Types of risks associated with tourism tourism essay

A fundamental worldwide issue is to critically assess how potential holiday seekers perceive the concept of risk and safety as related to tourism. It is particularly essential in the actual political and socio-economic situation when travellers are facing an increasing risk when they travel away from their usual place of stay. Today, the probability of risk that an individual will be a victim of terrorism, international conflict, health hazard or natural disaster is very considerable. If the tourism industry is going to be successful, a thorough understanding of international tourists' perceptions of risk and safety is required. Ensuring safety is therefore a prerequisite and the minimum for the basic operations of the tourism industry. As a result, the issues of risk and safety within the tourism industry justify attention and research.

Many researchers make a clear distinction between safety and security but some tourism and hospitality researchers do not. It is important to know that tourism security and safety are not alike to other forms of security and safety. Due to the unique characteristics of the service industry in which the tourism industry forms part, some researchers have come up with a new definition; ' Rather than divide safety from security, some tourists' experts merge these two notions into one overall term, " tourism surety", (Tarlow, 2007b). Assuring people of safety and security at destinations is an essential condition for tourism growth (Cavlek, 2002).

Nature of Tourism

By its very nature, tourism is a worldwide and strongly competitive sector. Although naturally exposed to economic crunch, natural calamities and outbreaks of warfare and epidemics, international tourism has shown

significant resilience in recuperating from the hostile effects of such harmful, but short-term, factors. However, not only does the buyer have to spend relatively huge amount of his/her disposable income to buy the tourism product, he also sees it in a subjective and experiential manner. As a result, tourism is highly sensitive to perceptions of danger and lack of safety and security. It is in this framework that lack of safety and security and occurrences of crime represent a more severe menace to travel and tourism than any other negative factor.

" Tourism and travel is now considered one of the world's largest industries": the UNWTO's

(United Nations World Tourism Organization) Tourism 2020 Vision forecasts that international arrivals are expected to reach nearly 1. 6 billion by the year 2020. Of these worldwide arrivals in 2020, 378 million will be long-haul travellers and 1. 2 billion will be intraregional (UNWTO, 2008).

Types of risks associated with Tourism

The five major risks associated with tourism are " terrorism" (Richter, 2003), " war and political instability" (Sonmez, Apostolopoulos, &Tarlow, 1999), " health" (Richter, 2003), " crime" (Dimanche & Lepetic, 1999), and " cultural and language difficulties" (Basala&Klenosky, 2001). " These risks are of growing importance in the global tourism environment and present threats not only to tourists but also host societies and the tourist's home nations" (Richter, 2003).

Type of risk

Examples

Crimes

Possibility of being robbed, becoming a subject of rape or murder

Cultural

Possibility of experiencing difficulties in

communicating with foreigners, cultural

misunderstanding, inability to adjust to a

foreign way of life and standards

Equipment

Possibility of mechanical, equipment,

organizational problems occurring during travel or at destination

(transportation, accommodation, attractions)

Financial

Possibility of not obtaining value for money;

losing or wasting money if travel expectations are not fulfilled

Health

Possibility of becoming sick while traveling

or at the destination

Performance

Possibility of not receiving holiday benefits due to the travel product or service not performing well

Physical

Possibility of being physically injured, includes danger and injury detrimental to health (accidents)

Political

Possibility of becoming involved in the political turmoil of the country being visited

Psychological

Possibility that travel experience will not reflect traveler's personality or self-image, damage self-image, reflect poorly on personality

Satisfaction

Possibility of not achieving personal

satisfaction and/or self-actualization with

travel experience

Source: Sonmez and Graefe (1998a); Basala and Klenosky (2001); Dimanche and Lepetic (1999).

Safety and Security in the Tourism sector

Tourism's primary goal is to fulfil people's travel desire and holidays' expectations. In order to achieve the above mentioned goals, providers of tourist facilities need to make sure that safety and security of their guests are respected. " The tourism industry is safety and security

dependent" (Tarlow & Santana, 2002). Perceptions of safety greatly influence tourists' intentions to travel internationally. " Lack of safety is a strong predictor of tourists avoiding some tourist destinations" (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998a). Also it is important to know that: " Perceptions of travel risk, anxiety, and perceptions of safety are important determinants of international travel" (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005).

The issue of Safety and Security has gained more importance in the Tourism industry during the past decade. The safety component of the tourism health and safety problem has received relatively little attention from tourism and safety management researchers. This particular topic is of fundamental importance globally when we aim at providing quality service in the tourism sector. " Safety and security" has been identified as one of the five global forces that will drive the tourism industry in the new millennium (Chiang 2000). Successful tourism development is subject to the reduction of risks associated within a destination. Quality service being an important dimension of the tourism industry; safety and security need to be put forward in order to achieve our objective of quality service. Compared to any other economic activity, the tourism sector is highly dependent on our ability to accommodate our guests with a secure and safe environment. In tourist destination areas, it has been noted that tourists are more likely to be

potential victims of crimes. According to Ryan (1993), " crime can impede tourism by wielding a significant blow to the fragile nature of a destination's safe image". It is therefore very important to capitalise all our efforts to providing a crime free destination for the tourists.

Tourism is also about providing quality experience to the guests. " Safety and security are seen as a priori for a prosperous tourism industry in any destination" (Pizam et al., 1997; Neumayer, 2004). The UNWTO includes " safety and security as a determinant of quality tourist product" (UNWTO, 2003). For a tourism product or service to comply with the UNWTO's safety and security standard, " it should not pose a threat to the life, health and other interests, and integrity of the consumer". As outlined by the UNWTO, the concern for safety and security is reflected in several components of tourism experience, including health, cleanliness of accommodation facilities, and reliable and accurate information.

Tourists' attributes

" Tourists clearly possess a number of characteristics which account for their increased vulnerability" (Sparks 1982). " Tourists are tempting targets because they are known to carry large sums of money" (Fujii and Mak 1980; Chesney-Lind and Lind 1986). " They also carry items of value such as cameras, cash and credit cards" (Ryan 1993). Here are three definitions that explain in details the attributes of holidaying tourists and how these attributes can put their safety and security in jeopardy. Due to those luxury and expensive equipment that they usually carry with them, they can be easily spotted. Parallel to the growth of tourism, many coastal areas of Mauritius continue to experience significant social problems. Many people in

these areas are still underprivileged, and the poverty gap between the rich and the poor remains among the highest. Tourists are viewed as rich people and this can create a feeling of resentment or frustration from the local population as they usually do not possess the same luxury goods and would like to have the same. The latter are thus tempted to enter into illegal actions such as attacking tourists to steal their belongings. How to address such issues? This is the real question here. These luxury and expensive items are needed to make their stay in a particular destination memorable, we cannot deny it. Taking pictures and filming the destination both form part of the traditions and folklore of the tourism industry. For these guests it is a way to immortalise their unique experience at the destination, hence, we cannot forbid tourists to carry those expensive equipment while they are on holidays on our island but instead we should provide them with a secure and safe environment where they shall feel comfortable to move around.

Tourist perceptions on a destination's level of safety

Furthermore, if tourists have a negative impression of a destination where they feel threatened or unsafe, they shall develop a negative attitude towards that particular destination whereby customer loyalty is likely to suffer a lot. For example, " because of the US-Libya military confrontation in 1985, nearly two million Americans changed their foreign travel plans in 1986, which resulted in a 30% decrease in visitation compared with the previous year". (Richter & Waugh, 1986; So¨nmez & Graefe, 1998b; Edgell, 1990). This can impact badly on the tourism industry in the area and thus induce a decline in tourists' arrivals in the area. According to George (2003: 577), this can happen in the following ways: "(1) Prospective tourist may

decide not to visit the destination because it has a reputation for having a high crime rate." (2) " If tourists feel unsafe at a destination, they are not likely to take part in activities outside their accommodation facility". (3) " Tourists who have felt threatened or unsafe are not likely to return to the destination, and they are not likely to recommend the destination to others". So¨nmez & Graefe (1998b) indicated that despite the tourism industry's worldwide economic strength, terrorism and political turmoil present major challenges to the industry. For instance the political unrest that is present in various African countries like Egypt, Tunisia and Libya has contributed to a negative impact on these countries as potential tourist destinations. It is therefore very important to portray a very positive image of a tourist destination, otherwise this could impede badly on the reputation of the destination.

According to South African Tourism Brand Tracker, in January 2005 (DEAT 2005: 29), 22-25 million potential travellers across eight key markets (the USA, the UK, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Australia, India and China) did not consider South Africa as a travel destination over the past 5 years because they were concerned about safety. " The persisting perception that South Africa is an unsafe destination, with an uncontrollable crime situation, can also influence the potential tourist's decision-making process" (Minnaar 2007: 13; Van Niekerk and Oelofse 2007: 1) not to attend the event' If Mauritius or other island destinations were to witness such an unsuccessful marketing campaign in regards to its tourism sector, this would be catastrophic for the economic survival of such destinations which are highly dependent upon tourists receipts. Crimes engaged against tourists are

widely publicized around the globe and have an instant impact in terms of decreasing foreign visitor numbers and the international image of the area as a tourist destination.

Information on potential Risks at the destination

Mawby (2000) proposed that " tourists should be informed of the risks of visiting tourist areas in order to reduce fear of criminal incidents while holidaying". In a view of providing tourists with a high quality experience during their stay at a destination, they should be given sufficient information on the area. As such, they should be informed on the risks that are present in the tourist areas; hence they shall be better prepared to face any dramatic situations. It is also important that tourists are informed of the emergency processes to be adopted in case they are victim of any kind of crime. For instance, they should be given emergency telephone numbers e. g. Fire services, Police services, Hospital, Ambulance services etc… According to George (2002), " tourist's fear of crime might be derived from several sources, such as their own experience of crime, discussions about crime with their friends and acquaintances, exposure to crime through mass media (television, the internet,

newspapers and radio), and perceptions of actual crime rates, as well as their perceptions of police effectiveness at the destination. It should be noted that perceived risk has a great influence on the guest during his stay at a particular destination although, that in reality, it does not exist". On the other side, an unperceived risk will not affect consumer behaviour even if it is real and tangible. However unperceived risk might be more dangerous as sometimes guests are not aware of their presence and therefore they are not

prepared to face such situations. The tourism authority or other tourism linked organisations should acknowledge the fundamental role that media plays in projecting a good image of a tourism destination. It is how media will publicize crime committed against tourist and how the authorities through media will manage to reassure potential visitors of the level of safety available at the destination that will determine the long term success of a destination.

Tsaur, Tzeng and Wang (1997) used an Analytic Hierarchy Process method to determine the weight of various risk evaluation criteria of six representative group package tour itineraries for Taiwanese tourists. Their study was intended to cover two main types of risk: physical risk which refers to the possibility that an individual's health is likely to be exposed to injury and sickness because of conditions such as law and order, weather, and hygiene; as well as equipment's' risk which refers to the dangers arising from the malfunctioning of equipment, such as insufficient telecommunication facilities, unsafe transportation, and breakdown of vehicles. Safety and Security of tourists should not be viewed at one side of the coin only, that is providing safety and security only in the hotel resort or while they are on tourist trips, the subject should be addressed in a more holistic way. Safety and Security of tourists should be the concern of the authorities at all times, hence places that are well known to be visited by tourists should be provided with a maximum level of security but not only while they are on official trips with hotel groups or Tour operators, it should be also while they are visiting on their own.

" Tourism is a part of the service sector whose unique characteristics (intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability) intensify the perceived risk compared to goods"(Grönroos, 1990; Lovelock, 1996; Mitchell & Greatorex, 1993; Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996). We should not forget that the tourism product is exposed to factors, such as bad weather, unwelcoming host population, airport personnel on strike, inedibility of local food, terror, crime, political instability, disease, and natural disasters that account for the safety and security of tourists.

Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992) were among the first to study risk perception in tourism. They asked their respondents about the types of risk present in vacations in general and about types of risk present during their most recent overnight trip. (Page and Hall 2002, Lynch (1960). They suggested that unfamiliarity and difficulties with environmental learning had implications for fear. Other studies have also stressed on the issue of overseas visitor unfamiliarity with the marine and road environments of the places they are visiting. One factor that can affect the safety and security perception of a destination is the level of familiarity with it. There is ample amount of literature on familiarity and its positive influence on destination image and subsequent behaviour (Milman and Pizam, 1995; Mackay and Fesenmaier, 1997; Sonmez and Graefe, 1998; Prentice and Andersen, 2000; Baloglu, 2001; Kim and Richardson, 2003; Prentice, 2004). An increased level of familiarity is purported to provide ' rewards of security' that outweigh potential rewards of uncertainty that is also highly likely to be costly (Burch, 1969, p. 132). " Familiarity can be defined in different ways". Milman and Pizam (1995) defined familiarity as " a dichotomous variable" (familiar and

unfamiliar) based on the existence of a previous visit. Several researchers investigated the influence of a prior visit and observed that visitors hold more accurate and positive images than non-visitors (Milman and Pizam, 1995; Selby and Morgan, 1996; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Richards, 2001; Rittichainuwat et al., 2001; Vogt and Andereck, 2003; Tasci, 2006

There is a tendency to think that the issue of safety and security is only at hotel but that is not always correct. Again the factor of addressing the issue in a holistic way comes forward. The picture should be viewed with all factors that make the environment of the tourism industry. The tourism industry is known to be a dynamic one which keeps on changing with time. It should not be viewed as a static industry; therefore safety and security are important factors that should be addressed the same way while dealing with tourists. The latter keep on changing, their needs and wants also. What used to be their top priority in terms of security and safety is not necessarily the same today. Therefore strategies should be amended when needed to adapt to these changes.

Effects of terrorism and other forms of attacks on Tourism

" In the last decade, a series of safety and security events such as terrorism attacks, crimes, natural disasters, and accidents at destinations have increased. These events have prompted travellers to acquire more detailed information and knowledge about crimes, terrorism, political situations or safety and security at particular destinations" (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998a). " The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America spawned new and tightened security measures at corporations, airports, seaports, bus stations, train stations, sports stadiums and other places in the USA where large

numbers of people, including tourists, are likely to gather for an event".
(Borenstein 2001; Business Week, September 24, 2001; Merzer and
Chatterjee 2001; Nieves and Samuels 2001): The tourist's journey starts
right after he/she has set foot out of his/her usual place of residence to travel
to another destination to stay for more than 24 hours. After September 11,
2001 events, numerous attacks have been carried out in Tunisia, Yemen,
Morocco, Colombia, Indonesia, Philippines, and Saudi Arabia. There have
been a number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Iraq.

After September 11, 2011 terrorist attack, safety and security of tourists has
gained more importance. As mentioned earlier, the tourist experience does
not occur only at the hotels, it is everywhere and 24/7. Tourism planners
should therefore consider providing safety and security likewise. Since
September 11, tourists have a constant apprehension to travel in the Middle
East countries due to those attacks that have been perpetuated in those
regions.

War and political instability can deter tourists from travel. For example, the
massacre in

Tiananmen Square in China forced 11, 500 tourists to cancel their visits to
Beijing in 1989

(Gartner & Shen, 1992). The Persian Gulf War in 1991 caused a massive
redirection of tourists away from the Middle East. Even destinations such as
Kenya and Tanzania that are far removed from the Middle East were
negatively affected (Honey, 1999). The war on terror

in Afghanistan has created a 54 percent decline in tourist visits to Nepal

(Thapa, 2004).