

The Development of Tourism in Post Conflict Destinations

An Academic Literature Review

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is perhaps one of the most volatile industries today with an increase in security threats, terrorism, political turmoil, violence, natural disasters and pandemics. No tourism destination is immune from these external crises over which they often have no control. Consequently the international tourism industry requires strategies which prepare and enable national and regional tourism authorities to manage a crisis¹ from the onset and implement recovery strategies with expediency. The field of destination recovery and restoration is an under-researched discipline within tourism studies and management practice (Beirman, 2003). There has been more research into the recovery of destinations in the field of marketing and destination image (Pizam, Mansfield, Faulkner, Richter, Nielsen, Hall and Bierman) rather than taking a more holistic approach (Cassedy, 1992; Drabek, 1995) focusing on the key elements of a recovery process such as the rebuilding of physical, social, political and economic capital.

Clarke and Karma highlighted that crisis management² is a key strategic issue. Since '9/11' in the USA most countries and companies have realized that crisis management must be a core rather than a peripheral aspect of tourism management strategies and practices. In broad terms crisis management can be viewed as a four stage process of reduction, readiness, response and recovery. When looking at the development of tourism post conflict the key areas of crisis management relevant to this study are response and recovery. To assist tourism destinations cope and recover from crises there have been several crisis management models developed (such as Smith & Sipika, 1993, Seymour and Moore 2000 and Clarke & Varma, 2004) yet there have also been recent criticisms of these models (Evans & Elphick, 2004). Michailof et al (2003) state that there can be no blueprint approach to post conflict intervention, since each crisis is specific and requires a different response.

¹ A crisis can be defined as an event or a set of circumstance arising from external or internal causes which severely compromises the marketability or viability of a tourism destination, tourism and hospitality enterprise or service (Beirman, 2007).

² Santana (1999) defines crisis management as ongoing integrated and comprehensive effort that organizations effectively put into place in an attempt to first and foremost understand and prevent crisis, and to effectively manage those that occur, taking into account each and every step of their planning and training activities, the interest of their stakeholders.

When developing tourism destinations post conflict we cannot look at tourism in isolation: tourism has been seen in many countries as key a tool for economic development and in some countries as a tool for peace building³. Developing destinations is an all encompassing, inclusive and participatory process involving many sectors of an economy and is a complex process. Stakes, as well as risks are high, needs are immense and capacities are limited. And speed is key, since peace dividends are essential for conflict-affected groups to regain hope and work towards consolidating stability (Michailof et al, 2003). When conflicts have dragged on for years, as is the case in Sri Lanka, the post conflict situation is especially fragile, since most of the social, political, economic and physical capital has been destroyed.

There has been much research into recovery of countries post conflict focusing on all sectors of the economy, not just tourism (Sorensen, 2004; Kreimer, 1998 & 2000; Rathmell, 2005; Coyne, 2005, Del Castillo, 2001). There is also a plethora of tourism specific work, with some of the more relevant literature including Bhattarai et al (2005) who wrote on tourism, terrorism and turmoil in Nepal and the issues facing the tourism industry during the ongoing Maoist troubles. Blake and Sinclair (2003) examine potential and actual policy responses post '9/11' in the US. Bern and King (2006) looked at understanding the key elements of a crisis recovery strategy (CRS) in Fiji post the military coups. Finally Beirman (2003) has spent much time trying to understand the concept of tourism recovery and the role of different components of the tourism industry in the recovery process with a comparative assessment of three Southeast Asian tourism recovery campaigns including Bali post the October 12, 2002 Bombing.

To ensure that the development of tourism post conflict occurs in a responsible manner it is necessary to define what we mean by 'responsible'. In doing so we will refer to the 2002 Cape Town Declaration which defines responsible tourism as tourism which:

- minimizes negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- provides access for physically challenged people; and
- is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence

³ Sarajevo, Cambodia

CONCLUSION

There is a need for further research into the development of a framework for a more responsible approach to tourism development in post conflict areas. Themes that need to be looked at include:

- Responsible tourism; both domestic and international and, more specifically, it will look at different types of tourism from mass tourism, eco tourism and up market tourism of which the latter two predominantly attract Free Independent Travellers (FITs)
- Response and Recovery in relation to post conflict crises
- Destination Rejuvenation post conflict
- Destination Resilience and Vulnerability Theories
- The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) in the context of sustainable tourism development

For more information on developing tourism in post conflict destinations contact libby@adlibconsulting.com