

TOURIST DESTINATION MANAGEMENT IN CRISES

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SUMMARY

Purpose

The concept of the crisis situation developed quite late in human history, when it was understood that order and regularity prevail in nature and society, while a state of chaos represents a deviation from this order. For a long time, crisis situations were understood to be the result of the action of higher forces or the will of God. In these cases of crisis situations, the human reaction was reduced to magical rituals or religious rites and the attempt to subdue a higher power. Crisis management emerged from people's attempts to prevent or overcome crisis situations. As an academic discipline and part of management, crisis management first emerged in the private sector and later in the public sector. Over time and with the development of science and the rise of rationalism, scientists have tried to understand, describe, explain and classify crises and develop more effective methods to manage them. Furthermore, the task of crisis management is to develop methods that enable the destination to successfully deal with the crisis, respond to it effectively and resolve it with as few consequences as possible. In this way, the destination can return to normal business operations more quickly. A detailed review of the literature has shown that no single study simultaneously examines the relationships between the actions of entrepreneurs during management in the preparation and operational phases in a crisis situation, the tourism development of the destination, the attitudes towards the key elements of response planning and the importance of the elements of crisis communication, the functions in the management of a destination and the experiences of working in tourism, all under the assumption that the same represents the main determinants that lead to the improvement of the crisis management system in destinations. In relation to the highlighted problem, which was preceded by an extensive theoretical study and previous research, the topic of the thesis is to investigate and determine the outcome of the crisis situation, with the aim of a more successful future management. According to the topic, the main objective of the thesis is to determine and test the validity and reliability of the conceptual model for measuring the improvement of the management system based on crisis experiences in order to demonstrate proactive action and better preparation.

Methodology

In addition to the theoretical examination of the problem and the main constructs of the conceptual model, an empirical study was carried out in accordance with the set main and auxiliary objectives and the formulated hypotheses, in the context of which primary data was collected using the qualitative and quantitative method. The research was conducted using a in-depth structured interview on the one hand and an online questionnaire distributed by e-mail on the other. The data collection for the interviews was conducted via Zoom, by telephone and in writing, while the data for the questionnaire was collected online, i.e. in the program in which the questionnaire was created. In order to test the hypotheses, both instruments were created based on previous scientific literature. The variables of the main constructs in the questionnaire were measured using a fivepoint Likert scale to express the degree of agreement and importance. Univariate and multivariate statistical analysis methods were used to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics as part of the univariate statistical analysis was used to calculate the absolute and relative frequencies for the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents: country of origin, gender, professional training, function and experience in tourism and to display the arithmetic mean and standard deviation in other variables. The survey covers all 21 counties of the Republic of Croatia. The most represented counties in the sample are the coastal regions of Croatia, which are also destinations with a high degree of tourism development. In terms of gender, the survey is dominated by women (62.1 %). The predominant educational level of the respondents is a completed college education (69.1 %). As for the workplace where the majority of respondents (33.5 %) are employed, they work as the director of the municipality's tourist office. The results also show that most respondents have more than five years of work experience in tourism (85.2%). In the first step, factor analysis was used to determine the factors that best describe a particular construct, while in the second step the relationship between these constructs was examined, i.e. the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variables. Since the model includes several independent variables, it was tested using multiple regression analysis. The reliability and validity of the model was determined.

Findings

Based on the conducted analysis and the results of the empirical research, two of the five tested hypotheses were confirmed. Due to the positive significant individual correlation between the preparation for a crisis situation and the improvement of the foundation management system ($\beta = 0.445$, $p < 0.01$), the first hypothesis was confirmed. With the second hypothesis, that is, acting in a crisis situation, no significant connection was recorded ($\beta = 0.090$, $p > 0.05$), which is why it is rejected. Furthermore, the regression analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship between the level of tourism development and the improvement of the management of crisis situations in tourism destinations ($\beta = -0.013$, $p > 0.05$), which is why the third auxiliary hypothesis is also rejected. The fourth auxiliary hypothesis with attitudes towards key elements in planning a response to a crisis situation ($\beta = -0.141$, $p > 0.05$) was also rejected, as the construct of the same name is not statistically significantly related to the improvement of the management system. The fifth auxiliary hypothesis analyzed the perception of the importance of crisis communication elements, which is statistically significantly and positively related to the improvement of the management system ($\beta = 0.341$, $p < 0.05$), thus confirming this hypothesis. The results of the research carried out have shown that the measures taken before the crisis situation in terms of predictability and planning have a significant potential to reduce its negative impact. In the preparation and prevention phase of crisis situations, it is very important to set up a crisis team that meets regularly and exchanges information before a crisis occurs. Defining roles and responsibilities is also very important for effective crisis management. The crisis period consists mainly of diagnosing the crisis, making critical decisions and implementing them, while recovery from a crisis situation involves not only a return to normality, but also a period of learning through evaluation and the introduction of changes in specific areas of crisis management. Successful resilience to changing circumstances must include the ability to proactively manage and adapt to change. This requires good relationships and strong communication between all stakeholders, the ability to recognise risks and opportunities, and the development of a positive environment that facilitates coordination and timely interventions. This last phase is crucial, as a better understanding of the causes of crises and learning from the experience can prevent their recurrence in the future. By thinking about the future, organisations and destinations become more aware of the complexity of the environment in which they operate.

Originality of the research

The conceptual scientific contribution lies in the analysis and supplementation of the relevant literature in the field of crisis management in tourism. The combination of research measurement instruments with the selection of variables and constructs in the conceptual model and their verification with the appropriate method of multivariate statistical analysis represents an empirical methodological contribution. Applicable, the dissertation opens up new conceptual and empirical possibilities for tourism managers and makes suggestions for the introduction of improvements in crisis management, especially through proactive action and better preparation.

Keywords

tourist destination, crisis management, tourism development, planning, communication, crisis experience

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