
Understanding the Sustainable Development of Tourism

11

Crisis, Recovery and Risk Management

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Crisis, Recovery and Risk Management

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Rationale

Tourism is often the first sector that is impacted by crises and also the first sector that community leaders look towards in the recovery phase (Carlsen and Liburd, 2007). The significance of crisis and risk management in tourism is emphasised by the frequency, severity and global scale of crises which have disrupted and undermined the tourism industry during the first decade of the 21st century. Events including the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001, the Bali bombings of 2002 and 2005, the attack on the Taj Hotel, Mumbai in November 2008, epidemics or pandemics such as SARS in 2003 and H1N1 (swine flu) in 2009 and natural disasters including the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 had a widespread impact on the tourism industry. In late 2008 the onset of a global economic recession generated a significant downturn of international tourism movements during 2009. This was a global version of the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997–98 which impacted heavily on tourism in East and South-East Asia during the late 1990s.

The tourism industry is paying increasing attention to the issue of crisis and risk management. In September 2009 the UN World Tourism Organisation released its *sos.travel* web site (UN World Tourism Organisation, 2009) integrating crisis management knowledge with day-to-day destination and tourism business management on a global level. At the industry level, tourism businesses and tourism industry associations are approaching the issues of crisis and risk with growing emphasis and professionalism. The key outcome of this trend is that destinations and tourism businesses will require informed knowledge and employees who are increasingly risk aware and able to assist businesses and destinations to implement crisis and risk contingency plans and recover from crisis events.

Crisis and risk management have only emerged since the mid-1990s as related fields to the broader body of tourism management and sustainability research. Devastating as they can be, crises and risks require government and non government entities to respond in a sustainable manner and offer destinations the opportunity to 'build back better' to a more resilient and sustainable tourism sector.

Chapter extract

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