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Evaluating the Enablers of Resource Bricolage Activity within Hospitality SMEs as a Method of Resilience to Multi-faceted Crisis

Abstract

TOPIC: The global economy faces a turmoil of unprecedented crisis events, representing the most significant period of disruption since World War II. Several events, including Covid-19, war in Europe and the Middle East, trade tariffs and growing geo-political tensions have all contributed to creating an arduous and volatile environment for businesses to operate. The commercial challenges created by these events include increased energy bills, sustained high inflation, increased national insurance contributions from employers and decreased customer spending due to reduced disposable income. This complex web of crisis events, coupled with a complex web of crisis induced challenges, makes understanding these crises individually problematic, and in most cases impractical. This study therefore considers the concept of multi-faceted crisis, where a unique blend of crises come together to incur a unique blend of challenges, often creating secondary forms of crisis.

Drawing on resource bricolage theory, this study aims to evaluate the impact of multifaceted crisis on hospitality SMEs based within the United Kingdom (UK). SMEs are often more resource constrained than larger counterparts, meaning they usually experience crisis more severely. The SME hospitality sector currently operates within a particularly challenging environment, making it a noteworthy sector for academic study. This research aims to understand the enablers of bricolage, extending knowledge on how hospitality SMEs can leverage resources to increase resilience to unforeseen multi-faceted crisis events. This research responds to calls from existing research previously presented at the Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE), calling for an increased focus on bricolage enablers within entrepreneurship research.

AIM: To evaluate the enablers of resource bricolage activity within hospitality SMEs as a method of resilience to multi-faceted crises.

METHODOLOGY: This research is currently within its initial stages, with data collection planned for completion in Summer 2025. If accepted, this research would look to include empirical findings within the full paper submission.

This research analyses qualitative data using a semi-structured interview as the research instrument. Qualitative methods are well applied within existing SME crisis research, allowing for the collection of rich data pertaining to the unique experiences of SMEs through a time of crisis. Existing SME crisis research cites low participation rates from SMEs due to the traumatic nature of crisis. This therefore makes the use of a quantitative method problematic. Interview participants were identified and recruited using a combination of maximum variation sampling and snowball sampling. In total, 30 interviews were conducted with owner-managers of hospitality SMEs located in the UK, ensuring that data saturation was achieved on the issues discussed. All interviews were conducted in English and were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Interview data was analysed using thematic analysis to interpret the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Thematic analysis was applied to identify and organise the themes present within the data, allowing the research question to be answered. Using Microsoft Word and Excel, a process of first and second cycle coding was deployed to ensure a rigorous approach to the thematic analysis, as part of the iterative six-step thematic analysis process of Braun and Clarke (2021), leading to the development of a thematic map to visualise the relationships between themes.

CONTRIBUTION: This study makes a significant contribution to SME crisis research by evaluating the enablers of resource bricolage within the context of multifaceted crisis. Existing SME crisis research remains underdeveloped, with leading researchers calling for increased research within this area. Although current SME crisis research identifies precedents for resource bricolage as an enabler of resilience, the enabling conditions for successful bricolage deployment remain under researched. Furthermore, current research does not consider the deployment of bricolage within the context of hospitality SMEs during an unprecedented period of multi-faceted crisis.

APPLICABILITY TO THE CONFERENCE THEME: The ISBE 2025 conference theme is '*Collaborating across Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: opportunities for inclusion, innovation, sustainability, resilience and growth*'. This research contributes significantly to the conference theme by considering the resilience of hospitality SMEs to multi-faceted crisis. Findings from this research are also likely to be interesting to policymakers for creating more effective entrepreneurial ecosystems that support resilience.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY: This research informs SME government policy by providing insights into the experiences of UK based hospitality SMEs. By understanding the enablers of bricolage, policy will be better poised to support the resource capacity of SMEs, improving their ability to become more resilient.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: Current research fails to recognise the enablers of bricolage, despite citing its ability to support resilience. Without understanding the enablers of bricolage, bricolage research risks having minimal impact for practitioners due to a lack of understanding on how bricolage can be achieved. This research will present actionable steps that practitioners can take to become more resilient, improving their ability to deploy a bricolage response to mitigate unforeseen multi-faceted crises.

REFERENCES:

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What Counts as Quality Practice in (reflexive) Thematic Analysis?, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 18(3), 328-352.