

# Creativity and Innovation in Managing Security-induced Tourism Crises: A Strategic Perspective of an Israeli Tourism Case.

Osnat Broshi-Chen.

Research for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) under the supervision of: Prof.  
Y. Mansfeld. Haifa University, Faculty of Social Sciences, The Department of  
Geography and Environmental Studies. [osnatconcept@gmail.com](mailto:osnatconcept@gmail.com)

This study aims at advancing aspects of strategic policy and regulation as to security-induced tourism crises, due to extreme conditions of terrorism or war. The resilience of the state of Israel and its' tourism sector being responsible to various adjacent economic and social activities, is at the heart of this study. It wishes to introduce a new strategic perspective based on creativity and innovation while encountering security-induced tourism crises. Such extreme conditions call for change in the systematic management and mitigation of crisis which includes prevention, preparation for, response and recovery from such crises, over conservative, reactive and "trail-and-error" based strategies that represent the Israeli case (Avraham & Ketter, 2007; Cohen, 2014; Israeli & Reichel, 2003; Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006).

The post September, 11 global tourism arena had changed and is now facing a new paradigm that security-induced tourism crises are here to stay. They are no longer confined to a few specific locations. They are the biggest current threat to the survival of this industry. Consequently, it requires recovery strategies, organizations, rules and regulations to successfully manage crisis events in a comprehensive and systematic manner. The state of Israel and its tourism sector facing a chronic threat of terrorism and security-induced tourism crises is in desperate need for such strategies (Baker, 2014; Blake & Sinclair, 2003; Ritchie, 2009; Scott, Laws & Prideaux, 2013; Weiremair, 2004 ).

This research pursues its goals by investigating the period of the Second Intifada (2000-2003) which was Israel's most devastating security-induced tourism crisis (2000-2008). At the core of the research are two aspects that stem from one another. The first focuses on the strategic level; whereas, the other focuses on the outcomes of

that strategy. In consequence, both vision, conduct along with their outcomes are being presented. This is an elaborate analysis of the crisis' management and mitigation that sheds light on the efficacy and viability of the measures taken. Therefore, it adds to the existing body of knowledge as well as advances policy aspects.

The research specific questions are:

- To what extent were the realms of creativity and innovation implemented in the actual strategic management of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada by the various stakeholders comprising the Israeli tourism and hospitality production chain?
- What was the outcome of any such implementation of creativity and innovation based strategies?
- To what extent these creative and innovative strategies proved to be more efficient than the traditional ones?

In light of these, could creativity-and innovation-based strategies be regarded as a viable and effective alternative for the understanding, management and mitigation of future security tourism crises? Could they lead to new systematic cooperation, new organizations and regulations? And could these contribute to the resilience of the state of Israel and its ability to minimize security-induced tourism crises, long term as long as short term negative social and economic impacts?

This is a qualitative multidisciplinary research involving content analysis of various documents and reports and of semi-structured interviews with representative of all stakeholders involved in the management and mitigation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> intifada tourism-crisis. It also involves statistical analysis of relevant data. Hence, it represents a close analysis of the chain of production and its dynamics and theoretical complexities.

### **Preliminary Findings and conclusions:**

Though many allude to the importance of creativity and innovation, no systematic implementation was depicted. It seems that it is only a popular rhetoric and form of speech. Most of the tactics implemented during the crisis investigated were familiar, known and conservative focusing solely on the acute stage of the crisis and in poor timing and cooperation.

The sought of a strategic plan and policy revealed the absence of one. Among the various stakeholders, not only was there a very low level of cooperation but also issues of conflict and trust were apparent. Therefore, crisis management and mitigation exemplified a minor degree of creativity and innovation. The tactics implemented during crisis were used in a "trial and error" based. Most of which were focused on marketing while neglecting other aspects of crisis. The Ministry of Tourism exhibited very poor professional leadership. On the one hand, optimism was evident among the various stakeholders and on the other, distrusts and lack of cooperation. This had led to an internally based crisis which was not forced on the industry. In this respect, the lack of crisis management and mitigation led to an internal crisis among the various stakeholders and to degradation in product quality and an overall stagnation in the number of inbound tourism. It seems that the positive aspects of crisis in terms of new organization, policy and regulation were missed.

To conclude, there seems to be a low probability for the implementation of creativity and innovation approach and tools in future crises. There seems to be a looking for easy and rapid solutions to a complex problem. Finally, though an increase in the vulnerability of the industry is apparent, being in itself a catalyst for the need in creativity and innovation based tools and mechanisms; it is not seen in the horizon as a valid alternative for future crisis management and mitigation.

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