

Strategies implemented in hotel companies before and during the oil spill and covid-19ⁱ**ABSTRACT**

This theoretical-empirical study aims to analyze the strategic actions implemented by international entrepreneurs of hotels and inns located in Porto de Galinhas-PE (Brazil), and in the surroundings, in the face of the oil spill and Covid-19 catastrophes. It is a study of multiple cases with a qualitative approach. Documents and transcripts of semi-structured interviews carried out with directors, managers and employees of hotels, inn, Porto de Galinhas Hotels Association (AHPG) and Porto de Galinhas Convention & Visitors Bureau (PGACVB) were analyzed using the ATLAS.ti software. As a result of this study, it was found that with regard to strategic actions before disasters, it appears that differentiation was present in Hotels A, B and D and as differentiating elements are: services offered, personalized and regionalized drinks, revenue management and modern infrastructure. As for the strategic actions in the context of catastrophes, it is attested that the differentiation is also present in Hotel-A and Hotel-B with the implementation of new services. This investigation reveals that differentiation forms the essential b

s for the consolidation of the tourist destination in the domestic and international market. Therefore, these results indicate that the business strategies adopted in hotels and inns influence the strengthening of the tourist destination. In addition to the lack of internationalization studies in companies in the northeast of the country, investigations on the topic in the area of tourism are incipient. The sector's organizations are especially important to maintain the sustainable development of tourism-oriented economies, such as the coast of Pernambuco.

KEYWORDS: Strategy, covid-19, oil, Porto de Galinhas

Estratégias implementadas nas empresas hoteleiras antes e durante o derramamento de óleo e da covid-19**RESUMO**

Este estudo teórico-empírico tem o objetivo de analisar as ações estratégicas implementadas pelos empreendedores internacionais dos hotéis e pousada localizados em Porto de Galinhas-PE (Brasil), e no entorno, frente às catástrofes do derramamento de óleo e da Covid-19. Trata-se de um estudo de múltiplos casos de abordagem qualitativa. Foram analisados com apoio do software ATLAS.ti documentos e transcrições de entrevistas semiestruturadas realizadas com dirigentes, gestores e colaboradores de hotéis, pousada, Associação dos Hotéis de Porto de Galinhas (AHPG) e Porto de Galinhas Convention & Visitors Bureau (PGACVB). Como resultado deste estudo, constatou-se que no tocante às ações estratégicas antes das catástrofes, a diferenciação esteve presente nos Hotéis A, B e D e como elementos diferenciadores encontram-se: serviços oferecidos, bebidas personalizadas e regionalizadas, revenue management e infraestrutura moderna. Quanto às ações estratégicas no contexto de catástrofes, atesta-se que a diferenciação também está presente no Hotel-A e Hotel-B com a implantação de novos serviços. Esta investigação revela que a diferenciação forma a base essencial para a consolidação do destino turístico no mercado doméstico e internacional. Portanto, esses resultados indicam que as estratégias empresariais adotadas nos hotéis e pousadas influenciam o fortalecimento do destino turístico. Além da carência de estudos de internacionalização nas

empresas do nordeste do país, é incipiente a realização de investigações sobre o tema na área de turismo. As organizações do setor são especialmente importantes para manter o desenvolvimento sustentável de economias vocacionadas ao turismo, como o litoral de Pernambuco.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Estratégia, covid-19, petróleo, Porto de Galinhas

1. INTRODUCTION

For Strategic Management, strategy is not a recent topic. The publications, by Candler in 1962, Ansoff in 1965, are considered classic and pioneer studies (Ronda-Pupo & Guerras-Martin, 2012). Conceptually, the strategy is linked to the idea of understanding and anticipating scenarios, in order to establish actions that can be performed in them (Schnaars, 1991). For Porter (1996), to position yourself strategically is to do something different from the competition or even to invest in the same product or service, offering it differently. The challenge is real for any segment of the economy, especially sectors that work with services, such as the hotel industry.

The hospitality sector is recognized for its competitiveness (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021). The word hospitality originated in 1980, relating to hotel establishments, restaurants and bars, as well as all the services provided in them (Lashley, 2015). Its definition and practice have been investigated by some studies, namely: Lashley in 2008 and Uysal in 2004 (Gjerald et al., 2021). In the study by Lashley (2008), the author postulates that hospitality involves three contexts: social, private and commercial. The social is related to status and prestige, the private is the act of welcoming (host) and the commercial has aspects of services aimed at profit. The commercial element of hospitality stands out in the hotel industry (Crotti & Moretti, 2019), so in this study, the context analyzed will be the commercial one. In the hospitality industry, the provision of services aims at profitability (Karhunen & Ledyeva, 2021). So, with fierce competitiveness, the sector seeks to establish strategies for survival in the market.

It should be noted that the tourism segment grows rapidly and influences the performance of the economy. In addition, it is noticeable how much the tourism industry can suffer from external events considered out of control (natural disasters or man-made disasters), preventing the sector from operating at its fullest (Harrington, 2021).

In August 2019, the oil spill event was noticed in the State of Paraíba, the spill continued and reached the coast in the other states of the Northeast. In Pernambuco, 120 km of the 187 km of coastline were affected (Araújo et al., 2020). In December 2019, the pandemic caused by covid-19 required a series of restrictive measures in order to reduce the transmissibility of the virus (Gössling et al., 2020). Despite all measures determined by the health authorities, the pandemic crisis was installed in several parts of the world, including in the geographic area studied in this article: Porto de Galinhas-PE. Thus, in view of these aspects, the following search problem arises: which are the strategic actions of hotels and inns implemented by international entrepreneurs? In this way, the objective of this research is to analyze the strategic actions implemented by international entrepreneurs of hotels and inns located in Porto de Galinhas-PE (Brazil), and in the surroundings, in the face of the catastrophes of the oil spill and Covid-19.

To achieve this purpose, qualitative research was carried out based on the study of multiple cases, data collection was carried out and Bardin content analysis was used for the data study. The information obtained came from primary data through semi-structured interviews and secondary data through obtaining articles in newspapers (Jornal do Commercio and Diário de Pernambuco) and electronic magazines (Exame, Valor Econômico, HSM Management).

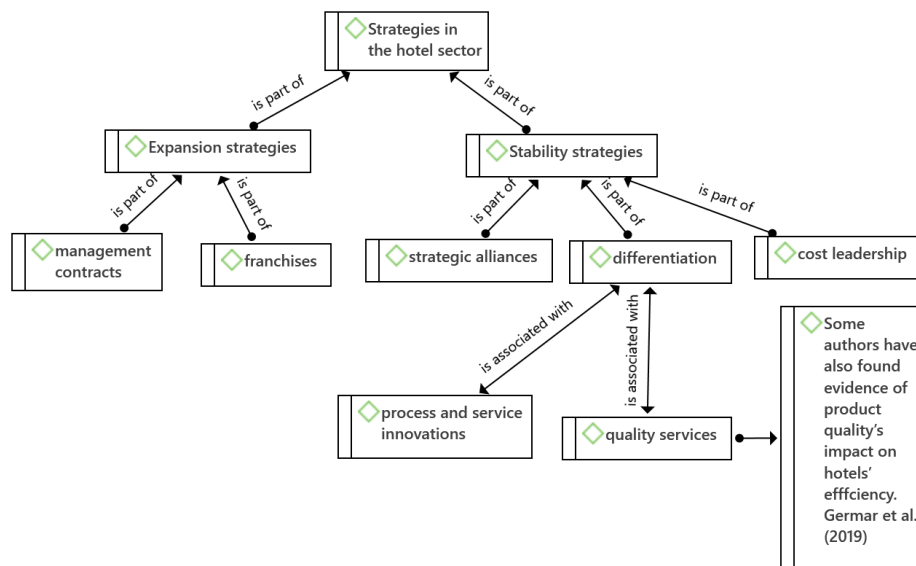
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Strategies in the hotel sector

In order to discuss the topic of business strategies in the hotel industry, articles available in the databases included in the Portal de Periódicos of CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) were analyzed. The databases previously selected for the development of the theoretical framework, namely: Emerald Insight, Scopus, Spell, Springer and Web of Science. The following descriptors were used: “strategy” AND “hotel” and, “strategy” AND “hotel”. As a result of the search, 54 articles were found with descriptors in English and 0 article with descriptors in Portuguese, totaling 54 papers. Among the articles surveyed, 21 were considered valid as they deal with the themes.

In the analysis of the 21 articles, it is possible to notice that most authors present expansion strategies (Casanueva et al., 2015; Gross et al., 2013) and stability, as strategies present in the hotel industry, which are represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Strategies in the hotel sector



Source: prepared by the authors (2023).

Expansion strategies aim at business growth and such strategies are classified as: management contracts and franchises (Gross et al., 2013). The study by Hua et al. (2020) postulates that a management contract is a useful tool for owners who do not have experience in hotel management, since, at administration is under the responsibility of the hotel operator. Franchising is a type of cooperation strategy that is established through a contractual relationship between franchisor (companies) and franchisee (partners) (Hitt et al., 2018).

Stability strategies are used to maintain organizational activities for longer and improve business performance (Evans, 2015). The articles reveal the following strategies of stability, namely: strategic alliances (Gao & Bi, 2021; Marulanda-Valencia & Restrepo-Montes, 2020), differentiation (Bharwani & Mathews, 2021a) and cost leadership (Bharwani & Mathews, 2021b).

For Casanueva et al. (2015) and Kaihatu and Oktavio (2020) strategic alliances are important and aim to adapt to scenarios to take advantage of market opportunities, as well as obtain sustainable competitive advantage. In addition, alliances promote mutual benefits, examples are partnerships between hotels and travel agencies (Heriyati & Utomo 2020; Andrade & Smith, 2020) and travel agencies and airlines with equity participation (Barros et al., 2018; Marulanda Valencia & Restrepo-Montes, 2020).

With regard to differentiation, Porter (2004) classifies it as a type of generic strategy and its definition is related to something offered by the industry in a sue-generis way. Seyitoğlu and Ivanov (2020) argue that the differentiation of services should reflect an original experience. Lee et al. (2021) postulate that this type of strategy is one of the ways to achieve competitive advantage over competitors. Boaria and Anjos (2014, p. 111) add: “We can see the existence of consumers who demand a personalized combination of products, price and service”. Therefore, with fierce competition, the sector seeks strategies for survival in the market. In the hotel industry, differentiation is related to anticipating changes, adaptation to technological trends, differentiated service and quality services (Liu & Hung, 2021; Njuguna et al., 2019; Erden Ayhün & Çavusgil Köse, 2019; Elnasr et al., 2021). Technological trends foster process and service innovations (Atadil & Lu, 2021; Bonfanti et al., 2021; Bianchini & Mondo, 2020; Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Centurión, 2015).

As for cost leadership, for Barney (2007), the company that uses it seeks to gain an advantage over the competition, as its focus is on reducing costs and maintaining them at the lowest possible levels. In the hotel industry, cost leadership can be seen in the efficient expenditure related to inputs, ensuring greater profitability and allowing the company to review the price policy in the face of the competition (Bharwani & Mathews, 2021a). The study by Gorondutse and Hilman (2019) warns of the need to practice more the use of strategies at the business level in order to gain competitive advantage and, consequently, leverage performance in the market.

After explaining the types of strategies used in the hotel industry, it is the methodology used in this research.

3. METHODOLOGY

This article was based on the qualitative research approach. As a strategy, the study of multiple cases was adopted, as it is research focused on a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2001). To this end, the mapping and selection of three hotels and an inn located in the region delimited for the study, of different sizes and serving the international public, were carried out.

The interviews were semi-structured and conducted face-to-face, virtual and by telephone. The subjects interviewed and the collection method are shown in Table 1. To collaborate in this step, ATLAS.ti was used, a software indicated for the investigation of qualitative data, meeting the objective of this research.

Table 1. Presentation of the subjects interviewed in 2021

| Interviewee's code | Description | Time in the company | ID ATLAS.ti | Data collection method | Date | Time |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|-------|------------|
| Interviewee 1 PG-EC-A | Hotel -A Account executive | 2014 - present moment | D 247 | Google Meet Online Platform | 09/15 | 1h42min31s |
| Interviewee 2 PG-GG-A | Hotel-A General Manager | 2015- present moment | D 250 | Google Meet Online Platform | 09/28 | 1h19min11s |
| Interviewee 3 PG-GR-A | Hotel-A Booking manager | 2009 - present moment | D 249 | WhatsApp audio messages | 10/05 | 17 min 53s |
| Interviewee 4 PG-CAB-A | Hotel-A Food and beverage coordinator | 1985 - present moment | D 252 | Telephone | 10/19 | 1h34min06s |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------|-------|---|----------------------------|------------|
| Interviewee 5 PG-AC-B | Hotel- B Commercial Assistant | 2018 - present moment | D 248 | Google Meet Online Platform WhatsApp | 09/23 01/07/22 | 1h46min47s |
| Interviewee 6 PG-CME-B | Hotel- B Marketing and experience coordinator | 2019 -present moment | D 254 | Google Meet Online Platform WhatsApp | 09/25 01/07/22 | 1h18min43s |
| Interviewee 7 PG-GC-B | Hotel- B Commercial Manager | 2001 - present moment | D 255 | Google Meet Online Platform WhatsApp Email | 10/11 11/18 01/13/22 | 1h26min49s |
| Interviewee 8 PG-CC-B | Hotel-B Commercial coordination | 2011 - present moment | D 256 | Telephone/ WhatsApp | 10/24 | 1h01min21s |
| Interviewee 9 PG-CR-C | Hotel- C Head receptionist | 2004 -2020 | D258 | In person | 11/08 | 38min46s |
| Interviewee 10 PG-GH-C | Hotel-C Hosting manager | 2017- present moment | D 259 | In person | 11/08 | 51min33s |
| Interviewee 11 PG-DC-D | Hotel -D Commercial Director | 2012 – present moment | D 260 | Google Meet Online Platform Email | 11/22 | 1h19min08s |
| Interviewee 12 PG-CR-D | Hotel-D Head receptionist | 2015 - present moment | D 261 | Google Meet Online Platform | 11/23 | 1h10min20s |
| Interviewee 13 PG-D-E | Convention & Visitors Bureau Director | 2015 - present moment | D 245 | Google Meet Online Platform PPT(WhatsApp) | 09/03 | 1h23min00s |
| Interviewee 14 PG-RC-E | Convention & Visitors Bureau Former Sales Representative | 2019 -2020 | D 246 | Google Meet Online Platform | 09/08 | 1h27min17s |
| Interviewee 15 PG-DE-F | AHPG CEO | 2013 - present moment | D 252 | Telephone | 10/04 | 1h12min23s |
| Interviewee 16 PG-GC-F | AHPG Commercial Manager | 2011 - present moment | D 251 | Telephone/ WhatsApp | 10/20 | 40min00s |

Source: prepared by the authors (2023).

In the data processing, the content analysis technique of Bardin (2016) is used, composed of the following steps: pre-analysis (organization of all the material), exploration of the material (coding and categorization process) and result processing (using the ATLAS.ti. software).

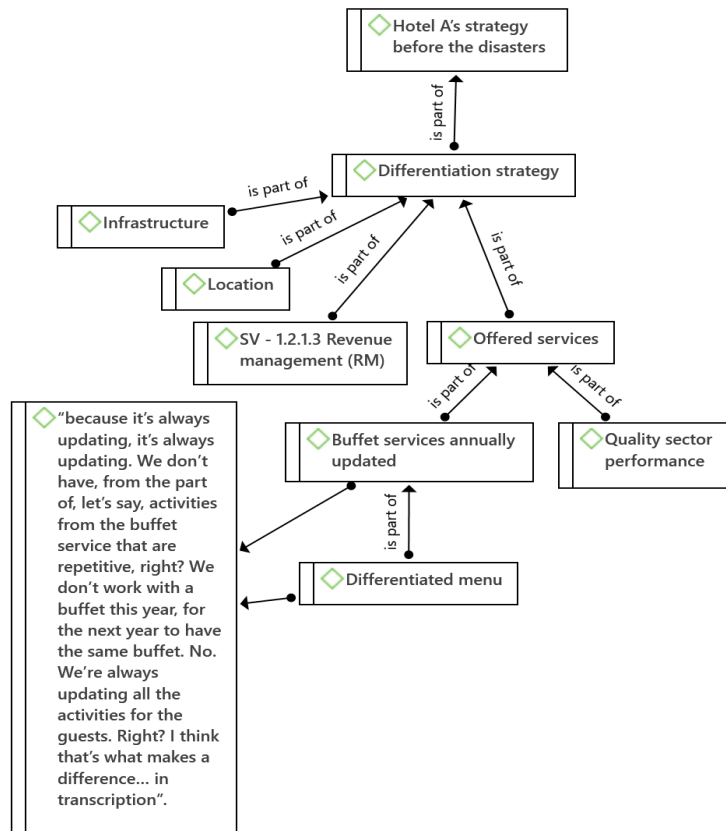
Secondary data were collected from articles published in magazines and newspapers. For Guba and Lincoln (1981), in document analysis one can see the wealth of details that make up the documents, enabling the researcher to select evidence for research. Data obtained from articles were considered those related to the subject of the study in which they were published in five sources, namely: electronic magazines Exame, Valor Econômico, HSM Management, Jornal do Comercio and Diário de Pernambuco.

4. Strategies implemented by hotels and inns in Porto de Galinhas

4.1 Hotel-A

The resort is located on the Muro Alto beach in the municipality of Ipojuca, occupies a green area of 70 thousand square meters and in 2021 completed 21 years of existence. Initially, the strategies adopted at Hotel-A before the oil and covid-19 disasters are analyzed, as represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Hotel A's strategy before the disasters



Source: prepared by the authors using ATLAS.ti (2023).

Porter (2004) states that differentiation promotes distancing from the competition, as consumers become loyal to a particular service, brand or product. Figure 2 presents the topics identified in this investigation, namely: infrastructure, location, revenue managers and offered services (renovated buffet services and quality sector performance). Regarding the infrastructure aspect, Interviewee_2 PG-GG-A explains: [...] It is, it is a more intimate resort. It tried to preserve, through the landscaping, the environmental aspect along with the construction (Interviewee_2 PG-GG-A).

Location is a differentiator for Hotel-A. The development has a privileged location in one of the most frequented destinations in the country, Muro Alto beach. According to the report of Interviewee_4 PG-CAB-A: [...] “Foreign guests, they often look for beach hotels, resorts, because what matters to them are the beaches”. Therefore, the location is considered a determining aspect for the destination choice.

Revenue Management (RM) is another attribute that makes up Hotel A's differentiation strategy. In Brazil, the term is known as *gerenciamento de receitas* and its purpose is to sell the product or service in the most appropriate way possible, which is related to price, customer profile and the best channel to distribute it. Therefore, it becomes an important and collaborative tool in the decision-making of managers (Bianchini & Mondo, 2020). In this way, Revenue Management (RM) collaborates in maintaining the company's competitive advantage, and this evidence is explained in

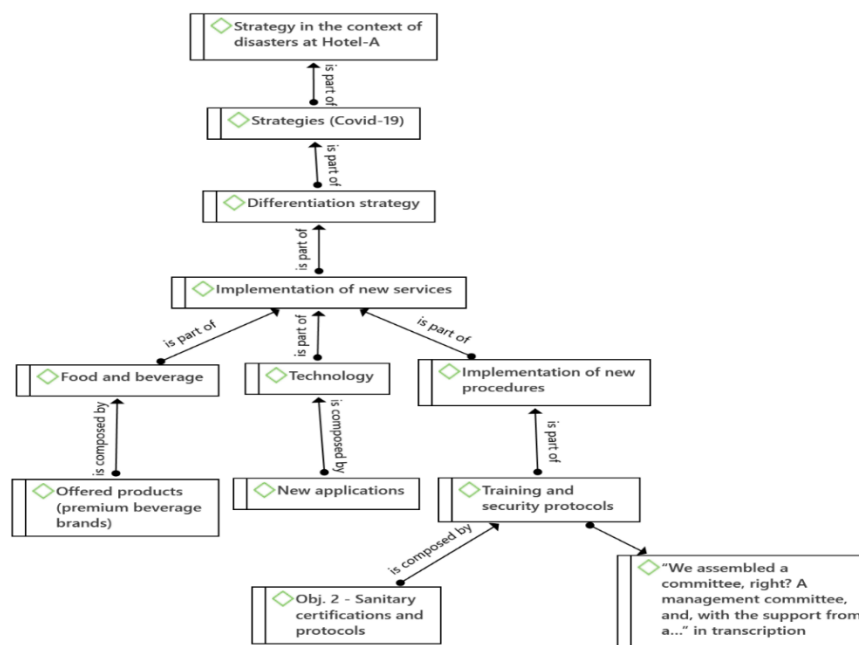
the report of Interviewee_2 PG-GG-A: “[...] Revenue management is actually *gerenciamento de receitas*, right?”

The offered services are also a differentiator. This attribute is formed by the annually updated buffet service and the quality sector performance. These data are in line with Crotti and Moretti (2019), when they show that differentiating aspects can be proven by daily strategies and practices based on three pillars: team involvement, physical structuring and customer focus.

Finally, there is the quality sector performance. Factors such as leadership and engagement of managers are relevant to the functioning of the sector. Leadership creates value, sets goals and promotes a healthy organizational environment, motivating employees to achieve the goals defined by the organization (Garcia et al., 2014). Employees working in the quality sector are proactive and work intensively in interacting with guests in order to assess the customer's experience.

Once the discussion on the strategies before the disasters is concluded, the strategy adopted in the context of disasters, represented in Figure 3, will be discussed.

Figure 3. Strategy in the context of disasters at Hotel-A



Source: prepared by the authors using ATLAS.ti (2023).

Differentiation is the strategy used by Hotel-A in the context of disasters. During those times, the implementation of new services stands out through food and beverage, technology and implementation of new procedures.

Regarding the food and beverage (F&B) sector, Hotel-A offered breakfast and half board service until February 2021. Although being considered a consolidated company in the market, seeking a differentiated positioning was necessary. Soon, the management and team decided to change the system, offering the premium All Inclusive (AI) system.

All Inclusive (AI) resorts offer accommodation, food, drinks (of all types) and other activities at the hotel included in the package price, paid in advance. AI packages are categorized with different denominations, namely: imperial all-inclusive, ultra all-inclusive, mega all-inclusive and premium all-inclusive. The latter is considered a superior category because of its marketing value (Gomes & Pereira, 2016). Hotel-A is included in the last category due to the package's commercialized value

and the quality of the products (beverage brands) offered to the final consumer (Interviewee_2 PG-GG-A).

Technology is the second aspect related to the services offered by Hotel-A. New apps were developed throughout the pandemic in order to attract and improve consumers' perception of safety.

This finding converges with the studies from Bharwani and Mathews (2021b) as the results point to technology as a facilitator of services, as it generates safer environments without agglomeration and promotes an atmosphere of safety for the customer in the midst of uncertain scenarios. Furthermore, it influenced the development of the “new normal”, as well as the implementation of new procedures. Interviewee_14 PG-RC-E reports: “[...] some innovations in the sense of online check-in. That happened. Facts, they had something. That you can do your own check-in before arriving at the hotel.

The implementation of new procedures is considered another factor that makes up the differentiation of Hotel-A. Training programs and stricter hygiene protocols influence the tourist's final decision to revisit the hotel and consequently the destination (Gupta & Sahu, 2021). For this reason, a pandemic response committee was created, composed of directors, area managers, specialized consultants and an infectious disease doctor. Thus, new procedures were implemented with the intensification of training and development of health safety protocols, and these findings converge with Hao et al. (2020). Collaborating to compose the security manual of Hotel-A according to Interviewee_2 PG-GG-A: “[...] We also registered with the national tourism certification, it was governed by a series of rules established by them. In this way, the resumption of tourism could happen safely for guests and employees.

4.2 Hotel-B

The resort is focused on the luxury segment. Hotel-B is administered by a family, located on the beach of Muro Alto and offers the half board system (MAP).

In hospitality, there is a strong connection between the companies in the sector, so that strategic alliances have become frequent (Krželj-Čolović & Radic, 2020). Strategic alliance with suppliers is identified in Hotel-B. In this case, the organization seeks suppliers whose brands are related to the company's DNA, as reported by Interviewee_6 PG-CME-B: “[...] So, we always have a partnership with a champagne winery. It was Perrier-Jouët the last one, they had a lounge at the beginning, at the end of last year here with us”.

Regarding the second type of strategy, unrelated diversification is identified. Erden Ayhün and Çavuşgil Köse (2019) explain that diversification strategies, both related (strategies operating in the same field of activity) or unrelated (development of the organization in other fields of activity) are important for the company, as they contribute to its development, mitigate risks and improves profitability. In the case of Hotel-B, the owner has other non-hotel related businesses (Interviewee_8 PG-CC-B).

Another strategy identified in Hotel-B is differentiation (Porter, 2004; Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020). Differentiation is characterized by the hotel's infrastructure (individual bungalows with private pools) and the offered services (freebie meals).

For Seyitoğlu and Ivanov (2020): “Companies that adopt a differentiation strategy expect customers to pay the price difference when differentiating the features of a product”. Thus, the findings of this research are in line with Seyitoğlu and Ivanov (2020), given that Hotel-B stands out for its peculiar infrastructure and has a compatible price. When it first opened, the project of individual bungalows with private pools was a pioneer and positively surprises guests to this day (Interviewee 6 PG-CME-B).

Another aspect related to the differentiation strategy at Hotel-B is the offered services. In this case, food is offered free of charge to guests throughout the day. This type of service can provide

customers with pleasant, location-related experiences (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020). When staying at Hotel-B, in addition to the half-board service included in the daily rate, guests are surprised by the afternoon tea offered by the hotel (Interviewee_6 PG-CME-B).

The fourth and last strategy used by Hotel-B is the focus strategy (Porter, 2004). The luxury market is the segment that it seeks to suit (Interviewee_6 PG-CME-B). Another particularity of Hotel-B, still related to its public, is that there is no restriction on the part of Hotel-B to accommodate families, groups or parents who want to take children (Interviewee_5 PG-AC-B).

Hotel-B is a member of the Brazilian Luxury Travel Association (BLTA), specialized in luxury accommodation (Andrade & Smith, 2020). For the hotel, the association with this institution is important, as it always promotes international events and helps to publicize the hotel internationally (Interviewee_6 PG-CME-B).

Having concluded this discussion of the strategies adopted in the context of disasters, during the analysis it becomes clear that, in order to face the adverse scenario caused by the covid-19 pandemic, the differentiation strategy was adopted.

Differentiation is the strategy present in the Covid-19 disaster. The implementation of new procedures is part of this strategy based on the governance sector (cleaning time), implementation of the quality sector, technology (new QR Code applications), training and safety protocol and biosafety manual.

The first implemented service is related to the cleaning routine. The pandemic has required hotels to reassess their cleaning policy (Sharma & Kaushik, 2021). These authors examined the issue of new cleaning procedures that were implemented to face the pandemic, during which many processes changed. In the case of Hotel-B, the enterprise underwent adaptations in the cleaning process and new practices were introduced in the sector. Interviewee_6 PG-CME-B details: “[...] The maid's cleaning time has changed”.

The second service is related to the quality sector. In the study by Hernández-Perlines et al. (2019), the results show that the quality sector influences the performance of hotel organizations. The findings of this research are in line with those of Hernández-Perlines et al. (2019), in this sense, Interviewee_5 PG-AC-B explains: “[...] So, a quality department arrived at the hotel, which we did not have”.

Regarding the third aspect related to the implementation of new services, technology stands out (Lau, 2020). This factor allowed the development and maintenance of the business. At Hotel-B, technology had an impact on the review and development of work processes. Interviewee_7 PG-GC-B explains: “[...] a series of processes has been changed, the online check-in to avoid contact with surfaces and objects, in addition to reducing the average service time”.

The QR Code system was featured in this pandemic and provided benefits for guests and the studied organization. With the use of this tool, all information was directed to the platform, providing users with security and convenience in accessing the services (Interviewee_7 PG-GC-B).

Finally, the training and security protocols are part of the implementation process of new services at Hotel-B. Training is a factor that must be taken into account in an adverse situation, such as disasters (Hao et al., 2020). In the pandemic, a lot of information was received almost daily. Given this, Teng et al. (2020) emphasize that hoteliers must train their teams to implement protective measures of covid-19, including: causes, forms of transmission, symptoms, cleaning and safety protocols.

Hotel-B is certified with the SafeGuard – Bureau Veritas certification (Interviewee_6 PG-CME-B). On the Bureau Veritas website it is possible to locate the certified organizations, and Hotel-B is on this list. This type of certification is important, as it promotes a sense of security in customers who are resuming their travels.

4.3 Inn-C

Inn-C is located close to Merepe beach. The inn is run by a family and belongs to the group of companies that has existed since 1981.

Regarding the strategies used by Inn-C, the related diversification strategy stands out (Hitt et al., 2018). The inn is part of a group that owns companies in the food sector, as Interviewee_10 PG-GH-C explains: “[...] It is a family that has had enterprises here and international enterprises for many years”.

The second strategy is differentiation (Porter, 2004). The study by Erden Ayhün and Çavuşgil Köse (2019) shows that hotels that opt for the differentiation strategy develop services with better quality, contribute to positive feedback and can become more competitive.

The aspect that makes a difference at Inn-C is location (Angeli et al., 2012). Evidence confirms that location is an attribute that promotes differentiation and positively impacts customer choice. Interviewee_15 PG-DE-F states: “[...] there are some important aspects, some characteristics of the establishment and some characteristics of the destination”. Having concluded the discussion of the strategies used before the oil spill and covid-19 disasters at Inn-C, the strategies adopted in the context of disasters are presented.

In the case of the pandemic caused by Covid-19, the differentiation strategy was present with the implementation of new procedures. In this aspect, technology, training and safety protocols are included in the new procedures.

Regarding technology, two situations stand out. The first is the upgrade of the company's IT system. Sharma et al. (2021) state that adverse situations such as disasters collaborate to accelerate changes in technology. The report of Interviewee_10 PG-GH-C corroborates this understanding: “[...] Regarding technology, the directors are totally innovative, technological people, generation Y, right?”. It wasn't a simple change, it was a total change, there were implementations of new technologies, everything is more computerized.

The second situation is related to the new applications (QR Code) that were implemented in the company in the covid-19 pandemic. Rahimizhian and Irani (2020) state that new technologies contribute to leverage the company's business. At Inn-C, the change was general, as the Interviewee_10 PG-GH-C alerts: “[...] The menu, instead of having a physical one, is online. Every service, it was very computerized”. There was this appreciation of technology because physical contact was lost and it turned into virtual contact.

Another factor related to the code for implementing new procedures is the training process and security protocols. Training and protocols are important tools that were widely used by the hospitality industry in the world to face the pandemic. Sharma and Kaushik (2021) present the main actions carried out by hotels in India, for example: The Taj Group of Hotels, in addition to sanitary protocols, introduced a strict training policy.

At Inn-C, on the subject of training and protocols, the Interviewee_10 PG-GH-C explains: “[...] There was a lot of work also with the managers. [...] and the company complied with all the health standards”.

Finally, the last identified strategy of Inn-C is restructuring. A downsizing strategy was established in the organization (Hitt et al., 2018). Due to the pandemic, the organization carried out a restructure, the number of employees was reduced (INTERVIEWEE_10 PG-GH-C).

4.4 Hotel-D

The hotel has modern infrastructure and is considered a new development in relation to competitors in the region. The differentiation strategy is identified in the Hotel-D (Porter, 2004), being characterized by three aspects, namely: modern infrastructure (cinema, quintuple room and

number of swimming pools), food and beverages (regionalized products and partnerships) and service provision (international standard quality).

Factors related to the modern infrastructure make the hotel contemporary. The first factor that contributes to modern infrastructure is the cinema. The commercial director comments: “[...] It's a cinema with steps, with seats like those max ones” (Interviewee_11 PG-DC-D).

The second factor related to modern infrastructure is the quintuple accommodations (accommodates up to 5 people). The respondent considers the category as an element that differs it from the competition (Interviewee_12 PG-CR-D).

The last factor that composes the modern infrastructure is related to the number of swimming pools; the enterprise has seven swimming pools. These aspects that constitute the modern infrastructure of the Hotel-D converge with the research by Erden Ayhün and Çavusgil Köse (2019) that indicate that hotels can differentiate themselves through architecture and superior quality standards compared to competitors.

Food and beverages are related to Hotel-D's differentiation strategy. The hotel sells regional and personalized products. Bharwani and Mathews (2021a) explain that the guest experiences three phases of hospitality experiences: pre-stay, stay and post-stay. In the pre-stay phase, expectations are created, in the stay phase there is a real interaction with the service and, in the post-stay phase, memories are created and shared. Interviewee_11 PG-DC-D illustrates the situation: “[...] The client wants to be served, pampered”. The report converges with the findings of Bharwani and Mathews (2021a), as each of the steps can independently or synchronously influence the guest's experience at the location.

Finally, the aspect of service provision. In the case of Hotel-D, during the years of contract with the tourism chain (international franchise), all standards determined by the franchise were incorporated into the organization's routine (INTERVIEWEE_12 PG-CR-D). Having concluded the discussion on the strategies used by Hotel-D before the disasters, we move on to the strategies in the context of disasters.

Differentiation was present in the covid-19 disaster. The implementation of new procedures is part of this strategy, which includes the governance sector (cleaning methods), technology (new QR Code applications) and security training and protocol. The first implementation is related to the governance sector's cleaning routine, in this sense the Interviewee_12 PG-CR-D explains: “[...] For example, a room that you used to clean for 40 minutes, started to take two hours to clean”. The report converges with Sharma and Kaushik (2021) who postulate that the pandemic imposed new cleaning processes on hotels and ended up transforming an “esthetically clean to a clinically clean” industry.

The second aspect related to the implementation of new procedures is technology. At the hotel, new applications were incorporated into the organization's operational routine. Fact reported by Interviewee_12 PG-CR-D: “[...] today we are working digitally a lot, right?”. This statement is similar to the results found by Giousmpasoglou et al. (2021), who highlights the use of technology as one of the main impacts caused by the pandemic on the operation of hotel enterprises.

Finally, the training and security protocols that are part of the implementation process at Hotel-D. Training took place with professionals from healthcare companies who sought to guide and clarify employees about the new coronavirus (Interviewee_12 PG-CR-D).

4.5 Comparative analysis of the hotel developments

This subsection addresses the comparative analysis of the cases selected for this research. The comparative analysis allows to indicate the enterprises' strategic actions implemented from their foundation until before the two disasters (See table 2). The distinguishing aspects of each case's differentiation strategy are highlighted, considering that differentiation is characterized by the differentiating element that makes something unique (Porter, 2004).

Table 2. Strategic actions before disasters

| Enterprises | Differentiation | differentiating element | Scientific contribution |
|-------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Hotel-A | Offered services | Buffet services annually update | Lee et al. (2021), Crotti & Moretti (2019); Gorondutse & Hilman, (2019); Njuguna et al. (2019) |
| | <i>Revenue Management (RM)</i> | | Bianchini & Mondo (2020); Boaria & Anjos (2014); Centurión (2015) |
| Hotel-B | Offered services | Complimentary food for the guest | Buhalis & Sinarta (2019); Seyitoğlu & Ivanov (2020) |
| Hotel-D | Modern infrastructure | Cinema /quintuple room/ number of pools | Erden Ayhün & Çavusgil Köse (2019) |
| | Food and beverage | Personalized and regionalized drinks | Elnasr et al. (2021) |

Source: prepared by the authors (2023).

According to the collected data, the presence of differentiation is verified. This type of strategy is evident in Hotels A, B and D as they have unique characteristics in relation to their competitors. At Hotel-A, the first differentiating element consists of the offered services. This factor is in line with Lee et al. (2021), Crotti and Moretti (2019), Gorondutse and Hilman (2019) and Njuguna et al. (2019). Specifically, the buffet service is highlighted, which is annually updated, making Hotel-A different from the other analyzed establishments.

As for revenue management, it promotes differentiation in Hotel-A. Such evidence converges with the specialized literature regarding the practice of revenue management and the influence on the organization's future decisions (Bianchini & Mondo, 2020; Centurión, 2015; Boaria & Anjos, 2014).

At Hotel-B, the services offered by the enterprise are related to the freebie meals for guests. This aspect corroborates Buhalis and Sinarta (2019) and highlights what is advocated by Seyitoğlu and Ivanov (2020) when they emphasize that organizations with differentiated services provide unique experiences for their customers. It can be classified as unique due to quantity, quality and the surprise effect.

Differentiation at Hotel-D occurs due to the modern infrastructure and food and beverage service. These amenities are differentials that the other analyzed companies do not have. With this, it is clear that the evidence is in line with the literature (Erden Ayhün & Çavusgil Köse, 2019).

Another aspect that differentiates Hotel-D from other establishments is the issue of food and beverage. In this case, the enterprise supplies drinks with its own brand labels, but the production is done by third parties. Unlike Hotels A and B, which offer international brands to their customers in their portfolio, Hotel-D seeks to differentiate by also serving products with regional labels, increasing the range of options for the customer experience. This evidence is in line with the conception of Elnasr et al. (2021).

After the comparative analysis of the hotel developments referring to the strategic actions performed before the disasters, we move on to the explanation of the strategic actions performed in the context of disasters.

According to Table 3, it appears that the differentiation strategy was implemented only in Hotels A and B and is related to the new services. Hotel-A sought differentiation through the food and beverage sector (all inclusive) and Hotel-B achieved certification from Bureau Veritas.

Table 3. Strategic actions in the context of disasters

| Covid-19 strategies | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Enterprises | Differentiation | Specific aspect of differentiation | Scientific contribution |
| Hotel-A | Implementation of new services | Food and drinks (transition to all-inclusive) | Elnasr et al. (2021); Gomes & Pereira (2016); |
| Hotel-B | Implementation of new services | <i>Bureau Veritas</i> certification | Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida (2020) Dias et al. (2021) |

Source: prepared by the authors (2023).

Hotel-A advanced in the premium all-inclusive project and, despite the pandemic scenario, changed its product proposal in the food and beverage sector corroborating Elnasr et al. (2021). It is noticeable that Hotel-A sought information on the service, so they chose to switch to the best version of the all-inclusive system: the premium version. The premium all-inclusive system promotes prominence in relation to the competition, allowing the hotel to reach higher levels, as recommended by Gomes and Pereira (2016).

Bureau Veritas certification promotes differentiation at Hotel-B. Thus, the enterprise is the only one in the region that has this international certification. This achievement promoted change through training that qualified the service, and it is noteworthy that this evidence is in line with Rodríguez-Antón and Alonso-Almeida (2020). According to these authors, training in crisis situations promotes changes in behavior. Dias et al. (2021) add that training is an important managerial action in a crisis situation.

Conclusion

This investigation had the purpose of analyzing the strategic actions implemented by international entrepreneurs of hotels and inns located in Porto de Galinhas-PE (Brazil), and in the surrounding area, in the face of the catastrophes of the oil spill and Covid-19. As main results it can be seen that differentiation is present in Hotels A, B and D, and the differentiating elements are: offered services, revenue management, modern infrastructure and food and. As for the strategic actions in the context of disasters, it can be seen that differentiation is present in Hotel-A and Hotel-B with the implementation of new services.

Given the above, this investigation contributes by revealing that differentiation forms the essential basis for the consolidation of the tourist destination in the national and international market. With regard to the performance of the Porto de Galinhas destination, equating to Fernando de Noronha, in an analysis at the state level, it is noticeable in the enterprises of the locality that there is a coepetition, because there is strengthening and promotion of the destination and all actors are beneficiaries. Due to the existing partnership between the actors, there are similarities in the characteristics of the strategies implemented by the enterprises that managed to survive the crisis resulting from the pandemic. Therefore, these results indicate that the business strategies adopted in hotels and inns influence the strengthening of the tourist destination.

With regard to the limitations of this research, during the development of this research, the planet was being impacted by the effects of the pandemic caused by Covid-19. In this way, most of the contacts took place virtually, respecting the security protocols and the availability of the interviewed subjects who were involved with the resumption of tourist activities in the region, which prevented all those contacted from contributing to the study.

Finally, to cover the gaps that still exist in the field of study of strategic management and tourism, it is indicated to investigate the influence of dynamic capabilities in the business strategies of hospitality companies in disaster situations.

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