

Is The Emergency Management Applied Within The Hospitality Industry at Present Sufficient?

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Abstract

The hospitality industry cannot hide anymore from various and continuous emergencies. Many calamities and emergencies whether the natural ones or human-made emergencies stroke the tourism and hospitality industry in all over the world in the most recent decades. Such emergencies impose the researcher to answer a significant question “Is the emergency management applied within the hospitality industry at present sufficient, or not?”. A case study design was the most appropriate qualitative method for this paper, a direct observation using a checklist is used in one of the biggest and famous restaurants in Washington DC. Our empirical findings reveal that X restaurant' management does not have even the culture of dealing with the emergencies; they take steps forward only after experiencing an emergency situation, subsequently their actions come in the form of reactive not proactive steps to mitigate the danger that threatens their business. Therefore, the emergency management that is applied within the restaurant at present is insufficient at all.

Keywords: Emergency management, Stakeholders relationship management, Hospitality.

1. Introduction

The Tourism Industry “consists of all the commercial and non-commercial institutions and agencies which make Tourism possible, encourage and enhance it and deal with the consequences. Henderson stated that the sectors that constitute the core of the industry are “Tourism authorities, hospitality properties, attractions, and guests.” (Henderson, 2008). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the tourism industry has experienced continued growth, development, and diversification over the past six decades to the degree that made it one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world (WTTC, 2010). The various services that shape the global travel and tourism industry (accommodation, transport, and catering, recreation and visitor services) generate several thousand billion U.S. dollars in revenue each year. Therefore, many countries rely on tourism for growth and existence (Ritchie, 2004), especially the industry sectors are considered the key contributor to socioeconomic progress and infrastructural development worldwide (Purwomarwanto & Ramachandran, 2015).

However, in line with this growth and on the other hand, many calamities and emergencies that strokes the tourism and hospitality industry in all over the world in the recent decades. An emergency is any situation or series of events that position a group, team or an organization into a downward spiral status, by threatening to harm guests and staff or property and negatively affect and damage an organization, its stakeholders and shareholders, or even an entire industry if not managed effectively and efficiently (Haleet al., 2005).

Emergency situations always create three inter related unpleased consequences: public safety, financial loss due to disruption of operations and loss of market share, and inevitably reputation damage because it reflects the poor and weak internal system (Coombs, 2012). Accordingly, the tourism organizations lose the tourists' trust. Many academics asserted that tourism organizations and destinations have experienced large-scale natural and human-induced emergencies with increased frequency and impact (Becken & Hughey, 2013; Ryu et al., 2013).

According to Prideaux (2004), such emergencies negatively affected the inbound landings and tourism business, making different difficulties for both the private and public sectors. Therefore, the reliance on tourism business increases the responsibility of executives and managers to consider the impact of potential emergencies and identify strategies to mitigate them effectively (Ritchie, 2004). Identifying the appropriate emergencies rely in the first place on adopting reliable emergency management within the hospitality properties, so, the aim of this study is to answer the inevitable and introductory question that must be asked before considering the negative consequences of the potential emergencies "Is the emergency management applied within the hospitality industry at present sufficient, or not?"

2. Literature Review

2.1 Emergency Prone Environment

In reality, the hospitality industry is facing a great variety of natural and man-made emergencies. As being part of the tourism industry, it is – among others - especially vulnerable to security, electrical, communication and other critical infrastructure failures (Ritchie, 2004). Burns (1999) claimed that emergencies that strike the hospitality industry may arise from different reasons that expand and multiple especially in developing countries. Therefore, risks and emergency situations that the hospitality industry may experience arise mainly because of the following two reasons:

- ☒ Problematic characteristics of hospitality operations and characteristics themselves,
- ☒ Exogenous events, which can emerge from broader economic, social and political processes or a consequence of natural disasters.

However, the second reason is the main reason, while the first reason may be considered as the motivator where the characteristics of the industry do the action of a drop of oil in bursting a flame; the man-made faults in such sensitive industry cause huge consequences and harm the image of organizations and destinations. So, the oldest and simplest typology of risks did not consider any factors or characteristics to become a part of creating emergency situations and only granted them into the intentional man-made emergencies and natural external causes (Rosenthal and Kouzmin, 1993).

According to Barton, possible hospitality industry 'emergencies reasons include:1) climate change induced reasons as "fire, flood, hurricane, blizzard, tidal wave, earthquake; 2) on-site gang violence; 3) industrial accident at the hotel construction site;4) leak of gas, chemical, or other toxic substance;

5) murder, rape, other violent crime against guests or the staff; 6) E.coli or other bacterial infection caused by improper sanitation procedures; 7) embezzlement of organization funds by employee, auditor, or other party; 8) publicized charge of sexual harassment against a property manager or executive; 9) arrest of employee for drug-dealing or other illegal on-site activity; 10) sabotage of computer or proprietary data; 11) major robbery, either of guests or management and 12) terrorist or war-related activity, including bombing and sniper fire.”(Barton, 1995).

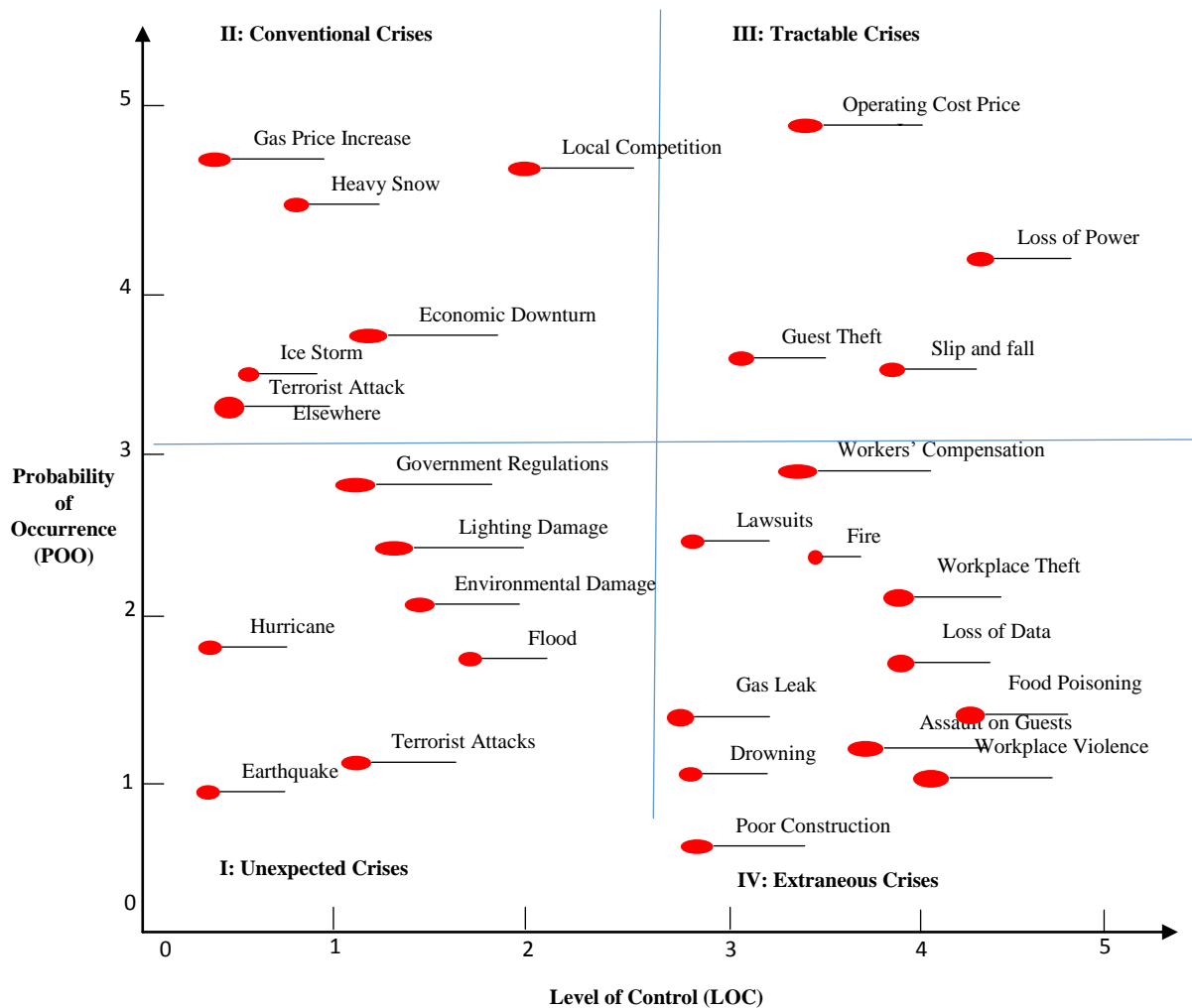


Figure 1: Emergency Typology as perceived by Hotel Managers
Source: Racherla and Hu, 2009

According to Mansfeld (2006), the hospitality industry tends to be highly sensitive to the negative effects of emergencies whether the natural disasters or the human-induced emergencies such as clashes, conflict and terrorist attacks. Henderson and Ng (2004) asserted that hospitality industry can be easily influenced by the internal and external impacts. Then, concrete emergency management must be established on clearly defined scenario-based pieces of training and communication concepts. In order to do so, the emergency sources must be identified and categorized.

Continuative, Figure 1 displays an overview and categorization of potential emergencies that may strike the hospitality industry on the basis of a rating of “probability of occurrence” and “level of control”. However, the emergency classification based on the level of control and probability of occurrence seems insufficient as these aspects might vary significantly over the course of the unpleasant situations (type, duration, and severity of the situation) and based on additional aspects (e.g. location, crisis experience, training courses).

According to Glaesser (2005), various authors have already set frameworks for emergency typology. E.g. Mitroff (1996) defined criminal attack, economic attack, loss of proprietary information, industrial crises, natural disasters, breaks in equipment and plants, legal, reputational perception, human resources, health and regulatory as differentiable emergency sources. In the same line, Henderson (2008) categorized the emergency sources into economic, political, socio-cultural, environmental, technological and commercial. But – so far – no source-based emergency typology was tailor-made for the hospitality industry and its specifications (intangibility of the products offered, the impossibility of storage of the products, high allocation cost, high labor cost and fluctuation, determining seasonality, and the high vulnerability to emergencies). Subordinated to the service industry, almost all emergency scenarios evoke consequences on numerous stakeholders and may hardly be solved without any public attraction.

Managing such emergencies and bad events require the involved organizations to answer the following question firstly for itself “What would you consider to be an emergency for your organization?” (Mitroff, 2000). The answer needs to be well-thought-out, honest, and detailed. All administrators and managers might be asked to write down examples of what they believe would constitute the emergency situation for their organization (Mitroff, 1996). Taking these aspects as a basis, the following hyponyms for a contemporary source-based classification in the hospitality have been defined as displayed in table 1.

Table 1: Emergency Typology

EMERGENCY TYPE	MAJOR IMPACT LEVEL
Economic Emergency	Macro
Environmental Emergency	Macro/ Micro
Health Emergency	Macro/ Micro
Reputational Emergency	Micro
Structural Emergency	Macro/ Micro
Political Emergency	Macro
Sociocultural Emergency	Macro/ Micro
Technological Emergency	Macro/ Micro

Source: Zech, 2016

Following this source-based approach, only by determining the specific emergency type, causes and impacts may be treated immediately and effectively. However, the emergency situations may fall into one or more categories at the same time.

Therefore, all hotel companies should be aware of the possibility they might be facing a crisis at one moment or another – regardless of size, type and success of the operation (Barton, 1995). Although, Faulkner (2001), claimed that there is no profound scientific evidence for increasing number of emergencies in general, but there is in fact e.g. scientific evidence of rising numbers of great natural disasters. Hence, tourism managers and policy-makers need to understand the nature of emergencies and their likely growth and possible magnitude. Coombs (1999) noted that all emergencies are different and emergency managers need to tailor responses to individual emergencies rather than try to plan for every individual situation. In addition, effective emergency management requires a continuous systematic approach to control the range and impact of potential losses.

2.2 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SPECIFICS WITHIN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

In the future, emergency management is predicted to be among the top 3 challenges for the tourism industry. The importance of applying concrete emergency management nowadays seems to be necessary because (Faulkner, 2001; Glaesser, 2006; Racherla and Hu, 2009) for the following reasons:

The industry' unique characteristics such as:

- Intangibility –products cannot be tested or touched prior to purchase,
- Perishability –inventory cannot be carried or stored away for later use,
- Volatility –depending on a wide range of external factors.
- The high sensitivity of tourism industry to risks and crises,
- The increased global tourism activity increased the levels of risk around the tourists,
- The attractiveness of high-risk exotic destinations,
- The tourism industry' position as an early warning indicator for other industries.

However, the hospitality industry' executives, administrators, and managers are still not aware enough of the imminent risk of severe emergency situations. In addition, they still ignore the importance of planning process in mitigating such calamities as Barton (1995) claimed that emergency management for the hospitality industry begins and ends with planning. According to Racheria and Hu (2009) workforce within the organizations still represents the weak point in the system that hinders developing and applying well proactive strategies and plans as they make a poor decision when actually they experience an emergency situation.

The most significant factors that contribute to poor decision making during the disaster or immediately after the disaster has occurred are;

- Traditional and inflexible techniques and strategies adopted to mitigate such events,
- Poor training in disaster management, and
- Poor communication among decision makers (stakeholders and shareholders).

In this regard, Purwomarwanto & Ramachandran (2015) found a shortage of emergency management policies and consequently the practices, and the need to adopt updated and reliable emergency procedures and techniques to give the priority to avoid human properties lost during the disaster. If emergencies are not managed, controlled, mitigated, or averted, destinations and hospitality organizations can experience disastrous impacts (Varghese & Paul, 2014) (loss of reputation of safety and accordingly losing the tourists' trust) and the severity of the impact will penetrate the industry sectors. Hence, the ultimate aim is to prevent the emergency from turning into a disaster.

2.3 THE ESSENTIALS OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROCESS

In his landmark book, Fink (2002) compared the emergency management process to a disease by defining the following consecutive phases:

1. Prodromal emergency stage,
2. Acute emergency stage,
3. Chronic emergency stage,
4. Emergency resolution stage.

Later on, Coombs (2010) defined three phases of emergency management (see table 2), consolidating Fink's acute and chronic emergency stages rounding them up by adding the corresponding measures applicable per emergency management phase. Effective emergency management can prevent an issue from becoming a crisis. Poor understanding and management of risks can lead to disastrous situations. The Australian and New Zealand International Standards (2009) (AS/NZS ISO, 2009) suggested that emergency management is a logical and systematic method of establishing the scenario, identifying, analyzing, evaluating, treating, monitoring, and communicating risks associated with any activity or function.

Table 2: Measures applicable within Emergency Management Phases

Emergency Management Phases	Measures Applicable
Pre-Emergency	Preventive measures signal detection, Prevention techniques and procedures.
Emergency	Emergency management plan recognition of the trigger situations and response
Post-Emergency	Post-emergency evaluations actions after operations have returned to normal.

Source: Coombs, 2010

According to UNWTO (2011), complete emergency management consists of the “strategies, processes and measures which are planned and put into force to prevent and cope with emergency situations”.

In line with Mitroff (2000), Beirman (2016) asserted that a successful emergency management should follow a systematic process that in turn give the human factor the full power to control and mitigate the emergencies, while not all emergencies can be foreseen, let alone prevented, all of them can be managed far more effectively if we understand and practice the best of what is humanly possible. So, the effective emergency management must prioritize the planning process in addition to having a good communication with the relevant stakeholders in order to reach the tourism sector to be able to operate normally. Therefore, assessing such emergency situations that may lead to the chaotic operating environment must be considered initially; understanding the reasons that contribute to creating such unpleasant events impose the organizations to put planning at the top of its agenda in addition to having the skilled workforce.

A basic emergency management team has to be determined. The emergency management team identifies and develops emergency management strategies and suitable techniques under the supervision and control of their team leader (Ritchie, 2004). They need to work under the condition of time pressure as well as under the consciousness of the current situation being of high importance to the organization. Considering the current research subject, the emergency management team representing the following departments seems generally advisable – a more concrete team composition will be empirically ascertained:

- Finance,
- Operations,
- Security,
- Public relations/marketing,
- Human resources.

However, according to Fink (2002), the emergency management team might not always be the same, different types of emergencies might require involving different team members. Therefore, the training must not be too specific or limited to involve certain team members. Furthermore, a clear reporting sequence has to be created so that the workforce members know what to do or whom to contact during emergency existence.

Generally, the hospitality industry cannot hide itself anymore from the fact that anticipating professional emergency management needs to be integrated into general managerial principles. Only by doing so, business continuity at the highest level possible can be assured. In order to effectively control emergencies situations and return a tourism-related organization to some degree of normality, management should work before an incident to anticipate a worst-case scenario that could seriously damage the organization's operations, reputation, financial condition, market share, and brand value. The process typically begins when a task force is appointed. Thus, an emergency committee should employ a person with creative mind within the team, in addition to adopting a reliable, accurate, and flexible technique.

3. METHODOLOGY

Scholars use case study approaches to explore phenomena in different real-life settings (Cronin, 2014) and collect rich data by touching the reality and accordingly getting a holistic view about the phenomenon with real and reliable results. Stewart (2012) described many case study designs as investigating a specific phenomenon at different research locations. Consequently, a case study design was the most appropriate qualitative method for this paper. The data collection method used in this study was the checklist; a direct observation using a checklist is being used in order to get a holistic view about the nature of emergency management - if it exists - in one of the biggest and famous restaurants in Washington DC. The case study is developed in an Italian restaurant in Washington Dc, USA, the reason that pushes the researcher to select this restaurant is its advantageous location in Georgetown, Washington, DC, in addition, its high capacity – 160 seats and accordingly lots of customers and many servers and busboys. These reasons could be to generate a lot of workload and pressure, more customers- servers' interactions that may be considered an excellent condition to catch and capture some of the real emergencies that hospitality industry may face.

The observation process was conducted and developed during the summer months, 2017. That period is considered the best time for most of the hospitality organizations because it is the holidays time around the world, this makes the restaurant very busy most of the weekdays and especially in weekends; Friday evening, Saturday, and Sunday. (X letter will be used in the study context to indicate the restaurant).

The study was adopted a naturalistic approach to studying staff (Manager and his workers) techniques/ actions and behaviors during their work operations which express their awareness and preparedness for such emergency situations. The checklist consisted of three main parts. Under each component, a series of items were included that represented criteria for evaluating the component's characteristics, as follows:

- Component One: Adopting emergency management procedures.
- Component Two: Training efforts (meetings or courses) for preventing or controlling the restaurant's emergencies.
- Component Three: Cooperation with all the relevant stakeholders in order to mitigate or control the restaurant's emergencies.

Direct observation was conducted three times a week only in August which gave a total of 12 times to be analyzed. Direct observation assisted me to answer my questions concerning the three previously mentioned components. The advantage of direct observation was that it assisted me to actually touch the restaurant's efforts to apply emergency management.

A special detail from these observations was discussed during each observation. During observations, a checklist is used. Having a checklist of observation criteria assisted the researcher to focus on specific aspects that the researcher wanted to investigate in the restaurant's operations.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The checklist component consisted of three sections; each one consisted of several statements measuring the section. In this process, each statement to be averaged is assigned a weight that determines the relative importance of each quantity. The weight of every statement was equaled 10 making the values of the three sections are 120, 30, and 120 respectively.

Five Likert-scale was developed to measure the perception of the researcher about each statement ranging from zero which indicate to poor perception to 100% which express excellent perception.

Table 3: Checklist components

CHECKLIST COMPONENTS	Poor 0%	Unsatisfactory 30%	Satisfactory 60%	Good 80%	Excellent 100%	N/A
Adopting Emergency Management (120)						
Training Efforts for preventing or controlling the restaurant's emergencies. (30)						
Involving all the stakeholders in mitigating the restaurant's emergencies. (120)						

The formula that is adopted to calculate the number of points for every sections in the checklist is based on **Weighted average equation** which is an average in which each observation in the data set is assigned or multiplied by a weight before summing to a single average value.

The number of points for applying Emergency Management Procedures =

$$[\text{The sum of the marks}] \div [6 - \text{no. of N/A}] \times \text{Number of points}$$

$$[120] \div [6-0.2] \times 60 = 12$$

Table 4 shows the statements used to identify the routine emergency procedures adopted by the X restaurant management in case of existing any emergency situation.

Table 4: Adopting Emergency Management Procedures

Assessment Elements	N	N/A	The sum of Points	Percent %
Adopting Emergency Management Procedures (120)	(2×0) + (4×0.3)	0.2	120	20

The results of the first component of the observation checklist indicate very low percentage (20%). This means that the restaurant management lacks the proper actions and procedures to mitigate or even deal with the potential or experienced emergencies.

The researcher decided to begin with exploring to what extent the restaurant is adhering to applying and using protective operating standards and rules in their daily tasks. The results indicate that the restaurant stands away from following proactive routine emergency procedures (83.35 %), while the restaurant management only relies heavily on the skills and the experience of the staff in order to mitigate such undesired events in addition to the governmental backup in case of big crisis.

The second component shed the light on the management concern of regulating training meetings for the different stakeholders (internal and external stakeholders) as preventive emergency reduction technique, as shown in the following equation;

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{The number of points for conducting Training Meetings} = \\ &[\text{The sum of the marks}] \div [3 - \text{no. of N/A}] \times \text{Number of points} \\ &[30] \div [3-0.1] \times 30 = 3 \end{aligned}$$

Table 5: Regular Training Meetings

Assessment Elements	N	N/A	The sum of Points	Percent %
Executing Regular Training Meetings (30)	(2×0) + (1×0.3)	0.1	30	10

As shown in table (5), there are no any significant efforts exerted by the management for training the restaurant’ staff (only 10%) on such undesired situations to even give them the relevant instructions that highlight the basic concept of emergency reduction procedures and rules; how to mitigate emergencies and how to deal with them in case of experiencing an issue.

When emergencies strike, the entire community is affected, so our X restaurant management should strive to keep contact with its stakeholders. The third component discusses the status of cooperation with the different restaurant’ stakeholders in order to mitigate and control the emergencies that may strike the restaurant.

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{The number of points for conducting Training Meetings} = \\ &[\text{The sum of the marks}] \div [6 - \text{no. of N/A}] \times \text{Number of points} \\ &[120] \div [6-0.2] \times 60 = 15 \end{aligned}$$

Table 6: Cooperation with Relevant Stakeholders

Assessment Elements	N	N/A	The sum of Points	Percent %
Cooperation with Relevant Stakeholders (120)	(3×0) + (2×0.3) + (1×0.6)	0.2	120	25

Results in table (6) show that the management even don't solicit advice from emergency agencies to reduce possible hazards and crises (16.66%), they also don't organize meetings with all those likely to be involved in a major crisis (caterers, suppliers, vendors, channel partners, and governmental authorities) (16.66%). Such collaboration with stakeholders ensures that the responsibility for common disaster tasks is now predetermined on a mutually agreed basis and this, unfortunately, doesn't exist (13.33%). Generally, collaboration with different stakeholders in mitigating the potential emergencies still undermined (30%).

Generally, the following empirical analysis of conducted checklist revealed by several indicators that there is no any straight or obvious concept when dealing with emergencies or any preparedness' methods for such events:

1. The first section: they even do not follow logic steps to prevent problems especially those related to their staff.
2. The second section: unfortunately the results were negative; there are no any training programs or meeting for both the staff and stakeholders in preventive crisis reduction techniques.
3. The last section: the results showed that they may charge their suppliers or vendors financially for any delay or for any deviation from the specified quality or quantity. Although the X restaurant management punishes the wrongdoers from its supplier financially, they appear cost-minded management not saving the life or enhancing quality seekers.

Subsequently, the management never solicited advice to reduce possible hazards and risks, in addition, they never devised established any and legislation or safety rules to increase the awareness for the need to proactively reduce the chances for emergencies. Hence, the empirical findings reveal that X restaurant' management does not have even the culture of dealing with the emergencies; they take steps forward only after meeting with the unpleasant situations, subsequently their actions come in the form of reactive not proactive steps to mitigate the danger that threatens their business. Therefore, the emergency management that is applied within the restaurant at present is insufficient at all. Therefore, the results indicate clearly need to an advanced, structured and practically applicable emergency management for the hospitality industry considering the following factors:

- Management should be moved towards the goal of emergency prevention rather than focusing on crisis response.
- All emergency management actions should consider the stakeholders' relationship approach, in a crisis situation the above mentioned multiple tourism industry entities are forced to coordinate "within organizations, between stakeholders, both within the tourism industry and between the tourism industry and external stakeholders".
- Taking into consideration the costs of planning and developing a reliable emergency management when running their operations, this because most hotel properties are micro, small or medium-sized businesses (i.e. they usually have fewer than 250 employees), who generally pay less attention and money.

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هل إدارة الطوارئ المطبقة حالياً في صناعة الضيافة كافية؟

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الملخص العربي

صناعة الضيافة بخلاف باقي الصناعات الأخرى لا تستطيع أن تخفى نفسها عن المخاطر وحالات الطوارئ المتنوعة والمتلاحقة. فعلى الرغم من أن صناعة الضيافة في العقود الستة الأخيرة شهدت تطوراً كبيراً للدرجة التي جعلتها واحدة من أكبر القطاعات الإقتصادية في العالم إلا أنها تعرضت للعديد من الأزمات وحالات الطوارئ (الطبيعية أو تلك الناتجة عن أخطاء البشر) على مستوى العالم وخصوصاً في العقدين الأخيرين. مثل هذه الحالات والأحداث الطارئة المتزايدة والمتلاحقة فرضت على الباحث الإجابة على تساؤل: "هل إداره الطوارئ المطبقة حالياً في صناعة الضيافة كافية أم لا؟". ولقد تم استخدام (دراسة الحالة) حيث كانت المنهجية الأنسب من أجل الوصول لنتائج واقعية وكانت قائمة الفحص هي الأداة الأنسب لجمع البيانات في واحد من أكبر المطاعم في مدينة واشنطن العاصمة. وأظهرت النتائج أن إدارة المطعم لا تملك حتى ثقافة التعامل مع حالات الطوارئ: فهم لا يتخذون أى خطوة إلا بعد تعرضهم لحادث، وبالتالي تُصنف إجراءاتهم كرد فعل وليست إجراءات إستباقية لتجنب مثل تلك المخاطر التي تهدد عملهم. وبالتالي فإنه ليس هناك أى تطبيق لإدارة الطوارئ حالياً في صناعة الضيافة على الإطلاق.

الكلمات الدالة: صناعة الضيافة، إداره الطوارئ، إدارة علاقات المساهمين.