

Understanding the Perception of Safety and Security of Tourists at Jeju Island, South Korea

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ABSTRACT

Over the previous years, the travel industry is often undermined by a developing absence of wellbeing and security. This factor has been recognised as one of the five forces that cause changes in the travel industry division. Among the five forces, crime, food safety, terrorism, medical issue and cataclysmic events are the central zone of concern. However, these issues just began to pick up considerable attention after the event on September 11. The primary goal of this research is to study visitor safety and security issues toward Jeju Island, South Korea. This investigation is endeavouring to find out if travellers are bound to change their sightseeing plan based on the risk assessment. The research additionally tries to observe whether the traveller factors in any preparedness in case of emergency situation while on vacation. In light of the various crisis situations that happen around the world, risk and risk perception management has become the vital responsibility of any industry and in particular, the travel, tourism and hospitality industries. The finding of this investigation is expected to give the responsible authorities to develop better perspectives to fulfil the expectations of visitors to Jeju Island, South Korea.

Keywords: risk perception, safety and security practices, Jeju Island, South Korea.

1. INTRODUCTION

Jeju Island often referred to as the Hawaii of South Korea, lies in the Jeju Province of South Korea along the Korea Strait, below the Korean Peninsula towards the south Jeolla Province. The island is a home to one of the natural world heritage sites, Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes. Around the year, Jeju often has a moderate climate and the temperature rarely falls below 0 °C (32 °F) even in winter, which makes it a popular holiday destination for domestic as well as international visitors. The island primarily relies on tourism as the main economic activity and it is the only self-governing province in South Korea. The island has a total population of over 660,000 and hosts over 15,000,000 visitors per year as of 2018. Many studies have been conducted on this resort island mainly focusing on the destination image and tourist satisfaction. Park and Njite (2010) studied the influence of destination image of Jeju Island on tourists' satisfaction and future behaviour using SEM. Hunter (2010) conducted content and interpretive analysis of almost 4115 pages in 225 tourist guidebooks and brochures to determine the frequencies of certain 'types' of photographs to probe the intentions behind the destination imagery. Chung and Whang (2011) employed a multivariate regression analysis to understand the impact of low-cost carriers on the Jeju tourism and new tourism demand and whether it brought more tourism revenue into the island's economy. Kang, Scott, Lee, and Ballantyne (2012) tried to comprehend visitor experiences in dark tourism contexts based on the events of past in the history of Korea. Kim, Thapa, and Kim (2018) indicated that

environmentally responsible behaviour of the tourists was influenced positively by cultural sustainability, and negatively by environmental sustainability in Jeju island. Today's travellers, be it for leisure or work research about the place before they plan for their trip to better understand the destination (Kozak & Rimmington, 1998). In this, an era of tempestuous global relationships, the necessity for destination marketing organizations to validate that they are safe for tourists has become progressively vital. Negative publicity, often unrelated to reality, may also affect tourist perceptions of the destination. So, it is imperative to understand the perception of the tourists on the safety and security of a destination before visiting the destination.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. RISK PERCEPTION OF DESTINATION

Perception about safety and security attributes of destination are vital in marketing and communication efforts especially when there is enough media exposure to any crisis or hazardous situations affecting tourist destinations. The psychographic characteristics of the tourists are often found to moderate the influence of media on the risk perception of a destination (Ala'a & Albattat, 2019; Kapuściński & Richards, 2016; Susilowati & Sugandini, 2018). Risk perception examines the opinions of the people to characterize and evaluate crisis situations for decision making process. It helps in improving the methods for eliciting the opinions about risks and provides the basis for understanding and anticipating the public responses to crisis situation (Slovic, Fischhoff, & Lichtenstein, 1982). A psychometric study of risk perception uses a broad strategy to understand the perception by developing a taxonomy of hazardous situations to understand and predict responses to risks. It also helps to understand reasons for aversion, indifference and discrepancies between the reactions of people to these various situations (Slovic, Fischhoff, & Lichtenstein, 1986).

2.2. TOURIST SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety and security are indispensable to giving quality visitor experience in the travel industry. Consequently, striving for excellence in the travel industry also fuses standards of safety and security. This requires the travel industry authorities at each dimension of service quality to facilitate their endeavors with government authorities, the media, support services and other non-governmental associations. The perception of risks or crisis shifts significantly among travellers, and the connection between crisis situations and their effect on the genuine travel inclination is not constantly direct. Travel and hospitality industry players must seek workable solutions in order to mitigate the negative impacts of safety and security incidences on the tourism industry and affected destinations (Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006). Dangers happening in a geologically isolated and particularly socially active resort locations are probably going to have a more prominent effect because of its uniqueness. Terrorist attacks and global outbreak of contagious diseases like the COVID-19 around the world has its repercussions on the travel and hospitality industries as well. This has encouraged a paradigm shift in the assurances of service quality and has moved its attention on tourism safety and security issues than ever before. The impact of such incidents have a significant impact on tourism destinations and businesses, as well as on traveler behavior (Hall, Timothy, & Duval, 2012). Current issues in tourism worldwide require further analysis not only on how travel safety may be improved but also on how such security issues may be seen as a threat to tourism marketing and management so that the industry is able to better respond to such crises.

3. METHODOLOGY

For this specific investigation, the analysts have executed subjective research strategy via interviews with the respondents identified for the study. During the data collection process, triangulation is observed from different data sources to validate and ascertain the accuracy of each datum and the degree to which each respondent confirms and elaborates the information collected from other respondents. Triangulation also helps in avoiding undue researcher subjectivity, help in expanding the meaning making and balance the interpretation of the data collected (Alasuutari, Bickman, & Brannen, 2008). This approach allows the respondents to share their opinions in their own words, free of restraints from closed ended questions found in most of the quantitative studies (Dapkus, 1985).

In light of the investigation, following research question were developed:

RQ1: What are the most frequent cases of security and safety issues in the island?

RQ2: What are the preventive plans that have been set up to ensure the overall safety of tourist at the beach?

RQ3: How do you respond to the breach of safety and security issues in the island?

RQ4: What are the obstacles that you endure during the implementation of the plan?

4. RESULTS

4.1. THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis was conducted to identify, analyse and interpret the patterns of meaning (or "themes") within data collected via interview from the respondents. This method can emphasize both organization and rich description of the data set and theoretically informed interpretation of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Unlike content analysis, thematic analysis doesn't go by counting phrases or words in a text, where as thematic analysis investigates the explicit and implicit connotations within the data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). It can be used to analyse most types of qualitative data via interviews and focus groups. In the analysis, the data collected is organised, filtered, outlined and arranged as per the key issues and subjects. This includes a six-stage process which involves acquainting with the data, coding, depicting themes, reviewing themes, analysis and reporting (Clarke & Braun, 2013). In comparison to quantitative analysis, the qualitative approach is much more diverse and is somewhat complex and nuanced (Holloway & Todres, 2003).

4.2. RQ1: *What are the most frequent cases of security and safety issues in the island?*

“The bars besides the beach always do open fire pit in front of their bars posed a great fire risk to the premises and also to the tourists using the beach area, the second one is too much of a vehicles that entering the beach area and causing great hazard to the tourists”.

(Respondent 1)

“In 2019, there were 114 cases reported which involved 129 victims which comprise of watersport activities, drowning, jellyfish stings and also minor injuries. The most frequent cases include accidents caused while parasailing and jet skiing which is approximately 4-6 cases per month involving the tourists. On the other hand, the jellyfish sting case depends on the season and also the condition of the sea, it can be as high as 12 – 14 jellyfish related cases per day”.

(Respondent 2)

“The frequent cases usually involve altercation, drug abuse and also alcohol intoxication resulting in fights. There are also reported cases of fraud involving travel agent that doing fraud towards the tourists”.

(Respondent 3)

For the theme of accidents and frequently happening cases, the respondent answers were substantial an specific in terms of the cases, according to the statistics, respondent 1 answers were ‘*open fire pits*’ at the beach, which is a fire hazard to the nearby stalls and bars, the respondent also stated that there were accident cases involving tourists during various water sports activities. driving vehicle on the beach side, this also poses a danger to the tourists who are sunbathing and walking up the beach.

According to the respondent 2, the most frequent cases included jellyfish stings, during the jellyfish season, they were cases of 14 to 15 jellyfish sting cases per day. Although jellyfish stings is not lethal, if not treated, it will worsen and cause allergic reactions, respondent 2 also stated that most dangerous cases also include accident cases related to water sports, rare cases of drowning and injuries to tourists while they were using the beach such as minor cuts. Lastly respondent 3 responded with cases of crime, altercation, drug abuse and also alcohol intoxication resulting in fights. There are also reported cases of fraud involving travel agents.

4.3. RQ2: *What are the preventive plans that have been set up to ensure the overall safety of tourist at the beach?*

“In terms of preventive plans, we can only enforce the act in our jurisdiction, for example the licensing of the water sport activities and the set of rules that they have to follow and also do regular patrol on those premises”.

(Respondent 1)

“The preventive plans that we do include a scheduled patrol every two hours to make sure the we can react faster and quickly to any emergency sensitive scenarios. But the most important plan is to collaborate with all the water sports operators to report any accidents”.

(Respondent 2)

“We have installed several security cameras and maintain 24 hours surveillance and also assign scheduled patrol on foot and also on patrol car to monitor and maintain security and safety”.

(Respondent 3)

For the theme of preventive plans that are set up to ensure the overall safety of tourists, are enforced by various Acts within the jurisdiction. Respondent 1 commented that they need the licensing of water sports activities and they have set rules and regulations that need to be followed at the premises. Besides that, they have also blocked the road to the beach, to prevent the entry of vehicles to the beach side. According to respondent 2, a scheduled patrol is conducted every two hours cover during emergencies. Beside they also collaborate with the water sports operators to ensure the safety of tourists. Respondent 3 commented that they have installed several security cameras to monitor the beach.

4.4. RQ3: *How do you respond to the breach of safety and security issues in the island?*

“When certain accidents are reported, we will send our officer to open up a case and investigate thoroughly, we will try to determine what is the cause of the incident or the case and finally bring this matter to the monthly Town Council Meeting so that this issue is addressed properly”.

(Respondent 1)

“After an incident has happened, the first responder will record every single detail of that incident including the type of accident and the cause of it, after that they will do a chronology of the incident until the ambulance has arrived (if required), after that the report is filed, it will be send to the state office for further action”.

(Respondent 2)

“In terms of incident and crimes, we have to receive a report from the victim of the crime or incident first in order to open up a case file, after that we will investigate and bring the case to court for conviction or prosecution. If the occurrence of the incident is high, we will enhance and add more officers to prevent the case from keep happening”.

(Respondent 3)

Based on the respondents' answers, there are several procedures that need to be followed before taking any action. According to the respondent 1, when cases are reported, officers are assigned to investigate to determine the possible causes of the incident followed by escalating the cases to town council meeting, so that they can address it properly. Whereas respondents 2, stated that the first respondent of the incident will record every single detail regarding the incident followed by opening a case file and sending an investigating officer to the incident location. Based on respondent 3, before opening up a case file, the victim needs to make a report. If the cases are high, there will be more a team of officers will take care of the case.

4.5. RQ4: *What are the obstacles that you endure during the implementation of the plan?*

“The obstacle that we endure in in terms of planning this safety preventive measures is the clashes of jurisdiction, for your information, we do not have the sole authorization and jurisdiction to enforce the law. They are several government bodies that are involved at Jeju island, but it is very hard to coordinate”.

(Respondent 1)

“The main obstacle that we have is lack of enough skilled and certified rescuers due to the poor benefits and pay. The second is deficiency of proper equipment to do the patrol and also rescue efforts, most of our equipment such as rescue boats, jet ski and patrol vehicles are either broken or not been repaired. We also lack first aid equipment to the extend that most of the rescuers have to buy the first aid equipment with their own pocket money. Apart from that we also have a difficulty of monitoring the whole stretch of beach because of the location of the tower is not strategic and the view is obstructed”.

(Respondent 2)

“The only obstacle that we have is to find the balance between alarming the tourist and scaring the tourist away. We have to make sure that we can maintain peace and security without creating a tensed atmosphere. We also

have to take extra precautionary methods in dealing with foreigners from all over the world”.
(Respondent 3)

They are several obstacles during the implementation of the plan. Based on the opinion from respondents 1, it is difficult for them to implement the preventive measures because it is difficult to coordinate between many government bodies at the Jeju island. Besides that, based on respondent 2, they do not have enough skilled and certified rescuers. Secondly, they lack proper equipment. This equipment is very important to ensure the safety of the tourists. They also lack first aid equipment, sometimes the rescuers need to buy it from their own pocket money. Lastly based on respondent 3, the only problem they face is to find a balance between alarming the tourists and scaring the tourists away. They need to take extra precautionary methods in dealing with the foreigners from all over the world to ensure their safety.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The safety and security of the tourists is a responsibility of everyone involved in the travel and tourism industry, which starts from the self. Proper research needs to be done before travelling to a destination. Only through educated and conscious methods, a destination can manage the perception of the tourists on the safety and security of the Jeju island. The practical implications of this study stress the need to implement policies on using open fire for commercial purposes in open public places. Necessary warnings (in English) needs to be made at swimming spots infested with jelly fish to warn the tourists during the season to avoid jellyfish stings. Stringent measures also need to be taken to enforce drug abuse and altercation. In terms of preventive measure to be taken, appropriate upgradation of the infrastructure including necessary equipment to rescuing, monitoring and patrolling will ensure the safety of the tourists. There needs to be classification of the incidents based on the degree of safety and security breaches and the procedure for responding to such situations need to be simplified so that there is a uniform understanding on the action plans required at each instances via benchmarking with various other international destinations and other travel and tourism organisations. This requires proper coordination between various ministries and departments of the government to ensure the effectiveness of such measures. A further area for research should include a longitudinal study on the perception of the tourists on the effectiveness of the policies and procedures implemented by various authorities to ensure their safety and security at Jeju island.

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