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Tourism and terrorism: a quantitative analysis of major terrorist acts and their impact on tourism destinations

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Since before the end of the Cold War, terrorism acts have had major effects on tourism destinations. As a result, the 'shadowy, mobile, and unpredictable'¹ forces of terrorism are becoming an unfortunate part of the travel and tourism landscape. Few can forget the explosion that killed three in Paris in 1986, the home-made pipe bomb in Tel Aviv in 1990, the November 1997 massacre of 58 tourists at Luxor's Temple of Hatshepsut in Egypt, and the Kenyan and Tanzanian US Embassy truck bombings killing 263 in August 1998. This paper provides a quantitative analysis of major terrorism events around the world during 1985–98, classified by date, location, victims, weapons used, severity of damage, motive, effect on tourism demand, and length of effect. The analysis is followed by a summary and conclusions about the magnitude of the impact of these events on host destinations and the tourism industry worldwide.

Terrorism is a systematic and persistent strategy practiced by a state or political group against another state, political or social group through a campaign of acts of violence, such as assassinations, hijacking, use of explosives, sabotage, murder and the like, with the intent of creating a state of terror and public intimidation to achieve political, social or religious ends.²

In Egypt it has been called 'a passing shadow';³ in Northern Ireland, 'The Troubles'.⁴ Increasingly, however, terrorism is known coldly by its own name and sits in the harsh light of day on the crisis planning and risk management

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agenda of tourism destinations worldwide. Government, industry, and the travelling public clearly understand that terrorist acts occurring at tourism destinations have a negative impact on tourism demand – and collectively view certain terrorist acts as more brutal or heinous than others. What have not been clear to date, however, are the specific temporal effects on tourism demand of terrorism acts that have occurred at tourism destinations and whether certain types of acts of terrorism had a more severe effect on tourism demand than others.

The research discussed here analyses these effects using the Lexis/Nexis Academic Universe database and a review of all newspaper and magazine articles discussing the topics of 'tourism *and* terrorism' for the period 1985–98. Before turning to an analysis of findings from these data, however, we offer a review of scholarly literature illuminating tourism and terrorism issues and developments in the 1980s and 1990s. This review focuses, where possible, on the identification of different types of terrorist acts and the length of the effect on demand in tourism destinations.

The terrorism and tourism landscape: 1980s and 1990s

Links between terrorism and tourism

Terrorism increased throughout the 1970s and 1980s to such a degree that it justified Richter and Waugh Jr's⁵ statement that 'terrorism against tourists has moved from the political periphery of the globe to the very centers of power and international trade'. Terrorism increased from 206 major events in 1972 to 3,010 in 1985.⁶ The literature illustrates in many forms the costs of terrorism as manifested in steep declines in tourism receipts and demand, such as the loss of over a million arrivals from the USA to Europe in 1986 – down 23% from 1985 – as an aftermath of the December 1985 Palestinian terrorists' attacks in airports in Rome and Vienna and the 1986 hijacking of TWA flight 847 in Athens and seizure of the cruise ship *Achille Lauro*.⁷

Though the frequency of terrorist acts had subsided by the mid-1990s, the 'legacy of terrorism'⁸ is still very much in evidence today, transferring political conflict between terrorists and the establishment to a wider scale.⁹

Ryan raised an important question when he asked whether there was 'something inherent in the tourist location that creates special opportunities' linking organized terrorist attacks against tourists to tourism itself.¹⁰ He disputed the existence of a direct relationship, with examples from Corsica and Wales that showed that additional factors, such as strong national feelings, must also be present. Therefore, the relationship is, at minimum, quite complex. Pizam¹¹ and Milman and Pizam¹² suggested that local people perceived a link between tourism and crime. Aziz claims that terrorist violence, at least in Egypt, is in fact a reaction to demonstrably irresponsible tourism development¹³ – development that uses public funds for tourism-related infrastructure in 'luxury ghettos' while basic requirements in water, sewage, power, telecommunications, and community facilities in other areas go unmet. Aziz also articulates the manner in which tourism in principle violates cultural values and traditions inherent in the comprehensive rules and codes governing Islamic daily life and its concept

of travel and relations between hosts and guests.¹⁴ He attributes the acts of violence carried out by Muslim activists in Egypt to 'reaction to the government's programme of attacks, capture, and actual imprisonment directed against these groups'.¹⁵

Effect of political violence and terrorism on tourism demand

As terrorism and political violence secured their positions as contemporary issues in international affairs, their economic impact on demand in tourist destinations became increasingly apparent. The Persian Gulf War in 1991 suspended travel. While the number of international terrorist incidents had 'dropped by 1992 to 361 ... exposure to media coverage of incidents may have unintentionally frightened and discouraged the public from international travel by magnifying the already volatile relationship between terrorism and tourism and clouding actual probabilities of travelers being targeted by a terrorist act'.¹⁶ Fear and insecurity about the possibilities of terrorism affect tourism demand, even when, in fact, deaths and injuries from terrorism for US citizens are statistically insignificant – less likely to occur than being struck by lightning or killed in an accident on the roads or at home.¹⁷

At the same time, however, terrorism has gained premier power and efficiency as a political weapon through mass media coverage and the exaggerated perceptions about traveller safety and security that this perpetuates.¹⁸ Ryan called the 'news value' of an attack the notoriety which terrorist groups attained in search of publicity for their views and confirmation of their own importance.¹⁹ This has resulted in difficult tourism patterns in Northern Ireland, where return of demand to pre-incident levels following 'The Troubles' has required up to three years.²⁰ As Richter and Waugh Jr²² suggest, 'over-reaction [of tourism destination managers and of the travelling public] increases the impact and importance of terrorist events'.

In researching the effects of terrorism on international business traveller behaviour, Sonmez²² noted that 83% of travellers reported that they had changed to more 'secure' behaviour to keep themselves safe (for example, 'keeping low-profile, dressing down, eliminating conspicuous consumption, not identifying oneself with a large corporation'), and 'nearly all experienced restricted freedoms, increased inconvenience, and heightened anxiety'.²³ Sonmez also summarized various studies examining the impacts of terrorism on tourism destinations from an economic perspective.²⁴ Of particular interest is Enders and Sandler's finding²⁵ 'that a typical international terrorist incident in Spain causes tourist arrivals to drop by over 140,000, and that tourism to Spain begins to decline *three months after* [authors' emphasis] a typical terrorist event'.²⁶ Furthermore, in their study of European countries dependent on tourism for foreign exchange, Enders *et al*²⁷ report 'that tourism reacts to terrorist occurrences *after six to nine months have passed* [again, authors' emphasis]'.²⁸ These findings point to the possibility of delayed temporal effects of terrorist acts on tourism demand.

By the late 1990s, heightened security and baggage searches were routines of travel, and the potential of what Wall calls 'extreme events' to affect single destinations as well as entire regions became very real. These included a political analyst's forecast of potential electoral violence in Jamaica that, although it was to prove erroneous, damaged the entire Jamaican tourism industry. Political

instability and violence in Zimbabwe adversely affected the region, including the Zambian tourism industry. Wall noted that, while tourists were not directly targeted in most terrorism cases, areas where tourism occurred were frequented by tourists, with the result that local citizens, tourists, and the tourism industry were all directly affected.²⁹ This produced short- and long-term effects on tourism demand, from cancellation of bookings and reduction in new bookings to reductions in global travel, as during the Persian Gulf War.³⁰

Tourism demand and tourist country of origin

Tourist country of origin has emerged as an important determining factor in understanding the impact of terrorist acts on tourism demand in affected destinations. Tremblay³¹ offers insight into the relationship between terrorist acts and tourism demand in his examination of tourism receipts of 18 European countries. As described by Sonmez,³² Tremblay's findings indicate that terrorism did not have as significant an impact on receipts from European tourists as it did on tourists from North America. This he attributed to differing levels of access between Europeans and North Americans to information about political events in Europe and to exposure to intense media coverage. Additionally, despite the low statistical level of risk, North Americans tend to perceive themselves as more highly selected for terrorist acts than other nationalities and, as a consequence, their personal safety is threatened by what Wall³³ calls 'the legacy of terrorism'. As Richter³⁴ determined to be the case in the Philippines, political instability or terrorism, even in nearby regions, supersedes scenic or cultural attractions in importance for tourism demand. Sonmez sets a valid prescription for future research on the implications of terrorism's impact on tourism destinations when she recommends that 'travel risk should be studied in terms of real and perceived risk and in relation to destination image and traveler attitudes'.³⁵

Destination image and the mass media

Competitive factors, such as the attractiveness of tourism product development, diversification, and pricing, appear to affect the resilience of tourism destinations in the face of terrorists acts occurring in their location or region. Wall suggests that, while tourists may resume normal travel habits in a matter of weeks after a single terrorist event, investors may take longer to return, if they ever do, to what they may consider unreliable business climates.³⁶ Wahab³⁷ discussed the effect of terrorism on tourism demand in Egypt, and showed that, while destinations such as the USA, France, and the UK experienced short-term decreases in inbound travel in response to terrorist acts, 'in Egypt, terrorism's effect on tourism demand was quite marked'.³⁸ He attributed this effect to Egypt's development of an adverse image due to sustained terrorism and related negative media coverage.

The growth in tourism demand in Northern Ireland between 31 August 1994 and 9 February 1996, during the 18-month terrorist cease-fire, provides a dramatic demonstration of the resilience of demand. Inquiries rose by 49% in 1994, room occupancy during 1995 increased by 11% percent over 1994, out-of-state visitors rose by 18% and holiday visitors by 68%. Figures for the

whole of 1995 show a total visitor increase of 17% over 1994.³⁹ Leslie claims, however, that declining visitor levels in 1996 indicate that this surge in visitor numbers, often termed 'the peace dividend', may be short-lived. He proposed that 'The Troubles', which have been exacerbated by media attention and sensationalism, have been only part of the cause of Northern Ireland's low level of tourism demand and have, in fact, served as a 'convenient veil' masking more significant and far-reaching socio-economic trends.⁴⁰ He outlined these trends as, among other things, lack of tourism product development and diversification, lower income levels, and higher cost of living, arguing that they had resulted in Northern Ireland's designation as a 'less favoured region' by the European Union.⁴¹ Dramatic expansion in the supply and diversity of lower-priced international package holidays had increased competition and reduced demand for the now more expensive traditional vacation – a week for a family of four in the Irish countryside.⁴²

Terrorism and destination crisis management

With nearly two decades of research now available on the effect of terrorism on the demand for tourism, the question now arises, 'Are peace and geopolitical stability the only prerequisites for ensuring long-term success of previously disrupted tourism industries?'.⁴³ Mansfeld⁴⁴ and Sonmez, Apostolopoulos, and Tarlow⁴⁵ advocate that carefully planned and implemented crisis management policies and crisis management strategies must form the basis of overall sustainable development master-planning for tourism destinations. For destinations that have been harmed in the past by recurrent terrorist actions, this will require 'marketing/management strategies to protect and rebuild their image of safety and attractiveness'.⁴⁶ In the case of Israel, Egypt, the Republic of Cyprus, Turkey, Albania, Jordan, and Mozambique, Mansfeld suggested that the short recovery periods following terrorist acts could be explained by the growing market demand for highly attractive and new, 'unexplored' destinations. The pressure of this demand replaced the destination image in the public's eye from insecure to secure once the situation had calmed down.⁴⁷

This image change, however, is possible only in the context of random acts. Persistent acts of terrorism can 'tarnish a destination's image of safety and attractiveness and jeopardize its entire tourism industry'.⁴⁸ This happens because increasingly higher forms of communication and information technologies are assisting the media in their graphically detailed and instantaneous reporting on terrorist activities 'live' from anywhere in the world. Sonmez recognizes the importance of mass media in affecting a destination's image and the need for further research examining the link between the two.⁴⁹

Mansfeld described the impact of terrorist events on a given destination as both 'unpredictable and highly differential', with the dynamics and outcomes possibly changing over time.⁵⁰ He recommended the formulation of crisis management guidelines and courses of action to help control destination image. He used the case of Israel to show that despite numerous cycles of disruption and war, the Israeli government had delayed building an organized crisis management and contingency plan. Mansfeld's recommendation to destinations that have to cope with cycles of violence and tourism is to view crisis management as a long-term process built on:⁵¹

- monitoring of past and current trends as a travel destination;
- cooperation and integration of all operations;
- representation of all parties involved;
- access to comprehensive information exchange at the level of security and safety; and
- proper budgeting.

Terrorist risks to tourism multinational corporations and their related activities in less-developed tourism destinations has also begun to be addressed in the broader political science context of political risk analysis. As the political nature of tourism became increasingly well-known, Poirier stated that 'factors which produce instability in one society may not be relevant to other political systems'.⁵² Furthermore, political stability in and of itself is not a sufficient guarantee of the success of a tourism destination without favourable economic conditions.⁵³ Poirier⁵⁴ pointed to potential challenges and risks for tourism operations in relation to a new international economic order (NIEO). NIEO involves the changing of global economic and legal principles that support the traditional North–South flows of products and services and altering the behaviour of multinational enterprises to promote the economic and social progress of developing and less-developed countries. Terrorism can be a powerful instrument in forging this change.

Fortunately, tourism destinations experiencing terrorist acts may learn lessons from the past, including the need to be prepared with a crisis management taskforce, guidebook, and pre-established partnerships among tourism organizations and local law enforcement agencies and officials.⁵⁵

Equipped with an understanding of the above terrorism and tourism landscape, this article now turns to a quantitative analysis of terrorism acts that occurred between 1985 and 1998 and assesses their impact on tourism destinations.

Terrorist acts between 1985 and 1998 and their impact on tourism

Objectives and methodology

The study objectives were:

- To analyse the effects of acts of terrorism occurring at tourism destinations on tourism demand.
- To determine whether certain acts of terrorism had a more severe effect on tourism demand than others.

Using the Lexis/Nexis Academic Universe database, a review was undertaken of all newspapers and magazine articles discussing the topics of 'tourism and terrorism' for the period 1985–98. The main publication sources identified in the search were: *The Economist*, the *Financial Times*, *The Herald* (Glasgow), the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, *The Times* (UK), *Time*, and the *Washington Post*.

The search identified a total of 70 major incidents that occurred in 28 countries, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of terrorist incidents per year, 1985–98.

Year	Number of terrorist incidents
1985	6
1986	4
1987	5
1988	4
1989	1
1990	3
1991	1
1992	4
1993	9
1994	11
1995	3
1996	1
1997	2
1998	8
<i>Total incidences</i>	70

Analysis

1. *Matrix.* The data collected were inserted into a matrix (see Table 2) that included the following information:

- Date of event
- Location (city, state, country)
- Description (short summary)
- Victims' identity (Tourists/Residents/Tourists and residents/Public officials)
- Severity of act (Property loss/Bodily harm/Loss of life/Mass destruction)
- Number of people injured
- Motive (Independence/Social injustice)
- Effect on tourism demand (No effect/Slight decline/Significant decline/Cessation)
- Length of effect (Less than 1 month/1–3 months/4–6 months/7–12 months/More than 12 months)
- Location of terrorist act (Urban area/Rural area/Mode of transportation)
- Terrorism weapons used (Bomb/Gun/Hijack/Kidnap/Execution/Rape/Knife/Sword)

Table 2 comprises a sample page from the complete matrix constructed to illustrate the data collected on terrorist acts and their effect on tourism destinations.

2. *Frequency distribution of terrorist acts and their effect on tourism destinations.* Tables 3–11 illustrate the frequency distribution calculated according to the following variables:

- countries affected by terrorist acts and frequency of acts;
- identity of victims;
- severity of damage inflicted;
- number of injured/killed;

- motive for the terrorist act;
- location of the terrorist act;
- instrument of terrorism;
- effect on tourism demand; and
- length of effect.

As can be seen from the tables:

- (1) The majority (54%) of terrorist events occurred in the Middle East, followed by Europe (27%) and Asia (12%).
- (2) In an absolute majority of the incidents (71%) tourists were among the victims of terrorist acts.
- (3) In three-quarters of the cases the acts caused bodily harm or loss of life.
- (4) The average number of people who died or suffered injuries in an event was 37.
- (5) The motives for terrorist acts were equally split between 'independence' and 'social injustice'.
- (6) Many (44%) of the events occurred in an urban location, followed by a mode of transportation (32%), and rural location (23%).
- (7) Guns were used in many (45%) of the terrorist acts.
- (8) In three-quarters of the cases the acts caused a decline in tourism demand.
- (9) The median length of the decline in demand was 1–3 months, with more than one-third of the cases causing a decline of 4–6 months.

3. *The relationship between terrorism characteristics and tourism demand.* This research identified the following statistically significant relationships between terrorism characteristics and tourism demand:

- (1) Acts of terrorism motivated by 'social injustice' had a stronger negative effect on tourism demand than those motivated by 'independence'.
- (2) Acts of terrorism that victimized both tourists and residents had a stronger impact on tourism demand than those that victimized residents only.
- (3) Acts of terrorism that resulted in bodily harm had a longer negative effect on tourism demand than acts that resulted in property loss.
- (4) Acts of terrorism committed with guns had a more negative and longer lasting effect on tourism demand than those committed with bombs.
- (5) No statistically significant differences were found between the location of the terrorist act and the effect on tourism demand.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the above study it is obvious that terrorist acts occurring at tourist destinations have been numerous and frequent. In the fourteen-year period covered by the study, we identified a total of 70 acts, an average of 5 acts per year. Though the majority of these acts occurred in the Middle East, terrorism also afflicted countries in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The terrorism acts identified in this study have not only caused substantial destruction of private and public property, but more importantly have resulted in the death of 830 men and women and caused injuries to 1,465 people, a majority of whom were innocent tourists. This translates into an average of 37 injured or dead per

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Table 3. Countries in which terrorist events occurred.

Country	Frequency	%
Egypt	19	27.1
Israel	7	10.0
Turkey	7	10.0
France	4	5.7
UK	5	7.1
Greece	3	4.3
Spain	3	4.3
Lebanon	2	2.9
Bahamas	1	1.4
Italy	1	1.4
Mediterranean Sea	1	1.4
Philippines	1	1.4
USSR	1	1.4
Thailand	1	1.4
Iran	1	1.4
Cyprus	1	1.4
Colombia	1	1.4
Cambodia	1	1.4
USA	1	1.4
Germany	1	1.4
Sweden	1	1.4
Denmark	1	1.4
Switzerland	1	1.4
Peru	1	1.4
Algeria	1	1.4
Kenya	1	1.4
Tanzania	1	1.4
Yemen	1	1.4
<i>Total incidents</i>	70	100.0
<i>Total countries</i>	28 ^a	
<i>Top 8 countries</i>		71.4

^aSome incidents affected more than one country.

Table 4. Identity of victims.

Identity	Number of cases	%
Tourists	15	22.7
Residents	13	19.7
Tourists and residents	32	48.5
Public officials	6	9.1
<i>Total^a</i>	66	100

^aMultiple responses

Table 5. Severity of damage.

Damage	Number of cases	%
Property loss	25	24.3
Bodily harm	42	40.8
Loss of life	33	32.0
Mass destruction of life and property	3	2.9
<i>Total</i> ^a	103	100.0

^aMultiple responses

Table 6. Number of injuries.

	Number	%
Death	830	36.2
Injury	1,465	63.8
<i>Total</i>	2,295	100
Average per incident	37	

Table 7. Motive for terrorist act.

Motive	Number of cases	% valid	%
Independence	26	49.1	42.0
Social injustice	27	50.9	43.5
<i>Total</i>	53	100	

Table 8. Location of terrorist act.

Location	Number of cases	%
Urban	34	44.2
Rural	18	23.4
Transport	25	32.5
<i>Total</i> ^a	77	100.0

^aMultiple responses

Table 9. Instruments of terrorism.

Instrument	Number of cases	%
Guns	34	45.3
Bomb	29	38.7
Highjacking	7	9.3
Kidnapping	2	2.7
Execution	3	4.0
Rape	0	0.0
Knives/swords	0	0.0
<i>Total</i> ^a	75	100

^aMultiple responses

Table 10. Effect of terrorist act on tourism demand.

Effect	Number of cases	%
No effect	8	12.9
Slight decline	28	45.2
Significant decline	19	30.6
Drastic decline	7	11.3
Cessation	0	0.0
Total	62	100

Table 11. Length of effect on tourism demand.

Length	Number of cases	% valid	%
Less than 1 month	12	22.6	19.3
1–3 months	19	35.9	30.7
4–6 months	18	33.9	29.0
7–12 months	2	3.8	3.2
More than 12 months	2	3.8	3.2
<i>Total</i>	53	100	
Unknown	9		14.6
<i>Grand Total</i>	62		100
Median = 1–3 months			

incident. With tourists representing 71% of those victimized by terrorist acts, it comes as no surprise that tourism destinations have been singled out by terrorists as targets. As a consequence, the tourism industry at large must come together to combat the perceived and actual threats that this trend presents to its vast customer base – the travelling public.

As expected, those acts that resulted in bodily harm or death, especially those committed with guns, had a longer negative effect on tourism demand than those that resulted only in property loss. The acts were conducted in various locations, including urban centres, rural areas, and on buses, ships, and aircraft. The motives of the terrorists who conducted these acts were equally divided between a 'quest for independence' and 'perceived social injustice'. However, the statistical analysis found that those who were motivated by 'perceived social injustice' had a stronger negative impact on tourism demand than those motivated by a 'quest for independence'.

Regarding the effects of these acts on tourism demand, the study found that a large portion of them (79%) caused a significant decline in tourism demand that lasted from one to six months, with recovery in approximately 50% of the cases within three months or less. The delayed effects of a decline in tourist demand, occurring as much as six months after the terrorists acts, as described in the literature, may possibly have been captured in the approximately 6% of cases indicated in the study as having 7–12 or more than 12 months' effect on tourism demand. Another possible explanation for a delayed decline in tourism demand may be that travel arrangements cancelled at the last minute, no matter what the cause – an unanticipated illness or a terrorist act – are generally prepaid and often non-refundable. These revenues may in reality be forfeited rather than spent on actual travel by the traveller, who instead may have elected to cancel travel arrangements at the last minute to a destination recently struck by terrorists. This hypothesis suggests that a certain proportion of tourist revenues may be left in the destination economy in the first few months following a terrorist act. The effect of this may be to conceal immediate declines in tourism demand during the first few months through false readings of artificially inflated tourism receipts for this period. After three months, this 'cancellation effect' would most likely have dissipated, and the full economic effect of the decline in demand would be felt.

The sad fact is that terrorism and tourism appear to have become inextricably linked. Accepting the permanence of this relationship can help us design research that will enable us to understand and mitigate terrorism's effects on tourism demand and the economic and socio-cultural quality of life in tourism destinations. The tourism industry seems to be relatively resilient, and, in most cases, destinations in the study demonstrated an ability to recover from the devastating effects of terrorism. Fortunately, despite the advent and growth of terrorism, tourism has continued to flourish. If terrorist acts are not repeated at close intervals, tourists will come back again and the destination will recover. People will continue to want to travel, and they appear to be willing to consider a place secure again following a terrorist act if proper marketing/image and crisis management occurs or, depending on the nature of the act, simply if sufficient time passes without further incident.

Study limitations and future research

The fact that our study is based on newspaper and wire reports may make it susceptible to personal interpretation and political or social biases held by reporters and editors. Therefore, its sources cannot be considered to be 100% reliable and accurate. In addition, some of the compiled data, such as the magnitude and duration of the effects on tourism demand were *estimated* by the authors on the basis of these newspaper reports. Thus, once again, these data cannot be considered as totally objective and accurate.

Regarding future research directions, the study suggests that one of the factors that may be responsible for the differential rate of recovery from terrorism acts is the composition of the tourists. It is possible that the residents of some tourism generating countries are quicker to return to a destination that has been afflicted by terrorism acts than those of others. Thus in future studies of the effects of terrorism acts on tourism demand, it would be desirable to incorporate the variable of tourist country of origin into the research design.

Last but not least, it is recommended that future researchers study the delayed effect of terrorist acts on demand in tourism destinations, since numerous tourism experts have hypothesized that the effects of terrorist acts may surface only weeks or months after the events themselves.

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