WHY RISK WHY NOW? CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS AROUND THE RISK PERCEPTION IN TOURISM INDUSTRY

POR QUE FALAMOS EM RISCO, POR QUE AGORA? PROBLEMAS CONCEPTUAIS NA PERCEPÇÃO DO RISCO NA ATIVIDADE TURÍSTICA

PORQUE HABLAMOS DE RIESGO, PORQUE AHORA? PROBLEMAS CONCEPTUALES ALREDEDOR DE LA PERCEPCIÓN DEL RIESGO EN LA ACTIVIDAD TURÍSTICA

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Abstract: Even though the risk perception theory has been coined by Cognitive Psychology and widely used during more than 40 years, only after September 11th 2001 the term risk was borrowed to tourism fields. The psychological and symbolic impacts that generated the WTC attacks drew the attention of many scholars concerned by the destination image. However, based on assumptions that need to be revisited, this body of knowledge rests on shaky foundations simply because its working definition of risk seems not to be correct. In addition, risk perception theory nourishes a discourse enrooted in a radicalized construction of otherness whose characteristics scare us. To some extent, risk perception theory in tourism has much to say but in fact some previous points should be previously discussed.
Keywords: Tourism. Risk. Modernity. September 11th. Terrorism.

Resumo: Embora a teoria da percepção do risco tenha sido alcunhada pela Psicologia Cognitiva e utilizada durante mais de 40 anos, o termo passou a ser utilizado pelos pesquisadores de turismo e hotelaria somente após o atentado de 11 de Setembro de 2001. O atentado contra as Torres Gêmeas não somente gerou grande impacto psicológico, mas também atraiu a atenção de vários especialistas preocupados com a questão da imagem das destinações turísticas. A referida teoria, no entanto, precisa ser discutida desde que a própria definição de risco tem sido mal interpretada. A teoria da percepção do risco também parece alimentar um discurso etnocêntrico com

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características preocupantes. Neste sentido, este novo campo de pesquisa tem muito a aportar, porém deve ser primeiramente submetido a um olhar crítico.
Palavras-chave: Turismo. Risco. Modernidade. 11 de Setembro. Terrorismo.

Resumen: Aún cuando la teoría de la percepción del riesgo fue acuñada por la Psicología Cognitiva y utilizada por más de 40 años, solo después del atentado del 11 de Septiembre de el término pasó a ser usado por los investigadores en turismo y hotelería. El ataque a las Torres Gemelas no solo generó un gran impacto psicológico sino que atrajo la atención de varios especialistas todos ellos preocupados por cuestiones que hacen a la imagen de los destinos turísticos. Sin embargo, dicha teoría merece ser discutida al encontrarse cuestiones en la definición de riesgo los cuales se han malinterpretado. Asimismo, la teoría de la percepción del riesgo parece alimentar un discurso etnocéntrico cuyo objetivo es presentar a un otro-radicalizado cuyas características nos asustan. En un sentido, este nuevo campo de investigación tiene mucho para decir pero no sin primero someterlo bajo el lente de la crítica.
Palabras clave: Turismo. Riesgo. Modernidad. 11 Septiembre. Terrorismo.

> Modernity's reflexivity refers to the susceptibility of most aspects of social activity, and material relation with nature, to chronic revision in the light of a new information or knowledge. Such an information or knowledge is not incidental to modern institutions, but constitutive of them … because many possibilities of reflection about reflexivity exist in modern social conditions" (GIDDENS, 1991, p.20).

Introduction

Risk-perception, a term which has been coined by cognitive psychology, has been expanded towards other fields and sub-disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and even geography (BECK, 2006). Afterwards the attacks to the towers in New York in 2001, the concept of risk started to be applied to travels and tourism issues. From that day onwards, a wide range of studies focused on risk perception as a scientific criterion in order for bringing security to tourists who were more vulnerable to threats than others (ROEHL and FESENMEIER, 1992; KELLY, 1997; HALL, 2002; HALL, TIMOTHY and DUVAL, 2003; FLOYD, GIBSON, PENNINGTON-GRAY and THAPA, 2003; QUI-ZHANG, 2005; QI, GIBSON and ZHANG, 2009 FLOYD and PENNINGTON-GRAY, 2004; HEGGIE and HEGGIE, 2004; KUTO and GROVES, 2004; REISINGER and MAVONDO, 2005; GOLDBLATT and HU, 2005; KOZAK, CROTTS and LAW, 2007; BIANCHI, 2007; KORSTANJE, 2009a; PARASKEVAS and ARENDEL, 2007; TANG and WONG, 2009; GUT AND JARRELL, 2010; SWAIN, 2009; ABDEL-AZIM, 2010; TRAN and PHILLIP, 2010).

In addition, Fuchs and Reichel (2010) explain convincingly that the sentiment of belonging or proximity is a key factor at time of preconceived risks. Volatile destinations as Israel can be considered safer when tourists are isolated in rural or sparsely populated zones or hosted together with other international tourists (FUCHS and REICHEL, 2010). Of course, because of space and time limitations, only part of specialized literature should be analyzed in this essay-review. The goals of this conceptual work is to provide readers a framework to be applied in empirical approaches as well as revisiting what we understand by risk and hazard, unearthing the voice of Niklas Luhmann, who somehow has not been widely cited in tourism and hospitality fields. This German sociologist gives to us a new platform of analysis to understand how the risk and linguistic discourses converge.

Preliminary Discussion

Fear and fancy have been two key-elements present in the attractiveness of destinations from the tourism inception onwards (DOUGLAS, 1997; ELIAS and DUNNING, 1992). Whenever the ontological security of people is in danger, physical displacement constitutes a prophylactic alternative to recover the sentiment of security. Mouth-to-mouth recommendations or travel online reviews are valid instruments in order for travelers to diminish their angst during they stay out of home. The invention and evolution of all-inclusive package supplies the psychological need to avoid unnecessary risks and intellectualize the uncertainness when the subject is en route (ANDERSON, JUANEDA and SASTRE, 2009). This suggests that travel-related information plays a crucial role in the imaginary of travelers when a territory remains unfamiliar (SMITH et al, 2009) but basically there would be a point of entry in this discussion that points out that under certain conditions a subtle fear may turn into panic.

Lepp and Gibson argue that travel seems to be circumscribed to two contrasting tendencies, the sensation or novelty seeking and risk aversion. As

well as the nationality of tourists, the type of psychological personality plays a crucial role at the time of determining risk perception. Their research revealed that American students substantially perceive more risk to travel inbound countries culturally different to US than to others with similar degree of development. Secondly, authors dwell on the existent correlation between personality, sensation seeking and risk aversion. They realize that consultants who showed higher SS (sensation seeking) are prone to experience fewer risks to visit remote lands than others who manifested lower degree of sensation seeking (LEPP and GIBSON, 2008).

In tourism and hospitality fields, risks are being analyzed from a quantitative perspective. This happens because scholars assume risk is an important aspect of travels. Previously determined by a previous decision-making process, people face their own risk by selecting not only the destination for their holidays but also their means of transport. From that moment onwards, the validity for their election is subject to a set of potential hazards that can affect the visitor's experience. Ranging from terrorism, crime, natural disasters towards road-accidents, diseases or delays in flights, many obstacles can be found whenever a tourist starts its trip (ROEHL and FESENMAIER, 1992; KELLY, 1997; HALL, 2002; HALL, TIMOTHY and DUVAL, 2003; FLOYD, GIBSON, PENNINGTON-GRAY and THAPA, 2003; QUI-ZHANG, 2005; FLOYD and PENNINGTON-GRAY, 2004; HEGGIE and HEGGIE, 2004; BANYAI, 2010). Following this, risk can be tentatively defined as any specific factor that can affect in some way the perception, experience or integrity of tourists during or after their stay (FUCHS and REICHEL, 2011). M. Shakya distinguishes "good than bad risks". The former calls for an opportunity to overcome adversity (principle of resilience) while the latter is often associated to the casualties of innocents or a sudden destructive event. Based on the belief that the sense of risk has certainly shifted in a globalized world where the ontological security of people is continuously jeopardized by an overload of information scholars have recently emphasized on the nature of risk as a form of intellectualizing and preventing timely the state of disaster or even as a

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subdiscipline within other more classical fields as sociology or psychology (SHAKYA, 2009). What is important to note here is that risk, security, expertise, and Science seem to be inextricably intertwined.

In this vein, Peattie, Clarke and Peattie (2005) call into question two different relevant aspects to determine travels: safety and security. Whereas the former defines any physical harm that can be inflicted to tourists in accidents, the latter refers to the potential damages a visitor can suffer, for example an assault or direct onslaught. With this background in mind, it can be hypothesized that tourists are potentially vulnerable to external dangers due to their status of strangers (PEATTIE, CLARKE and PEATTIE, 2005, p. 400). In this vein, Dominguez, Burguette and Bernard argue that tourists experience a more considerable degree of risk in leisure travels than business. Other studies focused on people who reside in rural areas who feel less fear than others who dwell on urban mega-cities (DOMINGUEZ, BURGETTE and BERNARD, 2003). The degree of impersonality that predominates in urban cities starts a process of decline of trust and solidarity paradoxically enhancing the perception of risk. An empirical investigation conducted by Yuan demonstrated that travelling with relatives or friends substantially reduces the preconceived risks (YUAN, 2005). The further advanced the technologies, the greater the fear. To some extent, the terrorist attacks to US in 2001 accelerated the process of reflexivity explained by Beck and Giddens respectively (GIDDENS, 1999; BECK, 2006). Both agree that modernity shortens the psychological distance between experts and lay-people creating an ongoing sentiment of despair which not always meets satisfaction in the products the market offers. From Beck´s view, the society of classes gives place to the society of risks after the accident at Chernobyl's. For these scholars, risk is internally generated while hazards are exogenous. In order for alleviating the unfettered sentiment of anxiety created by Science, the market poses as the most efficient alternative to reduce risks (BECK, 2006).

Similarly, Giddens sees the process of reflexivility accelerated the secularization process creating a declination of trust and social cohesion. In
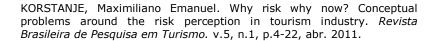
consequence, Reflexivity institutionalizes the principle of "Radical Doubt" while trust draws the boundaries between care-taker protection and ontological security. Notably influenced by the "Attachment Theory", Giddens realizes that trust should function as a "protective cocoon" in which case care-takes can provides in early socialization process to subject the necessary inoculation to face the potential threats and dangers in day-to-day life. Giddens goes on to write:

> Modernity reduces the overall riskiness of certain areas modes of life, yet at the same time introduces new risk parameters include high-consequence risk: risks deriving from the globalized character of the social system of modernity. The late modern world –the world of what I term high modernity- is apocalyptic, not because it is inevitably heading towards calamity, but because it introduces risks which previous generations have not had to face (GIDDENS, 1991, p.4).

However, there are some risks as smoking or driving that are not often perceived or can be anticipated. Even if risks are important elements to determine the security of visitors, perception plays a pervasive role in the psychological construction of danger. As a result of instrumental or technological advance that characterizes our modern society, risk is frequently linked to expertise and science. These experts are the only who are widely trained to deal with risks and protect the health of lay-people. From medicine doctors to firefighters, to a major or minor degree, professionals are aimed at mitigating the most pervasive and negative effects of risks. Giddens (1991), Beck (2006), Bauman (2008) and Castel (2006) have agreed that the technological advance of West opens the door to new situations which are enrooted in a probable future. So unexpected new risks emerge as soon as the scientific efforts to mitigate their effects and so forth. To be more precisely, some scholars refer to risk-perception in contrast to risk-reduction (FUCHS AND REICHEL, 2011).

Social identity, thus, seems to be a product of opposing social change with self reflexivity. Giddens tries to solve an old debate about the origin of social character to the extent to recognize that:

as developed through the loving attentions of early caretakers, basic trust links self-identity in a fateful way to the appraisals of others. The mutuality with early caretakers which basic trust presumes is a substantially unconscious sociality which precedes an I and me, and is a prior basis of a differentiation between the two (GIDDENS, 1991, p.38).

Security feelings are interconnected to early socialization process where the subject learns to construct the anticipation of future. This process involves the early mentioned separation between space and time. As Giddens put it, there is certain analogy between mother liaison and the perception of contingency. Whereas children envisage the protection of their caretakers, once in their adulthood they place expectations about the consequences of future facts. People who have been socialized in an atmosphere of conflict and violence show fewer probabilities to overcome threats than others who received support during their childhood. Social trust not only is needed to explore the uncertainness (time) in an unknown circumstance (place) but also harnesses the abilities for developing curiosity. Precisely, in a society characterized by a continuous quest for authenticity and mobility, risks are continuously redefining the geography of travels. Declination of trusts and social bondage on hands of globalization engenders a widespread sentiment of insecurity (GIDDENS, 1991).

Vulnerability, Communication and Risks

It is worthwhile to mention that communication plays a crucial role not only in mitigating the effects of disasters but as a form of cultural entertainment. Following this, Loftstedt (2010) suggests that risk communication should be based on three relevant aspects: a) risk allows intellectualizing the causal connectedness between two or more factors, b) involving multiple stakeholders or social actors, and c) transcending the boundaries of nationhood and taking international repercussions. In this process, mass-media elaborates a sentiment as though the world were an unsecure place to be. The voice of experts not only plays a pivotal role in

highlighting the correct steps to prevent the danger, but subrogates for the necessity of construing a new risk. However, Beck and Giddens alert about risk when it becomes a conceptual patrimony of experts, sometimes, exceeding their possibility to give response creating an involuntary but chaotic state of emergency. This type of alarmism, which was initially born in the World Health Organization, has been widespread by means of journalism and mass media during the outbreaks of SARS and Swine Flu (KORSTANJE, 2010b, 2011). The advances in technology and mobility paved the ways for increasing the vulnerability of West modifying not only our ways of perceiving reality but also our own corporality.

Mexican anthropologist Briones-Gamboa suggests that historically societies utilized different concepts, ceremonies and rituals to digest external dangers. From an interesting perspective, Briones says that the term risk stems from the Latin *resecum* that means "what cuts". Throughout Middle Ages, travelers used risk as a form of calculation that facilitated to fix the charter-rate. However, this was not before the crippling quake of Lisbon in XVIIth century when the concept of fear really replaced the usage of risk with similar connotations. In addition, the laicization of disaster accompanied with the advent of Science gave as a result the need of forecasting the surrounding events and their effects on humankind. About the middle of the XXth century, with the advent of existentialism, risk set the pace to a neologism: angst (BRIONES-GAMBOA, 2007). Following this development, risk, angst, fear and danger can be typified in similar conjunctures depending on the needs of society. The professionalization of disasters not only witnessed the way religion gave place to Science but also the way it engendered the concept of risk which is no other thing than a human effort to intellectualize the principle of contingency. Unlike animals, after all, human beings are the only to be aware of their own death.

Previously reconsidered as the probabilities to suffer an unexpected harm or be involved in an undesired event, K. Tierney suggests that risks are social construes determined by the cultural values of every society. Different

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disciplines such as Engineering, Sociology and Anthropology, have built a particular meaning around risk which inhibits the construction of an all-encompassed model (TIERNEY, 1994). In some extent, risk applied to travels is defined as the possibility to suffer damage or even experience an unpleasant situation during displacement out of home (PARK and REISINGER, 2010).

Even though the valuable and illustrative development of risk perception theory in tourism-related research seems to be in its infancy, the following relevant points can be found after a further examination of existent literature. Risk takes many forms and follows a typology based on financial risks, social risk, psychological risk, physical risk, functional risk, situational risk and terrorism (DONILCAR, 2005a); b) tourism can be considered an industry more than sensible to acts of violence or vandalism (product of social discontent or any type of resentment) (HALL, TIMOTHY and DUVAL, 2003); c) females feel major fear and risk than males as do elderly persons than younger; d) mass-media plays a pivotal role in the configuration and communication of risk; e) terrorism, disease and virus outbreaks are the most important concerns of travelers at time of decision-making process; f) risk can involve zones and regions limiting with dangerous countries; g) Americans and British are the main target of suicidal or terrorist attacks abroad; h) travels of pleasure are more sensible to risk and danger than business ones (KUTO and GROVES, 2004; AZIZ, 1995; CASTAÑO, 2005; ROBSON, 2008; MCCARTNEY, 2008; FLOYD and PENNINGTON-GRAY, 2004; PARASKEVAS and ARENDELL, 2007; SACKETT and BOTTERILL, 2006; ESSNER, 2003; ARAÑA and LEON, 2008; BHATTARAI, CONWAY and SHERESTHA, 2005, GOLDBLATT and HU, 2005; TARLOW, 2003; HALL, 2003; PRIDEAUX, 2005, YUAN, 2005; LEE, 2008, KORSTANJE, 2009; PARK and REISINGER, 2010).

Redefining Risks

In earlier research, Korstanje criticized that the theory of risk-perception has been constructed on shaky foundations because of the following reasons:

a) there is certain misunderstanding when differentiating definitions as risk, danger, hazard, threat, fear and panic; b) the supremacy of quantitative methods which emphasize the correlation among diverse variables tarnishes the understanding of the phenomenon. Mathematical algorithms overemphasize on measure scale in detriment of meanings. Secondly, the complex connection between gender and risk perception has been widely described but it has not been successfully explained by specialized literature creating impossibilities to assimilate this issue from a sociological perspective beyond the hegemony of management and business. This means that qualitative methodologies are strongly required to decode issues which in other way remain scripted; c) samples elections are unjustified in some cases, but most important, d) there was a great emphasis on Middle East as a dangerous place fraught with terrorists (KORSTANJE, 2009a, 2010).

This of course re-signifies the way of perceiving migrants who come from these countries. Starting from the premise, one might previously suppose Afghanistan is a dangerous place to visit because of the presence of terrorism and one is implicitly acknowledging that Afghans are in the same degree a hazard for Europe and US. Underpinned in the belief that terrorism should be considered the primary threat of civilized World (US and Europe), risk perception theory echoes of a previous ethnocentric discourse enrooted in liberal ideology (KORSTANJE, 2009a, 2010). Ultimately, it is important not to loose the sight media amplifies the risk when the most vulnerable generations are in danger such as elderly persons, children or women (LOFSTEDT, 2010).

An operational definition of risk emphasizes on the probabilities a person or a community has to be in danger respectively to an external event which to some extent may affect its integrity (TIERNEY, 1994). Even though the risk is socially and culturally constructed each scientific discipline operates with self definition depending on its scope and goals. Niklas Luhmann, in his insight book "The Sociology of Risk" emphasized on the differences between risk and danger. Whilst the former is subject to the principle of contingency, the latter only surfaces suddenly. This of course means that the risk should be

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considered as linked to a previous process of decision making. For Luhmann, a terrorist attack, an airplane accident, or a natural disaster seems not to be risks themselves but dangers simply because victims had no chance to avoid the effects of their decisions. Starting from the premise that risks are enrooted in language, Luhmann clarifies that the stance of Giddens, Bauman, Beck and Castel in contemplating the risk as exogenous threats is a product of an ongoing state of alarmism that nothing has to do with reality (LUHMANN, 2006).

By the confusion between what is probable and possible, mass-media works as a cultural-entertainment making of disasters a spectacle broadcasted 24 hours a day. One of the primary aspects present in apocalyptic theories is the misjudgment between probabilities and possibilities. Whilst the former goes along with causality between two factors, the latter takes shape in fantasy. For example, even though probabilities a passenger experiences an airplane fall-down are scant, the possibility for this event remains open. This is exactly what makes more impressive and interesting the movies related to disasters. As the previous argument given, knowledge is not the result of risk mitigation efforts, rather the preconditions for the upsurge of new perceived-risks.

Limitations and Problems of Risk Perception Theory

After further examination, it is necessary to revisit the risk perception theory applied on travels and destinations. Popular wisdom valorizes the risk as a form of intellectualizing the uncertainty. An efficient manner to do this has been the creation of all-inclusive package in tourism and hospitality. Following this reasoning, one might consider that a travel beyond the boundaries of classical tourist circuits runs serious risks. Therefore, the current discourse in this industry seems to be functional to the commoditization of landscapes (see for further details the theory of bubble) (PEARCE, 1987) (SANTANA-TALAVERA, 2006).

For this reason, it is important to discuss the role played by hospitality as an ancient social institution by creating a liaison between self-hood, otherness and sensation of security. Here a new channel has been reopened in regards to the convergence of fear, risk and economy circuits. By understanding that economies are based on exchange and inter-tribal reciprocity, some scholars have convincingly sustained that globalization tends to dissociate the social bondage because of mobility issues. As a counter-response to this irreversible tendency proper of late-capitalism, the fear works as mechanism of self-indoctrination that not only enhances the mass-consumption but also creates an ethnocentric discourse (HOLLOWAY and PELAEZ, 2002; BAUMAN, 2008; BECK, 2006; ROBIN, 2009). With this background in mind, Zizek ultimately acknowledges the modern propensity to exercise violence under the figure of sovereignty is circumscribed to the manipulation power and the principle of economic shortage. In recognition to this, one might speculate that fear, uncertainty and consumption seem to be inextricably intertwined (ZIZEK, 2009).

In my opinion, one of the most important limitations of risk assessment seems to be its qualitative nature. More important, risk should not be measured by quantitative scale simply because it is subjective and is circumscribed to personal interpretations. Questions associated to what an extent a driver has more probability to suffer an accident on road than on flight remains unsolved. Basically, perception of risk is based more on many profound and irrational issues as fear, anxiety and expectances than mere probabilities (BOUZON AND DEVILLARD, 2011). Secondly, mass-media amplifies the impact of events creating an atmosphere of insecurity to introduce a moral message whose ends are specially aimed at reinforcing the cultural values of society. Risks are not only culturally determined but also a product of social interaction. This means that every risk engenders a political discourse.

The continuance of Second International division of Labor in tourism industry, explains why some peripheral places are globally labeled as insecure

while others more dangerous are fagocitated. The construction of a radicalized other is functional to a much broader liaison of economic dependence that finds in fear the perfect complement. The fact is that the present discourse around terrorism harnesses the previous imbalances and dependence of some countries respectively to others (KALA, 2008). By means of articulating a symbolic boundary between civilization (characterized by international Trade and Tourism) and Barbarianism (wherein terrorism dwells on), it is clear to see how central nations nourish a specific narrative that enlarge the gap between one and others.

Even though scientific-related research have devoted considerable time at examining risk in travels and tourist destination, little attention has been given to the travel as institution in such. More interested in describing to what extent tourist-destination attractiveness can be harnessed or diminished, these studies explore this issue from a managerial perspective. As stated before, risk perception theory has more than 40 years in the experimental fields of cognitive psychology but in tourism it reemerged afterward the tragic episode of World Trade Center. This one-sided discourse refers to risk as a threat that affects the preconceived security of travelers or their properties. More interested in terrorism, health or natural disaster issues than in understanding the phenomena in an all-encompassed way, many of these studies recur to a quantitative-based methodology as a form of looking for further legitimacy. I´d rather propose a new model to understand the travel and the pleasure or fears it arises. The main thesis in this paper is that the journey represents an ancient institution that generates ambivalence and uncertainty in mind.

In other terms, the travel opens a liminal status between what is a home and the environment. For that reason, travelling is not only a form of entertainment but also a fertile source for the upsurge of panic and concern. This simply happens because travelers lose temporarily their epicenter of ontological security feeling more vulnerability. Preferably, we consider that ethnography was a suitable method of investigation due to two main reasons. On one hand, it encompasses the complexity of emotions to understand the

untangled net of discourses the risk encourages ranging from fear to ethnocentrism.

On another, ethnography explained better than other types of techniques the dissociation between what people say and do. In addition, from the contributions of Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildawski on, many specialists in anthropology and ethnology have made of risk-perception their object of study. As a social construal, risk is elicited by much broader social forces. Understanding risk from a qualitative view is a way of understanding the society itself.   Malinowski was not wrong when he wrote that security corresponds with a grounding function of culture which can be decoded to allow us to understand how a society is organized. For that reason, risk engenders its own narratives enrooted in the cultural values, expectations and frustrations of every society. Depending on the perspective, travelling is not only a form of entertainment but also a fertile source for panic and concern.

Conclusion

It is widely recognized that tourism melts into a homogenous system with different but interrelated components. Considered as a "perishable economic product", tourism and experience cannot be stored. That is the reason why forecasting is vital for the development of an efficient policy (PULINA, 2010). For business and management, some of those elements are controllable while others remain uncontrollable. From this perspective, perception acts as a conduit to warrant the well-function of industry, based on the assumptions that aesthetic values predominate in policy-makers and professionals devote considerable efforts in designing the perfect destination. Unexpected effects as well as unforeseen risks are immediately tracked, selected and eliminated (RAUKEN et al, 2010). That's why tourism academic researchers have during last years overemphasized risks and hazards issues. To some extent, the importance of identifying risk is associated to the preservation of tourist-places.

Furthermore, there is an important ethical dilemma about risk issues which should be discussed in detail. Starting from the premise that ordinary people are often relegated from the decision-making process, the conceptual confusion between threat and risk facilitates that those stakeholders in charge of making decisions avoid their responsibilities. In other terms, an airplane accident is a direct consequence of an untangled net of decisions made by upper-management, but not a consequence of acts by passengers who paid their ticket. As Luhmann puts it, victims face hazards while risks are generated top-down by decision-makers. For some reason strongly linked to the sensationalism of mass-media, the events of September 11th 2001 triggered a widespread sentiment of disaster by which nobody feels safe anytime and anywhere. After this traumatic experience, tourism-related scholars viewed in risk-perception theory a fertile source not only for explaining the financial fluctuations of international tourism but also a conceptual framework to mitigate the negative aftermaths of events in an ever-changing world. From a managerial perspective, risk-perception theory was certainly adopted giving priority to the tourist-destination's profit. This short paper was aimed at exploring the main limitations of this theory as well as the misconception around the terms hazard and risk. The war machine aroused after the World Trade centre's episode is accompanied with a cultural entertainment industry where sometimes the science entrenches complicity.

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