

Visions in Leisure and Business

Volume 16 | Number 1

Article 3

1997

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Recommended Citation

Van Dijk, Jan J. M. and Hauber, Albert R. (1997) "Travelling as a Risky Business," *Visions in Leisure and Business*: Vol. 16 : No. 1 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/visions/vol16/iss1/3>

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TRAVELLING AS A RISKY BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

Travelling is risky business as confirmed by empirical research that differs from country to country. The crime level is determined by the complexity of the economic, social, and cultural factors. In developing countries, property crime is stimulated by poverty. In more prosperous countries, opportunities lead to a higher level of crime rate. There is a need to have detailed sound criminological information in a standardized format.

INTRODUCTION

Crime is increasing worldwide during the last decades. More crime implicates a higher risk to be victimised, also more

victims. However, the chance to be a victim of crime is not equally spread out over all people in a certain area.

In general, inhabitants of highly urbanised areas have a significant higher risk of victimisation than those who live in the countryside, and among them men have a slightly higher chance to become a victim than women. Younger people are a higher risk groups than older people, (7) while certain professionals at duty, as ticket-inspectors, high school teachers and employees in the field of social security belong to the top ten of high risk professions (9).

A group which in this context has not yet drawn attention were the travellers, the foreign visitors, and especially the tourists.

This is surprising, for travelling showed a tremendous increase during the last decades and the income out of tourist industry forms a portion of the national income which cannot be neglected.

So Amsterdam alone, in popularity number seven on a ranking scale of European capitals, receives pro year 3.8 million foreign tourists, while all 6 million foreign visitors in the Netherlands spend together 2.6 Billiard Dutch guilders (CBS, 1995).

THEORY

From a theoretical victimological view, travelling is a risky business and the growth of the tourist industry may in fact lead to higher crime rates.

In modern criminology crime is no longer exclusively analysed as behaviour caused by offenders. The contribution of potential victims and opportunities for crime are taken into account as well.

In 1979 a general theory was developed on the relation between social change and crime rates, which sheds light on the link between tourist and crime (3). According to this so called "routine activity approach" the structure and level of crime are affected by three factors:

1. The number of suitable targets for crime. One maxim that appears to be known worldwide is "opportunity makes the thief". The greater the number of possible targets of thefts (visible, accessible, easily movable and easily disposable property, such as cars, cameras and jewelry), the greater the potential number of thefts. Similarly, the greater the number of possible

targets of violence (such as intoxicated and perhaps obnoxious young men wandering around at night) the greater the potential number of assaults.

2. The number of potential offenders. Simply increasing the number of potential targets of crime will not increase the number of crimes, if there is no one about to commit the crime. A "likely and motivated offender" is one who is both physically and mentally capable of committing a crime: he or she has the opportunity to commit it, the will to commit it, and (where the offense requires at least some premeditation) the belief that he or she can commit it with impunity.

3. Absence of capable guardians. Even where the number of potential targets and the number of likely and motivated offenders is high, crime may not be prevalent if many other people are present who can protect targets from victimization. Such people may provide protection as part of their official or informal role (police officers and private security, but also for example bus and taxi drivers, caretakers, concierges, maintenance staff and waiters in restaurants). The "capable guardians" may also be bystanders who provide protection simply by being there; few offenders would be prepared to knowingly commit an offense in the presence of possible witnesses.

This theoretical perspective can also be used to analyse the victimisation risks of individuals and special population groups such as tourists.

Three important risk factors concerning criminal victimisation of individuals are distinguished:

- proximity to potential offenders
- attractivity (being a suitable target)
- exposure (absence of sufficient social and technical protection)

THE TOURIST AS A TARGET

In general the tourist as a target has a high score on all these three factors as will be argued below.

ATTRACTIVITY

In the first place tourists carry on their body necessarily a great number of valuable goods as passports, credit cards, photo, film and video apparatus. Also in their cars are more valuable goods than in the cars of the local inhabitants (clothes, camping material, sport articles and so on). Especially in relative poor countries these goods represent a high economic value.

Furtheron tourists are regularly engaged in fraude-prone transactions as changing money and buying art.

In relation to sexual crime besides it should be pointed out that some travelling girls have the tendency to dress provocatively, at least according to the local norms, and take more risk than normal.

Shortly, the tourist is individually an extreme attractive target for divers categories of delinquents. Besides they form a target, which is easy to trace, while tourists have the tendency to move in great

numbers on the same time to the same places.

PROXIMITY

The tourist is not only an attractive and easily to trace target, but besides in many cases he is looking for the proximity of potential groups of offenders. Some of the tourists especially visit the prostitution quarters, as "de Wallen" in Amsterdam. With other words in the holiday countries tourists are looking for areas with a high concentration of local delinquents. Most of the other tourists are staying day and night in overcrowded recreation areas along lakes and beaches. The presence of groups of youngsters without parents--besides youngsters who drink excessive amounts of alcohol--make these areas to sources of small property crime, aggressive crime and sexual crime. Briefly, most tourists are situated continuously in the immediate proximity of potential offenders.

EXPOSURE

At last tourists have generally a low degree of protection against crime. The tourist is a stranger and as a consequence by definition hardly able to discover criminal treatments at the right time. The tourist is nearly by definition not "streetwise" in his holiday location. Besides in some countries the public is not so eager to help the stranger. Tourists themselves often take little care of criminal threats, by way of tiredness, preoccupation with sightseeing and, not to forget the famous "holiday feeling". The prototype of a tourist is a person who abandon to lose to hedonism and adventure. People who are reserved and suspicious in their normal life, are during their holidays

open for developing business contacts or friendship contacts with people from all social levels. Taking social risks belongs so to speak to the ethos of the tourist.

Also technical the properties of the tourist are relative poorly protected. Besides the tourist is not only in his holiday resort relative badly protected against property crime. He did often leave his home alone unattended. Also at home the tourist is at unusual high risk.

The tourist is an attractive target for crime, and is staying nearly continuously in the direct proximity of potential offenders. He is also relative poorly protected against crime, technically as well as socially. According to the theoretical victimology it can therefore be expected that tourist show on extremely high victimisation risk (5).

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Recently finished studies about the motivation and the strategies of the offender on one hand and studies of the backgrounds of travellers victimisation on the other hand confirm the validity of this approach. Looking at the offenders position Vogel (14) analysed the Amsterdam crime situation for foreign visitors. This research offers unique information, while 77 offenders were interviewed. They had committed at least one robbery during three years before the date of the interview. The modal age of the respondents was 16 years ranging from 12-37 years. Foreign tourists who generally limit their operational area to the city centre turned out be attractive targets indeed. As one of the respondents characterized his foreign victims: "They have money, and you never see them again. You are always succeeding to get money

and the chance to be caught is very small. A tourist does not know where the police office is and what he should do. He does not know the quarter".

The offender is on the other hand very well oriented in the city centre which is a help for an effective approach and a limitation of the chance to be caught.

Some offenders use special strategies to select their victim. One method is asking the time; when the answer comes in a foreign language, the decision is clear. Another method is putting sand on a paper, jumping to a foreign visitor, and while the sand is falling on the street, shouting to the foreigner: look what you done all my dope has gone. You own me 200 guilders, pay it immediately or I knock you down? (14)

Studies on the victimization of (foreign) tourists in a victimological perspective can focus on two questions:

1. Which part of all victimisation of the public has taken place abroad.
2. What is the extent and nature of victimization risks for foreign visitors compared to that of the national population.

BEING VICTIMIZED ABROAD

An example of the first category is a major international victimisation survey carried out in 1989 and 1992 (van Dijk et al 1990). This study indicates that for all the respondents in the 14 participating countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, England and Wales, Finland, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Switzerland and the United

States), 12% of all victimizations had taken place outside the local area--i.e. when travelling--and an additional 4% had taken place abroad. Particularly high rates of victimization when travelling abroad were experienced by the Swiss in respect of thefts from cars (41% of all incidents), by Germans in respect of car thefts (16%) and by Finns and the Swiss in respect of pickpocketing (24% and 21%, respectively). In addition, although the data were too small to allow specific calculations, Finnish, German and Swiss citizens were relatively often the victims of robbery when travelling abroad (11).

Table 1 gives an overview of the percentages foreign victim experiences. The proportions foreign victim experiences differ also strongly pro country. These proportions are partly determined by the degree in which inhabitants of a country spend their holiday abroad. In smaller and relatively prosperous countries the extent of holiday-travelling abroad will be higher and as a consequence also the proportion of foreign victim experiences.

The proportion foreign victim experiences is determined furtheron by the crime level in their home country in relation to that in the countries that are visited. In countries with few victimizations foreign victim experiences will constitute a relative big part of all victimisations. Countries with extreme high proportions of foreign victim experiences are Switzerland, Finland and Sweden. These are countries with relative low (Switzerland, Finland) or mean (Sweden) victim percentages. There are also countries of which the inhabitants presumably spend more holidays abroad. For such countries national victim percentages are inflated somewhat by the inclusion of the victimisation experiences

abroad. If these were discounted their percentages would be even more favourable compared with those in other European countries.

Also in the Netherlands the proportions of foreign victim experiences are somewhat above the mean. Presumably this is a consequence of the great popularity of holidays abroad of the Dutch.

Recent research (8) shows that from all Dutchmen who spent one or more times holidays abroad in 1991 10% had been victimised one or more times.

From the same research can be concluded that from the Dutchmen who spent their holiday in the Netherlands 13% was victimised.

As most holidays are not longer than one or two weeks, these data underline again the fact that tourists are at high risk on holidays.

CALCULATION THE RISKS OF TOURISTS

Examples of the second category are victim studies carried out in the Netherlands (10) and Spain (13).

One type of study concerns interviewing foreign visitors at the moment they are on the point of leaving the Netherlands at the Amsterdam airport. Victimisation results show that 11.0% of the departing tourists were actually victimised by any crime during their (brief) stay in the Netherlands. Taking into account a mean stay of around eight days and also the possibility of multiple victimisation, the conclusion, translated on a year basis is that a foreign visitors has during his visit to the

Netherlands a 8 to 10 times higher chance to be victimised than the 31.3% a Dutch inhabitant has. Also other recent Dutch studies on foreign victimisation (12, 10) support the conclusion that foreign visitors in the Netherlands have a significant higher victimisation risk than national inhabitants. Also Stangeland (13) in Spain finds a clear confirmation of the fact that tourist run far higher crime risks than permanent residents. Analysing the interviews with departing tourists from the Malaga airport, Stangeland found for burglary, personal theft and sexual offences that tourists during a two week holiday entails higher crime risk than permanent residents. The victim percentages for tourists were for burglary 3.8%, personal theft 5.1% and sexual offense 2.3%. These data of only three types of crime show that in Malaga the victimisation rate for tourists is even higher than in Amsterdam.

The above studies indicate that foreign visitors are at risk. As these studies have a fragmentic character a complete picture of the crime position of tourists all over the world is still lacking.

As travelling in general and world wide tourism especially are growing tremendously, many millions of people are involved. This phenomena stresses the importance of more detailed and comprehensive knowledge of the differential crime risk for foreign visitors. That means that there is a urgent need for a worldwide comparative study on victimisation of foreign visitors. Only then will it be possible to develop integrated crime prevention programmes for tourists.

Up to now it can only be stated that the risk for travellers is relatively high and in that context we want to finish this article with

some practical advises where to go and where preferably not.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFE TRAVEL DESTINATIONS

Criminology cannot only help to analyse risks. Knowledge about crime can also be transferred in practical advises.

The already mentioned ISE offers an unique source of good information about the crime risks for travellers over the world (1).

Difference City - Country

The first recommendation, which should be published in each travel guide, is to be on the alert in big cities. This recommendation seems to have nearly general validity. Everywhere on the world criminal risks are increasing according to the number of inhabitants of a city. From a criminological viewpoint holidays in cities are by definition risky holidays. Amsterdam belongs according to the victim percentage together with Spanish and German cities to the most unsafe cities in Western Europe. In Western Europe only Switzerland seems to be an exception on the rule that the crime level is higher in the big cities. In Swiss cities the victimisation chances are nearly as small as in the villages. Other big European cities with striking low victim percentages are Oslo and Athens. In this last city however, female tourists have to be cautious of sexual incidents. Elsewhere in the world nearly everywhere big cities bring along crime risks who are at least as high as in Western-Europe and often even higher. According to the now available information exceptions to this rule are many Asian cities,

notably Tokyo, Bombay, Surabaya, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Car Related Crimes

In the Western world the chance to be a victim of car theft or joyriding is the highest in France and Great Britain, the United States and Australia.

As a rule of thumb the chance to be a victim of joyriding is smaller the higher the percentage of local cycling youth. In typical cycling countries as the Netherlands, Japan, Sweden and parts of Canada and Germany fewer adolescents are apt to take cars away. Presumably this also valid for Denmark. In Eastern Europe the number of stolen cars is low pro hundred thousand inhabitants but high pro one hundred thousand cars. The demand for stolen cars is here much higher than the supply. In East-Germany, Poland and Russian foreign tourists with expensive cars have a high risk to be a victim of car theft. This seems also to hold for many third world countries (for example Egypt, India, Uganda and Brasil).

The chance to be a victim of theft out of the car is relative big in US and Spain as well as in Eastern European countries. In Eastern Europe the theft of spare parts of cars is a great problem due to the structural shortage of spare parts of cars. In many East European countries the inhabitants usually take their window cleaners with them inside. In developing countries, where there are few cars, as Tanzania, India and the Philippines this problem is a little less virulent. Presumably here is less demand for spare parts of cars. In these countries spare parts of motor cycles are more popular.

The chance that a parked car is vandalised, is higher in England, The Netherlands, Germany, Australia and North-America. In these countries it is advisable to park cars if possible in guarded parking lots. Elsewhere in Europe and in the third world the chance of this type of damage is considerably lower.

Robbery/Pick-Pocketing

In the Western world the risk to be robbed is highest in the United States, Australia, Spain, Italy and Belgium. The Spanish and Italian language have special words for subforms of robbery (Atracco and Scippo). This is a fateful sign in itself.

In these countries street robbery is promoted to a real art. The positive side is that street robbers in these countries do not use violence so quick as for instance in the United States. In most developing countries the chance to be robbed is still significantly higher than in the United States. In this context Brasil (Rio de Janeiro) and Costa Rica have a top position.

Pick-pocketing is a speciality of some countries on the European continent, as Spain, Poland, France and the Netherlands. In the Anglo Saxon countries are less pick pockets active. In nearly all developing countries pickpocketing is a great problem.

Violence/Harassments

The chance to be threatened or battered is the highest in the Western world: Australia, United States, Canada, Germany, The Netherlands and Finland. Aggression in the recreative sector seems to be most frequent in beer drinking cultures. In public places where a lot of beer is tapped, tourists are at

risk to be engaged in fights. In Southern Europe and Switzerland this risk is much lower. In developing countries the violence level is not extremely high, except in some South American countries. In this respect Japan, India and Indonesia belong to the most safe countries of the world.

The measurement of harassment with sexual intentions is complicated by differences in sensitivities and perceptions and presumably differences in the readiness to discuss this with an interviewer.

In the Western world however there is a strong relation between the victim percentage threats/battering and the percentage assaults. This could be indicative for the existence of the same factors (as beer consumption). High percentages of sexual harassment have been measured in Australia, the United States, Germany and the Netherlands. Also in countries where violence is generally relative low--such as Italy, Spain and Greece--female tourists run the risk to be bothered.

The data about non-Western countries are to be interpreted with the utmost care. The results of the research suggest that in most developing countries assaults take place less frequently with Brasil, Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica as clear exceptions. Also in Japan and South Korea many female respondents report that they were bothered by men in an annoying way. It is unclear if in these countries foreign women are also a target.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE

In case a tourist has been victimised and reports the crime to the police in some

Western cities the police can invite the victim to be helped by a special support organization.

Victim assistance is a new phenomenon. It can be seen as a reaction of the growing awareness of local authorities that victims of crime should be helped to mitigate the consequences of their victimization. At present victim assistance programs operate in cities as Dublin, Barcelona, Nice, Los Angeles, New York and Brussel Airport and, last but not least, in Amsterdam. In this last city the Amsterdam Tourist Assistance Service (ATAS) exists now nearly five years. It provides pro year about thousand tourists with primary emotional and practical help after a criminal incident.

CONCLUSIONS

Theoretical victimology predicts that travelling is a risky business. In general empirical research confirms this but criminal risks are different from country to country. The crime level is determined by a complex of economic, social and cultural factors. In developing countries property crime is stimulated by the poor situation of the greater part of the population. In more prosperous countries the ample opportunities to steal for instance well filled purses or cars lead to a high level of opportunity crime. Furtheron the level of both property crime and violence is influenced by various social and cultural factors.

To estimate the crime risks in a certain country adequately, the tourist industry needs to have detailed and sound criminological information at disposal. Such information can only be collected through standardized surveys among

tourists. Therefore there is, as already stated, an urgent need for a worldwide travellers victim survey.

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Table 1

Percentages Foreign Victim Experiences Pro Type of Delict and Pro Country

	theft from car	robbery	other theft
United Kingdom	1.2	3.7	8.2
The Netherlands	6.0	19.0	13.0
Germany	9.7	28.6	14.0
Switzerland	41.5	40.1	21.4
Belgium	17.6	6.3	100.0
France	1.9	5.0	1.5
Spain	0.4	0.4	0
Norway	5.6	9.0	12.3
Finland	12.2	20.5	26.0
USA	1.1	1.0	2.8
Canada	2.3	5.7	4.7
Australia	0.7	16.0	7.6
Italy	1.2	1.5	4.1
Sweden	4.6	22.9	21.8
New Zealand	1.9	6.3	6.2
Poland	1.2	1.5	1.1
Czechia	4.5	--	4.8
Slovakia	1.9	--	2.0
Russia	1.5	--	0.4
Slovenia	6.2	12.5	11.8
Estonia	--	2.9	4.1
Japan	0.8	--	7.6
Indonesia	0.3	--	0.2
Uganda	0.6	0.4	0.2
Egypt	--	1.5	0.3
South Africa	0.7	0.9	0.8
Argentina	0.8	4.1	2.9
Total	4.9	8.5	9.6
	N=4116	N=840	N=3205

Source: International Victim Survey 1989 and 1992