

DESTINATION MARKETING IN CRISIS: THE RESURGENCE OF THE CRUISE INDUSTRY AMIDST THE COVID- 19 PANDEMIC

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The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on every element of the tourism system- one such element is cruising- which came to a halt in March of 2020 with global 'no sail' orders. Such peripeteia had a ripple effect on the industry, notwithstanding the negative press and media attention cruise lines received from inception of the pandemic. Despite the growing proclivity of risks and crises for tourism destinations, academic literature points to a desideratum for the best types of messages and management strategies that should be used and implemented by destination marketing organizations when crisis occurs. As destinations eagerly reopen and return to full operations, strategies will be employed to aid recovery, manage risk and crisis, while ensuring consumer satisfaction.

Against this background, the purpose of this thesis is to analyse the effectiveness of the destination marketing strategies used in the resurgence of the cruise industry amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The denouement of the study aims to engender theoretical and practical contributions. Emerging findings will also provide new insights to industry stakeholders and yield practical acumen for cruise destination management and marketing as well as opportunities for personnel training in product design and service delivery.

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