Cruise holiday or Deep sea terror

Cyril Peter

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"With guns you can kill terrorists, with education you can kill terrorism."

Malala Yousafzai

Abstract

While two other research outputs by the same author have looked at the 1) cruise holiday consumer's needs and perspectives regarding security and 2) whether demographic factors have an impact on individual's security perceptions, this current study is trying to delve even deeper and attempts to understand *firstly* the exact level of importance placed on security when an individual plans or considers a cruise holiday. The issue of security is placed in amongst a few other criteria and respondents were asked to weigh and rank them. *Secondly*, the study explores the reasons behind security perceptions and whether they are common to all or most respondents of the study. This part informs us whether we all think alike and whether our perceptions of security, particularly terrorism, are similar. *Thirdly*, the study forces the research respondents to imagine various possible maritime terrorist attack scenarios and state what they believe will be the most likely way a cruise ship can be attacked. For this third part, respondents would have had to recall and use all their knowledge of cruising, security and terrorism, previous experience and exposure to the subject, in order to answer the question. This research output analysed five survey questions which attracted a maximum of 98 respondents. Their willingness to participate in the survey shows that individuals value security and consider security to be extremely important. The findings from this research will be useful to cruise ship operators for operational planning purposes, and to the government for policy design purposes.

Keywords: cruise, tourism, terrorism, hospitality, maritime

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Introduction

Terrorism did not begin with the events of September 11th 2001 (9/11). It has been a part of our history for a long time. 9/11 merely refocused the world's attention to it and kept it in the limelight ever since, because of the sheer audacity and magnitude of the attack. The amount of effort planning, resourcing and executing the attack was enormous and it all had to be done in secrecy. Imagine how difficult it must have been to organise an attack of this grand scale and nature, but under a cloak of secrecy. Whilst security agencies are continuously getting better trained and resourced, terrorist organisations are also progressing at the same pace, if not faster. More terrorist organisations (which are generally offshoots from larger, established terrorist organisations) keep sprouting up because of differences in opinions and ideology.

9/11 will go down in history as one of the most memorable terrorist incidents of our time but those involved in terrorism are not known to rest on their laurels. They are constantly scouting for more iconic structures to attack. Terrorist organisation are competing with each other to do one better; to become the most famous and revered terrorist group. Cruise ships could just be that icon they are looking for.

Cruise holidays are ever increasing in popularity but it is indeed surprising that a major maritime terrorism incident, specifically targeting cruise ships, has not occurred to date even though there have been many indicators and sufficient evidence pointing towards a desire to have one. Cruise ships have largely escaped the attention of terrorist groups but that does not necessarily mean that it will stay that way forever. Cruise ships are basically large mobile floating hotels, out in the middle of the ocean, all by themselves with little or no form of defending themselves. Bowen, Fidgeon and Page (2014) implied that terrorist attacking a cruise ship will definitely occur at some point and just under 50% of their survey respondents agree with them. Yet, we see cruising increasing year on year. Are cruise ship passengers transferring the security risk and concerns to owners, operators and government authorities?

This paper investigates the security perceptions of people considering a cruise holiday or even those who have been on a cruise holiday. The crux of this paper is to find out the importance that security plays when they make their cruise holiday plans. Does security factor in at all in that decision making process? The intention is that the findings of this study will inform cruise ship owners/operators, security agencies and the relevant government departments with their planning and policy making decisions. It is important to understand the needs and expectations of the

consumer before make any plans, policies and enacting laws.

The research paper will also compare dangers such as piracy, terrorism and accidents to explore which one respondents believe is the most likely to occur on a cruise. Again this will provide an idea of the importance placed on security. The study will also go onto exploring all the possible ways cruise ships may or can be attacked by those wishing to cause it harm. It forces respondents to evaluate and seriously consider the various dangers around cruise ships. Many would not have thought about these dangers prior to this exercise.

This research study which included collecting data via an online survey (Survey Monkey) attracted a total of 98 respondents, but the respondents did not answers all of the questions. The reason for this is unknown.

Literature review

Value of the cruise industry

In monetary terms, according to the 2015 statistics, the global cruise industry is worth $117 billion dollars, with 23 million passengers, has created the equivalent of one million fulltime jobs with wages and salary of approximately $38 billion dollars (Cruise Line International Association, 2016). This is a significant component of the global tourism statistics. It is fast becoming an important tourism sector and it is clearly evident that this industry is going to keep growing exponentially.

Season	Value	Passengers
2015-2016	$58 million	164,800
2014-2015	$36 million	150,000

Table 1: Value to New Zealand's economy

Winter (2016) claimed that the Wellington cruise industry was valued at $58 million for the 2015-2016 season, bringing in more than 160,000 visitors to the city (Table 1). Destination ports welcome these mostly day or overnight guests because of the money that is introduced into the local economy. Also many of the passengers return for an extended stay if they like that particular destination and want to spend more time there. Passengers also tend to give positive feedback to others about a destination they like and their reasons (Bridaa, Pulinab, Riano, & Zapata-Aguirre, 2012). Cruise ship passengers on stopovers generally spend money on food, beverage, public transport, vehicle rentals, souvenirs and local sightseeing tours.

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Popularity of cruising

Baker and Fulford (2016) state that the cruise industry is currently the fastest growing tourism sector. The article explains that the industry has been growing steadily for several years and will continue to do so. Douglas and Douglas (2004) also concur that the cruise sector has seen a steady growth of approximately 8% annually. They claim that the destination ports and businesses such as ship chandlers supporting and/or depending on this sector have benefited from cruise ship stopovers. According to Macpherson (2008) countries within the Pacific region welcome cruise tourism as it contributes to the individual economies. He states that governments are requesting more cruise ships to visit their ports.

Hannigan (2017) states that the earth is surface is made up of at least 70% water and it is no wonder that human are busy exploring it. Dowling (2011) states that cruising is so popular in the Australasian regions that is has exceeded United States and United Kingdom. It is clearly a sign of the times. Jones (2011) claims that people opt to go on cruise holidays because of trusted recommendations and also the type accommodation provided and comfort. He claims that the nightlife and entertainment itself is not necessarily the reason why people go on a cruise. However, it is important to note that cruise holidays are deemed as a one-fee holiday where passengers pay the one fee for their travels, accommodation, meals and entertainment. So it is a cost effective way to holiday.

Security consciousness

Korstanje (2011) states that security perceptions have increased and people are more wary of travelling. He claims that the events of 9/11 could have contributed to this. People are more aware of the risks and this had highlighted the importance of security in the hospitality tourism industry.

According to Sundararaman (2010) travel and tourism have been negatively impacted not only by the continuously changing economy but also by the increase in terrorist incidents and activities. Terrorism is basically affecting an already wound up industry suffering from hyper competition. So you have a scenario where you have too many suppliers in a particular industry with customers who are security conscious and choosing to be very selective. This is understandable since because they are concerned with their own personal safety.

Garg (2015) claims that tourists are continually searching for safer destinations because of the constant increase of crime and terrorists activities worldwide. This again appears to be logical because it is important to the individual to protect themselves and their families and this ties in with

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory with regards to safety and security.

Given that tourists are fearful or more wary of the dangers in the environment, it is safe to conclude that they will be careful when making any holiday plans including cruise holiday plans.

Terrorism in Tourism

For better or for worse, terrorism and tourism have had a long, intertwined existence. Hospitality terrorism survives on hospitality and tourism and like a parasite, clings to it and travels everywhere tourists go. Successfully attacking tourists guarantees extensive media coverage which is what terrorists want. Since 9/11, this phenomenon has become more apparent and also because traditional targets have become more fortified and harder to penetrate, terrorists are turning to softer options which seem to yield similar or better returns on their effort. Hospitality and tourism is one such soft option.

Examples of terrorists successfully targeting tourists include the 1) 2002 Bali bombing where 102 people died (Hitchcock & Putra, 2005), 2) Bardo museum attack which saw 22 people including cruise ship passengers die while on a shore visit (Andersen & Brym, 2017) and 3) 2008 Mumbai Taj Hotel attack where 166 people perished (Chandran, 2010). While these cases were not specific attacks involving cruise ships, they show that tourists are targets and will continue to be targets. The reason for this is that successfully attacking and killing tourists will upset several countries at the same time depending on the nationalities of the dead or injured. It is for this reason that tourists will continue to be potential targets.

Modes of attacks at sea

Szoldra (2017), in quoting Retired United States Navy Admiral James Stavridis, explains that cruise ships are a highly likely target for a terrorist attack. Citing the 2000 USS Cole incident, the articles seems to imply that anything is possible, especially the attack of an undefended commercial vessel. In the case of the USS Cole, a small vessel fully laden with explosives was used in the attack. The article also briefly explores the idea of capturing a cruise ship and taking those onboard as hostages as in the 2008 Mumbai Taj Hotel attack. This would be done purely for publicity, as is the case in many terrorist incidents. Capturing a cruise ship, largely seen as a 'playground' for the rich, would be a huge coup for any terrorist organisation.

Stavridis (2017) explores the variety of attacks by terrorist groups and the article seems to advice

and even encourage one to imagine the impossible when it comes to guessing the terrorist's next move. Nobody would envisaged terrorists going from using conventional weapons such as small arms and explosives, to converting commercial airliners and land-based vehicles into everyday weapons. The use of vehicles to kill and maim is very common today.

Given the above, attacking a cruise ship is not that far-fetched after all. Some of the possibilities include hijacking the ship, suicide bombing, ramming the vessel at port or in the open seas or planting an incendiary device on-board.

Piracy, Terrorism, Accidents

Maritime travel is unlikely to always be incident free, but terrorism is not the only 'evil' cruise holiday passengers are exposing themselves to. They are at the mercy of the weather, ship borne diseases, fire, crime, accidents and pirates, amongst others.

An interesting phenomenon which is discussed at lengths by Low (2006) is the often unexplained disappearance of employees and passengers from ships. This is increasingly common and is associated with alcohol, accidents, crime and suicide, amongst others. Many such cases have remained unsolved.

Getting sick while on a cruise is quite common and sometimes several hundred people can get ill at the same time. One of the common cause is norovirus. Cruise turn-around times are purposely kept very short to minimize downtime and maximize profits. They do not have enough time to clean the vessels properly and maintain high hygiene standards. Since everyone onboard is living in close quarters, it is very easy for diseases to spread. Longer layovers will allow for ships to be cleaned more thoroughly. Wootson JR (2017) describes a couple of recent cases of norovirus onboard two cruise ships owned/operated by Royal Caribbean lines. In total more than 500 people were taken ill. Throughout the history of the cruise ship industry, there have been many cases of diseases spreading while at sea.

Another major danger for sea-going vessels is encountering pirates. Young and Valencia (2003) describe cases where pirates have successfully attacked and boarded commercial vessels in the Southeast Asian region. They go on to state that often terrorism and piracy are treated as the same, but in effect they are very different and quite easy to distinguish.

Methodology

While this study was designed with a total of 25 questions and attracted a total of 115 respondents, only five questions have been selected for analysis and presentation of this particular output. Several outputs have been planned for the complete study on maritime security. Questions have, and will be grouped according to their relationships and presented in several outputs. Thus far the outputs have separately examined 1) customer's security perceptions and expectations, 2) the impact of demographic factors on security perceptions and 3) the importance of security to individuals and what a maritime terrorist incident could potentially look like if it were to occur.

For this output, five questions were selected but not all 115 respondents answered all of the questions. Respondent numbers varied from between 94 to 98 for various questions. Findings from each question will be presented separately. Questions were tested before they were uploaded onto Survey Monkey and respondents were invited to participate via Facebook and other means at the disposal of the researcher. It was an open invitation with no control over who could participate in the survey. To get the best results, it had to be open to anyone with a view on cruising. Known as snowball sampling, respondents were encouraged to invite others whom they felt could contribute positively to the research, to also participate.

The entire online data collection process which yielded 115 respondents took less than one week to complete. The raw data has been stored in a password protected external storage device which is under the control of the researcher and kept in a locked drawer when not in use. Once the research has been successfully completed, the raw and analysed data will be destroyed.

Findings, analysis and discussion

Is security a factor?

Response	Response (Percent)	Response (Count)
Yes	71.3%	67
No	28.7%	27
Total	100%	94

A total of 94 respondents answered this question and two-thirds of them or 71% percent believe that security is important and they take it into consideration when planning a cruise holiday. They automatically factor it into their thinking.

Table 2: Is security a factor?

As stated in the literature above, Korstanje (2011), Sundararaman (2010) and Garg (2015) all describe in their own ways how tourists are now more conscious about security and are looking for safer holidays and safer destinations. This is especially true with the increase in terrorist incidents worldwide. Media coverage of terrorist incidents tend to increase the awareness of the issues and also cause individuals to become more conscious of their environment, current situation and their own personal safety. Tourists also tend to adhere to travel advisories from their home countries. Henderson (2003), explains how travel advisories can even extend to countries close to the actual incident site. In some cases even surrounding countries are included in the advisory and this will cause disruptions and economic hardships in those countries. This proves that individuals tend to take the advisories and security in general seriously because of the current climate we live in.

So, it is understandable why 71% of the respondents from this survey have stated that they take security seriously.

What is important to me when planning a cruise holiday?

98 respondents answered this ranking question where they were required to study the eight options provided and rank them according to their own order of importance with one being the most important.

Table 3 shows us the breakdown and the ranking given by respondents. In this table, column with the heading 1 is the most important and the column headed 8 is the least important. So, under the most important column (1), respondents have listed *price*, followed by *destination* and finally *security* in that order. 23% of the respondents ranked *security* as their most important factor when they plan a holiday. This made *security* the 3rd biggest grouping listed under column 1. That's almost a quarter of the respondents.

Column headed eight (8) has the following top three groupings: *entertainment* followed by *amenities* and *duration of cruise*. 30% of the respondents placed entertainment is this category meaning that they do not rank entertainment very high when planning their cruise holiday and this finding is in agreement with the article written by Jones (2011) wherein he states that entertainment is not valued very highly in the decision making process. In fact, entertainment seems to be the least important factor when planning the holiday.

Rank the following in order of importance as if you are planning a cruise holiday (1 - most important)										
Answer Options	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**	**Rating average**
Price	26	25	24	8	4	4	3	4	98	2.83[1]
	27%	26%	24%	8%	4%	4%	3%	4%	100%	
Value	13	22	18	16	10	11	4	4	98	3.58[3]
	13%	22%	18%	16%	10%	11%	4%	4%	100%	
Destination/s, ports	25	20	11	16	7	9	4	6	98	3.34[2]
	26%	20%	11%	16%	7%	9%	4%	6%	100%	
Duration of cruise	6	5	11	18	21	8	12	17	98	5.04[6]
	6%	5%	11%	18%	21%	8%	12%	17%	100%	
Food	1	6	13	14	23	26	10	5	98	4.99[5]
	1%	6%	13%	14%	23%	27%	10%	5%	100%	
Security	23	9	12	10	11	9	14	10	98	4.12[4]
	23%	9%	12%	10%	11%	9%	14%	10%	100%	
Entertainment	2	4	6	4	11	18	24	29	98	6.19[8]
	2%	4%	6%	4%	11%	18%	24%	30%	100%	
Amenities	2	7	3	12	11	13	27	23	98	5.91[7]
	2%	7%	3%	12%	11%	13%	28%	23%	100%	

Table 3: What is important to me?

Order of importance	
1	Price
2	Destination/s, ports
3	Value
4	Security
5	Food
6	Duration of cruise
7	Amenities
8	Entertainment

Table 4: Order of importance

Table 4 shows the overall order of importance going by the rating average (table 3). In this list, *price* is listed as the most important and *entertainment* as the least important overall. *Security* is listed as the 4th most important factor. So, when planning a holiday, individuals tend to first look at the price and their budget followed by where they will be going (destination ports) and then the perceived value they will receive. Customers want to ensure they receive good value for the money they are about to spend. It is possible that customers leave the issue of security to the cruise operators, believing that ships will not sail in 'dangerous' waters or circumstances. While security is ranked close to the middle, and ranked above food, respondents are stating that it is very important. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory has in its level one, physiological needs which covers food, amongst others. Safety needs in Maslow's theory is only in level two (Bartol, Tein, Matthews, Sharma, & Scott-Ladd, 2011).

However, with this study we can see that respondents ranked security above food in terms of importance, which in itself is interesting.

Reasons for security perceptions

A total of 93 respondents answered this question. Many felt that having good security provisions was very important because they wanted a safe and hassle free vacation for themselves and their families. They are concerned about security because they are in locations and situations foreign to them and knowing they were safe meant they would be able to relax properly, which is the main purpose of a holiday. Also the increasing number of terrorist incidents worldwide could have an impact on the responses provided. So, the finding itself is not unexpected.

Those that said that security wasn't a factor, said that they expected the cruise operators to look after them and consider their safety. They are merely transferring the responsibility to someone else because they do not want to have to think about it. It could be that security itself is a big issue and not necessarily easy to understand.

Typical comments from respondents are shown below:

1. *'I want a hassle free vacation'*
2. *'Need to know how you are in a foreign place'*
3. *'Like to have a safe holiday'*
4. *'Because that make me happy and relax'*
5. *'You don't hear about cruise ship security breaches/scares. You assume that security is taken as seriously as any other international trip'*
6. *'Even though I ranked it last, it is still a really important factor. I always book through reputable companies and be aware of my own personal safety eg looking after my passport, valuables, not venturing out alone, not getting too intoxicated, knowing the laws of the land, knowing danger zones/scams. When you travel anywhere you need to be aware of those things'*
7. *'If I don't think I'll be secure I won't go'*
8. *In wake of the recent Paris attacks and US travel warnings if I have to indulge in pleasure travel, security would be the most important concern in my decision making*
9. *'Because of the terror threats globally'*

10. *Well, it plays a big factor it's because of the recent news happening around the world, which makes us afraid. So in order to encourage someone to go on a cruise they must assure first the safety and security of every passenger on that cruise ship*

11. *It is a factor now and I presume security is a top priority for the cruise company*

12. *'Expect that it will already have been considered by the company'*

13. *'I hadn't considered it until I saw this survey, and then it dawned on me that cruise ships would make good terrorism targets - lot of people in one place'*

14. *'The cruise industry's highest priority is to ensure the safety and security of its passengers and crew. Since 9/11 there have been new reports about cruise ships being the target of terrorists and of "massive" outbreaks of the Norwalk [Norovirus] virus'*

15. *'My personal security is important to me'*

16. *'If its your time to go then so be it. Terrorism isn't going to prevent me from doing anything'*

17. *'Not considering'*

18. *'Have not really thought about it'*

19. *I don't think about it*

20. *It's not really important*

Piracy, Terrorism, Accidents

What do you fear the most regarding cruise holidays? Rank your response						Table 5: What I am afraid of
Answer Options	**1**	**2**	**3**	**Total**	**Rating Average**	
Piracy	15	37	42	94	2.29[3]	
	16%	39%	45%	100%		
Accidents	53	16	25	94	1.70[1]	
	56%	17%	27%	100%		
Terrorism incidents	26	41	27	94	2.01[2]	
	28%	44%	29%	100%		

Received 94 responses to this question about what cruise passengers feared most when on cruise holidays. They were given three options to choose form and the majority of the respondents (56%) chose accidents as a possibility they feared the most (Table 5). This is logical given that there are so many ways accidents can happen on cruise ships because

passengers are in an environment that is foreign to them and they are walking on a constantly moving vessel. The weather also plays a part in the stability of the vessel. Slipping and tripping onboard a cruise ship will be quite common and as would be equipment failure which could increase the possibilities of accidents occurring.

Terrorism and piracy only occurs in specific regions. Not all parts of the world will face these dangers but the dangers or possibility of accidents occurring is universal and can happen anywhere at any time. Changing weather patterns can also wreak havoc at sea and cause damage and injuries. Accidents can be also be caused by crew error. Some examples of accidents at sea have been reported by Pieters (2017) and Derbyshire (2012).

Depending on the size of the vessel, most have doctors and nurses onboard that handle routine illnesses to accidents and emergency situations. Some also have laboratory facilities to conduct limited tests (de Beer, 2014).

Overall, respondents have placed terrorism and terrorism related incidents as second, based on the rating average.

Most likely mode of terrorist attack at sea

Response	Response (Percent)	Response (Count)
Passengers attacked while on-shore visiting Places of Interests	38.3%	36
Ramming cruise ship with another sea-going vessel	5.3%	5
Use of rocket propelled grenade (RPG)	7.4%	7
Suicide bomber on board the cruise ship	25.5%	24
Contaminating food supply (food terrorism)	9.6%	9
Planting incendiary devices on the cruise ship	8.5%	8
Other (please specify)	5.3%	5
Total	**100%**	**94**

Table 6: Possible modes of attacks

Respondents were asked what they believed would be the most likely way terrorists could or would attack a cruise ship and 38% of the 94 respondents believed the attack would happen onshore when the ship is in port (Table 6). This would be similar to the Bardo National Museum incident in Tunis in March 2015 where 22 people, mostly cruise ship passengers, were killed. This question 'forced' respondents to consider each option carefully and imagine the most likely scenario. An onshore attack would mean that passengers on quick, short stopovers, most of them with little or no knowledge of the stopover port, would be attacked. Most passengers do not tend to wander far from their destination ports because of time factor. They tend to disembark from the ship immediately after breakfast and return to the ship by late afternoon or early evening for dinner. Cruise ships tend to sail at night and stop during the day.

The next biggest group made up of 25% of the respondents think that an attack could be carried out by a suicide bomber. This is one of the most effective ways terrorist have operated. Suicide bombers are able to move, follow their target and position them at a specific location to get the maximum carnage from the blast. Many terrorists groups like al Qaeda and Tamil Tigers have successfully used this method over many years. Many terrorist groups use women suicide bombers because they were less likely to be suspected and women manage to get close to their intended targets (Bloom, 2011).

Almost 10% of the respondents think a type of food terrorism is possible where food or water supply is deliberately contaminated. This is an interesting finding since there have not been any major food terrorism incident.

Limitations and opportunities for further research

Only a selected few questions have been analysed and presented here even though a total of 25 questions were initially answered by respondents. Also not all the respondents answered all the questions.

The other issue is that the sample size was too small. Bigger sample size provides better findings that can eventually be extrapolated and applied. While we have some quantitative data that has provided some answers, qualitative type questions might have provided deeper, richer meaning thereby improving the quality of answers.

So, in future, a mixed method research study would be more useful and analyzing all the questions together will give a more complete picture.

Conclusion

It is not a question of *if* a maritime attack will ever take place, but rather *when* it will take place. This appears to be a foregone conclusion. Terrorist groups have shown keen interest in a sea attack for a long time and while they have had some 'minor' successes, none of the attacks have included cruise ships to date (Farmer, 2016; Chan, 2016; Thornton, 2005). Thornton (2005) describes the embarrassing USS Cole incident where an American military vessel was attacked brazenly in broad daylight while it was refuelling killing 17 seamen. Cruise ships are flamboyant western icons, sailing in the darkness of the night, waiting to be exploited. Cruise ships represent western successes and western excesses that must torment terrorists, teasing them like a red rag teases a bull.

This study has shown that respondents are very *au fair* about security matters and their own safety, and they have clear determined views about terrorists and what a maritime terrorist act would look like, if it were to occur. As described above, respondents have even placed *security* above *food* when they were asked to rank them, going against the principles of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Bartol, Tein, Matthews, Sharma, & Scott-Ladd, 2011). This shows that large segments of the respondents take security and terrorism in particular seriously, and cruise ship operators and other related government and non-government agencies should take security provisions seriously as well. They should not wait to be queried by their customers, but instead they should demonstrate that they are aware of security needs and are already providing what is required. Henthorne, George and Smith (2013) state in a study on cruise tourism, that tourist's buying intentions and behaviour will be negatively altered if they suspect they are being put at risk. This again relates to the fundamentals explained in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory.

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