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Crisis and Disaster Events: COVID-19 to Climate Change

By the end of this chapter, the reader will be able to:

- Describe the key issues that need to be considered in disaster preparation, response and recovery
- Outline the stages of Faulkner's tourism disaster lifecycle model
- Discuss the role of forecasting in disaster and crisis preparation
- Outline how a mean global temperature rise above 1.5°C will affect the tourism industry
- Evaluate the strategies that can be used by the public sector to achieve net zero GHG emissions.

Introduction

Crisis and disaster events may occur with little, or no warning. During the COVID-19 pandemic, international tourism flows almost ceased for two years significantly disrupting the tourism industry at every level from local to global. Fortunately, the pandemic event had little effect on the stock of tourism resources and infrastructure and the tourism industry was able to recover quickly as the impact of the pandemic eased during late 2022 and 2023. In other events, including earthquakes, floods and tsunamis, the tourism industry has suffered considerable damage to tourism related infrastructure that hampered recovery. The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami is one example of a regional scale event that caused significant damage to tourism infrastructure in Thailand and Sri Lanka resulting in a slow recovery (Gurtner, 2007). The COVID-19 experience and the 2004 Tsunami highlight the

need to prepare for possible future crisis and disaster events. Some events may be expected based on history and location (cyclones and hurricanes in tropical areas and earthquakes in some areas in Japan and California) while others may be unexpected. The COVID-19 pandemic and 2004 Tsunami events highlight the difficulty of preparing for events that may not occur for decades, if at all. Aside from known events, it is also necessary to consider how new types of threats may emerge to disrupt the global tourism sector. Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Jabeen et al., 2022) and cybercrime (Paraskevas, 2022) are examples of new forms of threats that may impact the tourism sector in the future.

This chapter discusses a range of issues related to crisis and disaster events with a specific focus on climate change and transition to net zero GHG emission. This approach was adopted because unlike many of the disasters of the past, climate change and transition to net zero are known crisis events, the scientific literature is able to provide extensive support for planning and preparation for these events, the types of impacts we may expect are known and the time scales of events such as sea level rise are known with some degree of certainty. This knowledge, if responded to in the near future, will enable the tourism industry to respond to this threat in a proactive rather than reactive manner, and thus minimize potential impacts on destinations and tourism flows. A proactive response will also require some knowledge of the key scientific terms and concepts used in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Defining crisis and disaster events

The terms *crisis* and *disaster* are often used interchangeably with both terms sometimes used to describe the same event. In an attempt to provide definitional clarity, Faulker and Russel (2001) and Ritchie (2004; 2009) described disasters as events that are external to an organization and which the organization has no control over. Examples include wars, pandemics, weather events and natural disasters. Crises on the other hand are described by Faulkner and Russell (2001) and Ritchie (2004) as events that are the result of an internal organizational failure, such as a failure to adapt to change. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) guide on disaster terminology provides an inclusive definition that describes a disaster as “*a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources*” (UNISDR, 2009: 9). Disaster risk management is described as “*the systematic process of using administrative directives, organizations, and operational skills and capacities to implement strategies, policies and improved coping capacities in order to lessen the adverse impacts of hazards and the possibility of disaster*” (UNISDR, 2009: 10-11).