Mediating role of government initiatives and media influence between perceived risks and destination image: a study of conflict zone

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to enlarge the current understanding of destination image in view of identified sources of risk and to investigate the mediating role of government initiatives and media influence for sustainable and secure tourism in a conflict zone. Therefore, this study develops and empirically tests an integrative model of destination image that reflects a comprehensive view of the relationships among these variables.

Design/methodology/approach – The study uses data collected through a self-administered survey of respondents selected through probability area sampling from the targeted sample of domestic tourists in hospitality contexts (four- and five-star hotels). The data were analysed using structural equation modelling. The scale was developed and purified through factor analysis (confirmatory factor analysis).

Findings – The results provide evidence that psychological risk and socio-cultural risk emerged as the major sources of risk followed by unrest (terrorist) and political risk which is against the predetermined notion that unrest (terrorist) risk is the major source of risk perceived by domestic tourists visiting a conflict zone. Further, the study identified that media is having comparatively higher role in influencing the perception about the sources of risk than the government initiatives in decreasing the sources of risk towards destination image and its competitiveness. Thus, the study supports the fact that for the destination image in conflict zone, performing best in the domain of control (government initiatives) yields very weak performance in the domain of concern (media).

Originality/value – This research contributes theoretically and empirically to the discussions on the components of the destination image in the conflict zone. Further, the study is inert in evaluating mediational role of media influence and government initiatives in the relationship between perceived risks and destination image.

Keywords Destination image, Media influence, Conflict zone, Government initiatives, Perceived risks

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Tourism is one of the major contributors in many ways to the life of human population, such as creating revenues, jobs, supporting culture and entertainment (Garg, 2013). According to World Economic Forum (2015), India stood at the 52nd position in terms of travel and tourism competitiveness. Travel and tourism accounts for 5 per cent of India's employment and its huge potential for further growth is made visible by comparing the country's 7m international visitors to that of China's 55m. The country's natural resources (17th) are vast and diverse and its cultural resources (10th) include unique intangible heritage events/sites (8th), sports events and a large entertainment offer. However, the safety and security situation is unsettling with a perceived increase in the impact of crime and violence (97th).

Thus, destinations have to look for and define its main distinguishing features based on which to build an attractive image of a destination (Glinska and Florek, 2013). More so, destination image