

Chapter 5

The Epistemology of Tourism Security: Methodological Discussions Revolving Around Tourism Security and Safety

ABSTRACT

The act of traveling needs higher levels of trust in view of the fact that the traveler is unfamiliar with the visited topography. The “sacred law” of hospitality not only reduces the anxieties in hosts and guests but also gives a veil of trust in order for the risk to be controlled. It is unfortunate that terrorism affects notably the organic image of the tourist destination. After hard work, policymakers see how their work of years evaporates in seconds. For this reason, scholars are captivated to present an all-encompassing model to understand risks and its impacts on the tourism industry. Somehow, theorist of risk perception enthusiastically embraced quantitative methodologies in detriment of qualitative ones. The authors review all conceptual and methodological limitations of the risk perception literature and lay the foundations to a new (more) qualitative definition of risk. This chapter explores the issue from a qualitative viewpoint introducing ethnography as a valuable instrument of research.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, risk perception theory gained a great deal of recognition in the tourism literature (Cater 2006; Kozak, Crotts & Law, 2007; Williams & Baláž, 2013). The onset of a new millennium ushered a wave of terror that pressed West towards the reprioritization of certain goals over others. The classic welfare state which was legally oriented to protect the individual rights of citizens to work and consume sets the pace to a new form of government that makes from securitization process its main cultural and foundational value. Recently the public opinion witnessed how global threats such as terrorism, natural disasters and virus outbreaks threatened the day-to-day life. It is safe to say we are living in a new world where the sense of complexity allowed the upsurge of uncertainty and mistrust. The end of the welfare state suggests that nobody feels safe anytime, anywhere (Korstanje, 2018). Of course, the tourism and hospitality industries were not exceptions. Affected by the inflation of risks, many policy makers and governments heightened their PR efforts (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005). One of the pioneering works in this field was authored by Roehl & Fesenmaier (1992) who introduced the concept of risk-perception to measure the sentiment of vulnerability of tourists while touring beyond the security of homeland. In an exploratory fieldwork, three basic dimensions were worthy of mention, *physical-equipment risk, vacation risk, and destination risk*. The contribution of this investigation consisted in that researchers found a substantial correlation between risk perception and some of the easily identifiable demographic traits of interviewees. This seminal text was widely cited and used to reconstruct the paradigm of risk perception applied in the tourism field. However, given the chaotic nature of many risky events, the theory has been differently interpreted and mutually incompatible corollaries were added by various recent authors. Here I explore the dichotomies and conceptual problems of current risk perception theory as it is applied in tourism and hospitality. This begs a more than interesting questions, what is risk? Or at the least how it can be measured?

In those chapters, which preceded this, I reviewed not only the epistemological borders but also the methodological limitations of risk perception theory as it was formulated and accepted in tourism research. It is safe to say that risk perception has generated a hot debate even in the humanities as well as social sciences (Bernstein 1996; Barseghyan et al 2013; Goodwin & Strang 2012; Reason 2016). While culturalists emphasized on

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