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Crisis management and destination marketing: the missing link

Publication Summary: Concerns over tourist safety have become a paramount topic. This paper reviews the literature on crisis management in tourism, focusing on the crisis management processes at a “macro” level (the destination). How tourist destinations react to crisis? Which measures are taken and what impact do they have? How can destinations prepare for such crisis situations?

The paper tries to answer such questions, with specific reference to security crisis and the way it affects the tourism industry, the destination competitiveness and the tourist destination choice process. The theoretical strategic approach to recovery is outlined, as well as the effects of crisis magnitude (duration, effects, origin, etc.) on the range of responses empirically adopted by affected destinations (as they emerge from international case studies).

The paper emphasizes the role that security information and its communication have in the mitigation of the damages in the short (the loss of clientele) and long term (the destination reputation), arguing that tourist destination (especially those subjected to cyclic crisis) should incorporate crisis management planning into their overall marketing/management strategies. It outlines the effects of a poor communication on the public perception of the crisis in the light of an empirical case: the city of Naples (Italy) during the recent garbage emergency. It finally reports the first results of an ongoing research carried out to assess the perceptions of neapolitan tourism industry operators about the appropriatedness of the crisis responses strategies adopted by the city, suggesting some area of improvement.

Keywords: crisis management, destination safety, information dissemination & risk perception, cyclic crises.

1. Introduction

Tourism appears to be especially sensitive to crisis situations: sars, tsunami, bird flu, terrorist attacks are only some of the negative events which, during the last years, dramatically impacted upon the tourism industry, determining a sudden decline in tourist arrivals and receipts. Considering the intrinsic vulnerability of tourism and its great contribution to the socio-economic development of many nations, it is surprising that investigation into crisis management, which spread in wider managerial sciences from the early 1970s, is a relatively new research field in this context¹ (De Sausmarez, 2003: 219; Ritchie, 2004) and that the majority of Destination Management Organizations do not usually develop *a priori* contingency plans to handle tourism crisis.

The purpose of this paper is to:

¹ The first international conference on tourism security (titled “Talk at the top: international conference on tourism security and risk”) was held in 1995 in Sweden, on initiative of the Mid Sweden University, but the general interest about this topic revamped only after the dramatic event of September, 2001.

- discuss the concept of crisis management and its relevance to tourism at a “macro” level² (the *destination*);
- focus on the destination marketing management of *prolonged crisis*, caused by non sporadic events, in particular those related to *destination safety* and *security* problems;
- assess, on the basis of international case-histories (and of a research in progress in the city of Naples), the specific *opportunities* and *difficulties* that arise when crisis management is “embedded” in a complex and multifaced industry as tourism is.

2. Vulnerability of Tourism Industry to Crisis

As Cavlek (2002) notes, there is probably no other industry susceptible to crisis as tourism. There are many factors which contribute to transform the “world’s fastest growing industry” into a “giant with feet of clay”:

- 1) its fragmented, complex nature; as tourism is linked to variety of other sectors of the economy and relies on the interdependence of many different suppliers (economic and non economic organizations, public and private firms, local and global enterprises), which all contribute to “produce” and sell an experience, whose quality depends on the harmony existing between the different components, any significant occurrence hitting a part of the supply system can produce a domino-effect, spreading to the others, as well as to the destination as a whole, whose image can easily deteriorate;
- 2) the rapid expansion of tourism business on an international scale; the great increase in the length and frequency of journeys, as well as the greater variety of reachable destinations, even the most “exotic” ones, expose tourists to higher levels of risk (volcanic, climatic, social, political, ecc.)
- 3) the high elasticity of tourism demand to security and health concerns; as a voluntary, discretionary³ activity, tourism is particularly sensitive to variations in external conditions (political, social, climatic, ecc.) that may compromise the travel experience

² For a micro-level perspective, see, among the others, Green (2003); Henderson (2003); Israeli and Reichel (2006).

³ Pleasure travel has historically been considered a discretionary item, which can be bought when individuals have already satisfied their basic needs. In the developed world, however, tourism demand tends to appear growingly inelastic. In this sense, Ryan (1991: 7) notes: “if there is a reduction in income...the demand for tourism does not slacken. Equally, it can be claimed that tourism continues to grow, even if prices increase”. McKercher and Hui (2003: 103-104) propose to explain this apparent contradiction (discretionary nature and inelasticity of tourism spending) in this terms: “tourists exert significant discretion over the *type* of travel undertaken. Less expensive destinations...can be substitutes for more costly items in times of economic downturns. In a similar manner, tourists may decide to substitute safer, known or less risky destinations during period of tension”.

(Santana, 2003: 300). As a consequence, tourists tend to substitute a potentially “dangerous” destination with others perceived as safer and more secure;

- 4) the intrinsic vulnerability of tourists (especially international ones) who, visiting the destination, move in an unfamiliar territory, where they can feel disoriented, becoming an easy target⁴ for criminal attackers (Holcomb e Pizam, 2006: 108)
- 5) the role played by destination image in conditioning tourist’s buying behavior, since tourists «do not travel toward places but toward their images» (Savelli, 2004). In an industry where «perception is reality» (Santana, 2003), the inability to manage crisis effects, even under the communicational point of view, can produce more severe consequences than the crisis itself. In this sense, it is clear that mass media have a strong power in conditioning the magnitude of a crisis, especially when news are distorted, exaggerated, amplified or, on the contrary, hidden, censored⁵.

3. Nature and magnitude of destination crisis

A *destination crisis* can be engendered by any significant occurrence which (Sonmez *et al.* 1999: 13):

...can threaten the normal operation and conduct of tourism-related businesses; damage a tourist destination’s overall reputation for safety, attractiveness and comfort, by negatively affecting visitors’ perceptions of that destination and, in turn, cause a downturn in the local travel and tourism economy and interrupt the continuity of business operations for the local travel and tourism industry, by the reduction in tourist arrivals and expenditures.

A crisis is therefore the result of a disastrous⁶ event, natural or man-made (in tab. 1 some of the main causes of destination crises are presented), which has the potential to threaten, damage or destroy the tourist industry (Cassedy, 1991). This definition subsumes that a crisis is not an event but «a process that develops in its own logic» (Santana, 2003) starting from an event which, if not correctly managed by the affected destination, can produce a dangerous escalation of effects.

⁴ As Pizam and Mansfield (2006: 16) note, tourists are generally a lucrative target because: they tend to carry much portable wealth, they ignore normal precautions, they are unfamiliar with their surroundings, they are less likely to report crimes, they cannot correctly identify their assailants, they do not return as witnesses at trial.

⁵ On this subject, the countries more exposed to the risk of a severe crisis are those which do not exert any form of media control. In this regard, Beirman (2003: 21) outlines that one of the factors which contributed to the Egypt’s tourism recovery after the 1997 Luxor massacre was “the tight control imposed by the Egyptian government and its tourism authority on media coverage and reporting”.

⁶ Faulkner (2001: 136) proposes a distinction between “crisis” and “disasters”: the former are situations “where the root cause of an event is, to some extent, self inflicted through such problems as inept management structures and practices or a failure to adapt to change”, the latter occur when an organization “is confronted with sudden, unpredictable, catastrophic changes over which it has little control”.

Table 1 – Destination crisis generating causes: some examples

Natural	Man made
Earthquake, bushfires, avalanches, flood, landslides, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, ecc.	Terrorism, war, socio-political unrest, riots, tourist kidnapping and murder, ecological disasters, ecc.

Whatever the generating cause is, a crisis situation presents some key elements (Faulkner, 2001; Anderson 2006: 1291):

- a *triggering event* (or a flow of events) which evolves in such a limited period of time that existing structures, routine operations and survival of the destination affected are deeply challenged;
- a high impact. The triggering event is so significant that it causes a “loss of control” situation, a perception of inability to cope among those directly affected, exerting an emotional and psychological pressure on decision makers; in these conditions, «creative decisions become more desirable but less likely» (Santana, 2003: 306); as a consequence, crisis certainly engenders short term damages (and even long term ones, if recovery strategies are not effectively put in place);
- a strong sense of urgency and time pressure, which translates into the need of an immediate and radical management action - based on co-operation and partnerships of all tourism stakeholders - in response to events «necessitating urgent adaptation of marketing and operational practices, to restore the confidence of employees, associated enterprises and consumers in the viability of the destination» (Beirman, 2003: 4).
- an intrinsic situation of instability, fluidity;
- a turning point, when decisive change, which may have both positive and negative connotations, is imminent.

Crisis can have a wide variety of scale range and display different disruptive potential. Generally speaking, crisis magnitude (see tab. 2) can be assessed on the basis of some inter-related factors: crisis origin, duration and frequency, media reporting, location, types and extent of damages (to tourists as well as to destination in general), tour operators’ commitment, government decisions of generating countries as well as endogenous reactive (and proactive) capability. Crisis effects can be projected over a short or a longer period of time: this depends on the duration and frequency of the root event, which, in turn, largely conditions the width of media coverage. At this regard, academic literature emphasizes the differences between crisis caused by natural catastrophes (which obtain a high media

coverage concentrated in a short period of time) and those engendered by a prolonged situation of political and civil instability, war, terrorism and crime (the so called *security crisis*⁷), that, instead, because of the continuous media coverage, can have a more intense, harmful, widespread, long standing impact on tourist flows.

Table 2 – Main factors influencing crisis magnitude

	<i>Crisis magnitude</i>				
	Minimum		Maximum		
Triggering cause	Natural catastrophes		Socio-political threats		
Duration	“Spot”/One time		With intervals		Prolonged
Media reporting	Low		Intense		
Location	Far away from tourist attractions and infrastructures		Near to tourist attractions and infrastructures		Coinciding with tourist attractions and infrastructures
Types of damages to tourists	None		Theft, robbery		Injury, kidnapping, murder
Number of tourists affected	One		Many		
Governmental restrictions of generating countries	“Precautions needed”		“Strictly no-go destination”		
Professional operators’ commitment to destination	Low (decision to withdraw is a possible consequence)		High (greater effort to return to normality)		
Endogenous reactive (and proactive) capability	Quick, coordinated and tailored		Low and ineffective		
Final effects	Temporary decline in arrivals and presences		Image deterioration tourism businesses shutdown decrease in tourism employment		

It is therefore not only the type of root event which affects crisis magnitude, but also its frequency⁸, which is generally⁹ linked to its level of media coverage. One-off events tend to induce short-term impact, since tourists have relatively short memories (McKercher e Hui,

⁷ Many specific events can undermine the safety and security image of a destination affecting the tourism system. Among them, the most common can be identified in (Beirman, 2003: 6): major criminal acts or crime wave, especially when tourists are targeted; war or prolonged manifestation of internal conflict; acts of terrorism, especially those directed at tourists; natural disasters causing damages to urban areas or the natural environment and consequently impacting on the tourism infrastructure and attractions; health concerns related to epidemics and diseases.

⁸ Pizam and Mansfeld (2006) note that frequency is usually measured by the number of incidents in a given period of time and by the scaled frequency pattern within a given period of time.

⁹ The level of media exposure depends on the the gravity of the crisis, the frequency of the triggering event, the co-existence of multiple generating causes as well as media’s freedom of access to the crisis zone.

2003: 102) and media reports show a time-decay function. On the contrary, incidents showing a cyclical frequency (or the continuous ones) have a more detrimental impact, triggering escalation effects and severely damaging the destination image.

The level of “psychological proximity” (Clements and Georgiou, 1998, cited in McKercher and Hui, 2003: 102) of potential tourists to the location affected, similarly acts upon crisis magnitude: at this respect, if a negative event occurs in places very distant from those usually visited by tourists or if it does not threat tourists’ survival, its impact is less severe than that determined by events which directly involve tourist infrastructures (airports, hotels, ecc.) and main attractions or cause visitors’ injury, kidnapping or death.

Government decisions of generating countries can equally affect crisis magnitude by issuing explicit travel warnings, which can rank on a scale from “precautions are needed” to “strictly no-go destination”. A high-level warning may induce a domino-effect on other governments, generating a cascade of other restrictions imposed by other countries alerting their tourists to avoid a specific tourist destination. Once imposed, travel restrictions are not easily removed, and continue to influence tourists’ behavior as well as operators’ strategies; warnings act as an important travel filter, since insurance companies and big tour operators base their business policy on governmental risk assessment (Mansfeld, 2006: 276). One of the possible negative consequences of travel warnings is tour operators’ decision to withdraw from the affected destination. This decision heavily depends on the level of operator’s commitment toward the destination, which, in turn, is linked to the level of investments which he directly made into it (Cavlek, 2002). So, if incoming flows depend exclusively on one or a few operators, whose investments in the country are not considerable (they are not so much financially engaged, being not holder or shareholders in some hotels, for example) the recovery effort made by the destination could not be much supported by private tour operators who could simply limit themselves to cut the destination from their programs. As Cavlek (2002: 486) notes, the operator’s commitment toward a destination could equally be high when he has specialized in only one or a few countries: in this case he can act as an important player in the destination recovery process.

Another decisive factor deeply affecting crisis magnitude has an endogenous nature and can be identified with the *reaction* capability (or, better, the *proaction* capability) showed by the destination. The attitude to coordinate and share action plans, the level of cooperation among manifold parties (belonging to public and private sectors) involved in the recovery process, the clear communication – to mass media and to all the destination stakeholders – of facts, as well as of response tools put in place and results gradually obtained, can, in other words,

contribute to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the destination. Conversely, the destination inertia or ineptitude to face the event in a coordinated manner, the existence of conflicts among industry players, who mutually accuse one another of incompetence (searching for scapegoats) are all elements which feed mass media gossip and sterile polemics, contributing to determine a crisis of confidence in the safety of the destination, on behalf of its clients (actual and potential ones).

In the light of these considerations, it is evident that destination management organizations should invest on contingency planning when “dark crisis clouds” are not yet on their horizon.

4. Strategic approaches to destination crisis management

Even though each crisis situation is an “unicum”, which has to be managed in a specific way, academic literature (Mitroff, 1992; Faulkner, 2001; Ritchie, 2004) has depicted a kind of crisis lifecycle, which progresses through six main stages, of varying lengths: pre-event, prodromal, emergency, intermediate, recovery, resolution (figure 1).

Within each stage, different strategies have to be developed to manage the situation.

The heart of crisis management can be placed in the pre-event stage, being associated with those activities aimed at preventing the potential causes of crisis or, anyway, at controlling their effects, mitigating their negative impact.

Crisis management can be defined (Santana, 2003: 308) as «an 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, in each and every step of their planning and training activities, the interest of their stakeholders».

Being prepared is, in other words, the most effective approach to deal with recovery. Understanding the type of crisis a destination can be susceptible to is essential to define in advance suitable plans and coping strategies, in order to limit damages and to avoid time and resources waste. If, in the pre-event stage, responsibilities have been assigned, procedures established and alternative recovery strategies formalized in contingency plans (the so called *Crisis management guidebook*¹⁰), it will be relatively easier to coordinate and put in place interventions, provided that strategic options defined *ex-ante* will have necessarily to be modified and adapted. At all stages of the crisis lifecycle, strategy development and

¹⁰ A “Crisis management guidebook” is a formal guide, *a priori* defined, detailing all actions to put in place at a time of distress. It should explain how to initiate task force activities, outline responsibilities for teams’ members as well as coordinators, suggest both pre-crisis and post-crisis actions, offer sample press kits (see Sonmez et al. 1999: 17).

implementation need flexibility, requiring constant monitoring and a continuous adaptation to the nature of the crisis and stakeholder response to strategies (Ritchie, 2004: 673).

During the “emergency” phase, fast actions need to be taken, crisis management teams have to be activated and assistance has to be provided to tourists involved¹¹: the aim is to restore normality as quickly as possible, preventing negative news. In this sense, the affected destination has to take particular care of crisis communication activities and media relations.

A crisis, especially in its early stages, tends to generate a situation of chaos, panic, uncertainty and general confusion. In similar conditions, it is essential to respond quickly to demands coming from media and other publics. Communication has to be clear, without contradictions, and has to be managed univocally (preferring a *one-voice* approach) in order to inform/reassure public opinion, extinguishing the “fire” of sensationalist media coverage and press speculation while it is still budding.

Academic literature (Frisby, 2002; Cavlek, 2002; Mansfeld, 2003; Santana, 2003; Martin et al., 2004) notes that a positive communications strategy may enhance the organisation’s reputation above its pre-crisis level; in contrast, an absence of effective communications is likely to instigate belief that the organisation is incompetent or uncaring, so inducing a crisis worsening. Destinations have, therefore, to anticipate demands, providing consistent messages to all stakeholders (mass media but also local tourist organizations, tourists, residents, etc.) in order to preserve their credibility, averting the risk of appearing reticent or untruthful.

In order to increase the probability of recovery strategy success, especially in a fragmented industry as tourism is, it is equally essential managing human and financial resources and fostering an adequate level of cooperation between all stakeholders, from public to private sector, from tourism central bodies to offices abroad (at this regard, see box n° 1, where Toronto’s case history is analysed: it provides a stunning example of the manner in which the government, businesses and individuals cooperated to cope with Sars emergency).

Box 1 - Toronto, Sars impact and the role of cooperation in destination crisis management

The Sars epidemic in Toronto lasted approximately 14 weeks, from March to June 2003 (when the World Health Organization removed Toronto from a list of places affected), but it had a disastrous impact: 44 deaths, 12.000 lost jobs, nine city-wide conventions cancelled in the summer 2003, a cost of over 1 billion dollars to Toronto

¹¹ Porras (2005) notes that assistance has not only to be provided by the civil protection and emergency services but also by tourism destination management bodies who have to: search for immediate provisional accommodation of tourists; provide them with food and drink, offer telephone communication with families and friends, keep in contact with tour operators in order to guarantee that their customers receive all the assistance that they need.

economy in 2003 alone, requiring an effort lasting more than two years for many of Toronto's economic indicators to return to their pre-crisis level.

The first case of Sars in Toronto was identified in a hospital on March 7, 2003. In April 2003 the cancellation of a large conference scheduled for later that summer by the American Psychiatric Association (28,000 foreseen attendants) had a large echo and great press attention, giving the start to a cascade of major conference cancellations. The subsequent crisis induced an immediate and substantial decline in tourism activity: average hotel occupancy rates fell to 46,4% in April 2003, in comparison with 68% a year earlier and tourism expenditure declined of 28% in comparison with 2002.

On April 23, the mayor of Toronto officially declared: "It's not the disease that's doing the damage; it's public perception about Sars that's hurting Toronto's tourism" announcing the creation of a Task Force to coordinate actions aimed at recovery. The Task Force soon started to meet with representatives from the tourism and business sectors to discuss how to ensure Toronto's economy and image a fast rebound from the effects of the SARS outbreak.

At the same time, leaders from Toronto's tourism industry announced the formation of the *Toronto Tourism Industry Community Coalition*, to address the tourism business impact of Sars and to develop a short to medium-term industry response campaign. The action group, chaired by Tourism Toronto (the official destination marketing, not-for-profit agency, composed of more than 700 members, coming from public and private sectors) was comprised of senior leaders from industry, labour and the business community through the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, the Ontario Restaurant and Motel Association, Local 75 of the Hotel Employees, Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE), the Metropolitan Toronto Convention Centre, the Toronto Board of Trade, the City of Toronto, the Government of Ontario – Ministry of Recreation and Tourism.

The Sars epidemic was brought under control through a combination of public health control measures (public information about personal hygiene, use of masks, gloves, strict isolation of diagnosed Sars patient, quarantine measures). The Public Health Agency of Canada created a website specifically dedicated to Sars (www.sars.gc.ca), to provide updated informations about the disease and caution measures to be adopted.

Meanwhile, the economic recovery plan was developed in three phases. In short term, the marketing campaign was addressed to residents and businesses, who were invited to resume their normal social and commercial activities (the slogan was: "Toronto. You belong here"). Soon after, videos and images of real street-life in Toronto were broadcasted through satellite channels and web, to show to the world that Toronto was a "safe place to come".

In June 2003, a civic organization, Toronto City Summit Alliance (a coalition of civic leaders in the Toronto region, formed before of Sars emergency to address challenges to the future of Toronto) created another non-profit organization, Toronto03Alliance, to help revitalize the tourism industry by promoting the Toronto region to US tourists. The Board of Toronto03 was made up of leaders from the business community, the arts and entertainment industry, tourism organizations, and the restaurant and accommodation industry, as well as governments. T03's efforts were funded by a \$10 million contribution from the federal government and \$1.22 million in donations from the private sector, including \$200 thousand from each of the major banks. On about May 14, Toronto03 proposed to hold a blockbuster event, in the form of an outdoor concert with the Rolling Stones, and decided to invest in print and radio advertising in large US markets. The concert took place on July 30: with 490,000 total attendants, forty-two thousand of whom coming from US, the event contributed to the \$75.2 million additional tourism spending reported for the week of the concert versus the previous week.

Soon after Toronto03 launched a plan called "Summer in the City" to promote cultural and sport events in the city. Prominent entertainers agreed to record, free of charge, public service announcement for Tv and radio. Discount packages for restaurants, hotels, shopping, attractions were offered to residents of Canada and international visitors. Cooperation links were established even between traditional competitors: for example an airline posted on its website the promotional fares and discount packages of the bus and rail companies of the region.

In July, when the Sars' shadows disappeared (health officials determined that "all clear" could be announced) an aggressive campaign was launched. Among the long term initiatives, was included the launch of the Toronto Branding Strategy, a partnership of the City of Toronto, Tourism Toronto, the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation and the Toronto03 Alliance: the project intended to revitalize and strengthen Toronto's image locally, nationally and internationally through a new brand identity.

Source: Wall (2006) and Tourism Toronto websites

The issue of cooperation is particularly relevant to destination crisis management, since tourist destinations are characterised by the compresence of many different players, variously interconnected but essentially "loosely coupled". The fragmentation may be cause for concern

when destinations have to deal with a crisis situation (Dimanche and Leptic: 1999: 22). It could difficult to reach the adequate level of coordination to achieve harmony of opinion about decisions and actions needed to cope with an emergency.

At this regard, while some Author (see, for example, Heath, 1995) underlines the opportunity of an approach oriented to the “fast leadership”, needed to accelerate decision-making and implementation processes, even at the expenses of collective consent, others (Sonmez et al. 1999; de Sausmarez, 2004; Henderson, 2007) suggest the need to reconcile quick actions with consensus driven decisions through the creation (during the pre-crisis stage) of cross-functional crisis management teams, which, in case of an emergency, could soon start to operate.

Teams should comprise representatives from local governments, travel and tourism industry professionals and communiy leaders; the responsibility of heading each team should be delegated to individuals according to their areas of expertise (Sonmez et al., 1999). Tourism bodies (national and/or local organization or agency) should be responsible for the co-ordination and creation of such teams.

At least two¹² different units should be created (a team providing assistance to tourists and the other concentrated on communication management activities); tasks should be allocated in advance, so that everyone could know, at the right moment, respective responsibilities and assignments, as well as procedures to follow in case of an emergency.

Both the evolution of the crisis (which also depends even on recovery strategy implemented by the destination) and the lenght of the single stages of its lifecycle (Figure 1) influence type and duration of interventions to put in place. In this respect, both academic literature and managerial practices, outline the nonexistence of single recovery model, universally valid. As Richter emphasizes (1999), tourist destinations are compelled to find their own way to respond to a negative event, according to time pressure, the extent of control and crisis magnitude.

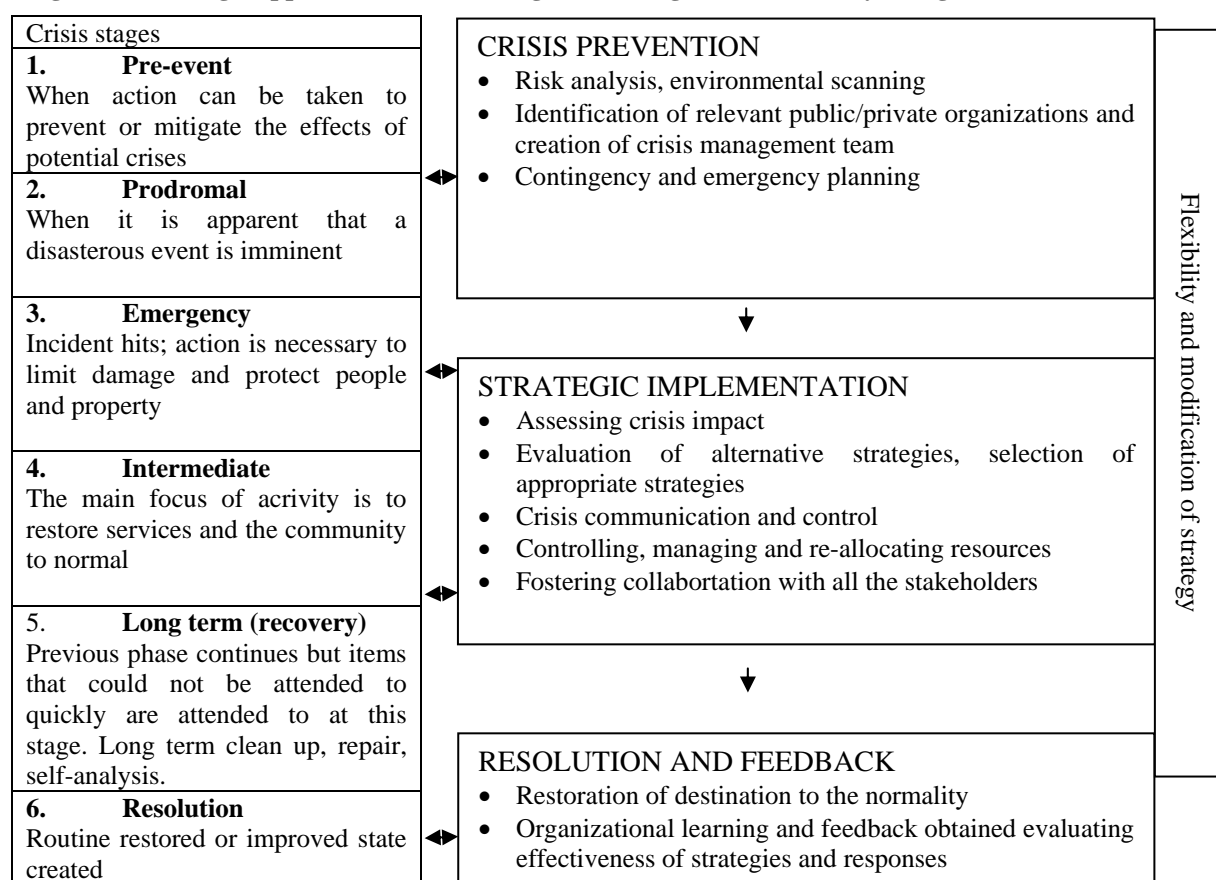
In this sense, Beirman (2003: 8) notes, for example, that the common idea that recovery marketing campaign can be launched only once a crisis is over is a erroneous assumption.

Traditionally, during an ongoing and severe crisis, destinations tend to suspend their marketing activities in order to avoid useless “wastes of resources”. A prolonged crisis, of

¹² Sonmez et al. (1999) propose the creation of four different teams, with these tasks: 1) a *communications/public relations team*, to represent, with one voice, the destination and provide accurate information; 2) a *marketing and promotional team*, to manage the recovery marketing process, including any required repositioning activities; 3) an *information co-ordination team*, to assess the damages and to collect informations on the territory; 4) a *financial team*, to estimate the cost of recovery and develop fund raising.

uncertain duration, may require a different approach, forcing destination authorities to implement even an in-crisis marketing strategy (ibidem: 19). In similar circumstances, however, a solution commonly adopted is concentrating (at least initially) promotional efforts and resources on more receptive market segments - showing the higher propensity to visit the country (or the lowest proportion of cancellations, or the strongest perceived affinity ties) - implementing a “precision marketing strategy”, based on an accurate analysis of market structure (see, on this respect, the case-histories of Israel and Croatia, summarized in box 2).

Figure 1 – Strategic approach to crisis management through different lifestyle stages



Source: Ritchie (2004: 674) and Faulkner (2001: 144) (with some adaptations)

The effectiveness of these actions - as well as that of other recovery interventions involving the creation of special events, the organization of study trips, the creation of special “high value” packages or of new products, the research of new markets, ecc. – is relative, depending on the real level of cooperation reached by all tourism stakeholders as well as on the extent of damages reported by the destination and its image.

If destination image is seriously compromised, even as a consequence of destination ineptitude to cope with crisis (which generally finds a large echo on mass media) it is essential to plan new investments to reposition destination, modifying its image, in order to restore credibility and to modify destination perception. A similar strategy, if it has not to be intended as a simple “facade operation” but as a profound intervention on real-life problems faced by those who use a destination’s services, may take necessarily many years, requiring the right balancing of marketing strategies and programs aimed at improving tourist facilities and services.

In this sense, recalling Chaos Theory key-concepts¹³, Faulkner (2001) notes that crisis have «transformational connotations» since even a negative event can act as a stimulus to innovation and change, creating new options and producing a positive outcome.

Box 2 – Destination marketing during an emergency

Israel and the “precision marketing”

In the first nine months of 2000 Israel registered an all-time record number of tourism arrivals. Nevertheless, after the Camp David Summit of July 2000 (where Bill Clinton, Ehud Barak e Yasser Arafat missed to reach an agreement), on September, 28 violence exploded again. The subsequently growing fear-wave seriously harmed tourism activities: from October 2000 to December 2001 international numbers declined of 55% (as compared to the same period of the previous year). In addition to the large media coverage of the crisis, Bethlehem closure and travel warnings issued by many governments contributed to determine tourism decline.

Israel tourism authorities soon realised that, since tourism was an essential and integral part of the local economy, it was impossible to wait for the crisis to be solved, before investing in marketing.

The recovery program was structured on some key-interventions, among which were the following:

- a further investment on Tourism Ministry websites, largely employed to spread real time news on crisis evolving, as well as to show “testimonials” from high profile visitors who publicly attested the positive experience they had just lived in Israel;
- a greater cooperation with IGTO (*Israel Government Tourist Office*) offices abroad (in each country where a IGTO operate, it acts as a point of contact for visitors planning to travel to Israel): even during the 1990-1991 Gulf War, IGTOs had already been charged with the task of sending regular situation updates to governments, key tour operators, airlines and travel agencies;
- a conference, called by the Tourism Ministry in January 2001 who invited all its worldwide PR specialists to define a strategy for marketing Israel during the crisis;
- the accurate assessing of the major market segments of travellers showing the highest (and the lowest) propension to visit Israel (a specific research conducted with this aim, revealed that travelers with the highest propension to visit were non conformist Protestant streams, the “Christian Zionist”, in addition to the jewish community “dispersed” through the world, while Catholic and Orthodox were showing the highest cancellations rates);
- an “isolation strategy” implemented through the focalization of marketing efforts (campaigns, educational tours, etc.) on some restricted areas, – as, for example, the Red Sea and the Dead Sea area - pitched at the european, american and japanese markets as a health and beauty resort in “their own right” (communication actions emphasized the beauty of these places, while their location was de-emphasized);
- the establishment, on initiative of IGTO operating in Australia, of the EMTA, Eastern Mediterranean Tourist Associates (which included airlines, wholesalers and national tourist offices marketing of Italy, Greece, Turkey, Israel and Jordan), to jointly promote all eastern mediterranean destinations, those well established (as Italy) and those mainly unknown in a more cost-effective way. In this way, long haul destination marketing initiatives were

¹³ Chaos Theory suggest that chaos can be the necessary precursor of a higher level of system order. In this sense, disorder is necessary to order, decay to renewal, collapse to rebuilding (On this sujet, see Seeger, 1992).

carried on a wider geographic base, promoting a broader context (Israel as a part of the Eastern Mediterranean). The relative success of EMTA experiment in Australia, induced IGTO to adopt it even in the United States.

Source: Beirman, 2003 and 2002.

Croatia and the isolation strategy

After the outbreak of the conflict with Serbia, Croatia experienced a sharp decline in its tourism activities. In 1990 the country registered over 7 million foreign tourists; in 1992 this number had dropped to 1,3 million. The crisis became particularly evident after the travel warnings issued by many European countries and the decision, adopted by international tour operators, to withdraw from Croatia. Despite this situation, during the whole period of conflict, Croatia continued to present itself to the generating markets thanks to the promoting effort made up by its national tour operator, Bemextour. The operator, with the support of the national government and acting in joint conjunction with Croatian Ministry of Tourism, hoteliers and the newly established national airline company, promoted the new, independent country, whose new name was still unknown on international markets. Bemextour worked to present Croatia (and especially its safest areas, like the Istrian region) in the main tourism fairs in Europe, to hold contacts with international media, to provide informations and promotional material to travel agencies and potential clients, to organize educational tour and study trips, to prepare accurate press releases, to nurture relationships with professional operators, inducing them to re-establish their operations in Croatia.

In this way, Croatia succeeded to break the fear of potential visitors, governments and operators, persuading them that some tourist areas (like, the Istrian ones) were absolutely safe to come (Cavlek, 2002).

Even in this case, an “isolation strategy” has been successfully implemented in order to reduce the psychological proximity level of tourists, helping them to re-establish the right distance (even geographically) between the affected location and the one selected for a holiday.

5. Security crisis, risk perception and travel behavior: the key-role of communication

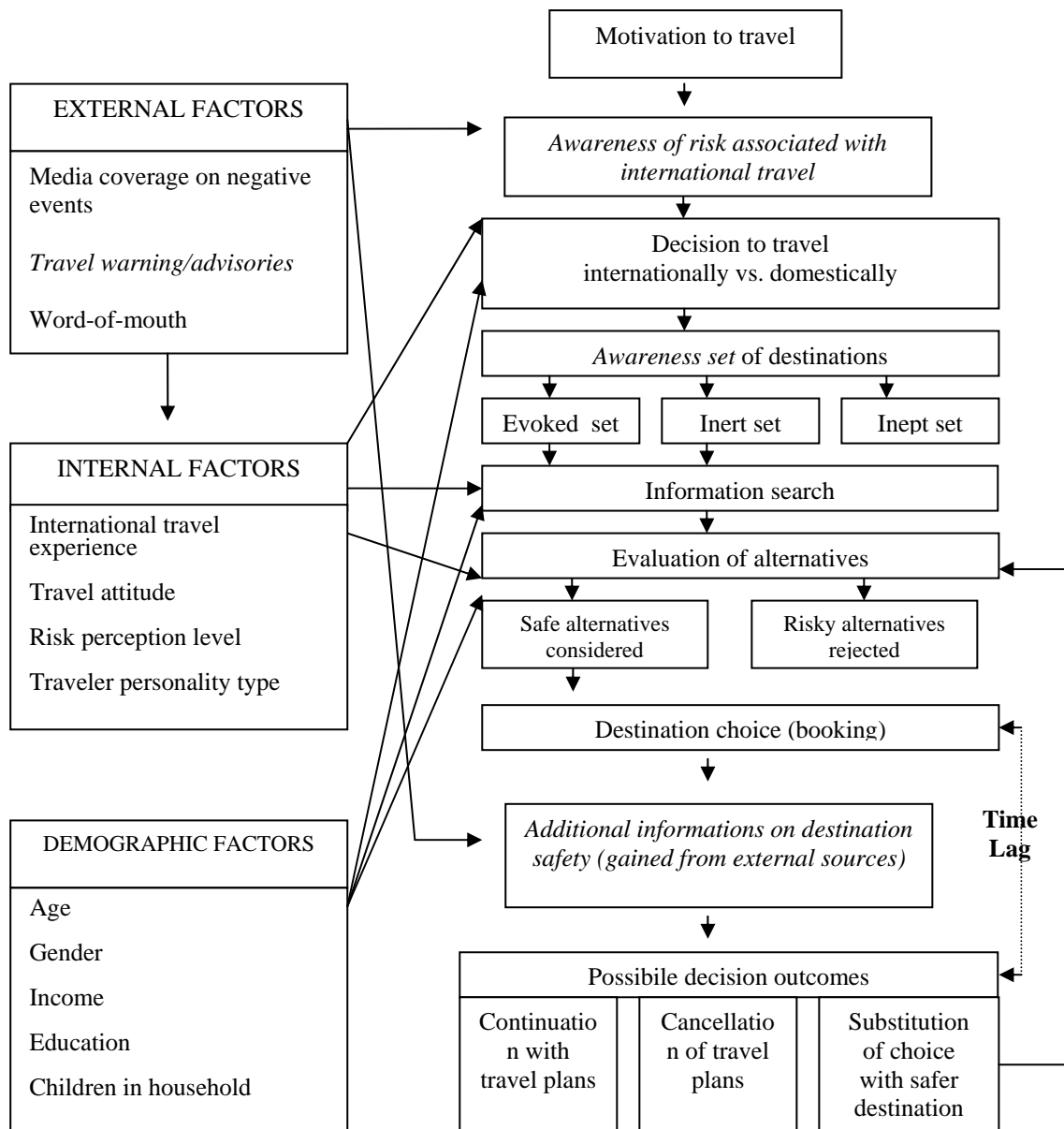
Consumer decisions are always exposed to a certain level of risk. In tourist decision making process, as for all non tangible products, risk influence tends to be more evident, since tourists can not assess in advance the overall experience they will live at destination.

Research on tourist behavior (Um e Crompton, 1992; Roehl e Fesenmaier, 1992) outlined the key-role of information in reducing risk perception related to travel purchases and in shaping the destination image¹⁴. However, as Mansfeld (2006) notes, «the majority of researchers confined their discussion on the perception of risk...to the stage where tourists are engaged in destination choice», that is the early stage of the buying process. Studying the effects of terrorism and political instability on tourism, Sonmez and Graefe (1998: 120), instead, outlined how tourist's behavior is conditioned by risk perception not only before the choice but also afterward. According to the Authors, the relationship between risk perception and

¹⁴ Tourist destination image is «the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination» (Crompton, 1979, Kotler et al., 1993). It can be defined as a cognitive network (Adamo e Ferrari, 2004), which is formed as a consequence of the individual's necessity to simplify (by processing it) the great number of informations and associations related to a place. The image is one of the “pull” factors which contribute to increase the potential attraction level of a location (Martini, 2005: 78), influencing tourist's decision making process even when it is not formed as a consequence of a direct experience but is the result of the informations obtained through word-of-mouth, advertising communication, television or web. Gunn (1972) was among the first (Leisen, 2001; Selby-Morgan, 1996) who examined the image formation process and proposed a distinction between its “organic” and “induced” level; the former is created by mass media, like television, newspapers, films, and other sources not having a commercial nature; the latter is created from the strategic promotion by a destination and/or a business. Since organic image is perceived as “unbiased”, it tends to be more influential.

travel behavior should be studied on all the travel behavior sequence, structured on more stages (figure 2). This sequence is triggered by travel motivation arising from personal, social, commercial cues. An awareness of risk associated to international travel (which, in turn, depends on previous personal experiences, as well as on external factors, such as individual's exposure level to media coverage, travel advisories, word-of-mouth, ecc.), will address tourist's choice toward a domestic or an international destination.

Figure 2 – Model of tourist decision-making process



Source: Sonmez e Graefe (1998: 124)

The awareness set of destinations, which includes all the alternatives individuals have learned about, passively or intentionally, is influenced by personal attitude. The awareness set of destinations can be divided into three sub-sets, according to their desirability: the “evoked” set contains all the alternatives about which the individual will explicitly search for information; the “inert” set is composed by destinations on which the individual is undecided or not enough informed, while the “inept” set includes all the alternatives rejected, since they are associated with a negative perception or perceived risks.

In the next stage of the travel behavior sequence, the individual conducts an explicit search on destinations included in the “evoked” and probably “inert” sets; these information can be obtained from travel operators, literature, advisories and other sources. The duration of this search process will vary, according to individual previous travel experience, its risk propensity, demographic factors, the relative importance of the specific vacation, etc.

Potential tourists will then subjectively evaluate alternative destinations according to their benefits, as compared to their costs and perceived risk factors: the choice is made selecting the destination which best matches needs for the least cost (or risk). The selection has therefore to be compatible with the maximum risk level accepted¹⁵ by the individual.

Even after the choice is made, additional information obtained (both in a “passive” or “active” way) could change risk perception, altering, subsequently, consumer behavior: the result can be the confirmation of travel plans, the cancellation and/or the substitution of the destination choice with another perceived as safer. In this way, choice process starts again; it returns to its earlier stages, involving the review of the set of destinations considered as safe.

In their analysis, Sonmez and Graefe outline the pervasiveness of information search in the buying process; Mansfeld (2006) adds that information search can continue even further, while tourist is at destination. In this case, if safety conditions of the destination deteriorate, determining an increase in risk perception beyond the “acceptable risk threshold” (Mansfeld, 2006: 282) subjectively and dynamically defined by each individual, tourists could be compelled to evacuate of their holiday destination or avoid consideration of this destination as a possible travel destination for the future. In this sense, the Author emphasizes the role of security oriented travel information and communication: destinations affected by security situations, have to build, maintain, update and constantly improve an integrated information

¹⁵ The way individuals behave in riskful situations depends on different factors (Casarin, 1996: 112-113): the type of tourists (the so called *high risk perceiver* considers only the safest alternatives, while *low risk perceiver* evaluates a wider spectrum of alternatives), the type of product to buy, the specific buying situation (for example the booking mode used) and the tourist’s national culture.

platform, in order to provide specific and different informations to tourists (according to the stage of travel behavior they are in) as well as to media, governments in the generating countries, professional operators, and all the publics they have to communicate with.

If media coverage obtained by the event that triggered the crisis was not disproportionately more intense than that granted to the “news” of its restoration, the affected destination would not be forced to act in order to counter-balance risk perception in the generating markets.

Since, on the contrary, in the information business “good news is not news” destination tourism bodies should be committed to remove root causes of the crisis but also to effectively manage *media relations* activities (providing daily updates of the progress of the recovery efforts, inviting journalists to personally “come and see” the real situation, etc.) and the communication with all other publics (actual and potential tourists, professional operators, governments, residents, etc.). For this purpose, in order to assure a constant flow of informations, they should proactively use even new channels of security communication, such as the Web. This channel offers the opportunity to constantly update informations, as security assessment changes, supporting it with audio and video (showing the destination real-life). Destinations could therefore create an integrated platform (combining traditional and new media), which could work as a “dark site”, becoming rapidly visible in case of an emergency. This platform could be accessed by tourists, as well as by operators, media and other publics, through main search engines linking both to the destination official site and to those of the tourism businesses locally operating.

A similar effort is much more needed by those destinations which are subjected to cyclical crisis where, as said before, a “parallel approach” is required, in order to manage the emergency deploying at the same time all the needed marketing and communication efforts.

6. The tourism in Naples during the garbage emergency: evaluation of the perceptions of the operators on crisis management

An exploratory research, focussed on the town of Naples, was conducted (and it is still ongoing) in order to weigh the perceptions derived by the tourism operators regarding the opportunity and the difficulty related to the implementation of the crisis management at the destination level¹⁶.

¹⁶ To this purpose a semi-structured questionnaire was developed, with closed and open questions, articulated on the following issues: effects caused by the emergency on the activity of the enterprise; predictions on the duration of such effects; priority actions to be developed in the short and in the long term; the subjects responsible for the promotion of such actions; the role of the media in the development of the crisis; evaluation of the effectiveness of the communication efforts developed by the city during the crisis. During the months of

Naples, the third Italian city for number of residents, is a complex reality. Its factorial endowment puts it in the ideal conditions to position itself with success among the most important Italian cities of art but, from the beginning, the development of the city tourism (tangibly measurable with the increase in the number of open hotels: see tab. 3) has had to deal with a cyclic cause of crisis: crime waves.

Table 3 – Hotels operating in the town of Naples

	Number of stars attributed						Total
	5	4	3	2	1	residenze	
2002	3	18	34	19	38	1	113
2003	3	20	38	19	36	1	117
2004	3	24	46	21	36	1	131
2005	3	25	55	19	29	0	131
2006	3	26	54	17	34	0	134
2007 (1 ^o quarter.)	3	28	58	17	34	0	140
% Var. '02/'07	0,0%	55,6%	70,6%	-10,5%	-10,5%	-100,0%	23,9%

Source: elaboration from Ept data

At the time when this research started (in the spring of 2007) another problem was making headline news: the garbage crisis. It was therefore inevitable, during the partially structured interviews with some of the main private entrepreneurs of the city tourism, to focus the attention¹⁷ on this "emergency" trying to understand the effects on the tourism level and to understand if, and how, the city was using all the tools of the *crisis management* to face it.

Wanting to quantify the effect produced by the “garbage emergency” on the arrivals and tourist presences in town, in absence of "official" data (still not available at the moment we

June and July 2007, 34 total interviews were completed, of these seven were with managers of tourism enterprises and travel agencies, nineteen with hotel managers, three with managers of agencies specialized in meeting planning, one with a cruise specialist and the remainder with presidents of associations (association of the Bed and Breakfast, of the travel agencies, of hotels). The research, still on going, will be completed with interviews with public operators.

¹⁷ The question "In your perception, which, between these two phenomena -crime and garbage- produces greater damages for the tourism," recorded a uniformity of positions among the operators interviewed that answered without hesitations "the garbage". The reason being, in the perception of the interviewees, that crime is a phenomenon shared with other metropolis of the world and, therefore, is a problem that the tourist, especially the international one, is already somehow used to. There is a common understanding that the tourist is able to manage (or at least, believes to be able to manage) the risk adopting some precautionary measures (avoiding specific parts of town, visiting the riskier areas with a group and/or with the help of a tour guide, using safekeeping measures for money and valuables before leaving the hotel, etc.)

On the other hand, in the eyes of the tourism operators, the garbage emergency has caused greater damages, partly because it increased the pre-existing problem of the low perception of safety associated with the town, partly because it revealed the inability to resolve in a definitive manner a matter that has existed for too long a time (recording every so often different grades of emergency) and finally because – and this is also a common thinking,- it has been amplified and misrepresented by the mass-media (this point will be reexamined later).

are writing) we can refer to a sample research¹⁸ ordered by Adan (Association of the Neapolitan Hotel Owners) and the Union of Naples Industry (Tourism Section). As we can see from table 4, the presences in town from May to August 2007 (traditionally the period of greater flow in tourist presence) shows a fall of 8.14% compared to the same months of 2006 (-2,65% for the Italians and – 10.31% for the foreigners).

Table 4 – Tourist Presences in the town of Naples

	Presences Total			Presences Italians			Presences Foreigners		
	2007	2006	%	2007	2006	%	2007	2006	%
May	168.757	188.872	-10,65%	75.475	80.906	-6,71%	93.282	101.966	-8,52%
June	170.523	182.796	-6,71%	75.593	74.293	1,75%	94.929	108.504	-12,51%
July	147.550	150.409	-1,90%	56.823	56.509	0,56%	90.727	93.900	-3,38%
August	134.868	154.707	-12,82%	47.104	50.231	-6,23%	87.764	104.476	-16,00%
May-Aug. Total	621.698	676.784	-8,14%	254.995	261.939	-2,65%	366.702	408.846	-10,31%

Source: elaboration from Adan-Unione Industriali data

It is not possible to establish a clear correlation between the garbage emergency and the lower number of presences. Nevertheless, all of the operators interviewed attributed the lower numbers to the specific problem or at least to the more general issue of the growing "perception of insecurity" felt by the tourist in reference to the town (derived by the connection of the problem of the garbage with that of the crime).

More than half of the hotel operators interviewed was able to document (showing fax and e-mail) the cancellations received (an example is presented in box 3).

Moreover, among all the operators interviewed the “perceived” fall of the number of presences is also higher (on average was estimated equal to the 15-20%). What worries the most the hotel owners’ category is the lack of interest shown by the tourists towards the city (tangibly measurable, according to their judgment, also with the slowing number of hits recorded by websites of category generally used for reservations and information).

When it comes to determine the length of the effect of this crisis, the operators fear this is "just the beginning". Some of them fear the situation will further worsen in the next months, an effect that could be determined by the decision made by some foreign tour operators (as

¹⁸ The research, completed on a sample of 60% of the available accommodation in the city of Naples, points out on a monthly base the tourist presences according to geographic origin, location and number of stars of the structure.

mentioned in the interviews operators from France, Belgium and the U.S.A.) to eliminate from their 2008 catalogue the page dedicated to Naples (particularly the ones dedicated to the "individual trips"). Therefore, a shared feeling is that the crisis will be prolonged certainly for at least a year (until the end of 2008) and that its effects will be exhausted only when the garbage emergency will have been definitively resolved and, at the same time, when the much needed interventions will be in place in order to improve the image of the town, in Italy and in the world.

Box 3 – A cancellation letter received by a hotel in downtown Naples

<p>Hotel Palazzo Alabardieri</p> <p>De: "Anne Ortmans" <anne.ortmans@skynet.be> A: <frontoffice@palazzoalabardieri.it> Date envoyée: 04/07/2007 15:19 Objet: Groupe 3 - 10 octobre 2007</p> <p>Chère Madame,</p> <p>Je suis vraiment désolé de devoir vous envoyer ce mail : en effet, le groupe du musée qui devait venir à Naples au mois d'octobre a décidé d'annuler son voyage à Naples; en effet, les responsables du musée refusent de prendre le moindre risque, et le problème des poubelles (qui, malheureusement, fait la "une" des journaux en Belgique) les a décidés à abandonner ce projet de voyage.</p> <p>Croyez bien que j'en suis vraiment désolé : c'est bien la 1ère fois que nous-mêmes avons une annulation de voyage à Naples... surtout pour une telle raison !</p> <p>Je vous remercie d'en prendre bonne note et de bien vouloir me confirmer que vous avez bien reçu ce message.</p> <p>Croyez bien que ce ne sera que partie remise et qu'un autre voyage sera programme à Naples, en 2008, pour un autre groupe.</p> <p>Avec mes meilleurs sentiments,</p> <p>A. Renard-Ortmans</p> <p>Administrateur des Demeures Historiques de Belgique. Licenciée en archéologie et histoire de l'art 82, rue de la Forêt 4100 Seraing Belgique Tél: 00 32 4 3361687 Fax: 00 32 4 3370801 E-mail: anne.renard.ortmans@skynet.be</p>	<p>Dear Madam,</p> <p>I am truly sorry I have to send you this e-mail: the fact is that the museum group that was going to visit Naples in the month of October, decided to cancel its trip; since the people in charge of the museum do not want to take a risk and the garbage problem (that, unfortunately, is in all the newspapers in Belgium) convinced them to cancel this trip. Believe me, I am truly sorry: it is the first time that we have ever had to cancel a trip to Naples... above all for such a reason!</p>
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As far as "who" has to be responsible to promote such interventions, the answer seems to be clear: "The Region", the "Government", the "Public" are the main answers obtained, accompanied by the consideration that the private operators have to "to be the entrepreneurs". The question on the contribution that the tourist enterprises can bring to the solution of the crisis ("As a tourism operator, what do you believe you can do to contribute to manage this delicate phase?") recorded very different answers¹⁹, nevertheless all centered on the enhancement of the functional levels of efficiency and effectiveness relative to their actual organization (to improve the service; to improve the relationship with the customer base; etc.). What is evident (and what was confirmed by the answers obtained by the same operators interviewed) is that there is a substantial lack of a culture of cooperation that, while necessary during "normal" business times, becomes indispensable to overcome a crisis. The operators judge "poor" or "mediocre" the level of cooperation reached between the local actors of the tourism, both in the relations between private entrepreneurs and in the public-private relationships (even if, in general, the cooperation between private enterprises obtained a potentially better evaluation of that between public and private).

¹⁹ Only two operators declared to have just started joined efforts (in the form of an Association with other private operators) in order to develop promotional activity in a synergistic manner. Such initiatives, however, have not yet produced significant results.

As far as the typology of the necessary actions to be taken so that the town can recover the proper level of tourist appeal²⁰, the operators agree on the need to increase the investments on the promotion and on the communication or at least to manage them in a more aimed manner²¹. "Decisive" has been judged the management of the communication and of the activity of media relations. On this note, all the operators interviewed believes that the crisis was aggravated by the media attention and by the absolute lack of any communication able to balance it.

"It is necessary to overturn the media system, our true downfall. There is perseverance in the media with respect to our problems. The information, though democratic and truthful, should not magnify the news. Furthermore there is an awful image of the town, and we end up demotivating the local population" (owner of a Naples travel agency).

Even when scoring the way the city is advertised on the web (on a scale from 1 to 5) the results are not much gratifying (average score: 1, 1), since, from the operators point of view, the quality of the tourist information presented online is not satisfying (even less productive if the search is initiated in English²²).

As a matter of fact, the garbage emergency has actually revealed the weakness of the town under this profile: the rebound (and the uproar) in the media obtained by the Warden Message (titled "Naples and Campania Region") dated July 8th and published on the U.S. Embassy in Rome official website and by the general Consul of Naples (in order to inform the American citizens visiting or passing by the region of the possible health hazards caused by the large quantity of garbage piled up and burnt) was such to persuade the mayor of the town to publicly intervene and point out the inappropriate timing of the advice issued by the Embassy, considering that "the garbage emergency had already passed", and asking for a correction²³.

²⁰ Besides the definitive resolution of the garbage problem (considering that at the time we are writing, September 2007, the situation of the refuse collection is normal).

²¹ In particular the promotion should be focused on the organization of a few "big events" of large cultural interest, avoiding "stretching" the resources on an excessive number of "micro-events" of short duration and with a local focus.

²² Using the Google search engine, typing the words "Naples" and "Italy" does not result, in the first ten pages, in any official tourist site. Using instead the word "Naples" alone, besides commercial sites and private businesses, the second place result is the (general) site of the Comune di Napoli (that, even though it contains a section dedicated to the Tourism, is only in Italian) and the third is the Tourism Agency of Naples, "Azienda di Soggiorno e Turismo" (however even this site has different sections, like those dedicated to shows, events, guided tours, fairs, etc only in Italian).

²³ Even though they have not denied the warning (due to expire on December 31 2007) on July 13 the General Consul of the United States in Naples, published on its website the Italian translation of the warning for the American citizens specifying that "unlike wrongly published by some Italian and foreign media" it did not contain any indication "to avoid trips to Naples or its surrounding areas".

We cannot avoid pointing out that a similar situation would not have happened had the town managed in a more effective way the relationship with the local, national and international media (that at the time was still showing Naples like a town sunken under piles of garbage) and actively pursuing all available means of communication (websites, publications dedicated to the tourists, etc) and show (also with images in real time) the actual conditions of the roads and of the tourist attractions.

This episode emphasizes the actuality of a strong detachment between the real situation (of a town that had returned to the normality) and the image remaining in the public perception, that reveals the lack (or, at least, the weakness) of counter-balancing information directed to reassure the public opinion, turning off the alarm set by the traditional media at the end of May (in Appendix 1 find a wide selection of International press headlines, some of which obviously outcry the emergency – referring in a "terrorist" way to the cholera or to the closing of the schools ordered by the mayor of the town²⁴ - or, at least, embellish the news speculating on the difficulty, for the foreign reader, to perceive the distinction between the town of Naples and the communities of the Province, where, in reality, the emergency has lingered much longer).

To that note it is not surprising to find in the specialized blogs and in the virtual communities (see, for example Tripadvisor. com), where tourists exchange ideas, comments and trip experiences, continuous requests (still in the month of August) of information on the state of the garbage crisis, on the reality of health hazards (there is an obvious worry for the risk of cholera, mistakenly announced by the international press) or at least of unpleasant drawbacks (unpleasant smells, toxic substances, mice, dumpsters burning etc.) capable to compromise the quality of a vacation. Furthermore, such requests are not limited to the town of Naples but are extended to the coastal area of Sorrento and Amalfi, as well as the islands of Capri and Ischia (completely immune from the effects of the crisis), confirming the existence of a *spillover effect*²⁵ (the tendency of a crisis to spread, since the visitors lack the geographical knowledge to limit it) and once more the need to manage the town media releases, not to censor them, hiding the real problems, but ensuring that correct information is divulged,

²⁴ The closing of the schools for a few days was ordered by the mayors of other Communities of the Province, like Frattamaggiore, Terzigno and Boscorecase (at a distance of 20 to 40 kilometers from downtown Naples), never in town.

²⁵ On this point refer to Santana (2003: 305).

answering the questions that the public is asking and that, otherwise, risk to be answered by other sources, even by the media looking for easy sensationalism²⁶.

Moreover the operators interviewed have underlined the need to develop not only the external communication (with the media, the operating professionals, the tourists) but also the "internal". Some operators have emphasized the necessity "to activate an adequate internal informative system" among the main personalities of the local tourism, so that, especially in case of emergencies, the communication can be managed in a straightforward manner and not left to the free initiative (and to the good will) of the front-office personnel. For some, the investment in the activity of "internal" communication should also be directed to stimulate the population to cooperate, underlining the importance that the tourism as a resource has and how it should be protected by all the citizens, in their daily activities.

In a long term perspective, other interventions that were indicated as priority to increase the perception of safety for the tourists that visit the town (cited by the majority as the main reason for the lack of a definitive development of the tourism) the main one remains a larger police presence in the territory, especially in the areas most commonly visited by the tourists but also the betterment of the tourist information services, with the creation of visible info-point (able to handle requests in different languages) as well as the presence of road signs to mark tourist routes (at the moment "insufficient" both for quantity and poor quality, mostly because limited to the Italian language), in order to limit the uncertainties of the tourists visiting the area, putting them at ease.

In conclusion, Naples case-history is a clear example of the opportunity to modify an erroneous assumption: the common belief that it is best to let the public gradually forget about a crisis (hoping that "time will heal"). This is not an effective strategy, nor is it a viable strategy, given the continuing media attention focused on the city. Denying a problem, or ignoring it, is not the right way to re-assure public opinion restoring destination credibility, especially when destination safety image has been compromised.

7. Conclusions

Crisis are an integrant part of all business activities, affecting perhaps even more the tourism ones. When they alter safety conditions of a destination they compromise at the base its tourism development. Peace, safety and security are the prodromic conditions which a region

²⁶ Once again on the garbage emergency is significant that the users of the international forums dedicated to the town of Naples have admitted not to be able to find on the web the addresses of the "official sites" that can provide updated information on the emergency.

or a country have to guarantee for the normal development of its tourist activities: without them, destinations can not successfully compete on the generating markets, even if they present in their marketign campaigns the most delightful, amazing, unique, natural and built attractions (Cavlek, 2006: 335)

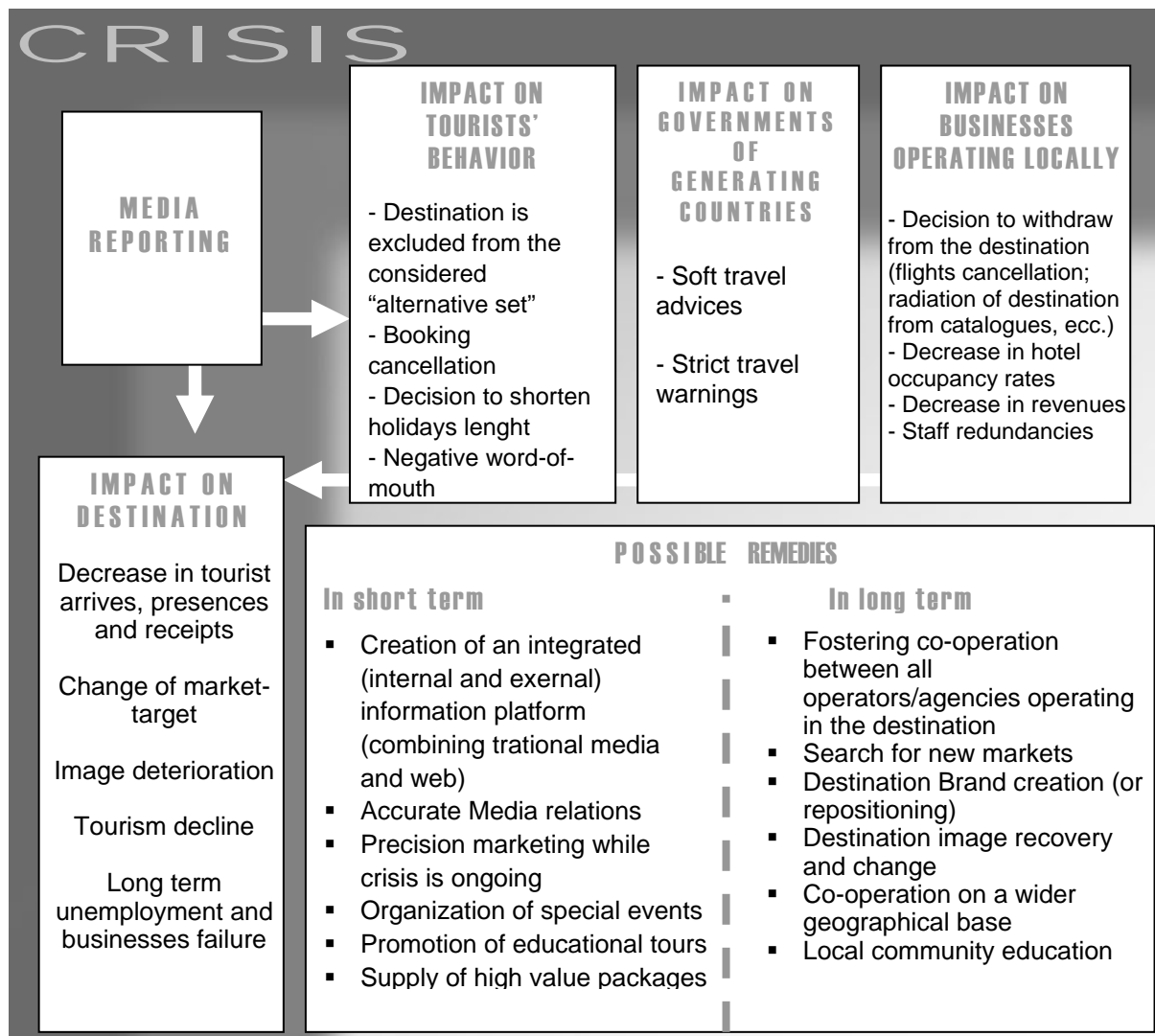
This is the reason why destination crisis management can no longer be left to an extemporaneous improvisation capability. Even though it is not possible to totally prevent negative events from occuring, it is possibile (and essential) to be prepared to cope with them, investing on *risk management* and *crisis planning* activities, in order to mitigate the impact of a possible crisis on the community, the economy, the local tourism businesses and the tourists themselves.

Given the uncertain nature of crisis (and because of the inability to foresee when and if it can occur) it is difficult to accept the idea of investing resources with the aim of effectively preventing or facing it. Nevertheless, crisis can produce such a harmful impact on destination (see figure 3) to compel *Destination Management Organizations*, to profoundly reflect on the opportunity to make an effort (cultural as well as financial) to allocate a high priority to crisis management. Being prepared is the only way to avoid a crisis or, alternatively, to improve the reaction capabilities of the destination, accruing recovery strategy probability of success.

If we consider, for example, media relations activities, it is evident that a good relationship with local, national and global media can not be instantly established but needs to be cultivated over time: if a good network of contacts has been established prior to any disturbance, it will be easier, in case on an emergency, to draw on a store of credibility and goodwill, reducing the risk of easy sensationalism.

The quality of recovery process heavily depends on the speed of (pro)action (or reaction), lying on the ability to creatively conceive and carry out a suitable and consistent system of interventions in the short and long term. Since these interventions require a great level of cooperation between different categories of stakeholder (between operators of the destination and those of the origin markets, between private operators and city administrators, between local and national administrators, besides the local community than necessarily has to be involved), the effectiveness of the crisis management will depend on the quality of the dialogue and of the cooperation priorly established between all the interested parties, public and private, tourist oriented and not.

Figure 3 – Destination Crisis: impact and possible remedies



It may seem obvious, if not redundant, reiterating the need of cooperation in the tourist industry, but reading the international cases emphasizes that it is the actual logic of sharing, the ability of working together, conveying the efforts towards the implementation of a collective strategy, to determine the different quality of the results. Given the high level of effort required in a short period time and the need to promote the participation of all of the local interested parties, *destination crisis management* is at risk of power imbalances that can inhibit both its initiation and success. A legitimate subject - with power and a strong charisma - capable of gathering resources and energies is strongly required; this subject (in the Italian context, at least) will probably be a public figure. However the private industry (just like the civil society) is able (and has to) to provide its contribution to support the recovery and, above all, can work to develop a fertile ground, promoting joint efforts and

urging the local tourist authorities - and, more in general, the local government agencies - to work or, even better, to cooperate.

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Appendix 1 – International press headlines

9 maggio '07



Des milliers de tonnes d'ordures s'amoncellent à Naples

Migliaia di tonnellate di spazzatura si accumulano a Napoli

(France Matin - France)

14 maggio '07



Naples Terre d'immondices

Napoli terra di rifiuti

(Libération 14 maggio - France)

15 maggio '07



Neapel versinkt in stinkendem Abfall

Napoli perduta nella puzza della spazzatura

(20minuten - Germany)



Neapolitaner kämpfen gegen den Müll

I napoletani usano il fuoco contro la spazzatura

(Tagesspiegel - Germany)

21 maggio '07



Residents in Naples set fire to piles of uncollected garbage

I napoletani incendiano cumuli di immondizia non raccolta

(Abc News e International Herald Tribune - Usa)



Italie: Les poubelles en feu à Naples

Italia: Immondizia in fiamme a Napoli

(Le journal du dimanche - France)



Invaden toneladas de basura las calles de Nápoles

Le strade di Napoli invase da tonnellate di spazzatura

(El Financiero - Mexico)

22 maggio '07



Italy: Naples Nose Woes

Italia: Napoli puzza

(Associated Press - Usa)



City kicks up stink over rubbish

La città aggiunge la puzza sopra l'immondizia

(The Times - UK)



Ruas de Nápoles estão repletas de lixo

Le strade di Napoli sono ricoperte di immondizia

(TVI - Portugal)

22 maggio '07



Nápoles se Ahoga en Incendios

de Tres Mil Toneladas de Basura

Napoli soffoca per l'incendio di tremila tonnellate di spazzatura

(Desastres.org - Spain)



Burning Garbage Adds To Naples Nose Woes

La spazzatura in fiamme si aggiunge alla puzza di Napoli

(Guardian Unlimited - UK)



Müllnotstand in Neapel: Bürgermeisterin will Schulen schließen

Emergenza spazzatura a Napoli: il sindaco chiuderà le scuole

(Der Spiegel - Germany)

23 maggio '07



Italian city faces rubbish crisis

Una città italiana alle prese con la crisi dell'immondizia

(Bbc-News 24 tv - UK)



«¡Colera! ¡Colera! Moriremos Todos»

«Colera! Colera! Moriremo Tutti»

(El Pais - Spain)

27 maggio '07



Naples burns as residents protest at garbage crisis

Napoli brucia per la protesta dei cittadini
durante la crisi dell'immondizia

(The Observer - UK)

29 maggio '07



**Les rues de Naples sont submergées
par plus de 10 000 tonnes de détrit**

Le strade di Napoli sono sommerse da 10mila tonnellate di rifiuti

(Le Figaro 29 - France)

30 maggio '07



**Romania refuses to accept Italian
trash**

La Romania rifiuta di accettare l'immondizia italiana

*(Independent Online – South
Africa)*

31 maggio '07



**In Mire of Politics and the Mafia, Garbage
Reigns**

Nel fango dei politici e della mafia, regna la spazzatura

(New York Times - Usa)



Romania rejects Italy waste

La Romania respinge la spazzatura italiana

(Gulf Times - Qatar)

2 giugno '07



Naples, Buried In Trash, Going Up In Smoke

Napoli, sepolta dai rifiuti, se ne va in fumo

(Hartford Courant - Usa)

15 giugno '07



Naples struggles with trash burden

Napoli in lotta con la crisi dei
rifiuti

(United Press International - Usa)