

11 Hospitality employment during and after times of crisis

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Abstract

This chapter examines the impact of crises on hospitality employment, using Covid-19 as a case. While crisis may amplify existing challenges in the hospitality industry – such as precarious work conditions, low wages, and job unpredictability – the question remains whether crisis actually drives meaningful change. The chapter applies the principles of fair work as a framework for understanding and navigating the unpredictability and transformative potential of crises, and suggests that disruption can lead to new, improved systems that promote opportunities for a more decent, sustainable and equitable future for the hospitality workforce. A central challenge for the hospitality industry is thus to shift from reactive crisis responses to adopting fair work principles in order to build adaptive capabilities for future resilience.

Introduction: Crises, hospitality and employment

Aliperti *et al.* (2019) highlight the manner in which crises, whether environmental, social, economic or political, impact on contemporary tourism and hospitality (TH). This reflects, in particular, the geographical spread of tourism and tourists to intersect with fragile environments, cultures, and economies. Interest in the impact of crises and disasters on tourism is not new (Faulkner, 2001; Ritchie *et al.*, 2011; Mair *et al.*, 2016) but the Covid-19 health pandemic intensified engagement and generated a plethora of academic and media outpourings that were, at the same time, reactive, polemical, reflective and, in a small number of instances, insightful. Much of the published discussion on disaster and crises in the context of TH focuses on prevention, impact and recovery at a community and destination level, with the underlying assumption that what emerges out of such events should, broadly, mirror that which preceded them, in other words a return to the old order. The image of the rapid reemergence of beachside micro-businesses (bars, cafes etc.) in Thailand in the aftermath of the 2005 tsunami