

## Book Review

# Crisis Management in the Tourism Industry: Beating the Odds?

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*Crisis Management in the Tourism Industry: Beating the Odds?*

Peter Hosie and Christof Pforr

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What is a crisis? What is a disaster? In what way can be disasters prevented or at the best measured are some of the questions this book attempts to decipher? At a first glimpse, one of the most difficult aspects of disasters corresponds with their chaotic nature as well as the lack of preparedness and reactions in local communities. At a closer look, the term disaster denotes certain surprise that leads towards a lack of answers before the emergency. The disaster often exceeds the normal capacity of proactive reaction of a society.

In this context, editors present a collection of different chapters that tend to integrate practice and theory in a way that offers a clear illustration in forms of case-studies. Based on the needs of reversing the already existent fragmentation of publications in the fields of public relations and tourism management, authors –from different angles- devote their efforts in integrating applied-research with a much deeper conceptual framework.

Basically, this book departs from the idea that tourism industry seems to be retractile from the rise of risks and crises. Editors and authors toy with the belief that many external and internal factors contribute to the formation of crises which may very well place the industry in jeopardy. Starting from the premise that these dangers range from global terrorism to natural catastrophes, this book is formed by 14 chapters which are organized according to the themes each one deal.

The first section, at least for this reviewer the most robust from the book containing from second to sixth chapters, explores the conceptual definition of crisis management in tourism. The problem lies in the fact that some of the conditions that precede disasters can be rarely prevented or predicted. In the second chapter, this led Butler to think crisis management involves two types of contrasting processes: “rational designs” with the emergent process. The third chapter, which is authored by Chatterjee & Pearson, holds the thesis that decision-making process should be based not only on accurate but also historical information which outlines the vulnerabilities of the tourist destination. Hence the information sharing is vital to proffer a sustainable plan of contingency and mitigation.

The fourth (Pforr) and fifth chapters (Blackman & Ritchie) review the notion of crisis management reminding that the rise of interest for the issue does not entail a multiplication of risks for tourism. While Pforr emphasizes on how business and how public imaginary reacts to disasters, Blackman & Ritchie focus on DMO –destination marketing organization- to improve the resiliency of a destination in a not-so-distant future. In this sense, chapter six written by one of the editors (Hosie) outlines the importance of human resources to save lives and resources in post-disaster contexts.

The second part of the work, which goes from 7 to 14 chapters, introduces the notion of sustainability as the main point of entry in the discussion. For example, Nankervis (ch. 7) places the concept of sustainability under the critical lens of scrutiny while Dockery (ch. 8) sheds light on the ways terrorism resonates in public. In fact, the attacks perpetrated on the US soil on September 11 caused a shock in Australia harming the potential demands of tourists for this country. Carlsen (ch. 9) and Pearson & Chatterjee (ch. 10) present practical study-cases with basis on the Ocean Tsunami in Maldives (2004) and SARS outbreaks that whipped China. With the benefits of hindsight, Felix, Dowling, and Ganeshasundaram explore the dichotomies of Sri Lanka's Tsunami which is reminded as a case where no reaction –by the side of officials- or evacuation has been done. This is the reason why prevention and the precautionary principle help in saving lives and material losses. The government intervention should be associated to the self- perception of politicians their actions may give a material benefit. This is a gap between governments and citizens which needs to be fulfilled. In the same direction goes chapters 12 (Dickson) and 13 (Beirman), which discuss critically to what extent efficient tactics and strategies maximize the possibilities of destinations -though once affected- to achieve a rapid recovery. Most certainly, the last chapter serves as a corollary piece which reminds the important to alternate the theory with practice. Though learning is a vital force in the fields of disaster/management, no less true is that there is a strong research that proved in many cases things came out pretty different to what has been planned. This is the importance and the stronghold of a book of this caliber. To cut the long story short, I feel that the book centers on an attempt to calibrate more efficient tactics in assisting victims in post-disaster landscapes. Tourism would act as a valid instrument of resiliency –as it was amply discussed in the literature of post-disaster marketing-accelerating not only the recovery timeframes but also the material resources invested for recycling the effaced community. Here is when two interesting questions struck me that.

On one hand, as I have explained in my recent book *The Rise of Thana Capitalism and Tourism* (Korstanje 2016), the concept of rationality as it was formulated and used by the West is being confronted –if not questioned- by the rise of new emergent crises worldwide. Anthropologically speaking, capitalism -far from solving these crises- commoditizes disasters in a form of spectacle, i.e. dark tourism, slum tourism or even war-tourism. The Other's suffering played a leading role as the new commodity of this contemporary society. On another, the evanescence of dark tourism studies reveals two important assumptions. First and most important, we must speak furtherly on the failure of preventive technique, which is enrooted in the spirit of precautionary doctrine, to protect tourist destinations. Secondly, to what extent dark consuming sites offer a real lesson of the event. Sometimes politicians intervene directly to distort the message to society paving the ways for a new similar disaster repeats in a near future. Quite aside from this for academicians, scholars, students and policymakers concerned by the future of tourism this situates as a path-breaking project which is highly recommended as a source of consult and critical discussion.

## REFERENCES

Korstanje, M. (2016). *The Rise of Thana Capitalism and Tourism*. Abingdon, VA: Routledge.