
Sarah Machado Marques Sampaio

PhD Candidate CEEDR – Centre for Enterprise and Economic Development Research
Middlesex University – London, UK

**A Book Review: RISK AND SAFETY CHALLENGES FOR RELIGIOUS TOURISM
AND EVENTS***

Risk and Safety Challenges for Religious Tourism and Events is a volume of 15 chapters on risk and safety management for religious tourism and pilgrimage. The book explores the risks and safety challenges faced by tourists and worshippers while visiting holy and pilgrimage sites and religious events, on a global scale. From stampedes and terrorist attacks to health hazards such as untreated water and epidemic, visitors are vulnerable to a series of safety issues and event managers must be prepared to mitigate risks while respecting the specificity and importance of religious rituals. Consequently, tourism operates in a world of uncertainty and constant change, where risk is inevitable. Thus, this book's main goal is to inform academics and practitioners from the field of religious tourism and events planning/management of potential risks and mitigation strategies. In this light, the editors gather the contributors' perspectives on theoretical and practical aspects of religious tourism safety, risk assessment and management.

The book is divided into 3 sections – 1) Risk Management; 2) Managing for Risk: issues and challenges; and 3) Risk Challenges and Issues: global case studies. Section 1 provides an overview of risk management and examines theories of tourism security, risk perceptions, religion and ideology, as well as principles for risk assessment. The main concepts and variables of safety and risk assessment are also outlined in this section. Subsequently, the discussion moves to the ideological aspects of groups and crowds – how racism and 'me versus them' ideologies highly influence individual and shared identity. Tolerance and overall emotional state is discussed, which will ultimately affect crowd movements and behaviours, that is, how pilgrims and worshippers 'act and react' in a religious event setting.

It is however, the topic of terrorism that drives the book's first part – its origins, the conceptual differences between crime, hate crime and terrorism as well as the analysis of discrimination and xenophobia faced by certain ethnic, social and religious groups due to the war on terrorism. In that sense, the authors argue the effect of terrorism on tourism is

twofold: terrorist incidents influence the choice of travel destination or even cancel travel plans altogether; and anti-terrorist security measures and laws cause harassment and discrimination towards social and religious minority groups which also impacts travel plans and choice of destination (e.g. Muslims travelling to the United States or to the United Kingdom). Another topic approached in section 1 is the connection between religious and cultural needs in medical travel is also explored in this section as Halal tourism, for instance, is gaining notoriety as religious and cultural rules greatly impact the decision-making process of destination and medical procedures not just for Muslim but for many international medical travellers.

In section 2, the view that crowds are not only physical but also emotional and psychological is reinforced as a tool to forecast crowd movements and avoid tragedies such as stampedes and collapses and to understand why these incidents happen. Small computer simulations performed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for example, are cited as an integral part of risk assessment as they influence safety measures and allow for improvements in infrastructure and transportation. Still discussing safety, another relevant subject explored in this section is of pilgrimage routes and development. Regardless of the type of pilgrimage, secular or religious, these routes are paramount to local development. From infrastructure and security to modes of transportation, event managers and local authorities must accommodate the pilgrims' needs and provide safe conditions for their experience, especially because on that is dependent the region's economic and touristic development.

The third and concluding section focuses on global case studies including religious and local festivals such as the Maltese 'festa' and the fireworks safety issue that has been happening for centuries. The debate on how to create and ingrain a security-conscious culture of tourism and hospitality in face of terrorism is, however, the most important chapter of this section, as it presents an overview of risks and safety challenges in several types of events, past incidents and recommendations for hospitality and tourism practitioners.

This book is a timely and relevant reassessment of risk and security challenges faced by the tourism industry in a tumultuous period of history for both secular and religious events, although, its most important contribution to the field is the link it builds between theory and practice. Previously, the religious tourism and events literature provided theoretical foundations and empirical examples, but it did not fulfil the practitioners' need for plans, models, and document templates (e.g. risk specification document). Thus, this work's merit lies in the best practices it proposes, from preventive to reactive and recovery levels, as

well as matrices and risk assessment methods based on international standards to be utilised by event managers in their planning and management process.

In addition, its comprehensive overview of risks and safety issues and how they might be perceived by religious travellers, worshippers and other stakeholders is an important assessment for tourism industry academics and practitioners in our troubled times. Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings. First, the overlapping chapters and their arrangement within the book, as some chapters would be a better fit in a different section, according to their theme. Second, the lack of a ‘Conclusion’ chapter at the end of the book, summarising and/or discussing the most important aspects of the work really is a disadvantage – instead, the editors formulated a “Discussion Questions” chapter, which only seem adequate for classroom exercises as it does not add much value to the book’s main goal.

Risk and Safety Challenges for Religious Tourism and Events is a book that caters to the needs of practitioners, academics and students interested not only in Religious Tourism and Events, but in Medical Travel and Heritage or Historical Travel. It is a book that will also interest event organisers, local authorities and tourist/hospitality industry services.

* Korstanje, M.E., Raj, R. and Griffin, K (eds.). (2018). *Risk and Safety Challenges for Religious Tourism and Events*. CABI. (170pp ebk and hbk available ISBN-9781786392282)