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## **Cultural Resilience and Strategic Adaptation: Organisational Change in Greek Hotels amidst Uncertainty**

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the critical factors influencing successful organisational change within the Greek hospitality sector, with a focus on four- and five-star hotels. Employing a quantitative approach, data were collected from a sample of 513 hotel employees to examine the relationships amongst strategic change content, environmental uncertainty, and environmental hostility. The findings suggest that the content of strategic change is a key determinant of its success, underscoring the need for a clear understanding of both corporate- and business-level changes. Environmental uncertainty and hostility, however, are shown to constitute the principal obstacles to successful change, insofar as they engender negative forces that hinder its implementation. The paper examines the relationship amongst the stages of change — unfreezing, moving, and refreezing — and proposes several strategies to enhance the adaptability and resilience of tourism organisations operating in dynamic global environments.

**Keywords:** Change Management, Strategic Change, Environmental Uncertainty, Environmental Hostility, Greek Hotels

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## Resiliencia cultural y adaptación estratégica: el cambio organizativo en los hoteles griegos en un contexto de incertidumbre

**Resumen:** Este estudio explora los factores críticos que influyen en el éxito del cambio organizacional en el sector hotelero griego, con énfasis en hoteles de cuatro y cinco estrellas. Mediante un enfoque cuantitativo, se encuestó a una muestra de 513 trabajadores hoteleros con el fin de analizar las relaciones entre el contenido del cambio estratégico, la incertidumbre del entorno y la hostilidad ambiental. Los resultados sugieren que el contenido del cambio estratégico constituye un factor determinante para el éxito del proceso, lo que subraya la necesidad de una comprensión clara tanto de los cambios a nivel corporativo como de los cambios a nivel de negocio. No obstante, la incertidumbre y la hostilidad del entorno se revelan como los principales obstáculos para el éxito de dichos cambios, dado que generan fuerzas negativas que dificultan su implementación. El artículo examina la relación entre las etapas del cambio —descongelamiento, movimiento y recongelamiento— y propone diversas estrategias orientadas a fortalecer la adaptabilidad y la resiliencia de las organizaciones turísticas en entornos globales en constante transformación.

**Palabras Clave:** Gestión del Cambio, Cambio Estratégico, Incertidumbre del Entorno, Hostilidad del Entorno, Hoteles Griegos

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Businesses constitute a cornerstone of the global economic framework. Achieving a high degree of sustainability requires the capacity for adaptation to adapt dynamic external environments (Belias & Trihas, 2022b). When external environmental shifts exhibit both frequency and significant magnitude, organizational change becomes imperative (Belias & Trihas, 2022c; Rossidis et al., 2020). While proactive organizations perceive external changes as avenues for growth and proactively implement necessary adjustments, reactive organizations tend to wait for the inevitable impact of these changes before initiating any adaptation (Dzwigol et al., 2019).

Strategic business change constitutes an inevitable juncture for entrepreneurs, top management, and employees within any organization (Belias & Trihas, 2022). Compelled by the exigencies of the competitive landscape and the imperative of long-term viability, strategic change often becomes a necessary undertaking (Jayatilleke & Lai, 2018; Belias & Trihas, 2022d). However, such transformative initiatives are inherently laden with both costs and risks. Beyond readily quantifiable operational expenses, strategic change inevitably disrupts business operations, resulting in consequential losses in productivity and revenue. Moreover, the success of strategic change initiatives remains uncertain, raising the specter of outcomes in which the anticipated benefits fail to outweigh the associated costs, potentially jeopardizing the organization's future. Indeed, a significant proportion of change initiatives ultimately prove unsuccessful, potentially leading to detrimental consequences for the organization. The inherent risks associated with strategic change encompass both the challenges of the change process itself and the uncertainty about the organization's ability to adapt effectively to the post-change environment (Wang et al., 2019).

The tourism sector is characterized by high environmental uncertainty (Belias et al., 2022e). Indeed, the tourism industry is inherently vulnerable to environmental fluctuations (Belias et al., 2024; Zerva et al., 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic serves as a poignant example, with significant disruptions to tourism activities due to both mandated lockdowns and widespread travel anxieties among potential tourists (Belias

& Trihas, 2022; Ntalakos et al., 2022b,c,d). Furthermore, the hospitality sector must proactively adapt to the evolving challenges posed by climate change and other critical factors such as energy crises (Belias et al., 2022). These examples underscore the critical role of effective change management within the hospitality industry (Rossidis et al., 2021b; Belias et al., 2020). Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to successful change management within the hospitality sector has emerged as a critical area of inquiry. This research focuses on elucidating the interplay between environmental dynamics and the specific characteristics of the change process in determining the ultimate success of change initiatives within the hospitality industry (Elsharnouby & Elbanna, 2021).

Given the inherent uncertainty characteristic of the hospitality sector, a comprehensive understanding of the critical drivers of successful organizational change within this context is imperative. Despite its significance, this area of research remains relatively under-explored (Costa et al., 2018). Consequently, this study focuses on two key determinants of successful change within the hospitality sector: (1) the nature of strategic change initiatives and (2) the prevailing level of environmental uncertainty/hostility. These factors have been identified by Rossidis et al. (2021) as crucial success determinants warranting further empirical investigation to assess their impact on organizational change outcomes. This research aims to contribute valuable insights by empirically examining the role of these two variables in shaping organizational success. To address these research objectives, the following research questions are formulated:

*RQ 1.* Is the content of strategic change a significant positive predictor for the success of change?

*RQ 2.* Is the content of uncertainty and hostility of the external environment a significant negative predictor for the success of change?

*RQ3.* Is there a connection between the unfavorable forces at every stage of change (unfreezing, moving, and refreezing)?

*RQ4.* Is there a connection between the favorable forces on every stage of change (unfreezing, moving, and refreezing)?

This study aims to investigate the relationship between strategic change initiatives and the successful implementation of organizational change within the hospitality sector. Furthermore, the study seeks to examine the impact of environmental uncertainty and hostility on the successful implementation of organizational change initiatives.

As a result, the following research objectives are examined:

1. Describe the strategic changes that can be implemented in four and five-star hotels in Greece.
2. Estimate the level to which the uncertainty of the external environment can affect the successful implementation of an organizational change in four and five-star hotels in Greece.
3. Analyze how the hostility of the external environment can affect the successful implementation of an organizational change in four and five-star hotels in Greece.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. The effect of strategic change on the successful outcome of an organizational change**

Barker III and Duhaim (1997) conceptualized strategic change content by differentiating between changes at the corporate and business levels. Corporate-level changes encompass activities such as mergers and acquisitions, divestments, the creation of new divisions, market penetration strategies, and product

development. In contrast, business-level changes include discontinuing products or production lines, expanding into new markets, closing factories, relocating, and modernizing. In essence, strategic change content reflects the nature and scope of the change process. Environmental uncertainty, conversely, is characterized by frequent, unpredictable changes in the operating environment. The hospitality sector has experienced numerous unforeseen challenges in recent years, highlighting its vulnerability to such unpredictable shifts. Consequently, environmental uncertainty is defined as a state of the macro-environment characterized by significant and unpredictable changes (Ntalakos et al., 2022; Belias and Rossidis, 2024; Rossidis et al., 2020).

Conceptualizations of strategic change vary across the literature. Some scholars define it as an alteration in strategic dimensions, such as product portfolios, geographic markets, research and development activities, or investment levels (Bentley & Kehoe, 2020). Alternatively, strategic change can be viewed as a comprehensive transformation of resource allocation across strategic domains (Carpenter, 2000). This perspective underscores the role of strategy as a framework for resource selection and mobilization, emphasizing that strategic change fundamentally involves a shift in the organization's resource needs and business model. In essence, strategic change entails a dynamic evolution in resource acquisition patterns (Carpenter, 2000).

Effective strategic change requires clear alignment between the initiative and the organization's strategic priorities. Before implementation, strategic objectives must be clearly defined and communicated to all stakeholders, contingent upon a well-defined strategic planning process and a thorough understanding of the factors driving competitive advantage. The scope and magnitude of the change initiative significantly influence the resource allocation required for implementation and the potential impact on organizational performance (Ford & Greer, 2006). Moreover, while more challenging to implement, broad-based strategic changes tend to yield more substantial impacts on business outcomes compared to minor, incremental adjustments (Bentley & Kehoe, 2020).

Empirical evidence on the relationship between strategic change content and successful implementation within the hospitality sector remains limited. Ogaga (2015), in a quantitative study of 220 employees from 74 four- and five-star hotels, found that employee acceptance was higher when change initiatives focused on customer needs and workplace improvements, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful implementation. Furthermore, prior experience with successful change initiatives and effective communication of the change content to personnel were identified as significant predictors of successful change.

Iionita (2013), in a quantitative study of 148 managers and executives from small and medium-sized enterprises, including hotels, found that adequate resource allocation and employee participation in the change design process were crucial for increasing the likelihood of successful change implementation. Kessler et al. (2015), in a study of 225 hotel owners, managers, and executives, emphasized the critical role of management commitment and employee involvement in driving successful change initiatives. Successful change outcomes were associated with strong management focus on the change process and high levels of managerial confidence in the change.

Prior research examining the combined influence of strategic change and environmental uncertainty/hostility on successful organizational change implementation within the Greek hotel industry is

notably absent. The tourism sector constitutes a critical pillar of the Greek economy, contributing significantly to national GDP (20.8%) and employment (21.7%) (WTTC, 2019). To navigate the inherent uncertainties and crises, (such as the COVID-19 pandemic, war crisis, economic crisis, and environmental crisis), hospitality businesses, including hotels, must adapt by implementing a range of strategies, including the adoption of robust health and safety protocols, the integration of data and service management systems, a customer-centric approach, the utilization of technology, and a commitment to sustainable tourism practices (Varelas & Apostolopoulos, 2020).

Despite the critical importance of strategic change content as a predictor of successful change implementation, empirical research in this area remains limited. Moreover, existing research has largely neglected the perspectives of hotel employees on this crucial issue. Given the pivotal role of effective change management within the hospitality sector (Belias & Trihas, 2022), this study aims to investigate the following research hypotheses:

*H1: The content of strategic change is a significant positive predictor of the success of change*

## **2.2. The impact of the uncertainty and the hostility of the external environment on the successful outcome of an organizational change**

Dolnicar & Zare (2020) found that environmental uncertainty significantly impacts decision-making processes within the hospitality sector. Key challenges include indecisiveness, anxiety regarding prospects, and ultimately, suboptimal decision-making. Their analysis, which drew upon digital marketing metrics and case studies from renowned hotel chains such as Marriott, underscored the profound impact of a health pandemic in exacerbating environmental uncertainty and hindering effective change management. These findings align with the qualitative research by Abo-Murad and Abdullah (2019), which was conducted among 25 managers from 4- and 5-star Malaysian hotels. This study revealed that environmental uncertainty and hostility not only heighten anxiety among decision-makers but also permeate ranks of employees, potentially leading to decreased engagement and increased turnover during periods of organizational change. These negative consequences ultimately undermine the success of change initiatives.

Most of the existing research literature tends to focus on the negative impacts of environmental uncertainty on the success of organizational change. However, new studies have revealed that the relationship between environmental uncertainty and hotel performance might not be entirely negative and could be influenced by the organization's response and capabilities. Campo et al. (2014) argue that environmental uncertainty, rather than merely a barrier, can induce innovation and thereby improve competitiveness in unstable environments where organizations have established the right adaptive capacities. This viewpoint aligns with contingency theory, which posits that structural adaptability can enable organizations to achieve superior results (Darvishmotevali et al., 2020). Existing quantitative studies have exposed organizational agility as a potential mediating mechanism through which environmental uncertainty can be converted from a threat to an opportunity. Abdel-Aty and Deraz (2022) found that environmentally uncertain situations can lead to greater innovation in hotels at the product, process, organizational, and marketing levels, provided that organizational agility fully mediates this relationship. Likewise, Darvishmotevali et al. (2020) found that an uncertain environment can encourage both organizational creativity and agility, thereby facilitating problem-solving skills and ultimately leading to higher performance.

Additionally, the literature on organizational resilience indicates that hotels with strong strategic orientations and change management capabilities can turn an uncertain environment into a competitive advantage. According to López-Gamero et al. (2023), organizational agility and innovation synergistically enhance environmentally friendly business practices, leading to greater competitive advantage. Hence, uncertainty can lead to a positive transformation of the organization if it is equipped with the right capabilities. The main idea of this argument is that environmental uncertainty does not necessarily undermine the success of change. It depends on the organization's adaptive capabilities, strategic responses, and its capacity for innovation. The problem, however, is that developing these capabilities requires a significant investment of resources and strong leadership, which may be why many hotels still experience negative results when facing environmental uncertainty and hostility.

Further insights into the impact of environmental uncertainty and hostility on change management can be gleaned from the work of Laws & Priedeaux (2017) and Giannopoulou (2019). Laws & Priedeaux (2017), through quantitative research among 79 hotel managers in Washington D.C., and Giannopoulou (2019), through qualitative interviews with 12 managers and executives from Greek luxury hotels, identified two key consequences. Firstly, uncertainty can trigger fear and anxiety among employees, particularly when change initiatives involve downsizing or layoffs, which can lead to significant resistance to change. Secondly, it can precipitate radical and ill-conceived change initiatives, increasing the likelihood of negative outcomes. Given the limited empirical evidence on effective change management within the hospitality sector during periods of turbulence (Belias & Trihas, 2022), further investigation into this critical area is warranted. Consequently, the following research hypothesis is formulated:

*H2: Uncertainty and hostility of the external environment are significant negative predictors of the success of change*

### **2.3. The connection between the favorable and the unfavorable forces of the success of an organizational change**

Zand & Sorenson (1975) proposed a three-stage model of organizational change: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. Unfreezing involves preparing the organization for change by disrupting the existing equilibrium. The moving stage entails learning new behaviors and adapting to the changing environment. Finally, refreezing solidifies the new behaviors and integrates them into the organization's operating systems (Bahari & Syed, 2010). Each stage within this model is characterized by a dynamic interplay of driving and restraining forces. Drawing upon Lewin's theory, Zand & Sorenson (1975) emphasized that these forces can vary across stages. Consequently, the factors contributing to successful unfreezing may differ from those influencing successful movement and refreezing. This necessitates considering both driving and restraining forces within each stage of the change process. Zand & Sorenson (1975) posited that, in general, strong driving forces within each stage would positively correlate with successful change implementation, while strong restraining forces would negatively correlated with it. However, they acknowledged the possibility of mixed outcomes, in which driving forces in one stage may not correlate positively with overall success.

Recognizing the inherent unpredictability of these forces, Burnes (2004) (in Bahari & Nasirin, 2010) highlighted the critical importance of active and equal participation from all stakeholders for successful change implementation. Building on the framework of Zand & Sorenson (1975), Bahari & Nasirin (2010) developed a refined model that incorporates both internal and external forces, subsequently applying it to the

context of British local governments. To investigate the potential interrelationships among favorable and unfavorable forces across the three stages of change (unfreezing, moving, and refreezing), the following research hypotheses were formulated:

*H3: There is a positive connection between the favorable forces on every stage (unfreezing, moving, and refreezing).*

*H4: There is a positive connection between the unfavorable forces on every stage (unfreezing, moving, and refreezing).*

#### **2.4. Conceptual, theoretical, and practical model**

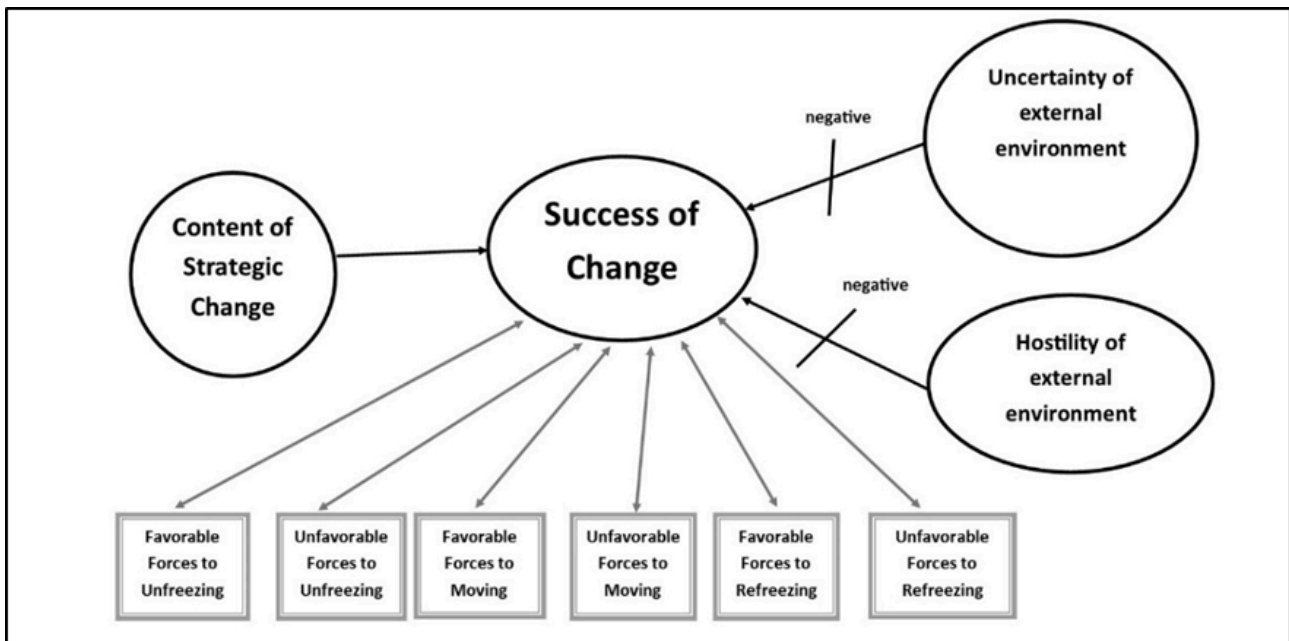
This study applies and empirically tests an integrative conceptual model within the Greek hospitality context. Drawing on established theoretical frameworks, the model examines how strategic change and environmental conditions shape the success of change in a sector characterized by pronounced turbulence. The "Success of Change in Hospitality Industry" model posits four key constructs: Content of Strategic Change, Uncertainty of the External Environment, Hostility of the External Environment, and Success of Change — the latter serving as the dependent variable. The model hypothesizes a positive relationship between strategic change content and change success, while both uncertainty and hostility are expected to exert a negative influence. The Success of Change construct is further delineated into six sub-factors representing Favorable and Unfavorable Forces across Unfreezing, Moving, and Refreezing stages, which interact dynamically within the overall model (Figure 1).

Drawing on Kurt Lewin's (1951) Force Field Analysis and Zand & Sorenson's (1975) conceptualization, organizational change is viewed as a shifting balance between driving forces (factors that facilitate change) and restraining forces (factors that resist it), each manifested differently across the three change stages. During unfreezing, favorable forces include clear management communication of the change rationale, recognition of performance gaps, leadership commitment, and external competitive pressures. In contrast, unfavorable forces comprise employee complacency and denial, fear of the unknown, vested interests in the status quo, cynicism rooted in past failures, and inadequate communication. During the moving stage, favorable forces encompass adequate resources and training, a supportive organizational culture, cross-functional collaboration, and early wins that demonstrate progress. In contrast, unfavorable forces include resource constraints, implementation obstacles, and employee stress from dual workloads, competing priorities, and active resistance. During refreezing, change is consolidated through reward system alignment, integration of new practices into routines, sustained leadership support, and cultural reinforcement; it is undermined by reversion to old habits, erosion of management attention, misaligned incentive systems, high employee turnover — particularly acute in hospitality — and environmental disruptions that divert attention and resources from change consolidation.

These driving and restraining forces are not random but are systematically shaped by two critical antecedents. Strategic change content — spanning corporate-level decisions (market entry, diversification, strategic alliances) and business-level actions (service innovation, process improvements, positioning strategies) — shapes force field dynamics by enhancing employee understanding and reducing ambiguity-based resistance when clearly communicated, by generating favorable forces when aligned with organizational capabilities and market needs, and by affecting the balance between enthusiasm and resistance depending on the magnitude of change. Environmental uncertainty and hostility — comprising

unpredictability, volatility, fierce competition, and resource scarcity — predominantly amplify restraining forces by increasing employee anxiety, constraining resources, complicating planning, and creating competing priorities. In resource-constrained contexts such as the Greek hospitality sector during periods of economic crisis, environmental turbulence manifests primarily as a threat, systematically undermining the success of change efforts. This integrative force-field framework thus delineates the theoretical bases through which organizational factors (strategic change content) and environmental conditions (uncertainty and hostility) systematically impact the forces operating throughout the organizational change process, with direct bearing on change management practices in the hospitality sector.

**Figure 1. The Success of Change in Hospitality Industry Model – Conceptual Framework**



Source: (Authors' Compilation)

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Participants and data collection

This study aims to investigate the application of change management principles through the lens of strategic human resource management within the Greek hospitality sector. Data were collected from employees working in four- and five-star hotels across Greece. The research sample comprises 513 adult participants, with no missing data. These participants were employed in 62 four- and five-star hotels, selected from a total of 2467 such establishments registered with the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels (2024). The Hellenic Chamber of Hotels serves as the official institutional consultant to the Greek government on tourism and hospitality matters (Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, 2024).

Data collection commenced with the distribution of electronic questionnaires to 345 hotel managers via email invitations. These invitations outlined the research objectives, emphasized the anonymity and voluntary nature of participation, and assured participants that data would be used solely for research purposes. All hotel employees were invited to participate, regardless of age, gender, nationality, work experience, position, or specialization. Of the 345 contacted, 152 hotel managers responded. Sixty-two hotels

consented to participate, 71 declined, and 19 did not respond. The final sample included 513 employees from the 62 participating hotels, representing a diverse range of departments including management, reception, housekeeping, food and beverage, finance, public relations, and maintenance. The sampling method employed was convenience sampling, prioritizing accessibility to the target population. Data collection was conducted electronically through Google Forms from September to December 2024, with questionnaires distributed to employees by their respective hotel managers.

### 3.2. The research instrument

The current research instrument consisted of three research tools that were used to measure the variables of the study: a) content of strategic change, b) uncertainty and hostility of the external environment, and c) success of change management. External environment uncertainty and hostility were measured by two scales. The first one was Miller & Droge's (1986) environmental uncertainty scale, which was designed to measure the degree of impending changes, mainly in terms of marketing practices and technological achievements, in the business environment, as well as the difficulty/weakness in predicting it. The measurement scale ranges through a 7-point Likert scale (1: Not at all, to 7: Completely) and it includes 5 items/questions (e.g. "Our firm must rarely change its marketing to keep with the market and competitions Vs Our firm must change its marketing practices extremely frequently"). Furthermore, Calantone and di Benedetto's (1994) environment hostility scale is used for measuring hostility in the external environment. The scale was designed to measure the existence of intense competition in the industry environment, the lack of opportunities, and the extent to which risky business practices are implemented. The measurement scale uses a 7-point Likert scale (1: Not at all, to 7: Completely) and it includes 4 items/questions (e.g. How would you characterize the external environment within which your firm operates? Very safe, little threat to the survival and well-being of the firm" Vs Very risky, a false step can mean my firm's undoing").

The content of strategic change was measured using Barker III & Duhaime's (1987) research, which Korra (2013) modified to align with changes in the Greek managerial environment; hence the current research used Korra's (2013) version. The data collection instrument measured the extent of change in strategy across both corporate and business levels. The measurement scale uses a 7-point Likert scale (1: Not at all, to 7: Fully) and consists of 4 items/questions. This scale is divided into two variables:

- (A) Corporate-level management actions: This includes long-term decisions and changes (for example, entering a new market or launching a new product) (1 item) ("Enter new geographical markets").
- (B) Business-level management actions: This includes the actions taken at the business-unit level, including changes to meet customer needs (3 items) (e.g., "Targeting in new market departments").

Finally, the success of change management is measured through Zand & Sorenson's (1975) measurement scale. It consists of three phases of change, during which favorable forces support its success. These three phases are:

1. Unfreezing: This is the initial stage where the change process is launched. This is the stage where management must improve employees' readiness and motivation to embrace the change program.
2. Moving: This is the change program itself, where the change is implemented
3. Refreezing: This is applied when the change has concluded; thus, the situation has to "freeze" to continue with the implementation of the rest of the strategic goals of the organization.

This instrument is measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1: "This sentence accurately depicts what is happening" to 5: "This sentence depicts exactly the opposite of what is happening"). There are 9 questions favorable to these powers (3 items/questions for Unfreezing favorable forces, 3 items/questions for Moving favorable forces, 3 items/questions for Refreezing favorable forces) (e.g., "Top and unit managers felt the problem was important to the company"). There are 9 corresponding questions unfavorable to these powers (3 items/questions for Unfreezing unfavorable forces, 3 items/questions for Moving unfavorable forces, 3 items/questions for Refreezing unfavorable forces) (e.g., "Unit managers could not state their problems clearly").

### **3.3. Data analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 25. A series of statistical techniques was employed. Exploratory factor analyses were performed on all scales and subscales to assess their underlying factor structures. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was utilized to evaluate the internal consistency reliability of all scales and subscales. The Shapiro-Wilk test, appropriate for sample sizes below 2000, was used to assess the normality of distribution for each scale. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated non-normal distributions for all scales. To address this and to investigate the research hypotheses, correlation and linear regression analyses were employed.

## **4. RESULTS**

### **4.1. Demographics analysis of the sample**

The sample comprised predominantly Greek nationals (97.3%, N = 513) with a slight male majority (50.7%). Participant ages ranged from under 30 years (11.3%) to over 50 years (25.3%), with the majority falling between 31 and 50 years (63.3%). Marital status varied, with married individuals constituting the largest group (58.9%), followed by singles (28.8%) and divorced individuals (12.3%). Educational attainment exhibited diversity. Participants with secondary education comprised 22.4%, while 26.3% had completed professional college. A significant proportion held higher education degrees: 16.6% had a technical college diploma, 15.6% a Bachelor's degree, 17% a Master's degree, and 2.1% a PhD.

Regarding employment status, 50.1% of the sample were permanently employed, while 49.9% were employed seasonally. Work experience within the hospitality sector was substantial, with 84.6% of participants having worked in the industry for over 5 years. Specifically, 4.1% had 1-2 years of experience, 11.3% had 3-5 years, 24.8% had 6-10 years, 26.7% had 10-20 years, and 33.1% had over 20 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Among their current hotel employees, 16.2% had 1-2 years of employment, 21.1% had 3-5 years, 23% had 6-10 years, 20.7% had 10-20 years, and 19.1% had worked at the hotel for over 20 years. The sample was evenly distributed across four- and five-star hotels, with 50.7% employed in four-star hotels and 49.3% in five-star hotels. Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the sample's demographic and employment characteristics.

**Table 1. Demographic and work characteristics of the sample**

		Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Male	260	50.7
	Female	253	49.3
<b>Age</b>	< 30	58	11.3
	31-40	148	28.8
	41-50	177	34.5
	> 50	130	25.3
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	148	28.8
	Married	302	58.9
	Divorced	63	12.3
<b>Work experience (in years)</b>	0-5	50	9.7
	6-10	78	15.2
	11-15	74	14.4
	16-20	91	17.7
	>20	220	42.9
<b>Type of employment</b>	Permanent position	257	50.1
	Seasonal position	256	49.9
<b>Years of employment in specific hotel unit</b>	1-2	83	16.2
	3-5	108	21.1
	6-10	118	23.0
	10-20	106	20.7
	>20	98	19.1
<b>Years of employment in the hotel industry</b>	1-2	21	4.1
	3-5	58	11.3
	6-10	127	24.8
	10-20	137	26.7
	>20	170	33.1
<b>Level of education</b>	Secondary education	115	22.4
	Professional college (IEK)	135	26.3
	Technological college (ATEI)	85	16.6
	Bachelor's (AEI)	80	15.6
	Master's	87	17.0
	PhD	11	2.1
<b>Hotel classification</b>	5-stars	253	49.3
	4-stars	260	50.7

#### 4.2. Explanatory factor analysis

In the first model (Uncertainty and hostility of the external environment), data were deemed appropriate for inclusion [KMO = .85, Bartlett's  $\chi^2$  (28) = 1600.08,  $p < .0001$ ]. The unrotated model extracted a single factor, accounting for 48.20% of the observed variance. Analysis without rotation was chosen because all types of data rotation methods (Varimax or Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization) did not provide an improved

final solution. Item 5, “The production/service technology and its impact on the change process,” was excluded because it had a low factor loading ( $< .4$ ). The final solution comprised one factor with seven items. Regarding the Content of strategic change, the data for the third model of factor analysis showed a good fit [KMO = .69, Bartlett’s  $\chi^2(6) = 1016.81, p < .0001$ ], and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin score was accepted because it marginally fell within the minimum threshold point set at .70. The model extracted one factor which accounted for 65.86% of the observed variance. All items are loaded onto a single factor without rotation. For the final part of the questionnaire, “Success of change”, a series of six-factor analyses were performed. Apart from the first variable (“Favorable forces for unfreezing”) where the data did not have a good fit in the model, all the other variables were accepted as the item’s loading was acceptable for each factor. For the last part of the questionnaire, "Success of change", a series of six-factor analyses was conducted. A significant and theoretically important exception was the first subscale, "Favorable forces for unfreezing", which did not fit the factor analysis model. The items of this subscale failed to load satisfactorily onto a single, coherent factor; the construct, as operationalized by Zand & Sorenson (1975), may not be psychometrically a unified dimension in the Greek hotel context. It is a significant limitation because the unfreezing stage is a central and fundamental part of Lewin's (1951) three-step change model; without proper unfreezing, the moving and refreezing stages cannot be carried out effectively. Therefore, "Favorable forces for unfreezing" was removed from the SEM analysis and from hypothesis testing, and the results about the unfreezing stage should be viewed with great caution. All other subscales exhibited acceptable factor structures, with item loadings reaching a minimum of .40. More details are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability of scales and subscales, mean scores, normality, and factor analysis of dimensions of the study

	Factor Analysis	Cronbach reliability (alpha)	N of items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov*		
	Loadings					Value	df	p
<b>Uncertainty and hostility of the environment</b>		.789	7	3.83	1.180	.115	513	.000
Item 1	.695							
Item 2	.713							
Item 3	.668							
Item 4	.625							
Item 6	.753							
Item 7	.825							
Item 8	.830							
<b>The content of strategic change</b>		.807	4	5.59	1.085	.113	513	.000
Item 1	.808							
Item 2	.898							
Item 3	.868							
Item 4	.649							
<b>Success of change: 2. Unfavorable forces for unfreezing</b>		.829	3	2.52	1.140	.164	513	.000
Item 4	.827							
Item 5	.869							
Item 6	.901							
<b>Success of change: 3. Favorable forces for moving</b>		.756	3	3.60	.839	.124	513	.000
Item 7	.676							
Item 8	.881							
Item 9	.900							
<b>Success of change: 4. Unfavorable forces for moving</b>		.747	3	2.51	.993	.109	513	.000
Item 10	.633							
Item 11	.903							
Item 12	.900							
<b>Success of change: 5. Favorable forces for refreezing</b>		.867	3	3.76	.803	.125	513	.000
Item 13	.870							
Item 14	.914							
Item 15	.883							
<b>Success of change: 6. Unfavorable forces for refreezing</b>		.859	3	2.51	1.059	.144	513	.000

	Factor Analysis	Cronbach reliability (alpha)	N of items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Kolmogorov-Smirnov*
Item 16		.830				
Item 17		.904				
Item 18		.915				

Note: \* with Lilliefors significance correction; cut-off criteria:  $p < .05$

### 4.3. Reliability results and mean scores

Table 2 presents the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients (Goforth, 2015) for all scales and subscales, along with mean scores and normality assessments. Overall, acceptable levels of reliability were observed across all constructs. "Unfavorable forces for moving" exhibited the lowest reliability coefficient ( $\alpha=.747$ ), although it still fell within acceptable limits. Conversely, "Favorable forces for refreezing" demonstrated the highest reliability coefficient ( $\alpha=.867$ ). Descriptive statistics revealed that hotel employees perceived the external environment as marked by significant levels of hostility and uncertainty. Furthermore, the analysis indicated a high prevalence of strategic change initiatives, encompassing both business-level and corporate-level alterations. However, the findings suggest that the success of these change initiatives was limited, with the data indicating a dominance of unfavorable forces within the change process.

Importantly, no reliability coefficient is reported for 'Favorable forces for unfreezing', because this subscale did not meet an adequate factor structure and was therefore excluded from subsequent analyses. This exclusion means that the favorable dimension of the unfreezing stage — the phase in which employees are prepared for change and initial resistance is overcome — could not be empirically assessed in the present study. Readers should bear this in mind when interpreting findings related to the unfreezing stage, as the results reflect only the unfavorable (resistance) dimension of that phase.

### 4.4. Hypothesis testing

To test the research hypotheses, a two-stage analytical approach was used. Given the non-normal distribution of the data (results of the Shapiro-Wilk test showed  $p < .05$  for all scales), nonparametric Spearman's rho correlations and linear regression analyses were conducted. Afterward, to better support the hypothesis testing, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was performed using maximum likelihood estimation. The SEM method gives several advantages from a methodological point of view: (1) it allows for the testing of all hypothesized relationships within the theoretical framework at the same time, (2) it provides an assessment of the overall model fit, and (3) it allows measurement error to be controlled. This thorough analytical strategy provides triangulation of the results and enhances the credibility of the inferences.

#### Structural Equation Model Fit

The structural equation model demonstrated an acceptable to excellent fit across multiple indices. The chi-square statistic was significant ( $\chi^2 = 59.29$ ,  $df = 10$ ,  $p < .001$ ), which is common in models with larger sample sizes. The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/df = 5.929$ ) was borderline acceptable. More importantly, the model achieved excellent fit on the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.961), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI = 0.953), and Normed Fit Index (NFI = 0.953), all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.95. The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = 0.909) indicated acceptable fit above the 0.90 threshold. The Root Mean

Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = 0.115) clearly exceeding the widely accepted threshold of 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) and even the more lenient upper bound of 0.10 sometimes applied to complex models (MacCallum et al., 1996). The authors acknowledge this as a genuine limitation of the present model, warranting cautious interpretation. While the elevated RMSEA does not invalidate the findings, it indicates that the model may not reproduce the observed covariance structure with full precision. Possible sources of misfit include the use of composite scale scores rather than individual items, the relatively small degrees of freedom, and potentially omitted pathways or unmeasured constructs. Consequently, the results should be regarded as providing preliminary empirical support for the theoretical framework rather than as definitive validation of the model. Replication with item-level indicators and alternative structural specifications is encouraged. More details are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Structural Equation Model Fit Indices**

Fit Index	Value	Acceptable Threshold	Assessment
$\chi^2$ (Chi-square)	59.29	----	-----
Degrees of Freedom (df)	10	----	-----
$\chi^2/df$ ratio	5.929	<5.0	Borderline
p-value	<0.001	<0.05	Significant
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.961	>0.90	Excellent
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.909	>0.90	Acceptable
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.115	<0.08	Moderate
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.953	>0.90	Excellent
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.893	>0.90	Acceptable
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.953	>0.90	Excellent

### Hypothesis H1: Strategic Change Content as a Predictor of Change Success

Initial correlation analyses revealed that strategic change content was significantly associated with success dimensions. Spearman correlations showed moderate negative correlations with unfavorable forces for unfreezing ( $\rho = -.52$ ,  $p < .01$ ), moving ( $\rho = -.45$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and refreezing ( $\rho = -.45$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that well-defined strategic change reduces resistance. Conversely, strategic change content demonstrated moderate positive correlations with favorable forces for moving ( $\rho = .29$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and refreezing ( $\rho = .29$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Five linear regression models were used to examine predictive relationships. Strategic change content significantly predicted all dimensions of change success. The models explained between 7.8% and 27.6% of variance: unfavorable forces for unfreezing ( $R^2 = .276$ ,  $\beta = -.55$ ,  $p < .01$ ), favorable forces for moving ( $R^2 = .084$ ,  $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ), unfavorable forces for moving ( $R^2 = .218$ ,  $\beta = -.43$ ,  $p < .01$ ), favorable forces for refreezing ( $R^2 = .078$ ,  $\beta = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and unfavorable forces for refreezing ( $R^2 = .216$ ,  $\beta = -.45$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

The structural equation model confirmed and extended these findings, revealing that strategic change content exerts significant effects across all change stages (Table 4). Strategic change positively influenced favorable forces for moving ( $\beta = 0.257$ ,  $z = 6.853$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and refreezing ( $\beta = 0.194$ ,  $z = 5.333$ ,  $p < .001$ ), demonstrating that clear strategic direction positively influences the drivers of change. Simultaneously, strategic change significantly reduced unfavorable forces across all three stages: unfreezing ( $\beta = -0.428$ ,  $z =$

-9.742,  $p < .001$ ), moving ( $\beta = -0.300$ ,  $z = -7.726$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and refreezing ( $\beta = -0.336$ ,  $z = -8.129$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The strongest effect was observed in reducing resistance during the unfreezing stage ( $\beta = -0.428$ ), suggesting that well-communicated strategic change is particularly effective in overcoming initial resistance to change initiatives.

The present study has confirmed Hypothesis H1, and therefore, the content of strategic change has been is a statistically significant positive predictor of success in change. Correlation, regression, and SEM results all agree with one another, thereby increasing the validity of the conclusion that strategic decisions of hotel managers, such as market expansion, new service launches, and the business-level actions aimed at meeting customers' needs, have a positive impact in two ways, i.e., they increase the favorable forces and at the same time decrease the unfavorable forces. These findings support the theoretical perspective of Zand & Sorenson (1975), who maintain that strong driving forces during the unfreezing, moving, and refreezing stages lead to a successful change.

**Table 4. Structural Path Coefficients for H1 (Strategic Change → Success of Change)**

Dependent Variable	$\beta$ (Coefficient)	Std. Error	z-value	p-value
Favorable Forces for Moving	0.257	0.038	6.853	<0.001
Favorable Forces for Refreezing	0.194	0.036	5.333	<0.001
Unfavorable Forces for Unfreezing	-0.428	0.044	-9.742	<0.001
Unfavorable Forces for Moving	-0.300	0.039	-7.726	<0.001
Unfavorable Forces for Refreezing	-0.336	0.041	-8.129	<0.001

### **Hypothesis H2: Environmental Uncertainty and Hostility as Predictors of Change Success**

Spearman correlation analyses revealed significant positive associations between environmental uncertainty/hostility and unfavorable forces across all change stages: unfreezing ( $\rho = .39$ ,  $p < .01$ ), moving ( $\rho = .46$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and refreezing ( $\rho = .47$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Environmental uncertainty demonstrated a low negative correlation with favorable forces for refreezing ( $\rho = -.23$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while the relationship with favorable forces for moving was non-significant ( $\rho = -.01$ ,  $p = .589$ ).

Linear regression models demonstrated that environmental uncertainty/hostility significantly predicted four of the five success dimensions, explaining between 5.6% and 26.6% of variance. Specifically, environmental uncertainty increased unfavorable forces for unfreezing ( $R^2 = .198$ ,  $\beta = .43$ ,  $p < .01$ ), moving ( $R^2 = .266$ ,  $\beta = .43$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and refreezing ( $R^2 = .259$ ,  $\beta = .46$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while decreasing favorable forces for refreezing ( $R^2 = .056$ ,  $\beta = -.16$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The model predicting favorable forces for moving was non-significant ( $p = .589$ ).

The structural equation model provided comprehensive support for the detrimental effects of environmental uncertainty on change success (Table 5). Environmental uncertainty significantly increased unfavorable forces across all three change stages: unfreezing ( $\beta = 0.327$ ,  $z = 8.347$ ,  $p < .001$ ), moving ( $\beta = 0.331$ ,  $z = 9.530$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and refreezing ( $\beta = 0.352$ ,  $z = 9.533$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The magnitude of these effects was substantial and remarkably consistent across stages, with the strongest impact observed during the

refreezing stage ( $\beta = 0.352$ ). Additionally, environmental uncertainty negatively influenced favorable forces for refreezing ( $\beta = -0.151$ ,  $z = -5.371$ ,  $p < .001$ ), further undermining change institutionalization of change.

Various factors create environmental uncertainty and hostility in the hospitality industry. These sources include erratic client behavior, supplier dynamics, competition pressures, external events such as financial crises and pandemics, and a lack of knowledge management dissemination from management to employees (Koseoglu et al., 2013; Long et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2011). The consistent findings across analytical approaches strongly support Hypothesis H2: environmental uncertainty and hostility are significant negative predictors of change success. These findings are consistent with studies showing that environmental uncertainty harms organizational outcomes (Oyeku et al., 2020; Elbanna & Alhwarai, 2012; Darvishmotevali et al., 2020). The particularly strong impact in the freezing phase or refreezing phase ( $\beta = 0.352$ ) indicates that environmental turbulence is the primary factor disrupting attempts to institutionalize and maintain changes in an organization.

**Table 5. Structural Path Coefficients for H2 (Environmental Uncertainty → Success of Change)**

Dependent Variable	$\beta$ (Coefficient)	Std. Error	z-value	p-value
Favorable Forces for Refreezing	-0.151	0.028	-5.371	<0.001
Unfavorable Forces for Unfreezing	0.327	0.039	8.347	<0.001
Unfavorable Forces for Moving	0.331	0.035	9.530	<0.001
Unfavorable Forces for Refreezing	0.352	0.037	9.533	<0.001

### Hypothesis H3: Connections among Favorable Forces

Spearman correlation analysis revealed a significant, strong positive correlation between favorable forces for moving and unfreezing ( $\rho = .57$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating a substantial interconnection among positive drivers across change stages. The structural equation model further confirmed this relationship, demonstrating a significant moderate positive correlation between favorable forces for moving and refreezing ( $r = 0.303$ ,  $z = 8.838$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding supports for Hypothesis H3, suggesting that favorable forces are consistent across change stages. Organizations that successfully generate positive momentum during the moving phase are more likely to maintain supportive conditions during the refreezing phase. These results align with previous research by Zand & Sorenson (1975) and Bahari & Nasirin (2010), emphasizing the interconnected nature of driving forces throughout the change process.

### Hypothesis H4: Connections among Unfavorable Forces

Spearman correlation analyses demonstrated very strong positive associations among unfavorable forces across all change stages. Unfavorable forces for unfreezing exhibited significant correlations with both moving ( $\rho = .75$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and refreezing ( $\rho = .74$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Additionally, unfavorable forces for moving correlated strongly with refreezing ( $\rho = .75$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These exceptionally high correlations indicate substantial interconnection among resistance forces.

The structural equation model confirmed these patterns with all correlations reaching high statistical significance (Table 6): unfavorable forces for unfreezing with moving ( $r = 0.451$ ,  $z = 10.482$ ,  $p < .001$ ),

unfavorable forces for unfreezing with refreezing ( $r = 0.459$ ,  $z = 10.154$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and unfavorable forces for moving with refreezing ( $r = 0.422$ ,  $z = 10.422$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Notably, these correlations produced the highest z-values in the entire model ( $z > 10$ ), underscoring the robust and pervasive nature of resistance forces. These findings provide strong support for Hypothesis H4, demonstrating that unfavorable forces are highly interconnected across change stages.

All methodological approaches have confirmed that resistance forces are a systemic, ongoing "natural" phenomenon within organizations. A hotel that faces resistance to change in the unfreezing stage is very likely to face the same resistance in the moving and refreezing stages, and it may even intensify. Such stubborn resistance, therefore, underscores the decisive importance of timely intervention. Human resource managers who are aware of this should, from the very beginning, actively communicate with and involve employees in the change process rather than hiding important information or waiting until the last moment. By convincing employees of the need for change and the advantages it might bring, managers can increase employee responsiveness and make changes run smoothly. These results are consistent with the theoretical frameworks of Zand & Sorenson (1975) and Bahari & Nasirin (2010), which emphasize the identification and management of restraining forces as a vital condition for successful change.

**Table 6. Correlations between Success Dimensions (Hypotheses H3 & H4)**

Hypothesis	Variable 1	Variable 2	Rho (correlation)	Std. Error	z-value	p-value
H3	Favorable Forces for Moving	Favorable Forces for Refreezing	0.303	0.034	8.838	<0.001
H4	Unfavorable Forces for Unfreezing	Unfavorable Forces for Moving	0.451	0.043	10.482	<0.001
H4	Unfavorable Forces for Unfreezing	Unfavorable Forces for Refreezing	0.459	0.045	10.154	<0.001
H4	Unfavorable Forces for Moving	Unfavorable Forces for Refreezing	0.422	0.040	10.422	<0.001

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This study, conducted with a sample of 513 employees from four- and five-star Greek hotels, investigated three primary research objectives. The first objective sought to examine the predictive relationship between strategic change content and successful organizational change outcomes. This objective aligns with existing literature (e.g., Ogaga, 2015; Iionita, 2013), which emphasizes the critical role of strategic change content in determining the success of change management initiatives. The findings supported this hypothesis, demonstrating that strategically aligned change initiatives encompassing both corporate-level and business-level adjustments, are crucial for successful implementation. Effective implementation necessitates clear communication, employee motivation, and the identification of new opportunities arising from the change process (Bentley & Kehoe, 2020). Such an approach fosters employee engagement, enhances the sustainability of the change effort, and ultimately contributes to positive organizational outcomes.

Furthermore, the study found that environmental uncertainty and hostility significantly predicted unfavorable forces within the change process, negatively impacting favorable forces and ultimately hindering overall change success. While these external factors pose challenges, as highlighted by Belias & Trihas (2022), employees can recognize the need for change in today's dynamic, competitive market. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, necessitated significant adaptations in guest interactions, technology utilization, and operational procedures to ensure employee and guest safety (Belias et al., 2021). Recognizing the interconnectedness between organizational change and external environmental pressures is crucial for successful adaptation.

Consistent with the findings of Laws & Priedeaux (2017) and Giannopoulou (2019), the study underscored the negative impact of environmental uncertainty and hostility on change success. Giannopoulou (2019) emphasizes the critical role of management in effectively communicating the rationale for change, explaining how external pressures necessitate specific adjustments and highlighting the positive outcomes these changes will bring for both the organization and its employees. The study also revealed that a significant proportion of participants perceived a general resistance to change within their respective hotels. Addressing this resistance requires proactive efforts by management to create a more change-supportive organizational culture that fosters employee engagement and motivation.

### **5.1. Theoretical and practical contributions**

This study provides valuable insights for both academia and practitioners within the hospitality industry. Firstly, the empirical findings establish a significant positive relationship between the content of strategic change and the successful implementation of organizational change within the hotel context. This finding challenges conventional wisdom, which often overlooks the crucial role of strategically aligned change initiatives within the hospitality sector. By demonstrating the importance of strategically planned and executed changes, this research provides a valuable framework for practitioners, guiding them in identifying and implementing change initiatives that are more likely to succeed. This finding is consistent with strategic management literature's emphasis on the importance of well-defined change initiatives. It extends it by providing direct empirical evidence from the Greek hotel sector — a context that has received limited attention in organizational change research. The results offer actionable guidance for practitioners seeking to improve the success rate of change initiatives in turbulent hospitality environments.

This study makes a major theoretical contribution by revealing that both favorable and unfavorable forces serve as crucial mediating mechanisms through which strategic change initiatives lead to organizational success. Building on Lewin's (1951) force field theory and Zand & Sorenson's (1975) operationalization, this study provides empirical evidence from the Greek hotel sector showing that both favorable and unfavorable forces constitute important mechanisms through which strategic change initiatives lead to organizational success. Our research indicates that strategic change content alone is not a direct determinant of the result; rather, it influences the outcome through the force field configurations. Specifically, a clear, well-communicated strategic change decision simultaneously promotes favorable forces (such as increased employee understanding, resource mobilization, and early wins) and minimizes unfavorable forces (e.g., resistance, obstacles, cynicism). Moreover, favorable and unfavorable forces mediate the relationship between strategic change decisions and change success. In addition, environmental uncertainty and hostility serve as moderators that can either intensify or diminish these relationships. For instance, in stable

environments, strategic change has a stronger positive impact on changing employees' attitudes and increasing the number of supportive forces, and also a stronger negative impact on the number of resistance, obstacles, cynicism, etc.

On the other hand, in the Greek hotel industry during the economic crisis, environmental factors have amplified the restraining forces and constrained the driving forces, thereby attenuating the positive effects of well-planned changes. The empirical application of this integrative framework in the Greek hotel sector demonstrates that change success depends on the interplay among strategic decisions, organizational force fields, and environmental conditions. This dynamic that has been theorized but rarely tested empirically in Southern European hospitality contexts. By applying and testing these established theoretical constructs in a specific and underexplored empirical setting, the study offers a contextual contribution that can inform both future research on boundary conditions in organizational change and the practical decisions of hotel managers seeking to navigate environmental turbulence. The proposed framework contributes to a deeper understanding beyond simple direct-effect models, revealing that success in change depends on the complex interplay among strategic decisions, organizational force fields, and environmental conditions. By showing these processes explicitly, the study provides theoretical bases for further research on the boundary conditions and contingency factors in organizational change while at the same time helping managers diagnose the dynamics of the force fields and adjust change strategies according to the environmental situations.

Furthermore, the study highlights the detrimental impact of environmental uncertainty and hostility on the success of organizational change. This finding underscores the need for hotels to develop robust strategies to navigating unpredictable, challenging external environments. While acknowledging the inevitable presence of external shocks, the study emphasizes the importance of proactive adaptation and a flexible organizational structure. Key strategies for mitigating the negative impact of environmental uncertainty include:

- Developing a culture of continuous learning and adaptation: This involves fostering a learning environment that encourages employees to embrace change and develop the skills to navigate uncertainty (Ntalakos et al., 2025; Ntalakos et al., 2024a,b).
- Investing in employee training and development: This includes training programs that equip managers with the tools and knowledge to effectively assess and respond to environmental changes, such as through scenario planning and risk management techniques.
- Promoting employee empowerment and autonomy: Decentralized organizational structures can empower employees to respond effectively to unforeseen challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities.
- Cultivating a diverse and inclusive workforce: A diverse workforce brings a wider range of perspectives, experiences, and cultural insights, enhancing the organization's ability to adapt and innovate in response to changing market dynamics (Viterouli et al., 2025; Belias et. 2025a,b; ).

Finally, the study emphasizes the critical role of effective communication in driving successful change implementation. Open and transparent communication channels are essential for building trust, addressing employee concerns, and ensuring that all stakeholders understand the rationale for change and the potential benefits of the proposed initiatives. By effectively communicating the strategic rationale for change and empowering employees to participate in the change process actively, hotel managers can significantly

increase the likelihood of successful change implementation and enhance the organization's long-term competitiveness.

## 5.2. Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study, while providing valuable insights, is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, as this study employed a quantitative research methodology, it is inherently subject to the limitations inherent in such approaches (Queiros et al., 2017). Future research should adopt a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Secondly, the current study focused solely on employees within four- and five-star hotels. Future research should expand the scope to include employees from a wider range of hospitality establishments, including one-, two-, and three-star hotels, as well as other sectors such as hostels and bed-and-breakfasts. This broader perspective would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the generalizability of the findings across different segments of the hospitality industry. Finally, the study's focus on high-end hotels may have limited the generalizability of the findings. Employees in luxury hotels often possess specialized skills and experience compared to those in lower-rated establishments. Future research should investigate potential variations in employee perceptions and responses across different hotel categories.

A further and theoretically significant limitation concerns the psychometric performance of the 'Favorable forces for unfreezing' subscale. This is not a minor technical issue. The unfreezing stage is the foundational phase of Lewin's (1951) three-step change model. Those researchers who have made the idea of resistance to change famous are always referring to the unfreezing stage. The failure to accurately gauge the favorable aspects of this stage means that the present research identifies only the resistance side of the unfreezing process, without empirically testing the driving forces at this critical juncture. This result skewing has direct implications for how the next step is interpreted. Subsequent investigations should focus on developing and validating hospitality industry-specific instruments to measure favorable unfreezing forces.

A final limitation concerns the fit of the structural equation model. Although three fit indices achieved excellent values (CFI = 0.961, GFI = 0.953, NFI = 0.953), the RMSEA of 0.115 clearly exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) and should be acknowledged explicitly rather than dismissed. This level of misfit suggests that, despite being theoretically coherent and yielding significant parameter estimates, the model does not reproduce the observed data with the precision required for full structural validation. Contributing factors may include the reliance on composite scores as manifest variables, cross-sectional data constraints, and the possible omission of relevant mediating or moderating pathways. Future research should therefore pursue item-level confirmatory factor analysis, test alternative or competing model specifications, and employ longitudinal designs to provide more rigorous empirical support for the proposed relationships.

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