


The role of contingency theory for tourist destinations management

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Abstract

Contingency theory, known for its ability to adapt to dynamic conditions in an environment, has increasingly come to the fore as an agent of change in the ever-changing environment of the tourism industry. This study looks at the application of contingency theory in the tourism industry, with a particular focus on crisis management, community engagement, technological integration and the promotion of sustainable practices. The potential of the theory to be effective in managing uncertainties and promoting resilience in tourism destinations is presented in its ability to provide perspective. Furthermore, the paper recommends the application of the studies presented to investigate the enduring effects of contingency-oriented strategies on the long-term viability of tourism destinations. This paper emphasizes the interaction between contingency theory and new paradigms such as ecotourism, sustainable development and heritage conservation. It also suggests using contingency theory as a framework for understanding visitor behavior to increase the resilience, sustainability, and resilience of tourism destinations that are dynamic and complex.

Keywords: Contingency theory, Destination management, Crisis management, Adaptive strategies

1. Introduction

In the dynamic and ever-changing world of the tourism industry, the search for sustainable, robust and flexible management techniques continues to be of paramount importance (Dwyer et al., 2014). In the face of constantly evolving challenges, the field of tourism is increasingly turning to contingency theory as a guiding framework for renewing and strengthening its practices (Oetomo et al., 2020). Recognized for its ability to adapt and respond to a variety of circumstances, this theoretical approach has the potential to be a contributory tool to significantly transform the way tourism destinations address uncertainty, effectively manage crises and promote sustainable growth. Situational Theory, a well-established approach in many research fields, has an important place in the complex world of tourism (Fernández-Robin et al., 2019; Nalakath & Koshy, 2019). The basic principle of this concept is to seek solutions by pointing to a significant change in the way destinations perceive, plan and implement their activities. Given that the effectiveness of organizational strategies in the tourism sector depends on unique contextual factors (C.-F. Lee & King, 2006), this theory offers an attractive prospect as the tourism sector is known for its susceptibility to success or failure based on subtle contextual nuances. The aim of this

theoretical paper is to examine various aspects of the use of contingency theory in the tourism field, focusing on its capacity to effectively address important areas such as crisis management, community engagement, integration of technology and the promotion of sustainable tourism practices. In this way, it aims to draw implications that can demonstrate the effectiveness of the theory in guiding destinations towards resilience, adaptability, and longevity.

Furthermore, this paper highlights the importance of expanding the temporal scope of academic research, particularly the need for comprehensive research efforts that examine the long-term effects of strategies motivated by unforeseen circumstances on the sustainability of destinations (Ballantyne et al., 2011). From this perspective, it argues for a comprehensive exploration of the dynamic relationship between contingency theory and emerging paradigms in tourism. These paradigms can cover a variety of topics such as ecotourism, sustainable development, and cultural heritage conservation. This paper adopts an approach that discusses the possible applications of contingency theory in the tourism sector to provide customized destination experiences in response to tourists' dynamic and changing behaviors and preferences. Adding to the importance of this current paper is its ability and potential to offer new

approaches that enhance the ability of tourism destinations to withstand challenges, promote long-term viability and adapt to the dynamic nature of the global environment.

2. Contingency Theory

The theoretical framework known as contingency theory has gained considerable prominence and has been widely used in many disciplines, including management, psychology, and organizational behavior (Boyd et al., 2012; Hall, 2016). The theory suggests that there is no singular, universally applicable strategy for management or organizational structure, as its effectiveness varies according to different circumstances. However, the optimal course of action may vary depending on the specific circumstances and context in which it is applied (Sousa & Voss, 2008). The origins of contingency theory can be traced back to the influential research conducted by Lawrence and Lorsch in 1967, where they coined the term "Contingency Theory" and introduced the concepts of subunit differentiation and integration (Liu, 2020). These contributions have played an important role in the wide acceptance of the theory in the academic community (Betts, 2011). The use of contingency theory is widely used to assess the ways in which organizations change their structures and methods to achieve improved performance, often in response to various contingencies arising from the organizational environment (Boehe, 2014). By highlighting the importance of organizational context in determining control systems, the theory can contribute to an understanding that can facilitate the understanding of the intricacies of many sectors, including both public and private (Woods, 2009). Furthermore, the theory suggests that different theories are needed to address various situations, arguing that management's reporting practices are influenced by the characteristics of the environment and the organization, rather than just their impact on revenue (Omran & El-Galfy, 2014).

Contingency theory served as a theoretical framework to examine the changes in practitioners' perspectives on social media in the field of small retail businesses before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This helps to understand the importance of contingency theory in understanding the changing dynamics of business practices (Woo et al., 2022). Furthermore, the concept of contingency theory has been conceptualized as a theoretical framework for studying the intricacies of organizational behavior and has been able to clarify how many contingent situations have an impact on the structure and activities of organizations (Islam & Hu, 2012). It also has the capacity to provide an important theoretical foundation for studying the relationship between

information technology and firms' performance, taking into account the ever-changing nature of organizational resources and capacities (Wang, 2014). The applicability of the theory has been studied in many fields beyond management and organizational behavior as it has been used in various disciplines such as psychology, reinforcement and classical conditioning. This underlines the fundamental importance of contingency in influencing behavior and learning processes (Sidman, 2000; Jenkins & Shattuck, 1981). Moreover, the integration of contingency theory with other theoretical views, such as resource dependence theory and institutional theory, has contributed to the expansion of a comprehensive theoretical framework that facilitates the study of different fields (Assefa, 2019; Hu & Lovrich, 2019).

3. Contingency Theory in Human Resource Management

Contingency theory has an important place in the field of human resource management (HRM), primarily because of its ability to explain the complex relationships between organizational practices and contextual factors. Contingency theory acknowledges that there is no universally applicable approach to managing human resources, underscoring the need to adapt management strategies to fit the unique circumstances and contingencies faced by organizations (Bonache et al., 2012). This theoretical framework acknowledges that various factors such as the size, sector, technology, and external environment of the organization can significantly affect the effectiveness of HRM practices. Therefore, contingency theory plays a vital role in HRM by emphasizing the need to match HRM techniques with unique contextual conditions and organizational strategies to achieve the best results. The importance of contingency theory in the field of HRM is highlighted by its capacity to provide a conceptual framework for understanding the dynamic and complex characteristics of HRM practices and their impact on organizational performance (Bal et al., 2013; Wood, 1999). The notion that there is no universally applicable approach to managing human resources adds to the importance of the fact that contingency theory is an important contribution to the field of HRM. Rather, the theory suggests that HRM methods should depend on a number of contextual elements, including but not limited to organizational culture, corporate strategy, and environmental dynamics (Huang, 2001; Li & Rees, 2020). This perspective highlights the importance for HRM professionals to comprehensively assess the specific circumstances of their organizations and customize their HRM strategies accordingly to ensure optimal fit between HRM systems and organizational context (Farndale & Sanders, 2016; Gooderham et al., 2008). Furthermore, contingency theory in HRM recognizes

the inherent dynamism of organizations and the constant changes in both internal and external factors that affect HRM methods. This assumption is particularly relevant for small and medium-sized organizations because the factors that influence HRM methods can vary significantly depending on the size, sector and geographical location of the organization (Chen et al., 2019). By carefully considering these situational dynamics, HRM practitioners can better understand the different requirements and barriers faced by small and medium-sized enterprises. This can result in formulating HRM strategies that are aligned with the specific circumstances of these organizations. In addition, contingency theory offers important insights into the relationship between HRM practices and organizational strategy. This statement reveals the important role of the alignment between HRM practices and the overall strategies of an organization in determining their effectiveness. The alignment between HRM practices and an organization's strategic goals and objectives is of great importance in achieving competitive advantage and organizational success (Gill & Meyer, 2011; Jery & Souaï, 2016).

The use of contingency theory in the field of HRM has played an important role in influencing scientific research and practical applications related to high-performance work systems, transformational leadership, and organizational innovation (H. W. Lee et al., 2019). By acknowledging the inherent variability of HRM processes, organizations can better understand how to optimize employee performance, foster innovation, and adapt to evolving business contexts (Boxall, 1996; Neal & West, 2005). Because of the gig economy and the presence of contingent workforce, contingency theory can provide a valuable perspective for businesses to effectively negotiate the complex challenges associated with overseeing non-traditional employment arrangements. By acknowledging the inherent uncertainty of HRM in the gig economy, businesses have the opportunity to create adaptive HRM strategies that meet the different requirements and incentives of contingent workers. This can improve organizational agility and performance (Han et al., 2017; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019). Furthermore, the use of contingency theory has had a significant impact on the design and execution of HRM procedures in professional service organizations (Verburg et al., 2007). Businesses operating in professional service sectors can improve the effectiveness of their HRM practices by recognizing influential situational factors. This recognition enables businesses to customize their HRM strategies to effectively address the unique requirements of their business environment and the demands of their customers (Courvisanos & Cavagnoli, 2013; Kaiser et al., 2015). The importance of contingency theory in the field of HRM is mostly due to

its capacity to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contextual elements that influence HRM practices and their impact on organizational performance. By embracing the ideas of contingency theory, HRM professionals can create customized and efficient HRM strategies that can be adapted to the specific needs and challenges faced by their businesses. This can lead to sustainable competitive advantage and overall organizational success.

4. Contingency theory for tourism industry perspective

The tourism industry places great value on contingency theory as it offers a comprehensive insight into the complex and numerous aspects of tourism operations and their impact on organizational performance (Nalakath & Koshy, 2019). This idea, which suggests that the effectiveness of management techniques depends on the fit between strategies and unique complex circumstances, is of particular relevance to the tourism industry (Lindberg et al., 2021; Vita & Kyaw, 2016). The use of contingency theory has been observed in different aspects of the tourism field, including supply chain integration, economic development and workforce adaptability (Uwamahoro, 2018). The study conducted by Flynn et al. (2009) emphasizes the importance of supply chain integration for performance. It highlights the importance of both internal and customer integration, especially for tourism organizations that are highly dependent on effective supply chain operations to provide high quality services to their guests. Moreover, it has been shown that the impact of focusing on tourism as a specialization in terms of stimulating economic growth depends on the level of economic development and absorptive capacity of the economies receiving this specialization. This highlights the importance of considering the specific conditions and circumstances surrounding tourism development, as highlighted by Vita and Kyaw (2016). In addition, the ability of tourism organizations to withstand and recover from potential risks is associated with the implementation of risk mitigation strategies and business contingency planning, which are aligned with the principles of contingency theory. This theory emphasizes the importance of using adaptive and flexible strategies to effectively cope with uncertainties and disruptions in the tourism industry (Martins et al., 2020). Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the importance of aligning management practices with complex variables to optimize performance, as evidenced by the contingent effects of supply chain integration on the design of management control systems and operational performance in tourism-related organizations (Nartey et al., 2020).

In addition, scholars have analyzed how the tourism industry responds to exogenous disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic using a contingency framework (Permatasari & Mahyuni, 2022). This approach paved the way for the implementation of adaptive workforce flexibility models and strategic management accounting practices to effectively tackle the unique obstacles faced by the tourism and hospitality industry (Martins et al., 2020; Sigala et al., 2023). In this way, it is necessary to highlight the pragmatic implications of contingency theory in enabling the formulation of customized solutions to effectively overcome different complex obstacles in the tourism sector. Moreover, the study of tourists' preferences in different seasons and the examination of the impact of tourism on the subjective well-being of residents has provided valuable insights into the variable nature of tourist behavior and the consequences of tourism on local communities, as demonstrated in the contingent ranking study (Cuccia, 2021; Yeoman et al., 2005). The use of contingency theory in formulating development strategies for tourism and hospitality businesses has further highlighted the importance of methodological frameworks that consider the different relational elements that influence tourism activities. These elements include the perspectives of local stakeholders, cultural resources and the unpredictable nature of the ecological environment (Konovalova et al., 2018; Meirejeki et al., 2022). The importance of contingency theory in the tourism sector is primarily due to its capacity to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the contextual interdependencies and variable characteristics of tourism activities. In this way, it serves as a tool for formulating customized strategies that effectively tackle specific challenges and take advantage of opportunities in the sector. By acknowledging the uncertainty inherent in tourism management, organizations can effectively adapt to changing conditions, optimize their operational results and promote the long-term sustainability of tourism growth.

5. Contingency Theory in Creating Organization in Destination Management

Contingency theory plays an important role in shaping the organizational structure of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) (Nalakath & Koshy, 2019; Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014). Based on the aforementioned theory, researchers argue that the formation and management of an institution cannot be universally standardized due to various factors such as the institution's specific technical demands and contextual conditions (Permatasari & Mahyuni, 2022; Sriyono, 2022). Contingency theory is very important in determining the organizational structure of DMOs in the field of destination management. The recognition of the impact of corporate governance theories on

destination governance structures and the evolution of DMOs has had significant impacts on their organizational structure (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014). Moreover, the importance of DMOs and the involvement of stakeholders with vital resources in urban destinations underscores the important role of resource dependence and power dynamics in shaping the organizational structure of DMOs. Furthermore, the emergence of innovative and non-traditional organizational structures and models in destination management and governance means that the hierarchical structure of DMOs may undergo changes to accommodate evolving trends and paradigms in the field of destination management. Contingency theory emphasizes the importance of governance theories, resource dependency, stakeholder dynamics and changing paradigms in relation to the complex nature of destination management. DMOs operate in dynamic environments that encompass a range of factors such as stakeholder engagement, resource availability and ever-changing patterns of tourist behavior. The organizational structure of DMOs is heavily influenced by these characteristics. Therefore, contingency theory can provide a conceptual framework for understanding the complex elements of destination management and the need for adaptive organizational structures that can successfully respond to diverse and ever-changing circumstances.

From this perspective, contingency theory significantly influences the creation of the organizational chart in the field of destination management. The organizational structure of DMOs is influenced by various factors such as governance theories, resource dependency, stakeholder dynamics and changing paradigms. These factors play an important role in shaping how DMOs operate and function. This highlights the importance of DMOs adopting flexible and adaptable organizational structures that can effectively deal with the various contingencies inherent in destination management.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the broad and varied utilization of contingency theory across multiple disciplines, including tourism, HRM, and destination management, highlights its significant role in comprehending and navigating intricate organizational contexts. The central tenet of this theoretical framework places significant emphasis on the necessity of contextual adaptations and tailored solutions, so serving as a guiding principle for both scientific inquiry and practical implementations. The contingency theory offers a complete framework for comprehending many facets of operations within the tourist sector, encompassing factors such as the integration of supply chains and the development of resilience plans in the

face of disruptive occurrences, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The application's scope encompasses the comprehension of tourist behavior, economic consequences, and community relationships, emphasizing the significance of context-driven methodologies in promoting sustainable tourism.

In the field of HRM, the relevance of the theory is demonstrated by its advocacy of flexible HRM practices that are compatible with contextual variables. The statement highlights the importance of implementing HRM strategies customized to fit the specific circumstances of organizations, especially those operating within the gig economy and small and medium-sized enterprises. This highlights the important link between aligning HRM practices with organizational goals and achieving overall performance. Furthermore, the field of destination management is influenced by contingency theory, which plays an important role in shaping the organizational structures of DMOs. This theory recognizes the complex relationship between governance theories, stakeholder dynamics and resource dependency. It emphasizes the importance of implementing adaptive structures that can effectively meet the ever-changing demands of destination management.

The scientific paper of the application of contingency theory in these fields not only enhances our understanding of its theoretical underpinnings, but also provides practical insights for professionals in the field. This highlights the importance of firms adopting flexibility, adaptability, and contextual understanding in their strategies, thereby increasing resilience, maximizing performance, and enhancing sustainable growth. Contingency theory is undergoing ongoing development as a theoretical framework, thus providing a strong foundation for subsequent academic research and pragmatic applications. Future research initiatives could embark on a more comprehensive examination of specific contextual variations in these areas, exploring the complex interplay between contingency factors and institutional outcomes. These initiatives have the potential to improve our understanding and application of contingency theory in these ever-changing fields and thus make a valuable contribution to the advancement of organizational theory and practice. Based on the insights gained from examining the practical application of contingency theory in the context of the tourism sector, a proposal for its pragmatic adoption in tourism destinations emerges. By utilizing the key concepts of flexibility and context sensitivity in contingency theory, tourism regions have the capacity to develop all-encompassing strategies that are tailored to adapt to their specific contextual circumstances. Implementing adaptive risk management frameworks in line with this theory has

the potential to enable destinations to proactively anticipate and successfully address unexpected disruptions, thereby increasing their resilience amid crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, in line with the theory's emphasis on context-driven methodologies, incorporating community-oriented strategies into tourism efforts has the potential to facilitate sustainable development through prioritizing the protection of indigenous cultures and the natural environment. Adopting technology-driven innovations, in line with the concepts of contingency theory, has the potential to enhance visitor experiences, improve operational efficiency and increase the competitiveness of destinations. By integrating these theoretical perspectives into practical approaches, tourism destinations can create comprehensive frameworks that promote sustainable growth, resilience, and holistic development.

Given the extensive research on the practical uses of contingency theory in the tourism industry, a recommendation emerges for policy makers to incorporate this knowledge into the formulation of policies for tourist destinations. Policy makers have a crucial role in implementing legislation and establishing frameworks that govern the sustainable development and resilience of tourism destinations. Policy formulation has the potential to incorporate the concepts of adaptability and context sensitivity underpinned by contingency theory. Encouraging the formulation of adaptive risk management strategies in line with the theory's emphasis on preparedness and resilience will help destinations manage unforeseen disruptions more effectively. In line with the context-centered approach of contingency theory, promoting policies that prioritize cultural preservation and sustainable development with a focus on community-oriented approaches has the potential to create a mutually beneficial link between tourism growth and the well-being of local communities. Furthermore, supporting technological breakthroughs in tourism industry operations, in line with the principles of contingency theory, has the potential to increase the competitiveness of destinations and improve visitors' experiences. By integrating knowledge from contingency theory into policies, policy makers can develop frameworks that promote sustainable, culturally sensitive and resilient tourism destinations.

The exploration of the applications of contingency theory in tourism has revealed profound discoveries, suggesting that academics are well positioned to use this knowledge for future improvements and practical applications in various tourism regions. Researchers could explore the intricacies of using contingency theory in various tourism settings by examining case studies that demonstrate its effectiveness in crisis management, community engagement and the use of

technology to promote sustainable tourism approaches. It is also recommended that future research efforts prioritize longitudinal studies that assess the lasting effects of contingency-driven tactics on the resilience and sustainability of destinations. Additional research is needed to explore the links between contingency theory and emerging phenomena such as ecotourism, sustainable development and cultural heritage conservation. This area offers a promising avenue for academic analysis. Furthermore, examining the ever-changing characteristics of tourist behavior and preferences within a contingency theory framework has the potential to provide important and invaluable insights for the development of customized destination experiences. Scholars who adopt these ways of working have the potential to advance the discourse on the uses of contingency theory in tourism. This could lead to the development of creative solutions that contribute to the sustainability and resilience of tourism destinations in the future.

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Research interests: Destination marketing and management, Tourism management, Sustainable tourism, Alternative tourism



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Author statement: Author(s) declare(s) that All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. The authors declared that they contributed equally to the paper.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests: The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article

This paper does not required ethics committee report. Justification: The methodology of this study does not require an ethics committee report.