

Literature Review

Tourism, Safety, and Perceptions

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Abstract

This paper explores and compares eight articles that report on the results from a wide variety of research within the tourism and tourism safety sectors of the travel industry. The methods of information gathering are highly varied and include focus groups, visitor surveys, government data analysis, and studies conducted both online and in-person. The articles vary in their methods and approaches to understanding the needs of tourists and their perceptions of safety in a global and local manner. Traub and Kellog (2014) take a purely quantitative approach using an umbrella survey to gather information on tourist activity whereas Peattie, Clarke, and Peattie (2005) utilize focus groups to gather qualitative responses to visitors understanding of the hazards of sun exposure. The other five articles and one text suggest that all forms of research regardless of geographical location should be studied to understand the views, opinions, and needs of tourists.

Keywords: tourism risk, tourism safety, tourism trends

Introduction

Those familiar with literature styles found in an established academic, scientific, or technical discipline will most assuredly find the literature available in the tourism and safety industries odd. Tourism and safety research is typically characterized by a lack of standardized reference tools and will include a host of publications that are outside the academic arena. Most of this literature is densely populated with unpublished reports from unfamiliar publishers, including tourism departments of local cities, states, and various government entities. While there are some serious discussions of tourism safety issues scattered among the different disciplines, they are often buried deep inside other economic development reports with a heavy bias towards the economic impact those issues may have. To that end, most of the tourism and safety literature are recent, will vary with the terrorism climate of the time, and is based on the context of the commercial world.

Synthesis of Research

These initial impressions of the state of literature for tourism safety are confirmed by an examination of the articles selected here for review. Wilkes and Page (2003) co-edit *Managing Tourist Health And Safety In The New Millennium* as a compilation of fourteen chapters of articles addressing a combination of business, legal, social, academic and government viewpoints on the broad discussion of tourism safety and health. While some of the articles date back to the early 1970s the textbook's writing style makes it easy to read and desirable for a desk reference. The research in selecting the materials is impressive and keeps with a systematic and consistent theme in the presentation. Publication design is enhanced with the inclusion of tables, charts, graphs, and well-selected photographs that support the text.

Of particular interest in Wilkes and Page (2003) is Section Two that addresses a unique case of travelers seeking locations that have high-risk type activities. This chapter on risk assessment helps identify the reasons tourists deliberately seek out risk and the uncertainty of its outcome. In particular, it addresses the context of the risk-taking during vacations and why these types of activities have become increasingly popular despite the risk as it has become a particular social construct.

Concurrent to the adventure seeker is a discussion on the current state of the industry in addressing both individual and ecological safety factors and suggests destinations examine who is responsible for risky locations and whether or not destinations should provide services to address those risks. The text addresses those concerns well and provides a comprehensive look at the risks and strategies for improving both the health of the tourist and safety conditions.

Having identified some of the dangers of travel and tourism Peattie, Clarke, and Peattie (2005) delve into a more focused look at how tourists are affected long term by sun exposure and how even casual sunburn leads to skin cancer in their study *Risk And Responsibility In Tourism: Promoting Sun-Safety*. This qualitative study analyzes eighteen focus groups with participants from both Cardiff, UK and Tasmania, both high tourism areas. The question sets asked each group about awareness of skin cancer causes, factors that influence UV radiation intensity and participant's knowledge of sun protection strategies. The significance of the survey region is that it holds the world's largest number of non-melanoma skin cancer cases (Peattie et al., p 402). Study results conclude that many of the participants were aware that sun exposure could lead to cancer, but were not mindful of the fact that early childhood exposure was significantly contributory even though medical literature exists on that subject.

The examination of casual sun exposure during holiday suggests an opportunity for tourism operators and health and safety organizations to develop educational materials and programs to make sun-safety a joint effort and benefit for the tourists. By providing tourists with sufficient information to prevent sunburn in the most popular vacation areas gives them the opportunity to continue seeking sun-fun destinations without fear of personal harm. This study and its purpose fall in line with the economic reasoning that permeates much of the tourism industry literature.

As discussed earlier travel and safety research crosses a gamut of disciplines, while personal safety from environment and elements is necessary so becomes the issue of crime. Cain (2001) discusses that inattention to tourism safety can have negative impacts on local and regional economies. Tourism security issues became national matters in the mid-1990s when two German tourists were killed in Miami affected Miami's European tourism industry by as much as 30%. Normally cities like Anaheim, California, with a population of 300,000 would not invest in tourism safety programs, yet Anaheim is host to Disneyland and different theme parks that attract millions of tourists in each year. Loss such that occurred in Miami could cost the Anaheim tourism industry as much as \$100 million in annual revenue reports Cain. By investing in tourism safety programs, and expanding policing personnel tourists will realize both a perceived and real increase in safety from crime while visiting the area.

The Anaheim/Orange Country Visitor and Convention Bureau conducted a cohort survey with visitors to Disney properties. The survey results concluded that only 15% of domestic travelers and 18% of international travelers indicated that safety was a concern while visiting Anaheim. According to the Travel Industry Association, there are 127.8 crimes per 1,000 travelers in the U.S. which they consider low compared to the general public where it reaches as high as 40% in some high-density populations.

The survey results were significant enough to prompt the city of Anaheim to expand the Tourist-Oriented-Policing team, by adding sixteen specialized officers. Also, TOPS developed a public-private partnership with Downtown Disney by installing a police substation on site. While this survey is not highly scientific, it took a more generalized approach to answering the question of whether or not tourists feel safe while in Anaheim California. According to Ann Galluger, director of tourism for Anaheim/Orange County Visitor and Convention Bureau, increasing safety efforts is an investment and selling point to improve tourism growth (Cain, 2001).

Barker, Page, Meyer, Wilkes, and Page (2003) gather data in *Tourist Safety and the Urban Environment* where tourists are exposed to safety risks in the major cities that are host to media rich sporting events. These locations typically are major tourist gateways, have large hotels for accommodations and serve as either the primary location or a secondary event location for tourists. Typically these places will be in high population density regions. Barker et al. (2003) study crime rates and effects surrounding the America's Cup races in Auckland, NZ. The data analyzes the frequency in which various offenses such as assault, rape, disorderly conduct, burglary, and petty theft occur. The challenge in these venues is the ability to differentiate between a tourist and a resident as a crime victim. Data was obtained as a joint effort of the America's Cup committee and the Auckland Police departments. Crime statistics trends were compared between October 1999 and February 2000 with subsets within the months surrounding the America's Cup event. A direct correlation was found between the time of the event and the type of crime committed. For example alcohol, drug, and disorderly conduct was high during event days whereas theft, and sexual assault occurred more frequently when events were not in play. Another aspect of the study sought to identify if criminals find venues such as these because of the transient nature of the tourist. By recording the characteristics of victims, they identified that overseas tourists accounted for 80% of the victims and of those victims the highest level of victimization was among visitors from the

United Kingdom. However when overall crime rates were compared to population increase for the America's Cup race, it was in direct proportion to the population. The Barker et al., (2003, p. 209) data conclude that "urban destinations are likely to have hotspots of criminal activity and that the event will generate some degree of additional crime." Moreover, while no consistent model can be used to attribute crime to a particular event. Any increase in crime will be dependent on a range of interrelated variables associated with the host destination, the event and the status of the populations. Other benefits of this study included the intrinsic value in collecting crime statistics from a practical perspective in collaboration with police. These insights apply to other tourism locations around the world where similar events occur.

It is evident from even a sampling of the literature that any research involving travel is commerce based. Even when research is conducted with academic level research the end goal is to understand how to continue to attract tourists to a particular location. When the economy is good and people are traveling, research is helpful but not necessarily critical. However when damaging events such as terrorism, political unrest, health issues, and declining economies are in play tourism takes a steep decline. The tourism industry has been very careful when instituting overt safety measures following world incidents. Rittichainuwat in 2013 set out to assess a tourist's perception towards safety at hotels and travel in general after a terrorist incident occurs. Between 2012 and 2013 terrorist incidents rose exponentially. A report by the Institute for Economics and Peace states that nearly 18,000 people died from terrorist attacks in 2013. This represented a 61% increase in attacks in 2012 (Cheung, 2014).

Tourist's reaction to overt safety measures can have a significant impact on whether they travel or not. Rittichainuwat (2013) conducted a qualitative study where 476 respondents were asked to indicate their perceptions to a 5-point semantic differential and a 5-point Likert-type scale survey regarding safety and travel. More than 90% of respondents are of Western origin

with only 7% representing Asian tourists. Research results indicate 15.6% of travelers expressed concern with overt safety measures. Less than 50% felt an increased sense of security and 38.4% remained neutral. Another 32.8% indicated a sense of fear whereas the balance of respondents reported that they were not discouraged or remained neutral. The study concludes that during periods of high terrorism reports tourists feel and perceive that hotel management care about their overall safety. However, in regular times where terrorism activity is small or non-existent hotels that exert overt safety measures cause an unwanted concern. While this study was in response to terrorism incidents Rittichainuwat (2013) suggests that additional research to areas where emerging environmental safety issues such as hurricanes that can have large impacts on tourism would be beneficial.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the United States was the second most visited nation in the world after France with a little under 75 million visitors in 2014. With the multitude of cultural and ethnic differences among visitors Money and Crotts (2003) identify the needs for reliable travel and safety information for travelers coming from high uncertainty avoidance individual (UAI) cultures. The quantitative research is derived from a survey sponsored by the U.S. Department of Tourism. The sample consisted of 80,000 travelers of Japanese and German origin traveling to the U.S. over a two-year period. The study suggests that consumers from a high UAI national cultures will engage in more external search from sources that are non-marketer dominated, compared with consumers from a medium UAI culture, when seeking information on travel (p. 195). Proposition 1 suggests that consumers of a high UAI national culture will make their travel plans further in advance compared with medium uncertainty avoidance consumers (p. 195). P2 contends that travel parties of consumers from high UAI cultures will be larger than the travel parties of medium uncertainty avoidance

consumers, who will tend to travel alone (p. 195). Yet, P3 suggests consumers of a medium UAI national cultures will purchase fewer prepackaged trips and will stay longer in the U.S., and visit more destinations compared with high UAI consumers (p. 195-196).

Data collection was from a self-administered, random clustered sampling survey consisting of 29 questions made available in eleven languages. To gather results from a more mature and sophisticated tourist the data delimited in the final sample to visitors between the ages of 45 and 60, had not visited the United States in previous five years, and their main purpose for travel was leisure. The study was looking for pure tourists.

The results of the first hypothesis partially support that a high UAI group would search more in non-marketing groups for information. P1: was not compatible with the need for long lead times. P2: suggesting that high UAI people would only travel in groups. Also P3: was supported indicating travelers in this group preferred packaged travel programs. It is important to note that in 2003 using the internet for booking travel to the USA was not as prevalent as it is today. Travelers would tend to seek ticket and package purchases through a travel agent thereby limiting spontaneous purchases.

The study concludes that travelers rely significantly on reliable sources of information in determining where they travel to, and how they travel. It also supports the need for quality independent non-commercially attached information availability before travelers who come from uncertainty avoidance cultures. Primarily travelers relied on the influence of family and friends as to where and when they would travel on holiday. The limitations of this study were self-imposed as a huge quality sample base was available. Further research into how using the internet for international travel affects persons from UAI cultures may yield different results.

Stepping over to government needs of improving tourism is the coordinated efforts of Bryson and Salazar (2012) under Executive Order of President Obama to form the *Task Force on Travel Competitiveness*. The earlier statistic of 75 million tourists annually to the U.S. will increase by 25 million by 2021 and will yield revenues of over \$250 billion annually. The impact on the local level for creating jobs in and outside the tourism industry is substantial. The U.S. has survived the terrorist attacks of the World Trade Towers on 9/11/2001 and the horrific events at the Boston Marathon, and yet the tourists keep visiting. The task force, its research, recommendations, and strategy is focused on attracting foreign travelers. Furthermore, it seeks to ensure considerable efforts are made to encourage travel within the United States by its own citizens. Staycations and multi-day local vacations have become popular in the U.S. during the economic recovery period.

The strategic plan addresses critical areas, travel, and promotion to the U.S., utilization of technology and data from reliable sources, improving travel visa and arrivals process and training programs to widen the scope of the tourism workforces. These five areas dovetail into a coordinated effort of the national travel and tourism divisions of the Department of Commerce and tourism offices of other nations. A final aspect of the strategy is to conduct ongoing research and develop the best case practices for gathering and interpreting tourism behaviors and patterns.

A common thread that weaves through the literature regarding tourism and safety is the continuous suggestion for development of reliable and timely educational materials. Significant measures to develop and distributes safety materials including pamphlets, websites and checklists in seven languages is part of the steps to improve national tourism. Moreover, while education is important the report also includes mandates on how different government

departments will enhance the security of international and local tourists at airports. Efforts are also in place for improvement of border crossings and anti-terrorism efforts at major attractions.

The United States' economy relies on global travel and tourism. Local business and economics are affected by tourism, and this federal report provided a positive approach and suggested the pooling of national resources will be helpful to travel and travel safety for both citizens and visitors.

The various literature discusses exposes pertinent issues of safety, health, and commerce each with its own flavor yet applicable to other areas. Most were dealing with international, national or large city issues. As important as international travelers are to the U.S. economy the Task Force on Travel Competitiveness places great emphasis on the development of local tourism. Small cities and towns all over compete heavily for tourists and as is common much of the critical information about tourism and safety perceptions is buried deeply in economic development reports. The *2014 Lake Havasu City Benchmark Visitor Study* developed jointly by Lake Havasu Visitors and Convention Bureau and the Partnership for Economic Development by Traub and Kellog (2014) is a comprehensive 422-page document that analyzes and compares reliable and projectable data about travelers' awareness, visitation, experience and impressions of Lake Havasu City, Arizona. It is a longitudinal study measuring changes of a baseline study of the same information from 2010. The data provides detailed information on visitor profiles that allows for the targeted and efficient use of tourism marketing investments. Lake Havasu City competes with other locations from within a thousand mile radius including Phoenix, Tucson, and Sedona, as well as Las Vegas and Palm Springs. The survey was sent by email to a demographically balanced sample of 55,300 travelers west of the Mississippi River and including Illinois, Michigan, and Western Canada. This sample was selected because data from

the LHCCVB data base revealed 82% of visitors live in those areas. The survey yielded 5,477 respondents with a 10.1% rate with a margin error of .08%. The findings reveal a significant increase in overnight and long-term visitors of 16.6% over the 2010 survey. The increase validates that division's tourism marketing efforts put in place during the economic recovery.

What is most interesting about this report is the extent at which the designers sought to gather information. The utilization of a detailed umbrella survey that included customized survey questions for eight different respondent types yielded a significant volume of data. Most destinations only seek two or three respondent types. The goal was to gather data that could help predict tourism patterns and how best to create programs and services for each. As Lake Havasu traditionally is not a long vacation destination (seven days) but a short term location (3 days) identifying ways to increase a stay by even one day can have significant economic impact. One example shows how visitor spending increased from 2010 to 2014 by 6%. This is an increase above the national average increase for the same period of 4.8%. While not an academic analysis, visitor and convention bureaus utilize data extensively. In contrast to the Money and Crofts 2003 international traveler survey where 100% of the people visiting the U.S. travel by airplane, 86% of visitors to LHC travel by automobile. Much of this relates to the lack of commercial flights in LHC, but it is also indicative of the market Lake Havasu City serves.

The Traub and Kellog (2014) survey was crafted to get opinions and beliefs without leading the person being surveyed in any particular direction. While many research projects seek to answer one or two research questions, this survey can answer dozens. Small cities like Lake Havasu can benefit by using umbrella studies to dig deeply into what their tourists' desire in a destination. These types of studies help shape how to attract not only first-time visitors but develop methods of generating repeat visitors.

Limitations of These Studies

The limitations of these studies are broad in that respondents vary in sample size from several dozen people to tens of thousands. Also, each study is limited by its geographical location and cultural bias. This bias can be seen as positive in that each case is seeking information pertinent to a particular population. As is seen in Traub and Kellog (2014), and Bryson and Salazar, bulk data is helpful in analyzing even the smallest of trends and opinions. To deal with the complexity of many types of research aims a global view that takes into consideration multiple realities needs to be engaged.

Conclusion and Future Study

To gain a full appreciation for the wide range of literature available within the tourism and safety disciplines, it is necessary to examine not only a particular area of research but to consider tangential studies and reports. Because there are few theories specific to tourism researchers, there exists a need to examine broad social trends and historical events that affect tourism and discuss how those aspects can help a researcher gain a greater understanding of the information they seek. Researchers should be mindful of approaching analysis and interpretation using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The eight articles discussed are a small yet clear, example of how broad information in the tourism sector can be.

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