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Crisis and disaster management in Jordanian hotels: practices and cultural considerations

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Abstract

Purpose – This research aims to: identify major risks that have the potential to place Jordanian hotels in crisis or disaster situations; investigate the tools/frameworks adopted by Jordanian hotels to manage crises and disasters; and investigate the cultural factors influencing the wider adoption of crisis and disaster management best practices in Jordanian hotels.

Design/methodology/approach – A survey of “five-star” hotels in Jordan was undertaken. Interviewer-administered questionnaire was conducted followed by semi-structured interviews with three General Managers from three hotels of different cultural backgrounds: local; regional; and international.

Findings – Results revealed that Jordanian hotels are exposed to a wide range of risks. Jordanian hotels lack effective and comprehensive tools/frameworks for managing crises and disasters. Organizational culture affects the wider adoption of crisis and disaster management best practices within Jordanian hotels.

Practical implications – To be successful in promoting crisis and disaster management in hotels and in the tourism industry more generally, the relevant authorities in Jordan, such as the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Jordanian Hotels Association, should demonstrate to hotels in Jordan how significant crisis and disaster management is, so that they can be able to cope with crises and disasters more efficiently.

Originality/value – This is the first study investigating crisis and disaster management in Jordanian hotels using quantitative and qualitative approaches. This research will be of value to those interested in crisis and disaster management in the tourism industry.

Keywords Risk, Crisis, Disaster, Hotels, Culture, Jordan, Risk management

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Tourism development has the potential to impact almost every aspect in a society, both positively and negatively (Byrd, 2007). The global tourism environment is increasingly becoming complex and unstable, making hotels vulnerable to a wide range of risks (Paraskevas and Arendell, 2007; Ritchie, 2004; Blake and Sinclair, 2003; Dean, 2002). The tourism industry has been affected hugely by crises and disasters around the world in recent years; including natural hazards and man-made (Pennington-Gray *et al.*, 2011).

The Jordanian hotel and tourism sector has experienced multiple crises and disasters in the last decade. Overall, the period from 2000 to date has been



characterized by serious political instability in the Middle East and has continued to influence Jordanian hotels negatively (Ali and Ali, 2010; Taylor, 2002). After September 11, there have been at least 18 major terrorist incidents aiming at tourism targets worldwide, including two conducted in Jordan (Paraskevas and Arendell, 2007).

This research aims at: identifying major risks that have the potential to place Jordanian hotels in crisis or disaster situations; investigating the strategies and actions adopted by Jordanian hotels to manage crises and disasters; and exploring the cultural factors influencing the wider adoption of crisis and disaster management best practices in Jordanian hotels, a field of study that is still largely underexplored in the context of the Middle East and in the tourism industry more specifically.

2. Literature review

2.1 Risk and the tourism industry

In today's risky business environment, there is a tendency for crises and disasters to occur and bring about unfavorable impacts (Low *et al.*, 2010). Natural hazards and man-made crises and disasters are becoming more frequent, intense, and geographically diverse (Coppola, 2011; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2006) and the number of crises and disasters impacting on the tourism sector is increasing significantly (Pforr, 2006).

Paraskevas and Arendell (2007), Pratt (2003), Dean (2002), Feichtinger *et al.* (2001), and Sonmez (1998) discussed impacts of terrorism on the tourism industry and argued that terrorism and political instability intimidate tourists and the tourism industry considerably. Johnston *et al.* (2007), Ichinosawa (2006), and Johnston *et al.* (2005) discussed the negative impacts of natural hazards; tsunamis in specific, on the tourism industry and argued that such incidents have the potential to change and disrupt the social and economic make up of the affected area very severely. Cashman *et al.* (2012), Valls and Sarda (2009), and Batra and Kaur (1996) focussed on the deterioration of the global atmosphere, climate change, and environmental pollution and their negative impacts on tourism, a field that has gained much attention in recent years. They argued that the global current pace of development and industrialization is turning the world's main and secondary cities into urban nightmares and farms into factories. Others, such as Amelung *et al.* (2007), Hein *et al.* (2009), and Hamilton and Tol (2007) have also discussed impacts of climate change on tourism.

Examples of risks which have severely impacted the tourism industry and tourist mobility include terrorism attacks in Madrid in 2004, Jakarta in 2003, and Bali in 2002, natural hazards, such as the Boxing Day Tsunami affecting coastal South East Asia in 2004 (Sharpley, 2005), bush fires in Australia's capital Canberra (2002), health-related threats, such as SARS and bird flu epidemics in South East Asia (in 2003/2004), and the foot and mouth outbreak in Britain in 2001 (Leslie and Black, 2006; Irvine and Anderson, 2005; Coles, 2004; Frisby, 2002).

The 9/11 events in the USA in 2001 had also severe and unprecedented impacts. These events have changed the entire world, and phrases such as: "new era" and "our lives will never be the same", have become familiar since then (Kondrasuk, 2005; Castillo, 2004; Carton, 2001; Pillar, 2001). Following the 9/11 events, airlines (both in the USA and abroad) experienced a financial crisis unlike any in modern aviation history. Initially, there was a fall in the number of airline passengers and many switched to other modes of transportation, such as sea and road in order to avoid the risk of air traveling. Those continuing to use air transport faced many restrictions regarding their

flights which reduced the flexibility of traveling and tourism (Ito and Lee, 2005). Subsequently, international tourism declined noticeably and faced huge financial losses. The impacts extended beyond activities directly associated to tourism but also to hotels and catering services (Blake and Sinclair, 2003).

A considerable amount of the existing literature on crises and disasters in the tourism industry is made in the Americas (e.g. Kennett-Hensel *et al.*, 2009; Cashman *et al.*, 2012; Johnston *et al.*, 2007) and Far East (e.g. Ichinosawa, 2006; Henderson, 1999a, b, 2002). Very little research has been made in Jordan and in the Arab World more generally. Henderson (1999a, b, 2002) noticed that there was absence of formal crisis planning and management within this industry in this region. More research is needed on crisis and disaster management and the development of predictive, preventive, and corrective measures in the tourism industry (Ali and Ali, 2010; Hystad and Keller, 2008; Kumar, 2000).

2.2 Crisis and disaster management

Risk is the probability that something unpleasant will happen (Rockett, 1999). A crisis is an abnormal situation which presents high risk to business and which might develop into a disaster if it is neglected or mismanaged (Shaluf *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, if a crisis escalates, it could end up with a disaster (Wilks and Moore, 2003). A disaster is an unusual event which causes large-scale damage, loss, disruption, injury, and/or loss of life (Parker, 1992). Coppola (2011) and Recht (2004) argued that disasters are events that overwhelm the capacity of communities, businesses, and systems and require huge recovery and restoration efforts in order to get back to normal. Figure 1 illustrates how day-to-day risks escalate if they are mismanaged or neglected.

The concept of best practice is a popular approach to improving organizational and professional practice (Seeger, 2006). Understanding and implementing crisis and disaster management best practices start by recognizing that crises and disasters consist of three stages; the pre-crisis/disaster stage; crisis/disaster stage; and post-crisis/disaster stage (Shaluf, 2008; Ritchie, 2004; Faulkner, 2001; Kumar, 2000) (Figure 2).

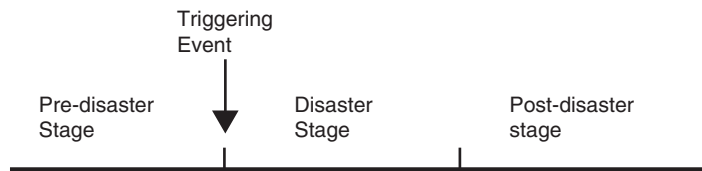
The vulnerability of organizations to crises and disasters stimulates the need for thinking of the most effective ways of managing them. Nevertheless, there is no single, universally adopted approach for crisis and disaster management that fits all countries and organizations (Coppola, 2011; Unlu *et al.*, 2010; Khodarahmi, 2009; Moore and Lakha, 2004). According to Pearson and Mitroff (1993), crisis and disaster management is a multi-stage process that consists of six phases.

Figure 1.
Escalation of events



Source: Wilks and Moore (2003)

Figure 2.
Disaster stages



Source: Shaluf (2008)

Signal detection is a pre-disaster phase that aims to identify early warning signals that precede an event. Early warning is considered to be the first “line of defence” against crises and disasters. It helps to control problems before they are too big to correct (Momani and Alzaghal, 2009; Johnston *et al.*, 2007; Gonzdlez-Herrero and Pratt, 1995; Pearson and Mitroff, 1993).

Preparation is a pre-disaster phase that aims to develop a state of readiness (Carmeli and Schaubroeck, 2008). Crisis and disaster management best practice calls for preparation and prevention in the first place. Preparation/prevention involves preparing proactive and preventive measures in order to prevent potential risks to escalate into crises or disasters (Unlu *et al.*, 2010; Shaluf, 2008; Warhurst, 2006; Brown, 2002).

Containment/damage limitation phase is concerned with the way an organization responds to an event when it occurs. It differs in terms of its time span depending on the impact of the event. The more severe the event is, the longer it takes to contain it and contain the damage (Childs and Dietrich, 2002).

Short-term and long-term recovery phases aim to recover from the damage that has already occurred to the infrastructure and other elements of the organization and restore business functions (Moore and Lakha, 2004; Childs and Dietrich, 2002).

Learning is a post-disaster phase. It aims to ensure that adequate reflection and critical examination of the lessons learned from experiencing an event are achieved. Learning from previous experiences facilitates the management of future incidents (Pearson and Mitroff, 1993). Organizations that are better at learning can adapt to changing environmental conditions more quickly over organizations that cannot (Martin de Holan and Phillips, 2004).

2.3 Strategies and actions

A comprehensive approach to crisis and disaster management requires multiple strategies and actions to be embraced (Ritchie, 2004). Various strategies and actions have been described in the literature. Most importantly, the selection of a specific strategy/action should be made in line with the disaster stages, as well as crisis and disaster management phases (Faulkner, 2001; Khan *et al.*, 2008).

Duncan *et al.* (2011), Pennington-Gray *et al.* (2011), Racherla and Hu (2009), Momani and Alzaghal (2009), Comfort (2007), Johnston *et al.* (2007), Paraskevas and Arendell (2007), Simola (2005), Ritchie (2004), Sapriel (2003), Wilks and Moore (2003), Faulkner (2001), Pheng *et al.* (1999), Davies and Walters (1998), Williams and Olaniran (1998), Gonzdlez-Herrero and Pratt (1995), and Pearson and Mitroff (1993) have identified various strategies and actions for managing crises and disasters (see Appendix Table AI).

Some of the strategies and actions which can be used before the occurrence of an event include: early warning systems, proactive planning, cognition, strategic forecasting, crisis awareness, scenario analysis, and risk analysis. During an event, business continuity management, crisis communications, emergency management, and contingency management can be used. After the occurrence of an event, damage assessment and disaster recovery management can be used.

2.4 Organizational culture

Arab organizations have a culture that is different from that of the west. Centralization of power and the existence of lines of authority and hierarchy are among the features that characterize the Arab business environment. The workplace itself can be quite

a systemized environment and is associated with low levels of autonomy and delegation (Sabri, 2004; Al-Rasheed, 2001; Hofstede, 1991). This is why it becomes significant to explore whether or not organizational culture (i.e. Jordanian culture), which traces its roots to Arab culture, has an influence on the wider adoption of crisis and disaster management best practice in Jordanian hotels.

Culture is strongly linked with livelihood patterns of the communities thus when the cultural factors are aligned with the livelihood patterns, communities can be more resilient toward economic, social, and environmental risks and more effective in managing and coping with these risks. The same applies in an organizational context. When cultural factors are aligned with interaction and day-to-day operations, organizations can be more resilient toward risks (Kulatunga, 2010). Culture to an organization is like personality is to a human being, and since many aspects of human personality are unconscious, many aspects of organizational culture are hidden. Therefore, organizations may be unaware of the forces influencing their actions which subsequently can cause crises and disasters (Smith and Elliott, 2007; Pearson and Mitroff, 1993; Mitroff, 1988; Pauchant and Mitroff, 1988). Organizational culture is learned by individuals and groups in an organization as they work through and resolve day-to-day challenges, as such, it produces automatic patterns of perceiving, feeling, and behaving that provide stability and comfort (Schein, 1990). Subsequently, organizational culture affects the way organizations cope with external pressures that might threaten their long-term survival, as well as the development of effective crisis and disaster practices (Kulatunga, 2010; Kondra and Hurst, 2009).

Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) argued that organizations which are not prepared for potential crises and disasters have institutionalized “sickness” in their culture, and as a result, they put huge pressure on “normal” individuals to become “sick” in order to fit in. They concluded that, it is not what people within an organization do that leads to a disaster or crisis: it is how they are. Crisis prone organizations are often reactive in their response to crises and disasters, i.e. they usually focus on the recovery aspect more than preparation and prevention. Organizational culture helps in preventing/reducing potential risks to escalate into crises and disasters. In order to improve resilience, organizations need to initiate and underpin a cultural change and development process which, in turn, is significant in creating a “risk culture” which is considered to be a cornerstone in enterprise risk management implementation and in crisis and disaster management best practice (Udayangani, 2010; Kimbrough and Compton, 2009; Hofstede, 1991).

3. Methodology

A survey strategy was adopted in this research. Primary and secondary data were obtained. Interviewer-administered questionnaire was conducted with five stars hotels. Other hotels of lower star ratings were not included in this study since they are considered small businesses and lack financial recourses and adequate management practices. The sample consisted of 21 hotels which represent all five stars hotels in Jordan. 16 responded to the questionnaire representing 76 percent response rate.

Interviewer-administered questionnaires were used since they usually result in higher response rates compared to self-administered ones, especially when samples are small (Saunders *et al.*, 2000). The questionnaire included open-ended, closed-ended, and Likert scale questions. Likert scale is often used as a measure of intensity of responses (e.g. “very unlikely” to “very likely”) (Hair *et al.*, 2003). The questionnaire

was divided into three sections: general questions; major risks facing Jordanian hotels; crisis and disaster management practice within Jordanian hotels.

The questionnaire was followed by semi-structured interviews conducted with three general managers from three hotels of different organizational cultural backgrounds: local; regional; and international. Interviews were undertaken in order to provide insight of the cultural factors influencing the wider adoption of crisis and disaster management best practice in Jordanian hotels. Interviews targeted five stars hotels only which took part in the questionnaire. Having said that, and taking into consideration that three interviews were conducted, it was not intended to draw concrete conclusions from the interview sample, but rather to explore and provide a better understanding of potential cultural factors affecting crisis and disaster management in Jordanian hotels.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Section 1: general information

a. Respondent profiles – Respondents were requested to indicate their positions. Three were general managers; four were deputy general managers; and nine were human resources managers.

b. In all, 100 percent of respondents reported that their hotels have experienced crises and disasters in the last ten years.

4.2 Section 2: risks facing Jordanian hotels

a. Respondents were requested to identify the risks that threaten their hotels. Table I shows the major risks facing Jordanian hotels.

The findings revealed that political instability in the Middle East was a major risk that threatens all Jordanian hotels. This finding is consistent with Ali and Ali (2010) who found that the unstable political situation in the Middle East was a major risk facing the Jordanian tourism sector and which hinders the greater development of tourism in Jordan. The findings also showed that social unrest, threats of terrorism, financial problems and sudden exchange rates fluctuations, perceived destination image, the decline in the number of tourists entering Jordan, biological threats and pandemics, and natural threats were identified as major risks facing Jordanian hotels. This shows that hotels and the tourism sector more generally are vulnerable to a wide

Risks	Frequency	% of respondents
Political instability in the Middle East	16	100
Social unrest in the region and in Jordan	16	100
Potential terrorist activities	10	63
Financial problems and sudden exchange rates fluctuations	6	41
Perceived destination image of Jordan in light of the unstable conditions in the Middle East	5	31
Potential decline in the number of tourists entering Jordan	5	31
Biological threats and pandemics	4	25
Scarcity of sustainable water resources	4	25

Note: Frequency represents the number of respondents who reported the risk

Table I.
Risks facing
Jordanian hotels

range of risks and highly susceptible to crises and disasters. This is consistent with the views of Paraskevas and Arendell (2007), Ritchie (2004), Blake and Sinclair (2003), and Dean (2002) who argued that the global tourism environment is increasingly becoming complex and unstable, making tourism organizations vulnerable to risk, crises, and disasters.

b. On a scale rating from 1 = (very unlikely), 2 = (unlikely), 3 = (neutral/no significant change is predicted), 4 = (likely), and 5 = (very likely), respondents were requested to assess the probability of the risks above to further escalate and cause crises or disasters. Table II shows the mean (i.e. the average of scale) of probability.

c. On a scale rating from 1 = (very low), 2 = (low), 3 = (moderate), 4 = (high), and 5 = (very high), respondents were requested to assess the expected level of impact (i.e. severity of damage and loss) if the risks identified above escalate. Table III shows

Table II.
Average probability
of risks to escalate to
crises or disasters

Risk	Average probability
Social unrest in the region and in Jordan	4.50
Political instability in the Middle East	4.50
Potential decline in the number of tourists entering Jordan	4.00
Scarcity of sustainable water resources	3.50
Perceived destination image of Jordan in light of the unstable conditions in the Middle East	3.00
Potential terrorist activities	3.00
Financial problems and sudden exchange rates fluctuations	2.50
Biological threats and pandemics	2.00

Table III.
Expected levels of
impact of risks on
Jordanian hotels

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Average level of tangible impact</i>
Social unrest in the region and in Jordan	4.50
Political instability in the Middle East	4.50
Potential decline in the number of tourists entering Jordan	4.50
Biological threats and pandemics	4.00
Potential terrorist activities	4.00
Perceived destination image of Jordan in light of the unstable conditions in the Middle East	4.00
Financial problems and sudden exchange rates fluctuations	3.50
Scarcity of sustainable water resources	3.00
	<i>Average level of intangible impact</i>
<i>Risk</i>	
Social unrest in the region and in Jordan	4.50
Political instability in the Middle East	4.50
Potential terrorist activities	4.50
Biological threats and pandemics	4.00
Perceived destination image of Jordan in light of the unstable conditions in the Middle East	4.00
Scarcity of sustainable water resources	4.00
Potential decline in the number of tourists entering Jordan	3.50
Financial problems and sudden exchange rates fluctuations	3.00

the mean (i.e. the average of scale) of expected levels of impacts; both tangible (i.e. damage to infrastructure and financial and economic losses) and intangible including damage to corporate reputation and public image mainly.

Overall, the findings indicated a high probability of the risks identified to escalate and end up in crises or disasters and showed that respondents were aware of the high levels of impact of those risks if they materialize. These results indicate that respondents were aware of the fact that those risks can occur and potentially escalate into crises or disasters which can be more threatening and difficult to cope with and will bring a lot more negative consequences.

4.3 Section 3: crisis and disaster management

a: Respondents were requested to identify their main concerns during crises or disasters (Table IV).

Table IV shows that losing customers was a major concern of all Jordanian hotels during crises and disasters. This might not be surprising since Jordan is a small country with a relatively large number of hotels (i.e. 250 hotels). If one hotel is highly susceptible to crises and disasters, customers will switch to other hotels seeking safer environments.

b: Respondents were requested to indicate if they are aware that crises and disasters consist of three stages. 60 percent of respondents were aware that crises and disasters consist of three stages.

c: Respondents were requested to identify the steps of crisis and disaster management adopted in their hotels. A list of these steps was provided in the questionnaire in order to help respondents answer this question (Table V).

d: Respondents were requested to identify the strategies and actions adopted in their hotels for crisis and disaster management. A list of these strategies and actions was

Element	% of respondents
Loss of customers	100
Damage to corporate reputation	100
Loss of stakeholders confidence	60
Damage to infrastructure, facilities, and buildings	50
Disruption/discontinuity of critical business functions	30
Injury or loss of employees	25

Note: % of respondents represents the percent of respondents who reported each element

Table IV.
Main concerns of
respondents during
crises and disasters

Crisis and disaster management stages	% of respondents
Signal detection/early warning	0
Preparation/prevention	50
Containment/damage limitation	50
Short-term recovery	100
Long-term recovery	100
Learning from previous crises and disasters	20

Note: % of respondents represents the percent of respondents who reported each step

Table V.
Crisis and disaster
management stages
adopted in Jordanian
hotels

provided in the questionnaire in order to help respondents answer this question. Table VI shows crisis and disaster management strategies and actions adopted in Jordanian hotels with the corresponding crisis/disaster stage and percent of respondents.

The findings showed that 60 percent of respondents were aware of the fact that crises and disasters consist of three stages. They also revealed that early warning and signal detection was not used in any of the hotels surveyed despite the fact that early warning and signal detection is highly significant to Jordan and should be part of crisis and disaster management best practice of the country as Momani and Alzaghal (2009) argued. 100 percent of Jordanian hotels depended on security management. Disaster recovery management is used by Jordanian hotels in order to reduce impacts of disasters and resume normal operations.

In comparison with the strategies and actions that have been presented in the literature (Appendix Table AI), it can be concluded that Jordanian hotels lack the variety of strategies and actions that can be used in order to mitigate, prevent, and cope with risks. The findings showed that there is a great dependence on the security department and security management, while many other strategies and actions are still not implemented, such as early warning systems, scenario and risk analysis, business continuity planning and management, emergency management, and contingency planning and management. This might explain why Jordanian hotels are still vulnerable to risk and clarifies the gap between the literature and best practice in the field. The literature provides a wide set of strategies and actions that can be adopted, where on the other hand; the practical implementation of such strategies and actions seemed to be limited in Jordanian hotels. Therefore, if Jordanian hotels pay more attention to the wide variety of strategies and actions that can be adopted, crisis and disaster management best practice might improve considerably.

4.4 Section 4: cultural factors

Interview findings revealed that the cultural backgrounds of the hotels surveyed have influenced crisis and disaster management best practice.

Stage	Strategies/actions	% of respondents
Pre-crisis/disaster	Early warning systems	0
	Proactive planning and cognition	10
	Scenario analysis and planning	0
	Crisis awareness	40
	Security management	100
	Risk management	40
	Business continuity management	0
	Improvement of organizational culture	20
Crisis/disaster	Crisis communication systems or plans	30
	Integrated emergency management	0
	Contingency management	0
	Security management	100
Post-crisis/disaster	Business continuity management	0
	Damage assessment	30
	Disaster recovery	100
	Learning from previous crises and disasters	20

Table VI.
Crisis and disaster
management strategies
and actions adopted in
Jordanian hotels

Three main cultures were examined; local; regional; and international. The first is a local Jordanian hotel owned by a Jordanian investor. The owner is the senior executive officer. The hotel is operated by Jordanian employees mainly. The second hotel is owned by a number of stakeholders from Arab Gulf countries. It is operated by Jordanian and Asian employees mainly. The third hotel is part of a larger international hotel chain. It is headed by European senior executive officer and employs both Jordanians and non-Arabs. The respondent from the local hotel reported:

[...] we don't have a formal risk management department or crisis and disaster management department. We have a security department which is responsible for coping with all unexpected incidents. It is also responsible for business recovery.

The respondent from the regional hotel reported:

[...] we have a risk management department which is referred to as security department. However, we do not plan in advance for crises and disasters in a formal and systematic way. The risk management department provides guidance to the necessary procedures required to reduce impacts of unexpected incidents.

The findings show that the local and regional hotels were reactive in their approach to crisis and disaster management. They understand crisis and disaster management as instantaneous reactions to unexpected incidents rather than developing anticipatory procedures or adopting advanced planning techniques. Efforts focus on how to respond to crises and disasters after they occur and reduce damage and recover.

This situation was different than the case of the international hotel. It was found that the international hotel adopted a more proactive approach to crisis and disaster management and was aware of the significance of preparation and loss prevention over loss reduction and recovery.

The respondent from the international hotel stated:

[...] we have a risk management department responsible for managing crises and disasters, as well as the implementation of internationally recognized procedures and various aspects of best practice. Preparation is a priority and is considered a primary element of crisis and disaster management best practice.

The interviews aimed at identifying the cultural factors that hinder the wider adoption of crisis and disaster management best practice in Jordanian hotels. The following factors were identified: ability/willingness to learn from past experiences; organizational structure and centralization of power; type of relationship between private and government sectors; lack of quality infrastructure; and the lack of the implementation of international standards and specifications in both the tourism industry and crisis management practice. The above factors may not represent an exhaustive list of all the cultural factors that influence crisis and disaster management best practice in Jordanian hotels, but rather those identified by the respondents only.

When asked to explain how the factors above influenced crisis and disaster management best practice, the respondent from the local hotel stated:

[...] we recognize the significance of learning from previous experiences, however, in many cases after the occurrence of an incident, there is no one to follow up or initiate crisis awareness programs, crisis awareness is still not a part of our day-to-day life [...] strategic decisions are usually made by senior management only, middle managers and employees are rarely involved, thus making crisis communications less effective [...] there are some attempts from the Jordanian government to bridge between the private and public sectors, however, attempts sometimes fail due to lack of funding, budget deficit, or negligence from

key people/parties [...] we also lack adequate quality infrastructure, which sometimes causes tragic and unexpected incidents that can be barely dealt with, such as problems in water supplies and sanitary, and the reluctance of local services to spend on and develop quality infrastructure due to financial deficit mainly, which in turn reduce our capability to implement many aspects of crisis and disaster management best practice or internationally recognized procedures.

Based on the argument above, adequate funding was identified as another factor that hinders the wider adoption of crisis and disaster management best practice in Jordanian hotels. It was noticed that funding new projects, such as crisis and disaster management best practices in particular, is viewed by many parties; governmental and private, as extravagance since it does not generate profits straight away. Traditionally, Arab organizations and managers are reluctant to implement new projects unless they make quick revenues on the short run. Extra spending on projects that do not make quick revenues is considered waste of resources. Therefore, Arab management systems are known to be short sighted and lack future vision (Al-Rasheed, 2001).

The same cultural factors identified above were found to influence crisis and disaster management best practice in the regional hotel since it has a culture identical to the culture of the local hotel, which is the Arab culture. However, it was noticed that new projects, which can help to reduce risks on the long run, can have many sponsoring parties. Therefore, the slow adoption of crisis and disaster management best practice was not attributed to financial support, but rather more to the cultural aspects identified above. For instance, it was found that all decisions related to crisis and disaster management are made by the risk management department (e.g. security department) only with almost no one else involved except the CEO.

The cultural factors that influenced the wider adoption of crisis and disaster management best practice in the local and regional hotels had minor influence in the international hotel. This is mainly because the Arab culture is different than the western culture (Sabri, 2004; Hofstede, 1991). However, this does not necessarily suggest that all western organizations (e.g. hotels) are better managed than Arab hotels. It only shows, for instance, that the international hotel, which is better in learning and preparation, was better in managing crises and disasters. This is in line with Martin de Holan and Phillips (2004) who argued that organizations that are better at learning can deal better with emerging risks.

4.5 Section 5: proposed strategy/action plan

Table VI of the findings shows that there was a greater focus on security management in both the pre-crisis phase and the crisis phase while paying less attention to the wider variety of strategies/actions that can be used in these stages. Table VI also shows that hotels in Jordan focussed only on disaster recovery management after the occurrence of major incidents.

Based on the findings of this research, a strategy/action for crisis and disaster management in the tourism sector can be proposed. The proposed strategy/action can also be adopted in a wider Arab context since Jordan is considered part of the Arab World and shares similar/identical cultural background and specificities of those of the Arab countries. The significance of this strategy/action is that it takes into account the gaps and management shortfalls that have been identified by the findings, thus can be considered more effective and comprehensive compared to the current practice of crisis and disaster management the findings show.

The proposed strategy takes into consideration the wider variety of strategies/actions identified in the literature, as well as the most frequently highlighted strategies/actions in Appendix Table AI. Figure 3 shows the proposed strategy that can be adopted in Jordan, as well as other Arab countries. Most importantly, Figure 3 emphasizes the fact that the strategies/actions adopted in this framework should be well connected in order to provide effective management of crises and disasters.

5. Conclusion

The increasing number of organizational crises and disasters stimulates the hotel and tourism sector to consider crisis and disaster management best practices more than ever before. If an organization is incapable of coping with risks then it is likely to end up in a corporate crisis or disaster. This research contributes to the understanding of the significance of crisis and disaster management in Jordanian hotels in a time the entire Arab region faces huge political instability. It is the first study that investigates the strategies and actions used by Jordanian hotels to manage crises and disasters and the influence of culture on the wider adoption of crisis and disaster management best practice.

Results revealed that Jordanian hotels face a wide range of risks. Yet, crisis and disaster management best practice is still in its infancy in Jordanian hotels. The strategies and actions adopted in Jordanian hotels for managing crises and disasters are limited, reducing their ability to respond and recover effectively.

In the context of crisis and disaster management in the tourism industry, the influence of organizational culture is still underexplored. The findings revealed that few hotels in Jordan recognize the importance of organizational culture. Interview findings suggest that culture could affect the wider adoption of crisis and disaster management best practices in Jordanian hotels. As a result, the development of crisis and disaster management practice requires a better understanding and research to be undertaken relating to organizational culture. This can provide sound proofs for the preliminary findings of this research. This research is considered as a first step to the understanding of the influence of organizational culture on crisis and disaster management in the tourism sector and lays foundations for extended future research. Larger samples can be used in future in order to expand on the findings of this research.

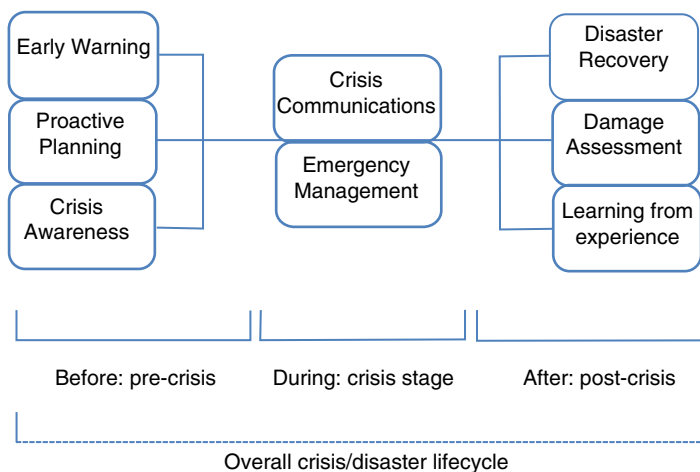


Figure 3. Proposed strategy/action

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Appendix

	Pre-disaster stage			Disaster stage			Post-disaster stage					
	Early warning systems	Proactive planning	Strategic forecasting	Crisis awareness	Scenario analysis	Risk analysis	Business continuity management	Crisis communications	Emergency management	Contingency management	Damage assessment	Disaster recovery
Duncan <i>et al.</i> (2011)	✓						✓					
Pennington-Gray <i>et al.</i> (2011)								✓				
Racherla and Hu (2009)				✓								✓
Momani and Alzaghaf (2009)	✓								✓			
Comfort (2007)				✓								
Johnston <i>et al.</i> (2007)	✓						✓					
Paraskevas and Arendell (2007)												
Simola (2005)	✓					✓						✓
Ritchie (2004)	✓					✓						✓
Sapriel (2003)	✓					✓						✓
Wilks and Moore (2003)												✓
Faulkner (2001)	✓						✓					✓
Pheng <i>et al.</i> (1999)												✓
Davies and Walters (1998)												✓
Williams and Olaniran (1998)												✓
Gonzalez-Herrero and Pratt (1995)												✓
Pearson and Mitroff (1993)	✓											✓

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