



**CATÓLICA  
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Dissertation

**Leadership as a Business Adaptive Strategy during  
the COVID-19 Pandemic | A case of Grupo UIP**

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**Title:** Leadership as a Business Adaptive Strategy during the COVID-19 Pandemic | A case of Grupo UIP

**Key Words:** COVID-19; Dynamic Capabilities; Hospitality; Leaders; Leadership; Pandemic Crisis; Strategy

**Abstract:**

The COVID-19 pandemic represented challenging years in various dimensions – from economic to healthcare challenges, which caused powerful changes and mindset shifts in different industries. Worldwide measures such as border closures, quarantine and social distancing were employed, prompting an economic crisis.

One of the most impactful industries during the COVID-19 pandemic was the hospitality industry, due to its business model. In Portugal, in 2023, there were more than 30M guests - a growth of around 10% compared to 2019, a record year for tourism- and 77M stays. Revenues of around 25B€ represented a 37% growth compared to 2019, and 18.5% compared to 2022.

Despite different factors promote hotel success, the current thesis illustrates how Grupo UIP overcame the pandemic crisis, especially focusing on how leadership was a crucial factor during the crisis and an adaptive strategy for managing teams.

How did leaders overcome the pandemic challenges? Which main changes happen in terms of leadership purpose and importance within the organization? How did leaders perceive this transformation? This thesis aims to provide a structured case study, applied to a group that owns hotels – United Investments Portugal - where it exposes leaders' main challenges, the most important leadership competencies and strategies to navigate the COVID-19 crisis effectively.

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**Título:** A Liderança como uma Estratégia Adaptativa do Negócio durante a Pandemia COVID-19 | Um caso do Grupo UIP

**Palavras-chave:** COVID-19; Capacidades Dinâmicas; Hospitalidade; Líderes; Liderança; Crise Pandémica; Estratégia

**Resumo:**

A pandemia COVID-19 representou anos desafiantes em várias dimensões que provocaram mudanças significativas e alterações na mentalidade em diferentes indústrias. Foram aplicadas medidas mundiais, como o encerramento de fronteiras, a quarentena, conduzindo a uma crise económica.

Uma das indústrias com maior impacto durante a pandemia foi a indústria hoteleira, devido ao seu modelo de negócio. Em Portugal, em 2023, registaram-se mais de 30M de hóspedes - um crescimento de cerca de 10% em relação a 2019, um ano recorde para o turismo - e 77M de estadias. As receitas de cerca de 25B€ representaram um crescimento de 37% em relação a 2019 e de 18,5% em relação a 2022.

Apesar de diferentes fatores promoverem o sucesso hoteleiro, a presente tese ilustra como o Grupo UIP superou a crise pandémica, focando-se na liderança como um fator crucial durante a crise e uma estratégia adaptativa para a gestão de equipas.

Como é que os líderes ultrapassaram os desafios da pandemia? Quais as principais mudanças ocorridas relativamente ao objetivo e importância da liderança na Organização? Como é que os líderes percecionaram esta transformação? Esta tese tem como objetivo providenciar um estudo de caso estruturado, aplicado a um grupo que detém hotéis - United Investments Portugal- expondo os desafios, competências de liderança e estratégias adotadas durante a pandemia.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

B - Billion

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CHRO – Chief Human Resources Officer

E.G – Example

F&B- Food and Beverage

GDP – Gross Domestic Profit

ha – hectares

HGMR - Hospitality Global Market Report

HR – Human Resources

HRL - Hyatt Regency Lisboa

L&H - leisure and hospitality

M - Millions

PCR - Pine Cliffs Resort

QMG - Quinta Marques Gomes

RBV - resource-based view

RevPar – Revenue Per Available Room

SC - Sheraton Cascais

SS - Serenity Spa

UIP – United Investments Portugal

VF - Vale do Freixo

WHO - World Health Organization

WTTC- World Travel and Tourism Council

YP - Yotel Porto

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## 1. Theoretical Background

This chapter aims to support the case study and teaching notes presented with theoretical background concepts, to promote clarity, associations, and predictions within the practical case study. This theoretical content was chosen considering critical and pertinence reflections, as well practical considerations not excluding the relevance of other concepts.

### 1.1. Leadership

According to Yukl (2013), leadership concept relates with the interaction between leaders and subordinates, with leaders seeking to influence the behavior of employees, aiming the organization's goals. Therefore, they can be outlined from various points of view, such as the *“traits, behaviours, influence, interaction, role relationships, and occupation of an administrative position”* (Yukl, 2013).

When considering leadership in different scenarios, specifically during crisis, organizations need to adjust quickly to the unforeseeable and constantly changing circumstances of it (Alonso *et al.*, 2020). It is throughout moments of emergency that leadership plays a pivotal role in enhancing both human well-being and organizational performance. The pandemic context highlights the need for effective leadership as their guidance has never been so critical (Hahang, Bayraktar, Jimenez, 2022).

Hirudayaraj and Sparkman (2019) assert that leaders facing a crisis must grow the appropriate skills and strategies to navigate the challenges inherent in such situations. Crisis leadership can be defined as the recognition of potential risks, rigorous preparedness, the influential guidance of others, and concrete decision-making to minimize negative impacts while taking advantage of opportunities within a limited timeframe (Hahang *et al.*, 2022).

Among numerous researchers emphasizing the indispensability of competent leaders during difficult periods, Jaques (2013) highlights that the effectiveness of an enterprise in navigating the complexities of a crisis is heavily dependent on the executive suite. Similarly, Deverell (2013) emphasizes that crisis management demands more than merely selecting optimal damage control measures, since it necessitates effective governance (Hahang, Bayraktar & Jimenez, 2020). Particularly in times of crisis, the development of empathy and social intelligence is a necessary skill for hotel leaders, due to the fact they are being called to respond to unacquainted sentiments, even more in an industry where interpersonal contacts are

inevitable (P. Tavitiyaman et al., 2011). When facing rapidly changing conditions, a continuous demand for the enhancement of skills to lead change effectively arises (Hahang et al., 2022).

Even though leaders are responsible for guiding teams in accordance with an action plan, the implementation of this plan is not required or cannot be done on an individual basis. As a result, a capable leader, particularly during a pandemic crisis in which pressure is an ongoing factor, should seek support of their colleagues to carry out their plan. By understanding each department's structure, hierarchy, and competencies, the general manager, HR manager, and hotel department managers should allocate tasks to individuals (P. Tavitiyaman et al., 2011).

According to research, HRM practices and employee motivating approaches play an active role in the hotels' efficient organization and operations (Kehoe and Wright, 2013). Employee satisfaction is recognized to be crucial for acquiring customers as well as maintaining market share (Hashim et al., 2016). To secure a competitive advantage and broaden market share, hotels must prioritize customer satisfaction, which is primarily dependent on the service provided by the first line of workers. Afterwards, employee satisfaction is considered as equally crucial (Ypapanti, A., Constantoglou, M, 2021)

To conclude, according to different researchers (Kim and Oh, 2004; Wang and Shyu, 2008), the accomplishment and implementation of human resource management practices, can increase business competitive advantage, while providing an economically significant contribution to organization performance (P. Tavitiyaman et al., 2011).

Thus, the development of crisis management skills and strategies as well as the relevance of HRM practices are essential for corporate success.

## **1.2. Dynamic Capabilities**

The perspective of dynamic capabilities addresses the fundamental inquiry of how firms can cope with changing environments (Barreto, 2010). Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997) have defined dynamic capabilities as "*the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments*". Their approach was built around several key elements that highlight its major theoretical principles encompassing the nature, role, context, creation and development, outcome, and heterogeneity of dynamic capabilities (Barreto, 2010). Dynamic capabilities are the innovative form of the resource-based view (RBV), and it is approached in fast changing environments, which is why they are often related. RBV is a framework on how to achieve competitive advantage in the long run, and how

to accomplish sustainable competitive advantage by combining resources. Departing from the traditional perspective that emphasizes routine learning procedures, the reconceptualization of dynamic capabilities accentuates organizational and strategic processes, restructuring the resource base (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). This renewed focus extends to areas such as product innovation, the strategic decision-making process, and the establishment of alliances.

Research indicates a declining trend on the average duration for which firms can maintain a competitive advantage over time (Wiggins & Ruefli, 2005). This trend infers that in hypercompetitive environments, firms encounter increased difficulty in attaining prolonged competitive advantages (Barreto, 2010). In the contemporary business panorama, achieving sustainable advantage requires more than the ownership of difficult to replicate assets such as knowledge; it also demands unique and intricate dynamic capabilities that are difficult to replicate.

A more complete definition was suggested by Barreto (2010) accommodating old and more recent proposals within the field aiming to overcome some of their limitations. Organizations should be strategically managed to promote successive temporary advantages through effective responses to constant environmental shocks (Barreto, 2010). The dynamic capabilities framework aspires to clarify the sources of enterprise-level competitive advantage over time: as Barreto points out (2010), while the long-run performance of an enterprise is influenced to some extent by how the external business environment acknowledges its heritage, the development of (internal) dynamic capabilities lie at the core of enterprise success and failure.

Dynamic capabilities vision can be disaggregated into the capacity to sense and shape opportunities and threats, to seize opportunities, and to maintain competitiveness through enhancing, combining, protecting, and, when needed, reconfiguring the business enterprise's assets, intangible and tangible (Teece, 2007). Also, the processes that support the core elements of dynamic capabilities are coordination/integrating learning (Barreto, 2010). Furthermore, as researched by Teece (2007), dynamic capabilities and business performance are correlated, which foundations can be found in Fig. 1.

The ownership of dynamic capabilities is specifically relevant to multinational enterprise performance in business environments that showcase certain characteristics: the environment is open to international commerce, exposed to the opportunities/threats associated with technological change; technical change itself is systemic in that multiple inventions must be combined to create products and/or services that address customer needs; there are well-

developed global markets for the exchange of (component) goods and services; business environment is characterized by underdeveloped markets, creating challenges for the exchange of technological and managerial know-how (Teece, 2007).

When specifically talking in crisis capabilities, a consensus between researchers emphasizes the importance for crisis leaders primarily possess analytical skills, to make sense of conflicting and erroneous information (Borodzicz, 2004; Hadley et al., 2009; Wooten and James, 2008). Once information is collected, assessed, and disseminated, a leader's competency to make strategic decisions emerges as a critical factor for surviving a crisis (Abdalla et al., 2022; Adams et al., 2013; Bauman, 2011; Hadley et al., 2009; Hasel, 2013; Tourish, 2020).

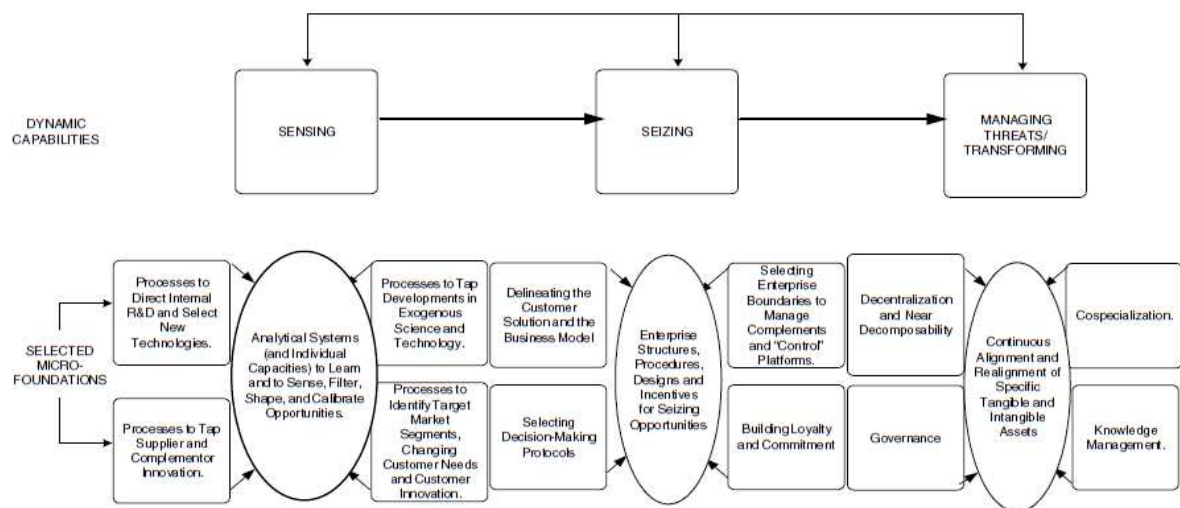
Additionally, adaptability and agility stand out as broadly recognised competencies in crisis leadership, enabling leaders to act fast in turbulent times (Borodzicz, 2004; Fener and Cevik, 2015; Hirudayaraj and Sparkman, 2019; Kamoche, 2003). Stress resilience has also been proven as a survival imperative (Adams et al., 2013; DuBrin, 2013; Low Kim Cheng, 2007).

Communication emerges as a frequently emphasized skill in crisis management literature (Cros & Gaultier-Gaillard Cros, 2015; DuBrin, 2013) highlighting a clear, honest, consistent, and timely communication strategy, demonstrating authenticity and empathy is very powerful (Thiessen, Ingenhoff, 2011; Wilson, 2020). Moreover, a leader's ability to inspire trust is considered as an essential ingredient for success, strengthening transformative collective action and increase efficacy in overcoming crises (Adams et al., 2013; Adiguzel, 2019; Babic, 2014; Hasel, 2013; Kovoov-Misra and Gopalakrishnan, 2016).

During crisis, where conventional problem-solving standards are loosened (Kuhn, 1970), a leader's creative capacity to generate numerous viable solutions using divergent thinking is highly valued in crisis management (Adiguzel, 2019; Crookall, 2004; Hadley et al., 2009; Hokanson, 2018; Lalonde and Roux-Dufort, 2013). Moreover, leaders who can inspire strategic thinking, exhibit greater competence in handling crisis eventualities (Fener and Cevik, 2015; Rowe, 2016).

Establishing a bridge between stakeholders, during pandemic crisis, to attract guests and accomplish their expectations with the services provided, the hotel's workers must be properly trained in accordance with health and safety guidelines. Managers should communicate to employee's concrete public health standards, which hotel needs to respect, ensuring that employees feel safe (Susser & Tyson, 2020). Meanwhile employees will easily transmit the feeling of security and situation control to the guests, the higher the feeling of being informed

and protected, contributing to the quality increased of the provided services (Ypapanti & Constantoglou, 2021). To make this feasible, hotel leaders and, in particular, HR Managers must understand the individual needs of employees at this time of crisis and develop procedures to mobilize staff members and achieve their most effective achievable performance, through competencies development (Ypapanti et al., 2021).



**Fig.1:** Foundations of dynamic capabilities and business performance

Source: Explicating Dynamic Capabilities: the nature and microfoundations of (sustainable) enterprise performance, Teece (2007)

### 1.3. Porters 5 Forces

Michael E. Porter (1979) explained how different factors could change a company's strategy. Porter defends 5 forces that shape Industry competition: the threat of new entrants, the threat of substitutes, the bargaining power of customers, the bargaining power of suppliers and the rivalry among existing players in the market (Porter, 1979).

Porter's 5 forces framework (1979) focus on the external elements on the environment instead of internal characteristics, when influencing the industry attractiveness. The principal purpose of this analysis is not only to identify threats to their profitability but also to maximize the performance by showing opportunities that will position companies ahead of the competition.

Deep diving in his forces, the threat of new market entrants refers to the possibility of new competitors in the market panorama, meaning, new rivals. Common barriers to impact this force

are economies of scale, government policies and product differentiation (Botten and McManus, 1999).

In what concerns to substitutes products within the hospitality industry, it establishes a reduced threat in the hospitality industry, especially when facing similar product offers, for example, when providing a mass type of service (Dale, 2000).

The bargaining power of customers stands to the clients' capacity to force the decrease of prices, while asking for better quality. The size and concentration of customers are the decisive aspects of customers' power, being able to put rivals against each other (Botten & McManus, 1999).

The bargaining power of suppliers, in the hospitality sector, appears to be low when there is a great number of suppliers, which signifies that no supplier dominates the market competition (Olsen & Roper, 1998; Kim & Oh, 2004).

About the rivalry among existing firms, it is normally intense due to fixed costs, lack of differentiation or switching costs (Botten and McManus, 1999). The hotel industry's competitive intensity rises as the number of operational units grows, new products are introduced (Kim & Oh, 2004). In hotel industry, most competitors are chosen by pricing, classification, and proximity (Mathews, 2000). Differentiating its offer would reduce competition (Enz, 2010).

The positive performance of a tourism business depends heavily on how it reacts and adjusts to market indications, as well, the reliability of predictions on the evolution of the tourism sector structure (Kim & Oh, 2004).



Figure 2: Industry Competition is shaped based on 5 Forces

Source: Michael E. Porter

#### 1.4. Hospitality Industry and its Trends

The hospitality industry is a business that operates 24/7 and 365 days a year (Hahang *et al.*, 2022). The global hospitality industry, which goes from hotels, restaurants to cruise ships, travel agencies, contributed significantly to the global GDP constituting 10.3% in 2019, amounting a total of \$8.9T, according to data from the WTTC (2020), as referenced by Aksoy (2022). During 2020, travel and tourism segments have recorded an approximate \$4.5T in consumer spending, as reported by the HGMR (2020).

The travel and tourism sector are recognized as a significant driver for job creation and a dynamic engine of employment opportunities (Dogru & Bulut, 2018). According to the WTTC (2020), in 2019, 1 in 10 jobs (total 330M jobs) were supported by the global travel and tourism sector, and one quarter of all net new jobs were created by this sector over the last 5 years (Aksoy *et al.*, 2022).

Many individuals that work in the hospitality industry can make cross-industry career moves, through regular training programs, which cultivate a combination of technical skills and highly transferable soft skills (Huang *et al.*, 2021).

As a global trend, hotels are increasingly leveraging AI to modernize their operational procedures, optimizing processes traditionally managed by employees. This includes areas such as guest relations, check-in/out procedures, room service, bartending, chatbots, reservations and bookings management (Cain, Thomas & Alonso, 2019; Ivanov *et al.*, 2019; Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019). Hotels are more likely to implement new technologies involving AI because it improves efficiency in the workplace (Li, Bonn & Ye, 2019). Due to these, AI starting to change low-skilled roles, even though most jobs that require human interaction are difficult to automate (Brougham & Haar, 2018). Therefore, human interaction is considered a critical factor in driving profitability in the service delivery (Hogreve, Iseke, Derfuss, & Eller, 2017) for the reason that is what makes a product unique and differentiates between one service provider and another (Tasci & Semrad, 2016).

In 2023 there were more than 30M guests - a growth of around 10% compared to 2019, which had been the best tourist year so far - and 77M overnight stays. Revenues of around 25B€ represent growth of 37% compared to 2019 and 18.5% compared to 2022 (Portugal.gov.pt, 2024). The WTTC, according to its Economic Impact Research (EIR) 2023 Report, predicts that tourism will contribute around 56.4B€ to the GDP in 2033, which means that it will account for around 21.1% of the Portuguese economy (Forbes, 2023).

## 1.5. COVID-19 Crisis, a Global and Hospitality Overview

In Mandarin, the word for crisis is “wēi jī”, being composed by 2 ideograms: “danger” and “opportunity” (Crookall, 2004). Paraskevas and Quek (2019) state that crisis can be identified as any significant event with the potential to induce unfavourable effects, that threaten the sustainability of companies and is characterized by an inherent ambiguity of causes (Giousmpasoglou, Marinakou & Zopiatis, 2021). As Laws (2007) mention, crisis are unexpected critical situations that can happen at any time. Based on Kamoche (2003), a crisis can leave marks that can go from retrenchments to unemployment (Hahang *et al.*, 2022).

In the contemporary globalized panorama, unprecedented crisis (Bland, 2020), pressured, and obligated populations worldwide to reinvent themselves (Hahang, *et al.*, 2022).

The start of 2020 witnessed the rapid spread of COVID-19, threatening the health and everyone's lives what led to crippled the global economy but also paralyzed the tourism industry.

Regarding tourism and hospitality, was one of the areas that have been hit the hardest, because its essence is built around people interaction (Gössling *et al.*, 2021). Impacts can be listed from operation suspension to bankruptcies (Baum and Hai, 2020; Gossling *et al.*, 2020; Bartik *et al.*, 2020; Gursoy & Chi, 2020).

Resonating with the above, by March 2020, low hotel occupancy rates were reported (30% or lower in May 2020). Some of the most common metrics to evaluate the effect of a crisis on hotel businesses are usually the average daily rate, the revenue per available room (RevPar) and the occupancy (Langford *et al.*, 2019) - check Figure 3 for an European overview.

Associated with HR and workforce impacts, the WTTC forecasted 100.8M jobs at risk, whereas Sigala (2020) argues that 120M tourism jobs could be lost and that 24% of COVID-19 induced layoffs may be permanent (Barrero *et al.*, 2020). However, among a worldwide financial crisis, hotel employees had the opportunity of layoff which allows them to earn and not be dismissed. Therefore, employer assistance led to higher worker satisfaction and business commitment (Wong *et al.*, 2020).

Moreover, COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the labor market, since it has triggered the elimination of numerous entry-level jobs, the exit of the aging workforce, and amplification of stigmas associated with hospitality employment as perceived short-term work (Bowen & Morosan, 2018; Society of Human Resources Management, 2015; New American Economy, 2020). Mass unemployment was expected to increase automation which combines with

technology adoption being boosted as a pandemic consequence. About job postings in the leisure and hospitality (L&H) industry, it declined by 45%–65% during April-May 2020, due to the closure policies. However, the situation around May, after these policies were revoked, and all industries began to recover, L&H job postings were still down by 30%–45% in September 2020, the lowest among all industries (Huang et al., 2021).

Illustratively, Marriott International, with a global workforce of 174,000 employees, implemented substantial measures during the pandemic, as tens of thousands of workers were placed on furlough as part of their strategic response. Alongside, Hilton Worldwide took proactive steps in March 2020, notifying lenders of their decision to secure a precautionary \$1.75B through a revolving loan. These moves were strategically coordinated to conserve financial resources and ensure operational flexibility (Nicola et al., 2020; Aksoy et al., 2022).

Historical data revealed that pre COVID-19 management plans, strategies and actions to deal with crisis were not well established by the leaders (Giousmpasoglou, Marinakou, & Zopiatis, 2021). The market volatility highlights the needed to embrace dynamics and leadership requirements of the hospitality sector (Hahang, Bayraktar, Jimenez, 2022).



**Figure 3:** Hotel European countries RevPar% changes  
 Source: Hahang, Bayraktar, Jimenez (2022)

## 2. Methodology

This dissertation employs a qualitative research method to explore "Business Adaptive Strategies in Crisis," focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic in the hotel industry, specifically the United Investments Portugal Group, encompassing Pine Cliffs Resort, Sheraton Cascais, Yotel Porto, Hyatt Regency Lisboa, among others. The study aims to demonstrate insights into Business, Strategic Management, People Management and Leadership.

This theoretical background allowed to understand concepts and theoretical aspects that guided the questions definition and what I intended to acquire through interviews with leaders. The interviews aimed to understand the perspective of leaders with regard to the most important skills of a leader in the face of a crisis and the business adaptive strategies. The case study concerns the description of the specific case of the selected group. Finally, teaching notes are questions for students to reflect on from the literature review and the case study.

The interviews conducted involved operational leaders, with 7 of them reporting directly to, or working closely with, the Hotel General Manager. Interviewees included Fernanda Magri, Regional Learning and Development Manager at UIP; Eduarda Santos, HSK Manager Pine Cliffs; Jaime Sarmiento, CHRO UIP; Rui Brito, Director of Rooms Pine Cliffs; Ana Simão, Operations Manager previously HSK Manager Sheraton Cascais; Rui Tendeiro, Operations Manager Yotel Porto; Dálio Calado, F&B Director at Pine Cliffs Resort; Luís Moreira, Assistant Director of Food and Beverage (F&B); Nicole Guerreiro, HR Director at Pine Cliffs Resort. The selection criteria were focused on leaders from core hotel areas, reinforcing the applicability of leadership and the strategy applied to operations.

Facilitated by Fernanda Magri, interviews were arranged with leaders from Grupo UIP, specifically Pine Cliffs Resort, Sheraton Cascais, and Yotel. Regarding the interview, firstly, I conducted a comprehensive review of the existing literature and academic research to understand the existing discuss on the topic. Subsequently, I formulated interview questions that aligned with the insights collected from the literature, ensuring that they supported the themes identified in the literature review. Drawing from examples of questions utilized in previous dissertations and research studies, I developed a credible interview structure tailored to leaders' reality. The interviews followed a predefined script, covering topics such as the leaders' career trajectories, perceptions of COVID-19, organizational preparedness for the crisis, strategic objectives, industry transformation, essential leadership competencies during a crisis, effective strategies during the pandemic, and talent impacts. Meetings occurred between March 14th and 30 April, with an average duration of 30 minutes. In order to get a bigger understanding about the strategic view of the Group as a whole, insights from CEO's interviews were gathered from credible and renewed magazine, due to the impossibility to conduct an interview with him.

Qualitative analysis of interview results will feed the construction of the Case Study. Quantitative analysis will identify frequently referenced competencies and corresponding

examples, aiming to establish patterns, and concluding with a final percentage, highlighting the most frequently mentioned competencies.

### **3. Case Study**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused strict measures such as quarantine, social distance, and border closures, due to prevalent disease, increased in mortality, and long-term health effects. These pandemic restrictions and characteristics, caused an economic crises, including an enormous damage in all areas of tourism and hospitality since the very beginning of 2020.

This case study highlights the impact of the COVID-19 in the hospitality industry, focusing on the adaptive strategies of the United Investments Portugal Group. The business adaptive strategies are reflected in two pillars: people and strategy/operations (strategy applied to hotel business and operations). People is one of the greatest pillars of any organization and this case study aims to explore the adaptive strategies of leaders towards their teams, and how their leadership skills were crucial to overcome the pandemic crisis.

#### **3.1. United Investments Portugal**

##### **3.1.1. History**

The Grupo UIP, established in 1985, it is part of the Al-Bahar Investment Group and its brands as PCR, SC, YP, HRL, QMG, VF, and Algarve resort represented IFA's first venture into tourism investment, as the company later became the primary investor in the "Palm Islands" project in Dubai. Today, IFA's tourism empire extends across Europe, the United States, Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Middle East.

Nowadays, Grupo UIP's has more than 30 years of experience, 500 sold properties, and more than 2 000 members and proprietaries (UIP, 2024).

##### **3.1.2. Company Culture**

In this chapter, the Grupo UIP's mission, vision and values are highlighted.

The group's mission is focused on ensuring the development, building, and management of assets in the tourism industry; to offer a personalised service of excellence in the real estate

market. Besides that, commercialise and manage spas under an exclusive luxury brand (SS) is also part of their mission. Aiming to be “always more”, Grupo UIP aims to be a global and a reference brand, growing in a sustained and sustainable way, creating asset value for the client. UIP’s core values are experience, excellence, commitment, safety, and client orientation.

### **3.1.3. Organizational structure**

Jassim Al-Bahar was the driving force behind IFA, a multinational company that owns Pine Cliffs Resort.

After Jassim Al-Bahar, the leadership within IFA was assumed by his son, Talal Al-Bahar. Carlos Leal is the Grupo UIP’s CEO.

In terms of Pine Cliffs Executive Committee includes General Manager, HR Director, Engineering Director, Finance Director, Operations Director, F&B Director, Sales Director, Revenue Director, Landscape and Golf Director. Hierarchically below are area managers and supervisors.

At the SCR, which has a smaller structure, the positions are: General Manager, HR Director, Finance Director, Engineering Director, Sales Director. Managers are the most senior position in the following areas: Operations, Food and Beverage and Revenue Management.

YP, with a smaller structure compared to SCR positions: the only director is the General Manager; then there are Operations Manager, Revenue Manager, F&B Manager. In the HR area, there is a supervisor.

### **3.1.4. Core Business**

UIP specializes in Hospitality and Real Estate Investment, offering luxurious properties and investment opportunities in Portugal. With a focus on luxury industry and top service, SS, is the spa and wellness brand that has grown along the years.

### **3.1.5. Group Business Segments**

Nowadays, 2024, the group’s business segments are a range of 7 main entities.

Located in South of Portugal, Algarve, PCR, a Luxury Collection Resort, was inaugurated in 1992 with the Pine Cliffs Hotel and Pine Cliffs Townhouses. Managed by UIP, affiliated with Marriott International, Inc. through “The Luxury Collection” brand, PCR offers a diverse range of accommodation options, real estate investment opportunities, and a luxurious lifestyle for the whole family. This resort is one of the most prestigious and award-winning luxury resorts in Europe.

Acquired in 2005, VF, located in Benafim (Algarve), is considered a Project of National Interest (PIN) and it stills in the licensing phase. It represents a potential investment of around 200M€ by Grupo UIP, aims to integrate a 5-star boutique hotel, a hotel-school in partnership with the University of Algarve, and other facilities.

Situated in the heart of Quinta da Marinha, in the village of Cascais, SCR, inaugurated in 2016, offers 154 accommodations, from hotel rooms, suites, and residences.

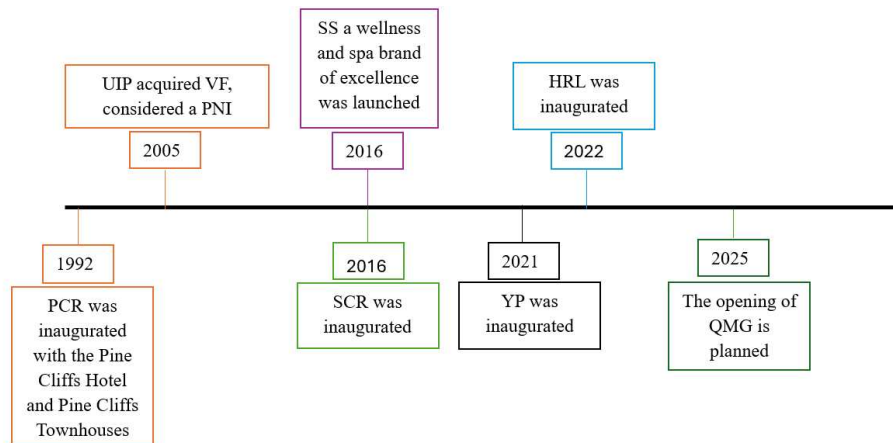
Available in 4 different locations, 3 in Portugal and 1 in Dubai, SS, is another business segment of the group, and it is a wellness and spa brand of excellence, which was launched in 2016.

The first YP in the Iberian Peninsula opened in 2021, Porto, representing an investment of around 30M€. It was the first YP to operate under a franchise regime.

Inaugurated in 2022, Hyatt International Corporation makes its entrance in the Portuguese market through UIP to open the HRL, with a real estate component.

The QMG, in the North of Portugal, planned to open in 2025, offers a residential condominium.

It is important to reinforce that back in 2020, COVID-19 pandemic timeline, in terms of properties, Grupo UIP worked with PCR, SC and YP, since the other properties were still in an early stage of development.



**Figure 4:** Grupo UIP history Timeline

Source: Own figure

### 3.2. Strategic Goals Pre COVID-19 (situation before COVID-19)

UIP’s business perspective, at the beginning of 2020, was to open YP, representing an investment of around 30M€. Besides, at the end of the same year, they wanted to open the first Hyatt brand hotel in Portugal, HRL, reflecting an investment of around 70M€. In addition, with the acquisition of QMG, in Vila Nova de Gaia, an investment of 200M€ was planned with the aim of building a boutique hotel and a luxury real estate part.

To enhance its portfolio and serve to a broader clientele, the Grupo UIP wanted to expand the SS brand into its latest properties. Additionally, to strengthen its business resilience, the Group explored prospective ventures beyond its current scope. This strategy, as outlined by Carlos Leal in an interview with Executive Digest (2019), encompassed assessing potential locations across Portugal and delving into diversified business verticals, including senior tourism and student living.

#### 3.2.1. Market Overview

##### 3.2.1.1. Competitors

The competition analysis was based on the main business segments and the hotels' respective positioning.

Regarding PCR, it competes in the upscale leisure and hospitality segment, targeting both leisure travellers and event organisers. Considering its business segments and localization, its competitors may include Vila Vita Parc Resort & Spa, Anantara Vilamoura Algarve Resort, Hilton Vilamoura, Penina Hotel & Golf Resort.

When considering SCR, which is in the seaside town of Cascais, its competitors would include other upscale hotels and resorts in the region, as: Penha Longa Resort, Hotel Cascais Miragem Health & Spa, The Oitavos, Onyria Marinha Boutique Hotel. SCR may distinguish itself through its brand recognition, international standards of service, and possibly its Marriott loyalty programme. YP competitors could include: The Yeatman, InterContinental Porto, Pestana Vintage Porto Hotel & World Heritage Site, Crowne Plaza Porto. Even though these competitors share similarities with UIP's hotel in terms of target market, location, and excellence in service, YP may differentiate itself through its unique design and technological-driven approach.

For an easier visualization, check Appendice I.

### **3.2.1.2. Customer**

All the Grupo UIP portfolio comprises properties tailored to meet the needs of high-income individuals. Each establishment within the group is meticulously designed and curated to appeal to this discerning demographic, offering luxury service, and exclusive amenities.

PCR and SCR are focused on building an attractive luxury resort focused on families and leisure stays. Regarding YP, when it comes to its target, it is business segment.

Regarding customer nationalities, before COVID-19, the top 5 markets were the British, Portuguese, German, Dutch, Spanish and French markets, with strong growth in the United States and Brazil.

### **3.2.2. Trends in Hospitality**

The hospitality industry, a significant slide of global commerce, has experienced profound transformations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes were predicted in terms of customers and services provided, for example a greater reluctance to travel on long-haul flights to countries with different cultures, considering the high risk of contracting the virus and the

measures adopted in each country. In the short term, the Portuguese market was expected to depend on the Spanish. On the other side, considering the medium term, it was expected to expand geographically, with the recovery of regional and European markets, due to the resumption of airlines and the opening of borders (Expresso, 2020).

Tourism products and services in luxury hotels also had to adapt with the suspension of some services in favour of the safety, health and protection of guests and employees (Expresso, 2020). Moreover, during this crisis, leadership skills emerged as pivotal assets for navigating unpredictable challenges. The integration of AI, automation, and robotics has revolutionised operational protocols, streamlined processes while demanded a revaluation of human capital allocation. However, despite technological advances, human interaction and leadership remained essential in fostering memorable guest experiences and driving profitability.

### **3.3. Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on UIP Hotels**

#### **3.3.1. Business and Operations**

For two months, the PCR and SCR hotels were nearly closed (Expresso, 2020), which resulted in significant and unrecoverable losses when it comes to hotel rooms, since there is no "stock" in this business area (Dinheiro Vivo, 2020).

Grupo UIP's adaptive strategies included retaining its employees and reformulating its service offer in accordance with the new reality. Likewise, another adaptive business strategy to deal with the pandemic crisis were streamlining operations and the reinvention of some services, where in PCR, for example, the entire F&B service was optimised to offer customers new options, such as an in-unit food delivery service. At SCR, long stays were promoted, and the "Resort Office" concept was developed, allowing teleworking in the hotel, known as "workation".

In terms of housekeeping measures, norms were applied and a simplification of processes to prioritize tasks were crucial to succeed, particularly in concerns of reputation, with the Clean and Safe seal by Tourism of Portugal, served as a catalyst for hotel promotion.

In terms of customers, there has also been a significant increase in the domestic market, since the Group's resorts were considered safe and high-quality alternatives, compared to trips abroad (Dinheiro Vivo, 2020). The impact of foreign markets on tourism in the Algarve was reflected

when bookings at the PCR increased by 56% in one week, due to the reopening of the air corridor with the United Kingdom (Expresso, 2020).

According to Leal (2020), in 2020 the Grupo UIP lost around 50M€ to 60M€ in revenue in the tourism sector and in 2021 it was slightly less, due to the withdrawal of some measures in July (Forbes, 2022). In October 2020, the measures were tightened again, resulting in a more difficult end of year than anticipated. In summation, between the two years (2020 and 2021), there was a loss in revenue of more than 80M€ to 90M€ (Forbes, 2022).

### **3.3.2. People**

HR practices may raise shareholder value (as a reference: by \$20,000 to \$40,000 per employee, according to Pfeffer, 1998). This may be explained due to the amount of value, on average, that each member generates to the company's total market valuation (market value per employee), is correlated with the HR practices adopted (Huselid & Becker, 1995). Businesses got above average returns when they used a broader range of practices, including more employees and integrated these practices within the business (Richardson & Thompson, 1999). This enhances the idea that financial impact is significant, however the essence of success lies in its people, and without them, financial endeavours cannot thrive.

The focus of the leaders and the HR team was on leader proximity, prioritization, and reorganization, considering the reality that was being observed. Along the interviews, the idea that no business strategy can be effective if it doesn't embed employee health, safety, and well-being into its DNA was recognized (PwC, 2020).

A major concern of the HR Department was not to lose the relationship and contact with employees. As such, one of the actions taken was to create a Facebook page for the Group, which was dynamized on a daily basis, from CHRO posts to the sharing of themed posts, as well as socialising through the online group. In addition, the HR team made phone calls to employees to find out how they were doing, thus reinforcing open communication, and reinventing the organization's internal communication.

From the point of view of human capital, no employees were hired for the season, due to the clarity of the instructions on this topic, namely, not to hire or fire anyone. What happened was a reorganization of the teams and the structure itself. A spirit of mutual help and great partnership is mentioned during leaders' interviews, with the most vulnerable employees having

been identified due to their health conditions and the priority being to protect themselves at home.

The adaptive strategy used to keep employees was the lay-off, so the feeling of "abandonment" was minimised within the possibilities, as they received a percentage of their salary each month. In addition, there were leaders who rotated between layoffs. In total, and particularly at PCR as an example, there were 38 people left on the property and in this group, there was a restructuring of the organization and assignment of tasks, which had repercussions on employees and leaders working in multiple positions and tasks.

In the summer months, when the national pandemic situation evolved, business gradually picked up again due to the increase in customers, although this improvement did not lead to the hiring of employees, due to the uncertainty at the time. Faced with the challenge of offering a good service taking into account the lack of HR and the need to keep people in the Resort's professional ranks, a new project was developed, called "Pine Cliffs in Action", which consisted of organising departmental schedules by integrating all employees (including managers and directors), regardless of their area (management, finance, HR, sales, revenue), into the operational side, thus making it possible to contribute to the lack of people in the respective area, reinforcing unity and team spirit.

Also, as an adaptive strategy during the pandemic, due to the lack of people with qualifications, there was a greater need to train people, starting with basic knowledge of what hospitality is (e.g. new training courses: Base and Merge).

Guidelines from the CEO were considered in group with the general manager and the department leaders, with the purpose to define strategies to the different hotels, requiring them to be reactive to new information, but pragmatic and flexible to the need to systematically adjust the operation and the mindset, since it was not possible to plan for the long term.

When speaking about HR data, the amount that the company spends on its workforce in relation to its revenue generated (Payroll / Revenue), PCR saw an increase of 67,8% between 2019 and 2020, with a decrease in 2021, while maintaining higher values than before the pandemic (2019). There are many similarities with SCR, where there was a 44% increase between 2019 and 2020, and in 2021 it fell, remaining higher than in 2019.

### **3.3.2.1. Leadership as the main asset**

The effectiveness and success of a business to navigate the complexities of a crisis is heavily dependent on their leaders' leadership skills, and for that reason, leadership is considered in this Case Study as a business adaptive strategy, crucial for crisis overcome.

Organizational culture is the set of embedded behaviors that the citizens of an organization display. As mentioned by Peter Drucker, “culture eats strategy for breakfast”, which emphasizes how governance and leadership is exercised significantly influences these behaviors (Parc, 2015). Organizations with established routines that allow them to execute a strategy, aligned with the promotion of continuous adjustment to new market contexts, can create more value for their shareholders and other stakeholders: studies point to a 2.2 times higher EBITDA, double the Return on Invested Capital (ROIC) and 3 times better Total Return to Shareholders (TRS) (Odgers Berndtson, 2023).

Considering the key competencies for business adaptive strategies of leaders in hospitality context, communication was the competency emphasised by all the interviewed leaders - including different ways of it, while highlighting communication importance. Competencies such as adaptability, resilience, empathy, closeness to people, being a team player, managing team stress and the capability to be positive when dealing with failure, are considered essential for unifying people and teams at such vulnerable times. Competencies that were also emphasized are the capability to be up-to-date, factual, and informative; effectively reactive and consequently the importance of focusing on problem-solving. Moreover, the ability to be willing to explore alternatives and not be afraid to take risks; being quick to observe and make decisions, were also stood out. As mentioned by some interviewees, anticipate "next steps" were difficult given the unstable reality of the pandemic. The ability to adapt to uncertain day-to-day life and the acquisition of new digital skills were also considered, by some leaders, to be challenging and essential.

Dynamic capabilities are therefore applied to the reality of the interviewed leaders, due to their potential to recognize, shape, and take advantage of opportunities, while maintaining competitiveness through increasing, integrating, defending, and, when necessary, reconfiguring a company enterprise's intangible and tangible assets (Teece, 2007). Furthermore, the processes that support the core elements of dynamic capabilities are coordinate and integrate learning, while the market panorama - with fast and difficult to predict changes - obligates to achieve sustainable advantage, which requires more than the ownership to replicate assets, such as

knowledge. Also, it demands unique and intricate dynamic capabilities that are difficult to replicate (Barreto, 2010). To conclude, as you may remember, "*A dynamic capability is the firm's potential to systematically solve problems, formed by its propensity to sense opportunities and threats, to make timely and market-oriented decisions, and to change its resource base*" (Barreto, 2010), which notions were mentioned throughout the interviews.

The reinforcement of a caring culture by the leaders made it possible to overcome the crisis and get back to business when the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 were lifted and to get closer to the reality of 2019.

### **3.4. Post COVID-19**

The incessant search for innovative solutions to capture new markets and customers is a reality for the Grupo UIP. However, the need to contain costs to mitigate the reduction in revenue was an adaptive strategy, due to the volatile and uncertain situation (Dinheiro Vivo, 2020). The pandemic itself has made customers more demanding and with further needs, forcing the hotel industry to reinvent itself both in terms of the operation and processes carried out in each hotel department, as well as new business lines. In addition, shifts in terms of supply chain dynamics were also noticed, since it has significantly evolved, transitioning from traditional supplier-stockpiling practices to a more agile sourcing strategies due to reduced transport mobility, which underlines the company's preparation and management strategy for a greater foresight and planning.

The Grupo UIP's post COVID-19 period included the inauguration of the HRL; the expansion of the SS brand at national and international level, with international openings; awaiting approval for the VF project and the continued sale and construction of the project in Vila Nova de Gaia, QMG (Forbes, 2022).

Regarding employees and their teams, the post COVID-19 process involved understanding the different needs of the team, taking into account the increasingly significant generational gaps, empowering people, and promoting well-being within the organization.

Hiring became more difficult after the pandemic since the talent market was inadequate, and many workers found positions in other industries, preferring a remote and hybrid model of work.

In the light of the difficulty in selecting people with qualified talent and availability, there was a greater need to train people, starting by providing basic knowledge about hospitality, hence changing the entry level of the different core hotel areas, which is more cyclical. In addition, for those already in the company, there was a need to further train them and motivate their development in the company, through the training academy launch - Vibrant Academy - a leadership academy, with the aim of preparing people for leadership positions within the Grupo UIP.

The constant adaptation that the organization has had to undergo has, according to various testimonies from the leaders interviewed, made people more flexible and adaptable, with a more agile organizational structure, more efficient and automated, for example, faster digital processes have been implemented, and there is also a different mentality and a greater valorisation of work-life balance.

Based on concrete data provided by the HR team, the PCR maintained an average of approximately 500 full-time employees between 2019 and 2023, while the SCR had around 90 employees, and the YP had approximately 30 employees during the same period. Analysing the Payroll/Revenue ratio from 2020 to 2023, a notable decrease of 30.4% was observed at the PCR, contrasted with a 16.7% increase compared to pre-pandemic figures (2019-2023), indicating a heightened necessity for increased Payroll investment in 2023. Similarly, at the SCR, there was a significant decline of 32% in the Payroll-to-Revenue ratio from 2020 to 2023, with a cumulative decrease of 2% compared to the pre-pandemic era (2019-2023).

To conclude, with the goal of unifying people and the business, there is a direct relationship between an organization's ability to create value and its proficiency in the behaviors that support organizational excellence (Odgers Berndtson, 2023). In Portugal, high performing organizations demonstrate 5 keys behaviors: foreseeing trends, efficiently managing financial resources, focusing on elevated standards of performance, continuous improvement, and top management leadership with the necessary skills. Even though this study relies on C-Level participants to take conclusions, it is important to highlight that to support cultural changes within an organization, the Executive Commission is one of the first to identify and want to tackle the challenges (Odgers Berndtson, 2023).

## **4. Results**

The interview and respective results are systematized below, giving the perspective of the interviewed. A thematic analysis approach is used to facilitate conclusions.

### **4.1. Sample**

The data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews to hospitality leaders from Grupo UIP hotels, resulting on a sample of 9 persons. All of interviews, except one due to technological issues were audio recorded for analysis.

Concerning the 9 participants (Appendice I), some data was collected: 44,4% were female and 55.6% were male. Regarding the education background 55,7% held a bachelor's degree, 11% held a master's degree, 11% held a postgraduation, 11% held a MBA and 33% has no academic background/only sessions certifications. These participants come from different areas of studies from Management, HR Management, Tourism Management, Hotel Management. The years of experience in hospitality varied between 10 and 36 years, which 44,4% of the participants have 20 or more years of experience in the industry, while 55,6% has less than it.

The interviews happened between march 14<sup>th</sup> and april 26<sup>th</sup>, lasted an average of 30 minutes (the longest lasted 56 minutes and the shortest 15 minutes).

## 4.2. Interviews Systematization

### 4.2.1. Part I

Identifi- cation	COVID-19 Crisis				
	Leader	Crisis perception/ description	Crisis preparation of the Organization	Changes in this regard	Strategic pre COVID-19 goals and how did they change
A		A crisis that caused panic; there were no dismissals neither new hirings; major impact on the strengthening the commitment to people.	-	-	-
B		Had never been experienced before	Anyone was prepared; company supported the HSK workers with the material they needed to feel safe at work.	It was necessary to create new HSK processes and recovery plans to guarantee maximum security	-
C		Sudden closure of almost all economic activity; with the possibility of zero revenue, how it would be possible to maintain the entire staffing structure?	No preparation for a pandemic crisis	-	-
D		Something never lived; In the Housekeeping team, we became from about 30 to 3 people; Work functions became more operational than administrative	Despite existing normative procedures, there was no preparation for the effect of a pandemic; unpredictable outcomes;	Marriott tried to adopt strategies, implementing DGS rules, to ensure an excellent safe service.	-
E		No generation had ever experienced a pandemic crisis; flexibility to adapt to all our health rules in Portugal.	The organization was not prepared to experience this situation	There weren't contingency plans before COVID-19 pandemic.	-
F		Despite experience in natural crises, never had worked during a crisis such a long time as the pandemic	There was no preparation for this specific situation. Pine Cliffs, had international corporate standards for crisis, but these did not cover situations like this.	It is believed that after the COVID-19 pandemic a contingency plan was created at a more corporate level	-

G	No one knew how to adapt to that reality. The pandemic required an equitable division of tasks to be performed at that time, with a luxury resort model transitioning to a basic model	No one had contingency plans or preparation; It implied daily readjustment; were established standards and rigorously followed Marriott guidelines and national legislation from DGS. Constant learning process	Now they are more prepared and aware of the processes needed	Until February-March 2021, the projections for the year were good which resulted in cancellations-They managed to turn around in terms of revenue in July, being one of the hotels working at 100%.
H	There was no forecast. There were investments that remained in stand-by; COVID-19, forced a relearning of what is the hotel business, there was a need to restructure responsibilities and define priorities.	UIP invested in greater resources compared to what was described in the guidelines. Marriot quickly established internal guidelines	-	-
I	Had never lived in a similar situation; I believe it was a warning not only for the hotel industry but for all the world's economic and financial systems	There wasn't a contingency plan for a crisis like this	We currently still provide Power to Clean training to our bosses. Contingency at the level of leadership (e.g. when budgeting)	2020 was financially challenging ; Budgets were not achieved, forecasts had to be revised; programmes were postponed, as well recruitment

Table I – Interview outputs part I

#### 4.2.2. Part II

Identification	Leadership Competencies			Hospitality
Leader	Competencies that a leader should have during a crisis	Strategies/actions that helped effectively lead during the pandemic	Good practices from your leaders, highlighting the importance of leadership in overcoming the crisis	How COVID-19 changed hospitality industry

A	Positivity; Empathy; Focus on problem-solving; Open Communication; resilience	Communication was optimized, maintaining an active organizational culture	-	A major difficulty in hiring after pandemic, Due to people starting to choose other methodologies of work, such as remote work. Additionally, there has been a greater need and commitment to training staff, particularly people with zero experience in the field.
B	Being an example, resilience, communication, courage, decisiveness.	Several were considered: Union; Caring culture and Capacity for self-motivation	Communication and concern for the teams, particularly in ensuring that there was material to guarantee cleanliness and safety in the communal areas.	It is considered that there has been a big change in the way people work, especially in the lack of commitment
C	Empathy; Closeness to people; Positivity (in the face of failures); Open communication; the ability to be available, giving openness and support in order to reduce anxiety; Understanding the different generational gaps within a team to cover needs.	The development of a program called Pine Cliffs in Action, in which all employees, regardless of their area contributed to the operation reinforcing unity, team spirit and making up for the lack of people not hired due to the uncertainties imposed by the pandemic.	-	The pandemic has increased the problem of lack of talent and resources in hospitality in Portugal, which already existed. The implementation of remote working, in this sector, ends up being difficult to provide for employees, since 70%/80% of jobs are on site. However, there has been a greater appreciation of work-life balance.
D	Being a source of knowledge, this is, to be factual and informative. Being a source of tranquility for the team.	The search for information, as well as the conciliation and implementation of procedures.	-	There was an increase of other cultures and ethnicities working in hospitality in Portugal. There was difficult to hire, since people had gone to explore other sectors.
E	Having digital skills; Knowing how to manage the teams' mental well-being and stress; Flexibility/adaptability. Willingness to explain in the workplace, promoting the learning process during work	We worked together as a multi-professional team to look for information and transmit it in an accessible way	There was phenomenal support from the UIP' HR department, with clear and recurrent communication, strengthening relations	People became more flexible, with a greater ability to adapt to any issue; digital processes have started to be implemented more quickly.

F	Flexibility; Keeping updated; Being open-minded and creative; Not being afraid to take risks; Being observant and quick to respond/decide; Being factual and pragmatic; Knowing how to communicate.	Communicate often with people and teams; Empower them with information; Provide more support to HR; Outline strategies with the General Manager and HCCP and Quality person; Be reactive to incoming information; Periodically adjust the mindset; No long-term planning	Had a great example of leadership: calculating, rational, pragmatic, factual person and an excellent communicator; Implementation of the 5 P's: proper planning, prevent poor performance	The structure has changed and become more agile (aggregated functions); Companies have become more efficient and automated; The mentality about work has changed (greater appreciation of work-life balance)
G	Consistency; Human Skills (empathy); Resilience; Communication	-	Assertiveness; very clear communication; guidelines; proactivity	Business is more agile, dynamic, and digital. In terms of talent/people: there is no available workforce, low-skilled workforce; it becomes necessary to explain hospitality; people with lack of knowledge and notions of hospitality, resulting in daily customer service training.
H	Effectiveness in open communication, emotional management, team management and information management (the importance of filtering and transmitting the most correct information arises because this will be what the team works with); Effectiveness in these pillars is fundamental for: clear and concise decision-making and not generating panic among the various departments	Networking was fundamental, as we needed to contact other Luxury Collection properties around the world, to know exactly what was being done. The Health and Safety department kept the others up to date with information, equipment and guidelines, which allowed us to define the departments' operation and strategy. Regardless of the area, everyone was a Health and Safety ambassador, which was a guarantee of the resort's promotion and reputation.	-	Food management and the way the process is managed from the moment the supplier delivers the product until it is delivered to the customer; Development of practical rather than technical skills.
I	Adaptability, resilience, thinking outside the box, team spirit; communication	Information that was transmitted across all departments was fundamental. Increased collaboration between departments	There was proper management of resources, expenses and actions and this was done at the top level, which, by transmitting this adaptation and understanding of the situation, ended up being diluted down the hierarchical pyramid to the bottom; Leaders began to perform functions that were not theirs; Clarity in the information shared	People started looking for more flexibility, which is why a new worker profile emerged, which is what we currently find; People began to prioritize other aspects of their lives and manage their work by considering their balance between personal and professional life.

Table II – Interview outputs part II

### **4.3. Qualitative Analysis**

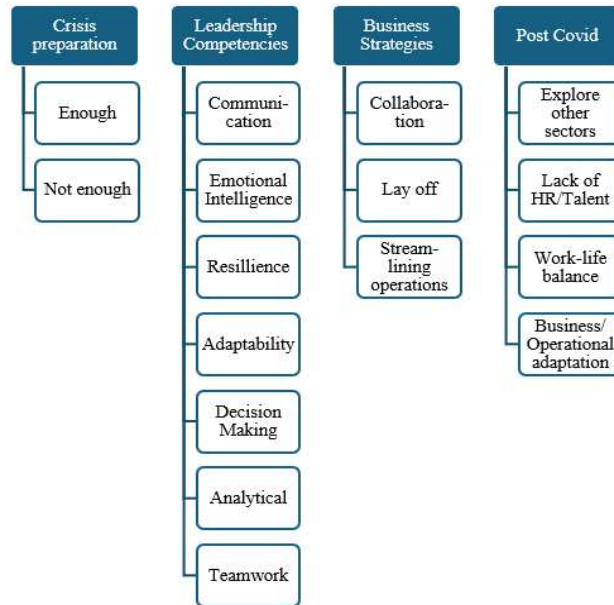
Using a qualitative method research, the analysis was focused on what was comparable and the main common questions that were asked. In this regard, crisis preparation, leadership competencies, business strategies and post COVID-19 changes, are the most comparable content and quantitatively (Mayring, 2004).

Qualitative Content Analysis has the intention to systematically interpret textual data by identifying underlying themes and patterns. Thematic analysis was used to evaluate the results of the qualitative content. The process involves a structured approach, beginning with defining the research question and selecting relevant material.

Through a process of coding, categories are developed to capture key concepts. These categories are filtered through analysis, leading to the emergence of themes that summarize the essence of the data. Lastly, interpretation involves making sense of these themes within the context, thereby providing pertinent insights about the topic. Four categories were defined with sixteen different codes associated, making it possible analyze the most frequent competencies, strategies and changes mentioned. Frequency was applied, concerning thematic analysis, as one of the indicators that allows to recognise a pattern.

#### **4.3.1. Thematic Analysis**

Theoretical background regarding Leadership Competencies definition may be found on Appendice IV, since the table description (below) links the literature and what was the reality of the interviews. This thesis aims to comprehend human experiences and backgrounds through non-numerical data analysis, the applied approach was the selected (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The chapter aims to analyze the interviews in terms of frequency of competencies referred, which means the number of times the code was applied throughout the interview analysis.



**Figure 5:** Categories and Codes for analysis

Source: Own figure

Caterory	Code	Description	Frequency
Organization's Crisis Preparation	Not enough preparation	There was not enough planning and contingency plans for a pandemic crisis	6
	Enough preparation	Taking in consideration the Grupo UIP's Resources, that was enough to be prepared for such a crisis	1
Total			7
Leadership Competencies	Communication	Stand to the different types of communication, inter and intra departmental, between leaders and within their teams	36
	Emotional Intelligence	Management of team emotions; ability to deal with fear and insecurity; ability and need to reassure the team; empathy	20
	Resilience	Ability to overcome/recover from adversity	12
	Adaptability	Quality or capacity of what is adaptable. For greater applicability to the case, includes the notion of be open minded, be willing to explore new possibilities and think outside the box	36
	Decision Making	Ability to make decisions; Be reactive	11
	Teamwork	Team spirit; Sense of mutual help	18
	Analytical Competencies	Factual, read the news, read protocols, know the numbers; data; facts	17
Total			150
Business Strategies	Collaboration	Mutual help between different departments; manage and make a strategic allocation of people from different departments to the most priority services; Collaboration between the different Marriott brand hotels (networking)	25

	Lay off	Extraordinary measure to support the maintenance of Employment Contracts, which was used by the UIP in order to ensure the permanence of workers (and not having to fire anyone); implementing temporary pay cuts to retain employees while managing financial strains	6
	Streamlining Operations	This stands for the simplification of processes to increase efficiency and reduce operational costs and tasks prioritization, while also effectively managing HR	10
Total			41
What has changed (post COVID-19)	Explore other sectors	People went to explore other industries and ways of work, including remote work as a common preference	7
	Lack of HR/talent	Due to the lack of talent and resources in this industry, the need for training sessions and development programs are considered a priority. Moreover, the changes in the entry level are also included here	12
	Work-life Balance	Stands to the valorization of the work-life balance as a top priority	3
	Business/Operational Adaptation	COVID-19 required an adaptation of processes, operations and compliance with new standards in different areas. It was necessary to reconsider and adapt the business; adaptation in recruitment, in the relationship with suppliers (for example, began to anticipate more stock breaks)	14
Total			36
<b>Total</b>			<b>234</b>

Table III – Codes and frequency of strategies

#### 4.4. Conclusions

Considering the scope of this thesis, adaptive strategies are operational and related to talent management and teams, which was verified based on interviews and industry knowledge. It was verified, once again, the application of the strategy in the operation and how the leaders impact the business, having the Grupo UIP harmoniously overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and resumed its business successfully, as mentioned during the interviews.

The interviews were coded using MAXQDA software, in order to ensure greater centralisation and schematisation of the information; and subsequently the calculation of their relative impact.

Leadership skills highlighted as the most important during the pandemic were communication and adaptability (mentioned 24% of the time), followed by emotional intelligence (13.33%), teamwork (12%), analytical competencies (11.33%), resilience (8%) and decision making (7.33%).

Leadership skills are reflected in strategies such as collaboration (60.98%), as the most prominent, which was a way of using people who were not operational to perform more operational functions, in order to mitigate the lack of people and allow interactions in day-to-day operations; followed by streamlining Operations (24.39%) and layoff (14.63%), as a way to run the business Sustainably amongst the uncertainty.

## **5. Teaching Notes**

### **5.1. Intro/ Synopsis**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an enormous damage in all areas of tourism and this case study reveals the impact of the COVID-19 in the hospitality industry, focusing on the adaptive strategies of the Grupo UIP. These are reflected in two pillars: people and business operations.

Even though there are different factors that promote hotel success, the current case study highlights some business strategies as collaboration and layoffs; and leadership competencies such as adaptability and communication, which played a crucial role in the pandemic crisis. These are mentioned as adaptive strategies when it comes to managing teams, particularly in a people-to-people business, as hospitality.

Accordingly, the following questions aims to add value to class's related thematic, with the intention to provide a business perspective of how strategy moves operations, leaders' importance, and strategies to foster a culture of collaboration; specially in a crisis context. When exploring this case study, the goal is to invite professors and students into a thoughtfulness discussion.

### **5.2. Suggested Assignment Questions**

1. Analyze the attractiveness of the industry and external factors impacting Grupo UIP
2. How did Grupo UIP adapt to the pandemic situation? What other strategies do you suggest that should be considered by UIP?
3. How did Grupo UIP embrace the dynamic capabilities of the company to rapidly react to the pandemic impact?

### **5.3. Teaching Strategy | Objectives and Audience**

The case serves as the point of contact between the literature review and the case study, highlighting different perspectives on the strategic decisions of the Grupo UIP, seeking to contribute to the study on how companies have adapted themselves during the harsh economic and social crisis as COVID-19 pandemic provoked.

For this scenario, students will be equipped with relevant and applicable inputs, empowering the discussion in topics related with business, hospitality, strategy, and people management, giving the opportunity to apply business frameworks in real-life scenarios. It is important to emphasize that students should rely on the provided theoretical backgrounds without being limited to it, inferring that they can go beyond the literature and use other concepts and research.

The case's target audience is students pursuing either bachelor's or master's degree, suitable for students in areas of business, management, hospitality, strategy, and HR. Class discussions throughout the analysis of the case study are essential, since it promotes developing knowledge about dynamic capabilities, strategy, and market competition.

Students are either encouraged to individually answers in an essay form, or to discuss the assignment questions in groups, for a more valuable reflection. During class, the professor should engage with students to review questions and offer appropriate guidance, tailored to their level of comprehension in the topic. The specific learning objectives corresponding to each question are outlined before the answers themselves.

### **5.4. Case Analysis and Discussion**

#### **5.4.1. Analyze the attractiveness of the industry and external factors impacting Grupo UIP**

The main goal of this question is to advocate students' ability to critically evaluate the competitive landscape of the firm, using Porter's 5 Forces. By analyzing the attractiveness of the industry, students will gain insights about key factors influencing firm performance, such as market dynamics, competitive forces, technological advancements, and societal changes; which conditionate firm's strategic decisions. Through this analysis, students develop a comprehensive understanding of the broader business environment and enhance their strategic thinking skills, enabling them to make informed recommendations to drive Grupo UIP's success. By applying Porter's 5 forces framework, it will allow students to assess the dynamic

changes in the industry, understanding how the ability to adjust can be enhanced, how to better use its resources to attract shareholders and generate higher profits. The analysis covers five dimensions: threat of new entrants; threat of substitute, bargaining power of buyers, bargaining power of suppliers, competition between existing companies.

Regarding the threat of **new entrants** in the industry, it was low. The hotel industry usually has high entry barriers, such as a huge amount of investment required for buildings, for example. Specifically, during crisis, because of the uncertainty and the amount of requirements to guarantee a safe business, there were additional entry barriers, thus making market entrance more inaccessible and less profitable.

In order to enhance entry barriers for competitors, and keep it as a low force, Grupo UIP may constantly improve and increase their brands promotion, create a differentiated product (e.g. new experiences) and invest in new ways for consumer loyalty.

Concerning the **threat of substitute** products or services, it was medium/high. Substitutes products meet similar needs within businesses. During the epidemic, travel restrictions and health fears may have driven clients to look for alternative trip options, such as longer stays in private houses or closer destinations. As a result, the danger of alternative products or services may have increased during this period, as people preferred safer and more flexible travel options. Some examples of the arising of substitute products, in the hotel industry, was the renting apartment business, through web platforms (e.g. Airbnb). This substitute may introduce dramatic changes to the tourism economy.

Luxury hotels may have felt pressure to adjust their offerings to compete with these alternatives, even more because when a lot of substitute products are identified, it is risky to increase its prices because of the possible reduction of client's attraction.

When it comes to **bargaining power of buyers**, it was medium. Given the imminent pandemic reality, Grupo UIP's hotels might have experienced price reductions, and customers' price sensitivity might have increased – Grupo UIP customers are mostly residents, leisure, and business travellers. Even though this obligated them to keep competitive under pandemic and low demand conditions, buyers were not capable to negotiate cheaper prices or better quality packages, hence not putting pressure on hotels' offers and business.

Discounts, promotional packages, marketing strategies, flexible cancellation policies and customer base diversification, could be used to attract and keep clients during pandemic severe period.

About the **bargaining power of suppliers** during pandemic crisis, it was high. Suppliers faced operational suspension, changes in the availability, prices variations of products/services; while seeking for additional safety measures, which may have increased their expenses. Moreover, suppliers were limited, and demand was high, in order to guarantee minimum services and post lockdowns business.

It is pertinent to reflect on the luxury concept behind an hotel, which can range from customer service differentiation, accommodation conditions, quality food and beverage restaurant offers. Related with gastronomic experiences, hotels from a upscale segment, usually tend to prefer local products to promote an authentic service and gastronomic experience to clients. This may also foster a more responsible and sustainable business, while reinforces the bargaining power of suppliers, due to lower offer. Also, when they have differentiated products, and they have the ability to forward vertically integration, they can have more control over their market position and charge superior prices (while also having a better costs efficiency cycle).

In order to enhance Grupo UIP's business performance and financial sustainability, supplier's diversification, contracts re-negotiation, as well as partnerships, might be interesting strategies to stay competitive.

Regarding the intensity of **competition between existing companies** of the industry, it was high. Since competition depends on the number and size of the businesses in the industry, negative changes in the demand trigger higher competitiveness between existing companies (e.g.: competition increases when there is lower demand for a certain destination). During the pandemic situation, was possible to observe this decrease in demand. Despite the lockdown period, it is reasonable to analyze the significant competitiveness amongst existing companies in the market, regardless of the collaboration and networking initiatives between Marriott brands (e.g. Luxury Collection).

The quick adaptation to meet client preferences needs and preserves effective operational cost management, were critical for the survival and success in this highly competitive market.

Moreover, the hotel was able to decrease the level of rivalry of existing hotels by differentiating hotel products and services (e.g. Workation).

Being successful in profitable growth and better performance is a common aim for a firm, and its development of a competitive strategy is one of the variables that has a significant effect on achieving that goal.

#### **5.4.2. How did Grupo UIP adapt to the pandemic situation? What other strategies do you suggest that should be considered by UIP?**

The assignment question 2 invites students to identify the business adaptive strategies implemented by Grupo UIP. In this regard, it is expected that students summarise the main impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the business and consequently identified its adaptive strategies. In the second half of the questions, students can do some benchmark about what other hotel groups did.

The company has employed numerous adaptive strategies, encompassing perspectives on business operations, the level of services provided, and adaptive strategies related with leadership initiatives. Depending on the phase of the inherent pandemic situation, the strategies evolved, considering the very dynamic and unpredicted situation, reinforcing the idea of a constant adaptability.

Building the bridge between the main impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and how do they adapt to it, it is from the very beginning identified the challenge that COVID-19 cause: globally country borders closed; therefore, last minute cancelations, low occupancy rates, which consequently means a decrease on demand, negative impacts on sales and revenues. Since there was no rentability from rooms (for example, RevPAR) the company needed to adapt. UIP adapted to this reality by defining priorities, ensuring a constant alignment with Marriott and national health regulations, maintain the frequent need to be up to date with the latest news, which was possible through collaboration between departments, constant communication and adaptability, as well filter credible and trustworthy information. The fact of being able to connect, share information and good practices with other hotels (from the Luxury Collection brand, for example) was also considered as an important way to be aware of market changes and good practices.

Moreover, the investment in new technological and more advanced disinfection equipment, was not only a way to give employees a sense of work security (safety), as well to the guests, which

some were residents and others were obligated to stay at the hotel due to virus SARS-CoV-2 contamination. Housekeeping new cleaning measures were, therefore employed, while the “Clean&Safe” badge was a guarantee of hygiene, safety, and a matter of reputation.

Due to this scenario, another adaptive strategy was streamlining operations, being only provided minimal services, from the F&B department to the Rooms services (which includes reception, housekeeping services). When restrictions were softer, and there was not significant demand, the readaptation of services were an adaptive strategy, to guarantee personalized offers. For instance, the Workation - a combination of Work and Vacations, giving clients the possibility to work on the hotel and enjoy some of the facilities.

Simultaneously to these business and operations adaptations, there were several challenges on HR's side. Taking into account the weak business performance and absence of demand imposed by COVID-19, there was an impossibility to keep all the employees working. Due to workload, reduce operational costs, costs efficiency, resources allocation, and health and safety matters, a few strategies were implemented, making it clear that there would be no dismissals. HR team started by the identification of vulnerable employees who needed to go home; layoffs were applied to home-stay workers; tasks were reallocated; and a huge sense of collaboration was accomplished, which was only possible on the basis of a clear and constant communication, an alignment of the company's vision and a common sense of adaptability, teamwork, and emotional intelligence competencies.

While the restrictions were eased, and hotel services suffered adaptations, normalcy was getting back, subsequent more customers. However, due to the lack of recruitment for the high season, there was a scarcity of workforce to handle tasks, resulting in an insufficient number of staff to serve the guests. For this purpose, Pine cliffs in Action was another adaptive strategy that Grupo UIP pursued. It allowed guest to have a good customer service, and people from different teams/departments were allocated into the F&B area, which contemplate leaders' capacity to think out of the box, adaptability, and collaboration.

Throughout the pandemic period of 2020-2021, employees received a variety of training sessions, predominantly consisting of on-the-job learning experiences (for example, ongoing health and safety training).

When it comes to recruitment needs and practices, with the aim of ensuring workforce for the next months, a lack of available talent and willingness to work in hospitality was pinpointed, which reflected in two types of training sessions as adaptive strategies: hospitality basic notions,

to capacitate new joiners about hotel business; and leadership training programmes, with the goal of empowering UIP employees, giving them new learning opportunities to potentiate their motivation and development within the company. The training sessions about hospitality basics are hand in hand with the identified shift on the entry level (initial positions when people get in companies), which was considered more cyclical and with lower know-how.

Leadership played a key role in Grupo UIP, namely the way leaders adjusted their leadership, was a crucial adaptive strategy for Grupo UIP's success - with constant adaptability, fostering teamwork, promoting a frequent and clear communication - which is perceived by teams' motivation and a care culture.

Regarding the second half of the question, Grupo UIP may have implemented other business strategies and mitigate the impact of a low revenue, if there were other Government policies issued, for example taxes reduction in the different; AI implementation and more digital procedures; negotiations with suppliers for better rates and more flexible payment periods, to ensure liquidity.

Once restrictions were lifted, it could be important the collaboration with local companies to provide authentic and unique experiences, while involved with the community and support local businesses to foster goodwill in the region; government's policies regarding national aviation's companies, ensuring the reintroduction of flights.

With respect to leadership and HR practices, it would be important, as a post COVID-19 adaptive strategy, to rethink the concept of work-life balance, understand what initiatives could be carried out to promote it and how to improve the EVP (employee value proposition) to attract more talent. Taking in consideration all that they have learned together, in terms of people management practices, the (re)definition of the leader profile, could be beneficial for a better alignment and definition of the company's culture.

#### **5.4.3. How did Grupo UIP embrace the dynamic capabilities of the company to rapidly react to the pandemic impact?**

The assignment question 3 aims to encourage students to ponder about dynamic capabilities and its impacts on business, including how it contributes to enhance the overall guest experience and maintaining a competitive edge in the hospitality sector. The question aims to connect business, leadership, people, and strategy notions; by building the bridge between leadership

and teams' dynamic capabilities with business impact, highlighting people importance within an organization.

Dynamic capabilities concern the organization's ability to adapt to new circumstances by modifying its resources and processes when facing new conditions, seeking to be competitive in the market. By integrating, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies, Grupo UIP addressed the rapidly changing environment caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

Grupo UIP showed a capacity to sense and shape opportunities and threats, to seize opportunities, and to maintain competitiveness through the management of resources, by optimising, combining, preserving, and restructuring the enterprise's assets as demanded.

UIP's most crucial leadership competencies to overcoming crisis were communication, emotional intelligence, adaptability resilience, decision making, teamwork, analytical competencies, which are considered internal competencies, and were critical to support the organization during a crisis.

In UIP specific context, sensing opportunities included the analytical competencies and dynamics within the leadership team; for them to be informed and able to empower teams to better perform within the circumstances. These includes the adaptability to react and try to understand market changes; encompasses target market segments and understanding changing client needs. The awareness of an unstable market during crisis, allowed leaders to react faster, since they developed a strategy aligned to these conditions.

Seizing considers the enterprise structure and procedures to seizing (taking advantage of) the opportunities. Those were adapted taking in consideration the urgent need to react, from tailored customer solutions, streamlining operations and a fast decision making. That was possible through the internal departments' collaboration, teamwork spirit and adaptability, while looking for the most up to date information, respecting national health regulations, while assessing business adequacy. Furthermore, the reorganization of the organizational structure, the increase in an effective communication and the emotional intelligence practiced by the leaders, boosted loyalty and commitment from people's side, reflecting Grupo UIP culture.

Threats management and the capacity to transform the Organization, are the third pillar of the dynamic capabilities. The continuous alignment of specific, tangible and intangible, assets relate with the correct allocation of resources along the pandemic situation. Examples of it are HR management strategies implemented to potentiate efficiency; new financial investments,

taking crisis priorities in consideration (for example, the investments in disinfection and new products to ensure health and safety).

The assets combination and reconfiguration may be observed in UIP' strategies, by the constant learning, which includes leadership competencies that were developed by leaders along the crisis; the integration of the daily learning experiences; knowledge transferability between leaders and teams; and know-how integration - for example, adaptability to new ways of work.

To conclude, dynamic capabilities allow the overall guest experience to enhance through client's communication, empathy, adaptability, and readaptation/innovation of the services. Ahead of meet client's expectations, finding cost-effective and profitable viable solutions, dynamic capabilities allow more agile operations, strategic partnerships, and an employee satisfaction and safety perception, therefore guaranteeing a competitive edge within the industry.

## **6. Conclusions and Limitations**

The current dissertation was written to prepare a case study for students on crisis management, in the hospitality business. Students get information about how to strategically act in a crisis and the leadership importance to overcome it. This case study invites students to explore a real scenario and strategic decisions that were made, giving them the opportunity to apply theoretical concepts and knowledge, from classes, to a real-world business situation.

In this particular case study and questions resolutions, the most important reasoning and learning output is that enormous consequences on the hospitality industry can quickly arise (in different scopes) and different business adaptive strategies decisions have to be made. These highlights the importance for a company to have an aligned culture, leadership competencies and consequent behaviours, that nurtures this alignment and capacity to adapt.

Moreover, the dynamic environment of hospitality industry is also explored, going from strategy applied to hotel operations, to reorganization of the structure and the impacts within the various stakeholders. During and after pandemic crisis, customer needs were re-considered as well as market changes, which consequently led to the creation of new differentiation services.

From my point of view, this dissertation is a pertinent moment to look back to 2020/2021 and understand what the companies' main adaptive strategies were and their main learnings. In this regard, different discussions may be promoted, namely: the way companies need to enhance internal resources to be empowered and capable to deal with volatile competitive market, how a strategic alignment promotes business success during crisis, and what leadership competencies were crucial to "keep the ship afloat".

Regarding the relationship between the theoretical background and the observed results, several correspondences were noted in terms of similar strategies described in the literature and developed by the Grupo UIP.

The development of the case study granted me the opportunity to apply what I have learned in my academic studies, to a real example. Furthermore, the possibility to meet and get to know leaders while interviewing them, was very valuable.

Regarding limitations, it is possible to underline three main ones.

There was an additional challenge since the interviews had very different lengths, different amounts of examples and different business area perspectives. Giving an example, housekeeping interview examples are more related to adaptive strategies at process and operational level, being a micro and detailed vision; which is not so pertinent to the scope of my thesis.

In one hand, since interviewees were directors and managers departments, the strategy perspective was most of the times applied to operations, therefore in some cases was difficult to see the "big picture" and more strategic notions. On the other hand, it was enriching to understand the applicability of strategy in daily operations, as well business initiatives that enhance its performance.

In terms of business data, such as costs evolution - before, during and after COVID-19 - there are no Annual Reports online, and since Grupo UIP preferred not to disclose data due to confidentiality matters, it was not possible to add value to the dissertation related with business context. Also, there is available data about some hotels and other don't (e.g.: payroll/revenue).

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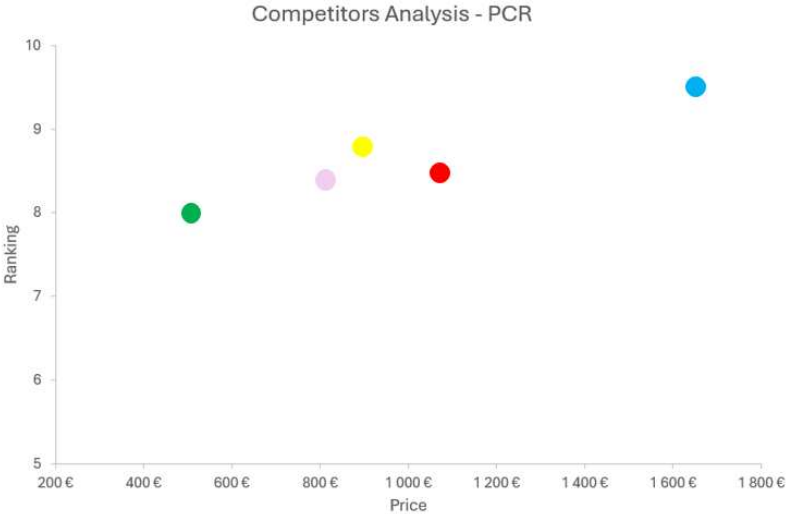
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## Appendices

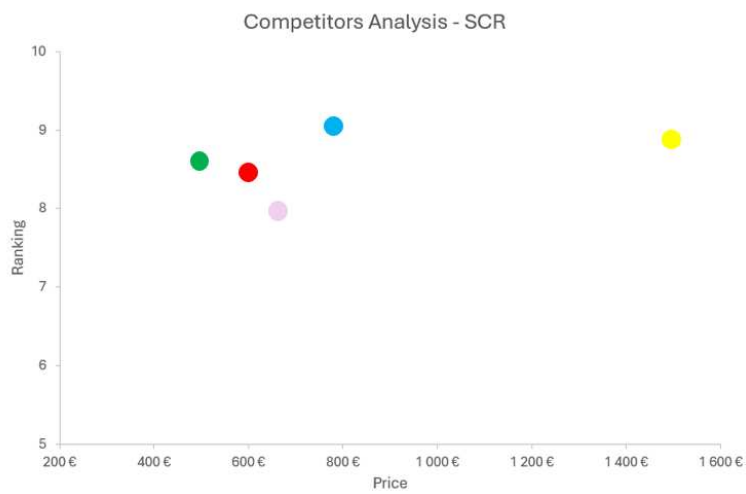
### Appendice I – Market Overview Competitors



- Pine Cliffs Resort Ranking: 8.5 Price: 1062€
- Vila Vita Parc Resort & Spa: Ranking: 9.5 Price:1648€
- Anantara Vilamoura Algarve Resort: Ranking: 8.8 Price: 893€
- Hilton Vilamoura: Ranking: 8.4 Price: 810€
- Penina Hotel & Golf Resort: Ranking: 8 Price: 510€

Figure 6: Pine Cliffs Resort Competitors Analysis

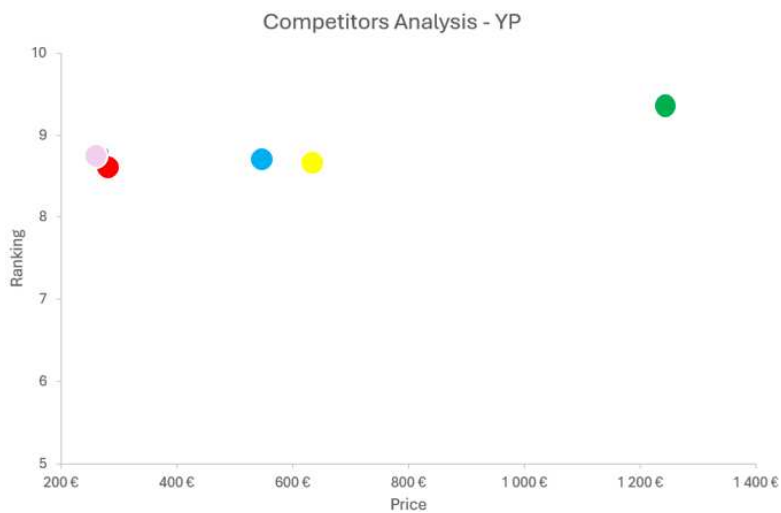
Source: own figure



- Sheraton Resort Cascais: Ranking: 8.5 Price: 598€
- Penha Longa Resort: Ranking: 8.9 Price: 1496€
- Hotel Cascais Miragem Health & Spa: Ranking: 9.1 Price: 788€
- The oitavos: Ranking: 8.6 Price: 506€
- Onyria Marinha Boutique Hotel: Ranking: 8.5 Price: 657€

**Figure 7:** Sheraton Cascais Resort competitors analysis

Source: own figure



- Yotel Porto: Ranking: 8.7 Price: 278€
- The Yeatman: Ranking: 9.4 Price:1240€
- InterContinental Porto- Palácio das Cardosas: Ranking: 8.7 Price: 627€
- Pestana Vintage Porto Hotel & World Heritage Site: Ranking: 8.8 Price: 551€
- Crowne Plaza Porto: Ranking 8.8 Price: 276€

**Figure 8:** Yotel Porto competitors analysis

Source: own figure

## **Appendice II – Interview Script**

### Introduction:

- Express gratitude for the interviewee's participation.
- Provide a brief personal introduction.
- Outline the scope and objectives of the thesis.
- Explain the interview structure.

### Questions:

1. Could you provide an overview of your career trajectory within the company and your current leadership responsibilities?
2. How would you describe the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your organization?
3. How do you assess your and your organization's preparedness for the crisis? What actions or planning were in place?
4. Have you observed any significant changes in this regard over time?
5. What were some of the pre-COVID-19 strategic objectives, and how have they evolved?
6. In your opinion, how has COVID-19 transformed or changed the hotel industry?
7. What do you consider the most important competencies for a leader during a crisis?
8. Based on your experiences, could you share strategies or actions that helped you lead effectively during the pandemic?
9. Reflecting on examples from your own leadership experiences, how significant were this examples and leadership competencies in overcoming the crisis?

### Appendix III – Interviewees Table Contacts

Identification		Date	Interview length
Person	Area	Day/Month/Year	Minutes & Seconds
A	Regional Learning and Development Manager at UIP	14/03/2024	38 min 27sec
B	Housekeeping Manager Pine Cliffs	14/03/2024	26 min 28 sec
C	Chief HR Officer at UIP	14/03/2024	56 min 51 sec
D	Housekeeping Manager at SC	15/03/2024	33 min 27 sec
E	Operations Manager at YPo	21/03/2024	22 min 46 sec
F	F&B Director at UIP	22/03/2024	15 min 17 sec
G	Rooms Manager at PCR	11/04/2024	20 minutes
H	Assistant Director of F&B at PCR	26/04/2024	24 min 45 sec
I	HR Director at PCR	26/04/2024	39 min 10 sec

### Appendix IV – Leadership Competencies codes definitions

1. **Communication:** Sharing useful, pertinent information promotes effective communication which can improve coordination, increase awareness and confidence of each other's work, all of which can enhance performance (Mayo, 2020).
2. **Emotional intelligence:** ability to feel and transmit emotions, to integrate emotions into thought, to think critically with emotions and to manage emotions in the individual and in others (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2000).
3. **Resilience:** involves adapting to stress and challenging circumstances while preserving normal psychological and physical functioning (Wu et al., 2013).
4. **Adaptability:** it focuses on how leaders can unlock the potential of systems and people to modify and adapt in order to effectively manage the needs of a changing environment (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

5. **Decision making:** do decisions relying on personal expertise and understanding of the problem, choosing a plan of action from different possibilities to achieve a specific goal (Tanaka & Tamaki, 2012).
6. **Analytical:** Give clear sense to contradictory and erroneous information; the decision is made based on data, actual facts and reliable data supported by evidence (Cosic, Shanks & Maynard, 2015).
7. **Teamwork** is the coordination of knowledge and other resources to learn and act effectively; there is the need to actively adapt while engaging in partnership (Mayo, 2020).