
Book Review

Reviewed by Kyriaki Glyptou

Email: k.glyptou@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Tourism Crises and Destination Recovery

by: David Beirman

Published 2021

by SAGE Publications, Ltd., UK, 282pp

ISBN: 9781526402998

As the global tourism sector is slowly starting to recover from the aftermath of the most challenging crisis since the World War II, Dr. David Beirman builds on 40 years of industry and academic experience to address the critical issues of risk, crisis and recovery management in tourism.

Research on tourism crisis management and destination recovery has gained momentum in the academic and institutional community since the 9/11 attack at the beginning of the new millennium. Beirman's (2003) early work on *Restoring Tourism Destination in Crisis – A Strategic Marketing Approach* has been amongst the earliest and most prominent ones in exploring the impact of crises on tourism destinations through the compilation of evidence from actual case studies. Beirman's work at the time was amongst the first to adopt a thematic analysis approach to explore crisis development and destination recovery along five distinctive typologies of crisis (terrorism and political violence, natural disasters, epidemics, crime and war). Almost two decades later, the actual and perceptual vulnerability of tourism to crisis remains prominent with risks becoming more frequent, severe and cumulative. In his latest book, Bierman accounts for the most recent tourism-related advances in technology, communication media and management structures, to expand his analysis of crisis and recovery management on a broader spectrum of crisis themes and on a wider range of destinations and sectors of the tourism industry. In this way the author addresses the major and most urgent challenges of contemporary tourism destinations and industry. With the publishing of the book coinciding with one of the most challenging crises in recent history, COVID-19 as game changer becomes an underlying theme in a number of book chapters for the author to highlight the challenges of the next day in the tourism industry.

The book consists of two distinct parts. The first one (Part 1: Establishing the Theoretical and Sectoral Context for Tourism Risk, Crisis and Recovery with focus on Covid-19 Tourism's most Challenging Crisis) sets the conceptual and theoretical foundations for the analysis to follow along three key chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the definitions of the book's key concepts (risk, crisis, recovery and resilience) in the context of tourism and discusses the importance of applying collaborative theory for the effective recovery of the industry. Chapter 2 focuses on a variety of approaches undertaken by

national governments, travel industry and international to regional tourism organisations to facilitate recovery both at industry and destination level. Chapter 3 dives into the specifics of the ‘global tyranny of Covid-19’ to examine its impact on destinations, governments and the prevailing business model in tourism industry to highlight the implications of the lack of preparedness for a crisis at that scale.

In Part 2 of his book (*Key Themes in Tourism Risk, Crisis and Recovery*), Bierman adopts again a thematic approach to explore tourism risk, crisis and recovery along nine main crisis typologies (themes). The first one (Chapter 4) explores the relationship between political instability and civil unrest to tourism, for Chapter 5 to then focus on cases of terrorism targeting tourists and the recovery efforts undertaken by both industry and destinations over the years. Chapter 6 adopts again a more destination-recovery approach with a focus on natural disasters while highlighting the importance of collaborative approaches between tourism industry and tourism associations in the context of emergency management. The next theme (Chapter 7) addresses both real and perceptual health-related tourism crises. In this chapter, Bierman assesses the strategic and operational approaches to destination recovery in the aftermath of major epidemics and pandemics beyond Covid-19. Chapter 8 addresses the relationship between crime and visiting intention in tourism destinations. This chapter goes beyond recovery strategies to examine the effectiveness of contingencies in the form of proactive preventive measures in destinations and the importance of a pre-arrival warning system. Economic crises are the key theme of the following Chapter 9. Bierman adopts again a more destination-recovery approach to explore the impact of the 2008–2009 global financial crisis and to identify successful recovery strategies. The chapter further on considers the financial and business repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic for business travel. Chapter 10 takes up a more industry and business operations approach to examine the most common technological risks and crises in the sector and the measures taken to facilitate ‘quick’ business’ recovery. On a similar approach, Chapter 11 examines crises arising from product and service collapses and failures as a result of inadequate internal management. Bierman exposes the vulnerability of the ‘default tourism business model’ through a series of case studies that challenge business resilience. The final Chapter 12 concludes with an examination of the emerging theme of environmental crises due to climate change, extreme weather conditions, pollution and human-induced environmental degradation and the adaptive measures adopted within the context of destination recovery.

The book adopts overall an accessible language and style that is easy to follow for both students and industry practitioners. The chapters are short, and information is to the point. Even if not directly advancing the theoretical understanding of the key themes it addresses, it still offers a useful source for evidence-based analysis that academics could easily employ in their teachings. In fact, the inclusion of a number of case studies per theme allows an exploration of the various facets and dimensions of each crisis in multiple geographic, political, socio-cultural, and sector contexts. The level of detail included in the case studies often suggests a more hands-on than observer approach from the author. From a literature perspective, each chapter is supported by a wide range of both academic and up-to-date grey literature (e.g., organisation reports) sources resulting on a book of high relevance and utility for both students and industry practitioners.

In terms of structure, each chapter starts with an introductory section placing the key theme examined in the broader context of the book and tourism overall. It is often the case that the author makes reference to other parts of the book or invokes case studies

discussed elsewhere to highlight case interlinkages and bring side implications in a more integrative context. In my view, this approach allows the smoother navigation of the reader through the multiple crisis themes discussed in the second part of the book, while making strong links to their contextual basis in the first part. Similarly, each chapter concludes with a 'Summary and Conclusion' section culminating in a section on open 'Discussion Questions' which allows the reader to summarise key points and messages to take forward.

A weakness of the book, as is the case of many books exploring multiple themes along case studies, is the lack of coherence in the contribution and focus of each theme chapter. The author claims (preface section) that the book 'involves a thematic focus on the recovery of tourism businesses and destinations', yet most of the theme chapters address the challenges and experience from a destination perspective which is, nevertheless, consistent with the title of the book. Even though implications for businesses are often insulated, it would have been a useful addition to clearly explore the same crisis experience and journey to recovery both from a business and destination perspective. Tourism businesses even within the same destination tend to experience the same crisis in a completely different way (severity of impact) subject to their management structure and level of preparedness. This is another weakness of the book. Even if the focus is clearly on examples of business and/or destination recovery, the important role of preparedness is not always nor sufficiently addressed in the theme chapters. The author recognises overall the importance of developing contingencies in the effective management of tourism crises and transitions towards recovery, yet the mitigating effect of preparedness on the extent and severity of a crisis, or on the success of its recovery is not attributed particular importance in all the book chapters.

Overall, the book is undoubtedly a useful learning resource for students and tourism practitioners. Its actual value lies on the variety and detail of the case studies included per theme of crisis. Even if not coherently analysed, they still serve as a learning and reflection point for the analysis of the risk vulnerability and crisis experience of tourism destinations and the journey towards their management and recovery. Notwithstanding the underlying references to COVID-19 pandemic, which exceeds the dedicated chapter and are not always necessary, the book will be of use to the future researcher as a reliable record of the crises experienced by tourism destinations in the first two decades of the 21st century.