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World tourism cities in crisis – insights from previous research and current debates

Dr Cristina Maxim
London Geller College of Hospitality and Tourism
University of West London
St Mary's Road, Ealing, London W5 5RF
cristina.maxim@uwl.ac.uk
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2343-3100

Abstract

World tourism cities are multi-functional places and popular destinations that attract many visitors due to their characteristics. In their recent book on World Tourism Cities, Morrison and Maxim (2022) identify five main features of world tourism cities: they act as gateways for tourists visiting a country; they are influential cities, being significant generators of domestic tourists as well as a source of international visitors; are innovative and creative hubs that economically impact other areas within a country; are cosmopolitan places; and are easily recognised.

Although world tourism cities are important destinations and perform various functions, they also face many challenges (Maxim, 2019), including severe crises and disasters. This became evident over the past two years, with world tourism cities being among the most affected destinations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The same characteristics that entice many tourists to visit those places, made them more vulnerable in the face of the fast-spreading coronavirus that killed many people worldwide.

Destinations in general are prone to many natural or man-made crises and disasters, and world tourism cities are even more so. Still, there is limited research on crises in tourism cities, with scholars starting to look into this area mainly after 2000. This may be a consequence of the lack of attention received in the past by the field of urban tourism in general, with more studies turning their attention to this area of research over the past two decades.

To gain an understanding of what has been published to date on world tourism cities in crisis and how this field of study evolved over the years, a systematic literary review was conducted. This helped comprehend the state of research on the topic so far by discussing emerging themes and trends, and by identifying new avenues for future research.

A number of key databases such as Scopus, EBSCO, SAGE and ProQuest were used to identify and collect the research papers published on the topic. Among the aspects considered in the analysis of these papers are the year of publication and the journal, the types of crises discussed, the cities and regions covered, as well as the methodological approach employed in those studies. In addition, content analysis was performed to try to identify the key themes covered by the papers, grouping them under the main stages of crisis management.

Findings highlight the limited research published on crises in world tourism cities, with more studies emerging over the past few years as the world has been battling the coronavirus pandemic that had a devastating impact on tourism cities. A number of gaps and imbalances are identified, which relate to the types of crises discussed in the papers analysed, the regions / cities studied, the research approaches employed, and the topics addressed. The findings of this study could help scholars in directing the future research agenda in world tourism cities and crises, and in progressing the knowledge in this important area of study.

Reference

Maxim, C. (2019) Challenges faced by world tourism cities – London's perspective, *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22:9, 1006-1024, DOI: 10.1080/13683500.2017.1347609

Morrison, A.M. & Maxim, C. (2022) *World tourism cities: A systematic approach to urban tourism*, Routledge