

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

THE PERCEPTION OF RISK AND ITS IMPLICATION IN THE PROMOTION AND TOURIST DESTINATIONS MANAGEMENT. THE MODERATING EFFECT OF DESTINATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

Safety in a destination is one of the most important aspects in offering tourists a quality experience (Otto and Ritchie, 1996). The risks faced by a tourist are many and diverse. Understanding the perceived risk formation process is important because it influences both the image of the destination and the behaviour of the tourist.

This article uses a structural equation system (SEM) to establish the causal relationships between different types of risks (health, accident, terrorism, catastrophes, delinquency) and the risk perceived by the potential tourist in three international tourist destinations (Canary Islands, Colombia and Brazil). A multi-group analysis is then carried out to examine the moderating effect that the “destination” variable may have on the proposed causal relationships. In other words, it is analyzed if the types of risks present different importance depending on the destination that is visited. For this purpose, the sample is divided into two sub-groups of destinations: Europe (Canary Islands, Spain) and Latin America (Colombia and Brazil).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is generally associated with pleasure and leisure activities, and risk is seen primarily as something to be avoided or hidden as a potential threat (Williams and Baláž, 2014). But tourism and risk are inherently related (Yang and Nair, 2014). The tourist faces risks from the moment he begins to organize his trip, when a tourist buys a flight or book the accommodation he is necessarily running a risk since he is buying an intangible service and an experience that will only be experienced after it has been consumed. And once he reaches its destination, he faces both direct and indirect risks.

Tourists usually make their travel decisions based on perceptions rather than reality (Reisinger and Mavondo, 2005; Roehl and Fesenmaier, 1992). Perceived risk normally influences consumer decisions, even if they do not exist in reality. However, unperceived risk does not affect consumer behaviour, even if it is real and tangible (Simpson and Siguaw, 2008; Kozak *et al.*, 2007; Fuchs and Reichel, 2006).

Understanding the perceived risk formation process is important for managing tourist destinations in a sustainable and competitive manner, as perceived risk influences both the image of the destination (Rittichainuwat and Chakrabarti, 2009; Qi *et al.*, 2009; Lepp and Gibson, 2003; Lepp *et al.*, 2011; Sönmez, and Graefe, 1998) and even in the image through the tourist's experience in the destination (Carballo *et al.*, 2019; Carballo and León, 2018; Carballo, Carballo and León, 2018; Fuentes, 2015), as in the tourist's behaviour (Kozak *et al.*, 2007; Mansfeld, 2006; Sasso, 2005; Maser and Weiermair, 1998). The need for safety and stress-free travel will be the key to determining the behaviour of many tourists.

The risk perceived by tourists is a function of various types of risks. All these perceived risks are connected, generating an overall image of perceived risk of the destination, and guiding tourists' travel decisions. The aim of this work is to analyse the most common risks that can influence the process of formation of perceived risk in selected destinations (Figure 1).

Figure 1
PROPOSED THEORETICAL MODEL



3. METHODOLOGY

The empirical study to analyse the proposed objectives was carried out through a questionnaire designed to analyse the the perceived risk formation process (Carballo, León and Carballo, 2017; Karamustafa *et al.*, 2013). The fieldwork was carried out via Internet through a specialized company during the months of July to September 2017. Questionnaire was supplied in the United Kingdom and Germany, both being among the main countries of origin of tourists in the world and especially in the Canary Islands (Eurostat, 2019). A total of 609 useful surveys have been obtained (303 surveys in the United Kingdom and 306 in Germany).

The statistical treatment of the data was carried out with the statistical package AMOS 24 and an analysis of SEM was used to establish the relationship between the perception of risk and the different types of risk that can be found in the destination. In addition to testing the theoretical model, the study also tested the moderating effects of the “destination” on the causal relationships between risk perception and risk types.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Analysis of proposed causal relationships

The model shows that the different types of risk contribute positively and significantly to the formation of the perceived risk (catastrophe risk has been left as a reference variable), so we accept the four hypotheses proposed. We can affirm that the perceived risk in the destination depends significantly on the health risk ($\beta=.82$; $p<.000$) with a higher relative importance. Next, the risks of delinquency ($\beta=.73$; $p<.000$) and terrorism ($\beta=.70$, $p=0.0$) with a very similar importance in the final risk perceived by tourists are significant. However, the risk of accident ($\beta=.47$, $p=0.0$) has a much lower relative importance in the formation of perceived risk.

4.2. Multigroup analysis

In addition to testing the theoretical model, this paper also analyzed the moderating effects of the “destination” variable on each of the relationships proposed in the model. To this end, the sample was divided into two subgroups according to destinations: Europe (Canary Islands) and Latin America (Colombia and Brazil). The size of the groups was 203 and 406, respectively.

The results show that the destination groups significantly moderated the causal relationships between health risk and risk perception ($\Delta X^2=14.8$, $p<0$). Curiously, the relationship between health risk and risk perception is significant for both destinations ($p<0$) and is stronger in Latin American countries ($\beta=.86$) than in Europe ($\beta=.64$). The risk of delinquency is also significant for each of the destinations analyzed ($\Delta X^2=7.9$, $p<0$) and has greater effects on risk perception in Latin America ($\beta=.73$) than in Europe ($\beta=.55$). Regarding the relationship of risk in terrorism and risk perception, the destination typology also has a significant and greater effect in Europe ($\beta=.76$) than in Latin America ($\beta=.59$).

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has analyzed the influence that different types of risk have on the perception of security. In particular, the health risk has the greatest influence on the perceived risk. The risks of delinquency and terrorism show similar weights in the perception of risk of destinations. Although terrorism has well-differentiated motivations from delinquency, its influence on perceived risk is similar. Finally, the accident risk has the least impact on the composition of perceived risk.

Relating to the moderating effect of the destination on the perceived risk, the results show that the different risk, both in health and delinquency, seem to have a greater incidence in Latin American than in Europe. The risk of accident is not moderated by the destination.

As implications of this work, it should be pointed out that the perception of risk in tourist destinations is subjective and influences both to the image and to the intentions to visit the destination (Carballo, Carballo and León, 2017; Carballo *et al.*, 2015; Carballo, 2015; Hultman, Skarmeas, Oghazi and Beheshti, 2015; Qu, Hyunjung and Hyunjung, 2011). It would be advisable for tourist destinations to project an image incorporating the aspects previously discussed when carrying out marketing strategies, depending on the importance of each type of risk. The health risk is significant in the formation of the perceived risk, so it is important to project the positive aspects of medical and emergency services in a destination, especially in Latin America, where this risk is perceived as more dangerous than in Europe. On the other hand, while in Latin America the risk of delinquency must also be given a lot of attention, in Europe the strategies must be based on the aspects of security in risk of terrorism since this not only affects the image of the European destiny but also its demand. (Araña and León, 2008).

Finally, and as limitations of the study, it is worth asking whether the selected Latin American destinations (Brazil and Colombia) and the European destination (Canary Islands) with an insular condition and far from the continent, influence the results, and it is advisable to carry out subsequent analyses in other alternative destinations. On the other hand, the markets of origin analyzed (Germany and the United Kingdom) also condition these results and their implications. It would also be advisable for the surveys to be carried out considering whether the individual has made previous visits to the destination and therefore already has experience in the destination, this could influence the results.