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**Positive Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Czech Hospitality Industry**

This article aims to examine the positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on accommodation and catering facilities in the Czech Republic. Data collection took place via the Czech Association of Hotels and Restaurants (AHR CR) between June 2020 and March 2021. A total of 422 questionnaires were completed. Almost three-quarters (72.7%) of the questionnaires were completed by accommodation facilities, 20.6% by catering facilities, and the rest by accommodation and catering facilities together. In this research, we used mathematical and statistical methods, Correspondence Analysis (CA), and the method of generalization. According to the research, almost one-third of the respondents (31.0%) did not identify any positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, this study confirmed that hospitality managers were more focused on reconsidering their lifestyle. The COVID-19 pandemic helped people to analyze and change their values. More than a tenth of the respondents (11.4%) said that they considered the positive benefits of the COVID-19 pandemic to be family support and that they had enough time to spend with their families.

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Keywords: Recovery, COVID-19 pandemic, accommodation and catering facilities, hospitality, Czech Republic

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## **Introduction**

While some industries suffered from minor consequences, firms in the hospitality industry lost their business almost completely for months (Baum & Hai, 2020) during the initial period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The hospitality industry has been severely affected by the regulations and restrictions, such as the shutdown policy lasting for weeks, issued in many countries. The shutdown policy and the lower demand during the COVID-19 pandemic put hotels and restaurants at risk of permanent closure, and many of their employees have lost their jobs (Nicola et al., 2020). Moreover, the lockdown might have changed how business in hospitality will be done in the future, given the new rules and regulations concerning hygiene and social distancing, together with more hesitant and worried customers (Breier et al., 2021). Like other countries worldwide, the Czech Republic and Slovakia experienced a negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on life, the economy, and tourism (Pompurová et al., 2022; Roncak & Hobza, 2022).

## **Theoretical Part**

Numerous studies have examined the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and hospitality industry (e.g., Gössling et al., 2020; Günay et al., 2020; Centeno & Marquez, 2020; Roncak & Hobza, 2022). However, only a few papers have investigated the positive effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on new trends, innovations, and potential future development. In this regard, the authors see a certain knowledge gap. Though hugely traumatic, the shock of the COVID-19 crisis has given the world pause for thought and shown that many interventions previously thought unrealistic are achievable – and, in some instances, welcome. The IBM Institute for Business Value (2020) global consumer report highlighted that sustainability has reached a tipping point.–The COVID-19 crisis has pointed the way to what some commentators see as the transition to a sustainable future (Jones & Comfort, 2020). According to the IBM Institute for Business Value

(2020), nearly 62% of the surveyed consumers were willing to change their shopping habits to reduce their environmental impact.

Zhou et al. (2020) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has forced humans to acknowledge the importance of nature and the ecosystem. Wang et al. (2020) pointed out that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have begun reconsidering their lifestyles and focusing on physical and mental well-being. In many ways, the nature of the COVID-19 crisis poses unprecedented changes for sustainability in the hospitality industry. This wave was also caused by pressure from consumers. If businesses in the hospitality industry want to be prepared for the changing needs of their consumers regarding sustainable travel and accommodation, they will have to adapt (Jones & Comfort, 2020). Baum & Hai (2020) highlighted that the severe restrictions on the movement of people and the closure of many national borders have had beneficial social effects, such as reducing human trafficking and child sex tourism.

The pandemic has brought a new wave of innovations. The analysis of news media, which was collected via NexisLexis (one of the world's largest electronic databases for news and public records) using the keywords "coronavirus" or "COVID-19" and "hotel or resort or hostel" and "strategies or solutions" between January 1 and August 1, 2020, revealed that business innovations in the hotel sector played a strategic role through proactive strategies to support business recovery and post-pandemic growth (Le & Phi, 2021). Pascual-Fernández (2021) claimed that innovation capability in the pandemic period is critical for the modernization and competitiveness of the hotel industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic facilitated a smooth and responsive exchange of information and decision-making (Moorhouse, 2020). The pandemic has accelerated the ad hoc implementation of video conferencing, cloud collaboration, and teleworking (Valle, 2020). Using a combination of

online office technologies, tools, and platforms, hotel brands have established an effective remote command and management system to deploy employees and arrange meetings (Hao et al., 2020).

Triggered by the pandemic, in the Chinese mainland, live-streaming sales have become one of the most popular marketing and sales channels across industries. Live streaming sales have achieved phenomenal success (Ni & Wang, 2020). Hotels seized the opportunity to use live streaming to display products, interact with customers, and promote sales. For instance, Fliggy made over 7,500 live broadcasts in over 30 countries and regions and attracted 30 million users during February and March (Xu, 2020).

The pandemic compelled the introduction of innovations such as the implementation of technological solutions, which were not only safer options but were also more efficient and had the potential to save labor costs for hotels (Smart et al., 2021; All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, 2020). During the pandemic, hotel groups (such as Dossen, Huazhu, and New Century) increased the implementation of intelligent contactless services, including self-check-in, remote check-in, face-scanning, voice control of room service, robotic room service, and zero-second check-out (Guan, 2020). In Rome, hotels were offering digitalized guest experiences such as a virtual tour of the hotel property, mobile check-in and check-out, contactless payments, voice control, a digital menu, and facial recognition to access their rooms and venues of recreational activities (Al-Mughairi et al., 2021). These services aimed to avoid human contact and minimize their customers' stays in public areas, thereby contributing toward reducing the risk of the transmission of COVID-19 and cross-infection (Guan, 2020).

The COVID-19 outbreak accelerated the penetration of AI and robotics technology into the hospitality industry. Specifically, more hotels are likely to adopt “unmanned” devices and use robots to provide a completely contactless service (Jiang & Wen, 2020). The advanced self-service

and biometrics made contactless facilities, from booking a hotel to exiting from the hotel, reduced COVID-19 risks. Industry giants such as Ctrip, Alibaba, Xiaomi, Baidu, and iFlytek have shown great interest in developing artificial intelligence (AI) applications for hotels. For example, FlyZoo Hotel, which is developed and operated by Alibaba, is widely recognized as the leader of smart hotels in China. The traditional hotel business model focusing on catering and accommodation has been severely challenged by COVID-19, which has driven proactive companies to restructure and develop a more diversified business scope and distribution channels (Hao et al., 2020). Wanda Hotels and Resorts uses its public space to demonstrate consumption scenarios and exhibit commodities (Chen, 2020). Atour generates profits through commodity displays and e-commerce, in addition to room income; thus, e-commerce income has become an important source of income (SocialBeta, 2020). Jinling Hotels and Resorts extended its business scope and broadened the operating income structure by setting up a food retail platform, which integrates the commercial scale production of classic dishes, an online sales system, and a cold chain logistics system (Hao et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed views on hygiene and cleanliness. Hygiene and cleanliness are essential to successful hotel operations and have attracted increased attention after public health crises such as the 2003 SARS outbreak (Kim et al., 2005). Many studies have considered overall hygiene and cleanliness as a principal determinant of travelers' hotel choices (Lockyer, 2005), guest satisfaction (Gu & Ryan, 2008), guest delight (Magnini et al., 2011), and guest loyalty (Barber & Scarcelli, 2010). The importance of hotel cleanliness and hygiene has become particularly salient of late because the COVID-19 pandemic can be spread by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus (WHO, 2020). Hotel brands have taken strict hygiene and sanitary measures to secure their customers' accommodation environments. These

measures include conducting complete disinfection, controlling food hygiene, distributing masks, offering online medical consultations, detecting the health of customers and employees, and shutting down laundry rooms, gyms, and other public areas and facilities.

Financially, the biggest lesson learned by the general managers in the hospitality industry is the financial health of the hotel, and it is important for hotels to watch the payroll, utilize all staff, and eliminate redundant positions. Hotels applied self-save strategies to revitalize their cash flow, reduce non-essential costs, enhance operating capabilities, monitor cash flow predictions, and make dynamic adjustments promptly based on the ever-changing pandemic situation (Hao et al., 2020). In the gastronomy sector, there was a boom in takeaway services.

Within the business world, corporate sustainability and corporate social responsibility have become increasingly important strategic issues for many large companies (Jones & Comfort, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic made several entities rethink their traditional views of their business. This involved a purpose-oriented focus on profit changes in management and more consistent monitoring of expenditure effectiveness. The new priorities involve social responsibility and the expectations of local communities, a focus on local suppliers, and more intense cooperation. Businesses are tapping into the growing market for carbon neutrality. Companies are adjusting their portfolios to meet consumer demand for products with a lower planetary and ecological footprint.

Despite the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economies and societies worldwide, we can find some positive effects on the future development of the hospitality industry. There is a lack of papers that have studied the positive impact on the hospitality industry. The present research aims to fill this recognized gap.



## **Materials and Methods**

The aim of this paper is to examine the positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on accommodation and catering facilities in the Czech Republic. In connection with the research goal, the following research question was posed: What were the most positive impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic? In this paper, primary data was collected by a questionnaire survey of the top management of accommodation and catering facilities.

Data collection took place via the leading Hospitality industry association in the Czech Republic (AHR CR). The AHR CR sent all its members a questionnaire survey via email. The questionnaire consisted of five questions (mainly related to the negative and positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and state support) and contained no ethical issues; there was confidentiality, informed consent, and anonymity. There was no persuasion or pressure. The link provided was opened by 582 hotel and restaurant managers to complete the questionnaire, and 422 questionnaires were completed. Almost three-quarters (72.7%) of the questionnaires were filled by accommodation facilities, 20.6% by catering facilities, and the rest represent accommodation and catering facilities together. The hotel and restaurant managers answered the questionnaires between June 2020 and March 2021; almost half of them (48.5%) completed them in one and two minutes.

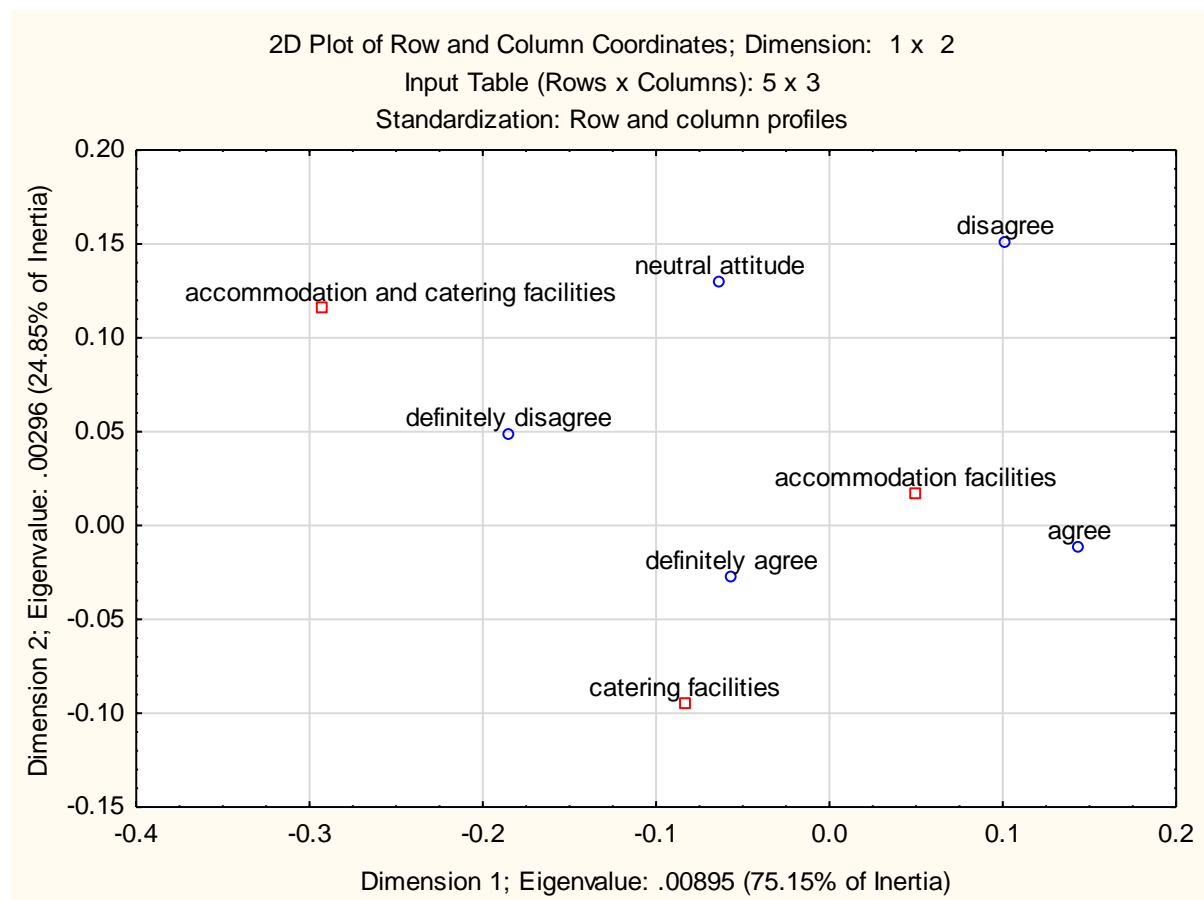
In this research, we used mathematical and statistical methods, Correspondence Analysis (CA), and the method of generalization. The Statistica 13 EN program and Atlas.ti software program were used to evaluate the results. As the declension of nouns and the verb tenses in the Czech language complicate the search for codes in these software packages, the text was translated into English before content analysis was performed. The data were coded, analyzed, and categorized using the Atlas.ti software. Categorization facilitated the identification of the main issues and the capturing of the variety of stated issues. The transcript was carefully read through

numerous times to ensure the detailed textual analysis necessary for describing the phenomenon under investigation.

### Results

More than three-quarters of all respondents (84.1%) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic had had a negative impact on their family's economic situation. More than half of them (57.6%) strongly agreed with this statement. Regarding accommodation facilities, the figure was 69.9%, while for catering facilities it was only 22.6%.

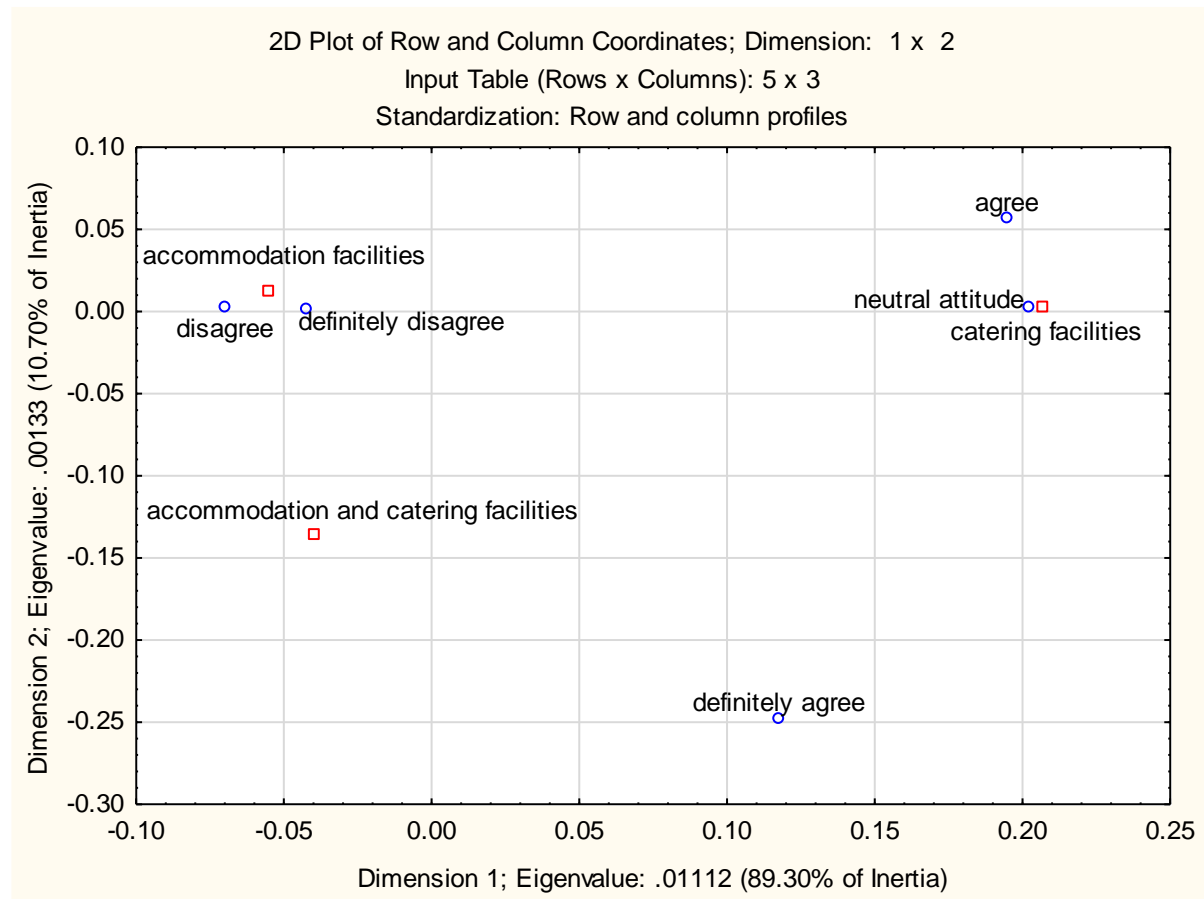
Figure 1: Negative impact on the family's economic situation



Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2022.

Our finding is supported by Figure 1, which shows that the accommodation facilities agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic had had a negative impact on the family's economic situation. According to the survey, the crisis had the worst impact on the South Moravian Region (94.6%) and the Vysočina Region (92.3%). The regions with the smallest negative impact were the Pardubice Region (58.4%) and the Hradec Králové Region (75.9%). As far as the capital of the Czech Republic, Prague, is concerned, 84.2% of the respondents reported a negative impact on the economic situation.

Figure 2: Government support for hospitality enterprises



Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2022.

More than three-quarters of all the respondents (77.2%) replied that the government support to save tourism was insufficient. Only 1.8% of them said that the support from the state was adequate. More than one-third of all the respondents (38.8%) strongly disagreed with the statement that the support to save the tourism industry was adequate (accommodation facilities, 74.4% and catering facilities, 18.9%). Very similar results were obtained from those who disagreed (28.6%). Also, the values of accommodation facilities and catering facilities were almost identical (accommodation facilities 75.5% and catering facilities 17.8%). More detailed information is displayed in Figure 2.

Many hotels and restaurants are currently struggling with a shortage of qualified staff, with some businesses even having to cut back on their operations. This situation is not expected to improve, so solutions must be found to replace human power with machines or applications. In particular, these are tasks and activities that are repetitive and to which the human factor does not add any value. Service robots, chatbots, and self-service kiosks can work 24/7, much more than hotel employees' usual 40-hour working week. In addition, chatbots can serve many guests at the same time, which is not usual for employees. We could characterize the COVID-19 pandemic as fear, uncertainty, and apprehension on the one hand and pity with compassion and responsibility on the other. However, we have to say that despite all the negatives, the COVID-19 pandemic had its positive impacts. The results of this article are summarized and reinforced with direct quotes taken from the scripts. Individual responses (n=422) were divided into 12 categories (Table 1).

We must state that almost one-third of the respondents (31.0%) did not identify any positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The perceived positives of the COVID-19 pandemic can be divided into two groups. The first group is the perceived positives for the business in question, and the second one consists of responses that relate to the accommodation or restaurant (Figure 3). The initial focus will be on the first group.

Table 1: Positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

No	Category	%
01	No positives	31.0
02	Reshaping the competitive landscape	3.8
03	Self-reflection with awareness of personal priorities and values	7.6
04	Rest (relaxation, time off, etc..)	11.4
05	Family support, extra time spent with family	11.4
06	Time for oneself	7.6
07	Improvement of the premises and environment (cleaning, maintenance, and renovation)	7.8
08	Business strategy development and planning (resolving restarts and backlogs)	4.7
09	Recovery of the labor market and strengthening employee relations	5.2
10	Innovation (e-shop, new technologies, windows, new products, and target groups)	4.5
11	Cost reduction	1.4
12	Reduce stress and lead a less hectic life	3.6

Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2022.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we looked at how entrepreneurs see the positive impacts on themselves and their personal lives. Some of them (7.6%) expressed the view that the most remarkable thing was to be able to think about themselves, to perceive their actions, and analyze and learn from them, e.g., *“The world stopped for a while, and I found time to calm my head”* (R99). *“Impulse to think about values, priorities, and good practice, how pandemics will change people/customer behavior”* (R233). *“Most people have experienced a whole new situation; maybe it would be good if we could stop, not consume, think more deeply, not produce cheap and meaningless things in Chinese factories...It would be great if we could transform not only ourselves, our republic, and how it works, but the whole world and treat not only other people and things but our planet better”* (R240).

The positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were noted by 3.8% of the respondents as a reshaping the competitive landscape (selection of entrepreneurs or accommodation and catering establishments), e.g., *“Woke up entrepreneurs”* (R192). *“Partial selection of entrepreneurs”* (R374).

Furthermore, the respondents (11.4%) found a positive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in additional time to rest, e.g., *“I learned to rest”* (R41). *“Finally, after years of continuous toil,*

*we have rested and stopped for a while” (R47). “After thirty years of business, I got enough sleep” (R144).* In the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, accommodation and catering facilities were closed. After the rollout, some hotel owners opened for business travel, then to the public; the same applied to restaurants, cafes, and bars. However, some businesses did not open when they could have done so because it was not economically worthwhile, and the entrepreneurs preferred to rest.

More than a tenth of the respondents (11.4%) said that they considered the positive benefits of the COVID-19 pandemic to be family support and that they had enough time to spend with their families. Particularly during the peak season, holidays, and weekends, more staff are employed in accommodation and catering facilities, and there is no time for rest, e.g., *“I was able to spend more time with my family” (R23). “We went out into the countryside more” (R43). “I had more time for my parents” (R126).*

Almost all people experience some level of change in their daily lives. It is uncomfortable, and no one would willingly undergo it. However, it is also possible to discover something unexpectedly good about the situation. Just 7.6% of the respondents said that the positive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was that they finally had free time to use for themselves and pursue their hobbies. We believe that perhaps the enforced slowing down of our lives or having free time for ourselves is beneficial, e.g., *“Time for hobbies” (R297). “Lots of free time” (R359).*

Most accommodation and food service workers could not do their jobs because these businesses were closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. For some employees, the pace of work has changed, and they have been forced to work under pressure in response to various situations connected with the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 3.6% of the respondents reported calming down and slowing down their work pace as positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, e.g., *“Slowing down from the previous lifestyle. Finding out what is important for life” (R182).*

*“Overall calming of the frantic pace of work” (R185). “Absence of stress from business” (R284). “I had time to tidy up my house and garden. I had time for my family and to let go of stressful situations at the hotel. I did everything I had not had time to do for years” (R405).*

The most perceived positives in accommodation and catering facilities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic included improved facilities and environment (7.8%). There was more time for cleaning, maintenance, and renovation, e.g., *“Ability to completely renovate rooms and public areas, launch a new website and internal information system” (R118). “I had time to clean my office, catch up on administrative work” (R138). “We did a lot of maintenance on the facilities; it was time to invest” (R153). “We fixed the things in the hotel that were still not working” (R399). “Painting the outdoor seating area” (R400).*

Process reviews, strategy development, and business planning were also critical (4.7%), e.g., *“Opportunity to change established processes” (R34). “We had enough room/space (plenty of time) for reform and innovation in business processes, we made the team more efficient, and the whole situation also brought about team-building” (R74). “More time to plan and strategize the growth of the business” (R101). “Time to go through the whole business and make radical changes that normally there would not be time for” (R149). “Finding new opportunities, processes, and ways” (R160). “Seeing things we have not seen” (R317).*

Recovery of the labor market and strengthening employee relations. This category was found to be perceived positively by 5.2% of the respondents. Tourism became a precarious industry during the pandemic. Hotels, in particular, have complained, and still are complaining, about staff shortages, especially of receptionists, restaurant staff, and maids. Hotels are thus trying to lure new employees with extra financial bonuses and employee benefits such as training opportunities. These motivational financial rewards include extra payments for services on

holidays and weekends, annual wage increases, and Christmas bonuses. A benefits scheme is also tempting, including banking services, subsidized meals, free drinks, internships, or courses, e.g., *“Employee Loyalty Survey”* (R94). *“The pandemic has perhaps taught employees to value their employers and work more”* (R369). *“During the pandemic, I went through all of our employee positions”* (R370). However, it must be stated that the hotel industry was already facing a shortage of quality, professional, and customer-oriented candidates before the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this situation. On the other hand, artificial intelligence is already breaking through in this industry. The longer it takes to find workers, the faster new technologies become available to replace some routine activities and make hotel staff's jobs easier, e.g., *“The HR Side – Changing Employee Attitudes Toward Job Duties. Solving a long-standing staff shortage problem”* (R365). *“Increase in unemployment and greater availability of workers”* (R388).

The economic impact of COVID-19 will influence the thinking of many hotel and restaurant operators. Addressing fixed operating costs seems like a logical move. Many traditionally fixed costs will become more flexible to achieve greater efficiency, e.g., *“Revise company processes, reduce costs”* (R38). *“Cost optimization”* (R205). *“Deeper reflection and costs, both corporate and personal”* (R393). In practice, this means a greater focus on outsourcing and centralizing some hotel and restaurant functions. One of the most effective tools will be forecasting occupancy and demand for extended periods.

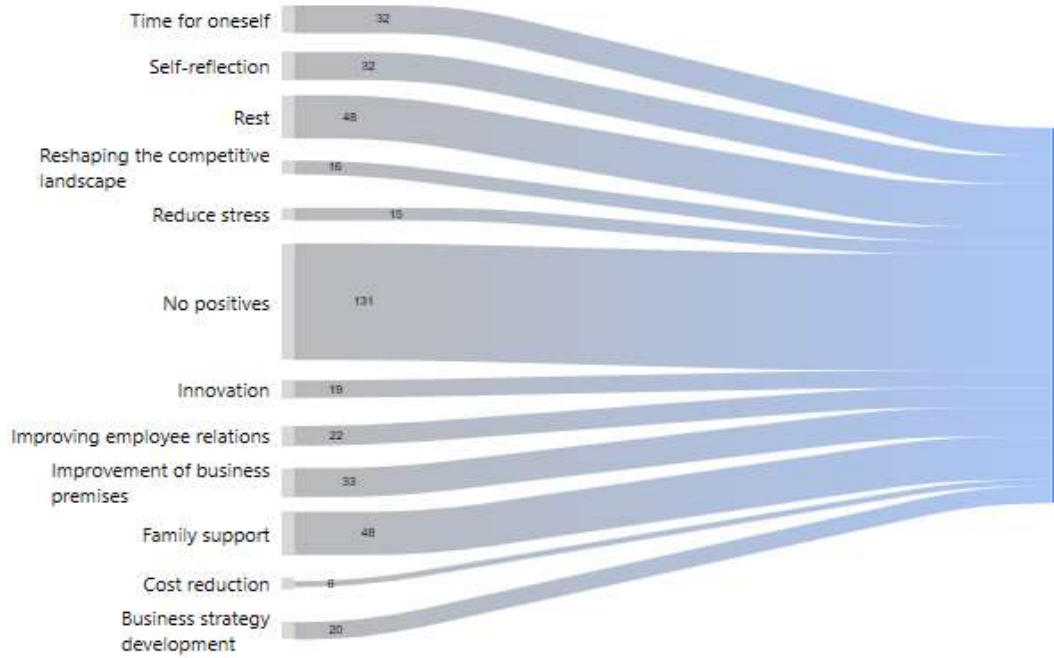
Innovation was indicated as a positive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by 4.5% of the respondents. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a lot of uncertainty, changes, cancellations, and shifting of bookings. It has become clear that hotels are unprepared for this and do not have the tools to change their bookings online and cancel their direct bookings. We think there was a marked difference from the big booking portals that provide these tools. Indeed, hotel owners



should implement technologies that allow them to make online changes and cancellations of direct bookings, e.g., *“We have been developing online services”* (R174). As for restaurants, they generally lagged behind hotels in implementing technology. The first significant change came in 2016 with the introduction of the Electronic Sales Control System, as a result, many restaurants had to have a POS system, and the industry became a little more digitalized. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the second wave came, i.e., the need to implement various connections to ordering systems, delivery services, and outlets, e.g., *“Outlet window, a wider range of food”* (R107). *“We have opened a takeaway window and gained new customers who are comfortable with takeaway”* (R323). A restaurant with no online reservation or ordering system had to implement one in a very short time. Thus, we can conclude that catering facilities have made significant progress in general, which is perhaps even more remarkable than accommodation establishments that were closed, worried about their existence, and hesitated to invest in technology. Many hotels in the Czech Republic still lack a suitable booking engine on the web and a channel manager to link the distribution portals with their hotel system, e.g., *“We decided to implement an e-shop for our brewery’s products”* (R337). *“Production of homemade products for future guests”* (R383).

Focusing on accommodation and catering facilities separately, it can be noted that they showed a higher percentage of the positive benefits of the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost a third of accommodation facilities (31.8%) found no positive benefit, compared to catering facilities (28.4%). The most considerable differences were found for family support (accommodation facilities 13.0% vs. catering facilities 7.9%) and improvement of business premises (accommodation facilities 7.8% vs. catering facilities 4.5%).

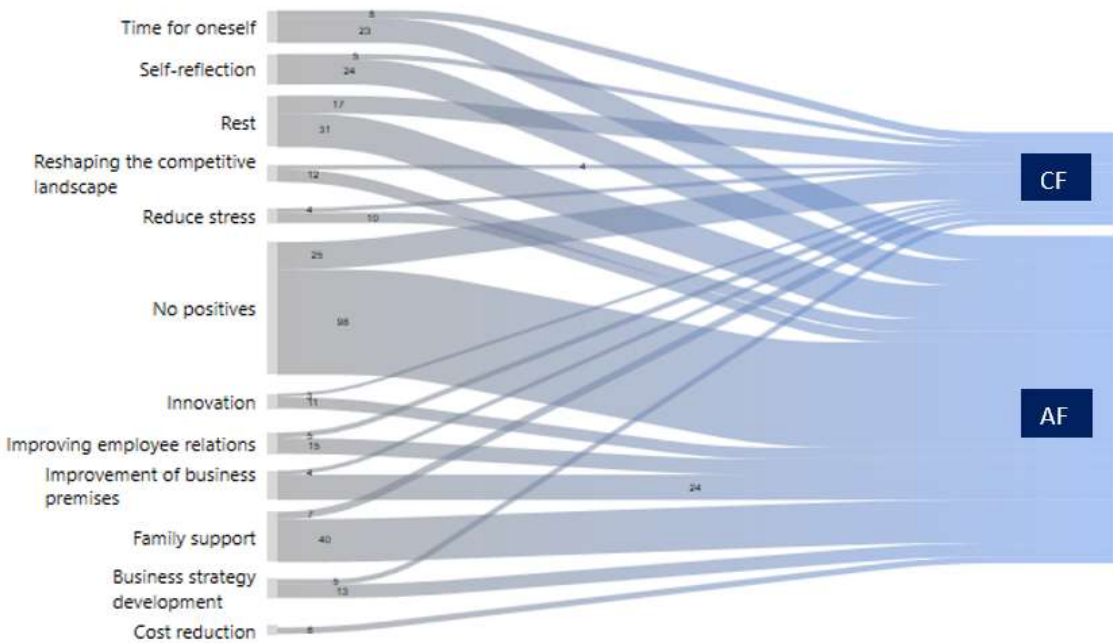
*Figure 3: Positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic*



Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2022.

In terms of cost reduction, no catering facility found this to be a positive benefit of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, catering facilities reached almost double the values for rest that accommodation facilities did (19.3% vs. 10.3%). More detailed information about the positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic is displayed in Figure 4.

*Figure 4: Comparison between accommodation (AF) and catering facilities (CF)*



Source: Authors' own elaboration, 2022.

## Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic may be a milepost to a more sustainable future. Jones and Comfort (2020) pointed out that implementing sustainable principles should be part of the recovery strategies within the hospitality industry. However, the hospitality industry has already stated that it is only by committing all its available resources and energies to reopening hotels and returning to business as usual that it will accumulate the financial resources to continue, or, more realistically, to renew, its commitment to sustainable development goals (SDGs). Such a transition revolves in part around the conceptualizations of weak and strong sustainability and the radical opportunities offered by Cohen (2020). Many hoteliers indicated that immediate measures to stay in business took priority over implementing sustainability principles. Our findings also confirmed this. There were no responses among hospitality industry managers in the Czech Republic

concerning “sustainability” or “implementation of sustainable principles” as a positive aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Czech hospitality managers did not mention the improvement of safety, hygiene, and cleanliness in the hospitality industry as a positive effect of the COVID-19 pandemic even though these are among the most important criteria, as stated (Gu & Ryan, 2008; Lockyer, 2005) in consumers' decision-making processes. Healthcare and sanitary measures have grown greatly in importance during COVID-19. Clients have been carefully checking all the necessary precautions related to safety, hygiene, and cleanliness (Wen et al., 2021). As Rončák et al. (2021) pointed out in their research, during the COVID-19 pandemic, even the most numerous generation on Earth, Generation Z (born after 1995), choose accommodation facilities where they expect all safety and hygiene measures to be respected.

A relatively low number of hospitality industry managers (4.5%) mentioned innovation as a positive result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This corresponds with the statement of Breier et al. (2021), who highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic led to a major reduction of income streams and, thus, to enormous pressure to innovate. Czech accommodation facilities were not ready for digitalization before COVID-19. They had fallen far behind online travel agencies and big accommodation booking systems. Our study confirmed that hospitality industry managers were more focused on reconsidering their lifestyles, taking time to rest, and spending extra time with their families. This is a very positive effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees' stress and mental health represent important concerns in the hospitality industry (Teoh et al., 2019). Scholars have noted that hospitality workers often experience emotional distress due to the precariousness of their work, abusive customer behavior, and work-family issues (Cheng & Yi, 2018). It has been reported that working adults, especially hospitality workers, have been enduring mental health

challenges, including anxiety, depression, loneliness, and compulsive behavior amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (Murray, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020) and work-family issues (Xu et al., 2020; Zhao, 2016). The difficult-to-balance work-family relationship can cause hospitality workers to experience anxiety (Vanderpool & Way, 2013), depression (Zhao, 2016), exhaustion (Zhao et al., 2014), and burnout (Mansour & Tremblay, 2018).

### **Limitations and future research**

This is a unique research study, but the findings of this paper must be seen in the light of some limitations. Firstly, it is the study focusing on the positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on accommodation and catering enterprises in the Czech Republic. The study was limited to primarily small hospitality enterprises in the Czech Republic, which may not represent all small hospitality enterprises worldwide. Secondly, there are over 32,000 hospitality enterprises in the Czech Republic; less than a sixteenth (1,788) are members of the AHR CR. We only focused on enterprises that are members of the AHR CR, so we cannot generalize the results for the entire Czech Republic. On the other hand, AHR CR is the leading and the most influential hospitality industry association in the Czech Republic. We contacted members of AHR CR directly, and therefore, we know their motivation, requirements, etc. In future research, we want to focus on hotels only. We want to examine them according to different criteria regarding location, size, quality, independent and chain hotels, etc. Finally, we would like to conduct an in-depth analysis and compare our results with neighboring countries, which we think would be more than desirable. A possible comparison with, for example, the hospitality industry in different parts of Europe or the world would also be interesting.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to examine the positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on accommodation and catering facilities in the Czech Republic. In connection with the research goal, the following research question was posed: What were the most positive impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic? According to our research, almost one-third of the respondents (31.0%) did not find any positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, our study revealed some valuable key messages for hospitality industry managers, particularly in the post-COVID era. These findings could help the hospitality industry adapt and be resilient to similar future crises. In addition, they can better optimize their strategy.

To sum up, (1) hospitality managers reconsidered their lifestyle. The COVID-19 pandemic helped them to analyze and change their values. More than a tenth of our respondents (11.4%) said that they considered the positive benefits of the COVID-19 pandemic to be family support and that they had enough time to spend with their families. Family support and work-life balance are extremely important for hospitality managers and the effectiveness of accommodation and catering facilities; (2) the COVID-19 pandemic pause provided time to stop and find additional time to rest (11.4%). This is a very positive effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees' stress and mental health are crucial issues in the hospitality industry; (3) Accommodation and catering facilities (7,8%) used this pause to improve their facilities and environment. This will definitely have a positive impact on the quality of experience for the visitors. Even though our paper did not confirm it, the COVID-19 pandemic changed several other aspects of the hospitality industry. (4) The traditional hotel business model focusing on catering and accommodation has been severely challenged. The hospitality sector will not be quite the same after the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospitality industry companies have been driven to develop a more diversified business scope and distribution channels and optimize the financial health of their enterprises; (5) The COVID-19

pandemic has significantly changed views on safety, cleanliness, and hygiene. Hotels and restaurants have taken strict hygiene and sanitary measures to secure their clients; (6) the COVID-19 pandemic enormously increased the ability to innovate; (7) Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the implementation of technological solutions, e.g., self-check-in, remote check-in, voice control of room service, face-scanning, etc. Video conferencing became part of everyday life. Live streaming sales boomed. When it comes to hotels and restaurants, automation is key. In addition to automation, direct bookings and loyal hotel guests will prevail in hotels. From our point of view, there is no way to stop people from ordering food to eat at home. Besides busy restaurants, extra dishes will be delivered to client`s homes. More chefs will be coming to people's homes to cook because people will create a new trend and want a different experience.

**Funding:** This work was supported by a research grant from the Czech Science Foundation under reg. no. 18-24977S and other grants from the College of Polytechnics Jihlava under reg. no. 1170/26/451 and 1170/26/452.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Physical Culture University Palacky and College of Polytechnics Jihlava.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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