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Successful Strategies to Sustain Profits from Tourism Following a Hurricane

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Kevin James

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Successful Strategies to Sustain Profits from Tourism Following a Hurricane

by

Kevin C. James

MBA, Walden University, 2013

BSBA, Columbia Southern University, 2011

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2018

Abstract

Hurricanes have caused billions of dollars in damage to the hotel industry in Florida, significantly affecting tourism flow. The unpredictable impact of hurricanes makes sustaining profits challenging. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies that hotel leaders use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. The theory of image restoration provided the conceptual framework for the study. Data were collected from company documents and semistructured interviews with 5 hotel leaders in Central Florida. Transcribed data were coded then validated using member checking during the data analysis, which revealed 5 themes: storm impact, accommodations, operations, communications, and planning. Results indicated the relevance of the theory of image restoration to help hotel leaders get operations back to normal following a hurricane by using effective communication and planning. Results also indicated that when hotel leaders have an effective response strategy, the opportunity to sustain profits extends beyond tourism. Results may be used by hotel leaders to sustain profits and support their communities during hurricane recovery by providing accommodations, safety, and security to stakeholders other than tourists, such as first responders and state and local residents.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research project to my family for all the support given to me during this process. To my wife, Crystal, thank you for the patience that allowed me to pursue my education. Your selflessness to endure intermediate spousal neglect helped relieve much of the pressure endured during this process. I love you baby; you are the best. My parents and siblings, I thank you for the constant examples of togetherness and inspiration showered upon me, my kids, grandkids, nieces, and nephews as we journeyed through school to achieve higher education.

Finally, I want to dedicate this scholarly contribution to my late grandmother (Mattie Polite) and my aunt (Matlin Polite). My grandmother was my rock when I needed someone to hold me steady. My aunt's dedication and spirit comforted me, as a career educator, and helped ensure I finished what I started. I love all of you for what you represented in my life. For those whom I may have missed, though you were not called by name, your influence on my life was equally instrumental in my ability to achieve my goal. Thank you all!

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Tourism is one of the most economically important global industries. Ritchie, Crofts, Zehrer, and Volsky (2013) asserted that terrorist attacks, political instability, economic recession, biosecurity threats, and natural disasters make tourism vulnerable to crises. Every organization should establish procedures and action plans for crisis prevention and crisis management (Taneja, Pryor, Sewell, & Recuero, 2014). The size and scale of these planning approaches are not clear (Orchiston, 2013). Exploration of hotel managers' use of messaging strategies may provide hotel leaders with detailed information on how to sustain profits from tourism following a hurricane.

Background of the Problem

Every year Florida is vulnerable to high-impact storms like hurricanes (Misra & DiNapoli, 2013; Peek & Young, 2013). Dahles and Susilowati (2015) noted that the unpredictability of crises that emerge from devastating events like hurricanes triggers diverse responses from tourism businesses. Many tourism operators lack the resources and capabilities to rebound (Mair, Ritchie, & Walters, 2016). Consequently, the complex relationships between cause and effect, and decisions and actions are difficult to understand in tourism-related subsidiaries like hotels.

Events like hurricanes have cost the tourism industry billions of dollars (Y. C. Huang, Tseng, & Yiap, 2013; Malmstadt, Scheitlin, & Elsner, 2009; Ooi, Hooy, & Som, 2013; Ryu, Bordelon, & Pearlman, 2013). Hotel managers may use the information from the current study to integrate crisis and strategic management practices to sustain their businesses (Taneja et al., 2014). Previous research related to tourism and crises addressed

signal detections, destination image repair, and sustaining a competitive advantage; however, less attention was paid to hotel managers' decision-making following a hurricane for profit sustainability (Avraham, 2013; Evans, 2016; Paraskevas & Altinay, 2013).

Problem Statement

Leaders within the tourism industry have experienced a spectacular development, moving from an activity with limited importance to one of the largest industries in the world (Ursache, 2015). Ryu et al. (2013) reported that Hurricane Katrina caused 1,409 tourism and hospitality-based businesses in Louisiana to shut down after the storm, affecting 33,000 hospitality-based employees. The general business problem was inadequate preparation by organizational leaders to sustain profits following a natural disaster. The specific business problem was some organizational leaders in the hotel industry lack strategies to sustain a profitable hotel business from tourism following a hurricane.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies hotel leaders use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. The target population consisted of leaders from 10 hotel businesses located in Central Florida who sustained tourism profits following a hurricane. Successful hotel managers in Central Florida may provide insight into ways to provide safety for tourists, preserve a tourist destination's image, and develop evacuation options for communities and businesses to improve tourists' experiences following a hurricane.

Nature of the Study

The research method for this study was qualitative. Yilmaz (2013) declared that using the people-oriented approach of qualitative research enables researchers to explore phenomena or situations to gain a better understanding. The qualitative approach was appropriate because the purpose of this study was to explore strategies used by hotel managers in the tourism industry to sustain their businesses after a hurricane.

Researchers use quantitative methods to analyze numerical data using surveys and questionnaires (Yoshikawa, Weisner, Kalil, & Way, 2013). Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala (2013) noted that the mixed-methods approach consists of combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. To explore the successful strategies of leaders in the hotel industry following a hurricane, I did not collect numeric data using surveys or questionnaires; therefore, neither the quantitative nor mixed-methods approach was appropriate for this study.

I chose the case study design for this study. Yin (2014) posited that using a case study poses conditional challenges that researchers must address. The case study design was appropriate because the focus of this research was contemporary events, which required direct observations and interviews of more than one individual involved in the event using a qualitative methodology. Phenomenological research involves describing people's lived experiences (Bevan, 2014). Paschen and Ison (2014) noted that narrative researchers elicit stories using conversational interviews prompting a process of reflection of a person's experience. I did not explore experiences or tell stories; therefore, the phenomenological and narrative designs were not appropriate for this study.

Research Question

What strategies do organizational leaders in hotel businesses use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane?

Interview Questions

1. What was your experience with dealing with a hurricane as a hotel business leader?
2. What strategies did you use to sustain a profit from tourism following a hurricane?
3. What method did you find worked best to sustain a profit from tourism following a hurricane?
4. How do you determine whether your strategies used to respond to hurricanes are working?
5. What makes dealing with a hurricane challenging for the hotel industry?
6. What, if anything, would you do differently if you were faced with a similar situation?
7. What else could you add to assist others in learning more about ways to sustain a profit from tourism following a hurricane?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the theory of image restoration. Benoit (1997) developed the theory of image restoration in 1995 as an approach for developing and understanding messages when responding to corporate image crises. A crisis has the potential to destroy a brand, particularly when the acts of organizations are

inconsistent with the brand values (Grundy & Moxon, 2013). Ketter (2016) mentioned that according to the image repair theory, cultivating and protecting a destination's image from a crisis is critical.

Grundy and Moxon (2013) noted that the effectiveness of image restoration theory depends on the characteristics of the crisis faced; although no two crises are the same, reactions or responses to crises vary. The theory of image restoration holds that communicators who need to restore damaged reputations have five strategic options: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective actions, and mortification (Benoit, 1997; Grundy & Moxon, 2013). The theory of image restoration provides organizational leaders with strategies to deal with a crisis because, despite the challenges in a crisis, it is important to select the appropriate communication method to ensure that the message reaches its intended audience (Benoit, 1997; Grundy & Moxon, 2013). The theory of image restoration also provides organizational leaders with strategies to sustain profits following a natural disaster such as a hurricane.

Operational Definitions

The following definitions of terms are industry specific and may not be used in other contexts:

Corporate social responsibility: Corporate social responsibility (CSR) consists of concepts that firms use to focus on economic, social, and environmental responsibilities while creating value for stakeholders (Coles, Fenclova, & Dinan, 2013; Martínez, Pérez, & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013).

Crisis communication: Crisis communication refers to provisional messages relevant to audiences during a crisis (Freberg, Saling, Vidoloff, & Eosco, 2013)

Organizational crisis: An organizational crisis consists of institutional stressors provoked or exacerbated by outside events (Ghaderi, Som, & Wang, 2014)

Resilience: Resilience is the ability to overcome change, loss, decline, or a crisis (Lew, 2016).

Tourism crisis: Tourism crisis is an event of sufficient magnitude that may severely disrupt the tourism industry (Ghaderi et al., 2014).

Tourism industry: The tourism industry is a diversified sector of public and private businesses differentiated by fields of activities including hotels, service providers, restaurants, transports, tour operators, travel agents, nongovernment organizations, and government bodies (Bâc, 2015).

Vulnerabilities: Vulnerabilities refer to a function of character that determine the ability to absorb shock of an exposed system (Espiner & Becken, 2014; H. Kim & Marcouiller, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Conducting research involves factors that may or may not be in the researcher's control. Assumptions include statements that are accepted but are not supported by research. Limitations are circumstances that are beyond the researcher's control. Delimitations are factors that indicate the boundaries of a study.

Assumptions

Pettigrew (2013) defined assumptions in qualitative research as the underpinnings of research practices and outcomes that shapes standards of awareness. The key assumptions made in this study pertained to whether the participants' experiences would support my inquiry. Mair et al. (2016) noted that the management of crises and disasters is vital to reduction and recovery efforts. Therefore, I assumed that the communication strategies used by participants may help hotel leaders sustain tourism profits following a hurricane.

Limitations

Kepes, Banks, and Oh (2014) described limitations as circumstances beyond the control of the researcher that indicate the need for more research. Key limitations in the current study included (a) the proximity of the participants to where hurricanes make landfall such as inland versus coastal areas, (b) the scope of research in Central Florida extending from the coast to inland areas, and (c) the number of hotel leaders willing to participate in the study. Additionally, there may be different guidelines and local regulations used to govern hotel safety and security systems (Chan & Lam, 2013). Finally, privacy restrictions could have limited access to archival data requested from participants.

Delimitations

Strydom (2013) characterized delimitations as the identification, formulation, and objective problems that arise from boundaries of a study. Factors that were beyond the scope of the study included (a) other natural disasters or human-made disasters that

affected tourism in Central Florida, (b) hotel leaders who have not implemented crisis communication strategies for tourists pertaining to hurricanes, and (c) a small sample size of hotels with limited reliance on tourism for profits. Another delimitation involved the strategic decision use by leaders in the tourism industry to determine what information attracts tourist (see Josiassen, Assaf, Woo, & Kock, 2016). Delimitations included (a) local hotels and resorts, (b) hotel leaders with universal crisis communication policies, and (c) hotel leaders identified by the hotel as decision-makers for crisis communication strategies who may not have a designated title.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

The results of this study could be significant to business leaders because the finding may provide organizational leaders with strategies to prepare for or manage fallout from hurricanes that affect profitability. Evans (2016) advised that sustaining a competitive advantage involves understanding the changes in business strategies and recognizing the service implications that the tourism products have on the market. Paraskevas and Altinay (2013) noted that understanding crises is not always possible because the organizations involved are unable to determine whether the effects are results of multiple causes or one cause. When it comes to the enhancement and preservation of an area, tourism is one instrument for economic rejuvenation and development (Ursache, 2015).

Implications for Social Change

Ryu et al. (2013) mentioned that tourism is one of the largest industries and income generators that contributes to the economy of countries, states, and cities. Tourism activities allow residents to present their identity and raise awareness about their social and cultural values (Ursache, 2015). These contributions to social change include satisfying tourists, businesses, and communities; improving images of destinations; and enabling hotel leaders to increase contributions to corporate social responsibilities following hurricanes.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Damage from crises is often unpredictable. Avraham (2015) noted that intangible damages that crises have on service and infrastructure are difficult and severely affect tourism flow. Terrorist attacks, hurricanes, tsunamis, earthquakes, and economic crises can occur with or without warning signs and can quickly send an organization's reputation into a downward spiral, which can affect profitability (Bowen, Fidgeon, & Page, 2014; Cesar, 2013; Chatterjee & Mozumber, 2015; Evans, 2016; Freberg et al., 2013; Genovese & Green, 2015; Y. C. Huang et al., 2013; Jeuring & Becken, 2013; Rittichainuwat, 2013; Ryu et al., 2013; Smith & Montgomery, 2015; Taneja et al., 2014; Ursache, 2015; Wang & Ritchie, 2013). Reported weather conditions help give organizations and communities warnings of an approaching event; however, it is often difficult to determine the magnitude of damages that these crises may cause.

Failure to predetermine damages does not relieve responsible actors of the burden of responsibility. It is important for hotel managers to understand tourism safety, crisis

knowledge, crisis management, the risk associated with unexpected human-made or natural disasters, and sustainability efforts in the hotel industry (Chan & Lam, 2013; Mair et al., 2016; Taneja et al., 2014). Hotel managers who formulate effective message strategies when addressing a hurricane crisis demonstrate their assertiveness in improving their corporate social responsibilities and managing threats to their customers, communities, brand image, and profit strategies (Benoit, 1997; Horney, Nguyen, Salvesen, Tomasco, & Berke, 2016; Macpherson & Burkle, 2013). Hotel leaders have used various marketing initiatives and resources to improve brand image and profits such as local media, social media, promotions, and improved safety measures (Avraham, 2015, 2016; Brown, Rovins, Feldmann, Orchiston, & Johnston, 2017; Ryu et al., 2013). In the following literature review, I examine the use of the theory of image restoration conceptual framework in the tourism and hotel industry. Additional analysis includes tourist decision-making in the event of a crisis, emergency preparedness, corporate social responsibility, and strategies for profit sustainability by using appropriate message options when responding to a crisis resulting from a hurricane.

Organization of the Review

The literature review addresses the importance of understanding hurricane crises for hotel leaders in the tourism industry. I present search strategies, percentage of articles used, applications to the business problem, a critical analysis of Benoit's theory of image restoration and contrasting theories, and themes pertaining to the theory of image restoration that leaders use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. Based on Randolph's (2009) description of the four types of literature reviews, this literature

review focuses on practices or applications, including strategies that hotel leaders in the tourism industry use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane.

Search Strategy

The purpose of the literature review was to address the diverse resources related to the business problem. Sources obtained included peer-reviewed articles and seminal works. The Walden University library was the primary source of literature identified using key word searches in the following databases: (a) Business Source Complete, (b) ABI/INFORM Complete, (c) ProQuest, (d) Science Direct, and (e) SAGE Premier. I also used the Google Scholar search engine. The key words included *theory of image restoration, situational crisis communication theory, crisis communication, crisis knowledge, emergency preparedness, hotel crisis, evacuation decisions, Florida hurricanes, hurricane effects, corporate social responsibility, profits, and sustainability in the tourism industry and the hotel industry*. These terms helped me identify sources related to the research problem and the conceptual framework used to support my inquiry.

Summary of Peer-Reviewed Articles

The literature review includes a critical analysis and synthesis of Benoit's (1997) theory of image restoration. I used Ulrichsweb, a database designed to verify academic and scholarly journals, e-journals, peer-reviewed titles, magazines, and newsletters, to determine whether the documents chosen for my study had been peer reviewed (Walden University Library, 2016). Table 1 includes the reference types, totals, and percentages of

sources published within 5 years of the Chief Academic Officer's anticipated approval, which is 2018.

Table 1

Total Percentages of References Used

Reference	Total	% of references	% less than 5 years old	% more than 5 years old
Scholarly and peer-reviewed articles	176	97%	97%	3%
Other sources (seminal work & gov. sites)	5	3%	100%	100%
Total	181	100%	97%	3%

Note. Seminal works refers to books.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that hotel leaders use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. Hurricanes have severely affected Florida tourism industry in its coastal regions (Chatterjee & Mozumber, 2015; Malmstadt et al., 2009). The analysis and synthesis of the literature addressed Benoit's (1997) theory of image restoration messaging response strategy, tourism, hotel safety and security, emergency preparedness, and the corporate social responsibility of leaders responding to crises, specifically hurricanes.

Critical Analysis and Synthesis of Benoit's Theory of Image Restoration

Y.C. Huang et al. (2013) noted that crises could have a negative influence on the tourism industry and threaten companies' ability to attract tourists. For example, Hurricane Katrina disrupted the economic infrastructure, image, and ability of New

Orleans, Louisiana to be an attractive tourist destination immediately following the hurricane (Y.C. Huang et al., 2013; Ryu et al., 2013). Destination marketers have used several strategies to reduce the negative impact of disasters or crises, which affect the perceptions of tourist destinations (Avraham, 2015, 2016, Y. C. Huang et al., 2013; Ketter, 2016; Ryu et al., 2013). Dunn and Eble (2015) mentioned that crisis communication researchers tend to view a company's crisis communication strategy from a success or failure standpoint. The theory of image restoration provides a response strategy designed to increase success and mitigate failure by promoting responsibility, social change, message options for hotel managers to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane.

Organizational leaders are not immune from crises, and their response to a crisis can affect their image. Benoit (1997) described the theory of image restoration as an approach for corporations to understand crises by focusing on message options. An organization's ability to respond to a crisis can affect its brand image (Benoit, 1997; Dunn & Eble, 2015; Ryu et al. 2013). Countries, states, and cities face challenges in their marketing initiatives, policies, crisis communication techniques, and brand imaging used to attract tourists (Avraham, 2015, 2016; Josiassen et al., 2016; Ketter, 2016; Ryu et al., 2013). Favorable crisis response options offer leader's ways to reduce the negative impact on a destination's image. The favorability of leaders' crisis response increases when they understand how, when, and where to employ it.

There is no straightforward approach to respond to a crisis. The theory of image restoration proposes five messaging strategies for crisis responses, including denials,

evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness of events, corrective actions, and mortifications or forgiveness that can be used in different situations (Benoit, 1997, 2014; Dunn & Eble, 2015; Holdener & Kauffman, 2014; Smithson & Venette, 2013). Although Benoit (1997) argued that crisis responses should be prompt, Grundy and Moxon (2013) argued that the effectiveness of the image restoration theory depends on the crises faced. In concert with Grundy and Moxon's argument, Smithson and Venette (2013) noted that it is hard to weigh short-term gains against long-term damages to a company's reputation. The various opinions by previous researchers suggested the importance of having an in-depth understanding of message strategies, which provide hotel managers with options when responding to crises affecting consumers in the tourism industry. Each message strategy outlined in the theory of image restoration includes ways to mitigate blame, reduce fallout, and improve recovery efforts resulting from crises.

Denial. When crises occur, people tend to point fingers, assign blame, or deny responsibility. Compton (2014) posited that denial could be achieved by rejecting accusations and implicating someone else. Denial challenges the verity behind assumptions regarding negative events (Wang, 2016). Some researchers argued that denial could imply the refusal of organizations to acknowledge responsibility, blame, or harm to anyone because of the crisis (Benoit, 1997, 2014; Holdener & Kauffman, 2014). For example, professional baseball player Barry Bonds shifted the blame of his alleged steroid use to his strength trainer, essentially denying any responsibility for the allegations (Holdener & Kauffman, 2014). Similarly, Benoit (1997) explained how Coke denied allegations against Pepsi Cola following a price dispute with McDonald's, and

Exxon denied fault in an oil spill, shifting blame to the Coast Guard and state officials. The use of denial can be individual or organizational; however, blame shift is just one side of the argument.

In a crisis, there are alleged offenders and victims. Benoit (2014) argued that denial is an effective response strategy if the intended audiences accept it. Denial may not be feasible in every instance in which the fault lies with companies; nevertheless, denial provides organizational leaders with a crisis response strategy to repair damaged reputations. Benoit (1997) warned that a company at fault from a crisis should probably admit to it because denying accusations could backfire. Leaders may find it difficult to predict how an intended audience will assign blame when a crisis occurs, but a careful analysis of denial indicates that it offers a response strategy that could go either way. Leaders' use of denial or shifting blame may influence an audience's perception and may be akin to evading responsibility in the theory of image restoration.

Evading responsibility. In the early stages of a crisis, it could be difficult to determine which response strategy an organization will choose. Evading responsibility is similar to denial (Benoit, 1997, 2014; Holdener & Kaufmann, 2014; Stone, Erickson, & Thorwick, 2015; Smithson & Venette, 2013). The organizations that evade responsibility project an image that rejects culpability and blurs the lines between control and intentions (Benoit, 1997, 2014; Compton, 2014; Holdener & Kauffman, 2014; Smithson & Venette, 2013). Some researchers argued that evading responsibility is effective when there is minimal obligation on the part of organizations, which ultimately allows them to counteract negative perceptions (Grundy & Moxon, 2013; Holdener & Kauffman, 2014,

Stone et al., 2015). Strategies used to evade responsibility include provocation, lack of knowledge on what to do or how to act, claiming it was an accident, or convincing others that the company had good intentions (Compton, 2014; Stone et al., 2015).

Organizational leaders may use the evading responsibility response strategy when they believe the impact of a crisis was not intentional. Some crisis events have had actors who intentionally sought to negatively influence the image of an organization or place.

The intentional acts of individuals or groups can make evading responsibility difficult. For example, the Arab Spring and other violent governmental uprisings, political tensions, and terrorist attacks significantly affected the tourism brand of the Middle East because countries denied and evaded responsibility costing the region over \$15 billion in revenues (Avraham, 2015, 2016). Stone et al. (2015) suggested it is appropriate to blame crisis provocations on others if the company or industry is not able to sway public opinion against any wrongdoing. As shown in the Middle East, that could be difficult when the victims feel both the act of a crisis and a leader's choice to evade responsibility from both sides. If evading responsibility is not feasible, reducing offensiveness may be the next viable option for organizations to use (Stone et al., 2015).

Reducing the offensiveness. In any crisis, one of the first acts should be to get a handle on what is happening. An organization's ability to reduce the offensiveness strengthens its positive image by bolstering, minimizing, differentiating, transcendence, attacking or compensation (Benoit, 1997, 2014; Smithson & Venette, 2013). British Airways reduced the offensiveness following a crash of their Boeing 777 (Grundy & Moxon, 2013). Their airline's utilized media resources to frame the incident in a positive

light by releasing a pre-draft statement, which they described the flight details and instructions on the company's website, gave constant updates, and placed the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) out front to praise the flight crew and the company's emergency teams. The day after the crash, British Airways held another press conference focusing on the training of the aircraft Captain and the crew's performance (Grundy & Moxon, 2013). Though the above actions successfully reduce the offensiveness, they do not always work.

Organizational leaders face tremendous challenges when responding to the fallout from crises. Similar to British Airways success to reduce the offensiveness, Arby's utilized the strategy to improve its reputation after an aggressive advertising campaign strayed away from their intended message (Compton, 2014). Local Iowan's felt attacked by Arby's after they attempted to smear the reputation of Subway about fresh meat slices; prompting Arby's to utilize Benoit's reduction of the offensiveness strategy (Benoit, 1997; Compton, 2014). Arby's efforts to slow Subway's momentum in the marketplace ended up negatively impacting their brand image, as oppose to the intended negative impact to the Subway brand. Business leaders and crisis management officials can use the reducing the offensiveness message options to slow the damaging effects on an organization's reputation.

Leaders may find that reducing the offensiveness of a crisis has many characteristics. Leader that acknowledges culpability, also features bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, or attacks as tactics for reduction (Compton, 2015; Stone et al., 2015). These tactics of reducing the offensiveness emphasize the good,

minimizes the bad, compares the differences with worse acts, attacks the credibility of victims, and puts into context the severity of the crisis. Essentially, reducing offensiveness de-emphasizes the damage towards an organization's reputation (Wang, 2016). In any event reducing offensiveness does not deny or evade responsibility, rather it permits organizations to accept responsibility. The final two steps of the typology indicate a leader has taken responsibility for their action, which is a more active role.

Corrective actions and mortification. Taking actions to mitigate the negative impact of a crisis should be swift and effective. Holdener and Kauffman (2014) argued that corrective actions and mortification is a more practical approach that embraces both responsibility and the reprehensible nature of the act. Corrective actions involve efforts to repair damaged reputations, and mortification seeks forgiveness for the offense (Benoit, 1997, 2014; Harlow & Harlow, 2013; Smithson & Venette, 2013). For example, both corrective actions and mortification were the strategies of choice used by President Obama and Michael Vick to repair damages to their reputations, but their results varied. The President employed these strategies in the wake of the fallout from the problems associated with the Healthcare.gov website, which affected the slow recovery of its approval rating (Benoit, 2014).

In stark contrast to the President's strategy, Holdener and Kauffman (2014) reported that although Vick sought forgiveness, his image remains tainted in the court of public opinion due to lack of details surrounding his corrective actions. Wang (2016) argued that taking corrective action depends on the nature of the crisis. The decisions made by President Obama and Michael Vick demonstrated that when faced with a crisis

using these strategies does not guarantee favorable results. The use of one image restoration strategy is not a mean for disregarding the possibilities of combining strategies (Holdener & Kauffman, 2014; Smithson & Venette, 2013).

The unpredictability of a crisis can lead to unpredictable responses; however, having multiple options to choose from increases chances of success. The versatility of the theory of image restoration strategy gives message options for organizational leaders to utilize when communicating about a crisis. Failure to have mechanisms in place can leave organizations vulnerable (Timmerman, Sharp, & Shepard, 2015). Grundy and Moxon (2013) believed that the theory of image restoration provides organization's strategies to employ as crises develop but warned about the importance of selecting individuals to deliver these messages for the sake of reassuring stakeholders. British Petroleum (BP) demonstrated this when they prioritized their response to the Deep-Water Horizon (Harlow & Harlow, 2013; Smithson & Venette, 2013). After dealing with the public address announcement from President Obama and pressure from the public pressure, BP held press conferences to announce its corrective actions by establishing a \$20 billion repair compensation plan for the victims (Harlow & Harlow, 2013). Although BP did not accept fault for the explosion, their willingness to assume responsibility for the clean-up and provide compensation to victims helped improve their negative image.

Organizational leaders need to be aware that it is not a matter of if a crisis will occur, but merely when. Timmerman et al. (2015) emphasized that it is important for organizations to have contingency plans in place to respond to problems. Protecting a brand's image during and after a crisis using Benoit's image restoration strategy helps

reduce the negative impact on a destination's image (Benoit, 2014; Grundy & Moxon, 2013; Holdener & Kauffman, 2014; Ketter, 2016; Smithson & Venette, 2013). It is evident that organizations, groups, and individuals differ on how they apologize, assign blame, or accept the responsibility of crises, but Benoit's theory offers both consistent and versatile messaging options for image restoration (Avraham, 2015; Compton, 2014). Stone et al. (2015) argued that few companies take immediate actions to correct a wrong and even fewer apologies. Benoit's work stressed his attempt to formulate crisis responses into one overarching theory (Dunn & Eble, 2015). Timmerman et al. suggest that when planning for disasters leaders should focus on mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. The typology offered by Benoit gives leaders a communication strategy to address each of those. The options available in Benoit's typology helps provide a framework for hotel leaders to use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. There is an alternative to the theory of image restoration.

Contrasting Theory

As indicated earlier, a crisis can prompt more than one response strategy. Coombs and Holladay (2002) argued that crisis response strategies should be selected based on the potential damages and those adversely affected. Some authors believed that organizations can tailor their crisis communication strategies depending on the crisis type and consumer reactions (Avraham, 2014; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014). Coombs and Holladay described the use of situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) as a strategic communication approach, which is used to protect an organization's reputation by assessing and selecting the appropriate response strategy. Crisis impacts vary, and as a result the response

strategy may vary. It is helpful when a leader is acutely aware of the crisis and those involved so that they may respond accordingly.

SCCT strategy seeks to help readers understand the ins and outs of a crisis and the impact on stakeholders. Several authors reviewed the theoretical aspects of SCCT and found that as a response strategy it focuses on crisis types, managerial efforts, public relations, stakeholder perceptions, severity, and performance histories (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2002, 2014; David & Chiciudean, 2013; Ki & Nekmat, 2014; S. Kim & Sung, 2014; Mason, 2014, Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013; Wang, 2016). S. Kim and Sung warned that a single incident could damage a company's reputation. The SCCT framework suggests that it helps manage the perception and evaluation of responsibility that affects stakeholders (David & Chiciudean, 2013; Mason, 2014). Mason (2014) noted that the threat to an organization's reputations increases or decreases base on the degree of communication and the acceptance of responsibility. Leaders may find it difficult to predetermine the magnitude of damages a crisis may have on an organization's reputation, yet they should constantly seek strategies to mitigate potential threats to their image or brand.

Determination of the crisis an organization faces is a challenge within itself. The acceptance of responsibility within the SCCT framework suggests that crisis response planners base their responses on reputational threats (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014, Coombs & Holladay, 2002; David & Chiciudean, 2013; S. Kim & Sung, 2014, Utz et al., 2013). The SCCT framework enables crisis managers to identify and strategically decide how to respond to threats (S. Kim & Sung, 2014; Mason, 2014). David and Chiciudean

(2013) believed that the SCCT is a proactive system use to harmonize crisis responses to help preserve an organization's reputation. Benoit (1997) image restoration theory, on the other hand, is perceived as a backward-looking strategy. Crises are often unpredictable, but an organizational leader's response does not have to be unpredictable. When a crisis occurs, unbeknownst to an organization, the public will immediately seek to attribute blame; therefore, it is essential that organizations act swiftly and efficiently when disseminating information.

When using the SCCT response strategies leaders must be cognitive of how and what type of information to disseminate. For example, S. Kim and Sung (2014) used a quantitative approach to test 242 students at a major public university to examine the effectiveness of base crisis responses and two-sided message strategies to determine the best approach for SCCT. They found little support that suggests SCCT is the best communication strategy for crises. Although Coombs and Holladay's SCCT focuses on proactive measures, Benoit's image restoration provides the best options for reactive strategies relative to events following a crisis. The guiding principle offered by Coombs and Holladay (2002) does provide alternative options to respond to crises. The tourism industry is prone to crises from a magnitude of sources. When organizations can link tourism and disaster risk reduction, they enhance tourism resistance, strengthen their defense mechanism, and limit the time it takes to return to normalcy (Becken & Hughey, 2013; Paraskevas, Altinay, McLean, & Cooper, 2013). Whether the choice response is proactive or reactive, it is important for leaders to respond when a crisis occurs. Crisis

managers choice of communication methods should focus on how to address it, particularly when using external networks.

The various platforms available to communicate crisis responses has increased the chances for crisis managers to reach their intended audience. Some authors suggest that SCCT strategies can have profound effects when responding to crises, despite their mixed views on the methods of communication (Ki & Nekmat, 2014; Utz et al., 2013). Ki and Nekmat argued that SCCT combined with social media make it less effective, while Utz et al. asserted that using media and social media with SCCT is better for reputational damage control. Despite the mixed views of using social media, acknowledging the notion of power, action, and the willingness to listen to others creates transparency for corporate crisis communication (Dunn & Eble, 2015). A tourist uses various communication outlets to review and select choice destinations. In an industry like tourism, hotel managers can use many of the same media outlets it uses to attract tourist to disseminate information in the event a crisis occurs.

Communicating to stakeholders during a crisis is key. Some authors assessment of SCCT suggests that the attribution of responsibility will vary in the court of public opinion (S. Kim & Sung, 2014; Mason, 2014). It is common for organizations to handle crises differently; consequently, the manner in how swiftly and effectively they disseminate information may help to mitigate blame (Stone et al., 2015; Timmerman et al., 2015). Timmerman et al. noted that failure in crisis communication could eliminate a company from the marketplace, thus emphasizing the importance of targeted responses. Stakeholders review of how leaders respond to crises improves the negative fallout.

The SCCT crisis response strategy has a few things common with the image restoration theory. Similar to Benoit's theory, SCCT focuses on managerial efforts of preserving an organization's reputation through a crisis (Benoit, 1997; David & Chiciudean, 2013). Although Benoit's theory supports the most viable messaging options, other author's favor SCCT asserting that crisis types and the level of involvement will determine how differently people react (Benoit, 1997; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; Ki & Nekmat, 2014; Mason, 2014). Several authors have shown that strategic communicative responses can protect reputations, situations, and the selection of the correct response strategy fits the situation (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2002; David, Chiciudean, 2013; Ki & Nekmat, 2014; S. Kim & Sung, 2014; Mason, 2014). After reviewing both Benoit and Coombs and Holladay crisis communication strategies, the theory of image restoration provides the appropriate response strategy to react to tourism products affected by human-made and natural disasters. Hotel leaders can use the theory of image restoration strategy to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. To increase effectiveness, leaders should also have an understanding of the tourism and hotel industry.

Tourism and Hotel Industry

Elements of the tourism and the hotel industry rely upon each other for success. Some authors characterize tourism as the forms, types, and versions of historical and cultural systems that help create economic, social, and cultural recovery opportunities (Ismagilova, Safiullin, & Gafurov, 2015). Buckley, Gretzel, Scott, Weaver, and Becken (2015) expressed that tourism and travelers motivation to travel are affected by social,

political, economic, technological, and environmental factors. Jucan and Jucan (2013) believed tourism is a pillar to economic stimulation. Ritchie et al. (2013) argued that tourism is an open system that is affected by events beyond its control, which has the potential to affect profit sustainability that stakeholders rely on in the industry. Despite the various opinions about factors that define tourism the impact the industry has on economies should not be neglected.

As with any industry, the tourism industry is not free from crises. Dahles and Susilowati (2015) mentioned that sustaining crises caused by human-made and natural disasters profoundly affect economic layers of the tourism industry. For example, in 2012 the tourism industry supported 262 million jobs, representing 9.3% of the global GDP, which helped alleviate poverty for developing countries, and change the negative images that resulted from exposures to crises (Avraham, 2014; Jucan & Jucan, 2013; Saha & Yap, 2014). Tourism managers should be knowledgeable about the exogenous drivers of disastrous events that affect both the historical evolution of tourism and its spillover effect, in particular, the ability to predict more precisely how, when and where these drivers will occur (Buckley et al., 2015; Crotts & Mazanec 2013). When tourism leaders learn from past events it helps them assess the benchmarks of tourism and hotel demand. The proactive steps to understand the tourism industry is critical for those hotel leaders that seek to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane.

The hotel industry has more to offer than the reliance on tourism. The hotel industry creates jobs, promotes developments of tourism activities, improve the welfare of residents in tourism areas, and help revive economies (Rendón, Martínez, & Flores,

2014). Roman and Martin (2016) suggested that managers within the hotel industry should find alternative ways to promote their products. Hotel managers that understand risk and how to work within those risk gains to maintain financial stability during times of crises (Brown et al., 2017; Molina-Azorín, Tarí, Pereira-Moliner, & Lopez-Gamero, 2015). As shown in Spain, when overnight hotel stays fell by 7.94% following the 2008 financial crises, uncertainty in this industry can have profound effects (Campo, Diaz, & Yagüe, 2014). The impact of crises on the hotel industry impacts far more than tourism itself. Other stakeholders operating within the hotel industry are also affected.

Leaders within the hotel industry should take into account the holistic approach to their decision-making. Brown et al. (2017) argued that hotel size, structure, adaptability, culture, and flexibilities affect hotel leaders decision-making, but their willingness to address their vulnerabilities may help build resilience. Ismagilova et al. (2015) emphasis on the historical and cultural aspects of tourism exemplifies the importance of an industry and its role in economic, social, and cultural recovery following crises. When leaders foster positive climates they improve business performances; and though industries like hotels and tourism are not immune to crises, understanding the cause and effects of crises will help minimize damage reputations and increase earning potential (Rendón et al., 2014; Ritche et al., 2013). Hotel leaders that reduce negative impacts to their image following a hurricane could use the knowledge to sustain tourism profits, which improves their earning potential. One of the biggest challenges that hotel leaders will encounter involves determining when, why, and to what extent they would characterize an event as a crisis.

Hurricane Effect on Tourism

A crisis can be human-made or the result of a natural disaster. Taneja et al. (2014) defined a crisis as a series of unforeseen events with no limitations on the level of chaos that can affect organizations. Florida is vulnerable to high-impact weather events (Misra & DiNapoli, 2013). Since the early 20th century, Florida has experienced over \$450 billion dollars in damages due to hurricanes (Malmstadt et al., 2009). A hurricane is defined as a tropical cyclone with winds over 74mph with deep convection generated by hot sources of warm upward and downward drafts from the earth surface (Cesar, 2013; Malmstadt et al., 2009; Peek & Young, 2013). Peek and Young warned that predictions of these storms are vital for the safety of coastal communities. A tourist visiting from areas outside of coastal regions exposed to hurricanes may lack knowledge associated with hurricane risks (Cahyanto et al., 2016). When hurricanes threaten the Florida region, it poses significant challenges to everyone within the impact region. Hotel leaders should actively seek information on hurricane and its developments.

There are several variables that hotel leaders should consider when obtaining information about hurricanes that threaten the state of Florida. Several authors have used various measures to help researchers understand the development and atmospheric impact of hurricanes and tropical cyclones (Cesar, 2013; Ruf et al., 2016; Smith & Montgomery, 2015). Ellis, Sylvester, and Trepanier (2015) asserted that unlike the Gulf regions; the Atlantic coast hurricanes produce at least one intense hurricane that will impact multiple cities. Hurricane damage depends on where the storm makes landfall. Powered by heat and moisture of the tropical ocean, hurricanes tops the list of catastrophic events in Florida,

which is more than any other state in the union (Malmstadt et al., 2009). However, as shown with Hurricanes Katrina, Wilma, and Andrew, the dramatic force behind hurricanes can significantly impact tourism (Chatterjee & Mozumder, 2015; Freberg et al., 2013; Y.C. Huang et al., 2013; Ryu et al., 2013). Water surround Florida on three size, which increases the likelihood of experiencing a direct hit or the remnants of an approaching hurricane. Hotel leaders who understand the widespread impact of hurricane effects can help reduce the effect it may have on tourist who lacks hurricane knowledge.

In many cases, prior knowledge about hurricanes should help with planning. Researchers have made efforts to help predict seasonal events to monitor the effects of wind damage, power outages, and storm surges caused by hurricanes (Chatterjee & Mozumber, 2015; Misra & DiNapoli, 2013; Peek & Young, 2013; Vecchi & Villarini, 2014). Vecchi and Villarini argued that the utility of predictions may lead to targeted actions like evacuations and evaluations of risks. Straightforward and unambiguous factors allow for decisive and targeted responses when disasters strike (Timmerman et al., 2015). Peek and Young warned against the use of the Saffir-Simpson scale; an instrument used to measure wind speed, to predict storm surges. Nevertheless, the Florida Commission on Hurricane Loss Projection and the Florida Office of Insurance Regulations does provide resources to help evaluate risk models associated with hurricane damages (Malmstadt et al., 2009). Though resources are available for hotel leaders to use it is important to note that a natural disaster like hurricanes can significantly disrupt a hotel's daily operations and the tourism industry within the impact

area. Due to the location of the state of Florida, the areas that rely heavily on tourism could be extensive.

The warm waters of the Southern Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico during hurricane season will likely pose risk to the Florida coastline. Genovese and Green (2015) reported that since 1990 nearly 22 tropical storms and hurricanes in Florida had had storm surges over 17-foot, which caused damages to property, beaches, and loss of life. The tourism industry face multifaceted challenges to protect against natural disasters like hurricanes. Woosnam and H. Kim (2014) examined the relationship between impacts of hurricanes, climate conditions, and park visitations, and found that when natural disasters or hurricanes hit, they cause severe damage to tourist attractions, which reduces visitation to these areas. Belasen and Dai (2014) argued the impact or damages from hurricanes vary depending on the severity and timing of the storm characteristics. The fact that hurricane severity and timing is unpredictable makes it difficult for leaders in the hotel and tourism industry to predict impacts.

Hurricane damage limits what stakeholders can do before and after the storm along the Florida coastline. It is important to understand that the negative impact of hurricanes is not limited to outdoor recreation opportunities (Woosnam & H. Kim, 2013). In areas where tourism revenue is significant to profit sustainability, the unpredictable impact of natural disasters like hurricanes makes sustaining a profit challenging. Brown et al. (2017) reported that hotel vulnerabilities to natural and human-made hazards affect operations, profitability, and tourist motivation to visit destinations. It is important for local policymakers and fiscal analyst to effectively manage a company's image and

understand the effects of hurricanes when communicating to stakeholders to project the expenditures needed in the recovery process (Belasen & Dai, 2014; Stone et al., 2015). Organizational leaders should strive to improve organizational strengths and reduce weaknesses. When these efforts fail, the results can be catastrophic to the communities and hotel organizations that rely on tourism to sustain profits.

Approaching hurricanes can halt the economic vehicle of communities and organizations. Hurricane Katrina caused 1,409 tourism and hospitality businesses to shut down in New Orleans, which affected 33,000 hospitality-based employees, which ultimately impacted tourist choice to visit the city (Y.C. Huang et al., 2013; Ryu et al., 2013). Ryu et al. examined professionals with 10 years or more of first-hand experience managing organizations during a natural or human-made disaster and found that tourist perceptions significantly changed following the hurricane. Similarly, Hurricane Wilma caused an estimated \$20 billion in the damage in Florida, and after the BP oil spill hotel demand fell in Florida more than any other state along the Gulf (Brown et al., 2017; Ritchie et al., 2013). Timely and adequate corporate responses restore consumer confidences and help mitigate negative perceptions of a companies messaging strategy (Dunn & Eble, 2015; Wang, 2016). The use of the theory of image restoration messaging strategy among researchers has shown that government, local, and business leaders have used the strategy to reduce the negative impact on tourism (Benoit, 1997; Y.C. Huang et al., 2013; Ryu et al., 2013; Smithson & Venette, 2013). The impacts of hurricanes and human-made disasters are costly, but not properly responding to them can be equally

costly. When negative perceptions are reduced leaders can formulate profit strategies to remain competitive to produce brand equity.

Maintainng a positive image increases the equity within an organization's image. Brand equity is when positive brand identity is created as a marketing source to bring about favorable results towards a company or product brand (Lee, Capella, Taylor, Luo, & Gabler, 2014). In the tourism industry, hotel leaders use marketing initiatives like loyalty programs to create brand equity to guard against negative images following crises (Lee et al., 2014). Dahles and Susilowati (2015) noted that crises cause tourism businesses to use a diverse range of responses to survive. When those responses are favorable, it enables the image associated with an organization's brand to help generate revenue. The theory of image restoration offer messaging options that enable tourism leaders to protect and improve their image following a hurricane, and they can also work toward other crises.

Hurricanes are not the only threat to tourism and the hotel industry. Other authors have shown that a tourism crisis results from a combination of human-made and natural disasters in other regions of the world (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2013; Ooi et al., 2013; Ritchie et al., 2013; Saha & Yap, 2014). Ooi et al. reported that Asian-based crisis events caused local tourism receipts to fall by 17% from 2002 after the 2003 SARS Outbreak; suffered US\$8 million in property damages from the 2004 Indonesian tsunami, and increased travel cancellation by 20% after the 2005 Bali bombing. Similarly, the earthquake that struck Tohoku, Japan affected tourism in Hawaii. Although Coombs and Holladay's SCCT suggests managers should provide information regardless of the crisis

type, Benoit's theory shows that no matter the factors that cause the crisis, it does not prevent prospective audiences from assigning blame (Benoit, 1997; Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Dunn & Eble, 2015). When blame is assigned, an organizational leaders determination to deny, evade responsibility, reduce offensiveness, mortify or use corrective actions could determine how much the negative impact will have on their brand's image. Leaders should carefully review all options when responding to crisis events to protect the stakeholders impacted by those events.

Deciding Factors

When tourist perceives an area is at risk to their public safety it could hinder both organizations and communities from sustaining tourism profits. The responsibility to address these perceived threats typically falls on tourism managers. Several authors reported that there is a growing concern about the health and safety of tourist (Civelek, Çemberci, & Eralp, 2016; Jeurig & Becken, 2013; Lai & Hitchcock, 2017; Nijkraak, Gosselt, & Gutteling, 2015; Peattie, Clarke, & Peattie, 2005). Lia and Hitchcock noted that travelers expect different levels of service, and hotels that cannot fulfill certain services may negatively influence customer's satisfaction ratings and the likelihood of generating repeated stays from their customers. Despite the proposed model for studying customer satisfaction, tourist experiences could be unsatisfying for several reasons (Lia & Hitchcock, 2017; Peattie et al., 2005). Benoit's (1997) messaging options offer a platform to deal with these concerns by giving leaders choices to respond appropriately to crisis events. The difficulty that hotel leaders face when trying to please every tourist and their individual needs can be daunting, but an aggressive approach towards fulfilling its core

needs help both hotels and the tourism industry. Even when leader meet some of the tourist needs, the perception of those activities or their results may vary.

Tourist perceptions. Tourist perceived threat differently. Unfortunately, tourist and those operating in the tourism industry are at risks to various threats (Bowen et al., 2014; Jeuring & Becken, 2013; Rittichainuwat, 2013; Wang & Ritchie, 2013). It could difficult to determine which threat poses the biggest challenge. Mair et al. (2016) believed that negative perception is the biggest challenge that tourism marketers face following a crisis. The strategic approach to managing these perceptions should be a part of organizational crisis management planning (Benoit, 1997; Bowen et al., 2014; Civelek et al., 2016; Rittichainuwat, 2013; Wang & Ritchie, 2013). Several authors have used different approaches to measure tourist perceptions regarding whether to visit destinations (Bowen et al., 2014; Jeuring & Becken, 2013; Rittichainuwat, 2013; Ryu et al., 2013, Wang & Ritchie, 2013). Crisis planner's initiatives should use the perception of those in the tourism industry as a strategy to develop effective plans. There is not a universal method used to evaluate perception.

Use of qualitative or quantitative approaches when measuring planning initiatives increases the chances of developing a good strategy to evaluate tourist perception. The mixed methods approach used by some authors has ascertained threats of terror against cruise ships, beach safety in the event of a tsunami, as well as other natural disasters that affect their crisis planning initiatives (Bowen et al., 2014; Rittichainuwat, 2013; Wang & Ritchie, 2013). Rittichainuwat found that following crisis events, tourist and crisis managers perceptions varied. Tourist felt that safety and security were vital to their

decision-making towards destinations (Bowen et al., 2014; Rittichainuwat, 2013, Walters, Mair, & Ritchie, 2015). Wang and Ritchie reported that managers felt differently, seemingly because they considered assessments of tourist behaviors, attitudes, and norms are important only when planning for a crisis. Some authors approach to crisis handling aligns with the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2002; David & Chiciudean, 2013; S. Kim & Sung, 2014; Wang & Ritchie, 2013). Researchers have shown that leaders can use Benoit's typology interchangeably, which provides tourism practitioners an appropriate message option to survive a crisis, and reduce the negative impact on profitability (Ryu et al., 2013; Stone et al., 2015). Though the perception of tourist improves profitability, it is paramount that hotel leaders keep tourist safe.

Hotel safety. People views on hotel safety vary. For example, severe weather poses a risk to tourist in both the hotel and the tourism industry (Jeuring & Becken, 2013). Similarly, catastrophic events like natural disasters, terrorist attacks, outbreaks, or economic crises can influence safety and security measures in the hotel industry. Chan and Lam (2013) noted that hotel managers could ill afford to ignore the importance of safety and security. The mechanism for overseeing staff and security of guest must be planned and proactively used (Macpherson & Burkle, 2013). Whether these measures are covert or overt, a successful balance of the protocols, guidelines, and directives should be understood and easy to follow (Macpherson & Burkle, 2013; Rittichainuwat, 2013). The protocols used by hotel leaders should focus on how to respond to crisis events that

threaten their brand reputation. Leaders should take a holistic approach when developing crisis management plans.

Hotel leaders within the hotel and tourism industry determine the extensiveness of a hotel crisis management plans. These plans may vary by organization. Macpherson and Burkle (2013) proposed several options that addressed crisis planning and procedural needs for an organization. Similarly, Peattie et al. (2005) plan demonstrated how an organization can offer events to promote the reduction in skin cancer risk by offering facilities and activities that provided shade, training, and public policy message communication towards the need for sun-safety. Their approach demonstrated how hotel leader's use proactive measures to sustain tourism profits from external environmental threats. Despite the efforts to use the proposed framework offered by Macpherson and Burkle, Rittichainuwat found that tourist felt too many overt safety measures deterred them from staying at specific hotels. Benoit's (1997) theory, nonetheless, does not take away from proactive measures taken by organizations, but it does provide a response strategy if tourist ignores those overt or covert actions. A tourist response to measures taken by hotel leaders varies, but that should not prevent an organization from developing crisis response initiatives. Whether actions are proactive or reactive, it is important for leaders to act.

Hotel leaders and leaders in the tourism industry seek to improve the tourism experience. Tourist experiences are about the pursuit of pleasure, but there is a growing concern about health and safety within the industry (Peattie et al., 2005). Chan and Lam (2013) warned that hotel managers should not install safety measures based solely on

customer perceptions but suggested that taking their viewpoints into account helps give hotels a competitive advantage. Hotel leaders struggling to attract or maintain travelers at their hotels should develop marketing and service strategies according to the hotel's strengths to help sustain business operations (Brown et al., 2017; Lai & Hitchcock, 2017). Jeuring and Becken (2013) suggested that emergency managers and tourism agencies understand the decision-making of tourist when dealing with the associated risk threatening the industry. Benoit (1997) warned that responsibility for crises has many guises; therefore, understanding an audience perception of an organization help leaders get out in front of potential threats before those threats cause damage to their image. In concert with understanding the perception of tourist towards hotel safety, it is important to understand how tourist makes decisions altogether.

Evacuation decisions. Tourist is vulnerable to crises and trying to understand the behaviors that influence evacuee's decisions may be a daunting task for leaders. Sadri, Ukkusuri, Murray-Tuite, and Gladwin (2015) defined evacuations as a recourse to prevent loss of life. Local community officials typically issue evacuation orders to allow time for those in the tourism industry to evacuate before crises worsen (Sadri et al., 2015). As a hotel leader operating in the tourism industry, it could be difficult to determine how tourist will respond to disaster warnings in the event of an evacuation order. Consequently, Benoit's (1997) messaging options may extend credibility to organizations when tourists ignore evacuation orders.

Tourist may use an organization's creditability to help with decision-making in the event of a crisis. When disasters occur, such as hurricanes, organizations should adopt

new behavioral responses when there are obvious failures (Cahyanto et al., 2014; Dillion, Tinsley & Burns, 2014; Villegas et al., 2013). Some authors believed that two of the main drivers behind a tourist decision to evacuate were perceived risk and prior experience (Cahyanto et al., 2014; Villegas et al., 2013). Ryu et al. (2013) argued that though organizations take proactive measures, rarely are lessons learned carried over from previous crises, making response strategies inefficient. Nevertheless, what has become clear is that an organization's view of disasters depends on its ability to handle the fallout (Timmerman et al., 2015). The decisions leader's make when crises occur offers insight on their preparation, and crisis management practices. While some leaders may argue that it is difficult to prepare for every crisis, the level of difficulty should not mitigate their initiatives to prepare for one.

Leaders should examine their internal and external resources to help develop hurricane evacuation and crisis management plans. Cahyanto et al. (2014) argued that regular assessments of hurricane risk and evacuation procedures help to ensure warning messages are consistent with what tourist already knows. Additionally, hurricane evacuation messages should address the different types of tourist (Cahyanto et al., 2016). Experience and knowledge about hurricanes are linked to where residents reside in hurricane-prone regions (Villegas et al., 2013). When DeYoung et al. (2016) examined the hurricane evacuations thresholds in North Carolina for mandatory and voluntary evacuations, they found that cultural and collective histories of citizens impacted the level of experience and knowledge associated with how they viewed risk, information accuracy, and trust. Leaders who understand the experience and knowledge of tourist can

develop messages that address the safety and well-being of individual tourist, residents, and businesses in the tourism location. Evaluation of tourist knowledge and experience is just one side of the spectrum.

A leader will find that the cultural and historical positions that communities and businesses take can cause profit efforts to fluctuate because tourist decision to evacuate could contain many variables. In contrast to leaders seeking information, Cahyanto et al. (2016) noted that tourist sought information about their abilities surrounding risk belief, correctness, hurricane knowledge, and experiences. Similarly, Bowser and Cutter (2015) review of past literature revealed that personal risk perception, official warnings, warning dissemination channels, sheltering options, use of private auto, housing, and storm factors also influence hurricane evacuation decisions of tourist. Simply stated, tourist responds differently to hazards they believe will not cause significant damage, and because individuals perceive risk differently, it leads to complacency (Dillion et al., 2014). Bowser and Cutter noted that although warning technologies and risk communication have improved over the past decade, the industry requires more. Many factors affect tourist evacuation efforts and decision-making, and it should be an ongoing effort.

When industry leaders conduct constant assessments and updates of organizational safety procedures, it may offer a plausible resource to support messaging options following a hurricane. Coombs and Holladay (2014) believed that crisis communication messages and its assessments would have positive results, essentially, minimizing reputational damage. Benoit (1997) theory of image restoration message options, which includes denial, evading responsibility, reduce offensiveness,

mortification, or corrective action helps mitigate the fallout following a hurricane crisis when proactive measures taken by companies failed to protect a brand's image. Josiassen et al. (2016) noted that when leaders understand the tourism industry and their firm's operating procedures it helps with strategic decision-making. Leaders who communicate effectively when a hurricane crisis occur demonstrates preparedness. While it may not be possible for leaders to determine the impact of a hurricane crisis, it is possible for them to prepare for one that is approaching.

Emergency Preparedness

In many cases, leaders who critically assessed their internal and external infrastructure may discover areas of weaknesses, which may warn of a potential crisis. When early warning signals or crisis signals deviate from normalcy, crises can escalate (Paraskevas & Altinay, 2013). Several authors consider the hospitality industry as one of the most vulnerable to crises, but what is not always clear is the planning approaches used to address it (AlBattat & Som, 2013; Orchiston, 2013). Morakabati, Page, and Fletcher (2016) believed that one of the likely reasons for this lack of clarification is the disconnection between the public and private sector. Crises can threaten organizational relationships and reputations (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). A leader's ability to detect, plan, and disseminate information is critical to the relationship and reputation between an organization and its stakeholders. It is vital that organizational leaders understand how to merge or develop strategies to communicate effectively in the event of a crisis.

One way to merge and develop strategies is to evaluate what others have done. AlBattat and Som (2013) reviewed existing literature on emergency management and

preparedness affecting the hotel industry and found that many organizations lack proper safety measures, emergency preparedness plans, leadership, coordination, and resources. They believed that leaders should consider internal factors such as collaboration, communication, and control when preparing for emergencies. Paraskevas and Altinay (2013) went a step further by exploring the mechanism used to detect crises. They wanted to know about the designs of detection systems, where the scanning should take place, the types of detectors used, how to capture transmitted signals, and the challenges for detecting crises. Paraskevas and Altinay findings showed a broad consensus on predicting crises but warned that signal detections should be an organization first line of defense followed by the appropriate transmission channels. Timmerman et al. (2015) noted that it could be difficult to design measures to prevent unprecedented events; therefore, having communication strategies to minimize the impact offers the best protection towards a brand's image. Several factors determine the effectiveness of an organization's preparedness for emergencies, but proper use of resources could help protect organizations from reputational damage. Organizational leaders are responsible for the construction, production, and instructions associated with emergency preparedness plans, but not everyone will agree with those plans.

Stakeholders view may differ from leaders on what to focus on to prepare for emergencies. Orchiston (2013) gave insight on the perceptions of business and community leaders. Using a quantitative approach, she examined tourist disaster planning in areas at risk from low-frequency/high-consequence (LF/HC) natural disaster to determine if their plans adequately address the potential threat to the region. Orchiston

found that despite the tools available to improve preparedness and resilience, many businesses and communities were complacent when it came to disaster planning. Similarly, Morakabati et al. (2016) conducted an exercise using the Delphi Technique examining the allocation of responsibility. Their findings indicated differences in allocations of responsibilities but revealed the importance of a collaborative approach. As shown in Benoit's (1997) proposed theory, crisis-planning efforts should be continuous to prevent organizational missteps in their response times, which enable leaders to collaborate with the public to control the allocation of responsibility. Nonetheless, complacency can threaten image restoration messaging options in the event a crisis occurs. Hotel leaders within the tourism industry should work with other community stakeholders.

When a hurricane crisis occurs, it impacts several industries. Paraskevas and Altinay (2013) concluded that the tourism industry is prone to crises because of its highly fragmented and complex interdependencies with other sectors. Ryu et al. (2013) claimed that when crisis occur proactive crisis management is optimal. Some authors argued that it is important to prepare plans to reduce risk in areas that rely heavily on tourism and prone to natural disasters (Avraham, 2015; Becken & Hughey, 2016; Ketter, 2016; Orchiston, 2013; Paraskevas & Altinay, 2013; Rittichainuwat, 2013; Ryu et al., 2013; Sawalha, Jraisat, & Al-Qudah, 2013; Taneja et al., 2014; Wang & Ritchie, 2013). Consequently, these plans must match organizational capabilities and resources to mitigate negative impact towards a destination's image (Orchiston, 2013). Hotel leaders who understand the magnitude of what they are facing and the reliability and availability

of others industries operating within the tourism sector increases their opportunities to reduce risk and damage from a hurricane. Hurricanes impact on communities differ.

It can be difficult for hotel leaders to determine what to focus on when hurricanes impact their business sector. Ryu et al. (2013) accentuated that leaders in destinations that have a clear understanding of their image before a disaster may know which attributes to focus on during recovery. Paraskevas and Altinay (2013) learned that crisis signals, once generated from their sources, could have lasting effects. Early warning signals help organizations prepare or plan for crises when tourists ignore signals. Inept planning cost the accommodation industry after the BP oil spill, specifically hotels and vacation rentals in Central West Florida and Southwest Florida, to decline 10.3% and 11.3%, and roughly US\$13.5 billion in out of court expenses (Ritchie et al., 2013). Thus, the success of a leader's strategies to mitigate negative image and cost is determined by how well they plan, prepare, and respond to crises. For this to happen, hotel leaders should expand their crisis manage knowledge.

Crisis management knowledge. A crisis, whether human-made or natural disaster can impact the tourism and hotel industry at any time. Mair et al. (2016) concurred with other authors that over the last decade the tourism industry had experienced many crises and disasters. As a result, it is important for communities to adopt comprehensive plans to withstand and recover from these crises (Chacko et al., 2016). Horney et al. (2016) believed that for disaster planning to be successful it must involve key stakeholders. In tourism, crisis disaster and communication efforts help rebuild consumer confidence (Mair et al., 2016). When communication between

stakeholders and their communities are fluid it provides a platform to build, run, and implement decision support systems (Chacko et al., 2016; Horney et al., 2016; Mair et al., 2016). Community stakeholders can use planning efforts to prepare, recover, and rebuild when disasters occur. Benoit's (1997) message response theory can enhance that decision support system for hotel leaders to employ an effective response following a crisis, so their organizations can remain competitive.

A hurricane crisis or any other crisis that affects the hotel and tourism industry does not mitigate a company's responsibility to remain competitive. Globalization has seemingly allowed organizations to be more competitive, which challenges organizational leader's ability to identify, anticipate, prevent and manage crises (Taneja et al., 2014). Paraskevas et al. (2013) argued that shaping infrastructure and crisis strategies require the appropriate mindset, vision, and actions for crisis leadership. Since tourism organizations and small businesses are notoriously under-resourced, disaster management efforts in existence appear to be too inefficient to coordinate with (Becken & Hughey, 2013; Benoit, 1997). Paraskevas et al. believed that an organization's tangible resources no longer determine their survivability, it is; however, determined by their management of intangible knowledge capital. A leader's ability to remain competitive in the hotel and tourism industry requires that they take a holistic view of themselves and their crisis management efforts. A leader should thrive to survive a crisis.

There is risk associated with a leader's lack of crisis management knowledge. Paraskevas et al. (2013) supported their argument by interviewing 21 executive officers at the corporate level of the tourism profession who experienced or made decisions

directly related to risk/crisis management and found that crisis knowledge possessed at the time of the crisis were problematic (Paraskevas et al., 2013). The lack of flexibility led to inappropriate responses. Similarly, Taneja et al. (2014) argued that integrating crisis management into strategic management of organizations depends on innovative and intuitive strategies to survive and flourish. They recommended developing a strategic management plan that empowers employees to prepare for crises by engaging stakeholders and holding crisis management training sessions. Other authors concluded that planners who are actively engaged in recovery planning could reduce damage images, reputations, and tourist behaviors (Horney et al., 2016; Mair et al., 2016). These proactive measures support Coombs and Holladay's (2002) SSCT. It is important to understand that crisis management knowledge of this magnitude enables crisis managers to employ the strategic aspects of the image restoration strategy when crises occur. In either event, when organizations have plans in place their abilities to sustain profits increases. When leaders have proper plans in place, they must communicate the information to stakeholders.

Crisis communication. A tourist response to the risk associated with a crisis may be influenced by how leaders communicated the message. Cahyanto and Pennington-Gray (2015) sought to explore the motives related to how tourist sees risk and what dictates their willingness to evacuate voluntarily during a crisis. They found that tourist base their decisions surrounding risk on how they received the message. Benoit (1997) argued that because image restoration messaging is a form of persuasion, leaders need to know how to persuade their audience. Civelek et al. (2016) asserted that thanks to the

improvements in communication technologies, system disbursement of information are reachable everywhere. Crisis communication can be delivered in a push or pull culture using mass media, or other means such as social media and social networks (Civelek, et al., 2016; Nijkrake et al., 2015, Olsson, 2014; Wang, 2016). Regardless of the method used, clear and concise communication when a crisis occurs could help leader communicate an effective crisis strategy to mitigate risk to tourist. Although a tourist may perceive risk differently, communication from organizational leaders to stakeholders should be ongoing.

Management of a crisis is crucial. Managing corporate communication using a crisis response strategy can limit the adverse effects of public perception (Nijkrake et al., 2015). The social media platform offers a convenient and versatile mode of communication to disseminate information, as well as, give leader's the ability to assess the perceived risk of crises (Ryschka, Domke-Damonte, Keels, & Nagel, 2016; Ketter, 2016; Schroeder, Pennington-Gray, Donohoe, & Kiouisis, 2016; Wang, 2016). Ketter use of the theory of image restoration with Facebook, shedding light on the unique characteristics of the theory with a diverse audience. The use of technology in this manner indicates that due to the dynamic environments in which organizations operate, a firm's reputation, sales, and survival depends on how quickly they adapt (Nijkrake et al., 2015; Wang, 2016). The use of technology affords the organization the ability to be transparent, clear, and concise with their message strategy. Leader should ensure their intended message does not get distorted or lost in translation.

It is important for leaders to get ahead of a crisis when possible. Nijkraak et al. (2015) emphasized the importance for crisis managers to frame crises regarding human interest to prevent negative coverage, regardless of the modes of communication. As shown in the cruise industry, when corporations are not out in front of a crisis the fallout could have global implications (Ryschka et al., 2016). Cahyanto and Pennington-Gray (2015) echoed this sentiment arguing that failure to comprehend or decipher risk could hinder how messages are received. Companies can ill afford to use the wrong message on the wrong platform to deliver a message concerning a crisis. Regardless of the mode of communication when crises occur, effective communication can minimize damages.

Everyone should be concerned about the risk associated with hurricanes. With more than 50% of U.S. landfalling tropical cyclones hitting Florida, the risk posed to a tourist is greater than the risk to non-tourist (Cahyanto & Pennington-Gray, 2015). Although tourist safety is paramount, it is equally important that leaders know if the crisis communication strategic or operational approach guides their organization style (Cahyanto & Pennington-Gray, 2015; Olsson, 2014). The choices used within Benoit typology may indicate an organization's engagement approach when they seek to preserve what remains of a damaged reputation in the event of a crisis (Benoit, 1997; Grundy & Moxon, 2013). Hotel leaders have a responsibility to communicate hurricane risk to tourists. When these leaders place stakeholder value above personal value, they demonstrate the willingness of their organizations to take responsibility for their roles within the industries and communities they serve.

Corporate Social Responsibility

It is important for organizational leaders to act responsibly for the conduct, products, and services provided by their organizations within a business environment. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a complex term to define (Kang, Chiang, Huangthanapan, & Downing, 2015). Calveras (2015) described CSR as the willingness to pay extra for products with CSR attributes. The importance for merchants and service providers to build sustainable relationships with customers is essential to competitiveness in the marketplace (Bolton & Mattila, 2015). The successes that accompany firms who are aware of their CSR reflects their approaches towards employee welfare, diversity, stakeholder engagement, ethical, social, environmental, and community efforts (Coles et al., 2013; Paek, Xiao, Lee, & Song, 2013). Moreover as shown in British Airways use of Benoit's theory to respond to the crash of 2008, the public's assertion to assign blame diminishes when organizations take ownership and respond quickly to crises (Grundy & Moxon, 2013). Bolton and Mattila showed that service failures could affect buyer-seller relationships. Consequently, a business social relationship with its stakeholders goes far beyond the revenue generated from its products and services. A leader who fails to recognize the importance of this relationship risk far more than what they could gain.

In the hotel and tourism industry, when firms elect to address CSR concerns it could help differentiate them from their competition. Martínez et al. (2013) proposed to measure the perceptions of customers to help firms focus on CSR responsibilities. They believed that internationally, CSR initiatives are growing in the tourism and hotel industry. Their results showed that customer's perception of CSR includes several

corporate actions (Martínez et al., 2013). While sustainability seems to be at the heart of success in hotel and tourism industry, organizational leaders have a greater responsibility. Their responsibilities begin with understanding the perceptions of stakeholders for researchers to evaluate how CSR is progressing within their industries (Coles et al., 2013; Martínez et al., 2013; Paek et al., 2013). A corporation that considers the perception of its consumer will likely improve their corporate position in the market. The tourism marketplace is competitive.

There are some advantages to understanding the competition. The inherent benefit of stakeholders engaged in CSR is the investment links affecting market practices that improve corporate reputation, brand image, and customer relationships (Paek et al., 2013). Similarly, other authors suggest that having a clear and measured path that balances long-term commitment against short-term decision-making benefits tourism organizations (Calveras, 2015; Coles et al., 2013; Kang et al., 2015). Coles et al. expressed that CSR is an approach taken by business administration officials that account for voluntary consideration towards operations and value creations. A major part of CSR initiative should include messaging strategies capable of handling crisis response. Benoit's (1997) theory offers the best approach for hotel managers to use for the tourism industry. The way companies define, design, and implement their CSR initiatives depends on the factors affecting the industries they serve. In any event, CSR leaders actively engage in CSR initiatives are taking appropriate steps to remain competitive in the tourism and hotel industries.

Resilience. The hotel and tourism industry play a vital role in economic growth, but they have their challenges. The tourism industry is a key driver of global socioeconomic progress, but the risk to multiple shocks and hazards are tremendous challenges the industry face (Bâc, 2015; Calgaro, Llyod, & Dominey-Howes, 2014). The disruptive aspects associated with natural disasters are one of those challenges, but disruptions in a tourism flow do not occur in a vacuum (Calgoro et al., 2014). Aswani, Diedrich, and Currier (2015) learned that environmental and social impacts in the tourism industry are inextricably linked. Leaders within this industry must be aware of the vulnerabilities to sustain success for stakeholders. Vulnerabilities are exposed systems that determine how one absorbs shock from events (Espiner & Becken, 2014; H. Kim & Marcouiller, 2015). A vulnerable industry increases the risk of crises and reduces brand equity. A leader's perception of the challenges they face could determine their motivation towards the pathway ahead for the organizations they run.

The intricacies that accompany a crisis affects how leaders address them. Some authors believe that the degree in which one interprets vulnerable and resiliency systems determine how well stakeholders understand the methods or plans associated with them (Aswani et al., 2015; Calgaro et al., 2014; Espiner & Becken, 2015). Resiliency planning is an alternative to sustainability planning, but it is relatively new to the tourism industry (Lew, 2016). Losses following a crisis event can cause human and physical damage because as the tourism industry change, so do tourist and the needs of those working in the industry (Bâc, 2015; H. Kim & Marcouiller, 2015). When hotel leaders take in to account all the stakeholder's needs in the tourism industry, they can properly plan and

prepare for the slow or sudden changes that take place in the tourism industry before and after a crisis. As with any business environment, the one constant that leaders face is change.

Trends. The constant influx of tourist and residents in and out of hotels and tourism locations is hard to determine. Several authors asserted that as the global tourism system goes through changes, there would be a growing need to develop techniques to respond to these challenges (Buckley et al., 2015, Scott & Gössling, 2015). Costa, Gomes, and Montenegro (2014) analysis of lessons learned, contributions, recommendations, and key actions surrounding tourist destinations indicated that success builds through awareness and constant reassessment of performances from crises. Although the tourism industry has suffered from crises, emerging trends has enabled tourism destinations to create a positive image for the lessons leaders learned. Jucan and Jucan (2013) reported that the Romania tourism contributed to 9.3% of the global GDP in 2012, and it was forecasted to grow to 3.1% in 2013. Although leaders face tremendous challenges with trying to keep up with the changes in the tourism industry, crises events have not slowed the growth of the global GDP. Whenever leaders suspect growth in the global GDP it suggests profit sustainability is achievable within the tourism and hotel industries.

The profits that organizations gain enables them to diversify their portfolios. For example, Mariani, Buhalis, Longhi, and Vitouladiti (2013) gathered information from the *2nd International Conference on Tourism Management and Tourism Related Issues* held in France and noted that increased competition, modification of target markets, and

collaboration were areas that countries were willing to invest. Leaders in the tourism industry must be aware of the various drivers that affected the industry (Buckley et al., 2015; Jucan & Jucan, 2013; Scott & Gössling, 2015). Awareness of these trends will help organizations develop an effective response strategy in the event a natural disaster such as hurricanes affect the market, which affects profit options. Grundy and Moxon (2013) believed that a lack of leadership should not be the focal point when crises occur. To be effective, Jucan and Jucan recommended that communities and tourism operator's work together to build relationships designed to improve recovery efforts sustain by catastrophic events. Investment opportunities promote diversification and improve profit choices, but these opportunities enable relationship building. The possibilities are endless when enough revenue enables an organization to diversify.

Profits. Hotel leaders need to make money to remain in the marketplace.

Radojevic, Stanistic, Stanic (2015) mentioned that one method such as providing feedback via online surveys would help hotel leaders assess the overall effect of hotel services. While some authors believed that hotel leader's commitment to improving customer service enhances quality, any degree of turbulence could produce uncertainty (Campo et al., 2014; Roman & Martin, 2016). Therefore, hotel leaders are encouraged to explore marketing initiatives to improve profits following a hurricane. Evans (2016) reported that some organizations combine resources to create value. In event of a crisis, tourist behavior will likely be affected (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2013). When leaders understand the impact of the services they are providing it helps them meet the needs of their

stakeholders. As the industry changes, so should the services required to remain within that industry.

Key stakeholder's in the hotel industry should be mindful of their leader's willingness to adapt to change. Campo et al. (2014) believed that hotel innovation and performance is base on a leader's attitude. The positive and negative impact of tourism has its challenges, but building engaged and vibrant capital community helps (Brown et al., 2017; Scott & Gössling, 2015). Many hotel companies are using global branding initiatives because of the profit opportunities that come with foreign markets (Z. Huang & Cai, 2015). The tourism industry acts as a vehicle that supports tourist and local residents because of the requirement of hotel stays in the event of a hurricane, or any other human-made or natural disaster. The ease of travel and proactive measures adopted by resilient hotel leaders provides an opportunity for them to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane.

Sustainability. There are many aspects of the tourism industry that hotel leaders should consider when seeking to sustain profits. Sustainability brings heritage preservation, tourism, and economic development into balance; therefore, to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage requires an understanding of tourism service orientations and characteristics (Evans, 2016; Ursache, 2015). Becken and Hughey (2013) pointed out that it is important for leaders to understand the links between tourism and disaster risk reductions in areas that rely heavily on tourism and prone to disasters. Crises can leave small-scale businesses in the tourism industry feeling volatile (Dahles & Susilowati, 2015). When leaders know the vulnerabilities of the areas and resources that

generate the most profits, actions should be forthcoming to strengthen those areas. An organizations ability to recover from disruptive events are essential to maintaining effectiveness.

Disastrous events can also create opportunities. Dahles and Susilowati (2015) discovered that severe disruptions caused by crises and disasters had created opportunities for entrepreneurs. The tourism industry is far from static, and despite adverse effects from human-made or natural disasters, the industry has continued its upward trend towards profit sustainability (Evans, 2016, Ritchie et al., 2013; Ursache, 2015). Tourism affects economies and communities all over the world, yet it proves its resilience with emerging markets playing key roles in the recovery efforts following crises (Sekulovic, 2015). Some authors believed that resiliency and crisis management programs aid tourism professional towards sustaining a competitive advantage through decision-making, diversification of services, and firm-specific strategies to address crises (Dahles & Susilowati, 2015; Evans, 2016; Ursache, 2015). A crisis can completely disrupt the tourism and hotel industry, but a leader's abilities to prepare, recover, and diversify from the impact of a crisis enable organizations to remain competitive in the marketplace. Leaders should be knowledgeable or have a knowledge staff member available to handle a crisis.

There are resources and information available to help hotel leaders communicate effectively in the event of a crisis. Advancements in understanding the theory of image restoration will provide hotel leaders a crisis management approach to sustain itself following a hurricane crisis (Benoit, 1997; Benoit, 2014; Grundy & Moxon, 2013; Ketter,

2016; Holdener & Kauffman, 2014; Smithson & Venette, 2013). Increased competition, population, wealth, and technology help trends emerge from crises, creating specific tourism products that influence cost and travel duration (Buckley et al., 2015; Saha, Su, & Campbell, 2016; Sekulovic, 2015). Tourism presents opportunities that raise awareness about social and cultural values (Avraham, 2015; Ryu et al., 2013; Ursache, 2015). Gurtner (2016) asserted that destinations affected by crises and adversity provide invaluable opportunities for stakeholders to understand crisis management and recovery strategies. Several authors have shown that when hotels and other tourism organizations combine resources, they create value (Avraham, 2015; Evans, 2016; Ketter, 2016). There is much uncertainty surrounding crises and disasters, and leaders can emerge with new ideas, products, and services, or fade due to their lack of preparation, understanding, or willingness to adapt to change caused by crises and disasters. If leaders take a proactive approach to improve their crisis management plan, these initiatives can help hotel leaders sustain tourism profits following a hurricane.

Transition

Section 1 included the background to the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, and the justification for choosing a qualitative multiple case design within the nature of the study. In addition, it introduces the research question I sought to answer and the interview questions, conceptual framework, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations I use to answer it. Further, it addressed the significance of the study, which described the contributions to business practices and implications for social change.

Finally, Section 1 concluded with an extensive review of the academic literature describing the conceptual support of Benoit theory of image restoration and subthemes.

Section 2 included (a) the project purpose statement, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) the participants, (d) research design and methods description, (e) population and sampling, (f) ethical research, (g) data collection instruments, (h) data collection techniques, (i) data organization technique, (j) data analysis, and (k) reliability and validity. Section 2 provided a structured course of roles and responsibilities of the researcher to the participants and the research to answer the research question.

Section 2: The Project

It is imperative that leaders in the hotel industry have strategies to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. Hotel leaders invest resources to ensure that their facilities are safe and secure for tourists (AlBattat & Som, 2013). The data provided by successful hotel leaders with experience sustaining tourism profits following a hurricane improved the body of knowledge for the tourism and hotel industry, and increased the probability of repeated customers to a destination. Section 2 presents the research process, including the purpose statement, researcher's role, participant recruitment strategy, and methods of collecting, analyzing, and validating data.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies hotel leaders use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. The target population consisted of leaders from 10 hotel businesses located in Central Florida who sustained tourism profits following a hurricane. Successful hotel managers in Central Florida provided insight on providing safety for tourists, preserving the destination's image, and giving organizational leaders evacuation options for communities and businesses to improve tourists' experiences following a hurricane.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to collect and analyze data using interview protocols and observable note taking while staying inductively open to understanding intricate social relationships (see Kaczynski, Salmons, & Smith, 2014). I had no previous experience working in the hotel or tourism industry, and I did not have any preexisting

relationships with any of the participants, which helped reduce potential biases that could have affected the results of this study. I maintained strict adherence to the Belmont Report by treating participants with respect, beneficence, and justice (Guta, Nixon, & Wilson, 2013; Health & Human Service, 2016).

I mitigated biases by making my orientation, predisposition, and biases explicit, and I avoided passing judgment on the appropriateness of situations involving the organizations and the participants (see Yilmaz, 2013). Conducting interviews was essential to capturing the experiences from participants. Yin (2014) noted that case study interviews require the researcher to satisfy the inquiry in a nonthreatening manner. Establishing and following an interview structure helped me to establish a comfortable interaction with participants (see Doody & Noonan, 2013).

Participants

The participants included 10 organizational leaders in the hotel industry located in Central Florida. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling. Robinson (2014) noted that purposive sampling ensures cases within a sampling universe represent the outcome. Florida experienced five of the most damaging Atlantic Hurricanes in recent years, which resulted in significant economic damage causing hotel and tourism demand throughout this region to fluctuate (Belasen & Dai, 2014; Cahyanto et al., 2014; Crotts & Mazanec, 2013). Therefore, I selected 10 participants for this study who met the criteria that included (a) a minimum of 5 years experience in the hotel industry located in Central Florida and (b) knowledge of successful strategies used to maintain profits following a hurricane.

I obtained approval from the Walden University institutional review board (IRB) using IRB approval number 10-04-17-0306049. I used the Internet and phone directories to locate potential participants. E-mails and information packages followed the approval process. Participants had the option to reply to the e-mail with the words “I consent.” The package included (a) the informed consent form with the approval number from the Walden IRB, which explained the purpose of the research; (b) letter of cooperation, and (c) an invitation to participate. Ioannidis (2013) noted that informed consent is the cornerstone of ethical research, especially when recruiting human subjects, regardless of whether the research is interventional or informational.

I made contact with participants to address any concerns prior to the scheduled interview date and time, and provided e-mails outlining the process of the interview. Seitz (2016) mentioned the partnership between the researcher and participant is crucial for achieving successful research. During the interview, I informed the participants that their identity would remain confidential, that they had the right to stop the interview at any time, and that their data would be removed from the study at their request. I used seven tactics for building and maintaining rapport that helped me sharpen my interview skills (see Abbe & Brandon, 2014).

Hotel leaders are integral to the planning process because they act as decision-makers or oversight members responsible for ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of tourists residing in their businesses. Exploring the strategies that organizational leaders in the hotel business use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane was crucial to this study. I collected interview and document data until data saturation was achieved.

Saturation occurs when no new information emerges, and the data sets are complete (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013).

Research Method and Design

Research Method

Three methods are available to guide research studies: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Bölte (2014) mentioned that quantitative researchers test hypotheses and ensure reliability and validity to enable generalization of findings. I did not test hypotheses, so the quantitative methodology was not appropriate. I chose the qualitative method to answer my research question. Rosenthal (2016) mentioned that qualitative research is used when researchers are interested in understanding the why of people's behavior and understanding participants' perspectives. The inclusion of quantitative and qualitative methods in a mixed-methods study needs to be justified in terms of design and framework (Makrakis & Kostoulas-Makrakis, 2016). I did not have a justification for the quantitative method; therefore, the mixed-methods approach was not appropriate for this study.

Research Design

Design choices for research can take a considerable amount of time to identify what combination of research methods and designs work best to answer the research question. Kaczynski et al. (2014) emphasized that in case study research the researcher is the primary research instrument, which helps support the design choice. In this qualitative study, the design choices I considered included (a) phenomenological, (b) narrative, and

(c) case study. The case study design is a qualitative methodology carried out in management disciplines (Runfola, Perna, Baraldi, & Gregori, 2016). A multiple case study design was appropriate for this qualitative research study. Yin (2014) mentioned that the logic underlying the use of multiple case designs is that it either predicts similar or contrasting results for anticipatable reasons. The research process continued until data saturation.

Bevan (2014) noted that phenomenological studies address experiences that are in many ways partially foreign because of the different perspectives but are capable of being understood when experienced by more than one person, which gives them an identity. The phenomenological design is based on participants' lived experiences described in their own words (Stapleton & Pattison, 2014). The phenomenological design fits the interpretive paradigm that acknowledges multiple, diverse interpretations of reality (Stenfors-Hayes, Hult, & Dahlgren, 2013). I was not looking to determine the meaning behind participants' lived experiences; therefore, a phenomenological design was not appropriate.

Narratives studies address the social contexts and interactions of structured knowledge, prompting a process of reflection and reworked experiences through the participant's life experiences (Paschen & Ison, 2014). Jones (2016) noted that narrative is a method of collecting, analyzing, and reporting data from the participants in a narrative form. Petty (2016) claimed that a narrative is a spoken or written account of events or experiences that can be stories, but it is not necessarily a story. The life experiences of

business leaders were not the focus of this study; therefore, a narrative design was not appropriate.

Marshall et al. (2013) mentioned that data saturation is an elusive concept in qualitative research. Wolfswinkel, Furtmueller, and Wilderom (2013) opined that due to time and resources, data saturation is still up for debate. When a purposive sample is used, data saturation occurs when no new information is emerging from the data provided by the interviewees, or from any supporting documentation obtained during data collection and analysis. Saturated data facilitates how information is categorized (Elo et al., 2014).

Population and Sampling

In this qualitative multiple case study, the purposive sample included 10 organizational leaders in the hotel industry located in Central Florida who demonstrated the use of successful strategies to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. Purposeful sampling consists of the identification and selection of information-rich cases in qualitative research (Palinkas et al., 2015). Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2015) argued that sample size should rest on shared methodological principles for estimating an adequate number of participants. Failure to meet data saturation may negatively affect the validity of research (Fusch & Ness, 2015); therefore, views from 10 participants were explored. I used member checking, transcript review, and triangulation to ensure validity of findings (see Morse, 2015; Simpson & Quigley, 2016).

Marshall et al. (2013) posited that no other research decision is more important than an adequate sample. The participants in this study met the criteria of a minimum of 5

years of experience in the hotel industry in Central Florida and having demonstrated successful strategies of profit sustainability from tourism following a hurricane. Robinson (2014) noted that the more inclusion and exclusion criteria used to define a sample, the more homogeneous the sample becomes. Rosenthal (2016) mentioned that before researchers undertake an interview or focus on the research, it is important to consider the data collection procedures that will be used to answer the research question. Participants with experience as organizational leaders in the hotel industry who had sustained tourism profits following a hurricane were critical to answering the research question.

Ethical Research

Ioannidis (2013) mentioned that the cornerstone of ethical research with humans involves obtaining informed consent because nonconsenting people may hinder and undermine the research progress. I complied with the informed consent process using the Belmont Principles of respect, beneficence, and justice (see Health & Human Service, 2016; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) noted an important step of informed consent is following the guidance and obtaining approval from the IRB.

Participation in this study was voluntary. Thorpe (2014) noted that there are many ethical dilemmas associated with data collection and potential courses of action. To mitigate potential ethical dilemmas, I informed participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Montalvo and Larson (2014) mentioned that some participants in their study had not read their informed consent forms. To avoid this potential problem, I reminded participants of their withdrawal options before starting the interview process and before collecting any documents.

There were no financial incentives offered in this study. Göritz and Neumann (2016) noted that motivation is key to getting people to respond and stay in a study until the end. Consequently, it was paramount to take measures to protect participants. The Belmont Report serves as a foundation for ethical principles and guidelines for protection of human subjects (Health & Human Service, 2016). I provided adequate information to enable the participants to make an informed consenting decision. I used the informed consent form to obtain permission to collect data from willing participants.

Usman, Jan, and He (2016) warned against using cloud databases, and suggested that data should be protected in encrypted form. To guard against potential threats, I will retain all data, including audio recordings, manuscripts, and collected records, in my password-protected computer and safe. After 5 years, I will destroy all data by deleting computer files and shredding paper documents. To ensure participants were informed, I included a statement about confidentiality and data storage in the informed consent form (see Hiriscau, Stingelin-Gines, Stadler, Schmeck, & Reiter-Theil, 2014). Ensuring confidentiality likely increased rapport and enhanced the credibility of the study. It is a researcher's duty to ensure confidence is maintained in circumstances in which data are expected to be held in confidence (Griffith, 2015).

Data Collection Instruments

Elo et al. (2014) noted that the best strategy to ensure trustworthiness of content analysis is choosing the best data collection method. I was the primary data collection instrument for this qualitative multiple case study. Kaczynski et al. (2014) asserted that the researcher, in qualitative research, directly control data collection and analysis, which

facilitates a deeper understanding of human interactions. The evidence used to collect data derived from the six items (see Yin, 2014, p. 106). I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with hotel managers in Central Florida using a voice recorder and a notepad, and reviewed archival records, physical artifacts, and directly observed participants.

Yin (2014) noted that researcher's lack control over data collections activities in case studies, mainly because it requires catering to the interviewee's schedules and the special arrangements required by observers. I ensured that participants were acutely aware of my role as the researcher and primary interviewer. Doody and Noonan (2013) recommended starting interviews with the focus on the research question (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I used audio recordings and note taking devices to transcribe data obtained from following my interview. I followed the guide located in Appendix A, which outlined the interview protocol and questions. I used this guide to help facilitate the process necessary to answer the research question. Doody and Noonan believed that following a guide helps participant's answer the easy questions before moving into more sensitive or difficult topics.

Yilmaz (2013) referred to reliability and validity in qualitative research as the credibility of data collection procedures, data sources, triangulation, member checking, audit trails, or other techniques to ensure trustworthiness. To enhance reliability and validity of my research, I used each of the above procedures. Data collection procedures comprised of documents from approved and official company resources about the research topic, where applicable. Interviewees conducted member checking of verbatim

transcriptions of voice recorded interview responses, and observable behaviors. Member checking involves participant's reading and responding to transcribe data for accuracy (Houghton et al., 2013). I used triangulation to capture themes derived from the information. Yilmaz mentioned that triangulation or a combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis are data collection methods that increase credibility.

I followed the interview guidelines and questions listed in the interview protocol (see Appendix A). Yin (2014) suggested that researchers review the major protocol questions before starting a field interview. Protocol questions may consist of specific questions to the interviewee, the individual case, patterns of findings across multiple cases, questions of the entire study, and questions about policy recommendations and conclusions (Yin, 2014). Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2013) noted that protocols questions should focus on the research question. A summarized written version, or verbal presentation of this study are available to participants upon request, in accordance with Walden's IRB policy.

Data Collection Technique

Yin (2014) recommends that case study researchers need to know how to carry out a variety of data collection techniques. The primary data collection technique used for this study was semistructured interviews using an audio recording device and notetaking. Thorpe (2014) suggested getting informed consent from participants to observe them in their work environment, if applicable. Similarly, archival records or physical artifacts helps increase the creditability and trustworthiness of the data collected; therefore,

obtaining consent to retrieve or reviews these data sources were crucial. Non-consenting participants may hinder the research process (Ioannidis, 2013).

In addition, I informed participants of any psychological, relationship, legal, economic, professional, or physical risk that could influence the outcome of this study. A copy of my National Institution of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research Certificate of Completion accompanied my Informed Consent Form, which will help clarify the risk associated with this study. Rid, Abdoler, Roberson-Nay, Pine, and Wendler (2014) emphasized that by comparing basic risk elements such as type, likelihood, and matitude of harm helps evaluate research procedures, particularly when IRB finds minimum risk in the research. Conflicts of interest or risk associated with this study was identified and mitigated with the help of participants. To protect organizations and participants, anonymous data submission was a viable option. Protecting privacy of anonymous data without altering the results help counter threats to collected data (Monreale, Pedreschi, Pensa, & Pinelli, 2014). Participants was informed of any conflicts of interest and associated risk prior to conducting interviews.

Interviews are methods of collecting data through questioning that ranges from structured, unstructured, and semi-structure formats (Doody & Noonan, 2013). I used a audio recording device to conduct semi-structured interviews to capture verbatim responses and clarification from predetermined questions. Doody and Noonan warned that novice researcher's often fail to identify where and when to clarify responses using follow-on questions during an interview. I followed the interview guidelines and questions listed in Appendix A, and made adjustments base on participant's responses.

Rosenthal (2016) recommended asking clear, open-ended and neutral questions about the research topic in a coherent order. Transcription of interview responses and use of member checking and audit trails to verify the accuracy of the content increased the validity of the data; however, transcribed data from voice recordings did not capture observed responses during the interview. I reconciled responses from comments and observed behaviors to increase transparency, and reliability.

A collection of archival documentations and physical articles allows the researcher to analyze its contents before or after conducting interviews. Yin (2014) warned that documents in case studies may be electronic or require large physical storage spaces. The researched data collected is stored on an external hard drive held under lock and key in a secured location for five years. Iqbal et al. (2016) warned against the vulnerabilities of using cloud computing, so I will not use this data storage option. Hammersley (2014) noted that publicly available information might not need informed consent; however, to increase transparency and confidentiality I requested permission before using any material that could negatively impact rapport with participants.

Houghton et al. (2013) suggested conducting member checking after transcriptions. The participant's review of the transcribed data served as validation of the captured content for this qualitative multiple case study. Simpson and Quigley (2016) recommended using a dialogical and flexible member checking process. The data collected were used to analyze, interpret, and establish themes from participants that relate to the research topic. Cycling through emergent data, themes, concepts and relevant

literature helps to discover new contents and determine if findings have precedence (Gioia et al., 2013).

Data Organization Technique

Yin (2014) identified four principles of data collection for case study research: (1) use of multiple sources of evidence, (2) creation of a case study database, (3) maintain a chain of evidence, and (4) exercise care when using data from electronic sources. Ummel and Achille (2016) argued that by taking rigorous reflective journal notes when collecting data, it may help make researchers aware of potential threats to confidentiality. The data was collected using audio recording devices, field notes, and organizational documents. I used interview-naming conventions, dates, times and locations to correspond with respective participant responses. Hammer and Berland (2014) concluded that construction of records and coding of those records involves the material evidence collected. Similarly, Houghton et al. (2013) suggested that to increase dependability and highlight transparency researchers should record thoughts about decisions when they organize data, and final themes and subthemes develops.

Field notes were compiled on notepads using the same format as audio recordings. Yin (2014) mentioned that field notes are the most common components of a database, which results from interviews, observations, or document analysis. The compilation of these notes was tabulated to provide clarity, where required. All collected data are stored in a secure location on an external hard drive for five years. Ummel and Achille (2016) warned that protecting participants' rights to confidentiality is a shared responsibility by everyone involved in the research process. It is important to note that

the decisions made in the data collection process should emulate the processes used for data analysis because transcribed interviews return to participants poses an additional threat to confidentiality (Ummel & Achille, 2016). I reminded the participants of such rights and responsibilities when they conduct member checking.

Data Analysis

Analyzing qualitative data was a critical component in the research process. Elo et al. (2014) noted that analyzing qualitative contents could be either inductive or deductive, as each involves preparing, organizing, and reporting research results. The use of qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) programs establishes research tools that supports a variety of research designs when analyzing interviews, focus groups, documents, field notes, and survey questions (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2016). Hilal and Alabri (2013) recommended using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software designed to manage coding procedures.

After conducting interviews, I transcribed the data; return it to the participants to allow for member checking before performing an analysis of the content. Simpson and Quigley (2016) recommended using their *Listening Guide* and *Member Checking Process* [emphasis added] to aid these steps. Rosenthal (2016) emphasized that it was important for researchers to obtain an objective measure of distance from transcription to allow themes to develop. While reviewing the transcribe data, I used the NVivo software program to help with analysis. NVivo is known to save researchers time and increases the accuracy of data in the analysis process (Zamawe, 2015).

Zamawe (2015) mentioned that advance stages of the analysis process represent the data and progress of work necessary for developing and testing theories. NVivo allows researchers to upload recorded audio and field notes to ease the process of coding. The NVivo software program enables researchers to put all source data together to develop queries as a starting point for coding (Zamawe, 2015). Woods et al. (2016) argued that when comparing the output of the analysis of NVivo to other software programs like ATLAS.ti, NVivo offers a unique advantage of creating a system of data categories.

Themes derived from manual interpretation and analysis of automated output from the NVivo software consisted of coding using an alphanumeric format. Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, and Redwood (2013) suggested an analytic framework method that groups clusters of similar and interrelated ideas and concepts that focus on relationships between data. Each theme coincided with content derived from interview questions, the literature review supporting, and the conceptual framework. The process of reviewing the data to determine how hotel manager's communication methods following a hurricane aligns with Benoit (1997) theory of image restoration suggested the effectiveness of the conceptual framework. Similarly, I coded and utilized a correlation of new studies that supported other themes associated with crisis communication, crisis management, tourism, and hurricane effects. A straightforward approach was used to evaluate the content (Elo, et al., 2014).

Reliability and Validity

Houghton et al. (2013) noted that the process of recording thoughts enhances dependability and highlights transparency. Reliability and validity in qualitative research is when data is plausible, credible, and trustworthy (Venkatesh et al., 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). To achieve this, I carefully collected, analyzed, interpreted, and reported data that suggested a due diligence approach to improve the quality of the research.

Reliability

Researcher's may illustrate how a study that has dependability (reliability) by demonstrating the process of selecting, justifying, and applying research strategies that are clearly define (Yilmaz, 2013). The information gathered, using member checking, conveyed accurate depictions of the phenomenon under study, which allows for participants to check the interpretation of the data compiled during the interview process. I triangulated participant's responses with collected site documents, memos, and field notes for accurate interpretations. The triangulation method used enables future researchers to follow similar steps to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Kaczynski et al, 2014). I identified, disclosed, or eliminated any perceived biases that influenced data interpretation. Yin (2014) argued that a study is reliable when researchers can conduct the same study repeatedly, while arriving at the same conclusions with minimum errors and biases.

Validity

Kaczynski et al. (2014) warned that credibility in qualitative research requires a new way of thinking. Qualitative research requires researchers to get close to participants.

Functioning as the research instrument, I sought clarification for observable behaviors and content collected during the interview process. The divergent theoretical orientation offered by Kaczynski et al. enables researchers to link research questions with appropriate theoretical orientations, which encourage researchers to think outside their comfort zones. The triangulation methods chosen in qualitative studies affect the credibility of techniques used to produce trustworthiness (Yilmaz, 2013).

Elo et al.(2014) mentioned that transferability suggest finding can be transferred to other settings or groups. Results from this study helps hotel leaders sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. The information was vital to supporting the hotel industry, tourism, and crisis communication strategies. I sought to explore how hotel managers in the industry use Benoit's (1997) theory of image restoration conceptual framework strategies work to respond to hurricane crises. Purposive sampling 10 hotel managers in Central Florida with experience sustaining tourism profits following a hurricane aligns with Elo et al. suggestive selection criteria for transferability.

The NVivo software program aided in addressing confirmability. Houghton et al. (2013) noted that the NVivo software program helps make case study confirmable by providing a audit trail and a reflective diary of decisions or rationale of interpretations during the analysis phase. Output from the NVivo program consisted of a coded matrix broken down into themes. Elo et al. (2014) warned that researchers should report results systematically and carefully to avoid an unsuccessful analysis. Houghton et al. suggested using peer-debriefing, which was used to verify coding processes, not the interpretation

the data. The consistency of the interview results and interpretations was compared against outcomes from the literature.

Fusch and Ness (2015) recommended several methods to reach data saturation, but warned against making assumption about exhaustive resources, methodological triangulations, and separation from the research. I started with one participant and continue until no new information emerges, or the information no longer connects to the theory (Malterud et al., 2015; Morse, 2015). Morse (2015) noted that saturation helps build theoretical aspects of inquiry. An in-depth analysis and interpretation of collected data should include the data saturation process.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 contained the processes that the researcher followed to protect participants, obtain and use information, as well as, how information was analyze using external instruments to enhance reliability and validity. Every step taken adhered to the guidelines establish by the Health & Human Service, specifically the Belmont Principles, and the IRB process of Walden University. Following these guidelines helped prepare the researcher to present data needed for Section 3.

Section 3 enabled the researcher to reintroduce the purpose of the study, present the findings obtained from participants, describe its application to professional business practices, implication to social change, and provide recommendations for actions and future practices. In addition, Section 3 provides a platform for the researcher to reflect and discuss challenges and changes to their thinking after completing the study.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies hotel leaders use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. The hotel sectors of the tourism industry are vulnerable to a variety of natural and human-made hazards, which pose risks to staff and guest safety, as well as operations and profits (Brown et al., 2017). Although visitors may lack knowledge on how to respond and prepare for these risks, a hotel's management and staff must understand and have the capacity to cope with what may unfold (Brown et al., 2017; Nguyen, Imamura, & Iuchi, 2017). The interview data from the current study showed that dealing with hurricanes was not an easy task. During the interviews, Participants (P) 538, 545, and 757 expressed how the storm caused stress for staff and guests, thereby increasing the need for effective communication.

Leaders in the hotel industry have limitations on their response strategies. Brown et al. (2017) noted that a larger hotel chain hierarchy makes strategizing difficult, but resilience and success strategies can ensure profitability. Although tourism profits are minimal after a storm, the results of my study showed how hotel business leaders use other viable resources to sustain profits, maintain operations, and enable the community to recover. Hotel leaders learned that crises vary in scope, and leaders should protect their organization's image through clear, inoffensive, and quick statements (Arendt, LaFleche, & Limperopulos, 2017). According to findings from the current study, leaders' actions helped minimize the negative impact on the hotel and the destination's image.

Presentation of the Findings

The research question for this study was the following: What strategies do hotel business leaders use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane? After collecting data from three sources (field notes, semistructured interviews, and a company source document), I confirmed that data saturation had occurred after five interviews. Morse (2015) noted that saturated data provide a comprehensive description of concepts and examples in which the findings surprise and delight the reader. I used NVivo to analyze the data.

During the data analysis phase of the study, I identified five major themes: (a) storm impact, (b) accommodations, (c) operations, (d) communication, and (e) planning. The results from these interviews provided surprising information about profit sustainability for leaders in the hotel industry following a hurricane. The first theme that emerged highlighted the physical, emotional, and mental toll of the storm's impact. The second theme showcased hotel leaders' eagerness to accommodate different types of guests. The third theme involved hotel operations, the fourth theme expressed the importance of communication, and the fifth theme consisted of planning initiatives before and after the storm. Arendt et al. (2017) suggested fluidity in measuring success. These five themes also underpinned Benoit's (1997) theory of image restoration.

Participants' Background

The work experience for hotel leaders in this study varied. Although four participants performed roles as general managers or assistant general managers, one served as director of sales management. All participants served in a leadership role for a

minimum of 5 years in the hotel industry in Central Florida. I adhered to the Belmont Principles guiding ethical behavior for human subjects to interview these participants without interruptions by following the interview guidelines (see Appendix A). P538, P539, and P545 had more than 10 years of experience in the hotel industry, while P645 and P757 had at least 5 years but less than 10 (see Table 2).

Table 2

Professional Background of the Participants

Participant responses	Years of experience	Percentage of totals
5 years, but less than 10	2	
More than 10 years	3	
Total	5	100%

Hurricane Experience

Hurricanes are not new to Central Florida or any of the southern parts of the United States. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (2018), in 2017 there were 17 named storms, 10 of which became hurricanes and three affected the state of Florida. Of the participants, 80% had experienced more than one hurricane as a hotel business leader (see Table 3). P539 noted that upon moving to Florida, she experienced a hurricane about two days after her arrival. P538 stated that although Hurricane Matthew was a milder storm, Hurricane Irma created a lot more stress because of its length and size. All participants spoke of the levels of stress caused by hurricanes, and they provided successful strategies they used to sustain profits, which

supported the messaging options from to conceptual framework (theory of image restoration).

Table 3

Hurricanes Experienced by Participants

Hurricanes experienced	Quantity	Percentage of totals
One	1	20%
Two, but less than five	4	80%
More than five	0	
Total	5	100%

Emergent Theme 1: Storm Impact

In areas that rely heavily on tourism, natural disasters can cause significant damage to infrastructure and disrupt tourism flow leading to losses in tourism revenue (Hajibaba, Karlsson, & Dolnicar, 2017). During the interviews, P538 and P645 stated that beyond the financial impact, the storm caused a lot of emotional and psychological stress for individuals in all areas of the industry (business, staff, and guest) because evacuation along the coast takes a hotel out of the marketplace. P545 concurred that stress and reduction in inventory disrupt hotel and tourism flow. Liat, Mansori, Chuan, and Imrie (2017) noted that hoteliers should have plans in place to handle any type of service failure. Although hurricane impacts are unpredictable, responsible hotel leaders seek to respond to all stakeholders.

All of the participants dealt with the same storms in similar fashions. Hurricanes are not new to Florida, yet their impact varies. Arendt et al. (2017) argued that although crises and natural disasters inflict harm, there are crisis response strategies to overcome

those events. Hoteliers are obligated to respond to service disruption despite the task of repairing the physical damage because the management of the media and the destination's image is an important part in encouraging visitors to return (Khazai, Mahdavian, & Platt, 2018; Liat et al., 2017). P645 warned that if a hotel underperformed before a storm, there was a strong possibility that the impact of the storm would compound problems. It was evident during these interviews that the hurricanes experienced by these leaders had implications for both infrastructure and people.

Infrastructure. Miller, Gonzalez, and Hutter (2017) noted that areas in which tourism infrastructure is sophisticated, hotel leaders face the daunting task of rebuilding physical structures and images. Although many of the current study participants spoke about the loss of power and broken windows from the hurricane, the physical damage suffered was minimal, enabling them to reopen rapidly. Storms have the ability to disrupt, if not destroy, a brand. Miller et al. (2017) argued that it is crucial to take the steps to rebuild and rebrand an affected destination infrastructure after a disaster. P645 reported that leaders need to make sure that hotel rooms are in good working condition with a staff ready to serve the community because there will be a displacement of people as a result of the storm and the inoperability of other hotels.

When other hotels lack the capabilities to operate following a hurricane, it provides opportunities for those that can. Liat et al. (2017) warned hotel leaders that if they want to remain competitive, their responses to service failures should be a part of their operational strategies. The difficulty of understanding the impact of a hurricane should not prevent hotel leaders from planning, yet many do not. Paraskevas and Altinay

(2013) noted that it is not always possible to capture how a crisis will affect an organization. Similarly, Ahmed and Memish (2017) showed that despite not making landfall in Florida, Hurricane Matthew caused over \$7 billion in damages and increased vector-borne illnesses. A hotel's infrastructure should be a concern for hotel leaders. Participants in the current study suggested that leaders should also consider the infrastructure of their employees. For example, P545 expressed concern about the damage employees suffered to their personal properties.

People. The impact hurricanes have involved more than tourists; employees and hotel leaders are also affected (Basolo, Steinberg, & Grant, 2017). All of the participants stressed how employees and guests place a significant amount of pressure on hotel leaders. Additionally, P545 spoke about the challenges of dealing with the Federal Emergency Management Administration FEMA. P545 reported that, on a few occasions, local guests were asked to leave due to drug use, drug paraphernalia, and room damages. The hotel leaders in the current study showed how Benoit's (1997) theory of image restoration can be applied during a crisis. Arendt et al. (2017) expressed that by identifying, preventing, or eliminating a crisis, individuals and corporations can successfully restore their image. In the current study, Benoit's theory highlighted a leader's response to the guest, but emphasized that guests are not the only ones affected by hurricanes.

Hotel staff members are also susceptible to the effects of a hurricane. All participants noted that their employees lost power, and some were without water for weeks. Consequently, the participants provided rooms to accommodate those employees.

Hajibaba et al. (2017) argued that sharing available resources with tourists before and after a disaster can benefit everyone. P757 argued that in these situations when people are trying to survive and taking advantage of them is unethical. According to P545, P645, and P757, use of Benoit's principle of reducing the offensiveness proved to be favorable in securing repeated and long-term customers as a result of their handling of the hurricane. Miller et al. (2017) warned that to be successful at rebuilding a destination's image, leaders must address tourists' emotional needs and satisfy their basic needs like food and accommodations.

Emergent Theme 2: Accommodations

As indicated by participants, hurricanes can impact tourists and the hotel industry differently. However, hurricanes create business opportunities in other areas. Hajibaba, Boztug, and Dolnicar (2016) conducted a study to investigate why and how to prevent tourists' trip cancellations and found that prevention heavily depended on the crisis and preventative actions taken. Leaders who take this information into consideration may find that their actions model SCCT, specifically because they seek to act based on the crisis type and the assessment of consumer reactions (Avraham, 2014; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Despite the actions chosen, individuals impacted by the storms may still need accommodations. P538 indicated if he had to do it all over again, he would research how to deal with certain types of clients.

Many first responders and local residents required accommodations following the storm, yet hotels' lack of planning limited their options. P645 suggested that if a hotel is open following a storm, the hotel will benefit from the reduction of inventory. P757

chose to reduce rates to accommodate displaced individuals and those responding to the storm. Tourist may have post-purchase dissonance in areas affected by crises, which may challenge an organization's crisis reduction strategy (Hajibaba et al., 2016). P539 recommended not to give people what they need but to exceed their expectations. According to P757, providing accommodations beyond what was expected may help hotels make lifelong guests. The guests that all participants agreed should be accommodated following a hurricane were first responders and local residents.

First responders. Hurricanes can disrupt tourism flow, which reduces hotel revenue options. Corder and Ellingham (2017) pointed out that providing emergency relief to a disaster is an essential task for local first responders, which forces local command structures to allocate responsibilities. All participants accommodated various types of first responders: local law enforcement, Red Cross, Army, Disaster Relief, FEMA, Florida Power and Light, and numerous other agencies from outside the state seeking to help put the community back together. Although these agencies enabled hotel leaders to obtain some form of profit, they did not acquire profit without challenges.

P538 mentioned that they were not experienced enough to handle some of the clients received, specifically government clients, because they had not dealt with them in the past. Similarly, several participants spoke of the challenges dealing with FEMA guests because of the extra paperwork and different websites they were required to use. P757 warned that when it comes to accommodating first responders, your profits will suffer because these agencies are not going to pay top dollar; they are only going to pay the government rate. Hotel leader's ability to adapt and change by evaluating their

vulnerabilities can help build resilient organizations (Brown et al., 2017). The findings in the current study showed that by accommodating first responders helps both the hotel and the community and demonstrated the use of Benoit's (1997) messaging strategy reducing the offensiveness. These actions not only fared well for first responders but also residents.

Residents. Hajibaba et al. (2017) believed residents with a high sense of community is more likely to support the tourism industry in times of crises. Hotels operating in the tourism industry have shown to be a vital resource for residents. P545 noted that many locals had to evacuate their homes, particularly those on the barrier islands, which required them to seek accommodations at hotels. P645 noted that the storm created so much demand because of displaced individuals that if hotels was opened and provided a good product it enabled hotel leaders to sustain profits.

All the participants reported operating at full occupancy with guests, but they accommodated only a small number of tourist. In concert with accommodating locals, all participants pointed out that those local populates of their hotels included their employees displaced by the storm. Efforts were made to return the hotel operations to normalcy. Khazai, Mahdavian, and Platt (2018) called these efforts *tourism destination recovery* [emphasis added] when tourist numbers and hotel bookings go back to normalcy. P538 stated you have to get back to normal conditions as quickly as possible. After a hurricane, the longer it takes for hotel leaders to get their organizations back to normal operations the more evident their struggles seems to tourist. Boatwright and Mazer (2017)

mentioned that robust image restoration strategies help to repair the image of the organization and individuals engage in crises.

Emergent Theme 3: Operations

Hurricanes can severely impact hotel operations. Brown et al. (2017) mentioned that hotel management and staff must be able to cope with the risk associated with business, guest, and surrounding areas that disaster affect. The findings in the current study indicated that each of the participants focused on different aspects of hotel operations following the hurricane. P538 had to run their operations manually for a couple of days by using old methods like registration cards and excel spreadsheets. She expressed that hotel leaders may need to have hardcopies of help desk numbers to process credit card transactions due to power loss. P645 focused on reports from the Smith Travel Research, a document that tracks average daily rates, to see how they were performing. In stark contrast to the other participants viewpoint, P757 indicated that their focus was not on making money, rather on ways to help the community.

P645 noted that people are less likely to stay at your hotel if they see that you have issues with service or quality. However, the findings showed that the sharing of information amongst the staff members through other communication mediums helped with mitigating service failures. P545 concluded that it is a long process to close everything down in a hotel when a hurricane is approaching, and it is equally straining trying to get them back up and running again. Regardless of the process to close or open a hotel threaten by hurricanes, some authors believed customer perceptions can shape corporate images, thus placing the responsibilities in hazards prone areas at the lowest

jurisdictional level (Liat et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2017). Instead of using Benoit's (1997) typology of shifting the blame because of hurricanes, hotel leaders in the current study used corrective actions and mortification to ensure their hotels remain operable by ensuring their guest continued to receive quality service. The findings captured two areas that received the most focus, and that was safety and security.

Safety. The Governor of Florida issued a mandatory evacuation order for the entire state during Hurricane Irma (Florida Governor Rick Scott, 2017). Safety of those in Florida was the Governor's number one priority. Everyone located on the barrier islands and along the coast had to evacuate. The participants in the current study placed a lot of emphasis on the time and details required to close down a hotel. P539 recalled that after shutting down the hotel for safety reason before the storm, it was still a major concern immediately after the storm.

Three of the participants noted that because evacuations were mandatory everyone located on the barrier islands needed permission to reenter the area. As noted earlier there were safety concerns with guests due to drug use (P645). The finding indicated that safety for staff and guest in the hotel industry is ongoing long after the storm has passed. When a hotel has issues of safety they must consider take security measures to deal with safety concerns.

Security. P645 mentioned there is a lot that goes into closing down and securing a hotel. They took the initiative to put up hurricane shutters and take pictures for insurance purposes. P538 moved all of their computers to higher floors to protect them from floods. P757 chose to use a third-party agency to provide additional security for

their facilities in anticipation of the loss of power. P757 admitted that handling such a large property was too much for them. Though other actions were taken by the leaders in this current study favored Benoit's (1997) theory of image restoration message strategy, the proactive approach for security suggests Coombs and Holladay's SCCT strategy was also appropriate for communicating during and after the hurricane.

Emergent Theme 4: Communication

All participants stressed the importance of communication before, during, and after a hurricane. Each of the participants in the current study spoke candidly about the number of meetings conducted leading up to the storm, and the amazing work their staff members performed following it. Morss et al. (2017) argued that advances in technology has transform communication methods, makes it difficult to formulate effective strategies to benefit diverse populations. The findings in the current study demonstrated how hotel leaders use social media, news media, home and cell phones, as well as the Tourism Development Council to relay messages to staff and guest throughout the storm (P539). In fact, the Tourism Development Council helped to facilitate a marketing campaign titled *Our Coast is Clear* [emphasis added] designed to inform tourist that the local area did not suffer substantial damage and it is ok to come. Similarly, Visit Florida launch a Hurricane Recovery Support program for businesses to receive additional support after the storm. As the findings showed, it was important to everyone to keep people informed about the hotel's status and the local tourism industry because it influenced both brand and guest perceptions about the businesses and communities who rely on them (P545 & P645).

P539 noted that communication with first responders and insurance agents before hurricane season helped with addressing accommodation concerns, specifically by letting them know the hotel was prepared to assist them. P545 cautioned hotel leaders to be aware of misinformation about storms because they could impact how the hotel closes. Morss et al. (2017) reported that though technology provide leaders with the ability to communicate, track and forecast hurricanes the advance notice of Hurricane Irma did not relieve participants of the stress. P545 response strategies proved to be successful enabling them to open immediately after the storm. Effective responses have its rewards. P757 described how they receive letters of thanks from guest, and more importantly the Mayor indicating how proud she was of their outstanding response and service provided to the community. P645 advised that despite the fact natural and man-made disasters are out of your control, there is an expectation that hotel leaders will reach out to their guest.

Guest. P538 expressed that as a hotel leader it important to be honest with your guest and keep them informed. P538 sent out an immediate notification via their website to warned guest that they were under the hurricane circumvent. Additionally, the finding in the current study showed that when local hotels go offline, prior communication with their brands can help facilitate information of the hotel's status for concern guest. Benoit's (1997) theory of image restoration is a message communication option designed to mitigate the negative impact to a brand image. The actions of the participants in the current study highlighted how effective communication reduces the potential of negative guest perceptions of a hotel following a hurricane. Satisfied hotel guest helps produce

loyal and new customers while gaining a positive reflection of the brand's image. P538, on the other hand concluded that guest is not the only concerns of hotel leaders.

Staff. The findings of the current study showed that it is important for hotel leaders to properly train their staff on the types of communications required to continue to serve the community. All of the participants indicated them importance to remain in contact with staff members, whether via cell phone or social media. P757 bragged about how well their staff came together, particularly highlighting how some members came to work despite not being on the schedule. Efforts like those exhibited by staff members of the participants in this study demonstrated how and when a collective body of an organization work together to protect a brands image before, during, and after a crisis like a hurricane the result is positive. Miller et al. (2017) mentioned that it is not easy to rebuild devastated tourist destinations; however, planning before the occurrence is beneficial to those managing it. All the participants involved in this current study warned of the importance of planning for hurricane season.

Emergent Theme 5: Planning

The findings showed that different hotels have different procedures, yet the good thing about hurricanes is that it gives hurricane leaders time to plan. Morss et al. (2017) spoke of how meteorologist use satellites, computer models, and aircrafts to help warn and recommend protective actions for public officials and those that may be impacted by hurricanes for planning purposes. Though all the participants of this current study spoke of having multiple meetings several times a week leading up to the storm, P539 noted that their hotel started planning for hurricane season as early as April and May. She

advised when planning for hurricanes, formulate plans that work for the client and the hotel. Much of the planning efforts learned from the hotel leaders in the current study happened before and after the storm.

Preplanning responsibilities. The findings in the current study supported all participants recommendations to contact or have relationships established with hotel headquarters, insurance companies, and emergency crews (first responders) before hurricane seasons, specifically, by letting them know your hotel want to be their preferred customer. These efforts help ensure hotel operations received priority service, which enables them to provide accommodations to those impacted by the storm. P539 recommended that hotel leaders go through their hotel emergency procedures and ensure all staff members receive training on those procedures. P538 discussed that because they had connectivity issues with their website, if faced with a similar situation they would write down every single contact of individuals whom the hotel conducts business. The preplanning initiatives in the current study tend to support the proactive approach of crisis response, SCCT (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). A single incident can destroy a company's reputation, but the corporate social responsibilities of hotel leader extends beyond the pre-planning phase (Calveras, 2015; S. Kim & Sung, 2014). Therefore, hotel leaders must be aware that plans fail and they should be prepared to adjust their response strategies following a hurricane in the event it does. P538 demonstrated this by showcasing the use of manual operations once they loss power.

Postplanning responsibilities. Benoit's (1997) theory of image restoration conceptual framework is a reactive approach for crisis response. All participants

concluded that it is important to assess hotel damage, if any, and to take immediately inventory following a hurricane. P645 suggested to look at what type of business will be entering the local market. P757 showed that despite not having power, staff members can find other ways of accommodating guest describing how their executive chef chose to use his personal grill to feed guest. Additionally, the findings showed it is important to reach out to alternative agencies. As indicated by the results, when Hurricane Irma disrupted the hotel and tourism industry other agencies stepped in to provide assistance (P539, P545). The findings in the current study showed that success is possible when people work together to protect both the brand and the destination's image following a hurricane. Although Benoit's typology offers five messaging strategies, the participants in this study never denied or evaded responsibility, yet consistently demonstrated efforts to reduce the offensiveness, take corrective actions, and use mortification to communicate a response message. The result of these interviews suggests that the conceptual framework, Benoit's theory of image restoration was an effective message options for hotel leader to use to sustain profit from tourism following a hurricane.

Applications to Professional Practice

Severe weather like hurricanes can negatively impact the hotel and tourism marketplace, which significantly affects a hotel's ability to sustain operations and profits in disaster areas (Bolton & Mattila, 2015; Brown et al., 2017; Jeuring & Becken, 2013). The findings revealed successful strategies that hotel leaders have use to sustain profits, not necessarily from tourism, following a hurricane. The study results apply to professional business practice for hotel leaders by highlighting how response strategies

towards a storms impact, accommodations, communications, operations, and planning can produce new business opportunity, which helps hotels sustain profits. Additionally, the finding revealed the versatility and relevance of Benoit's crisis communication strategy, the theory of image restoration.

First, the impact of hurricanes is often unpredictable. As shown by Brown et al. (2017) and Miller et al. (2017), natural and man-made disaster affects more than a hotels infrastructure. The findings showcased the effectiveness of how hotel leaders who looked beyond the physical infrastructure of their hotels use three crucial aspects of the theory of image restorations typology, specifically, reduce the offensiveness, corrective actions, and mortification to mitigate negative perception towards their brand and the destination's image. In the hotel industry, customers are invaluable, and satisfied guest tends to have positive perceptions of the hotel's image (Liat et al., 2017). Therefore, it is important that hotel leaders not solely rely on the tourism market for profit sustainability following a hurricane.

Second, by providing accommodations to those affected by hurricanes can make up for lost revenue from those normally in the target market. The findings revealed that indeed the tourism population is negatively affected by hurricanes, yet it provides an opportunity to accommodate others (state & local residents, first responders). The findings in the current study applied to professional business practice because it also highlighted a need for the contrasting theory SCCT. The SCCT framework suggests crisis planners based their responses on the crisis type and the threat posed to their reputation (Arendt et al., 2017; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2002; David &

Chicidudean, 2013; S. Kim & Sung, 2014; Utz et al., 2013). The typologies in both the conceptual framework and the contrasting theory provide strategies for overcoming crisis events.

Additionally, the findings indicated the importance of getting a hotel back to normal operations following a storm, along with communicating and planning effectively. The actions exhibited by the hotel leaders in the current study applied to professional business practice because it features crisis response strategies that enable leaders to actively engage in measures comparable to reducing the negative impact on brands and destinations image. By addressing safety and security concerns of guest and staff through effective planning, leaders can formulate plans and train teams on pre and postcrisis responsibilities to ensure the appropriate use of message responses. The finding was relevant to improving professional practices of businesses because it helps hotel leaders realize that though hurricanes have the potential to negatively impact tourism profits, by having an effective response strategy to communicate and use creates an opportunity to sustain profits from consumers other than tourist following a hurricane.

Implications for Social Change

Leaders in hotel firms located in Florida recognized that natural and man-made disasters like hurricanes that poses a formidable threat to their brand and the tourism industry (Hajibaba et al., 2017; Z. Huang & Cai, 2015; So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2013). Studies have shown that though the hotel sector is vulnerable to disasters, with effective operations, communications, and planning by achieving economic gains from various resources can assure profit sustainability and improved their corporate social

responsibilities in their local communities (Brown et al., 2017; Kang et al., 2015; Madanoglu & Ozdemir, 2016; Miller et al., 2017). The findings in the current study implied that following a hurricane, a hotel leader's effect on a local community extends far beyond profit sustainability from tourism, which features their role towards positive social change.

The results revealed strategies surrounding hurricane responses that hotel leaders and tourism operators can consider when seeking to understand (a) storm impacts, (b) accommodations, (c) operations, (d) communications, and (e) planning when tourism profits decrease in disaster-prone areas. Other authors have shown that when tourists cancel hotel reservations due to crises, having a strong relationship with consumers and the local communities help give destination's a positive image (Bolton & Mattila, 2015; Hajibaba et al., 2016, Hajibaba et al., 2017; Liatt et al., 2017). The principal implication for hotel leaders was when tourism profits decreased due to natural or man-made disaster their efforts to provide accommodations, safety, and security to first responders, state and local residents following a hurricane enabled organizations to sustain profits and support their communities during recovery.

Recommendations for Action

The following recommendations from the findings of the current study can facilitate actions of hotel leaders, tourism operators, and hospitality professionals. Lui, Pennington-Gray, and Krieger (2016) noted that effective crisis responses includes recovery marketing, clear communication, preventive measures, and engagement activities when crises occur. Based on the findings, I urge hotel leaders to use the best

practices and strategies identified in this study to minimize the adverse effects of hurricanes on tourism profits. Even though the hotel industry is a relatively small sector in the overall hospitality and tourism industry, tourism operators and destination managers can benefit from the findings.

One of the first actions hospitality professionals should be aware of is the difficulty of predicting a hurricane's impact. Consequently, hotel leaders should ensure they formulate, implement, rehearse, update, and be flexible with their crisis management plans, while ensuring all staff members are familiar, equipped, and trained with the contents necessary to execute it. Taneja et al. (2014) believed that integrating crisis management plans into strategic management of organizations is important because when utilized they empower employees upon preparation to respond to crisis situations. Once leaders create crisis communication plans, they should look to collaborate with other stakeholders to enhance their plans.

Accordingly, leaders need to establish and build rapport with community partners, first responders, the federal government and other agencies. These individuals and groups can compensate for lost tourism revenue caused by the crisis. Finally, communication is paramount; therefore, hotel leaders should ensure communication is effective before, during, and after a crisis. Cahyanto and Pennington-Gray (2015) noted that everyone views risk differently and warned against assuming prior knowledge is a requisite for comprehending the impact of hurricanes. Organizational leaders should (a) identify communication methods, (b) assess their vulnerabilities during a hurricane, (c) share information with community partners, and (d) manage their reputational damage.

Tourism stakeholders that use prevention and response strategies in tourism emergencies that focus on saving lives over profits demonstrates shared social responsibilities that have an impact on society and the environment (Kefan & Jia, 2014).

The results of this study are significant to hotel leader's ability to sustain profits following a hurricane. Dissemination of these findings for hotel and tourism leaders will maximize their crisis planning initiatives and improve revenue streams. Rose and Flynn (2018) noted that as researchers, we spend a lot of time seeking to disseminate research thought to influence policy, management, and professional practice, but efforts need to move beyond traditional groups and target different stakeholders. Consequently, though the final version will become available in the ProQuest database for students and researchers, I aim to use social media platforms to transmit and expound on findings. I will, upon request, provide a summary of the findings and recommendations to participants. Additionally, I will seek to make the findings and myself available to those in my field and the community by writing a journal article for peers to review, and presentations and crisis planning strategies for businesses and local officials.

Recommendations for Further Research

Kepes et al. (2014) suggests that limitations need for further research to reach a more definite conclusion. The primary limitations of this study resulted from the (a) small sample size, (b) restricted access to participants, (c) impact of the hurricane, and (d) the limited number of hotels that we operational after the storm. Since hurricane impacts differ by the area, future researchers should repeat this study to determine if hotel response strategies differ in coastal areas versus those located more inland. Secondly,

Central Florida hurricanes are typically impacted by Atlantic basin hurricanes, thus research should be expanded to see if hotel leaders in South Florida or those adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico have similar or different strategies to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane.

The recommendation for future research includes all stakeholders in the hospitality and tourism industry. Natural and man-made disasters can have devastating effects on areas and businesses that rely on tourism (Hajibaba et al., 2016; Lui et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2017). I recommend future researchers expound on this study by differentiating between private hotel owners and those operating under corporate restrictions for a more diverse perspective. Finally, I recommend exploring additional crisis communication strategies that focus on relationship building during preparation and recovery effort. As customer's in the hotel business demands and expectations become more sophisticated, vulnerabilities pose to the hospitality and tourism industry will vary, which suggest that leader will need to develop comprehensive strategies to keep them.

Reflections

The doctoral research process changed my perception of graduate students at this level. As a novice researcher, I have been humbled by this experience. The challenges I faced cause frustration, discouragement, envy, and sadness. I often contemplated dropping out altogether; however, individuals such as my chair and a few participants who were not able to participate because of corporate policies motivated me to push through. I learned that restricting research syntheses that meet methodological standards do not inoculate it from the assumptions they carry (Wolgemuth, Hicks, & Agosto,

2017). To my surprise, I was captivated by the wealth of knowledge and compassion for others that each of the participants held towards their staff, guest, and communities. I witnessed social changed agents in action, and their actions provided a model to emulate.

I did not have previous relationships with the participants, nor the community actors I encountered. The process of gaining rapport with strangers improved my personal and professional confidence. I now view hotel leaders with different lenses, which makes me appreciate the influence they have on tourism, and the economic and social impact they have on our communities. Calveras (2015) expressed that drivers of CSR have different initiatives and motivations. Although Kang, Chiang, Huangthanapan, and Downing (2015) argued that CSR is complex term, the acts of the hotel leaders in the current study gave new meaning to the term bottom-line is business. My perspective, understanding, and interest in crisis management, tourism, and the hotel industry vastly expanded during this research process.

Conclusion

Hurricanes threaten the state of Florida every year, which can have a negative effect on hotels and a tourism destination's image (Basolo et al., 2017; Hajibaba et al., 2017; Jeuring & Becken, 2013; Mirsa & DiNapoli, 2013; Peek & Young, 2013). Although disasters pose a risk to a hotel's ability to operate and sustain profits, they have been known to help reduce disaster risks (Brown et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2017). The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies that hotel leaders use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. Ryu et al. (2013) mentioned that tourism is a significant income generator, yet the result of this study showed the tangible

and intangible ways hotel leaders sustained profits following a hurricane from other resources.

Liat et al. (2017) argued that service disruptions, despite the cause, obligates hotel leaders to respond. Consequently, the findings from this study concluded that when hotel leaders use both preventive and proactive measures to restore damage reputations following a hurricane, it opens doors to new opportunity. A robust crisis management and response plan helps keep leaders engage to possible crises, and the formulation of positive relationships with stakeholders and their communities help rebuild a positive image. Although there is no one crisis response strategy that works for every single crisis; not having one almost assures the chances of damage reputations. A positive image of a brand and profit sustainability interconnects in all industries; nevertheless, leaders must not lose sight that the impact of a single crisis can destroy it all.

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Appendix A: Interview Guideline and Questions

The following guidelines are instructions on how to conduct the interview with the participants involved in this study. The researcher is the primary research instrument. The researcher will remain in compliance with the Belmont Report, IRB Process, and present (if applicable) their National Institution of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research Certificate of Completion as credentials to complete this interview.

- I. Introduction to participant(s) to include your roles and responsibilities as the interviewer.
- II. Presentation and explanation of consent forms, and the use of note taking during the interview process.
- III. Explain the purpose of the interview, seek final approval and start the recording device.
- IV. Introduce participant(s) using pseudo coding as an identifier with dates and times of recording to ensure confidentiality.
- V. Start the interview beginning with the first question, carefully observe for non-verbal cues, paraphrase and ask follow-up questions as needed.
- VI. Stop the interview, thank the participants and describe to participant(s) the transcript review and member checking procedures.
- VII. Provide/verify contact information and schedule follow-ups for member checking.
- VIII. End of Interview Guidelines.

The following questions will explore strategies that organizational leaders in the hotel industry use to sustain tourism profits following a hurricane.

Interview Questions

1. What is your experience with dealing with a hurricane as a hotel business leader?
2. What strategies did you use to sustain a profit from tourism following a hurricane?
3. What method did you find worked best to sustain a profit from tourism following a hurricane?
4. How do you determine if your strategies used to respond to hurricanes are working?
5. What makes dealing with a hurricane challenging for the hotel industry?
6. What, if any, would you do differently if you were face with a similar situation?
7. What else could you add to assist others in learning more about ways to sustain a profit from tourism following a hurricane?

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Dear Invitee,

My name is Kevin C. James. I am a doctoral student with Walden University's Doctorate of Business Administration Program. I am conducting research titled: "Successful Strategies to Sustain Profits from Tourism Following a Hurricane". My intentions are to understand how organizational leaders in the hotel industry sustain tourism profits following a hurricane. As an experience leader in the hotel industry, you are in an ideal position to provide the first-hand knowledge necessary for this study. I am seeking to capture your responses using semi-structured interviews, observation, and if applicable, obtain any documents that you feel will support this topic.

Due to increase impact of recent hurricanes, your participation is paramount to help protect the safety and well-being of community stakeholders, satisfy tourist, improve negative destination images, and increase the economic growth potential of businesses and communities you serve. Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from participation at any time. I will not require you to provide any personal identifiable information. You will be assigned a pseudo code to ensure your personal identifiers are not revealed. If you are willing to participate please read the Informed Consent letter provided and respond accordingly.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kevin C. James, M.B.A, Doctoral Candidate, Walden University

Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

Community Research Partner Name

Contact Information

Date

Dear Kevin,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Successful Strategies to Sustain Profits from Tourism Following a Hurricane within the Insert Name of Community Partner. As part of this study, I authorize you to conduct a semi-structured interview with a designated person who meets your research criteria and voluntarily agrees to participate, utilize any information available to the public upon our approval, utilize any private information given to you by the organization, communicate with the designated participant via e-mail or official correspondence to verify the contents captured during your interview, and disseminate results upon completion of your research. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include: disseminate information pertaining to your study to help notify potential personnel who meets the research criteria and voluntarily agree to participate, review any collected resources pertaining to the hotel and its operational strategies the researcher finds that will help answer the research question, and provide any oversight the hotel deems appropriate to protect its interest. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in ProQuest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Authorizing Official

Contact Information

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email, or (b) copied on the e-mail containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their e-mail address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an e-mail address officially on file with Walden).