

## Tourism and hospitality leadership in times of crisis: critical moderators

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**Abstract:** Tourism and hospitality organizations and destinations are increasingly struggling to resolve and manage diverse crises. Crises can be defined as unexpected and undesirable events, that cause pressure, represent a threat, provoking uncertainty, and fear. A different leadership is needed, with a strong capacity to deal with uncertainty, vulnerability, and complex chaotic contexts, to make urgent, quick decisions. This study used several complementary methods and techniques to achieve the proposed objectives. An empirical study was conducted, applying a survey, using semi-structured interviews with leaders in the tourism sector. In this sense, this work aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of crisis leadership and crisis management in disruptive scenarios, in tourism and hospitality. Also contributes to enriching crisis leadership research, when the crisis is increasingly frequent, much more globalizing, and harmful, and contributes to capitalizing on learning and developing research to help mitigate the future negative impact of another crisis.

**Keywords:** Crisis leadership; Crisis; Tourism and Hospitality; Organizations; Moderator Factors.

### Liderazgo en turismo y hostelería en tiempos de crisis: moderadores críticos

**Resumen:** Las organizaciones y destinos turísticos y hosteleros se esfuerzan cada vez más por resolver y gestionar diversas crisis. Las crisis pueden definirse como acontecimientos inesperados e indeseables, que causan presión, representan una amenaza, provocan incertidumbre y miedo. Se necesita un liderazgo diferente, con una gran capacidad para hacer frente a la incertidumbre, la vulnerabilidad y los contextos caóticos complejos, para tomar decisiones urgentes y rápidas. Este estudio utilizó varios métodos y técnicas complementarios para alcanzar los objetivos propuestos. Se realizó un estudio empírico, aplicando una encuesta, mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas a líderes del sector turístico. En este sentido, este trabajo pretende contribuir a una comprensión más profunda del liderazgo de crisis y la gestión de crisis en escenarios disruptivos, en el turismo y la hostelería. También contribuye a enriquecer la investigación sobre liderazgo de crisis, cuando éstas son cada vez más frecuentes, mucho más globalizadoras y dañinas, y contribuye a capitalizar el aprendizaje y el desarrollo de investigaciones que ayuden a mitigar el futuro impacto negativo de otra crisis.

**Palabras clave:** Liderazgo en Situaciones de Crisis; Crisis; Turismo y Hostelería; Organizaciones; Factores moderadores.

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## 1. Introduction

Many economies and destinations have long regarded tourism and hospitality as a strong and highly sought-after sector due to its recognized positive impact on communities, society and the economy. It contributes significantly to the social and economic growth of the destinations in which it operates, improving the quality of life and inclusiveness of employers that are accessible to all people, from investors to travelers. In the tourism and hospitality sector, people play an essential role in the success of destinations, because it is not enough to have an excellent product on the market, they can be a fundamental factor of differentiation (Gonçalves & Guerra, 2022).

Despite the exponentially positive development of tourism, there have been a series of negative events in recent times that have caused heavy losses to the tourism industry. The visibility of these tourism crises arises from various contexts, especially those related to living conditions and their impact on markets, as well as natural changes (Glaesser, 2008; Scott et al., 2012).

Although highly disruptive, the 21st century has proven to be excessively volatile, uncertain, unpredictable and complex with its various types of extreme events and hazards, from natural to man-made. These hard times and the many chaotic scenarios cause severe impacts and shockwaves of all types of crises that shake organizations, societies, sectors, economies, beliefs and destinations (Milano & Koens, 2022; Ritchie, 2004).

The tourism and hospitality sector is no exception. Due to its widespread and transnational activity, which is highly interconnected globally, it proves to be one of the sectors most vulnerable to instability and extreme events and has to deal with a variety of irregularities (Ritchie & Jiang, 2019; Sönmez, 1998; Sönmez et al., 1999; Tarlow, 2016; Zheng et al., 2022).

To deal with “unexpected, undesirable, unimaginable and often unmanageable situations”, which are synonymous with crisis concept and definition (Boin et al., 2017; Hewitt, 1983), tourism must have effective leadership that is aware of the various moderator factors that can influence decisions, behaviors, situations and outcomes in order to better manage such unpredictable and urgent situations.

Although tourism and hospitality is proving to be one of the most resilient sectors, continuously growing and better manage crisis, as data from relevant organizations and companies show (ETC - European Travel Commission, 2022, 2023; UNWTO, 2022, 2023a), the sector still needs effective strategic leadership, a key factor for more destruction, negative impacts or good outcomes and success.

Crisis leadership is critical for implementing any strategy in all types of contexts, for managing risk and fear, for exerting influence, with vision and values, for managing change, and for coping with highly disruptive contexts or chaotic scenarios (Boin et al., 2013; Yukl, 2012; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Since every organization, every sector, and the entire world “goes through some form of crisis on a fairly regular basis”, “crisis leadership is an essential part of leading in today’s world” (Firestone, 2020, p.7).

Leadership is an essential competence for driving diverse changes, shaping sectors, dealing with complex and constant extreme events, in a globalized world with regular disruption competitions (Olsen, 2004; Silva, 2016; Yukl, 2012).

The literature on crisis management (Blackman & Ritchie, 2007; Faulkner, 2001; Hall et al., 2020; Laws & Prideaux, 2006; Prideaux et al., 2003; Ritchie, 2004; Tarlow, 2014; Tarlow, 2016) and the literature on crisis leadership (Boin et al., 2017; Boin et al., 2013; Boin & Hart, 2003; Riggio & Newstead, 2023; Stern, 2017; Wu et al., 2021) suggest that each crisis has seen subsequent and significant changes in terms of regulations, policies, procedures, tourist flows, behaviors, decisions, tourism products and services offered, infrastructures, and various actors in the value chain.

Leaders bear the greater responsibility for mitigating, preventing and inhibiting negative impacts while maximizing positive impacts by empowering positive moderators (Silva, 2016). Tourism and hospitality leaders who engage in crisis leadership must be globally oriented, sufficiently agile, flexible, highly skilled and equipped with great know-how, sufficient experience and multiple and diverse competencies to deal with such complex and damaging situations and truly promote positive change, consistent stability and growth (Boin et al., 2017; Cunha & Rego, 2022; Silva, 2016; Silva, 2019; Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

In this sense, a study of tourism, crisis leadership and its critical moderator factors is considered extremely relevant and necessary. “Only by moving leadership investigation, beyond management will tourism be able to consider different skills, new ways of working, alternative strategies, that will enable organizational development, and for the sector and communities overall” (Benson & Blackman, 2011, p.1149).

Concerning moderator factors, according to James & Brett (1984, p.310), “a variable Z is a moderator if a relationship between two or more other variables, e.g. X or Y, is a function of level Z”. This means that there is a correlation and a causal relationship between the variables.

The same authors and later authors Villa et al. (2003) attribute a certain polarization to the moderator factors. As positive moderator factors, they are referred to as Enhancers if they positively reinforce positive effects or impacts or attenuate and inhibit harmful impacts. As negative moderator factors, they are referred to as Neutralizers if they have a negative influence, inhibit or destroy beneficial effects or strategies and thus cause negative outcomes. Silva (2016) defines a moderating factor with a medium effect and calls it a neutralizer because the results show some moderators without an active causal relationship, even if they are important variables or factors to consider, considering what Riggio & Newstead (2023, p.221) believe: “crisis will continue to occur, most likely in increasing frequency and complexity, which means that it is essential to continue efforts to research, teach and develop capacity for good crisis leadership”.

This work aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of crisis leadership and crisis management in deeper disruption scenarios in tourism and hospitality. It also contributes to enriching crisis leadership, especially in times when crises are becoming more frequent, global, negative and damaging, because “there is no situation in which leadership is more important than during a crisis, and yet crisis leadership is a relatively underdeveloped field” (Riggio & Newstead, 2003, p.221.).

## 2. Crisis leadership and crisis management in tourism and hospitality

Considering that crises are an “inevitable aspect of modern society” and that “crisis will continue to bring new challenges that test the strength of leaders” (Kane et al., 2021, p.899), across all sectors and nations, playing out in front of large audiences around the world and twenty-four hours a day, it is important to understand the concepts related to crisis, crisis leadership and crisis management in tourism and hospitality.

### 2.1 Crisis Concept

Different visions, theories, professions and types of events have developed different definitions of crisis, and it can be very complex to gather consensus or a complete concept (Lalonde, 2004).

It is an “unavoidable fact of life” and “is an integral part of human existence” (Mitroff, 2004). Based on several theories (Canyon, 2020; Mitroff, 2004; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Seeger et al., 1998), we can afford a definition that better fits this study. It is an unexpected, undesirable, unfortunate, momentous situation, event or series of events that pose or are perceived to pose a threat to stability, cause a high level of uncertainty, cause harm, bring about change and require accelerated decision making and action.

Some authors (Boin et al., 2018) are of the opinion that “the crisis approach brings together ideas of vulnerability, risk, threat, trigger, process, response and outcome”. Usually, a crisis develops quickly, causes shockwaves of further crises, disruptions and requires a response from an individual, a leader, surrounded by other leaders and teams, a response from organisations, a sector or an entire actor at the target location to mitigate the consequences (Canyon, 2020; Firestone, 2020; Klann, 2013).

Due to these facts and the notion that crises can always happen (Boin et al., 2018), “we need leaders who are prepared for crisis as a way of life”, and “crisis leadership is even more important today than in the past” (Firestone, 2020, p.12).

Leaders cannot ignore the lessons learnt from past crises. They should commit to constant research, learning and prevention, because crises will certainly continue to challenge leaders and can occur anywhere and at any time. And the disruptions caused and those who cause them cannot simply be prevented by the systems (Boin et al., 2016a).

Several authors who are considered experts in crisis management in tourism and hospitality (Faulkner, 2001; Glaesser, 2008; Laws et al., 2006; Pizam & Mansfeld, 2006; Scott et al., 2007; Tarlow, 2016) define a crisis as:

- i) Events, hazards, disasters, calamities, or catastrophes that usually produce chaotic situations and contexts in systems;
- ii) An unexpected undesirable process, limited in time and space causing negative impacts and disruption, interruptions in the tourism system and value chain.

According to the same authors, crisis can be categorised as natural or man-made, more localized, or global, short or long-term. They can occur within an organisation or destination, such as errors in decision-making, policy, leadership, management or errors in suppliers, materials or resources. Or they can come from the outside, when natural catastrophes, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, pandemics,

volcanic eruptions or man-made events such as political or economic instability, terrorism and wars occur.

Some other authors (Coombs & Holladay, 2010; Coombs, 2007; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Pearson & Mitroff, 1993) argue that there are several types of crises requiring different preventive measures and phases, and different actions:

- i) Immediate crises, unannounced, require a reactive and proactive attitude;
- ii) Emerging crises, slower crises that can be prevented somehow, or if some measures are implemented quickly, can be limited;
- iii) Persistent crises, the ones extending over long periods, causing other crises along time and space, involving directly or indirectly other actors (e.g. covid-19 pandemic, the Ukrainian-Russian war, Israeli-Palestinian war, fostering geopolitics turbulence).

Regardless of the type of crisis, Boin (2005) states that a crisis is a series threat to the basic structure or the fundamental values and norms of a system, which under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances making vital decisions.

The crisis concept assumes that urgent decisions are necessary to remove the fear and crisis itself, and has inherent the idea of a critical phase, a shift or separation from the Greek word (*krisis*) and also the meaning of the Chinese characters, danger and opportunity (Canyon, 2020; Klann, 2013).

Frequently crises add chaos to context making crisis leadership and crisis management critical for activating plans, decision-making, solving problems, coordination of teams and operations, and collaboration between players influencing and leading changes that are necessary to solve crises and mitigate negative and harmful impacts (Faulkner, 2001; Loannides & Gyimóthy, 2020; Miller & Ritchie, 2003; Ritchie, 2004).

Authors experts in tourism fields such as Faulkner (2001), Ritchie (2004), and Glaesser (2008) developed some crisis management models and strategies as guidelines for leaders in tourism to cope with crises. Based on some concepts from Coombs (1998) they integrated the three phases of intervention. Later Coombs & Holladay (2010) developed even more this theory. The three phases of intervention are as follows:

- i) Pre-crisis, the moment of prevention and preparation of mitigation strategies and contingency plans. Jaques (2010a, 2010b) assumes it is needed proactive surveillance strategies to prevent crises;
- ii) Crisis, the moment of chaos itself, that impels an immediate and well-coordinated response and action;
- iii) Post-crisis, when occurs learning, an opportunity to readjust and redesign structures, procedures, plans, organizations, teams, players, providers, products and destinations.

Lessons learned from the aftermath of a crisis response can be an important factor to capitalize knowledge and effectiveness of the next crisis response. Previous research has proven that when leaders fail to learn from past mistakes and respond to warning signs, the aftermath of a crisis can be extremely damaging, severe and catastrophic. Although every crisis is different, it is possible to learn from crises (Bundy et al., 2017; Kane et al., 2021).

In highly turbulent and competitive contexts characterized by constant change and instability, the challenges for leadership become ever greater, encouraging continuous exploration of influencing factors and the use of multiple processes to better understand and validate data (Gordon & Yukl, 2004; Silva, 2016).

This paper aims to contribute to the learning, understanding and development of research to help mitigate the future negative impact of another crisis.

## 2.2 Crisis Leadership and Crisis Management

Leadership has been seen as a core competency in most organizations and businesses, where the quality of leadership determines success or failure. When leaders respond well to a crisis, the damage is limited. When leaders fail, the negative outcome increases and usually spreads within systems and value chains (Boin et al., 2016b; Silva, 2016; Silva, 2019).

Leaders should be aware that each crisis is unique and poses different threats and challenges that need to be analyzed, involving multiple levels and players in networks. Silva and Costa (2010, p.2) state that operating and acting involving a network helps to do more and better business, increase competitive capacity and, above all, overcome recessions and crises more easily. Boin et al. (2018, p.32) agree and state that a crisis typically requires intensive collaboration in organizational networks.

Crisis leadership is about the strategy and the "Why". The crisis leader is focused on the vision of where it is needed to go and how to move forward, eventually finding opportunities, motivating

changes, and innovation, to prepare the organization to better handle challenges and future crises. It is a constant focus on before, during and after crisis (Boin et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2021).

Research in the field of crisis management focuses mainly on planning, prevention, models and responses to crisis risks (Mitroff, 2004; Mitroff & Kilmann, 2021; Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Tarlow, 2014). Mitroff (2004), considered the “father of crisis management”, argued that the best way to manage a crisis is to be well prepared for each phase of a crisis and that constant vigilance should be a priority.

While crisis management is concerned with immediate recovery, it is about tactics and the How. And the main goal of the crisis manager is to execute the tasks and operational activities outlined in a crisis plan as efficiently as possible (Klann, 2003; Mitroff et al., 2013). Crisis management is of great importance in the volatile and uncertain, unstable world we live in today. However, it is not enough, as we all need more than just responding to a crisis event at a specific point in time. Crisis management itself becomes a question of crisis leadership (Boin & Hart, 2003).

We really need to be prepared for the next crisis and implement the necessary changes with an attitude characterized by flexibility, agility and the ability to act urgently. Effective crisis leadership results in reducing stress and returning to some normality as soon as possible (Boin & Hart, 2003).

Crisis leadership research that emerged recently in the literature and tourism and hospitality is scarce compared to crisis management and other scientific fields of academic study. After at least twenty-five years of numerous and uninterrupted large-scale crises of various types and locations that have directly or indirectly had damaging effects worldwide, the crisis leadership research highlighted, although still relatively underdeveloped and new, has emerged.

The interest in this field of crisis leadership study sparked in 1998, as much as the severity of the crisis's negative impacts (Bundy et al., 2017; Firestone, 2020). Wu et al. (2021) argue that research in this field still remains too fragmented, making it difficult to stand out in crisis management research, and sometimes be confused as the same field. The same authors' (2021, p.18) study demonstrates that crisis leadership research has been growing exponentially in the past decade, also methods adopted, nevertheless, “further investigation is required to advance the field and to better inform leaders of effective means of handling future crises”.

### **2.3 Tourism and Hospitality crisis context 2019-2022**

Tourism and hospitality is one of the most important sectors worldwide due to its significant positive social and economic impact. For more than twenty years, it has shown great resilience and continuous growth and development.

Only recently, with the COVID-19 pandemic since the end of 2019, which has had an extremely damaging impact on all sectors and all destinations, tourism has seen a sharp decline in international arrivals and domestic markets, as well as a loss of significant organizations and jobs. Tourism was the hardest hit sector, showing its vulnerability to exogenous influences. It lost ten years of constant growth and fell back to 1950 levels, representing the worst decline in the last thirty years (ETC - European Travel Commission, 2021, 2023; Lemos & Silva, 2023; UNWTO, 2020, 2021, 2023).

This data confirms the statement by Duan et al. (2022) that tourism crises that lead to political, economic and social instability, which highlight risks and uncertainty, pose a threat to people and infrastructures, such as terrorist attacks, geopolitical instability, regional conflicts and wars, profoundly affect demand, tourist flows and destinations.

However, according to Seabra et al. (2013), there is a segment of international travelers who are relatively carefree and less sensitive to risk and travel regardless of risky crises. However, Seabra et al. (2014) believe that crisis management remains an area of particular importance for managers in the sector.

The pandemic crisis was considered by players, public and private organizations as an extreme event, the biggest in our lives in the tourism sector (Costa, 2021; Gössling et al., 2020; Gössling & Schweiggart, 2022; Midway et al., 2022; UNWTO, 2021b, 2021a). According to these official entities, in 2019, tourism generated 7% of world trade, employed one in ten people in the world, more than 334 million, and registered 1.5 billion international arrivals. It was labelled as the third largest export sector, with 7% of total exports.

However, with the COVID-19 pandemic state declared in March 2020, tourism dropped 73% in international arrivals, and all regions declined over 65%. ICAO (2021) indicates a decrease in revenue pax-km (RPK) of 65% and considered it to be the largest drop in revenue since 1950. In 2021, there was a 71% drop in international arrivals, and in 2022, even after a double increase in production 2022 and a strong recovery of tourism demand, still reveals a drop of 34% in comparison to 2019.

According to UNWTO (2023) reports the pandemic generated a loss of 2.6 billion international arrivals, and 2.6 trillion USD in export revenues in 2020, 2021 and 2022 combined, and export revenues dropped 62% in 2020, 59% in 2021, compared to 2019. Then rebounded considerably in 2022 but remained 34% below 2019 levels. In 2023, between January and July, international tourist arrivals reached 84%. Although with two wars affecting international geopolitics seriously, the Russian offensive to Ukraine in February 2022, and the Hamas terrorist attacks on October 7 followed by the intense war in the Gaza Strip, perspectives are still 2023 remain without reaching 2019 levels.

The tourism and hospitality sector continues to operate in a very challenging environment and in extremely uncertain times. Rising oil prices, rising interest rates, rising energy, transportation and food prices and high inflation are significantly increasing the cost of living around the world, especially in Europe. Changes in global geopolitics and other instabilities in economic and social systems are putting pressure on organizations and hindering their recovery, affecting consumer confidence and changing tourism flows in destinations (UNWTO, 2023b).

The impact of crises such as terrorism, natural disasters and wars destroy places and communities and destroy consumer confidence, which is reflected in the perception of risk and fear of traveling to some places and neighboring regions, leading to drastic and sudden changes in demand and harmful consequences for the economic and social environment, with high revenue losses (Duan et al., 2022; Milano & Koens, 2022; Sigala, 2020).

Tourism and the hospitality industry as a whole are changing in a crisis context, with tourists' desires, motivations, needs and consumption changing and moving from a saturation to a scarcity situation and quickly to a boom, without enough time to readjust in such volatile and uncertain turbulent times. These extremes in consumption and demand pose various challenges for leadership and the value chain (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019; Milano & Koens, 2022).

So many crises, one upon another, are affecting tourism seriously, with leaders struggling to cope with the most diverse challenges at once, from decision-making to solve and mitigating direct crisis impacts, to "struggling with staffing problems and ongoing renewal and professional skills, which compels a continuous rethinking of management and use of resources" (Silva et al., 2023). In this sense, the COVID-19 pandemic has stimulated new opportunities in the approach to the tourism ecosystem, such as the increase in green tourism. The disruption caused by this crisis has accelerated the shift towards more ecological and sustainable tourism development models, with improved environmental results for destinations and benefits for local communities (Gonçalves et al., 2023).

Only effective crisis leadership and crisis management with leaders who have great flexibility, agility, the ability to deal with pressure, emotional control and stability, knowledge, experience, vision, good communication skills, values such as compassion, honesty, transparency, positivity, commitment, authenticity, charisma, the ability to improvise and implement change under difficult conditions can not only survive but also lead their organizations, teams, sectors and nations to success.

### 3. Methods

The main objective of this work is to understand the role of leaders and their actions in all contexts and situations, especially in times of crisis where chaos and disruption are caused by harmful and extreme events. Events that trigger multiple crises with far-reaching shockwaves create one crisis after another, in time and space, systematically affecting civilisations, communities, economies and nations.

Strategic leadership in times of crisis is critical to prevent major negative impacts in the event of a crisis, effectively resolve problems, promote the necessary changes and restore stability, trust and confidence in leaders and organisations. With this premise, the discussion presented here is based on Silva's (2016) qualitative doctoral research on moderator variables and factors of contingency, proxy and transformational leadership theories first explored by Howell et al. (1986), James and Brett (1984), Kerr and Jermier (1978) and Villa et al. (2003) in general.

Silva's (2016) research assumes that moderators strongly influence decision-making, solve-problems, and strategy implementation. Moderator factors are polarized, with positive impacts the moderators' factors that maximize and reinforce, enhance, actions and results, labelled as Enhancers. And with negative impacts or effects the moderator factors that can neutralize the best decisions, plans, and strategies to achieve good results. Silva (2016) created the neutral moderator factors when the results of the research indicated some were without an active causal correlation, even if they were considered crucial variables or factors to be analyzed.

As Kerr and Jemier (1978) posit, depending on the context and leadership profile, several factors can neutralize and push, provoking, positive or negative outcomes or interfering with the success, growth, and development of products, organizations, communities, and destinations.

The ability of leadership to interact with, understand and control the moderator factors and variables determines the success of the strategy.

Based on this premise, Silva (2016) conducted semi-structured interviews with open-ended and closed-ended questions with twenty-nine tourism and hospitality leaders in functions, with top level C responsibilities in top and key organisations in the tourism value chain. The most prominent players were randomly selected according to their high-level status as official leaders and decision-makers.

They were categorized according to the nature of the activities and duties in the tourism and hospitality sector, such as:

- i) Official and political boards (6 interviews);
- ii) Board directors and presidents of tourism corporate associations (7 interviews);
- iii) Operational organizations (13 interviews);
- iv) Academic institutions (2 interviews);
- v) Specialized press (1 interview).

The population was composed of 86% (25) men and only 14% (4) women, revealing a clear difference in genre on top of hierarchies, usually due to *glass ceiling* facts or choices of other priorities such as family care. The average age was 55 years and the majority (83%, 24) had higher education degrees, from bachelor's to doctorate (even if this degree was really rare in the tourism and hospitality value chain).

The initial findings on moderators, variables, components and elements of leadership in an extensive literature review identified the most important ones to apply in semi-structured pre-tests and interviews. The literature review included the main keywords such as tourism and hospitality, leadership, strategy and moderators found in various official and scientific databases such as Scopus and B-on. The direct observation made an important contribution to better identify the leaders, their behaviour and their relationships. It also provided access to available data from various private tourism and hospitality organisations.

The interview was then prepared with the primary aim of getting to know the profiles and competencies of the leaders and identifying their valuable variables and their perceived contribution to the organisation.

A brief clarification of the moderator factors and variables concept preceded a three-scale used to identify and assess moderator factors. In addition, the polarisation of moderator factors was determined as positive, neutral or negative influences on strategic leadership effectiveness and success.

The semi-structured interview was conducted face-to-face between February and September 2016 and lasted an average of thirty minutes. Whilst predominantly closed questions were asked, open questions were also asked to gain more in-depth information or to find other topics of interest to focus on and explore.

Data were analyzed using Nvivo11 software, proceeding with inductive and deductive approaches, drawing categories and themes while deep interview transcription and content occurred. Quantitative data were converted into descriptive information and content by SPSS and Excel software.

Through the empirical study with semi-structured interviews and the secondary data from the literature review, moderator factors of leadership were identified and categorised as positive (Enhancers), Neutral, or negative (Neutralizers) moderator factors and variables.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Given the turbulent times we have faced for more than two decades, a study was conducted to identify the leadership moderator factors for effective leadership and crisis response. The research by Silva (2016) confirms that leaders in tourism and hospitality are global leaders, operating in a wide variety of countries and cultures, working with a wide variety of stakeholders around the world, with teams from a variety of cultures, races, religions and languages, all working together in a large network. They have complex, extensive skills and competences to operate globally. Competences and skills that are considered extremely important in times of crisis confirm some theories of other authors (M. P. Cunha et al., 2010; Rego & Cunha, 2020). It is also confirmed that leaders are crucial when it comes to changing mindsets and mitigating the negative effects of various crises faced by tourism, especially in the 21st century.

The tourism and hospitality sector is complex and highly interconnected in every form and in every way, with a great complementarity between players, activities, geographies, communities, hierarchies and political levels (Silva, 2016). The study by Silva (2016) confirms this fact, as leaders unanimously pointed out that there are high and complex interdependencies between all players, occurring between

all types of organisations and institutions, whether small or large, public or private, outgoing or incoming, incorporating all forms of administrative organisation, working and shaping diverse networks that connect places, organisations, sectors and consumers everywhere anyway (Silva, 2009, 2016).

The results show that leaders are well aware of how much context can influence organizations, sectors and entire systems by forcing some changes, redesigning structures, teams, plans, procedures, and providers, places of operations and products. It is a key factor in defining outcomes, whether positive or negative.

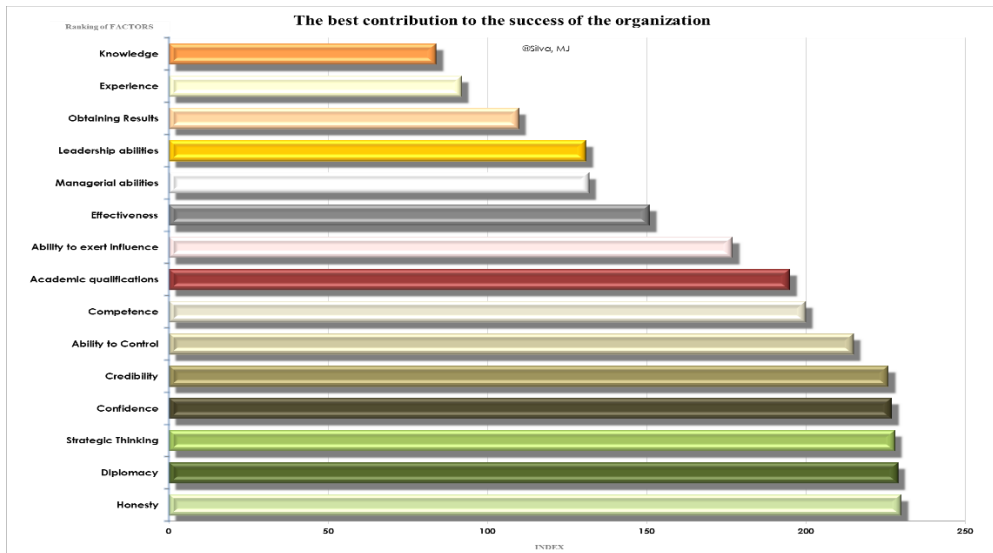
Context causes significant negative outcomes when crisis leadership and crisis management fail, especially in crisis disruption scenarios that lead to conflicts between stakeholders with different and regularly opposing interests. This fact was highlighted by most interviewees and confirms the literature review (Buhalis, 2000; Buhalis et al., 2019; Cooper, 2016; Scott et al., 2007), which states that the relationships between stakeholders in the tourism system, from the demand side to the supply side, are not always peaceful, sometimes even unethical, and there is fierce competition, especially when the crisis has a negative impact and makes strategies unviable.

Silva's (2016) research confirms the findings of several other authors (Avolio et al., 2009; Hannah et al., 2009; Lalonde, 2004; Schaedler et al., 2022; Villa et al., 2003) on the effectiveness of strategic leadership and its importance for the success and development of industries, sectors, organizations and destinations.

It was also confirmed that leaders more likely to have a positive impact and achieve positive outcomes, in the tourism and hospitality industry, are the ones who are well aware of enhancer factors and pay special attention to copying with neutralizers. They can recognize their critical influence on accountability and assertive decision making, which are so important in turbulent times of crisis. Bundy et al (2017) confirm that there are several factors that influence the ability to lead and that leaders are critical to the process of crisis management.

The results show that the contribution of leaders to the organization is consistently the most valuable (Figure 1). In order of importance, leaders believe that knowledge is the most valuable variable for effective leadership, success and development of their organization, ranking first out of fifteen variables.

**Figure 1: Valuable contribution of leaders to the organization**



Source: Silva (2016)

Second in importance is experience, followed by the ability to achieve expected results, leadership skills and management skills. They recognize that the concepts and tasks of leadership skills differ significantly from management skills. Among the fifteen most important variables, leaders choose effectiveness, influencing ability, academic qualifications, competence, control ability, credibility and honesty, the last half is in the top fifteen, but very important and still in the top fifteen.



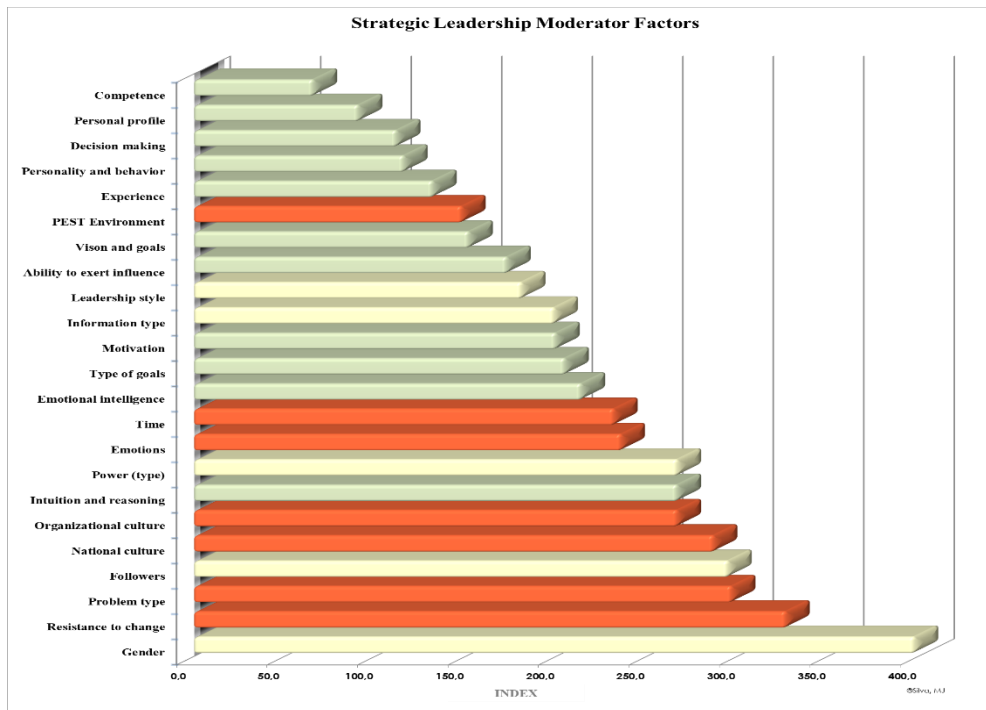
Confidence, ethical and authentic attitudes and behaviors have been identified as critical to some types of leadership and some types of crisis situations, and almost everyone agrees that they are among the most important factors in building good relationships among stakeholders, followers, suppliers, consumers with organizational brands, and leaders. They are of great importance when operating in organizational and sectorial networks, collaborative systems and groups.

All of the above variables are the most valuable contributors to increasing the probability of enhancing the development and success of a plan, strategy or action in an organization, sector or situation in a crisis disruptive context.

Tourism and hospitality leaders decided about enhancers moderator factors with the most positive impact, shown in green in Figure 2, and neutralizers with the most negative impact, shown in red. They also opt for some neutral factors, shown in yellow, even though they are extremely important to the decision-making process, such as the power factor, ability to cope with all environments and contexts, and influence.

As enhancers of leadership decision-making, strategies and positive outcomes, leaders ranked as follows: at the top of the pyramid in Figure 2, in order of highest score, are competence, personal profile, decision-making ability, personality traits, leadership behaviour and experience.

**Figure 2: Strategic Leadership Moderator Factors**



**Source:** Silva (2016)

As for the most rated negative impact factors, the neutralizers, these occur in context and in harmful environments, clearly showing that disruptive, unsafe, chaotic contexts in times and spaces of crisis can truly neutralize, inhibit and lead to negative outcomes. Vision and purpose, the ability to influence, can help amplify and maximize the positive impact of strategies, plans and decisions and enable success and growth. Other enhancers with the same correlation are motivation, type of goals, emotional intelligence, intuition, information type and power type.

The lack of sufficient time for decision making, lack of emotional intelligence and emotional control, organizational culture and culture with a high degree of inflexibility and resistance to change, the problem types are neutralizers that can cause harmful negative effects, leading to negative results.

Neutral moderator factors indicated were leadership styles, as they believe they are all needed depending on the type of events, actions required and context. Information type, power type,

followership type and gender, although important in some contexts, have a less causal correlation in influencing outcomes and development.

Political, economic, social and technological environment and context are the 6th most frequently considered moderator factors by leaders. All leaders choose these moderators in at least the top seven places in the ranking. This fact is consistent with contingency theories (House, 1996; Hunt, 1967; Kerr & Jermier, 1978) and situational theories (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; House, 1971; Vroom & Jago, 1995).

The leaders in Silva's (2016) model refer to other concepts and values to consider for leadership effectiveness that can be applied to crisis leadership in crisis contexts, such as the ability of leaders to gather the right competencies, skills and attitudes, such as the ability to handle pressure and risks well, control emotions, good communication skills with foresight, with transparency, a mindset ready to manage and implement change, and especially flexibility and agility.

This aligns with what other authors referred to as sustainable leadership to provide an opportunity to initiate change towards a regenerative planet, people, partnerships and relationships in tourism based on values such as justice, equality, love, balance, creativity, relationship, learning, openness, diversity, humility and community (Burns et al., 2015), for peace in the 21st century.

## 5. Limitations and Future research directions

Since the study was only conducted in one sector, it would be interesting to have and analyse the results in comparison with other sectors. It would also be interesting to continue with the research to understand if the factors change the intensity and position in the ranking depending on the crisis phases: before, during and after the crisis.

Another interesting research direction would be to examine which types of leadership and/or leader traits and behaviors are best suited for which type of crisis or for which crisis phase.

In future research, it may be important to identify the different factors that influence learning in crises, whether causes, roles, skills or the extent of crises. Different methods and correlations can be applied to contribute to the development of the field of crisis leadership.

## 6. Conclusion

The tourism and hospitality sector, organizations, communities and destinations are increasingly struggling to resolve and manage various crises that trigger others in shockwaves and spread spatially and temporally, creating disruption, uncertainty and chaotic scenarios, as several extreme disruptive events and threats have emerged in the last twenty years.

Crises can be defined as unexpected and unwanted events that cause pressure, pose a threat and create uncertainty and fear. Their devastating and damaging effects force a rapid response and urgent action, among complex challenges and decision-making processes that strain systems and nations worldwide. Leaders cannot ignore the lessons of past crises. They should commit to constant research, learning and prevention, because crises will certainly continue to challenge leaders and can occur anytime, anywhere.

This fact requires a different leadership that is able to deal with uncertainty, vulnerability and complex chaotic contexts and to be able to recognise opportunities and make changes whenever necessary.

In this sense, the study of strategic leadership, crisis leadership and moderator factors of leadership is considered relevant and important to gain a better understanding of how to cope with times of crisis and disruptive contexts, as well as for better decision making and definition of the most adaptable strategies.

The topic of strategic leadership in tourism and hospitality has been little discussed in the academic literature, and crisis leadership is a relatively underdeveloped and new area of research. In times of crisis, and with crises becoming more frequent, more complex and with damaging negative effects that spread widely in space and time, it is crucial to endeavour to research, develop and teach crisis leadership. Effective leadership in the tourism and hospitality industry is therefore paramount to overcoming challenges, ensuring business continuity and promoting resilience. Several critical moderators play an important role in shaping leadership outcomes during these challenging times.

Only effective crisis leadership and crisis management with leaders who have a wide range of attitudes, competencies and values, such as great flexibility, agility, ability to deal with pressure, emotional control and stability, knowledge, experience, vision, good communication skills, with values such as compassion, honesty, transparency, positivity, commitment, authenticity, charisma,

improvisational skills and the ability to implement change under difficult contextual conditions, would be able to make their organizations, teams, sectors, nations not only survive but thrive. Leaders who effectively manage these moderators during times of crisis can contribute to the resilience and recovery of the tourism and hospitality industry. Effective tourism and hospitality leadership in times of crisis requires a combination of strategic foresight, adaptability, strong communication, stakeholder engagement and a commitment to sustainable and innovative practices.

Previous studies on leadership show that leadership is a fundamental competence to achieve goals and positive results and to promote the growth of an organization, a sector, an economy or a destination, regardless of the dimension, activity or geography. It enables change and innovation for the development of nations and a better and sustainable world in line with the 5Ps of sustainability: people, planet, prosperity, partnership and peace.

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