

Book review

Bruce Prideaux and David Beirman (eds), *Handbook on Crisis and Disaster Management in Tourism* (Edward Elgar 2024) 430 pp.

Peter Mason*

London Metropolitan University and Bournemouth University, UK

This edited book has 25 chapters and is part of the series of Edward Elgar's research handbooks in Tourism. The authors represent several different countries affected by crises and disasters at the time the book was published, although just under a half were based at Australian or New Zealand universities/institutions. Nevertheless, over a third were working in the USA, there were several based in the UK, and others in Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Ghana and Saudi Arabia, indicating the international perspectives in the book. The objective of the book, according to the editors, is to explore the diversity of the issues, and they decided to bring together 'a collection that includes theoretical perspectives, case studies, methodologies and a selection of chapters from non-academic authors who have first-hand experience of working in crisis situations' (p. xiv).

The book explores seven themes, according to what is provided by the editors in Chapter 1. As the editors indicate, a number of themes cover more than one chapter; hence, the book is not structured in such a way that the themes are discrete or in the sequence shown below, but instead are spread over several chapters:

- The lifecycle approach to crises and disasters (12 chapters)
- COVID-19 responses (six chapters)
- Academic research-theory building (four chapters)
- Practitioners' perspectives on crises and disasters (four chapters)

Case studies that explore particular themes in crises and disasters (four chapters)

- Responding to multiple crisis events (three chapters)
- The impact of climate change and transition to net zero (two chapters)

The theme with the largest number of chapters focusing on it is the 'life cycle approach' (p. 15) to crises. The editors indicate that this approach can be divided into Preparation, (one chapter), Perspective (three chapters) and Response and Recovery (eight chapters). However, the editors do not fully explain here what is meant by 'Perspective'. Nevertheless, one of the 'Perspective' chapters (Chapter 6, by Takamatsu) is concerned with the development of a crisis response manual, another (Chapter 7, by Prideaux) focuses on the climate crisis and the third (Chapter 18, by Gordon) discusses strategy to integrate tourism 'within wider national governance' (p. 280).

Chapter 1, written jointly by the two editors (who also contribute other chapters), is a useful overview focusing on key issues. It is concerned with defining and classifying crises and disasters, response frameworks, preparedness and resilience. There is also a

* Email: p.mason@londonmet.ac.uk.

brief reference, in Chapter 1, to a major criticism of the ‘life cycle model’ (pp. 9–10) in a paragraph concerning chaos theory, which challenges the linear approach of the life cycle model. The first chapter also presents academic theory and in addition to this chapter, the relatively short Chapter 2 (by Prayang) is concerned with theorising organisational resilience in tourism, whilst Chapter 3 (by Riley, Pennington-Gray and Schroeder) attempts to recognise three distinct types of risk, drawing particularly on the marketing, health and psychological literature.

Many of the crises discussed are natural or semi-natural in origin, such as earthquakes (e.g. Chapter 5 by Kausar, Stevenson, Rosmali and Imran) and climate change (e.g. Chapters 7 and 8 both by Prideaux), others are at the interface of the environment and human health, particularly COVID (Chapters 10–12, which are all discussed in more detail below), but some are of entirely human creation, for example, the political issues causing a crisis in Hong Kong’s tourism (Chapter 24 by McKercher, Gamor and Nasiri), digital transformation in the Music event industry (Chapter 20 by Catarsi, Ronzoni and Linnes) and digital changes in hospitality in Hawaii (Chapter 13, by Linnes and Agrusa).

Of particular relevance to this journal is Abrar Faisal’s contribution (Chapter 4), which is concerned with interpreting qualitative data in crisis research. Faisal interviewed 27 residents of Christchurch New Zealand, following the 2011 earthquake, using purposive sampling, selecting ‘information-rich research participants’ (p. 57) from the hospitality industry. A key finding was that hospitality in Christchurch CBD ‘became temporarily extinct’ (p. 64), but local businesses working with government were ‘a notable collaborative response’ (p. 64), and Faisal suggests that ‘qualitative researchers need to adopt a holistic approach to interpret data’ (p. 65). Several other chapters are also based on the collection of empirical data. For example, Dressler and Thompson (Chapter 11) used a questionnaire survey at Cairns airport to investigate the nature and motivation of domestic visitors pre- and during COVID, while Beirman (Chapter 12) conducted content analysis of material relating to the use of ‘travel bubbles/travel corridors’ (p.178) as a response to COVID. Kalnaovakal, Kannoavakun, Promsivapallop and Prideaux (Chapter 10) employed ‘text-mining analysis, using big data analytics programmes, KNIME and KH Coder’ (p. 149) of comments made on YouTube, relating to travel risk perception during COVID, and Gamage, Pyke, DeLacey, Nguyen and Lindsay-Smith (Chapter 16) used semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample, followed by two virtual focus groups to assess resilience of the Australian tourism industry during COVID.

Chapter 15, by van Walbeek, is particularly useful for those interested in responses to crises. It is written by a practitioner, deliberately in ‘a non-academic style’ (p. 221), and focuses on the 2015 Nepal earthquake. The chapter is based on the Pacific Area Travel Association (PATA) report on the earthquake, of which van Walbeek was the main author. As well as killing nearly 9,000 people, the earthquake had a significant negative impact on the tourism industry. The chapter outlines the approach of the Nepalese chapter of PATA, following advice from external PATA experts. After the earthquake, a task force was set up and operated using successive stages, focusing particularly on marketing and rebranding. A key factor, van Walbeek argues, when recovering from a crisis, is strong leadership and as he states, ‘when business conditions change suddenly ... and the future appears uncertain, choosing a clear deliberate path forward is an overwhelming task’ (p. 238). Takamatsu (Chapter 6), another practitioner, discusses the creation of a crisis manual to deal with earthquakes and volcanoes in Japan. This manual was produced after consultation between public and private sector organisations, Takamatsu states, and he refers to important industry/academic

links, where students critiqued an early draft of the manual, which was subsequently modified in the light of their comments.

Of the crises that are not environment-based, Beirman (Chapter 22) discusses the collapse of Thomas Cook in 2019. In addition to the effects on those who lost their jobs with the travel company, Beirman considers the impact on customers in the UK and Europe, who he claims were treated better than those in Australasia. He also adds that the collapse was a 'harbinger of multiple travel business collapses during ... the COVID crisis' (p. 348).

A relatively minor criticism of the book is that, somewhat surprisingly, it does not have a Conclusions chapter, which could bring together some of the main themes discussed. However, in Chapter 1, there are brief conclusions and ideas on the future research topics, as well as a plea for a dedicated '*Crises Management in Tourism*' journal. Of greater significance is that although there is reference to the danger of 'crowding' at music festivals (Chapter 20 by Catarsi, Rouzoni and Linnes), there is not a detailed discussion of tourism as a cause of crises in terms of 'overtourism', particularly the impacts in places such as Venice, Barcelona and Mallorca. Nevertheless, this is an important addition to the literature and will be a very useful book for both senior and junior academics and PhD students and should hopefully find its way into the hands of practitioners.