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# Future Proofing a Crisis

## Introduction

The nature of the international tourism industry makes it prone to crises. In fact, it is considered one of the most vulnerable sectors of the economy and very susceptible to the negative impacts of a crisis event (Aldao *et al.*, 2022). Its service characteristics together with the number of potential external threats considered beyond its control contributes to its susceptibility and makes the risks difficult to manage (Evans and Elphick, 2005; Pforr, 2009; Nian *et al.*, 2019). Interruptions to services at the destination itself and within transit routes, as well as the (mis)perceptions (that the destination is unsafe) of consumers in distant markets, contributes to an increased vulnerability to the short and longer term effects of a crisis.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2011) defines a crisis, from a travel and tourism industry perspective, as *'any unexpected event that affects traveller confidence in a destination and interferes with the ability to continue operating normally'*. However, the terms *'crisis'* and *'disaster'* are often used interchangeably within the literature although it may be argued a difference in meaning exists (Rindrasih *et al.*, 2019). The scale and responsibility, or control factors within the causation of the event, appear to be the key elements used to distinguish the two terms. Faulkner (2001, p. 136), for example, makes the distinction between the two terms by defining a crisis as *'a self-inflicted event caused by problems, such as inept management structures and practices or a failure to adapt to changes'*, while considering a disaster as *'a situation in which an enterprise (or group of enterprises) is confronted with sudden unpredictable and catastrophic changes over which it has little control'*.

Within a tourism context, Bierman (2016) makes the distinction of crises as being either Category 1 or 2. Category 1 crises extend beyond the control of management and include natural disasters, acts of terrorism and war, crime, political conflicts and sudden economic downturns. Category 2 crises arise from a failure of management to implement procedures to prepare for or address potential risks