

Disaster management tourism and disaster tourism essay



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Along the Southern Gulf Coast of the United States the business is tourism. Every year, Getting back to business after these disasters depends on how well a business has prepared and planned. Business owners invest a large amount of time, resources and money to make their enterprise successful. For these businesses, being prepared can mean staying in business following a disaster. An estimated 25 percent of businesses do not reopen following a major disaster, according to the Institute for Business and Home Safety.

Disasters can be separated in two categories, natural and man made. The first is natural disasters such as hurricanes, forest fires, floods, or earthquakes. While preventing a natural disaster is nearly impossible, actions such as good planning can help reduce or avoid losses. The second category is man made disasters, such as chemical leaks and oil spills. In these cases mitigation planning efforts are priceless towards avoiding or lessening losses from these events.

In recent years the tourism industry has experienced many serious crises and disasters including terrorist attacks, political instability, economic recession, bio security threats and natural disasters (Boniface & Cooper, 2005). Along Gulf Coast of the United States, there has been both natural and man made disasters. First is when Hurricane Katrina and Rita, in 2005, wiped out much of the area from New Orleans, Louisiana to Mobile, Alabama. Hurricane Katrina was one of the most destructive natural disasters to occur in the United States. Mississippi's gambling industry was hard-hit, with the state's 13 floating casinos either heavily damaged or destroyed. In 2004, tourists spent \$5 billion in New Orleans, which represented half of the state of Louisiana's tourism income. The hurricane caused tourists to visit other

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destinations, and business conventions to be relocated to other cities that can accommodate the groups. Many companies and governments were not prepared for the loss of all business assets and all financial records. In New Orleans, many people will not return to the area, which means local businesses will have difficulty finding skilled workers.

The second disaster, the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, is still affecting the region. The Gulf oil spill has presented an incredible disaster planning challenge for companies along the coast because it was caused by a mechanical failure and not what insurers a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, earthquake, or flood. Therefore, insurance will not recoup losses. Communities and businesses along the coast have enacted disaster management plans to mitigate the damage and salvage the remainder of the summer tourist season.

Process of Disaster Management

One of the main goals of disaster management is the support of a maintainable income and the protection and recovery during disasters.

Disaster management focuses on the attainment of three goals; to reduce or avoid the potential losses from hazards, assure prompt and proper assistance to victims of disaster, and achieve rapid and effective recovery.

These goals are achieved through the four steps of the disaster management process: Prevention-Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.

Mitigation

Through the mitigation process, businesses attempt to eliminate or decrease the likelihood of disaster occurrences, or lessen the effects of disasters.

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Through proper mitigation preparations, those affected by the disaster will be greatly reduced. Mitigation takes many form, such as, building codes; land and zoning management; building regulations and safety codes; and proper education. Mitigation is the most cost-efficient method for reducing the impact of hazards.

During Hurricane Katrina and Rita and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, the Gulf States launched media campaign to mitigate oil spill's damage to tourism industry. There are measures that the tourism industry can take to help mitigate the loss. Travelers tend to be most concerned with their personal safety and their finances related to the trip. Most travelers felt they would be significantly more likely to travel with precautions in place, such as the ability to receive refunds, no change penalties on accommodations, and significantly discounted prices according to a study by Cunningham Research Group.

Preparedness

Disaster preparation is defined as an ongoing process of developing organizational capabilities to prevent, contain and recover from crises, and to learn from experience Kovoov - Misra (1995). That is, the continuous cycle of planning, training and improvement to ensure an effective response and recovery from any disaster. According to R. Wayne Mondy when disaster strikes a business, there are always significant human resource issues to address. Being prepared requires focus on how the company will respond when employees who are crucial to operations processes are unavailable or unable to work. It is critical that employees have proper training to identify

what needs to be done, key responsibilities and who performs the tasks.

There should be much time allocated for training personnel and staff what to do in case of disaster When disaster strikes, the best protection is

understanding what to do.

Response

The response to a disaster is the actions that are taken to save livelihoods and prevent further devastation during disaster situation. The response is the implementation of the preparedness plans. As the disaster is brought under control, the affected businesses and community are able to take on the growing number of activities designed to restore their lives and the infrastructure that supports them. There tend to be many opportunities during the recovery period to improve prevention and increase preparedness, thus reducing vulnerability.

Recovery

The aim of recovery is to restore the affected area to normal following a disaster. This is done by rebuilding the destroyed property, re-employment of citizens and repairing the damaged community infrastructure. According to William Clinton, former UN Secretary General, efforts should be made to “build back better”, with a focus to reduce the pre-disaster risks in the community and infrastructure. The recovery process will continue until the community and business are returned to original condition or better. As recovery starts to take place, the focus will shift to the encouragement of people to continue to travel to the areas that have been rebuilt.

Conclusion

Tourism is the single largest non-government economic segment in the world and the most important economic activity for several local economies across the country. It is also a delicate industry in that demand for travel is highly vulnerable to numerous disasters. Natural and human induced disasters alike are neither entirely predictable nor avoidable. When you also consider that the number of declared major disasters nearly doubled in the 1990's compared to the previous decade, preparedness becomes an even more critical issue. Tourism organizations can devise means for minimizing the damage of, and accelerating the recovering from, such events through the development of disaster management strategies. By studying past events, the responses of those affected and the recovery measures adopted, and with the benefit of hindsight evaluating the effectiveness of these responses, we can develop strategies for coping with similar events in the future. Though each situation is unique, any organization can be better prepared if it plans carefully, puts emergency procedures in place, and practices for emergencies of all kinds. Every business should have a disaster plan. It can save lives, company assets, and the business as a whole.