



Service Quality And Perceived Service Quality In The Maritime Business Post-Covid-19

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Abstract

This study aims to recognize the relationship between the quality of service provided and the perceived quality of the service supplied in the maritime industry after COVID-19. The SERVQUAL Model consists of five key service dimensions: Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, and Responsiveness. Service quality is a form of the SERVQUAL Model. In recent years, there has been a proliferation of written material on various SERVQUAL Model domains about the maritime industry. In addition, modern researchers have gone to great lengths to investigate the SERVQUAL Model concerning the marine sector. Nevertheless, it is critical to be aware of its implications for society. In light of this, the impact of perceived service quality on customer satisfaction will be discussed throughout this paper. This study is based on a systematic literature review to identify existing approaches in maritime business and to defend and demonstrate the necessity of an organizational resilience management philosophy in marine business management, which aids organizational survival.

Keywords: Service Quality, Perceived Service Quality, Maritime Business, and COVID-19

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2020, a total of 113,010 positive cases were recorded in Malaysia, along with 471 deaths caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the entire world. Malaysia is not an exception in experiencing the impact of this epidemic. The country's economic growth trajectory has also been altered as a direct result of the health crisis. As a result of the various phases of the Movement Control Order (MCO) that went into effect on March 18, 2020, to prevent the COVID-19 outbreak from spreading further, several economic sectors were temporarily shut down, and the number of hours that they were open was cut back. It was done to prevent the outbreak from spreading further. The economy of Malaysia shrunk by 5.6% in the year 2020, which is a worse performance than the 4.4% decline seen in the previous year.

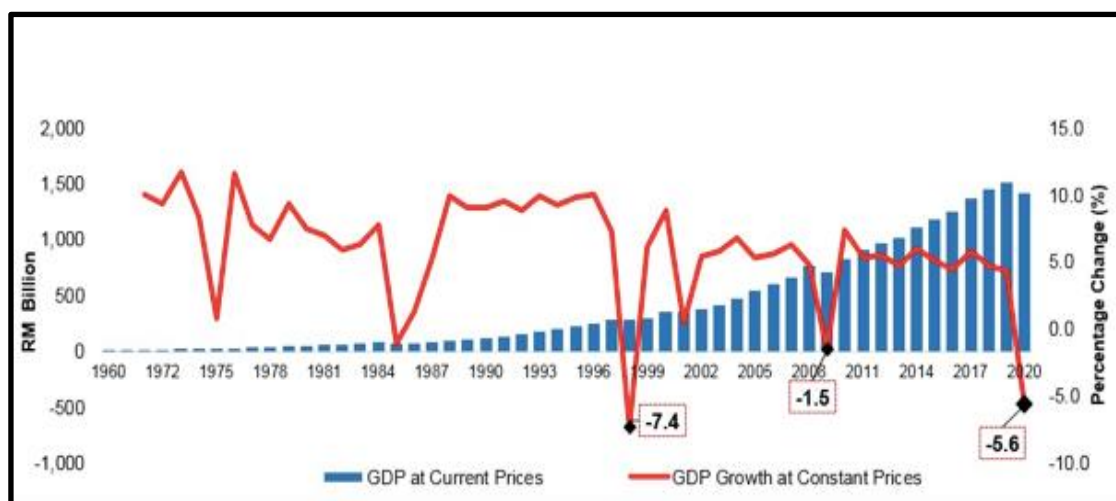


Figure 1: National GDP, 1960-2020

Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia official portal (2021)

In general, every industry posted a decrease in revenue growth, with the Services sector posting a slowdown of 5.5% (2019: 6.2%), the Manufacturing sector posting a decline of 2.6% (2019: 3.8%), and the agriculture industry posting a drop of 2.2% (2019: 2.0%). Nevertheless, two other sectors, mining, quarrying, and construction, each experienced a decline in the double digits, with negative percentages of 19.4% (2019: 0.4%) and 10.6% (2019: -0.6%), respectively.

The states' economic performance contributed to the country's overall growth, driven by consumer spending. The overall performance of each state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) can be affected in various ways by differences in the product concentrations between states. It is especially true in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak crisis. Compared to 2019, the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) experienced a decline of RM80,4 billion. Selangor recorded the highest contraction at the state level with RM18.3 billion, followed by W.P. Kuala Lumpur with RM17.5 billion, Sarawak with RM9.6 billion, and Sabah with RM8.1 billion. The national reduction value was reduced by 66.7% as a direct result of the combined efforts of these four states.

The entire world's economy has always been significantly influenced by maritime trade. It can be seen in the rising value and overall volume of cargo transported over the past few decades (UNCTAD, 2021). The maritime business trade is an essential component in creating the global GDP. The marine movement of container terminals, which can be viewed as an integrator of various modes of transport, plays a crucial role in this chain (Charampowicz, 2022).

These days, service quality and perceived service quality are considered to be one of the most important concepts in marketing. It has been demonstrated that marketing can only function normally with these concepts. In addition, a significant number of researchers from the past have looked into these ideas (Sasser et al., 1978; Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1982). They suggested that measuring the service quality from the customer's point of view was much more challenging than evaluating sound quality. The perceived service quality needs to be judged according to each consumer's expectations. The feelings of pleasure or disappointment that a person experiences as a result of contrasting a product's perceived performance or outcome with their expectations can also be referred to as satisfaction (Kotler & Keller, 2009). There needs to be more research that has been done concerning evaluating the perceived service quality of the maritime industry after COVID-19. This hole can be found in the literature. As a result, this study aims to modify a model to evaluate the quality of service that customers believe they receive from maritime companies. In the era that follows COVID-19, the purpose of this paper is to discuss the connection between the SERVQUAL Model and the perceived service quality in the maritime industry.

2.0 SERVICE QUALITY MODEL (SERVQUAL MODEL)

It is believed that Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) were responsible for developing the SERVQUAL Model, also referred to as the Service Quality Model. They came up with the vital service dimensions included in the SERVQUAL Model: reliability, assurance, tangibles, responsiveness, and empathy, respectively. "Service Quality Dimensions" refers to these five essential service dimensions. The SERVQUAL Model is a multi-dimensional research process designed to measure the gap scores between the expected and perceptions of service quality of customers based on the Model's five dimensions. The goal of this research is to improve customer satisfaction and business performance. The SERVQUAL Model refers to the five (5) aspects of service quality used to determine whether or not a company is meeting the expectations of its customers. The SERVQUAL Model classifies the various facets or aspects of service quality, referred to as the five (5) essential dimensions of service quality. The developers of the Model at first suggested ten different sizes of service quality; however, after further consideration, many specialists decided to settle on only five (5) of those dimensions. The Model is also referred to by the acronym RATER, derived from the initial capital letter of each dimension or component. It is another common name for the Model. After the gaps have been measured, however, this Model will suggest the most common causes of problems with the quality of the service.

The people responsible for developing the SERVQUAL Model initially proposed ten different aspects of service quality. These aspects included reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, customer knowledge, and tangibles. The following is a list of the ten components contributing to service quality.

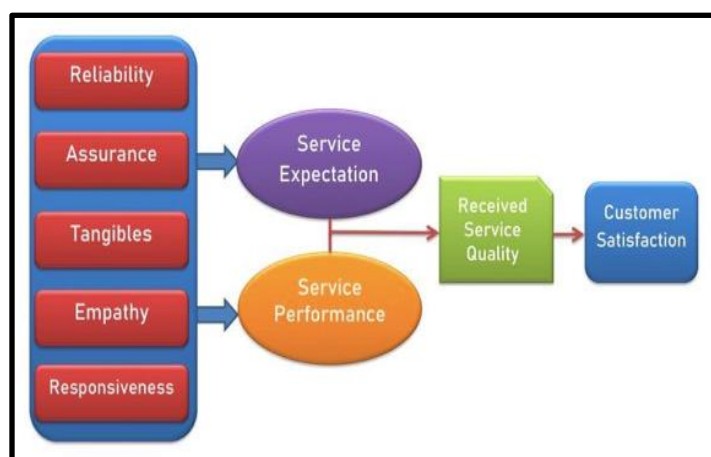


Figure 2: Five (5) Dimensions of Service Quality – SERVQUAL Model

Source: [https://newsmoor.com/servqual-model-five-key-service-dimensions-servqual-gaps-reasons/\(2022\)](https://newsmoor.com/servqual-model-five-key-service-dimensions-servqual-gaps-reasons/(2022))

2.1 Reliability

One of the most critical aspects of the SERVQUAL Model is reliability, which verifies an organization's ability to deliver accurate, timely, and credible services. Consistency is one of the most critical factors in getting our product to our customers on time and in perfect condition. You are obligated to honor your commitment to providing the service promptly and accurately, just as you promised to the customer.

2.2 Assurance

Establishing trust and credibility with the target audience is essential in assuring them. It is dependent on the employee's level of professionalism, as well as their level of technical knowledge, practical communication skills, courtesy, credibility, and competency. In addition, it depends on the employee's level of technical expertise. Because of this, the company will be able to earn the trust and credibility of its customers as a result of its skills.

The assurance dimension comprises four components: competence, courtesy, credibility, and safety and security. First, having the necessary knowledge and skills is essential to being competent. The characteristics of friendliness, politeness, respect, and consideration shown by individuals who provide customer service are collectively called "courtesy." The organization's credibility benefits from the staff members' high trustworthiness, believability, and honesty. To summarise, security denotes the absence of danger, risk, or unpredictability in one's life.

2.3 Tangibles

Examples of tangibles include the physical facilities, the appearance of the employees, the equipment, the machines, and the information system. It strongly emphasizes making the materials and the physical facilities easier to access.

2.4 Compassion and understanding

To demonstrate empathy for a person or group, one must concentrate intently on that person or group to provide a service that stands out as caring and distinctive. In certain parts of the world, providing individualized service to every one of a business's clients is an attitude that is considered necessary. It is also an excellent method for satisfying the psychological needs of customers and increasing their confidence, trust, and loyalty to a brand. Because of the lack of empathy displayed by some of the company's employees, the business risks losing customers. As a result, it must foster compassion among its workforce.

In addition to this, empathy is the result of the following elements working together:

- Access (physical and social) – Availability of services and resources (Approachable and easy contact).
- Communication is the priority (For instance, keeping customers informed in a language they understand and listening to them).
- Having a good understanding of the clientele in question – (For example, trying to get to know customers and their specific needs).

2.5 Responsiveness

The disposition to offer assistance to clients in a courteous manner and to deliver prompt service to fulfill the requirements of those clients is referred to as responsiveness. This aspect places a strong emphasis on the two most important factors, namely readiness, and promptness. As a result, you must ensure that the customer receives the requested service promptly and without delay. Furthermore, you need to convey to the customer that you are very interested in assisting them in any way you can.

The amount of time it takes for a customer to receive a response or a solution will serve as the metric that will be utilized to determine the level of responsiveness that is provided. In summary, responsiveness involves quickly providing the customer with the expected information or replacing products to resolve the problem. An illustration of the responsiveness dimension would be if an employee did not keep a customer waiting for a serial number and promptly replaced the product before the end of the promised period. In this scenario, the customer would be satisfied with the employee's responsiveness.

In conclusion, the SERVQUAL Model, also known as the Service Quality Model, has garnered much attention and acceptance worldwide because it improves customer service levels. It is a research system with multiple dimensions representing a customer satisfaction framework to satisfy customers and stakeholders. The Knowledge Gap, the Policy Gap, the Communication Gap, the Delivery Gap, and the Customer Gap are the five gaps in Service Quality.

3.0 PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY

Perceived service quality is the customer's evaluation of the overall superiority or excellence of the service (Zeithaml, 1987). According to research conducted by Parasuraman et al. in 1985, a customer's evaluation of the overall quality of the service is influenced by the disparity between their expectations and their perceptions of the level of actual performance.

It is assumed that a consumer's overall evaluation of the usefulness of a product or service can be derived by contrasting what the consumer has received with what the consumer has been given. This comparison is used to determine perceived service quality (Zeithaml, 1987).

The idea of quality is essential to the consumer market (Solomon, 2009). According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), service quality can be defined as "the overall evaluation of a specific service firm that results from comparing that firm's performance with the customer's general expectations of how firms in that industry should perform." In other words, service quality refers to "the overall assessment of a specific service firm that results from comparing that firm's performance with the customer's general expectations of how firms in that. It is what we mean when we talk about the quality of the service.

Later, he defined service quality as "the customers' evaluation of the expectation with actual service performance" (Parasuraman et al., 1994).

According to Taylor and Huneter (2002), the perception of service quality is directly related to positive business outcomes. These outcomes include customer satisfaction, favorable marketing, and behaviors such as customer repurchases and positive word-of-mouth. Researchers continue to extensively use the five dimensions of service proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985, 1988). These dimensions are "reliability," "responsiveness," "empathy," "assurance," and "tangibility."

In addition, the SERVQUAL Model, developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), was the most widely used Model for assessing service quality, despite its opposition (Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

Service quality has garnered much attention, not just from practitioners but also from academics. According to Parasuraman et al. (1988), service quality is an attitude that emerges from contrasting an individual's anticipated performance with their actual performance. Service quality can also be understood as the degree to which customers are satisfied with the advantages or advantages they receive from a product or service (Zeithaml, 1988).

Service quality can be defined as "the degree to which a particular service meets or surpasses the expectations or wants of the customer," although this definition is not universally accepted (Lewis & Mitchell, 1990; Dotchin & Oakland, 1994). During the 1980s, there was a surge in scholarly interest, which prompted the beginning of a project to improve the overall quality of the service. When businesses first became aware of the significance of service quality as both a point of differentiation and a haven for above-average performance, they started investing in the area (Gupta et al., 2005).

The level of perceived service quality is a significant predictor of future repurchase intent (Dali et al., 2014). Numerous studies investigated the relationship between service quality and the likelihood of a customer making a repeat purchase. For instance, Mensah and Mensah (2018) researched the dining options available at the University of Cape Coast Campus in Ghana. The findings showed a direct link between customers' perceptions of service quality and their intentions to repurchase. Dlačić et al. (2014) found the same when they assessed undergraduate students in two countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia).

In addition, customers are more likely to have repurchase intentions when they receive high-quality service (Srivastava & Sharma, 2013). Phuong and Trang (2018) focused on the ride-hailing service accessible via smartphone in Vietnam. According to the study's findings, an individual's perception of the quality of service significantly impacts the likelihood of future purchases.

4.0 MARITIME BUSINESS

The maritime industry is a model for how global business should be conducted. Given that the sea transports 90 percent of all goods traded worldwide, its significance cannot be overstated. The shipping industry is responsible for most of the goods that make up our regular lives. A large portion of the shipping industry continues to be obscured from view by the fact that ships travel throughout the world's seas and oceans and that ports are now tucked away and are not an integral part of the people lives who live in port cities, the business and management literature that is most widely read continues to ignore this aspect of the shipping industry. At the very least, beginning in the early modern period, maritime trade became a primary factor in international markets' communication and formation, eventually leading to global markets. This progression ultimately led to global markets. Some of the topics that have been the focus of research in the maritime industry include the development and transformation of shipping markets, the evolution of shipping firms and ship management, the impact of technology on sea transport and its productivity and freight rates, on trends of the nationality of the world fleet, and its denationalization or "flagging out," on seafaring labor and risk while at sea, and more.

A shipping firm is an economic unit that uses the factors of production to produce goods and services related to maritime transportation. These goods and services can be provided to customers. It is of use to the international trade

system, which became more established in the 19th century. The requirements of the various types of cargo that needed to be transported led to the establishment and organization of shipping companies in the following order: first, bulk commodities transported in massive quantities, such as raw materials; second, manufactured and packaged goods. It is because bulk commodities are more cost-effective to ship than manufactured and packaged goods. The tramp and bulk shipping companies have traditionally served the first type of cargo, and the liner and container shipping companies have traditionally served the second type of cargo. Technology has been a defining factor in the shipping company's beginning and ongoing development. In the last two centuries, the evolution of the shipping industry and the shipping firm can be broken down into five distinct periods based on the changes in shipping markets and the introduction of new technologies. These periods are as follows: (a) up to the 1820s; (b) from the 1830s to the 1870s; (c) from the 1880s to the 1930s; (d) from the 1940s to the 1970s; and (e) after the 1980s. Each of these periods is distinguished from the Up until the final third of the 20th century, Europe maintained its position as the dominant force in the world fleet. However, this position has since been usurped by Asian fleets, which will continue to do so into the 21st century. Even though there are influential shipping families with ties to certain countries, the maritime industry is gradually losing its "nationality" and becoming more international. It is the case even though certain countries remain essential players in certain aspects of the industry. Shipping has always been a high-risk business that, despite the evolution in many aspects of its operation, remains dependent on the acts of nature and people, as the recent revitalization of piracy reveals. Despite these changes, shipping remains a business that is highly dependent on the acts of nature and the acts of people.

The maritime industry sector caters to the needs of shippers for services such as liner shipping and tramp shipping. Tramp shipping refers to shipments of goods that do not adhere to predetermined itineraries, while liner shipping refers to the transportation of goods that stick to prescheduled routes (Goulielmos & Plomaritou, 2014). An explanation of the various stakeholders in the maritime industry should include shipowners, shipping agencies, shippers, ship chandlers, and classification societies. Additionally, it should consist of national and international regulators such as port states and flag states, port authorities, and so on. The maritime industry is the foundation of the global economy, and its growth is directly correlated to the expansion of trade (Mengqiao et al., 2015). As a distinct economy sector, the maritime business sector is characterized by highly volatile market characteristics, which are impacted by even relatively minor shifts in global developments. Martin Stopford explains in his enlightening book that maritime business cycles are the dominant force in the maritime market. According to Scarsi (2007), the maritime industry is subject to the geopolitical scene in global business. Maritime crises tend to arise between three and five years apart (Plans & Vuuren, 2014).

Even the maritime industry uses various analytic and statistical forecasting methods for future trends, making it particularly challenging to predict the future consistently. The maritime industry's multiple stakeholders are forced to contend with future operational and environmental uncertainties, such as shifting consumer demands, intense competition, globalization, and economic and political developments (Mansouri et al., 2009). These environmental unknowns impact organizational strategies and have a bearing on the organizational performance of maritime companies. Under these conditions, managers are obligated to adjust, reorganize, and transform their strategies to meet the objectives set forth by their organizations (McArthur & Nystrom, 1991).

Shipping industry (Goulielmos & Plomaritou, 2014), shipping (Quitau et al., 2018), ocean shipping or shipping business (Review of Maritime Transport, 2017), maritime transportation (De Monie et al., 2011), maritime infrastructure and transportation systems (Mansouri et al., 2009), world seaborne trade (Review of Maritime Transport, 2017), and maritime business are all different statements used by literature but have the same meaning of describing global marine. The requirements and needs of societies, organizations, and individual households are what drives the demand for transportation (Moreira, 2013). This demand is directly correlated with the expansion of international trade (De Monie et al., 2011). In addition, the demand for transportation is primarily influenced by changes in the global economy and trade patterns (Review of Maritime Transport, 2017). Because certain goods and services are unavailable in specific geographic locations, the maritime industry seizes the opportunity to satisfy supply and demand in these areas (Panayides et al., 2015). It utilizes the connection between ships and ports (Quitau et al., 2018). As a result of the maritime industry's capacity to connect all of the relevant parties (Mengqiao et al., 2015), it has evolved into the central pillar of international commerce and the actualization of supply chains. Maritime transport is one of the most important modes because it is "one of the primary transport modes for international merchandise trade" (Review of Maritime Transport, 2017). The responsibility of the maritime industry is to transport unprocessed materials, products in various stages of completion, and other inputs necessary for production and then to transport finished goods to end consumers (Quitau et al., 2018). A ship may be chartered to transport goods purchased by a shipper from one port to another by the ship's owner or by a ship management company (Goulielmos & Plomaritou, 2014). The types of ships that are used and the kinds of maritime transportation services that are provided are subject to change depending on the cargoes and schedules of the ships.

The maritime industry provides sea transportation for various cargoes, operating under two distinct types of shipping schedules known as tramp shipping and linear shipping. The bulk of liner shipping services is for transporting semi-finished and finished goods. Shipping lines can cover a greater geographical area with their container ships thanks to the scheduled services they provide (Liu et al., 2018). Even though liner shipping has a relatively short history, beginning in 1956 with the launch of *Ideal X* as the world's first container vessel (Ducruet & Notteboom, 2015), the container trade

has experienced significant growth in a relatively short amount of time thanks to globalization (Notteboom et al., 2011). Whereas liner shipping transports cargo according to a predetermined schedule, tramp shipping transports goods without adhering to a specific route (Goulielmos & Plomaritou, 2014). The requirements for bulk commodities are the primary driver of demand for tramp shipping. These goods can be classified as either significant bulk cargoes, such as grain or iron ore, or minor bulk cargoes, which can range in size. Because bulk shipments, such as dry or wet, require different ship sizes and specializations, such as gearless vessels, which are generally used for long-hauls, bulk carriers are primarily situated with various specializations to carry a wide range of cargoes. It is because of the heterogeneity of bulk cargoes (Comtois & Lacoste, 2015).

Not only does maritime business on land and at sea carry out the transportation of goods from one location to another, but it also creates a worldwide business system with various maritime subsectors and stakeholders from multiple countries who are experts in various aspects of shipping, such as ship scrapping, shipbuilding, or ship registering, etc. Marine business on land and at sea also carries out the transportation of goods from one location to another. (Review of Maritime Transport, 2017). This structure of the international maritime industry also creates job opportunities for each nation in their respective fields of specialization (Mansouri et al., 2009).

As maritime business organizations compete severely in dynamic markets in highly volatile business environments, conventional methods of managing organizations might not be able to answer emerging problems in the industry (Cunha & Cunha, 2006). The maritime industry in and of itself exists in a one-of-a-kind, non-linear environment that is influenced by any change that occurs elsewhere in the world. This environment is cyclical, dynamic, and unpredictable, all of which combine to produce a high level of complexity and volatility for the stakeholders in the maritime system. The economics of the maritime industry suggest that the maritime industry operates in an environment that is both cyclical and volatile (Goulielmos, 2017).

5.0 POST COVID-19

The pandemic caused by Covid-19 has had an impact on a variety of industries. During the pandemic, the service industry, which includes travel and tourism (airlines, hotels, and cruises), entertainment (theme parks and movie theatres), and hospitality, has been hit the hardest (coffee shops and restaurants). The manufacturing and supply chain industries are the second most severely impacted industries (Wuest et al., 2020). Manufacturing industries such as automobiles, electronics, and pharmaceuticals all have extensive supply chains that span the globe. There is also significant global supply chain activity in service industries such as airlines, retail suppliers, and transportation. Because of their heavy reliance on partners in global supply chains over the previous two decades, these industries will be significantly impacted by Covid-19 (Belhadi et al., 2021).

The pandemic after COVID-19 will have tiny budgets for the companies, leaving no room for implementing an extensive plan and strategy. However, to be successful, these businesses need to follow the Pareto principle, which states that they should aim to generate 80% of profits using only 20% of their available capital (Paul, Devi, & Teh, 2012) and (Haughey, 2010). To prevent mishaps and damage during the post-COVID-19 pandemic, the financial apparatus must be allowed to gain speed gradually. Instead of simply being agile, business organizations should be intelligent in their agility, as the new normality is dependent on creativity and essential decisions that pave the way to sustainability. Companies typically have a hierarchical structure, which needs to be flattened to be more open to new ideas and more flexible to adapt to change. Everything hinges on how effectively a company markets itself to various stakeholders in the industry. As a result, marketing does not refer exclusively to selling goods or services; instead, it is a survival myth. As a result, it is essential to market, attract, collaborate, improve, and grow as a result of marketing activities. Throughout this research article, the focus will be placed on three crucial aspects: the adaptability of businesses, the importance of prudent spending (percentage of concentration), and post-recovery strategies.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The research does have a few caveats to it. This research is based on a systematic review, and its goals are to (1) identify the various approaches that are already in use in the field of maritime business; (2) defend and prove the necessity of an organizational resilience management philosophy in maritime business management; and (3) show how this philosophy contributes to the survival of organizations. The conceptual Model should be empirically tested according to the various segments and stakeholders of the maritime industry, and subsequent research should use a variety of methodologies to do so. Additionally, the findings of this study open up a new field of research on the subject of resilience from the perspective of the maritime context, where the organizational approach needs to include more of the topic. As a result, further research should concentrate on the process of formulating key performance indicators for the various components of the proposed Model as well as the Model's implications for maritime organizations.

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