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Perspectives of tourist safety dimension research

Tourist safety issue is unique due to its immediate immense impact on tourist flows and requires timely adjustment to the fast moving environmental factors such as terrorist behaviour to maintain destination safety and to lessen adverse effects of crime and violence against tourists. Timely information dissemination related to tourist safety issue to practitioners and researchers, in addition to the travelling general public, are essential to warrant the safety of tourists. Therefore, the inaugural theme of e-Review of Tourism Research (eRTR) is justified.

There has been less active involvement from the tourism industry to assure tourist safety and, as a result, not many research results were reported. We are in the position to consider various perspectives in dealing with the tourist safety issues. There could be many different perspectives useful to research this topic, depends on the point of views. At least, the research concerning tourist safety should include planning, implementation, and management for the safe destinations, measurement and monitoring of the degree of safety, and knowledge sharing and benchmarking the best practices to make safe tourist destinations. Above all, it is time to expand our position to be actively involved in the destination safety.

The purpose of this commentary is to suggest possible perspectives for the future research in tourist safety issues. I would like to concentrate on suggesting the use of quality management perspectives (for destination safety planning, management, measurement and monitoring), knowledge and information dissemination management and benchmarking perspectives, and cooperative political involvement perspectives to assist for the destination security.

Quality management perspectives for destination security planning, management, monitoring and measurement

Security and safety is one of the important dimensions in tourist perceptions about the destination quality. The quality of security can be defined as perceptions of tourists about the degree of readiness and preparations of destinations to cater tourists safely. Tourists' perception about destination's safety environment and preparation to protect tourists is one of the critical factors to persuade tourists to visit a destination. Positive tourist perceptions regarding destination safety cannot be built without a destinations' sound safety planning, plan implementation, security management, monitoring, and measurement. Destinations should be prepared so that destinations do not pose any harm, either physically or mentally, to tourists and tourists can enjoy the destination offerings and return home safely. To warrant a destination safe, planning should be an on-going process, the plans should be implemented accordingly, and the destination should be managed safely. Environmental scanning, data mining and measurement to monitor the possible bottleneck should be performed strategically. Flow-charting, quality function deployment, TQM, and failure related methods are a few examples of many methods in the quality management related discipline that are

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possibly useful not only to the researchers of the academic field but also to practitioners such as law enforcement agents.

Knowledge management and benchmarking

Dissemination and sharing of knowledge and information is critical to maintain safety in destinations (for the recent research and discussion regarding knowledge management in hospitality and tourism, see special issue in knowledge management, Vol. 3, No. 3/4, *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality and Tourism*, forth-coming). It is especially true when the movement of people is global, and the frequency of travel and the speed of transportation are overwhelming. Information and knowledge related to destination safety can be stored and shared between those who should protect tourists (Pyo, Uysal, & Chang, 2002). Having readily accessible knowledge that indicates what destinations should do can be a great help to make destination safe. During the knowledge collection process, best practices in destination safety management can be found and the practices can be used for benchmarking (for the recent benchmarking studies, please see to Pyo (2001).

Proactive involvement

In general, law enforcement protecting tourists has limited access to persons from other organizations. Consequently, research on destination safety tend to be descriptive impact studies about the unfortunate accidents, crimes or violence after incidents. Serving in actual law enforcement scene may not be possible. However, proactive research and cooperation with law enforcement organizations could be achieved. Although, law enforcement agents are knowledgeable in destination safety issues, bringing in the research results of related industry's professionals should be useful. It is especially true when there is no tourism safety specialist in law enforcement organizations. Tourism researchers can provide knowledge about violence and crime patterns against tourists and new theoretical research results. Themes of proactive research may include destination safety planning, management, environmental scanning and data mining, contingency planning, new theoretical developments and findings, and best practices of other areas. Cooperative works between tourism academia and low enforcement practitioners must enhance the destinations safe.

Implications

Destination safety issues should be everybody's concern including tourists, destination residents, business people, politicians, policy makers, and others, although the views about crime and violence impact may be different. One of the missions in the tourism academic field and industry should be contributing to ensure the safety of a tourist destination. Maintaining safe destinations is an important prerequisite to attract a sufficient number of tourists and to make destination visit enjoyable. Classifying acts of crime and violence at tourism destinations (Pizam, 1999) and policy research on traveler safety and security (Smith, 1999) are examples of proactive studies. Multidisciplinary approaches could be helpful to produce proactive researches. One of the disciplines can be quality management. Knowledge and information sharing activities should be efficiently operated so that best practices are shared and knowledge and information required for the destination security management are in hand.

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