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Understanding Perceptions and Attitudes to Risk in the Tourism Industry

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An increasingly complex and rapidly-evolving array of risks presents one of the greatest challenges for decision-makers in all sectors, including the transport and tourism industry. The prospects of an international destination can be profoundly damaged in minutes as a result of a major outbreak of infectious disease, a natural disaster or a terrorist incident. It is therefore vital to understand the changing nature of risk and the ways that risks are perceived and understood, especially as people tend to respond to the perception of risks rather than actual risks, which means that their responses are not always rational and can even expose them to more danger.

The first part of this paper assesses the understanding of risk, and why social, cultural and psychological factors influence the response to threat, the second part looks at the application of this approach to tourism, and the third part sets out a model that can capture the relevant variables for the tourism industry.

Key Words: tourism, perception, risk, understanding, management.

Part 1: The Understanding of Risk

The tourism industry is now the largest source of employment and foreign revenue for a number of countries, who have therefore become relatively dependent on the industry. This means that anything that makes people more or less likely to travel, or to choose one destination over another, or affects the rate of growth in the industry, tends to have immediate and relatively widespread consequences in these countries (Bailey, Clayton & Karagiannis, 2014 in press). This dependency has been highlighted by a number of disasters, including 9/11, the tsunami in South-East Asia, Hurricane Katrina, the SARS outbreak and others, which have exposed the extent to which tourism is vulnerable to diverse risks (Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Peattie, Clark & Peattie, 2005; Tsai & Chen, 2010; Park & Reisinger, 2010; Korstanje, 2009).

There is now a great deal of interest in identifying and quantifying risk, but there has not yet been commensurate attention to the ways that people

respond to perceived risk (Korstanje, 2013) with regard to the potential implications for particular industries. The former has led to algorithms that quantify investment risk, for example, but this has not adequately captured the elements of human psychology that can result in apparently irrational behaviour. This essay therefore focuses on the latter, utilising a model based on the conceptual desagregation of reason and

Figure 1 : Fear and Uncertainty



<https://highstreettothehills.wordpress.com/tag/fear/>

perception proposed by Sunstein (2002). With regard to the application to tourism, this model indicates that the long-term resilience and success of a tourist destination depends on (a) the exposure to risk, (b) the perception of risk and (c) the ability to manage both (a) and (b). Some destinations are more likely to be severely impacted by adverse events because they do not give sufficient attention to the need to both control risks and manage the perception of risk. In some cases, latent threats are ignored or trivialized, or external perspectives of risk rejected as intrusive or unfair, which can lead to disaster when threats eventually become real.

There are also issues with regard to the limits to knowledge and certainty, and therefore to the extent to which some risks can be controlled, an idea which some people find threatening in itself. Denial, however, is rarely a wise option for decision-makers.

Risk and uncertainty

As the result of technological progress, economic development and political reform, people around the world are becoming healthier and living longer. It is important to note that almost all of this progress has been happened over the last century, which may have created a sense among the current generation that this kind of improvement is normal. In fact, this rate of improvement is not 'normal', in that it is unique to this era, although there are many reasons for hoping and some reasons for believing that it may last for some time to come.

In the time of the Roman Empire, average life expectancy for a Roman was about 20-25 years (Rosenberg, retrieved 2014). It took two thousand years (until 1900) for the global, average life expectancy to increase slightly to 30 years, a rate of improvement of less than 1 additional day of life per year. Life expectancy then doubled over the next century, a rate of improvement of about 110 days of additional life per year, which means that the rate of improvement suddenly increased over 100-fold. By 2012 the world average life expectancy at birth was 70 years (World Health Organization Global Health Observatory, retrieved 2014), and is approaching 90 in a few countries. This extraordinary surge in life expectancy was the result of improvements in agriculture and food supply systems, water and sanitation, medicine and health care, and increases in productivity which made it possible to generate enough wealth to support a far higher population. This means that people born today have a lower risk of premature death than any previous generation in history.

However, there are now some serious potential problems that could disrupt this progress. For example, *The Global Trends 2030* report by the US National Intelligence Council notes that world demand for food, water, and energy will grow by approximately 35%, 40%, and 50% respectively by 2030, due to the increase in global population and rising *per capita* consumption, while climate change will create instability in many regions by contributing to water and food shortages (retrieved 2014). The combination of rising demand for food, energy, water and other resources, environmental degradation, climate change and the associated impacts on agricultural systems and livelihoods, in conjunction with poverty, unemployment, crime, corruption and failures of governance, could increase the incidence of violent conflicts in many regions in future if these problems are not resolved.

So average exposure to risk has been falling for decades, but the possibility of a future increase in risk appears to be rising. This means that the quality of life available to the next generation may, unusually, be lower than today.

There are several dimensions to this challenge that require further analysis. The degree of exposure to these risks varies between regions, nations and generations, as does the flow of benefits from the current *status quo*, and the fact that the risks are unequally distributed greatly complicates the search for solutions. For example, China is by far the world's largest carbon emitter, but the Government of China does not want to incur the risk of reduced rates of economic growth and of losing domestic support by imposing the additional cost of carbon reduction measures, so has effectively traded its immediate domestic political and economic risk against the long-term damage that may be caused by climate change.

There are also important differences in attitudes to uncertainty. For example, the World Bank *Turn Down the Heat* report (2012, retrieved 2014) notes that the world average surface temperature has now risen by almost 1C, that an increase of 3 or 3.5C by 2100 is now considered 'probable', and that there may be 'catastrophic consequences' if there is a 4C rise, with some parts of the world becoming effectively uninhabitable. However, there are also projections (from Bloomberg New Energy Finance, retrieved 2014) indicating that fossil fuel use will peak by 2030 as the result of the rapid displacement of fossil fuels with cheap, efficient solar cells, which would certainly avert some of the worst consequences of climate change.

Neither outcome is certain; they are both possible future scenarios. The former projection assumes that most energy will continue to be sourced from fossil fuels; the latter projection assumes technological substitution. Which projection proves to be more accurate will depend on many variables, including the rate of technological innovation and uptake, demand, and governmental intervention in the market place, amongst others. So the issue is whether indeterminacy is seen as a justification for more vigorous action (to avert the worst-case outcome) or inaction (as the problem will eventually resolve itself as a result of technological advances). The stance that individuals take with regard to uncertainties of this kind tends to depend on a range of psychological and cultural factors, including their optimism or pessimism about the future, and their beliefs, particularly with regard to factors such as the importance of freedom and whether there are limits to growth.

In addition, as Clayton and Radcliffe (1996) note, each possible outcome is usually attended by a different distribution of risk, that is, by a different distribution of costs and benefits. This means that there are both technical and political considerations in any analysis of probability and risk. For example, a small risk of a major disaster (a 0.01% chance of an incident that would kill 10,000 people), and a larger risk of a smaller disaster (a 100% chance of an incident that would kill one person), give rise to the same expected outcome in terms of losses (1 statistical life), provided that the risk estimates are accurate. Despite this, the characteristics of the two outcomes are very different, and people are sensibly concerned about the distribution of such risks. There is no 'correct' way of choosing between such risks; the crux of the debate is about the acceptability of particular distributions of risk. As these examples suggest, most debates about progress, development and the environment ultimately resolve into different perceptions and responses to risk, which are in turn influenced by cultural values (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983). The relationship between culture, perception, risks and consequences is therefore the subject of this paper.

The perception of risk

The way that people perceive and respond to risk is partly culturally-mediated. For example, after the 9/11 terrorist incident in 2001, many US citizens were more reluctant to fly, because they feared being the victims of the next terrorist incident. However, they did not stop travelling, but would drive rather than take a domestic flight. This is likely to have increased the death toll significantly, as flying is much safer than

driving in terms of deaths/passenger/kilometre (Korstanje and Clayton, 2012). About 44,000 people die annually in car accidents in the USA, while about 200 die in aircraft accidents (in fact, flying is safer than bathing, as some 325 US citizens drown in their bath each year).

So, as a result of choosing to drive instead of flying, it is likely that about 1,595 additional people died in car accidents. As 2,976 people died during the 9/11 attack itself, the number of fatalities in the USA caused by 9/11 is likely to have been increased by over 50% by the consequent deaths on the roads. As this example illustrates, sometimes the actions that people take in response to a perceived threat actually increase their exposure to risk, mainly because of the way that most people act on the basis of their beliefs and perceptions, rather than reality.

Today, many US citizens still greatly over-estimate the threat of terrorism, and underestimate other risks; in particular, those associated with their lifestyles. As Zakaria (2013, retrieved 2014) notes, between 2001 and 2013, foreign-inspired terrorism claimed about two dozen lives in the USA (an average of two per year). Over the same period, over 100,000 Americans were killed in gun homicides (about 8,340 per year), and over 400,000 were killed in motor-vehicle accidents (about 33,340 per year). These were minor threats, however, in comparison to physical inactivity and poor nutrition (diets high in sugar, fat and salt), which cause 310,000-580,000 deaths in the USA every year, similar to the number of deaths caused by tobacco. So an overweight smoker with a bad diet is roughly half a million times more likely to die as a result of their lifestyle choices than as a result of terrorism, and yet may be far more worried that their next flight will be hijacked by terrorists.

There are also people who live on the slopes of active volcanoes, on unstable slopes, in areas liable to flooding and in other hazardous areas, or work in dangerous occupations. Some of the people in these circumstances are not fully aware of the risks, some have fatalistic attitudes or religious faith to help them cope, and some are in denial. For example, when Mount Vesuvius erupted in AD 79 it destroyed two cities and killed about 16,000 people. It has erupted many times since then, most recently in 1944. Today, some three million people live on its lower slopes, mostly in the city of Naples, which lies just 9km west of the volcano. Some of them believe that the volcano will not erupt again in their lifetime, or that there will be sufficient warning for them to escape. For some, however, this may not be true.

The perceived fairness of balance between risk and reward is also a factor. For example, most people will rate a situation as being significantly more risky if their exposure to the risk is not voluntary, if children are exposed to the risk, or if the situation is not perceived as fair, that is, if the benefits accrue to one person and the risks to another. Clayton and Radcliffe (1996) note that many people in the USA rated their exposure to the agrochemical Alar, which was sprayed on apples, as being significantly more risky than drinking high-roast coffee, even though both contain potential carcinogens and the latter activity is arguably the more dangerous. Exposure to Alar was widely perceived as a high risk partly because children were exposed to the risk, because the exposure was not undertaken knowingly or voluntarily, and because the benefits of spraying accrued to the producers and retailers while the consumers accrued the risks. In this case, the apples were slightly cheaper as a result of the use of Alar, but this was not seen as adequate compensation by the consumers concerned.

The perception of control

The perception of control is also a factor. In the example given earlier, people preferred to drive rather than fly because they felt that they were in control of their car, but would not be in control of a situation on board a hijacked aircraft. This perception of control is largely illusory, of course, as the safety of every driver depends on the alertness, competence and sobriety of other road users, and accidents involving tired or intoxicated drivers are far more common than terrorist incidents.

As these examples suggest, the relationship between actual risk, the perception of risk and any consequent change in behaviour is influenced by a number of variables, including the level of understanding of the situation and of probabilities, personal attitude to risk and cultural factors. These variables largely determine which risks are recognized, and which are not, and which risks are magnified, and which are underestimated. Even awareness of risk does not always translate into risk-minimizing strategies; it can also result in belief systems that allow people to live with risk by creating a sense that the risk can be ignored or placated. So, perceptions can profoundly influence behaviour, life styles and expectations. It is clear, therefore, that social and psychological factors are highly important considerations when translating technical assessments of risk into terms of everyday language and experience, and when formulating procedures for controlling risks in the domain of public policy.

The discrepancy between perception and reality of exposure to risk is relatively easy to understand with regard to individuals, but the same mismatch can also be true of institutional responses. For example, as Balko (2013) points out, civil disturbances of the 1960s followed by the 'war on drugs' led to the introduction of paramilitary tactics by police officers in the USA; partly to ensure their own safety and partly to protect the communities they serve. In the mid-1980s less than half of large cities in the USA (over 50,000 population) and just 20% of small cities (below 50,000 population) had Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams, but today it has risen to almost 90% of the large cities and 80% of the small cities. The SWAT teams are also deployed far more frequently; SWAT teams were deployed in the USA about 3,000 times in 1980, but are now used about 50,000 times each year. This is largely because they were previously reserved for situations where there was a high risk of violence, but they are now routinely used on many deployments where there is relatively little risk of resistance (including breaking up illegal poker games and raiding bars suspected of serving alcohol to under-age drinkers). So there are now far more SWAT teams, they are more heavily armed, and they are used far more frequently.

This militarization of police forces in the USA has resulted in a number of unwanted consequences. One of them is over-spending on equipment; a recent article in *The Economist* gave the example of Fargo, North Dakota, where the police force now has an armoured personnel carrier, even though the city averages less than two homicides a year. The more fundamental paradox, however, is that levels of violent crime have been falling in most US cities for several decades, so the militarization of policing is no longer related to the level of threat, and has actually made many citizens less safe than they were before, as more aggressive tactics are now routinely used by many police forces. As the same article in *The Economist* also reports, a number of minor confrontations have rapidly escalated to the unnecessary use of lethal force by paramilitary police officers. So measures originally taken to protect citizens can now result in an increased threat.

The extension of security and surveillance also represents an attempt to increase knowledge and control of the situation. There has been an enormous investment in security and surveillance systems since 9/11, but the same event also changed the context of security. In medieval Europe, for example, walls protected cities, and travelers were at risk while in transit. Today, the enemy can be anywhere, including inside the city, which raises new challenges for those

who must monitor the movement of terrorists and criminals while still allowing the free passage of those on legitimate business or leisure pursuits. Bauman (2013) suggests that the state has conceded some power to protect their citizens because of the importance of travel and trade, and also that the modern state is now obliged to provide solutions for problems created elsewhere. The security forces in the UK, for example, must now deal with radicalized young Muslims born in the UK, but who identify with ideological struggles in countries such as Syria. The technologies of security and surveillance have developed partly to address these more complex and fluid problems, but also partly in order to offer citizens an apparent (but usually only temporary) solution.

Situating risk

Risk usually implies a situation of potential danger, which is partly (as shown above) socially defined. The risk is not 'real', as it has not happened yet; it is a possible future condition. For example, earthquakes are far more likely to happen in seismically active areas, but their timing cannot usually be predicted with precision. If one does not expect an earthquake for another century, it is quite rational to build a house in the area, but if one believes that an earthquake is imminent, it would be more rational to move away. Similarly, New Orleans was devastated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and many of the former inhabitants still want to return there. The decision to return to New Orleans depends, in part, on an assessment of the future, i.e. on whether one expects another hurricane to happen in a relatively short time. When the event actually happens, of course, 'risk' is replaced by reality (Douglas & Wildavski, 1983; Douglas, 1992). This is the way that insurance policies work; insurance cannot be bought after the disaster has happened.

Risks are the combination of two factors; the chance that a particular event will happen to a person (or a business, or a country), and the number of times (or the length of time) that the person is exposed to that risk. If, for example, there is a 1/1000 chance of a person being hit by a car when crossing a busy road, that

might seem like an acceptably low risk. However, if 10,000 people cross the same road every day, then, on average, 10 people will be hit by a car every day. Similarly, if there is a 1/300 risk of a serious accident at a nuclear power plant in any given year, then that might be expressed as one serious accident, on average, every 300 years. That might seem like an acceptably low risk. If, however, there are 300 nuclear power stations in the world, then, on average, there will be one serious accident every year. So it is important to take both risk and exposure into account.

Similarly, when a risk is expressed as a 'one in a hundred year event', many people assume that that means that the event will not happen for a century – or, if it does happen, that it won't happen again for a hundred years. Neither of these interpretations is correct; a 'one in a hundred year event' means that each year there is a 1% chance that the event will happen.^[1] So it is just as likely to happen in year 1 as in any other year. It is also important to note that the probability remains the same, even when the event happens. For example, if the event actually happens in year 5, then the probability of it happening again in year 6 is still 1%.^[2]

The perception of risk is not necessarily the same as statistical risk; it tends to vary by context and between individuals. In a country with a high homicide rate, personal safety should be a matter of concern to all citizens. However, most people take threats more seriously when they believe themselves or their families to be directly exposed to the risk, so will effectively assign a lower value to a stranger being murdered further away. The killing of a friend, relative, acquaintance or neighbour is far more directly and personally threatening. In almost every country with high levels of violent crime, the violence is usually concentrated in particular areas, so that perpetrators are also likely to be victims. This means that the majority of the population is more concerned, in practice, with the distribution of the homicides than with the total; people living in areas with relatively low levels of violence may not feel that they are exposed to undue personal risk.

Some of the most serious risks, however, are beyond the control not just of individuals, but of any one nation. For example, some of the significant sources of global risk today are located in under-developing, rogue and failed states, including conflicts based on religious fundamentalism, political and narco-terrorism, and international crime (including money-laundering, cybercrime and the trafficking of people, weapons and narcotics), and the increasing flows of

1 Risks are usually expressed as percentages, or on a scale of zero (impossible) to one (certain). So an extremely low risk has a probability close to zero, while a threat that is already present would have a probability of 1, or 100%.

2 This is true unless the event actually does make it less likely to happen again. For example, an earthquake might relieve the strain on a fault, so that the chance of another earthquake is then lower than before.

political, economic and environmental migrants and refugees. Other risks include increasing antibiotic resistance in the bacteria that cause some of the major diseases, and the rapid international transmission of highly infectious diseases via main transport routes. These problems cannot be contained in their countries and regions of origin, and therefore now have global consequences.

These are real threats. However, their impact on the public can be compounded by rapid global reporting of threats, attacks, natural disasters and major accidents, missing aircraft and other calamities, which can give a false sense of their prevalence, as any sufficiently shocking event caused by factors that are beyond one's personal control can result in a sense of powerlessness and risk.

So, part of the public's sense of risk is irrational, in that natural disasters have occurred before and will continue to occur in future, so the only change is that they are now almost certain to be reported. The actual exposure to risk has not increased. However, part of the perception of increased risk is justified. Some developments, such as climate change or conflicts over resources or ideologies, could indeed make the world a more dangerous place, with consequences impacting on lives far from the original source.

The politics of risk

Durodié (retrieved 2014), in an analysis of the threat to the West posed by al-Qaeda, points out that the number of terrorist incidents has been going down, that most of them now are not in the West, but in places such as Kashmir, and that the threat to citizens in Europe today is minute compared to the second world war, when millions died. For example, the 7/7 bombings in London on the 7 July 2005 killed 52 civilians and injured over 700 more, which was the UK's worst terrorist incident since the 1988 Lockerbie bombing. By contrast, there were over 600,000 people killed in the UK in 1937 as a result of bombing by the Luftwaffe.

This suggests that part of the reaction to terrorism is mediated by the perception of threat, which can be easily exaggerated by the media. This can also be exaggerated for political purposes; Durodié points out that political or religious leaders can then offer to restore stability and safety, sometimes using that to gain power. The danger here, of course, is that they can then direct people's fear at identifiable enemies, who may be a different ethnic or religious group, and some of the most horrific civil wars and genocides have

stemmed from the identification of one group as the enemy, as people will then go and slaughter their former neighbours in order to remove the 'threat'.

One way in which the media can play a role in magnifying the sense of threat is simply in reporting what is considered newsworthy. Reports of terrorist incidents are usually given far more prominence than reports of bad diets, even though bad diets actually kill far more people. Few people understand probability, or their exposure to a given risk, and so will over-react to events that appear to be uncontrollable (such as a random attack), and under-react to events that seem mundane and under their personal control (such as the consumption of cigarettes, sugar and cheeseburgers).

This cognitive bias means that perception is not usually a good basis for important national decisions. As Sunstein (2002) points out, states should not echo the claims of their citizenry. Whenever alternatives are not properly evaluated by experts, unwise policies may actually engender new risks.

More generally, the role of the state in identifying risk and developing strategies to manage risk is now one of the factors that define particular nations and cultures. For example, Beck (2006) argues that some of the core institutions (such as educational, political and economic structures) that regulated social life are now in decline. Banks are no longer pillars of respectability and stability; politics is about expediency and management rather than ideology; online educational systems are replacing teachers. Risk, however, has become a common mediator (like money) that connects people. Beck suggests that without the need to manage risk, societies would disintegrate, while Giddens (1991) argues that even the concept of the future is inextricably intertwined with concepts of risk. This idea is supported by Douglas & Aaron Wildavsky (1983), who argue that risks have to be considered, at least in part, as cultural legacies, which suggests that one of the more important defining features of each society is their beliefs and fears. The recent Russian annexation of the Crimea, for example, incomprehensible behaviour to European governments, makes more sense when the resentments and fears of the current Russian elite are taken into account. Similarly, the low demand for travel insurance in Argentina, in comparison to the USA, reflects not just different risk profiles but also a different cultural understanding and acceptance of particular types of risk. As the 9/11 example above indicated, Americans feel safer when they are in control of the vehicle, even when the opposite is true.

In conclusion, although almost all authors on the subject of risk agree on the need to take cultural and behavioural factors into account, it is important to develop a more systematic methodology and typology for assessing and categorizing the influence of cultural variables on attitudes to risk and the associated patterns of behaviour.

The role of media

The media and cultural industries have always played an important role in shaping the public reaction to threats.

The shock many US citizens felt at the events of 9/11 led to a national debate about what it means to be American individually, nationally and internationally, and the terms of this debate were primarily moral. For US citizens, this debate was not just about what we ought to do in response to 9/11, it was about how our responses to 9/11 morally configure us (Weber, 2006: 4).

Wars create a moral narrative about good and evil. The media tend to focus on a few significant aspects including who we are and who we are not (i.e. defining 'us' and 'them'), and what we might become (i.e. what we have to do in response to an attack). For example, Korstanje and Olsen (2011) argue that the media shapes an ideological discourse which demonizes some people while over-valorizing others. Some acts of heroism may also be misappropriated. For example, the film *U-571* (released in 2000) showed a German submarine being boarded in 1942 by United States Navy submariners in order to capture an Enigma cipher machine. In fact, it was British personnel from HMS *Bulldog* who first captured a naval Enigma machine from German submarine *U-110* in the North Atlantic in May 1941, months before the United States had even entered the war. So an act of genuine heroism by British sailors was appropriated and used to show an apparent act of American heroism, which supports a commonly used narrative of the need for American intervention to save others.

Risk and the Implications for Tourism

The psychological impact of the 9/11 event affected tourism flows around the world. The 9/11 incident had such an extensive impact partly because the terrorists used hijacked aircraft, so that all forms of air travel were suddenly perceived to be much more dangerous. Some countries lost over 20% of their tourism arrivals, but others gained as tourists switched to destinations

that were perceived to be safer, as terrorism has a particularly significant effect on the way that tourists perceive the relative safety of destinations (Peattie, Clarke & Peattie, 2005).

The 9/11 incident also demonstrated a new-found ability to use media to amplify the effects of a 'spectacular' attack; the targets and the timing were all chosen to ensure that the message would be seen around the world. Both the media impact and the creation of 'winners' and 'losers' in the economically-vital tourism industry served to create fear and division. As this suggests, although the tourism and hospitality industry have devoted considerable effort to mitigate negative threats so that their destinations are not affected, the way that the media portray a crisis or a disaster will undoubtedly impact the local economy. A murder that is reported as an isolated event, for example, is unlikely to have a significant economic effect on a destination, but a murder that is portrayed as part of a pattern in which visitors are targeted probably will.

Who is at risk?

Korstanje (2009) argues that tourist risk is almost always defined in terms of those aspects which may jeopardize the well-being of tourists, based on the idea that vulnerability and a lack of familiarity make tourists easy prey for crime and terrorist attacks, and the idea that the tourism-dependent economies rely heavily on their image as destinations, and so are more vulnerable to the repercussions of attacks (Korstanje, 2010 and 2011).

It is true, of course, that tourists can be more at risk than locals, mainly because they are unfamiliar with the local terrain and customs, and may be instantly recognizable as both strangers and relatively wealthy potential targets (See Figure 2). The Bali nightclub bombing in 2003, for example, was used to create fear and anger in the victims' countries of origin, and also to undermine the local citizenry's trust in the state. West (2008) notes that this event is usually portrayed in Australia as an archetypical act of terrorism comparable with the 9/11 event.

The media narrative of terrorist incidents of this kind typically emphasizes that foreign tourists were targeted. This may be true of the specific incident, but can still give a very misleading impression, as the great majority of victims of Jihadist terrorists, for example, are actually Muslims living in the countries where the terrorists are active.

Some destinations actually combine risk aversion with risk attraction factors. As Lepp and Gibson (2008) put it, the industry is circumscribed by two contrasting tendencies, the sensation- or novelty-seeking risk, and risk aversion, so the personality of tourists plays a crucial role determining the perception of risk. Tourism involves a tension between security and curiosity (the wish to explore and find new experiences) (George, Inbakaran & Poyyamoli, 2010). Naturally, individuals vary in terms of their tolerance for risk (Dolnicar, 2005), but some will seek out riskier experiences and destinations.

Tourism Risk Model

Internal tourism risks are here defined as any threat or danger generated by the functioning of the tourism industry itself, while external risks are those imposed from outside the industry. Internal risks can be further subdivided into:

- Risk associated with the service.
- Risks to the security of the tourist.

The former includes relatively mundane factors, such as delayed flights, booking errors, lost luggage and so on. The latter is far more serious, with potential implications for lives, the image of the mode of transport (in the case of a hijacking or bombing at an airport) or tourist destination, and even the entire tourist system. This category includes:

- Virus outbreaks, pandemics.
- Terrorist attacks, especially those against civilians.
- Serious mass poisonings associated with contaminated food or water.
- Major road, rail or aircraft accidents.
- Large-scale natural and other disasters
- Frequent incidents of murder, rape, assaults, thefts.
- Violent political conflict, civil unrest.

As noted earlier, any model to identify and manage risk in the tourism sector has to take into account two variables:

- The actual probability of a dangerous event.
- The psychological effect on the public.

Efficient risk management plans have to address both the real risk, and also the public perception of the risk. The latter may be inaccurate, but failure to address it

and give the public the necessary reassurance may result in the destination incurring serious economic costs as people could still take their business elsewhere. In this regard, three factors are particularly important:

1. The extent of control
2. The probability of repetition
3. The status of victims.

The extent of control refers to the actual and perceived effectiveness of the intelligence and security professionals, and their ability to anticipate and prevent attacks.

The probability of repetition refers to the probability that the event will recur (i.e. if the ability to plan effectively and mobilize resources to increase resilience to further traumatic events is clearly lacking).

The status of victims and their nationality will have a significant effect on the extent of the social/media impact of an event. For example, the murder of an American tourist in Mexico will typically get far more coverage in the USA than the murder of a Mexican. In terms of media coverage, therefore, one American may be 'worth' thousands of local people, whose deaths are usually reported as statistics, rather than individual cases. Similarly, the killing of children, pregnant women or disabled people usually provokes a much stronger emotional response. Terrorists know this, of course, and so may attack tourists specifically in order to get more media coverage in the tourist's home nation and therefore inflict more economic damage. The degree of economic dependency on tourism in

Figure 2 – Coffin of French Tourist Assassinated in Argentina



<http://www.lapatilla.com/site/2011/08/05/las-mejores-fotos-del-jueves-4-de-agosto/the-coffin-of-murdered-french-tourist-cassandre-bouvier-is-loaded-into-an-undertakers-vehicle-in-salta/>

developing countries is therefore an important factor when trying to predict where tourists might be the targets for terrorist violence.

These factors can be arrayed as outlined in Table 1.

Paradoxically, when there is a high probability of repetition, the impact may actually reduce over time as the audience becomes inured to the event and its original impact gradually fades.

Any incident that is overwhelming in scale (such as the Asian tsunami) or a deliberate atrocity (such as an act of terrorism) invokes fears of powerlessness, especially when nation states appear unable to prevent these events, respond to them appropriately or reduce the likelihood of their recurrence. This will tend to maximise the social and media impact. If the state is able to act decisively, and can give – and guarantee – the necessary reassurances – then the fear will usually be mitigated. Current risk perception research is mostly limited to the impact on tourists, which means that the explanations are typically partial and largely descriptive. In order to advance our understanding of the options for risk management, it is important to take into account both actual risks and reactions to risk, the impact on both locals and non-locals, and both the event and the role that the media play in portraying the event.

Conclusion

This paper argues that risk assessment and management has to include both actual risks and the psychological and cultural factors involved in mediating the perception, understanding and response to risk. Three factors are of particular importance when assessing the effects of risks on human behaviour; the extent of control, the probability of repetition and the status of the victims. With regard to the application to tourism, this model indicates that the long-term resilience and success of a tourist destination depends on (a) the exposure to risk, (b) the perception of risk and (c) the ability to manage both (a) and (b). Some destinations are more likely to be severely impacted by adverse events because they do not give sufficient attention to the need to both control risks and manage the perception of risk. In some cases, latent threats are ignored or trivialized, or external perspectives of risk rejected as intrusive or unfair, which can lead to disaster when threats eventually become real. In an era when events are rapidly reported around the world, causing a cascade of consequences, all policy-makers must understand the importance of creating comprehensive risk-management plans.

Table 1 : Risks to the Security of the Tourist

Risk type	Control	Probability of Repetition	Victims	Impact
Virus outbreak	Low in vulnerable countries	Low in the most vulnerable countries	Anyone exposed, so depends on vector.	High
Terrorism	Low in vulnerable countries	High	Locals and/or tourists may be the primary target	High
Contaminated Food	Moderate to high, depending on the quality of control	Low in countries that respond appropriately, high in countries that don't	Typically tourists	Low to moderate, depending on numbers affected and reportage
Accidents	Moderate to high, depending on the quality of control	Low in countries that respond appropriately, high in countries that don't	Anyone in the affected area, more likely to be local in the case of e.g. industrial accidents	Low, typically short-term
Natural Disasters	Low	High, but periodicity may be low	Anyone in the area	High for severe disasters
Theft	Low in the most vulnerable countries	High	Locals and tourists; tourists may be targeted	Low, unless common and/or accompanied by violence
Homicide	Low in the most vulnerable countries	High	Locals and tourists	High, if frequent and/or tourists targeted

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