ENHANCING MANAGERIAL PERFORMANCE IN THE TOURISM SECTOR THROUGH CRISIS MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES

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Abstract. *It is true that tourism industry is one of the most vulnerable sectors of the global economy. It is sensitive to external shocks, crises and disruptions, such as health emergencies (the pandemics), political instability, and environmental emergencies. Given this context, crisis management should be seen not as an occasional response strategy, but an essential element of managerial performance. This paper offers a literature review of crisis management competencies in the tourism sector. It also provides an analysis of crisis management skills' contribution to organizational resilience and service continuity. The literature-based analysis is built around fundamental as well as recent studies and aims at identifying such key components of effective crisis management as risk anticipation, crisis and uncertainty decision-making, and communication with stakeholders. The findings suggest that recent global crises have noticeably raised awareness among industry practitioners, but many tourism organizations still heavily rely on reactive approaches to crisis management, rather than seeking structured managerial preparedness. We believe that it is essential to integrate crisis management into professional performance as well as tourism education, as a core managerial competency.*

1. Introduction

Unlike many other industries, tourism is one of the most sensitive sectors of the global economy because it is heavily dependent perceptions of mobility, safety, and external stability. Given these prerequisites, even small crises often result in immediate and large-scale consequences.

We all witnessed the COVID-19 pandemic, that has demonstrated an unprecedented global collapse in tourism systems and a hard some recovery. Surprisingly, given such a dramatic experience, the level of managerial preparedness among tourism professionals remains quite uneven.

Crisis management in tourism has always been seen as a reactive response to a particular situation, but not as a continuous management strategy. Early studies mention the necessity for a more structured and systemic approach to dealing with disruptions and uncertainty (Faulkner, 2001; and Ritchie, 2004). However, only limited and quite unbalanced implementation of these earlier proposed frameworks can be seen.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the role of crisis management skills in enhancing managerial performance in tourism and to highlight the existing gap between theoretical views regarding crisis management and its practical implementation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Crisis Management in Tourism Context

Tourism professionals work in the context of uncertainty and interdependence. According to Faulkner (2001), crises in tourism often hits suddenly and unfolds rapidly. It also requires multiple

stakeholder's communication, thus making crisis decision-making even more multifaceted and complex than in other industries.

This observation is supported by a more recent research. Liu et al. (2024) state that tourism remains sensitive to smaller-scale local disruptions, as well as large-scale global ones. The authors claim that crises like pandemics, environmental disruptions, or geopolitical instability continuously and unpredictably shape tourism dynamics.

Furthermore, Smolčić Jurdana and Milohnić (2025) argue that crisis management is inseparable from long-term planning and sustainability goals, rather than reactive decision-making and short-term solutions. This tendency is probably explained by the greater understanding and awareness of the need for strategic rather than reactive approach to crisis management practices.

2.2 Managerial Competencies in Crisis Situations

Crisis management involves a whole spectrum of cognitive, behavioral, and communication skills and competencies, with risk anticipation ability becoming one of the most important ones. Another key competency here is the ability to develop scenario-based responses.

According to Drammeh (2024), many SMEs rarely have formal crisis planning mechanisms. Managers often make decisions based on prior knowledge, experience, or intuition. However, this approach is sometimes neither efficient, nor sufficient given the complexity and uncertainty of crisis events.

Another factor to consider is the nature of crisis decision-making itself. In times of disruptions, decisions are often made under pressure. Managers must act fast in the context of limited or unreliable information. Such decisions are prone to errors, but delayed decision might become a catastrophe (Jiang and Wen, 2020).

We should not forget about one more central factor here. Numerous researches highlight the role of top-down communication. Transparent and clear communication helps maintain trust and employee motivation, reduce panic, and protect company reputation (Jiang and Wen, 2020), whereas poor or lack of communication results in crises escalation and long-term reputational damage and mistrust.

2.3 Theory vs Practice

Although crisis management is widely discussed in academic literature, its practical implementation remains inconsistent.

Recent researches show that many tourism organizations still rely on reactive approaches. Drammeh (2024), for example, states that crisis management strategies in these organizations are developed as a result of a crisis, not as a part of systemic organizational process.

Similarly, Liu et al. (2024) claims that even after COVID-19 crisis, many organizations still do not demonstrate crisis preparedness as a part of their operational performance. This suggests that lessons learnt from crises often remain untranslated into actual organizational change.

Lack of training is another important issue. It is interesting that crisis management remains mostly theoretical and rarely finds its way to tourism training programs. Such an unfortunate limitation obviously limits the development of crisis management competencies among tourism practitioners.

3. Methodology

The study is organized around a qualitative literature review of academic sources related to crisis management in the tourism sector. Only peer-reviewed sources were selected for this paper,

with particular focus on recent publications (2023-2025) to reflect current development in the field and to compare it to fundamental researches existing in the sphere of tourism.

Fundamental works included into this analysis were selected to provide relevant theoretical grounding, as well as continuity measurement tool. The aim of the analysis was to identify and highlight the recurring patterns related to both managerial competencies and organizational responses to crises.

4. Findings

First, tourism organizations are highly vulnerable to various crises, especially in recent years due to globalization and environmental changes. Thus, the need for systemic crisis management become paramount.

Second, there are three components of effective crisis management that are mentioned repeatedly across fundamental as well as recent studies. These components are: risk anticipation, rapid decision-making, and communication.

Third, there is a clear gap between theory and practice. Many organizations remain mostly reactive, increasing their vulnerability and lower levels of resilience.

Finally, crises exhort not only operational, but also psychological consequences. Employees feel demotivated and stressed, while customers may lose trust. This suggests that a manager should possess strong leadership and emotional intelligence competencies .

5. Discussion

The findings suggest that crisis management should be revised, as it is a core element of managerial performance in tourism.

Crisis management is inseparable of everyday management practice, and as such, should be integrated into strategic planning, organizational culture, and tourism training.

Another point is that crisis management is not about practices, it is also about human interaction. Managers should communicate stability, trust, and support to their teams in times of uncertainty and pressure.

From a broader perspective, crisis management can also be linked to organizational resilience. Organizations that invest in crisis preparedness are more likely to adapt, recover, and sustain operations in uncertain environments.

However, without structural change no proper crisis management can be implemented. Tourism education programs can become the first step helping organizations shift from reactive approach to systemic planning, by including crisis management component.

6. Conclusion

This paper examined the role of crisis management skills in enhancing managerial performance in the tourism sector.

The results show that crisis management is not an option or situational skill anymore. Rather it’s a fundamental competency that affects organizational resilience, service quality, and stakeholder trust.

Despite increased awareness, many tourism organizations still do not possess crisis preparedness, and there is the need for stronger integration of crisis management into both education and practice.

Future research may focus on empirical testing of existing crisis management models and analyzing their impact on performance in tourism.

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