands-on in each department" (Org 1). This is down to sicknesses and lack of workforce in the sector. Interviews with hotels 4, 6 and 10 revealed the same where "I've been welcoming guests at the breakfast service, because we had people call in sick (…), I've cleaned rooms because we had a crisis and three people sick, but rooms need to be cleaned and not that you're going to organise people to come and do it but you will go and do it yourself, be there side-by-side for them" (Hotel 10). Today hotel managers have to fill two roles being managers and employees, which on the one hand "is negative for the stress-levels of the manager, on the other hand it is positive that now you know more of the problems" (Hotel 6).

3.1.8 Other competencies

When asked in the interviews what other competencies they feel are now important one interview revealed there is the need for deeper understanding in Human resources law and more specific legal knowledge. The first is due to the fact that on the one hand some hotel managers are currently operating without HR managers "today I am having to do HR myself, as there is just no money" (Hotel 6) and on the other there are increased redundancies, which necessitate hotel managers to understand HR processes better as "definitely in this situation the specifics of personnel policies are highly relevant, that you maybe did not have to deal with that much before, and let's be honest during COVID-19 redundancies and all these processes are unfortunately very relevant" (Hotel 5).

3.3 Support mechanisms

The analysis of the interviews revealed that all the interviewees confirmed that whilst the focus of their leadership style has shifted, they agree unanimously that there has not been a fundamental change in their leadership style.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewer to further probe what support mechanisms do hotel managers have when asking about changes in behaviours and competencies. In addition, the different support in place was also probed when asking participants about trainings, feedback and developing employees. The results will be presented as follows.

3.3.1 Support mechanisms provided

The interviews confirmed that those who manage hotels that are part of bigger international chains, have had ample support: "there is a very good support from the international chain (…) I have constant information coming (…) because those international chains have huge teams behind this – health officials and so on, who know these things (…) and it is much easier for them" (Hotel 3). Indeed, the managers in those international chains had the support in terms of specific guidelines for managing COVID-19. The support materials in the form of videos, trainings and guidelines, allowed hotel managers to support their team with further communication because "if everything is demonstrated to you, and you know what to do, you are not afraid anymore (…) you lose the fear and you have confidence" (Hotel 3). Indeed, big chains and corporations have more means to provide this kind of support and they have a plethora of online trainings already in place that can be offered to teams and employees (Hotel 2, Hotel 3). Although some support was evidenced to have been in place and some chains also offered well-being and stress management webinars to hotel managers, one interviewee confirms this by saying "that there is quite a lot, one thing of course is providing information, so that we constantly know what's going on and if new restrictions are coming (…) and then there's these like how are you cooping and how are you doing kind of webinars, and how do you take care of yourself. These are of course necessary" (Hotel 4). Another hotel manager said the chain has organised trainings on "how to reduce stress, how to delegate how to notice risk factors etc" (Hotel 6). Therefore, international chains have been able to provide different support materials to the hotel managers, although support on well-being and stress management was not provided by most chains.

One interviewee said that there were no perceived support mechanisms in place and that "only the strong will survive", however, they did note that being part of an industry association "it does not quite give you any practical tools, but it is like a nice support group, like AA to support each other" (Hotel 7). Indeed, it was also noted that industry associations, now function as a "spokesperson for us and they are giving information an all activities and what could be done better or if you don't know where to go or who to turn to (…), I can say they have been a very supportive organisation for us" (Hotel 6). Industry associations also have an important role as sense-makers because "sometimes the laws are just so complicated that you don't understand, so they break it down for you, what it means" (Hotel 4). Therefore, in general hotels that are not part of big hotel chains have perceived industry associations to be supportive from the perspective of sharing the experience and interpreting the regulations.

3.3.2 Further support deemed necessary

Two respondents said that they would like to see more industry associations organise more seminars, trainings, and get-togethers between other hotel managers (Hotel 9). Another interviewee confirmed that it would be great to have resources on "how to deal with the situation better (…), some stress-release options (…) even up to guidance on mediation" (Hotel 10). However, it must be noted that these were both noted as "nice-to-haves" not necessities. In addition, another interviewee confirmed that having more resources on crisis management and crisis communication "it seems to me that crisis management is a topic, where there is still a lot to learn" (Hotel 7). Indeed, an interview with a person from one of the industry associations did confirm during COVID-19 they organised seminars for different hygiene safety rules along with Enterprise Estonia, but they admit that "we did have general assembly meetings once a year, and we would usually invite someone inspiring to talk (…) but we did not really have any separate seminars for hotel managers" (Org 1). In addition, two interviewees also said they would like to learn more about psychology. However, in general from the interviews it can be concluded, that most of the need for support, is something that hotel managers perceive to be a nice addition, rather than a necessity.

In addition, the analysis reveals that the existence of sharing best practices is greatly appreciated. This is in place more systematically in chained hotels, and through increased communication and

collaboration in industry associations, sharing best practices has become more frequent among other hotel managers as well. This practice was recognised as useful and important to have.

3.4 Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis of the interviews revealed that before COVID-19 that there was no one leadership style used, rather elements of transformational, authoritative, affiliative, and empowering leadership found most confirmation through the interviews. Goleman (2000) and Bass (1990) both argue that effective leaders use different styles and approaches depending on situation and context. Furthermore, Testa and Sipe's (2012) service-leadership competency model found confirmation as hotel managers listed business-, people- and self-savvy competencies all important.

The analysis further revealed that currently managers are still operating in crisis management mode and as such the two main challenges that hotel managers have to navigate are uncertainty and personnel. Whilst there is some evidence of organisational resilience principles being used, as the "main focus now is survival" (hotel 1) and ISO standard describes OR as "the ability to adapt to changes (…) and survive" (ISO 22316:2017, 2021), the author recommends hotel leaders to familiarise themselves with the ISO standard and include those principles along with actionable steps to their leadership style to ensure higher OR and business continuity.

Most hotel managers agree that their leadership style has not fundamentally changed but certain elements have become more important, and the focus has slightly shifted. Based on the previous analysis it can be concluded that the leadership focus has shifted from being process and business centric, to being people - centric. Whilst the crisis is not over, the analysis does indicate that the impact on the industry is long-lasting and as such people - centric approach will continue past COVID-19, as this was also linked to generational changes in the workforce. Therefore, it can be concluded that affiliative leadership style has gained more relevance during the pandemic, as these leaders possess high emotional intelligence, put people first and increase trust and build stronger emotional ties within the team (Goleman, 2000). In addition, ISO standard also states that it is necessary to review organisational resources and changes in the context (ISO 22316:2017, 2021). Hotel leaders also said they would like to have more knowledge on psychological factors. Therefore, the author recommends industry associations to work with hotel leaders and psychology

professors to develop a training course for hotel managers that gives an overview of psychology and looks at psychology in management and leadership.

Frequent communication was listed as an important competency for leaders during crisis. Forster *et al.* (2020, p421) argued that frequent communication helps to mitigate lack of crisis-management plans. Therefore, the author recommends hotel leaders to have specific communication tools such as newsletters or intranet to ensure relevant communication reaches all employees in time.

Furthermore, the ISO standard states that to increase OR sharing knowledge and information is an important principle for leaders to employ (ISO 22316:2017, 2021). In addition, the interviews confirm that sharing experiences and best practices would be helpful," it would be good to have some seminars" (Hotel 10) . Thus, to increase the OR of the industry and in turn individual hotels, the author recommends for industry associations to create an online platform for sharing best practices as well as organise regular seminars with trainings and networking to share best practices. D'Auria and De Smet (2020, p5) point out that crisis exerts increased pressure on leaders which often leads to burnout. Interview with Hotel 10 manager confirms "it would be great to have guidance on how to get by, from stress management to even meditation". Therefore, the author recommends industry associoations to create trainings and courses for hotel managers on well-being and stress management.

4. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This thesis does lend itself to all the hotel managers in Estonia, due to the small size of the market, it is challenging to break down the sampling further in terms of different hotel locations, sizes, and types of hotels. Therefore, further research could be conducted based on these different criteria to identify and account for more specific leadership changes based on hotel type, size, location etc.

Secondly, this research has considered only the view of hotel managers themselves on the changes of their leadership styles, as they are able to assess the changing needs of the industry better than frontline workers. On the other hand, to further assess the changes in leadership styles from an objective perspective, hotel employees could be included in the interviews. However, this might

be challenging due to the lack of stable workforce in hospitality who would be able to compare the leadership qualities now and three years ago.

Currently, the COVID19 pandemic is still not fully contained, and as the situation can be described as crisis, the leaders currently operate in a crisis leadership mode and cannot assess any radical changes in their leadership style post COVID19 pandemic. Therefore, further research should be conducted in a few years when the crisis is over or when COVID19 is no longer having a substantial impact on the daily routine, to assess if any fundamental changes to leadership style have occurred.

CONCLUSION

The hospitality and tourism sectors are important sectors both globally and locally in Estonia. In Estonia it occupied 7.8% of the national GDP in 2018 and contributed to 4.3% of the employment (OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2020 Estonia, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the industry, with a 57% drop in foreign visitors to Estonia in 2020 compared to the year before and tourist expenditure down by 67% (Foreign tourists spent 145 …, 2021). The hospitaliy industry is not forecasted to return to pre-pandemic levels of business for at least another three years (Karantzavelou, 2021). Therfore, hotel leaders need to find ways to ensure the survival of their business and navigate the crisis situation.

The aim of this thesis was to provide understanding of which leadership styles were used by Estonian hotel managers before the pandemic as there existed no such study. The thesis further investigated how has that leadership style has changed during the pandemic and how is that shift being supported.

Based on this research objective, the author set a central research question: what kind of leadership style was used by hotel managers in Estonia and how has the COVID-19 pandemic changed it? This central research question was examined through the following research sub-questions:

1. Which competencies are now deemed important for hotel leaders in Estonia to maintain organisational resilience?
2. What are the changes from pre-COVID-19 leadership style?
3. What support mechanisms have been put into place or are deemed necessary to support this shift and/or acquiring these competencies?

In the first section, the author provided a theoretical background which looked at different leadership theories that formed the basis for investigating the leadership style of hotel managers prior to the pandemic. In addition, the theory on COVID-19 impact on leadership and the framework for organisational resilience were presented. The theory formed the basis for further qualitative research which was conducted through semi-structured interviews with 10 hotel managers and 1 industry association leader to create understanding of the leadership styles. The results were analysed using qualitative data analysis.

The author first aimed to get an understanding of the leadership style used by the hotel managers before the pandemic. The analysis revealed that hotel managers considered leadership qualities to be quite universal and for hotel managers to posess business, people and self competencies. This aligned with Testa and Sipe (2012) service-leadership competency model which found that post global economic crises hotel managers should have a balance of business-, people-, and self-savvy competencies. Moreover, based on the analysis of the different leadership principles revealed in the interviews, it can be concluded that no one leadership style was used by hotel managers in Estonia prior to the pandemic. Rather, elements of transformational, empowering, authoritative and affiliative leadership styles were used. Goleman (2000) and Bass (1990) both argued that effective leaders use different leadership styles depending on the situation and context.

Furthermore, the author sought to understand how the pandemic has changed the leadership style of hotel managers in Estonia. The interviews revealed that hotel managers do not see fundamental change to their leadership style due to the pandemic. Rather, they are still operating in crisis-management mode characterized by uncertainty and lack of personnel. As such certain competencies have become more relevant. Those competencies aligned with the COVID-19 impact on leadership theory which listed several crisis-management competencies, such as more complex and faster decision-making, intensified communication, higher need for different kinds of resilience, empathy and positivity, optimism and motivation. Due to the changes in workforce generations, the importance of empathy and team motivation are expected to remain important competencies for hotel managers even post – pandemic. Therefore, it can be concluded that the leadership style has changed more towards affilative leadership (Goleman, 2000) which throuh high emotional intelligence is focussed on people and building stronger relationships within teams through trust and flexibility.

The third section of the analysis looked at which support mechanisms have been put in place and which are further deemed necessary to support the shift in leadership. Hotels belonging to international chains had more support materials readily available in terms of crisis management and furher training. Those managers did not deem any further support necessary from industry associations. Others said that industry associations were great help during the crisis as sense-makers and spokespersons. Further support was not deemed necessary, but it was assessed that having more seminars and a place to share best practices would be a nice addition.

Based on the above analysis and results, the author assesses the research questions answered and such the aim of this thesis fulfilled. This thesis has provided an understanding of the leadership styles of hotel managers in Estonia prior to COVID-19 and to what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic changed that.

Further research should be conducted once the business levels have returned to the pre-pandemic level to gain a better understanding of the full impact of the pandemic on the leadership styles of hotel managers in Estonia.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Goleman's Typology

Table 1. Created by the author

Goleman's Typology – 6 leadership styles			
Style	Characteristics	Risks	Environment / works best in
Coercive	- Top-down approach on decision/making - Seek to assign blame - Take little responsibility and ownership - Do not listen to ideas from team - "Do as I say approach" (p6)	- Detrimental to morale - Promotes negative organisational climate - Avoidance of taking any responsibility and ownership in the organisation on team level in the fear of getting blamed - Damaging on rewards system -Demotivating teams	- In a failed business environment - When company needs a complete reset and shocking people into working. - Emergency (such as natural disasters) - Problem employees
Authoritative	-Enthusiasm - Clear vision	- Might not work in a team of experts	- Works in most situations - When the company needs to refocus

	- Motivating people through making a clear link to between individual work and the company vision - Maximises commitment to company goals and strategies (p8) - Defines standards - Provides feedback - constructive and positive - Leave enough room for flexibility within the team for innovation to foster (p8) - "Come with me"	- Can undermine the egalitarian spirit of an effective team	
Affiliative	- People come first - Individual needs and motivations above tasks and goals - Builds loyalty through building strong emotional ties with people - Share ideas - Increase flexibility - Inspires and builds trust (P8) - Gives positive feedback	- Excessive positive feedback can leave poor performers unattended to and standards may drop (p9) - Fails to lead through challenging times and provide clear direction (p10)	- Build tam morale - Increase communication, trust and harmony - Best used in conjunction with authoritative style

	- Natural relationship builders who create a sense of belonging - High emotional intelligence – understands others and open with their own		
Democratic	- Builds trust through getting people's buy-in - Increases flexibility and responsibility - Keeps the morale high	- Slow decision/making - Detrimental in a crisis situation	- Leader is uncertain of the direction to take - Need for new and fresh ideas
Pacesetting	- Sets extremely high standards - Obsessive about improvement and efficiency - Points out poor performers and expects more - Replaces poor performers	- Overwhelming for the team - Morale drops - Poor communication of expectations and standards - Destroys trust and flexibility - Work becomes task-based (p11) - Micromanagement	- Works with a highly self-motivated team of individuals - With highly talented team - Should not be used by itself
Coaching	- Works with people's unique strengths and weaknesses - Acts as a counsellor to help achieve personal and professional goals - Delegate	- Might not work with a team that is not willing to grow	- Works in most scenarios - Works best when people are ready to take new challenges and grow

	- Give instructions and feedback - Willing to concede short/term gains for long – term learning - Improves results (p12)	61	

Source: Goleman, 2000

Appendix 2. Organisational resilience framework

Organisational resilience contributors	Resilience activities	Resilience outcome
Shared vision and purpose	- Communicate vision purpose and values to all stakeholders to be used in strategic planning and decision making - all individual goals and objectives aligned with the above - monitor and review the alignment of strategic goals with purpose and vision - reflect and change core values, purpose, and vision in response to external and internal changes - promote new innovative ideas to achieve objectives	- understanding, collaborating and strengthening of relationships with relevant interested parties to support the delivery of the organisation's purpose and vision
Understanding of up-to-date organisational context	- monitor and evaluate the organisation's context and the different interdependent factors that influence it, such as political, regulatory, environment and competitor activities - maintain strong relationships with stakeholders and foster co-operation across all levels - collaborate with parties that share the vision and purpose	- ability to think beyond current activities, strategy, and organisational boundaries
Effective and empowered leadership	- develop leaders who act with integrity and are committed to fostering organisational resilience	- effective leadership that encourages culture in favour of resilience

	- assign clear roles and responsibilities to enhance organisational resilience - encourage experience sharing (failures and successes) and promote best practice sharing - empower decision-making at all levels	- adaptive leadership to changing circumstances - leadership that utilises a diverse set of skills and competencies to achieve organisational objectives
Shared information and knowledge	- available adequate information supports organisation's objectives - shared effectively to support decision-making - considered a critical resource - established systems and processes to share, create and retain information - used in organisational learning	- information, knowledge, and learning are valued within the organisation - all available sources are used for learning
Availability of resources	- appropriate decisions in terms of resources to avoid any single points of failure and be able to respond to incidents while protecting core services - foster diverse skillset and competencies among employees to respond and adapt to change - create ability to identify and respond to change in a flexible manner - review resources and take account of changes in context	- develop and allocate resources such as people, premises, technology, finance and information to address vulnerabilities, providing the ability to changing circumstances
Development and coordination of management disciplines	- identify management factors important for organisational resilience - regularly assess the contribution of each discipline and react accordingly - create flexibility in the disciplines to adapt to change	- all management activities are coordinated to contribute to organisation's purpose collectively and individually

	- create cooperation, communication, and cohesion between the disciplines	- uncertainty managed through different management disciplines
Continual improvement	- implement monitoring and evaluating processes - ensure that evaluating criteria is relevant to changes of organisational objectives	- a culture of continued improvement to ensure relevance of purpose, vision, goals, and strategies - continually improving on organisation's resilience activities
Ability to manage and anticipate change	- be aware and map situations likely to have an impact - adapt when needed without affecting core business - adapt and change without compromising core values and vision - ensure robust and sufficient management disciplines to respond to changes	- ability to deliver on objectives under changing context - ability to absorb and adapt to unexpected situations - prepared to respond to change

Source: (ISO 22316:2017, 2021)

Appendix 3. List of interviewees

Details of participating hotels

Hotel Coding	Interview conducted	Size of the hotel (rooms)	Chain or independent	Location
Hotel 1	MS Teams	250 - 300	Independent	Tallinn
Hotel 2	MS Teams	250 - 300	Chain Intl	Tallinn
Hotel 3	In Person	100 - 150	Chain Intl	Tallinn
Hotel 4	In person	500 - 550	Chain Intl	Tallinn
Hotel 5	MS Teams	50 - 100	Chain	Tartu
Hotel 6	In person	150 - 200	Chain Intl	Tallinn
Hotel 7	MS Teams	150 - 200	Chain	Pärnu
Hotel 8	MS Teams	50 - 100	Chain	Võru
Hotel 9	In person	300 - 350	Chain Intl	Tallinn
Hotel 10	MS Teams	300 - 350	Chain Intl	Tallinn
Org 1	MS Teams	NA	NA	NA

Appendix 4. Interview template

(Translated from original questions in Estonian)

1. Describe the situation of hospitality in Estonia three years ago
2. Describe the current situation of hospitality in Estonia and talk about the biggest challenges
3. What were your three main priorities in managing a hotel prior to the pandemic?
4. What are your three main priorities now?
5. In your opinion, which attributes and behaviours are necessary for a good hotel manager?
6. How did that assessment change during the pandemic?
7. Which competencies are necessary for a good hotel manager?
8. How did that assessment change during the pandemic and which competencies are now necessary due to the pandemic?
9. How would you describe your interaction with your subordinates and colleagues?
10. How have these interactions with your team change over the course of the pandemic?
11. Which methods did you use to develop and maximise your employees?
12. How has this changed due to COVID-19?
13. How would you describe your own leadership style, this includes important competencies, principles, values, and motivations?
14. How has that leadership style changed over the past two years?
15. Describe your relationship with different stakeholders, and how you managed those relationships prior to the pandemic?
16. How have these relationships changed during the pandemic?

Source: Created by the author based on   the theoretical background provided in 2.2

Appendix 5. Interview transcripts

Due to the size of the transcripts, they are available for reading on the following link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ofWGrGOURd09IoP1-CPA9_PNujE9Jix2?ths=true

Appendix 6. Data analysis table

Due to the size, the data analysis table is available on the link below:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1OHFUGXt3Op023zSSqoukH1AHiKtDOK2n/edit?usp=drive_web&ouid=116096061159457738206&rtpof=true

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