# THE FUTURE OF TOURISM: challenges of tourism and hospitality in a risky world

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**Abstract**

The present brief commentary piece explores the future of tourism in view of the recently-innovated technological breakthrough as well as the surfacing of global risks as international terrorism. The piece discusses in depth the consolidation and evolution of the specialized literature according to three major events which not only shocked the public opinion but also marked the beginning of a new paradigm. The question whether Luxor Massacre ignited a hot debate revolving around the needs of promoting development to avoid ethnical conflicts or states of tension, was accompanied by the terrible images of September 11. This major event was characterized by the idea that mobilites and means transport may be used as real weapons against civilian targets. Specialists of all streams adopted the thesis that risk perception and the precautionary doctrine were useful instrument to prevent the advance of terrorism. The US-led invasion in Middle East, which were prompted by 9/11, reminded the impossibility of precautionary thesis to limit the violence of terrorism. In consequence, the attacks perpetrated simultaneously in Paris (2015) were only a question of time. Today´s tourists embraced enthusiastically the current technologies towards new forms of touring such as virtual tourism where their ontological security remains safe.

***Key Words:*** Terrorism, Risk, Tourism, Virtual world, Mobilities, the end of Tourism.

**Introduction**

Over the recent decades, terrorism and local crime have situated as two main threats to the tourism industry (Enders & Sandler, 1991; Somnez & Graefe 1998; Korstanje & Clayton 2012). The retractile nature of tourism, which exhibits the probability the activity recedes before external risks, leads analysts and experts to study the logic of the precautionary doctrine (Glaesser 2006). The turn of the century witnessed the rise and expansion of a new international jihadism, which unlike other forms of terrorism which targeted top politicians, celebrities and chief executive officers, killed lay-citizens, tourists and travelers affecting not only the credibility of governments but changing the ways the "non-Western Other" is imagined (Korstanje 2017). One of the troubling aspects of terrorism relates to the fact that anyone and anytime may be a victim. It creates a situation of panic and extreme fear which declines the authority of officialdom. In fact, terrorists do not want a lot of people dying, they rather want a lot of people watching! (Howie 2012). Quite aside from this point, the violence against foreigners, so to speak Muslims and Tourists, are considered an increasing phenomenon (Milano 2018).

Recently tourists and global travelers were systematically targeted by radicalized groups not only in Middle East but in the main European cities. It is important not to lose the sight terrorism ignites a diplomatic dispute between the hosting and the delivering countries when foreign tourists are assassinated (Wahab 1996; Pizam & Smith 2000). In parallel, those developing economies which are dependent of tourism are fertile grounds for terrorism. Through the articulation of violence some emerging groups look to oust the local governments affecting not only their credibility but the organic image as international destination (Fletcher & Morakabati 2008). From its outset, tourism security evolved as a conceptual corpus which consolidated in the ever-increasing number of papers, books, Ph. Doctorate dissertations and academic events. However, in its content, the theory versed on two combined problems. On one hand, tourism security centered on the economic nature of tourism overlooking other interesting variables in the study. In this way, terrorism was originally defined as a "problem", a "scourge", an "irrational act" or sentiment directed against democracy and prosperity. As ambassadors that speak in the name of democracy, or a vivid proof of the prosperity and the economic well-being of developed economies, tourists became in the perfect target for these groups. Put the things in these terms, tourists were passive victims who needed to be protected by the state (Harrison 2001; Araña & Leon, 2008; Mason 2015). On another, tourists situated as the only source of information for applied research ignoring others stakeholders or actors in the setting. Methodologically speaking, terrorism-related studies over-valorized the voice of tourists as the only way of reaching the truth. As Korstanje puts it, this represented a serious caveat in the epistemological debate about terrorism simply

because sometimes subject lies to protect their interests or what is equally important they do not recognize their inner-most feelings (Korstanje, 2017).

As this backdrop, the specialized literature in terrorism and tourism should be divided into three facets and commonly consolidated through three major events: a) the Luxor Massacre (Egypt, 1997), the attacks to the World Trade Center (the United States of America, 2001), and Paris Terror attacks (France 2015). The present conceptual approach introduces not only a short discussion that reviews the negative effects of terrorism in tourism but the methodological limitations of applied-research today.

**A preliminary debate**

The end of WWII brought substantial technological changes which accelerated the classic forms of transportation transforming notably the industry of travels and tourism. Paradoxically, the expansion of tourism was accompanied by a process of decomposition once the former overseas colonies claimed for adopting democracy as their main form of government. This process started an escalation of violence by the side of local groups which confronted the already-consolidated the authority of post-Westphalia nation-state. Historians termed this process as "decolonialism". While in the 60s decade terrorism was not considered a threat morally condemned, but only a military tactic (guerrilla) often deployed when one of the forces were in inferior conditions no less true was that English speaking academicians were uninterested in studying terrorism at least until the attacks happening on September 11 (Stampnitzky 2013). In this vein, some critical voices called the attention to the intersection of terrorism and tourism (Korstanje & Clayton 2012), whereas others argued that tourism liberated local terrorism in a hyper-globalized force (Skoll 2016).

In the tourism and hospitality fields, three major events inspired the perspective of terrorism is defined and discussed. The first major event is the Luxor Massacre, historically located on 17 November of 1997 in the Mortuary Temple of Hatshepsut where 58 foreign and 4 national tourists were executed by the radical group Al-jama´a Al-Islamiyya. As a result of this, the Egyptian economy, as well as its reputation as an international destination, was on the brink of collapse. The attack shocked the publics reminding the importance of democracy in the Middle East. One of the seminal studies in this vein was written by Sevil Somnez (1998) who reminded the importance of deterring political turmoil and instability in the Middle East and other regions. Terrorists look to create political instability to oust the local governments. Per her viewpoint, tourism and

development would play a leading role in promoting a climate of economic prosperity cementing democratic institutions and open regulations towards a global free-trade. In sum, Luxor Massacre, after all, ignited a hot debate revolving around the idea democracy and tourism are leading forces that gradually placate the virulence and hostility of terrorism (Somnez 1998; Somnez & Graeffe, 1998; Pizam & Mansfeld, 1996; Somnez, Apostolopoulos & Tarlow, 1999).

A second event that guided the horizons of the knowledge production was the attacks to World Trade Center, planned and perpetrated by Al-Qaeda in the US soil. This was the first time Americans and Europeans realized that terrorism would operate within the borders of developed-nations confronting directly with the premise that perhaps the economic prosperity was not enough. Although the theory of risk perception, which comes from psychology, was originally adopted for tourism studies by Roehl and Fesenmaier in 1992, academicians saw in this conceptual corpus a fertile ground to understand and successfully predict the future terrorist attacks and others expressions of violence (Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Tarlow 2006; Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005; Kozak, Crotts & Law 2007). Another critical academic wave emphasized the economic-centered positions of these studies, which elaborates complex algorithms and mathematical models to prevent terrorism instead of understanding what terrorism is. Still further, risk perception theory gives further importance to the voice of tourists as the only source of information or element in the system ignoring others actors (Korstanje 2017).

**Tourism Tomorrow and conclusions**

The US-led invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan showed two important things. On one hand, Al-Qaeda mutated towards more radicalized cells (like ISIS) which placed Europe in jeopardy. The attacks perpetrated in France in 2015 marked a new era, where analysts realize that the risk perception theory -as an all-encompassing model- failed. On another, some emerging studies evince that there is a conniving connection between terrorism and tourism which merits to be investigated (Bianchi 2006; Korstanje 2016; Seraphin et al 2016). These approaches center on the belief that tourism creates spaces of interests –even in post-disaster or post-conflict contexts- commoditizing terror and pain as reified forms of consumptions (Korstanje 2016). In this respect, the future studies are oriented to abandon the risk perception theory and the precautionary principle to acknowledge that terrorism –far from being limited- reproduces darker zones of consumption which needs to be understood (Sturken 2007; Stone 2012; Sather Wagstaff 2016; Tzanelli 2016).

Last but not least, the future of tourism in this new (risky) world seems to be uncertain but what is clear is that the rise of global and uncontrolled risks, associated to the technological innovation, allows the creation of novel forms of virtual tours where travellers' security remains in the safest position. This moot point interrogates on the nature of tourism and the disappearance of tourism as we know it (Gale 2009). In his book, *Empty Meeting Grounds,* Dean MacCannell acknowledges that modern tourism is destined to destroy the originality of locals. To put the same in other terms, the aboriginality runs serious risks of being commoditized and cannibalized by western tourists in the years to come. Whether Columbus looked to open new commercial circuits for the Spanish Empire without knowing he will discover a new civilization, tourists who are in quest of something authentic, commoditize the "Otherness" through their sightseeing. Mobile travelers demand the consumption of authenticity while they are before a copy-cat, as MacCannell adheres. In view of this, the richness of different cultures and multiple habits are homogenized to what tourists want. Here the drive seems not to be the freedom, as he observes, but the needs of controlling the difference through one passport, one culture, and one market!.

It is important not to lose the sight of the fact that most probably MacCannell was right when he confirmed that the drive of postmodern tourism tended towards the emptiness of the alterity, the re-elaboration of new mediated spaces where the genuine host-guest contact were subject –if not mediated- to the power of the machine. Doubtless, this not only represents the end of tourism but the end of hospitality as we know.

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