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The Effects of Terrorism on Tourism: (Inter)relations, Motives & Risks

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ABSTRACT

The article aims at explaining the relationship between terrorism and tourism, and the consequences that the former has on the latter. Untangling this relationship may be a useful tool to understand terrorist goals and motives. The pivotal question to be answered is which effects terrorism has on the tourism industry. In the modern era, terrorism has become an integrated risk, a maybe-to-include package of travelling for tourists. The operating environment for the tourism sector evolved in a huge way after the attacks to the Twin Towers in September of 2001. Terrorism and tourism data have become more and more important since that dramatic episode; both of them are twofold and interconnected with regard to their basic features, namely crossing national borders involving national and international protagonists and both using travel and communication technologies. Terrorists do not act randomly, but they have precise purposes. The article will explain the multiform and multifold ways through which an attack may occur and be better understood. Terrorism crowds the media; it physically hits and psychologically vexes minds. Tourists are an appealing target for terrorists because they are seen as a country's symbolic ambassadors, while tourism destinations are perfect and visible spots to deploy a terrorist attack. Terrorists are capable of using tourists as the means to get the media's attention and bombard the world with their message. Risk perception, attitude and preferences are one of the main determinants for a tourist in the destination choice momentum. A potential tourist who negatively conceives a destination as risky may choose to cancel his/her holiday or not even consider it because of security and safety motives.

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Keywords: Tourism; Terrorism; Terrorists' Motives; Perceived Risk in Travel; Media.

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Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the largest sectors worldwide. Many countries experience tourism as a wide source of revenues and economic growth, and over 49 developing and less-developed countries rely on this profitable industry for a considerable source of their revenues in foreign exchange (Lennon and O' Leary, 2005). According to the UNWTO (2015), international tourist arrivals grew by 4.3% in 2014 and generated US\$ 1.5 trillion for what concerns export earnings. Moreover, this specialized United Nations agency forecasts that international tourist arrivals will grow between 3% and 4% in 2015. Historically, terrorism dates back to the 6th century AD: at that past time, an organized Jewish group of patriots, named Zealots, launched a 'terrorist campaign' to oppose the Roman rule in Palestine, trying to send them away from the territory (Poland, 1988). However, the term 'terrorism' entered political vocabulary and can be traced in Edmund Burke's critic of the French Reign of Terror, following the Revolution between the 1792 and 1794. During that period, the French government used systematic terror to either intimidate or kill its enemies (Schlagheck, 1988). The cowardly attacks perpetrated in Paris by ISIS on the 13th of November or, recently, in Nice and Istanbul are few of the most recent examples of a grief-stricken world. The consequent striking fear involved in this attack has a name: terrorism (Sheperd, 2015). This article aims at explaining the relationship between terrorism and tourism, and the consequences that the former has on the latter and, also, vice versa. Moreover, understanding this twofold relationship may be a vehicle to better comprehend terrorists' objectives. The pivotal question to be answered is: "Does terrorism have real and dramatic effects on the tourism industry?"

1. Relationship Terrorism – Tourism

Enders and Sandler (2002: 145-146) define terrorism as: "The premeditated use or threat of use of extra-normal violence or brutality by subnational groups to obtain a political, religious or ideological objective through intimidation of a huge audience, usually not directly involved with the policy making that the terrorists seek to influence".

When it comes to describe the relationship between terrorism and tourism, there is no doubt that they may be defined as opposites in terms of quality of life. Imagining tourism evokes life, leisure, enjoyment and fulfilment; on the other hand, conceiving terrorism involves death, disruptions, destruction, pain and fear (O'Connor, Stafford and Gallagher, 2008). However, terrorism and tourism are twofold and interconnected with regard to their basic features, namely crossing national borders involving national and international

protagonists and both using travel and communication technologies (Sonmez, 1998). In the modern era, terrorism has become
an integrated risk, a maybe-to-include package of travelling for tourists. The operating environment for the tourism sector evolved in a huge way after the attacks to the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre, New York, in September of 2001 (O'Connor, Stafford and Gallagher, 2008). Thus, terrorism/tourism data have become more and more important since that dramatic episode. The tourism sector is permeated by a high sensitivity in terms of natural – such as tornados, floods, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions – and, especially, human-caused disasters. Bad situations and catastrophes create difficulties regardless of their nature. In a certain sense, terrorism can be viewed and correspond as a tourism crisis in terms of social, economic and political disruptions (Sonmez, Backman and Allen, 1994). As a consequence of the 2001 terrorist attack, prospective and eventual tourists were scared of flying; this provoked a consequential suffer for the global tourism industry and its decrease in terms of travelling abroad. According to the WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council), more than 100 million travel industry jobs worldwide were lost and the travel level decreased by as astonishingly as shockingly 7.4% (Lennon and O' Leary, 2005). The consequence of a terrorist attack is mainly evident at the political level first. Starting with a political instability, the rapid decline or, at the extreme, disappearance of tourist arrivals is visible. Tourists represent an export in economic terms and terrorist attacks may modify tourism patterns and demand. Tourists are prone to cancel a reservation but also to avoid going on holiday at the risky-perceived destination (Seddighi, Nuttall and Theocharous, 2001).

2. Terrorists' motives

Terrorists do not act randomly, but they have precise purposes. The achievement of the attack may be manifold. It may be an act to force issues, to influence political behaviours, to make a cause more visible and the symbol of a provocative (over)reaction for something (Gilham, 2001). In the 1960s/70s, the main issue was of political nature while, today, the cause is usually of religious origin, namely Islamic, and specifically concerning the Islamic areas worldwide (Domboróczky, 2010). Still, researchers agree on the fact that "religion is neither the chicken nor the egg" creating the terrorism impetus. Religion can be one of the various factors that develop cultural, social, political, economic or other types of disruptions. On the same side of the coin, scientific surveys proved that poverty has no link with terrorism but may be, same as religion, one of the contour causes (Horgan, 2005). After a terrorist attack, tourists feel scared and, as Altindag states, the purpose of the attack is to "instil fear by threatening basic safety and security needs" (2014). It is at that point that tourists take into consideration the case of victimization, opting for a safer tourism destination or not travelling at all. Safety is one of the fundamental needs that a tourist requires

to fulfil his/her own journey towards an excellent touristic experience, the keystone of the current "experience economy". In the "Hierarchy of Needs" (see figure 1), safety and security are at the second position out of five needs of the pyramid, representing a basic need to achieve self-fulfilment, at the top of the hierarchy.

Figure 1 Maslow and Pearce's Hierarchy of Needs
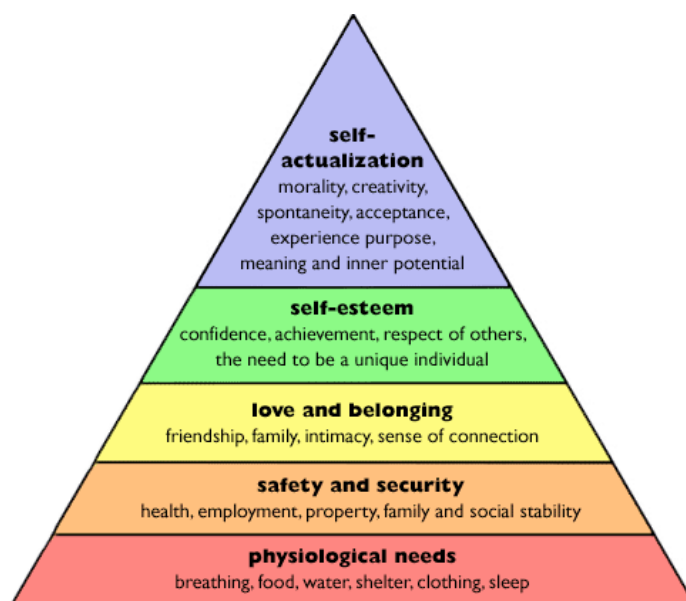
It may be said that there is a relationship between the Marlow and Pearce's Hierarchy and the tourist's decision to travel. In fact, the tourist needs to feel safe when travelling abroad and at the destination before the need of self-fulfilment and actualization may be satisfied. The recent acts of terrorism around the world have made these brutalities an actual concern in our 21st globalized century and have a negative security impact on tourists (O'Connor, Stafford and Gallagher, 2008).

The pivotal question should be then: "Why do terrorists target (international) tourists?" The answer is that terrorists do not exactly target tourists per se but want to achieve and make visible their own ideological objectives. Tourists are afraid of terrorism not knowing that, sometimes, terrorism may be the consequence of discordant values among cultures, values or also at the socioeconomic level (Hall and O'Sullivan, 1996). Travellers and tourists are targeted as symbolic representatives of "the others", even if they have no actual blame, mere wanting to spend a holiday and a consequent relaxation at the chosen destination. It may be interesting and unusual for many people to put themselves in someone else's shoes. Imagine being an Egyptian daily seeing tourists who live in the complete splendour enjoying, parading and showing it

off. On the other side, the locals of developing countries are usually poverty-stricken and forced to coexist, cohabit with and depend on "the other", i.e. tourists. Travel styles are said to represent ideological values, but also the social class we belong to and the culture we live in. The consequent opposition tourist-host and local-hosting results in resentment because of expensive lifestyles they may never have, conspicuous consumption and differences in culture education and manners of behaviours (Richter, 1983). As Aziz points out as a result of a research conducted in Egypt, tourist behaviours may be incongruent with Egyptian lifestyles or codes. For instance, gambling, pork consumption and Western fashion and dress codes are contrary to religion and may annoy the locals. These inconsistencies resulted in terrorist attacks because tourists represented a threat for local communities in terms of society, usages, religion and the Egyptian system as a whole (Aziz, 1995).

3. Terrorists, Tourism and the Media

One of the main reasons for travelling and going to a certain destination is relaxation, even if this act of leisure is not always the very first priority. Still, tourists may be bothered by negativities such as deleted events, bad weather, and lack of quality or quantity issues. In this framework, terrorism has a huge impact (Kozak, Crotts and Law, 2007). As Sonmez and Graefe point out, little research has been done concerning the element of risk as a component of tourist decisions (1998). The media coverage of international political and religious violence plays a crucial role to forge the ideas and the expectations of a potential tourist towards a specific destination, namely the one he/she is interested in. Imagining terrorism as the "appetizing news" in the media field, e.g. television, radio and other means of communication, it is interesting to notice that terrorism recognition has had a significant and tragic importance politically, economically and religiously. The basic importance linked to terrorism in this sense concerns uproars and news and an obvious point immediately attracts one country's nationals' attention: "When nationals of other countries become involved in a terrorist attack, news coverage is guaranteed" (Weimann and Winn, 1994). This is the reason why terrorists aim at capturing and shocking the public through the media, so that to increase terror, fear and to amplify their message in a vast scale. There is no sharpness or sensitivity, the message enters your mind, strikes your soul and hurts your body spiritually. The terrorists' effectiveness is reached through securing media attention and, consequently, (potential) tourists are "badly hit". Terrorists are also sure that the media could not lose the opportunity of circulation of an immense, say profitable, news but, at the same time, the touristic framework may suffer politically, socially and economically (Richter, 1983).

Tourists are terrorism's target because of their status of their own country's ambassadors. However, they do not represent their countries diplomatically or politically but, still, they are viewed and perceived as a target, a soft one. Being

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part of the 'hostile government' means being symbolically hostile to terrorists and hinder their objectives (Richter and Waugh, 1986). Involving tourists in a terrorist attack or, worse, being the tourists the focus of it may be a response to political restrictions and limitations on freedom of expression. Terrorists prefer to hit tourists so that such a dramatic event may shake involved nationals but would also entail a global concern and grief: the affront will not go unmentioned in the media field. If locals are concerned in a terrorist attack, the news may be unnoticed, but when it is the case of tourists, the situation is dramatized immediately: terrorists will have the media attention worldwide and the terrorists' implicit/explicit message is ensured (ibid). It may the interesting to notice that tourism may have a twofold raison d'être for terrorists: on the one hand, it is the terrorists' only medium of communication; on the other hand, it is the message itself directed to governments that instigates political, at first, and religious, cultural, socioeconomic consequences secondly. Tourists can be seen as a valuable resource to (ab)use on to get and attract international attention (Sonmez, 1998).

4. Terrorism and Tourist Perceived Risk in Travel

Many scholars in the tourism field assert that one of the expected tourist's requirement is to be safe and secure at a chosen destination, to spend a relaxing and satisfying holiday. However, a destination that develops a bad reputation linked to terrorism or with an unsafe perception may be substituted by other destinations felt as safer. Risk perception is then associable to the field of tourism in terms of safety when travelling; this shapes tourists' behaviours as a consequence (Sonmez, 1998). The destination image in terms of reputation, risk and safety matters is truly important for a tourist when it comes to choose the apt place to relax and "self-actualize". For instance, nowadays the Middle East is perceived as a highly risky destination and Africa as an unhealthy place to do tourism (Kozak, Crotts and Law, 2007). It is obvious that a tourist who wants to plan a holiday do not pay for the destination generating fear and unsafety feelings a priori and ex ante. Consequently, trips are cancelled and plans are not even planned for those destinations, cities or environments that may ruin a marvellous expected experience out of the usual environment. A tourist may choose to gain more piece of information or modify the usual travel behaviour in terms of preferences and tastes (Sonmez and Graefe, 1998). It may be quite interesting to focus on the fact that a previous travel experience may forge a potential tourist's confidence for a holiday to come (ibid). It was found that a past positive travel experience may change the tourist's perception and reactions to terrorism. Still, this reaction may influence indirectly a future behaviour and propensity to travel towards the same destination but the influence would be due to the previous travel nature, i.e. the essence, not just the extent and the scope (Ertuna and Ertuna, 2009). Nevertheless, travel risk should be interpreted

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and risk extrapolation should be done with regard to real and perceived risk relating to specific destinations and areas. In this sense, "the sociology of dangers" may be useful according to Korstanje: the cornerstone to understand threats and risks is that threats are carriers of risk which, then, may produce real threat. Anyway, it is difficult to differentiate them because they interact and may not always be as sensible as real, e.g. being and living in the Internet era, tourists should be aware that information may be truthful but, also, partial or unreal (Korstanje and Tarlow, 2012).

Conclusion

The WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) states that travel and tourism forecasts are extremely favourable with regard to tourist arrivals growth rates increasing annually (4%). Nevertheless, terrorism seems to be an integral part of our 21st globalized technological century and further researches and surveys should be done to involve a betterment in the understanding of this phenomenon and the effects that provokes in the tourism sector. Weimann and Winn state that terrorism affects international tourism and is "the largest economic factor in the equation between terror and foreign tourism" (1994). Tourists are an appealing target for terrorists because they are
seen as a country's symbolic ambassadors. On the other hand, tourism destinations are perfect and visible spots to deploy a terrorist attack (Giddens and Pierson, 1998). Terrorists are capable of using tourists as the means to get the media's attention. Many countries are threatened by this problem which has become global and has reached a global audience. Therefore, tourists may avoid easy-to-target destinations even if their risk perception is not real. Risk perception, attitude and preferences are one of the main determinants of destination choice for a tourist. A potential tourist who negatively conceives a destination as risky may choose to cancel his/her holiday or not even consider it because of security and safety motives. Terrorism has serious and negative consequences on the tourism sector whereas the tourism industry has great potential for intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

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