**Title:** Risk News Framing Effect – The Power of Audiences

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**Abstract:**
This media effects study reflects on the practices tourists employ in making destination risk judgments on the basis of news coverage of terrorist attacks and events of political instability. Through qualitative research, insights are gained into the link between news media representations of risk and individual destination risk information processing. The paper discusses the nuanced ways in which audiences interpret destination risk by drawing on a blend of their knowledge of hazards and portrayals of risk embedded in news reports. The findings point towards a cognitive transactional model of media effects, which recognise the active role and power of audiences in determining effects. Consideration is given to psychological mechanism underlying framing effects and destination marketing practice.
Keywords: News framing, risk perception, terrorism, political instability, destination image
Introduction

News media representations of conflict and hazards are an important source of information about tourist destination safety levels (Fuchs, Uriely, Reichel, & Maoz, 2013; Mansfeld, 2006; Stepchenkova & Eales, 2010; Walters, Mair, & Lim, 2016). The reports feed into personal risk judgments which essentially help people avoid negative consequences of exposure to hazards. Potential loss of time or money can deter tourists from experiences they value; however, the possibility of physical harm and/or psychological trauma are likely to be the least tolerable due to severity of their impact. While some degree of physical harm risk may be tolerable by, for example, tourists who seek thrills of extreme sports and novelty (Lepp & Gibson, 2008; Sharifpour, Walters, & Ritchie, 2013) places associated with a chance of exposure to human induced hazards such as bombings, shootings are beyond the threshold of acceptability of many.

Concern about potential threats can prompt tourists to adopt risk reduction strategies, of which seeking latest destination news is a frequent behaviour (Adam, 2015; Fuchs & Reichel, 2011; Lo, Law, & Cheung, 2011). The outcome of the interaction between messages concerning hazards and potential destination visitors is of paramount importance to destination marketers who seek to avoid distorted images of destination safety and potential drop in arrivals. Despite this, little attention has been devoted to the issue of consumer interpretation of risk news in tourism literature. Dual process theories, such as the heuristic-systematic model (HSM) (Chaiken, 1980) and elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) suggest that people attend to and consider persuasive or other messages in two different ways. Systematic or central route processors, analyse messages carefully and weigh alternative arguments, while heuristic or peripheral processors are less deliberate, respond to cues (e.g. trusted news source) and take other mental short-cuts (e.g. examples of other events that come to mind) for quick intuitive judgments. According to these theories, one of the key factors that determine which route is taken is the extent to which information can be handled effectively and understood by message recipients. Evidence from studies concerning risk information processing suggests that people have significant problems with interpreting risk as potential outcome probabilities when making decisions or forming risk judgment (Kunreuther, Slovic, & Olsen, 2017; Sunstein, 2003). This is expected to be especially true in light of complex events which people may know little about e.g. political and social turmoil in a foreign country. The difficulty of the task is additionally compounded by the fact that it is not uncommon for consumers to make travel decisions under pressures of
time or money, with imperfect knowledge of hazards and risk events that are unfolding on the
screen of their TV’s or mobile devices. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that under such
conditions some tourist audiences may employ simpler heuristic strategies reacting to
peripheral cues. For example, a tourist faced with the need to judge the potential for conflict
escalation within a foreign political system may decide that large scale civil strife is unlikely
due to memorable examples of limited impact events.

Dual processes described above are reflected in their risk specific equals termed as ‘risk-as-
analysis’ and ‘risk-as-feelings’. Former, typically employed by experts, emphasises
individuals’ capacity to be analytical in risk assessment, and the latter, often employed by
ordinary people, emphasises the tendency for individuals to rely intuitive experiences
(Loewenstein & Lerner, 2003; Slovic & Peters, 2006). Research suggests that affect, studied
as valence i.e. positive versus negative (Johnson & Tversky 1983), and specific emotions e.g.
anger and fear (Lerner et al. 2003) play a critical role in risk perception. Although efficient,
judgments guided by intuition in affect-rich contexts such as violent crimes can lead to
overestimation of risk (Breckenridge, Zimbardo, & Sweeton, 2010) and poor choices to avoid
wrongfully perceived scenarios of risk. For instance, as a result of exposure to vivid
depictions of 9/11th attack and induced fear of terrorism-related death in airplanes, many
Americans substituted air travel with far riskier car travel leading to a large increase in traffic
fatalities (Gigerenzer, 2006). This dynamic is also commented by Sunstein (2005), who
demonstrates how the inevitably fallible logic of risk as feelings employed by the general
public, or populist approach to risk, drives regulation of risk identified on the basis of lay
opinion and fear rather than scientifically sound information produced by ‘risk as analysis’,
or the technocratic approach. Following the populist logic and public demand for information
about some dangers fed by the heightened media focus has led to exaggerated climate of fear
and a quest for totally safe environments which can never be met (Bianchi, 2006). Given that
news of terrorism and political instability typically involve vivid descriptions and imagery
that invoke strong emotions, the role of risk as feelings in this context is particularly
important.

Related to this issue is the news framing theory of media effects which is helpful in
understanding different ways in which news texts are organised and audiences come to think
of different problems. Frames embedded in news coverage can be understood as “a central
organising idea or a story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events”
(Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). The invitation extended to a recipient to adopt a
particular interpretative lens can work on the same basis as heuristic strategies (Entman and Pellicano, 2009) in that they are used (or can act as a means) to “help simplify complex issues by lending greater weight to certain considerations and arguments over others” (Nisbet, 2010, p. 44). Conceptualised as a heuristic process, an effect is said to occur when in the process of forming their opinion, recipients focus on the features of a message emphasised by the sender and arrive at an interpretation promoted by the frame (Igartua and Cheng, 2009). An experiment based study by Kapuscinski and Richards (2016) demonstrates that emphasis on some qualities of risk in communicating text can result in greater or lower levels of risk attributed to certain destination hazards by users of these texts.

While useful in understanding how features of message can influence dependent variables of interest, framing experiments are limited in their ability to map thought processes that occur in response to exposure to a communicating text. This particular issue is of significance to tourism destination marketers who strive to understand their audiences and use this knowledge in communication campaigns that challenge potentially distorted representations of destination risk. On a theoretical level, such knowledge is of importance to the debate concerning the explanatory process of the framing. Key perspectives suggest that framing effect is a function of accessibility (memory-based model) or applicability of knowledge (online model) activated during reception of news (Cacciatore, Scheufele, & Iyengar, 2016; Matthes, 2007). Using a model of cognitive frame proposed by Scheufele and Scheufele (2010) this study contributes to these issues by focusing on the link between leisure tourists and news frames concerning risk of terrorism and political instability. Specifically, as opposed to statistically demonstrating an effect in response to experimental treatments, the model is used to map and represent graphically tourists’ interpretation of a fictitious hazard news report to arrive at a judgment concerning destination risk. On a methodological level this study proposes that the model of cognitive frame can be used as an analytical framework in studies that aim to explore the issue of news reception and impact.

**Literature review**

**Risk perception**

Risk perception concerns ‘processing of physical signals and/or information about potentially harmful events or activities, and the formation of a judgement about seriousness, likelihood and acceptability of the respective event or activity’ (Breakwell, 2007; Renn, 2004; Slovic, Fischhoff, & Lichtenstein, 1982 cited by Grobe et al. 2008, p. 16). In this sense,
it is a subjectively defined mental model which is derived from a relationship of people with hazards, such as bombings or tornadoes, which are founded upon physical properties of the world. For example, a bomb explosion in a particular destination is dangerous and it may lead to physical harm but it does not necessarily mean it is risky unless an individual, or, anything humans value, is in close proximity to it. However, proximity to an explosion is not the only factor that may be taken into account by people assessing such risks.

The psychometric paradigm of risk (Fischhoff, Slovic, Lichtenstein, Read, & Combs, 1978) suggests that in judging risk people consider a range of qualitative features of hazards such as their newness, catastrophic potential, or the extent to which exposure to risk is voluntary (Kunreuther et al., 2017; Renn, 2008). Initially considered mainly a cognitive process, risk perception was later recognised to be largely determined by affect (Slovic and Peters, 2006) and specific emotions (Lerner et al., 2003). For example, evidence suggests that if individuals’ feelings toward an activity are favourable, they perceive the benefits as high and risks as low (Finucane, Alhakami, Slovic, & Johnson, 2000). Taking a holistic approach, a dual process of conceptualising risk and explaining risk-related decisions takes into account both affect and cognition (Trumbo et al., 2016).

From a constructionist viewpoint, the cultural theory of Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) proposes that hazards are mediated by social factors i.e. socially selected and transformed into risks. For instance, terrorism may be considered a particularly salient risk because of the value that specific groups (e.g. western tourists) place on what terrorist seek to threaten (e.g. freedom of movement as tourists) (Douglas, 1992). Other sociological perspectives such as Beck’s (1992) risk society, Giddens (1991), or writers who adopted Foucault’s governmentality (Castel, 1991; Ewald, 1991; cited in Lupton, 2006) have studied risk in the context of the development of modern societies and see it as product of modernisation and secularisation that lead to decline in social cohesion and trust in government. According to Korstanje (2016), a new stage of development, ‘thana capitalism’, is characterised by a reality where suffering of others, for instance experience in watching news of terrorist attacks, became a form of entertainment and an instrument of self-gratification for global audiences. While disgusted by being exposed to violence, audiences’ find observation of others’ misfortune captivating because it reinforces the privileged status of a survivor.

Writers of socio-cultural perspectives focus on the discourses that surround and construct risk, or the ways of communicating about and acting upon risk that are common to social groups (Lupton 2006). From the perspective of this paper, their value lays in highlighting the
active role of the public in creating and re-shaping what constitutes risk which is expressed by representations of risk circulating in the society (i.e. culture, social interaction, news media).

In tourism risk perception can be understood as a judgment concerning the likelihood and severity of a loss of something that tourists value. Past studies measured tourists’ perception of risk in relation to factors such as time, money, health, or specific issues such as terrorism or political instability (PI) that may lead to a combination of unwanted consequences (Fuchs et al., 2013; Jonas & Mansfeld, 2017). Unacceptable level of risk is typically met with a range of strategies tourists employ to reduce risk (Adam, 2015; Law, 2006; Ritchie, Chien, & Sharifpour, 2017). These include searching for information concerning the place at risk, attaining travel insurance, substituting places perceived as risky with safer alternatives, or delaying decision to travel. In this respect, the negative perceptions concerning relative safety and security present at a destination are critical. This is emphasised by studies which demonstrate the negative influence on tourist arrivals of hazards such as terrorist attacks or events of PI (Araña & León, 2008; Aschauer, 2014; Buigut & Amendah, 2015; Hamadeh & Bassil, 2017). Despite the fact that the probability of being harmed in such events is typically low (Mueller, 2007), past research suggests that people tend to neglect such information (Sunstein, 2003; Sunstein & Zeckhauser, 2011) and, following the logic of gut feelings and fear, over-estimate risk on the basis of qualitative features of terrorism and political instability such as severe consequences, vivid images of harm and injury and intentional, human-induced nature (Alhakami & Slovic, 1994). This is particularly true with respect to terrorism which has been described by Schmid and Jongman (1988, p. 28) as:

"an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action … whereby the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat and violence-based communication processes between terrorists (organisations), (imperilled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience)."

This definition underscores, the symbolic communication aspect of terrorism, or as argued by Weimann (2008) ‘theater of terror’, which seeks to intimidate global audiences. The goal is achieved by means of a symbiotic relationship between news media and terrorism
(Spencer, 2017). On one hand, by targeting narrowly defined symbolic groups such as western tourists (Hoffman, 2006) terrorism provides violent and exciting stories which captivate audiences (Korstanje, 2016), and sell the news product. On the other, the media provides perpetrators with a way of spreading their message and inducing fear among the general public. Vivid and affect-rich depictions of suffering potentially create a state of mind in which audiences are not capable of making objective assessments of risk (Nacos, Bloch-Elkon, & Shapiro, 2007), and change behaviour e.g. avoid certain destinations (e.g. Gigerenzer, 2006; Rubin et al. 2007) in line with perpetrators demands.

While it is to be expected that some tourists travel despite such issues (Fuchs et al., 2013; Hajibaba, Gretzel, Leisch, & Dolnicar, 2015) or practice dark tourism (Light, 2017) many leisure tourists are discouraged. The recent string of events such as the car attacks in London and Barcelona 2017, bombing in Manchester 2017, Istanbul 2016 nightclub shootings, or France - Paris 2016 riots, suggest that human-made hazards remain a concern for the industry and an issue that requires more research.

Given that risk of terrorism or PI in tourist destinations is difficult to assess by people in tourist generating countries due to lack of direct stimuli and personal experience with these hazards, secondary sources of information are of particular importance. In this respect, news media representations of risk are of critical importance in shaping how people think of these issues and their travel behaviour (Chew & Jahari, 2014; Kapuscinski & Richards, 2016; Walters, Mair & Lim, 2016). Despite the importance of this issue the understanding of the psychological process that governs news reception concerning risk and impact upon audiences received little attention in tourism literature. Fundamental to these issues are the concepts of frame and framing which are discussed in the following section.

News framing effects

News framing is essentially concerned with variations in presentation of issues (Iyengar, 1991) that can resonate with audiences and condition the process of news reception and impact. In other words, frames are about patterns of interpretation (Schefufele, 2006) or schemes for both presenting and comprehending news (Schuflfele, 1999). Through selection of some words, images and expressions, one can construct messages that emphasise links among them in ways that promote a particular interpretation (Entman, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009) while de-emphasising a less favoured one (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2008). With respect to risk framing, the emphasis in mass media coverage of hazards on some
aspects of hazards to the exclusion of others has been demonstrated in a number of studies (e.g. Driedger, 2007; Jönsson 2011; Marks, Kalaitzandonakes, Wilkins, & Zakharoa, 2007; Woods, 2007). In turn, these messages can determine how media users remember, evaluate and act upon issues covered (Price & Tewksbury, 1997) including communication texts concerning risk (Boholm, 2009; Danis & Stohl, 2008; Durfee, 2006; Otieno, Spada, & Renkl, 2013; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006; Woods, 2011). The media effects approach to framing focuses on understanding the ways in which different features of a message concerning some issue influence media users.

Past research suggests that a framing effect is an outcome of interplay between two constructs i.e. media frame (or frames in communication) and individual frame (or frames in thought) (Scheufele, 1999, Druckman, 2001b).

The former has been conceptualised by Tankard et al. (1991) as “a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is” (p. 6). In other words, the focus is on what the speaker or news text says (Entman, Matthes and Pellicano, 2009), such as how a hazardous event is portrayed by a news outlet. Through the selection and emphasis on some aspects of an issue, journalists present a story to the public within a particular frame of reference to simplify the complexity (Entman, 2004; Van Gorp, 2007). Individual frame is the focus on what individual is thinking, such as the judgment of personal risk. This concept is also referred to as schema, which according to Fiske and Taylor (1991) is a “cognitive structure that represents knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and relations among attributes” (p. 131). Their make-up determines an individual way of receiving, organising and responding to incoming stimuli, such as, for example news of a terrorist attack. If incoming content contradicts the schema, individuals may ignore it and direct attention towards information compatible with the schema (Perse, 2001). Once activated, that is, retrieved from the memory; schemas help to process information (Scheufele and Scheufele, 2010) by relating its content to the existing understanding of topics. Moreover, schemas are also used when information is missing or ambiguous. For instance, when exposed to an incomplete report concerning safety as a destination (shortly after an incident), an individual may draw knowledge from other similar events to fill in the blank spots. As such, schemas may act as heuristics, making rapid information processing possible (Igartua and Cheng, 2009, Entman, Matthes and Pellicano, 2009), as opposed to careful consideration of information contained in news reports.
In tourism literature, the concept of framing is reflected in studies which investigate the link between media and destination image. Studies of Pan and Ryan (2007) and Pan and Hsu (2014) analyse travelogues to identify patterns of emphasis on some destination attributes. In a more specific context of destination image, Walters et al. (2016) analyse the media coverage of Blue Mountains Bushfires 2011, and find evidence of imbalanced and sensationalist portrayals that may influence tourists risk perception. While influential, these and other studies (e.g. Daye, 2014; Santos, 2004; Wu, Xue, Morrison, & Leung, 2012) focus on media frame analysis i.e. media perspective, and as such tell us little of news reception, or, the interaction between media and individual frames.

The work of Pan (2011) contributes to this issue in the context of responses to tourism TV commercials of New Zealand. On the basis of recall data concerning images of New Zealand obtained in a questionnaire on a student sample, the author demonstrates associations among images recalled. Sets of associations identified e.g. of snow-capped mountains, snowboarding, and fjords, are potentially indicative of images stored in memory, or schemas, that salient elements of commercials resonated with. As such, the study provides a rare contribution to uncovering relationships between media frames and individual frames i.e. knowledge of New Zealand. This study highlights that more evidence is needed to uncover this relationship beyond recall. In particular, greater insights into reasoning and affective responses to frames, especially, responses to issues that are not easily framed with the use of images alone. News representations of risk and how tourists decode rhetorical devices and multiple storylines used by journalists to portray complex issues such as potential for conflict escalation, offer a good context for such exploration.

According to framing effects scholars successful effects depend on three factors i.e. availability, accessibility (memory-based model) and applicability of knowledge (on-line model) activated during reception of news (Price and Tewksbury, 1997).

First, a frame has the potential to be effective if the concept it represents it is already stored in memory of a message recipient, or the recipient can comprehend it and make new beliefs about an issue covered (Matthes, 2007; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). Second, a frame once stored in memory can only be used as a lens through which to draw a conclusion about new information if it is accessible i.e. can be retrieved from long-term memory. Schemas can be thought of as resting in an inactive state waiting to be changed to active status and their accessibility i.e. ease with which they can be recalled, is determined by frequent or recent
exposure to the frame (Chong & Druckman, 2007). For example, in deciding to travel to a destination tourists may recall any number of salient events, including safety related issues, which may influence the final decision. However, influence of accessible concepts, such as memory of past hazardous events, is constrained by applicability to the issue at hand. A frame made available in memory and accessible through amount of exposure may be deemed inapplicable to an issue due to reasons such as non-credible message source or the context in which the frame is considered. For instance, a frame concerning levels of risk present in a tourist destination embedded in a news article from a reputable source may be deemed irrelevant by individuals who travel in business or to visit friends and family. Therefore, Scheufele (2000) and Cacciatore et al. (2016) argue that framing functions on the basis of applicability effects that call upon particular interpretative schemas (or frames in mind), which, in turn, guide information processing. Therefore, framing effects may be understood as an outcome of interplay between audiences’ pre-existing knowledge structures concerning some topic and structures of knowledge manifest in communication texts or audio-visual messages.

In consideration of literature concerning the relationship between terrorism, PI, theories of news media framing and destination risk perception; this study was guided by the following research question:

**RQ:** How are the message elements of media frames concerning the magnitude of risk of terrorism and PI used by leisure tourists in making judgments of perceived risk?

**Materials and Methods**

Semi-structured interviews were held with 12 participants in UK to address the research question. The interviews followed an online experiment of Kapuscinski and Richards (2016) which demonstrated how variations in features of messages concerning magnitude of terrorism and PI risk can influence leisure tourists’ risk perception. To observe effects, qualitative characteristics of risk were manipulated, embedded in fictitious news reports, and presented to audiences in a scenario of considering a leisure trip in a foreign country. Each of four participant groups consisted of three individuals who responded to one of the following article versions (see Appendix), Terrorism A – Risk Amplifying, Terrorism B – Risk Attenuating, PI A – Risk Amplifying, PI B – Risk Attenuating. Examples of message elements manipulated are presented in table 1. Details concerning the make-up of treatments are reported by Kapuscinski and Richards (2016). The interview was structured around these
articles and involved questions about most noticeable parts of the story that lead participants to judge personal risk associated with visiting destination concerned. A series of probes allowed to uncover a range of travel experiences, as well as broad thoughts and feelings concerning risk and specific hazards, that participants evoked in response to articles.

Table 1 Fictitious articles make-up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of PI risk</th>
<th>Scenario A (Risk Amplifying) vs. Scenario B (Risk Attenuating)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Violence</td>
<td>• e.g. “Violent clashes” vs. “Clashes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Commentary on degree of socio-political tension</td>
<td>• e.g. “Threatening atmosphere of high tension” vs. “Isolated acts of frustration”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Geographical spread and consequences</td>
<td>• e.g. “There is a possibility that further violent protests could spread” vs. “Any further protests are likely to be confined to city squares”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Disruptions to transport network</td>
<td>• e.g. “in the event of conflict escalation, delays and cancellations cannot be ruled out” vs. Absence</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of terrorism risk</th>
<th>Scenario A (Risk Amplifying) vs. Scenario B (Risk Attenuating)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Targets of attack</td>
<td>• e.g. “Including British tourists” vs. “Mainly police officers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Suspected Perpetrators</td>
<td>• e.g. “al-Qaeda and associated radical Islamic groups” vs. “Domestic rebel separatist group”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Location of explosion and threat of further attacks</td>
<td>• e.g. “Police vehicles parked in city square situated on the edge of a district full of restaurants, cafes and shops” vs. “Police vehicles parked in city square”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) VoxPopuli Event atmosphere and confidence level</td>
<td>• e.g. “I have never seen anything like this and I cannot believe it happened right here. Now people will not have peace of mind” vs. “Yes it was a terrorist attack but we refuse to be terrorised. Life here goes on as usual”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample of participants was identified from the list of individuals who responded to the experiment survey (N=124). The specific quota consisted of participants from each of the four article treatment groups experiment participants read. Beyond this, data collected in the online experiment screening questionnaire was used to recruit informants on the basis of personal characteristics found to explain variability in perceived risk. Characteristics
controlled for were the degree of allocentricity, gender and age, which allowed to target individuals who were uniquely qualified to address research question. E-mails were sent to participants in each of the four target groups that matched criteria which resulted in 5 respondents agreeing to participate in the interviews. Following this, two reminders were sent a week and two weeks after the initial contact point, resulting in the final sample of 12 participants. Interviewees characteristics were as follows: gender (6=male, 6=female), age (18-24=2, 25-34=3, 35-44=4, 55-64=3), allocentricity (allocentric=5, midcentric=3, psychocentric=4).

The interviews were conducted over the telephone due to the costs and time involved in face-to-face interviews with a geographically-dispersed sample. Skype video calls were also offered to the participants as an alternative to telephone calls, however, only one person preferred this form of contact over the telephone. With the permission of the participants, interviews were recorded for later transcription, and transcribed using the NVivo package.

To address the RQ, a model of the cognitive frame by Scheufele and Scheufele (2010) was used (see figure 1). The model is a simple depiction of the interplay between a recipient’s network of cognitive schemas (or individual frame) and a newspaper article (containing a media frame). In the context of this study, the individual frame was identified on the basis of participants account of thought and feelings that arise in response to the media frame contained in a hazard story they read. By emphasising certain aspects of this story (the white circles in the bottom level of the model), for instance, tourist targets and responsibility for the event linked to a specific perpetrator, the newspaper article invites the recipient to interpret the story in a particular light (media frame) i.e. involving more or less risk. The extent to which this information has an effect on a recipient depends on her/his network of schemas, or, in this case, her/his schema of a terrorist act or an event of PI. Such schemas are a network of ideas and beliefs that helps people process subsequent information, for instance, news articles on a terrorist attack. The model allowed to map responses of tourists to different elements of a risk story to uncover patterns of interpretation and address research question.

While not created for the purpose of studying impact of risk communications on audiences, the model is applicable to this context. In fact, it is related to an area of study in risk communication and the concept of mental models of hazard (Bostrom, Fischhoff, & Morgan, 1992). Mental models of hazard are used to map beliefs people have of hazards to develop risk communication that corrects potential misunderstandings (Breakwell, 2000).
Referring back to the model (see figure 1), if the message elements emphasised by a newspaper article resonate with certain parts of a recipient’s schema of an event (the white bulbs at the top level) more than others (the dark bulbs), they are made applicable to the issue at hand. That is, the media frame activates four of the recipient’s terrorism related schemas by means of applicability and provides a lens (current mental model) through which to interpret the issue or event, in this case, a risk judgment.

**Figure 1 Model of a cognitive frame**

An individual may also evoke schemas which were not emphasised by the newspaper article, but are in line with the direction of the media frame, and judge them as applicable to the issue at hand as a result of spreading activation (the two white bulbs on the left at the top level). For instance, reading about an event perpetrated by al-Qaeda or Islamic State (IS), an individual may think of a memorable incident such as the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre, or, a recent string of attacks in Europe despite no information in the article that would suggest connectivity between the events. As a result, the images of a fearsome event

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**Adapted from: Scheufele and Scheufele (2010)**
motivated by Islamic extremism with multiple western casualties may amplify the receiver’s perceived risk. Importantly, an individual may also oppose and negotiate the meaning of the article, and judge an issue through the lens of available thoughts and beliefs (schemas) which oppose an interpretation promoted by the media frame embedded within a particular media text. For instance, despite no connection between a terrorist attack and al-Qaeda made in the report, an individual may use the template of the Bali bombings to conclude what the event he/she is currently reading about might be like. Whichever strategy is employed by the audience members, in effect, a specific mental model of the event is a function of the media frame and its applicability to respondents’ cognitive schemas.

Using Scheufele and Scheufele’s model, a series of mind maps were created to reflect the depth of the interaction between each of the 12 interview participants and the article types to which they were exposed. The following paragraph explains in detail the meaning of the different parts of the mind maps. See figure 1.2 as an example of a mind map.

Starting from the top of the diagram, at level 1 is the news article and its expected direction of influence on perceived risk. This is signified by the letters employed in the experiment (i.e. article versions A and B) as well as by different colours i.e. red (risk amplifying) or green (risk attenuating). At level 2 are the elements of the media frame embedded in the news article. The colours signify the direction of each of the message elements used on the perceived magnitude of risk involved in the scenario. Apart from the red and green colours which correspond with the article type (level 1), the blue colour signifies a message element which was not intended to promote any particular interpretation of the issue. At the time of constructing the fictitious article, these elements were treated as ‘core fact’, or ‘frameless’ elements (Van Gorp, 2010, p. 94), which were held constant across all articles. Specifically, these include the: 1) commentary from the FCO about no advice issued against travel to the country described in the scenario and event relevant guidelines, and 2) tourism commentary concerning no downturn in the number of visitors to the country (in the terrorism articles) and the limited impact on the transport network (in the PI articles).

Next is the recipient’s current mental model (CMM) of perceived risk (level 3). The downward connectors between a level 2 message element and a CMM element at level 3 represents a situation where the recipient makes a reference during the interview to a message element included in the article read. The different colours of the elements at level 3 signify the direction in which the message element was used by the recipient i.e. risk amplifying (red colour), risk attenuating (green colour), or unsure/unspecified/opposed (blue colour). The
latter category signifies situations in which the recipient mentioned a particular message element and A) was unsure as to the risk implications; B) did not specify the perceived risk implications; or C) opposed the risk implications suggested by the message element. The symmetrical connection between a message element (level 2) and a recipient schema (level 4) signifies an active role of recipient in his or her interaction with the message. That is, the recipient picks up a particular message element and seeks to find meaning by relating it to a pre-existing network of schemas or adopting it without verbalizing a connection with schematic structures. Level 4 represents all comments made by the recipient in association with the event read about and the concept of risk in general. Finally, level 5 represents the recipient and his or her demographic and psychographic characteristics available from experiment.

The analysis of data obtained from the semi-structured interviews was performed with the use of NVivo software. The themes within the data were identified primarily with a theoretical, or top down approach; that is, one that is driven by the researcher’s particular theoretical interest and research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this case, it was the media framing theory and an investigation of a manner in which tourists draw on hazard reports to make risk judgments.

This choice had implications for how the coding was performed. It meant that initially coding was done in a deductive logic to fit into the pre-existing themes contained in fictitious articles (i.e. media frames). Participants responses were coded for any mention of these message elements to determine whether content was noticed and memorised. Following this, an inductive phase of open coding focused on identifying themes that went beyond responses that matched content of fictitious articles. In particular, those representing individual frames of interviewees e.g. memories and experiences with risk. The last phases consisted of refining of the themes, representing the date in the form of 12 mind maps, and identifying commonalities among the cases.

Results

This section presents findings regarding how interviewees attended to and evaluated article they were exposed to. Findings are presented by article type (risk amplifying versus risk attenuating frames) to explore potential influence of event interpretation (Terrorism or PI)
and draw on commonalities with respect to styles of evaluation. As with other treatments, Terrorism A article was read and discussed by three interviewees (John, Joshua and Melissa).

Surprisingly, the interviews with participants of this group were a stronger case for limited effects. For instance, both John and Joshua consciously rejected a number of cues intended to signal greater personal risk despite awareness (level 4) of Bali bombings, which closely correspond to the media frame promoted by the article they read. Refusal to apply this frame in evaluating risk was supported by a number of arguments, for example, beliefs in minimal chances of being involved in such an incident, bias inherent in media reporting, and the tighter security of tourism industry post an attack. In Joshua’s view, the incident imposed risk on other tourists who frequent vulnerable areas, such as nightclubs or markets, that him and his family do not. These largely determined participant’s CMM (level 3) applied to interpret the situation as involving low personal risk.

These observations suggest that while a media frame may be encountered and recognised by a member of an audience, the effect does not occur unless it is made applicable in her/his context (Scheufele, 2004). This confirms the finding by Price and Tewksbury (1997) who identified interpretative frames drawn on by readers of news stories, irrespective of the framing processes used by the media. They found that participant thoughts did not depend exclusively on the media coverage of an event or issue, rather “participants demonstrated a capacity to introduce their own thoughts, going beyond the information provided and drawing out some basic implications on their own” (Price and Tewksbury, 1997, p. 496).

Judgments of Terrorism A article are arguably a manifestation of the representativeness heuristic (Kahneman and Tversky, 1972). That is, a judgment of the probability of being victimised made on the basis of the similarity of the event described in the article to other memorable attacks. Interestingly, this could also imply a bias in judgment, as despite the Bali attacks of 2002 which targeted nightspots popular with young tourists and backpackers (Vaughn et al. 2009) many other events attributed to the group (including the Bali attacks in 2005) involved victims beyond the nightclub environment e.g. restaurants, modes of transport, heritage sites etc. This confirms the assertions of many researchers, that is, while efficient, heuristics often lead to incorrect judgments of probability.

Subsequently, the analysis focused on recipients (Alex, Valerie and Brian) of the risk attenuating Terrorism B article. In comparison to the terrorism A article, group B is a case for a media effect. A number of cues embedded in text were taken into account by recipients in
evaluating hypothetical destination. Specifically, Alex made references to the non-civilian ‘Targets’ element of the message (level 2) which found reflection in his schema of ETA attacks in Spain on government and military targets (level 4). To his mind, an unlikely link between separatist groups and tourist targets indicated lower probability of being victimised. In a similar vein, Valerie made a reference to cues such as the non-civilian nature of targets, the bomb explosion near to a police vehicle, which to her suggested a relatively safe situation. It is clear that both took a mental short-cut in that qualitative characteristics of hazard they were exposed to provided an efficient strategy for arriving at an estimation of risk. While recipients had also drawn on conclusions contradictory to the interpretation suggested by the media frame i.e. the mere fact that active separatists exist in the country means danger, the overall impression made by the article remained unchanged.

Figure 1.2 Brian’s mind map

Interestingly, one reader of terrorism B article, interpreted the event in the opposite direction and found it particularly threatening. As in the case of limited effects of terrorism A article group, Brian (see figure 1.2) adapted the article content in line with his knowledge and beliefs rather than interpretation promoted by the risk frame (level 2). In fact, he used a schema which corresponded more closely with the terrorism A frame and produced its
intended effect. Specifically, in contrast to Alex and Valerie, he rejected the suggestions made with regards to non-tourist targets and vividly recalled a number of high profile terrorist attacks which involved multiple tourist casualties to help him arrive at a heightened perception of risk. This train of thought is also evident in Brian’s distrust of the advice made by the FCO, revealed by the following statement “they are just trying to downplay this”. This indicates that the media content may cause effects that are hard to predict and control (Scheufele, 2000). Underpinned by previously discussed theories, these cases demonstrate a range of outcomes of tourists’ exposure to media texts, and underscore the complexity involved in the process of their reception and interpretation.

Next the analysis focused on responses to articles concerning cases of PI. As in the pair of articles about terrorism, the readers of articles about a case of PI employed a range of strategies which point to the cognitive-transactional model of media effects (Perse, 2001). That is, cognitive and affective effects of salient media content (via the emphasis of certain aspects of a story) which largely depend on audiences’ schema make-up (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Paige is the only participant who perceived a limited amount of risk in response to the PI A article, hence another case of a limited effect. She spoke of her trip to Egypt after demonstrations sparked by President Morsi’s decree in 2012 giving him extensive new powers (BBC, 2012). In doing so she referred to several situations during her holiday where she felt protected by the Egyptian security forces and the tourism industry (level 4).

“from my experience to go into such country … you are with a guide all the time, they do not just let you wonder around town … and all the bits that you go … you are with the guide, and tourists are looked after and protected”

This first-hand experience also appeared to reinforce her trust in the accuracy of the FCO travel advice and had a decisive influence on her interpretation of the situation (level 3). The confidence in judgment, made on the basis of this schema of PI, was also evident in the way Paige dismissed the information about the violent nature and fears among the local population.

In contrast, both Lucy and Omar represent cases for a media effect. In particular, Omar made several references to the message elements and used these in the direction promoted by the
article (level 3). Interestingly, the emphasis on the extent of the geographical spread and the consequences of unrest for public safety and order (level 2) contradicted his views on the usual level of control one has in avoiding riots. Moreover, following the logic promoted by the risk amplifying frame, a tone of distrust was evident in Lucy’s reaction to precautionary advice from the FCO advice. She said: “I am quite sure if it’s just a local … one off event I don’t think there would be a warning, asking tourists to stay clear of gatherings”. On a theoretical level, Scheufele and Scheufele (2010) and Chong and Druckman (2007) argue that, if a media frame reorients a receiver’s schema consistently over a period of time, this leads to media framing altering audience schema (i.e. transformation effect). In this sense, what became an element of participants CMM (level 3) at the time of discussing the article could potentially become part of his stable schema (level 4) that is much more difficult to change for destination marketers.

Next the analysis focused on readers of PI B version of the articles. As in previous cases, here risk judgments were a product of an interplay between interviewees schema and content of articles. In line with risk attenuating frame, both Beth and Clare perceived a limited amount of risk associated with visiting the destination they read about. On contrary, much as in the case of Brian (fig 1.2), Adam interpreted the event in the opposite direction. Specifically, he used a schema of large scale unrest in Egypt (level 4) to reject the emphasis on the contained character of the protests (level 2), and concluded “these small or large gatherings can at some point get out of hand really quickly, so that was one thing that affected my decision”. His statements indicate that the conclusion he reached is arguably an effect created by prior media coverage (Scheufele and Scheufele, 2010). Specifically, he said “I am not the type of person that really keeps up with the world affairs, but these things you hear them, as soon as you read them they come to you and you think … what if … might sound a bit overcautious but hey”.

Discussion

This research makes a theoretical contribution to the study of the tourist decision-making process. The study enhances the understanding of the relationship between perceived risk, the media, and tourist consumer behaviour by empirically supporting the validity of the framing theory of media effects. The above presented mind maps demonstrate the complexity and dynamics involved in the interaction between news texts and their receivers, and the
implications of this process for risk judgments. The ways in which the respondents used the specific message elements employed in the article they were exposed to were largely complicated by the receivers’ schema make-up and so clear patterns were difficult to observe. That is, the effects of each of the message elements within versions A and B were not uniform. While some readers of versions B used the manipulated content in the expected direction (i.e. Beth, Claire, and Alex) to judge the situation as less risky, others (i.e. Adam and Brian) found the scenarios indicative of high risk. Likewise, some readers of versions A interpreted the situation as involving high risk (i.e. Omar), while others completely rejected the meaning promoted (i.e. John and Paige) or negotiated its meaning with the use of their schemas of events (i.e. Melissa, Joshua, and Lucy). It is evident that, much like humans, each of the mind maps is a unique construct. This said, certain commonalities between them can be observed. The following three points summarise the possible outcomes of this process:

1. A media frame can be rejected altogether if it is not compatible with a receiver’s schema. Schemas considered by the receiver as applicable to the situation at hand are used to arrive at an alternative interpretation of an issue or event. This includes schemas created by previous media coverage that may be conflicting with the media frame encountered (e.g. Adam and Brian).

2. A media frame is partially accepted: while some parts resonate with receivers, others are rejected (e.g. Melissa, Joshua, Lucy). CMM may depend upon the weight attached to elements picked up from the message. Schemas compatible with the media frame encountered may be available and accessible (i.e. the memory of similar events is easily recalled) but not applicable to the personal context of receivers (e.g. Joshua, John).

3. A media frame is accepted: A) without previously existing schemas (or evidence verbalised) (e.g. Valerie, Beth); B) existing schemas are reinforced (Alex); C) existing schemas are transformed (e.g. Omar).

The findings discussed in this paper point towards a cognitive-transactional model of media effects (Perse, 2001) which recognise the active role of audiences in determining effects. This suggests that while the effects can take place as intended, for example in interviews with Valerie, Alex, they are very difficult to control or predict. In other words, it can be argued that for these data, the extent to which a media effect on perceived risk takes place also largely depends on: 1) the availability of schemas in the decision-maker’s mind which resonate with message elements he or she encounters, and 2) the applicability or
appropriateness of the activated parts of the schemas as a basis for making a risk judgment. For instance, just because a receiver recalls a terrorist attack perpetrated by IS or al-Qaeda or a severe event of PI which corresponds with the media frame promoted, it does not mean that he or she considers this an indication of personal risk. An individual may, for example, conclude that he or she would not be anywhere near ‘trouble spots’ such as nightclubs.

Importantly, this aspect of the media and perceived risk interaction points toward a two-directional relationship, which recognises both the power of the media to influence message recipients and the power of audiences to oppose and negotiate the messages. This notion is reflected in the model proposed (see figure 6.1), which contributes to the research on the relationship between perceived risk and the media.

The study also makes a contribution to theories concerning the cognitive mechanisms underlying framing effects. Taking the information processing perspective, the use of Scheufele and Scheufele’s cognitive frame model (2010) allowed for an in-depth investigation of the ways in which recipients process the content of a risk message they are exposed to and arrive at perceived risk judgments. The output of the analysis supports the applicability model of framing effects (Price & Tewksbury, 1997; Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997; B. Scheufele, 2006; Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). The effects in this model are based on the media message embedded frame that invites recipients to apply their existing schemas to interpret an issue or an event in the direction promoted by the frame. For instance, the news frame may invite the audience to interpret the news about a terrorist attack as particularly threatening due to a suggested connection between the location of the attack and supposed involvement of al-Qaeda.

Therefore, the extent to which an applicability effect takes place largely depends on the characteristics of the audiences, which influence the process at different stages. First, the effects are dependent on the availability and accessibility of audiences’ schemas. That is, the schema related to the issue or event covered by the media, has to be available to an individual (i.e. stored in memory for use) and it is more likely to be activated by communication frames when it is accessible (i.e. easily recalled for use). Once parts of the pre-existing knowledge are activated by the attended features of the message (i.e. accessible), framing effects occur when the active concepts are consciously considered by the recipient to be applicable to the judgment of the issue at hand (e.g. Chong & Druckman, 2007; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997). In other words, “it is the underlying interpretative schemas that have been made
applicable to the issue that are the central effect of a frame” (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007, p. 14).

The findings of this research have a number of implications for tourism marketing practice. Firstly, the complexity of the psychological mechanisms underlying media effects and the difficulty involved in the control of the outcomes of tourists’ information processing can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, this poses challenges to tourism marketers who wish to minimise the negative effect of media coverage of hazards such as terrorism and PI. On the other, this indicates that the media may at times be limited in exerting an effect on audiences due to the power of audiences to oppose and negotiate the meanings suggested. In part, this may be due to audience characteristics such as degree of allocentricity (Kapuscinski and Richards, 2016), or other resilience characteristics that recently received attention in tourism literature (Hajibaba et al., 2015). With respect to communication, this research proposes that marketers can influence the way tourists attend to risk messages and evaluate tolerability of risk involved in holidays. To this end, message strategies for offsetting problematic destination images proposed by Avraham and Ketter (2007, 2016) are a great example of ways in which marketers can engage their audiences. For example, one of the strategies they propose is to isolate problematic regions from national promotional campaigns. Our findings concerning the applicability of frames would support this and suggest such strategies may reduce the applicability of undesirable news to tourists’ risk judgments of these places and avoid ripple effects for the whole country.

In essence, tourism professionals are faced with the ever-present issue of how to communicate an image of a product as complex as whole countries or regions and reassure potential tourists of conditions that meet their needs in times of uncertainty. Given that the final decision of whether or not to travel is an outcome of individual weighing of benefits expected from visiting a destination versus total costs, including uncertainty of negative consequences such as physical harm, delays etc., tourists’ involvement with an object at risk due to, for example, uniqueness and low substitutability of holiday experiences is vital. Tipping the balance between risk and benefit may increase the propensity of potential tourists to rationalise risk in a fashion similar to some of the interviewees reported in this paper.

However, given that some destinations may be limited in pull factors related to natural resources and tangible attractions of the tourism sector, the creation of innovative experiences and new ways of communicating with consumers that engage them on a multi-sensory level may be particularly important in this context. An example of such an initiative is the Remote
Control Tourist (RCT) campaign (RemoteControlTourist, 2014) which closed the distance between Melbourne and its potential visitors with the use of social media communication and tourists in the destination wearing helmets fitted with video cameras (i.e. the RCT’s). This way the customers around the world could experience the destination from their homes by suggesting the RCT’s via Facebook or Twitter experiences to engage in and receiving a real-time stream of these exploits on the screens of their computers, mobile phones or tablets.

Recent developments in the area of Virtual Reality opens yet another wave of opportunities.

All research is a product of compromises made in response to the limitations imposed by time, data availability and the research methods employed. In consideration of these factors, the findings of this research project are associated with a number of limitations that have a bearing on the applicability of the results to a wider context. While the interview participants were uniquely qualified to address research question of this project, it is important to note that the size of the sample means that the results can be at best transferable to other contexts.

Beyond this, recognising the importance of e-word-of-mouth, tourism marketers must have some insight into framing that occurs on forums, tourism specific review websites, and social media to be able to challenge misunderstandings. With respect to engaging with audiences and being a part of consumer-driven marketing, future research could consider the role played in influencing tourists’ perceived risk by specific sources of information such as, for instance, the personal recommendation concerning level of risk from travel agents or other tourists.
Reference list


Appendix: (Versions of articles tourists read: Terrorism A, Terrorism B, Political Instability A, and Political Instability B)

(Terrorism A)

Bomb explosion in popular tourist destination: Is it safe?

Security forces are on high alert at airports, train stations and markets across the country following last week’s bomb explosion in the capital city.

The bomb went off next to police vehicles. They were parked in a city square situated on the edge of a district full of restaurants, cafes and shops. At least 22 people, including British tourists, were injured in the blast.

“I have never seen anything like this and I cannot believe it happened right here. Now people will not have peace of mind”, a resident said.

It was not immediately apparent who was behind the attack. Unofficial sources revealed that a link to al-Qaeda and associated radical Islamic groups is suspected; however a police spokesman said there were no firm leads.

If the suspicion is true, there are fears of further attacks on city centre locations.

The Foreign Office advises expatriates and tourists to remain vigilant in all public areas across the country and to report anything suspicious to the authorities. No advice against travel to the country has been issued.

Keith Johns, of the Federation of Tour Operators, said: "There has been no noticeable downturn due to terrorism." Nonetheless, further indiscriminate attacks in areas popular with tourists cannot be ruled out.
Bomb explosion in city square

Security forces are on high alert across the country following last week’s bomb explosion in the capital city.

The bomb went off next to police vehicles parked in a city square. At least 22 people, mainly police officers, were injured in the blast.

“Yes it was a terrorist attack but we refuse to be terrorised. Life here goes on as usual”, a resident said.

It was not immediately apparent who was behind the attack. Unofficial sources revealed that a link to domestic rebel separatist group is suspected; however a police spokesman said there were no firm leads.

If the suspicion is true, there are fears of further attacks on security forces.

The Foreign Office advises expatriates and tourists to remain vigilant in all public areas across the country and report anything suspicious to the authorities. No advice against travel to the country has been issued.

Keith Johns, of the Association of the Federation of Tour Operators, said: "There has been no noticeable downturn due to terrorism."
Violent clashes in popular tourist destination: Is it safe?

Tens of thousands of people gathered in the heart of the capital to protest against recent government decisions.

Some of the demonstrations led to violent clashes with the security forces resulting in a number of arrests and injuries. Although the situation was brought under control, a threatening atmosphere of high tension remained.

“I have never seen anything like this, it was complete chaos. We all feel nervous because the problem will not just go away overnight”, a resident said.

There is a possibility that further violent protests could spread to other locations across the country, including areas popular with tourists, which would likely have serious consequences for public safety and order.

The Foreign Office advise expatriates and tourists to stay clear of large gatherings of people and follow the advice from local authorities, hotels and tour operators. No advice against travel to the country has been issued.

According to the tourist office, demonstrations “had limited impact on transport network in the country”. However, in the event of conflict escalation, delays and cancelations cannot be ruled out.
Protests in capital city

Tens of thousands of people gathered in the capital to protest. Some of the demonstrations led to clashes with the security forces resulting in a number of arrests and injuries. Despite these isolated acts of frustration the situation appeared to be largely under control.

“It was loud at the square but outside life went on as usual. I do not think there will much trouble, people are just venting anger”, a resident said.

Any further protests are likely to be confined to city squares. Other locations across the country, including areas popular with tourists, are predicted to remain calm and not affected in any way.

The Foreign Office advise expatriates and tourists to stay clear of large gatherings of people and follow the advice from local authorities, hotels and tour operators. No advice against travel to the country has been issued.

According to the tourist office, demonstrations “had limited impact on the transport network in the country”.