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10 PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL TOURISM MANAGEMENT. A UNIFIED GUIDE FOR TRAINING MANAGERS AND STAFF TO OVERCOME CRISES IN TOURISM

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10 zasad skutecznego zarządzania turystyką. Zunifikowany przewodnik szkoleniowy dla menedżerów i pracowników na czas kryzysów w turystyce

Streszczenie

Globalny przemysł turystyczny nadal stoi przed poważnymi wyzwaniami wynikającymi z niedawnych i trwających kryzysów, w tym pandemii COVID-19, presji inflacyjnej oraz niestabilności geopolitycznej. Jednym z najbardziej palących problemów jest brak jednolitego i praktycznego systemu szkoleniowego dla menedżerów i pracowników branży turystycznej. Ta luka ogranicza zdolność sektora do szybkiego i skutecznego reagowania na kryzysy, narażając przedsiębiorstwa na większe ryzyko. Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia dziesięć uniwersalnych zasad skutecznego zarządzania turystyką, łącząc podstawy teoretyczne z praktycznymi strategiami mającymi na celu poprawę odporności, wydajności operacyjnej i zdolności adaptacyjnych. Zasady te stanowią elastyczną podstawę do tworzenia programów szkoleniowych przygotowujących pracowników branży turystycznej do działania w warunkach niepewności, przy jednoczesnym zachowaniu wysokich standardów obsługi. W artykule poruszono kluczowe obszary, takie jak integracja innowacji, technologii cyfrowych, spersonalizowanej obsługi klienta, rozwój kadry oraz zaangażowanie społeczności lokalnych. Zastosowanie tych zasad może wzmocnić zdolność przedsiębiorstw turystycznych do prze-

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widywania zmian, reagowania na zakłócenia i szybszego wychodzenia z kryzysów. Szczególny nacisk położono na długoterminowe korzyści wynikające ze zrównoważonego rozwoju, inwestycji strategicznych i zarządzania ryzykiem. Artykuł stanowi zatem cenne źródło wiedzy dla środowisk akademickich i praktyków dążących do budowy bardziej elastycznych i odpornych na kryzysy struktur w turystyce, w coraz bardziej niestabilnym globalnym środowisku.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie turystyką, odporność na kryzysy, zrównoważona turystyka, planowanie strategiczne, innowacje w turystyce

Abstract

The global tourism industry continues to face significant challenges stemming from recent and ongoing crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, inflationary pressures, and geopolitical instability. One of the most pressing issues is the lack of a unified and practical training framework for tourism managers and staff. This gap reduces the sector's ability to respond swiftly and effectively to crises, placing businesses at greater risk. This article presents ten universal principles for successful tourism management, combining theoretical foundations with actionable strategies aimed at improving resilience, operational performance, and adaptability. The principles serve as a flexible framework for developing training programs that prepare tourism professionals to handle uncertainties while maintaining high service standards. The key areas addressed include the integration of innovation, digital technologies, personalized customer service, staff development, and community engagement. By applying these principles, tourism businesses can strengthen their ability to anticipate change, respond to disruptions, and recover more efficiently. Emphasis is placed on the long-term benefits of sustainability, strategic investment, and risk management. Ultimately, this article offers a consolidated resource for both academics and practitioners seeking to build more agile and crisis-resilient tourism operations in an increasingly volatile global environment.

Keywords: tourism management, crisis resilience, sustainable tourism, strategic planning, innovation in tourism.

Introduction

One of the main challenges in the tourism industry is the lack of a unified training program for management and staff. This results in inefficiencies when handling crises and adapting to unexpected situations. If there were a standardized, universally applicable training program, it would be much easier for managers and staff to apply these skills to overcome crises effectively. Given the wide variety and frequency of issues in the tourism business, the training should be based on a set of fundamental principles that are easy to implement in different scenarios.

This article aims to synthesize 10 universal principles of tourism management, grounded in academic literature and industry practices, to equip businesses with a framework for crisis resilience and operational excellence. In this article, we propose 10 universal principles designed to support management and employees in the tourism industry. By adhering to these principles, busi-

nesses can become more resilient to crises and improve overall performance. If this concept is adopted and implemented, we are confident that the results will be remarkable.

The tourism industry has always been shaped by external factors, but in recent years, the scale and complexity of these challenges have intensified. The COVID-19 pandemic, which led to worldwide lockdowns, travel restrictions, and a dramatic decline in tourism activity, exposed the vulnerabilities of the sector. Even as the world is recovering from the pandemic, new risks have emerged, such as inflation, economic downturns, and political instability, particularly in Europe. These factors have combined to create a highly unpredictable environment for tourism businesses.

Inflation has driven up operational costs, making it more expensive to maintain services while also reducing the disposable income of potential travellers. At the same time, political unrest and conflicts in key regions, particularly in Europe, have disrupted travel routes, increased safety concerns, and led to fluctuating demand in certain destinations. These risks, combined with the ongoing recovery from the pandemic, present significant hurdles for tourism operators.

To navigate this complex landscape, tourism businesses must rethink traditional management strategies and adopt innovative approaches. The key to survival lies in flexibility, creativity, and a willingness to take calculated risks. This article outlines 10 essential principles of successful tourism management, designed to help businesses adapt to these challenging times. Each principle is aimed at addressing the core issues facing the industry today, from managing rising costs to enhancing customer satisfaction and implementing technological solutions.

In an era of uncertainty, tourism operators must not only focus on short-term survival but also position themselves for long-term growth. This requires a forward-thinking mindset, embracing digital transformation, and being open to new market trends. The 10 principles presented here provide a practical framework for tourism managers to follow, helping them stay resilient, improve customer engagement, and make strategic decisions that will ensure their business thrives in an increasingly volatile global environment.

Literature Review

Effective tourism management has become a critical area of focus for both researchers and industry professionals due to the rapidly changing global environment. Scholars have increasingly explored how businesses can adapt to crises such as pandemics, economic downturns, and geopolitical instability while optimizing operations to maintain growth.

Tourism management has become an essential focus for both academics and industry professionals, particularly in light of recent global crises. Existing research extensively discusses the importance of technology, customer satisfaction, and innovation in tourism, but it often falls short in addressing how these concepts can specifically contribute to crisis management and long-term resilience.

While Buhalis (2020) and Sigala (2020) provide valuable insights into how digital tools transform customer engagement and service optimization, they do not offer a comprehensive framework for integrating these tools into a crisis management strategy. Buhalis focuses on technology's role in enhancing the customer experience but lacks a discussion on how these same tools can be leveraged during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when customer needs and behaviours shift drastically.

Similarly, Sigala (2020) emphasizes the potential of digital transformation, but her study overlooks the operational challenges that small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMEs) face when trying to implement these technologies during uncertain times. The rapid adoption of digital tools is critical, but the literature needs to better address the question how these technologies can be used to maintain operational efficiency and manage financial pressures in a crisis context.

Another gap in the existing literature is the lack of consensus on how to balance risk-taking with sustainability in tourism management. Tussyadiah et al. (2017) argue that risk-driven decisions foster innovation and market differentiation, yet other researchers such as Pappas (2018) warn that excessive risk-taking, especially in times of crisis, can lead to long-term financial instability for tourism businesses. The literature is divided on how to effectively manage risk without compromising sustainability, and there is limited empirical evidence on the success of these strategies during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pechlaner et al. (2004) highlight the importance of building resilience to future disruptions, recommending that tourism operators diversify their business models and proactively plan for external shocks. However, their work does not provide a detailed roadmap for how SMEs in tourism can realistically achieve this diversification, especially when resources are already stretched thin. More critical analysis is needed to explore how theoretical models of resilience can be practically applied in real-world tourism settings.

Gössling et al. (2020) offer valuable insights into the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on global tourism, stressing the importance of rapid decision-making and flexibility. However, their study lacks a clear focus on the long-term strategies that businesses can employ to recover sustainably. While short-term measures are critical, the literature must place greater emphasis on developing frameworks that ensure long-term viability and growth in the tourism sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the most disruptive events in the history of the tourism industry. Research by Gössling et al. (2020) highlights how the pandemic forced tourism businesses to rethink their operations and adopt innovative strategies to survive. The authors stress that successful management during such crises requires a blend of flexibility, rapid decision-making, and the ability to navigate complex logistical challenges. Additionally, Pechlaner et al. (2004) point out that tourism management must also focus on building resilience to future disruptions, recommending that operators prepare for external shocks through diversification and proactive planning. The Covid-19 pandemic is proving to be a key factor in the reorganization of the activities of organizations from all branches that strive to create products for the mass market. Even with the temporary suspension of business operations, many of them have been able to innovate and organize planned activities in readiness for new pandemics.

Improving customer satisfaction is a recurring theme in tourism management literature. According to Buhalis (2020), technology plays an integral role in enhancing customer experience, allowing businesses to deliver personalized services that meet the evolving needs of travellers. The importance of measuring and responding to customer feedback is also noted by Zhang and Fu (2020), who suggest that continuous feedback loops can help businesses optimize their service offerings. This aligns with our principle of actively trying the product from a customer's perspective to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

The ability to take calculated risks is crucial for tourism businesses in uncertain times. Studies by Tussyadiah et al. (2017) emphasize that innovation often comes from risk-driven decisions that enable businesses to stand out in competitive markets. Risk-taking, combined with the adoption of emerging technologies like virtual and augmented reality, has become a powerful strategy for tourism businesses seeking to diversify their offerings and tap into new markets.

Optimization in tourism is another key focus of research. According to Koutoulas et al. (2009), optimization strategies should be designed to improve cost-efficiency, resource allocation, and overall productivity. This is particularly relevant for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism industry, which often struggle with limited resources. While optimization strategies are critical for SMEs, Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) extend this concept by emphasizing that technological integration not only improves efficiency but also elevates customer experiences through personalization. Moreover, Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) argue that smart tourism destinations – those that leverage data analytics and digital tools – are better positioned to optimize operations and provide superior customer experiences.

The rapid adoption of digital technologies has transformed tourism management. Literature by Sigala (2020) underscores the importance of digital tools in helping tourism operators streamline processes, enhance customer engage-

ment, and achieve higher levels of operational efficiency. In particular, the integration of AI, big data, and cloud computing into tourism management systems has been shown to drastically improve decision-making capabilities and allow businesses to react to real-time market trends.

Buhalis (2020) discusses the role of technology in transforming tourism and highlights the importance of digital tools in creating personalized experiences for travellers. The impact of global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism has been extensively analysed by Gössling et al. (2020), who emphasize the need for flexibility and innovation to adapt to such disruptions. Sigala (2020) notes that the pandemic accelerated digital transformation in the tourism industry, leading to changes in both consumer behaviour and business practices.

In their study, Tussyadiah et al. (2017) highlight the role of virtual reality in shaping traveller perceptions and providing immersive tourism experiences, showing how technology can enhance customer satisfaction. The resilience of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism industry during external crises is explored by Zehrer and Raich (2016), who argue that proactive planning and diversification are key to survival.

Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) emphasize that smart tourism destinations leverage personalized services and technological innovation to improve the overall visitor experience.

The importance of customer experience in the sharing economy and tourism is highlighted by Chandra et al. (2022), who found that personalization plays a crucial role in customer satisfaction within accommodation services. Ritchie and Jiang (2019) offer a comprehensive review of crisis management in tourism, providing insights into how businesses can mitigate risks and recover from disasters. Choi and Sirakaya (2006) identify key sustainability indicators that are essential for managing community-based tourism, stressing the need for long-term planning and resource management. In a study on decision-making during crises, Pappas (2018) discusses how hotels can adapt their operations to handle multiple challenges at once, providing a framework for effective crisis management.

Casal-Ribeiro et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of crisis management frameworks in the tourism and hospitality sector, highlighting the importance of proactive planning and long-term resilience in the industry. The role of stakeholder-centred approaches in managing tourism crises is emphasized by Ritchie and Jiang (2019), who advocate for collaboration among stakeholders to build resilient tourism systems.

According to Yuleva-Chuchulayna (2021), the crisis has clearly shown that many business models need to change, that many business and administrative procedures can be made more efficient. The crisis also shows the great dependence of modern society on information and communication technologies and clearly outlines the upcoming processes of digitization and automation, which

require timely adaptation by society. Rockström et al. (2023) discuss the importance of building a resilient future in tourism as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, stressing the need for sustainable and innovative strategies. Spenceley et al. (2021) explore how tourism in protected areas has been impacted by the pandemic, emphasizing the need for sustainable tourism practices to maintain ecological balance.

Wright and Sharpley (2016) introduce the concept of dark tourism, exploring how disaster-struck areas can attract tourists and contribute to economic recovery in those regions. Farmaki et al. (2022) point out the significant negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak on international tourism, while also discussing potential recovery strategies for the sector. Kuckertz and Brandle (2022) propose that disaster management in tourism requires creative reconstruction to help destinations recover and rebuild after crises.

Saarinen and Tervo (2006) focus on the adaptation strategies of tourism businesses in response to climate change, offering insights on resilience in the nature-based tourism sector. Sharifi (2016) critically reviews various tools used to assess community resilience in tourism, offering suggestions for strengthening resilience frameworks.

Overall, the literature on tourism management reflects a strong consensus that successful businesses must be adaptable, customer-focused, and technologically innovative. By applying these principles, tourism managers can better navigate current challenges and position themselves for long-term success.

The 10 Principles of Successful Tourism Management

In an industry as dynamic and competitive as tourism, effective management requires more than just reacting to immediate challenges. To achieve long-term success, businesses must adopt strategies that address both the current demands of travellers and the evolving landscape of the tourism sector. The following **10 principles of successful tourism management** offer a comprehensive framework to help tourism operators navigate these complexities, improve customer satisfaction, and build resilient, forward-thinking operations. Each principle is designed to provide practical insights and actionable advice, backed by real-world examples that highlight the importance of innovation, customer focus, and sustainability in today's global tourism market. These principles, systematically summarized below, integrate theoretical insights from contemporary research with actionable strategies validated by industry practitioners, ensuring a balance of academic rigor and practical relevance:

1. Use undercover people to detect problems.
2. Take calculated risks through strategic investments.

3. Experience your product firsthand.
4. Embrace technology to enhance customer experience.
5. Prioritize long-term sustainability.
6. Stay ahead of industry trends.
7. Provide continuous staff training.
8. Build strong local community relationships.
9. Prioritize personalization and customization.
10. Monitor feedback and continuously improve.

Each principle is elaborated in detail, combining theoretical underpinnings with illustrative case studies to demonstrate its applicability across diverse tourism contexts.

Principle 1: Use undercover people to detect problems

One of the most effective ways to evaluate the quality of service and identify operational issues is to employ undercover methods, such as mystery shoppers or anonymous inspectors. These individuals pose as regular customers and interact with various aspects of the business without staff knowing they are being assessed. This allows management to obtain a true picture of how services are delivered, identifying potential issues that might be overlooked in formal evaluations.

Mystery shopping can reveal gaps in customer service, operational inefficiencies, or even detect ethical issues such as overcharging or poor handling of complaints. This method is especially important in the tourism and hospitality industry, where customer satisfaction is key to repeat business and positive reviews (Fig. 1).

This principle highlights the importance of gathering genuine customer feedback through mystery shoppers and undercover evaluators. It aligns with Zeng and He (2018), who emphasize the need for continuous feedback loops to optimize service offerings in the tourism industry.

However, the use of undercover evaluations goes a step further by providing more detailed insights into operational inefficiencies that might be missed through standard customer feedback channels. While Buhalis (2020) stresses the role of technology in enhancing customer experiences, the mystery shopper approach addresses deeper issues related to service quality that technology alone may not capture. Zeng and He (2018) suggest that continuous feedback from customers can help businesses refine their offerings, but this principle expands on that idea by employing direct, undercover evaluations to capture more subtle service deficiencies.

Example: A leading hotel chain in the U.S. routinely hires undercover guests to stay at their properties. One such guest observed that although the hotel's amenities were excellent, the staff's response time to guest requests was slower than expected. Based on this feedback, the hotel management adjusted their

staff allocation during peak hours, significantly improving guest satisfaction and overall reviews.

In another instance, a tour operator discovered through undercover evaluators that the local guides they employed were not following the agreed-upon itineraries, resulting in customer complaints. After this discovery, the company retrained its guides and introduced stricter monitoring to ensure compliance.

Key Takeaway: This principle emphasizes the importance of seeing your business through the eyes of a customer. By gathering feedback through undercover evaluations, tourism managers can proactively address issues and fine-tune operations to enhance the overall customer experience.



Fig. 1

The process of using undercover evaluations to detect operational problems in tourism businesses.

Source: The authors

Table 1 presents an illustrative step-by-step breakdown of the mystery shopping process, from the recruitment of undercover personnel to implementing improvements.

Table 1

Detailed step-by-step process of organizing mystery shopping

Step	Objective	Process
1. Recruitment of Undercover Personnel	Select individuals who match the profile of typical customers to perform the mystery shopping task.	– Develop a detailed profile of the ideal "mystery shopper" (e.g., demographic, behaviour). – Partner with a third-party agency that specializes in mystery shopping, or recruit in-house by offering temporary roles to external testers. – Ensure that selected personnel are trained on how to objectively assess different service aspects without revealing their identity.

Table 1 (cont.)

Step	Objective	Process
2. Assignment of Specific Tasks	Clearly define what the mystery shoppers are expected to evaluate (e.g., customer service, cleanliness, product knowledge).	– Create a checklist of specific tasks or interactions the mystery shoppers will need to perform (e.g., booking a room, requesting information from staff, dining at a restaurant). – Outline specific situations to evaluate, such as how complaints are handled or how staff respond to inquiries. – Provide guidelines on how to document each interaction objectively.
3. Conducting the Mystery Shopping	Mystery shoppers execute their tasks without revealing their purpose.	– Mystery shoppers visit the location, interact with staff, and experience services as normal customers. – They take notes (discreetly) or record observations immediately after each interaction to ensure accuracy. – They remain anonymous and avoid giving any indication that they are evaluating the service.
4. Gathering Data and Feedback	Collect the insights and experiences gathered by mystery shoppers.	– Mystery shoppers submit detailed reports based on their observations (using the pre-defined checklist and adding any additional notes). – Reports include both quantitative data (e.g., time taken to address a query) and qualitative feedback (e.g., tone of voice, attitude). – All reports are collected for review by the management team
5. Analyzing Data and Identifying Problems	Analyze the mystery shoppers' feedback to identify strengths and weaknesses.	– Compare the findings across different mystery shoppers to look for patterns or recurring issues. – Analyze service performance based on criteria such as response time, quality of service, product knowledge, and overall experience. – Identify areas where performance falls below expectations, as well as aspects that customers respond positively to
6. Implementing Improvements	Use the data to make actionable improvements.	– Develop a plan for addressing the identified problems (e.g., additional staff training, changes to processes or service offerings). – Implement changes to improve service quality, based on the feedback gathered. – Set measurable goals to track the success of the changes, ensuring ongoing improvement in the areas highlighted by the mystery shoppers.

Table 1 (cont.)

Step	Objective	Process
7. Follow-up and Continuous Monitoring	Ensure the improvements are effective and maintain ongoing monitoring.	– Schedule follow-up mystery shopping sessions to evaluate if the changes have been successfully implemented. – Continuously monitor customer feedback and staff performance to ensure improvements are sustained. – Adjust strategies as necessary based on ongoing feedback.

Source: Authors' own work

Principle 2: Take calculated risks through strategic investments

In times of uncertainty, many tourism businesses may feel tempted to cut costs and avoid risky investments. However, long-term success often requires strategic risk-taking and calculated risks. Investing in technology, improving customer experience, and expanding services can help businesses stand out in competitive markets. Rather than holding back, successful tourism operators take measured risks that can lead to growth and differentiation.

Smart investments during challenging times can future-proof a business, positioning it to emerge stronger when conditions improve. While risky decisions carry potential downsides, failing to invest can also lead to stagnation and missed opportunities.

In an uncertain tourism environment, strategic risk-taking and calculated risks are necessary to foster innovation and differentiation. Tussyadiah et al. (2017) support this viewpoint, arguing that innovation often stems from risk-driven strategies. However, our principle also considers the financial sustainability of such risks. While Pappas (2018) warns of the dangers of excessive risk-taking, this principle advocates for strategic investments in technology and customer experience, which are necessary for long-term success.

Tussyadiah et al. (2017) focus on how risk-taking leads to differentiation in competitive markets. This principle builds on that idea by offering practical examples of how calculated risks, such as investing in technology, can help businesses stay competitive while ensuring sustainability according to the Center for Internet Security (n.d.).

Risk-Reduction ROI Equation

ROI = (reduction in risk '\$' – cost of control) / cost of control

$$ROI = \frac{(Rr - Cc)}{Cc}$$

Where:

- **ROI** = Return on investment
- **Rr** = Reduction in risk
- **Cc** = Cost of control

Thus:

Reduction in risk = Annualized rate of occurrence x Expected monetary loss for a single event x reduction in probability of risk occurrence with the implemented control

Example: During the global travel slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, a small hotel in Portugal decided to invest in refurbishing its property and enhancing its website. The investment included high-quality photos, virtual tours, and online booking optimization. When tourism began to recover, the hotel saw a significant increase in bookings from new markets, thanks to its improved online presence.

Similarly, a safari lodge in Kenya took a risk by investing in live virtual safaris during travel restrictions. These virtual experiences generated revenue, increased global visibility, and attracted new customers who later booked physical trips once restrictions were lifted.

Key Takeaway: Risk-taking is an essential component of successful tourism management. Strategic investments, even in uncertain times, can help businesses differentiate themselves and position for long-term growth.

Principle 3: Experience your product firsthand (to identify operational gaps)

While data-driven decisions are crucial, there is still value in trusting your instincts as a business leader. As a tourism manager, one of the best ways to understand your product is by experiencing it firsthand. Testing your own services gives you the opportunity to identify areas of improvement, experience customer pain points, and discover what sets your offering apart from competitors.

This principle emphasizes the value of firsthand experience for tourism managers. By personally experiencing their own services, managers can better identify gaps and areas for improvement. This approach is supported by Sigala (2020), who highlights the importance of personalization in the customer experience. However, this principle adds a personal, intuitive layer that complements data-driven decisions. Managers must combine personal insights with customer feedback and technological tools to deliver optimal service. While Sigala (2020) discusses the role of technology in improving customer experience, this principle emphasizes the need for managers to personally experience the product to detect issues that may not be captured through digital tools alone.

This principle also emphasizes the importance of intuition in decision-making. While feedback and metrics are vital, your personal experience and industry knowledge should guide key business strategies.

Example: A travel agency owner decided to take one of the guided tours offered by their company. During the experience, the owner noticed that certain activities were rushed, and guests were not provided with sufficient time to explore key landmarks. Based on this insight, they adjusted the itinerary, which led to higher customer satisfaction and improved reviews.

In another case, the founder of a boutique hotel chain regularly stayed at their properties to test room comfort, service quality, and food offerings. This firsthand experience enabled the founder to make immediate adjustments to the guest experience, contributing to the chain's success.

Key Takeaway: Leverage managerial intuition. Using your professional intuition and experiencing your product firsthand allows you to see it through the eyes of the customer. This approach fosters continuous improvement and ensures that your service meets the highest standards.

Principle 4: Embrace technology to enhance customer experience

The integration of technology in tourism management is no longer optional but essential for staying competitive. From AI-powered chatbots to virtual reality tours, technology enhances the customer experience and streamlines operations.

By embracing technology, tourism businesses can offer personalized services, reduce operational costs, and improve customer engagement (Fig. 2).

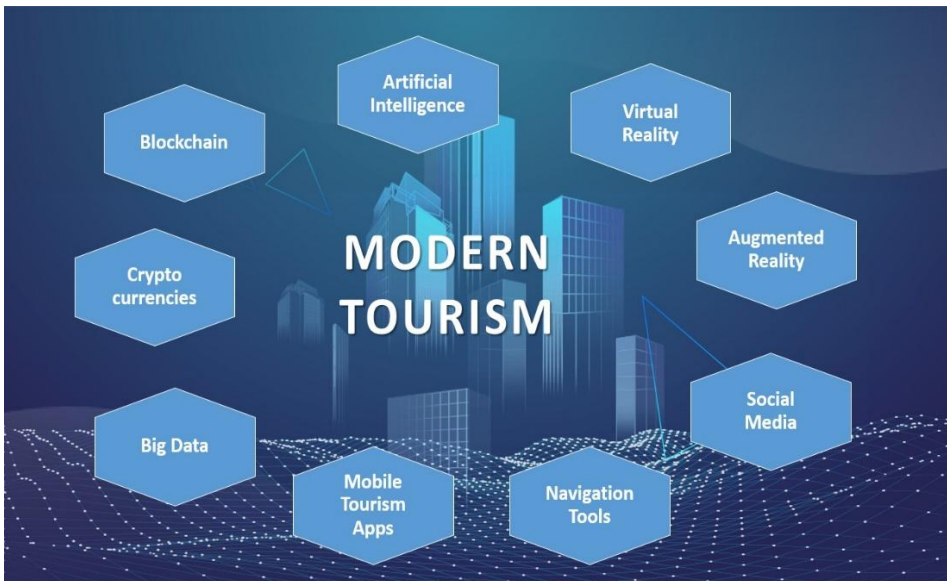


Fig. 2

Technological tools and their role in enhancing customer experiences in the tourism industry

Source: The authors, 2024

The role of technology in tourism management has been widely acknowledged, with Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) discussing how smart tourism destinations utilize personalized services and digital innovation. However, this principle goes beyond the adoption of technology to stress the need for businesses to continuously upgrade and integrate new tools, such as AI and virtual reality, to stay competitive in a rapidly evolving market.

This principle aligns with Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) but also highlights the practical steps tourism managers can take to embrace cutting-edge technology as a way to enhance customer satisfaction and streamline operations.

Technology also allows tourism operators to collect valuable data on customer behaviour, preferences, and satisfaction. This data can be used to optimize services, design personalized offers, and address customer needs more efficiently.

Example: A large cruise line introduced a mobile app that allowed guests to book shore excursions, order room service, and communicate with staff directly. This technology not only improved customer satisfaction but also reduced the workload for the staff, allowing them to focus on higher-priority tasks.

Another example comes from a theme park that introduced a virtual queuing system. Guests could book their spot in line through an app, allowing them to enjoy other attractions while waiting. This technological upgrade led to shorter wait times and a more enjoyable guest experience.

Key Takeaway: Embracing new technologies is critical for delivering a superior customer experience. From mobile apps to virtual experiences, tourism businesses that integrate technology into their operations will better meet the needs of modern travellers.

Principle 5: Prioritize long-term sustainability

Sustainability is becoming increasingly important in the tourism industry as travellers become more aware of their environmental impact. Implementing eco-friendly practices not only helps preserve destinations but also appeals to environmentally conscious travellers. Sustainability should be embedded in business strategies, from reducing waste to supporting local communities and promoting responsible tourism.

Sustainability in tourism is a key topic in current literature, with a focus on minimizing environmental impact while ensuring long-term business viability. Weaver (2012) emphasizes the rise of "organic mass tourism" as a growing trend that balances the mass tourism model with ecological sustainability. However, the application of sustainability in crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has not been extensively addressed. This principle stresses the importance of not only adopting sustainable practices during stable periods but also maintaining these practices in times of crisis. This expands upon the work

of Fennell (2008), who critiques the often romanticized notion of sustainable tourism and highlights the difficulties of maintaining ecological stewardship when businesses face economic pressures. Weaver (2012) discusses the potential of sustainable tourism models, but this principle highlights the need for a consistent commitment to sustainability, even during financial downturns or crises.

Long-term sustainability ensures that tourism businesses can thrive without depleting the resources or harming the environments that make their destinations attractive.

Example 1: An eco-resort in Costa Rica implemented several sustainable practices, such as using solar energy, reducing plastic waste, and sourcing food locally. These efforts not only reduced the resort's environmental footprint but also attracted a growing number of eco-conscious travellers.

Example 2: In addition, a tour company in Iceland began offering carbon-neutral tours, allowing guests to enjoy the beauty of nature without contributing to its degradation. The company partnered with local environmental organizations to offset carbon emissions, which helped attract environmentally responsible tourists.

Case study: The Jungle Bay Eco-Resort, located on the Caribbean island of Dominica, is a small-scale sustainable tourism enterprise that has successfully integrated eco-friendly business practices while maintaining profitability (Jungle Bay Dominica, n.d.). The resort focuses on responsible tourism, minimizing its environmental footprint while offering a high-quality guest experience (Slinger-Friedman, 2009).

The resort has implemented several sustainability initiatives to minimize its environmental footprint while enhancing its operational efficiency. It has fully transitioned to renewable energy, relying on 100% solar-powered electricity and rainwater harvesting systems to reduce dependency on non-renewable resources. Additionally, energy-efficient LED lighting and a passive cooling design further optimize energy consumption.

A strong focus has been placed on waste reduction and the elimination of single-use plastics, which have been replaced with biodegradable alternatives. To promote a circular economy, all organic waste is composted and utilized in the resort's on-site organic farm, providing fresh, locally sourced produce for guest meals.

The resort is deeply committed to local community engagement and economic support, with 85% of its workforce consisting of local employees, ensuring that tourism revenues benefit the surrounding region. It actively collaborates with local artisans and farmers, helping to preserve traditional craftsmanship while boosting the local economy.

Environmental conservation is also a priority, as the resort encourages guests to participate in tree-planting programs aimed at offsetting their carbon

footprint. Since 2018, over 1,500 trees have been planted, contributing to on-going reforestation efforts.

These sustainability initiatives have led to notable business and environmental benefits. According to guest satisfaction surveys, 87% of visitors selected the resort specifically for its strong sustainability policies. Additionally, its energy and water conservation strategies have resulted in a 22% reduction in operating costs. Recognized as a model for eco-tourism best practices, the resort has earned Green Globe certification, further solidifying its commitment to responsible tourism (Green Globe, 2023).

Jungle Bay demonstrates that small-scale eco-tourism ventures can be both environmentally sustainable and financially viable. By investing in green technologies and fostering community partnerships, SMEs in the tourism sector can attract responsible travellers, improve operational efficiency, and contribute to long-term sustainability.

Key Takeaway: Focusing on sustainability is not only the right thing to do for the environment, but it also makes good business sense. Tourists increasingly prefer eco-friendly businesses, and sustainable practices can boost a company's reputation and profitability.

Principle 6: Stay ahead of trends

The tourism industry is constantly evolving, with new trends emerging regularly. To remain competitive, tourism businesses need to stay ahead of these trends and adapt their offerings accordingly. This could mean responding to shifting customer preferences for sustainable travel, experiential tourism, or wellness retreats. By being proactive and recognizing emerging trends early, businesses can position themselves as leaders in their markets.

Remaining adaptable and flexible in your product offerings ensures that your business stays relevant and meets the demands of future travellers. Monitoring social media, attending industry events, and engaging with customer feedback can provide valuable insights into upcoming trends.

Customer behaviour in tourism is dynamic, and crisis situations significantly alter customer priorities and preferences. Richards (2011) discusses cultural tourism and the evolving expectations of tourists, especially in heritage-rich regions. However, crises like pandemics demand even more flexibility in understanding and adapting to changes in customer needs, such as an increased preference for local or virtual experiences. This principle emphasizes the importance of real-time customer feedback and adjusting services to meet these changing expectations, which is not always a focus in traditional tourism literature. Richards (2011) discusses shifting customer expectations in the context of cultural tourism, but this principle extends the conversation by focusing on how businesses must rapidly adapt to crisis-induced changes in customer behaviour.

Example: A resort in Bali noticed the growing popularity of wellness tourism and decided to shift its focus to offer more wellness programs, such as yoga retreats, meditation workshops, and organic dining. This change attracted a new segment of health-conscious travellers and significantly increased occupancy rates during the low season.

Another example is a tour operator in Iceland that capitalized on the rising demand for sustainable tourism by offering eco-friendly tours that highlight natural beauty while minimizing environmental impact.

Key Takeaway: Staying ahead of industry trends helps tourism businesses adapt and thrive in a constantly changing market. Recognizing emerging trends early can lead to innovative offerings that attract new customer segments.

Principle 7: Continuous training for staff

The success of any tourism business is closely tied to the skills and competence of its staff. Regular training ensures that employees stay up-to-date with industry trends, technological advances, and evolving customer expectations. Well-trained staff are more capable of delivering high-quality services, which directly impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Ongoing training programs also motivate employees by providing them with opportunities for professional development, resulting in improved job performance and lower turnover rates (Fig. 3).

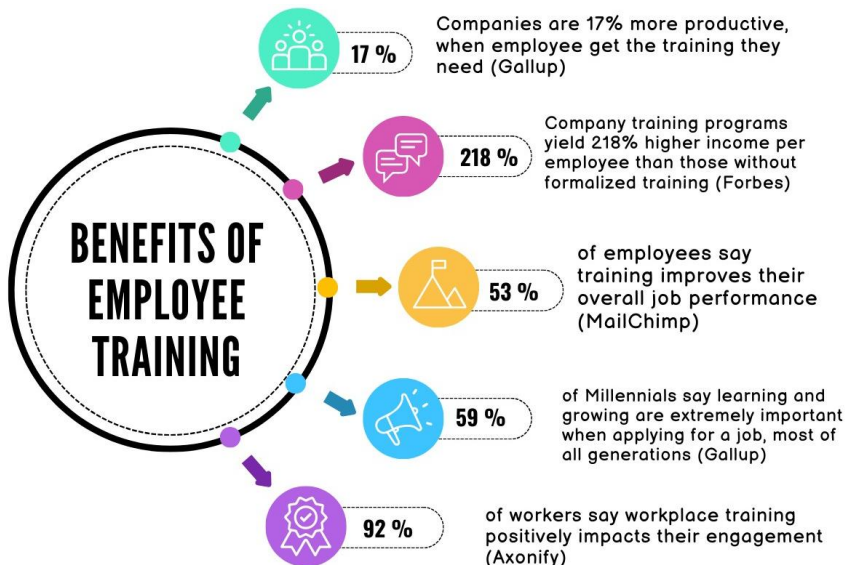


Fig. 3

Benefits of employee training

Source: The authors (based on external sources)

Employee training is critical in maintaining service quality and operational efficiency, especially during crises. Fennell (2008) argues for continuous investment in employee training to promote sustainability in tourism. This principle extends that argument by emphasizing the need for crisis-specific training that equips employees with the skills to manage sudden changes, such as handling health and safety protocols or implementing new technologies quickly. This builds a more adaptable workforce that can respond to crises effectively. Fennell (2008) highlights the importance of training in sustainability, but this principle emphasizes the need for training that specifically prepares employees to handle crises, ensuring operational continuity.

Here are presented some key conclusions of a survey focused on employee training, conducted by The Growth Blueprint Newsletter (2024).

- Companies are 17% more productive when employees get the training they need (Gallup).
- Company training programs yield 218% higher income per employee than those without formalized training (Forbes).
- 53% of employees say training improves their overall job performance (Mail-Chimp).
- 59% of Millennials say learning and growth opportunities are extremely important when applying for a job (Gallup).
- 92% of workers says workplace training positively impacts their job engagement (Axonify).

The results are obvious and clear. Staff training is a key factor in the success of a business. This is especially true in today's fast-paced and ever-changing world, where customers can immediately leave reviews on social media and apps regarding the quality of service they have received, thus impacting the overall image and rating of the company. Every good manager must be able to rely on well-trained staff who regularly update their skills and abilities, increase their motivation and loyalty, and thus contribute to the success of the business as a united team.

Example: A luxury hotel chain implemented a quarterly training program to update employees on the latest customer service techniques, hospitality trends, and technology tools. As a result, the hotel saw a significant improvement in guest satisfaction scores, with guests praising the professionalism and knowledge of staff.

A tour operator in Italy offered language and cultural sensitivity training to its guides, allowing them to better engage with international travellers and improve the overall guest experience. This helped the company attract a more diverse clientele and increase bookings from overseas.

Key Takeaway: Continuous training is essential for maintaining high standards of service. Investing in staff development ensures that employees are

equipped to handle the evolving demands of the tourism industry and deliver exceptional customer experiences.

Principle 8: Build strong relationships with local communities

Tourism businesses that build strong relationships with local communities can create more authentic and sustainable experiences for travellers. By collaborating with local residents, businesses can gain access to local knowledge, support local economies, and create a positive impact on the destination. This fosters goodwill between the business and the community, making it easier to operate sustainably and ethically.

Collaborating with local communities is crucial for building resilient tourism businesses. Bramwell and Lane (2011) stress that partnerships between tourism businesses and local stakeholders are essential for sustainable tourism development. This principle builds on that idea by focusing on how these partnerships can enhance crisis recovery. Local communities often provide the cultural, environmental, and human resources needed to create authentic tourism experiences, but during crises, these relationships become even more important as they can help businesses re-engage with their core markets. Bramwell and Lane (2011) explore the role of local partnerships in sustainability, and this principle extends that concept to emphasize how these relationships can support businesses during and after crises.

Engaging local communities also allows tourism businesses to offer unique, culturally immersive experiences that set them apart from competitors.

Effective tourism management requires staying informed about external factors, such as political shifts, economic changes, and global trends. Hall and Page (2014) highlight the importance of understanding the broader geographical and environmental context in tourism. However, their work does not fully address how businesses should respond to rapidly changing external conditions during crises.

This principle suggests a proactive approach – monitoring these factors continuously to anticipate disruptions and adapt strategies accordingly. Hall and Page (2014) provide a foundational understanding of external influences on tourism, but this principle pushes further by recommending continuous monitoring to ensure businesses remain adaptable in crisis situations.

Example 1: A boutique hotel in Thailand collaborated with local artisans to offer workshops on traditional crafts and cuisine. This partnership not only provided guests with an authentic cultural experience but also supported the local economy and preserved traditional knowledge.

Example 2: In another case, a tour company in South Africa hired local guides and worked with community leaders to ensure that tourism revenue contrib-

uted to conservation efforts and local development projects. This approach strengthened the company's reputation for responsible tourism and earned the trust of the community.

Case study: Andes Paths, a small adventure tourism company based in Cusco, Peru, specializes in sustainable trekking tours along the Inca Trail and alternative routes to Machu Picchu (Andes Paths, n.d.). Unlike larger tour operators, Andes Paths prioritizes community-based tourism, ensuring local Quechua communities benefit directly from tourism revenues (Mitchell & Eagles, 2021).

Andes Paths has established a strong model of community collaboration, ensuring that its tourism operations provide tangible benefits to local populations. The company employs over 120 Quechua porters and guides, offering them wages that are 30% higher than the industry standard. In contrast to many larger tour operators, Andes Paths provides its employees with life insurance, healthcare benefits, and access to educational opportunities, enhancing their quality of life and long-term economic security.

Beyond employment, the company is committed to preserving and promoting indigenous culture. Guests are invited to engage in Quechua weaving workshops, pottery making, and traditional Andean cooking classes, which not only offer immersive experiences but also create alternative income sources for local families. These activities play a crucial role in sustaining indigenous knowledge and ensuring that cultural traditions remain vibrant and relevant.

Environmental responsibility is another pillar of Andes Paths' mission. The company enforces strict "Leave No Trace" policies on its trekking routes to minimize ecological impact. Additionally, it organizes annual clean-up treks aimed at removing waste left by less responsible operators. A portion of the company's profits is allocated to reforestation projects in the Sacred Valley, further reinforcing its commitment to sustainability.

The economic and social impact of these initiatives has been significant. More than 200 rural families in Andean villages directly benefit from Andes Paths' operations, and the company has experienced an impressive 35% year-over-year growth, driven by increasing demand for authentic and ethical travel experiences. Its efforts in sustainable tourism have earned it the "Best Sustainable Tour Operator" Award from the Peruvian Ministry of Tourism in 2022, further validating its role as a leader in responsible tourism practices (Peruvian Ministry of Tourism, 2023).

Andes Paths showcases how community-based tourism can foster economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and sustainable tourism growth. SMEs can gain a competitive edge by emphasizing authenticity, fair labour practices, and environmental responsibility, which align with the growing global demand for ethical travel experiences.

Key Takeaway: Building strong relationships with local communities enhances the authenticity of tourism experiences and ensures long-term sustainability. Businesses that collaborate with locals can offer unique experiences while contributing to the well-being of the destination.

Principle 9: Focus on personalization and customization

Today's travellers expect personalized experiences tailored to their preferences. Tourism businesses that offer customized services – whether through personalized travel itineraries, room amenities, or dining options – can stand out in a crowded market. Personalization can be achieved through data analytics, guest feedback, and technology that allows for tailored services.

By understanding individual customer preferences, businesses can deliver more meaningful experiences, increase customer satisfaction, and encourage repeat bookings.

Example: A luxury cruise line used data analytics to track guest preferences and create personalized travel itineraries. Guests were offered personalized shore excursions based on their interests, resulting in higher satisfaction and repeat bookings.

A boutique hotel in Paris offered customized room packages for honeymooners, families, and solo travellers, each tailored to the specific needs and preferences of those groups. This approach led to higher occupancy rates and positive reviews, as guests felt that their experience was uniquely catered to them.

Key Takeaway: Focusing on personalization and customization allows tourism businesses to create more meaningful and memorable experiences for their customers. Tailored services can lead to higher satisfaction, increased loyalty, and stronger brand differentiation.

Principle 10: Monitor feedback and continuously improve

To stay competitive in the tourism industry, it is essential to continuously monitor customer feedback and use it to make improvements. Whether through online reviews, social media, or direct feedback, listening to what your customers say provides valuable insights into areas that need improvement and what aspects of your service are working well.

Monitoring feedback allows businesses to identify patterns in customer preferences, address complaints quickly, and make adjustments that enhance the overall guest experience. Continuous improvement should be a cornerstone of any tourism management strategy.

Innovation is a crucial driver of competitiveness in tourism. Buhalis and Amrangana (2015) discuss the role of smart technologies in enhancing tourism

experiences. However, innovation during crises must go beyond technological improvements. This principle focuses on fostering a culture of continuous innovation that encourages businesses to adapt their entire operational model when necessary. Whether through new service offerings, operational efficiencies, or adopting new market strategies, continuous innovation is essential for resilience. Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) discuss the role of technology in driving innovation, and this principle broadens the scope by stressing the need for continuous, holistic innovation, especially in response to crisis situations.

Example: A family-owned bed and breakfast in Scotland used guest feedback from online reviews to improve its breakfast offerings and room amenities. After implementing the suggested changes, the B&B saw a sharp increase in guest satisfaction and repeat bookings.

A global hotel chain actively monitored its social media channels for feedback and comments, responding to customer concerns in real-time. This quick response to guest feedback helped build a positive brand reputation and fostered stronger customer loyalty.

Key Takeaway: Regularly monitoring customer feedback is essential for identifying areas of improvement and ensuring continuous growth. A commitment to improvement demonstrates that a business values its customers and is dedicated to providing the best possible experience.

Conclusion

The tourism industry faces a range of challenges that demand innovative and resilient management strategies. By applying the 10 principles of successful tourism management, businesses can navigate uncertainties, enhance customer satisfaction, and build sustainable operations that stand the test of time. These principles emphasize the importance of embracing technology, investing in staff training, fostering strong community relationships, and continuously improving services through customer feedback (Fig. 4).

As tourism businesses continue to evolve, the ability to adapt quickly to market changes and customer demands is more critical than ever. The 10 principles provide a roadmap for navigating these complexities by fostering agility and innovation. Implementing data-driven strategies, coupled with a customer-centric approach, allows tourism operators to predict market shifts and respond proactively. Moreover, by embracing sustainability practices, businesses not only preserve their long-term profitability but also contribute to the conservation of the destinations they rely on.

Ultimately, the integration of technology, personalized experiences, and strong community ties will differentiate successful tourism enterprises in the

years to come. These principles are not only vital for short-term recovery from crises but also for building a resilient and future-proof tourism model.



Fig. 4

Overview of the 10 principles of successful tourism management

Source: The authors, 2024

By remaining focused on continuous improvement and aligning operations with global trends, businesses can thrive in a competitive landscape while offering unparalleled value to both their customers and the destinations they serve.

This paper contributes to the ongoing discourse in tourism management by presenting 10 universal principles designed to help businesses navigate crises while improving operational performance. These principles offer a unique theoretical contribution by integrating crisis management strategies with daily operational practices, particularly focusing on adaptability, customer satisfaction, and sustainability.

The managerial implications of the 10 principles are significant. Tourism managers are encouraged to implement undercover evaluations, embrace technology, and maintain resilience through strategic investments in staff training and customer engagement. These measures, when applied consistently, can lead to improved crisis readiness and overall business stability.

However, there are some limitations to the study. The proposed principles focus primarily on specific sectors within tourism, such as hospitality and tour operators. Future research could extend these concepts to other niches like eco-tourism or adventure tourism.

Additionally, future studies should explore how the principles perform in different cultural and regional contexts, providing further validation and refinement.

In conclusion, the 10 principles outlined in this paper represent a robust framework for improving the tourism industry's resilience to crises. Future research should focus on testing these principles across a broader range of businesses and environments to ensure their applicability and long-term success.

In an ever-changing landscape, tourism operators must balance risk-taking with strategic planning, remain flexible to emerging trends, and focus on long-term sustainability. By following these principles, businesses can not only survive crises but also emerge stronger, better positioned to offer exceptional experiences to travellers. Ultimately, success in tourism management hinges on the ability to innovate, adapt, and prioritize the evolving needs of both the destination and the customer.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Vladimir Karadzhov: Conceptualization, Methodology, Analysis, Validation, Original Draft, Review & Editing.

Adriana Atanasova: Data Curation, Investigation, Visualization.

All authors approved the final version of the manuscript.

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