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The treatment of language in travel advisories as a covert tool of political sanction

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ABSTRACT

The safety-related contents in the travel advisories issued by the departments of foreign affairs stand out among the drivers of the perception of risk by international travellers. The aim of this paper is to identify keywords used in safety advice and to explore how such words are related to countries issuing the travel advice and to the risks identified in the destination country. A content analysis of the travel advisories issued by the five main tourist origin markets for Kenya (USA, UK, Germany, France and Italy) within a time span of five years is carried out. Both qualitative (text mining) and quantitative approaches (correspondence analysis) were used to analyse the narrative information. The results show substantial differences in the treatment of language between the countries as well as a persistent use of words related to risk and potential threats even though the reasons for them are no longer present.

1. Introduction

The perception of insecurity has the potential to damage the image of a destination and affect the arrival of visitors. Travellers are expected to look for all the information available from different sources in order to decrease their levels of perceived risk (Maser & Weiermair, 1998). The authorities in charge of the tourism industry in any country of destination must handle the information provided by mass media, travel agencies, tour operators and foreign offices of countries of origin in everything that concerns any location within their own territory. The management of uncertainty must be sharply focused on the enhancement of information management because "risk handling is largely information handling" (Slevitch & Sharma, 2008, p. 87). There is a well-defined relation between perceived risk and information quality, since the more reliable a source is considered, the more effective and informative the message.

The significance of risk perception and the need for a destination country to project an impression of safety have been the subject of a growing literature focused on issues related to safety in tourism (Hall, Timothy, & Duval, 2003; Timothy, 2006) and their impacts (Goodrich, 2002; Henderson, 2004) as well as the risk factor as a component in travellers' choices (Chen & Chen, 2004; Sönmez, 1998). Travellers' perception of risk is a key factor in pondering over where to travel to, so much so that when such a perception is shared collectively, it can even be considered an attribute of the country itself (Law, 2006). Travellers collect information which affects their perception of risk regarding a particular destination from a wide variety of sources. Online resources such as official websites stand out as optimal tools for enhanced communication in a risk or crisis situation, since suggestions and warnings from governments and tourism organizations can be quickly and effectively made available to interested travellers through them (Muniz, de la Torre, & Fernandez, 2015; Volo, 2010). In this sense, when they are well used, travel recommendations from official websites can be one of the most effective means of communicating and disseminating accurate and up-to-date information about a travel destination.

Many countries issue travel alerts to inform their citizens about potential risks when traveling abroad. Various studies have shown how the security information issued in the form of travel warnings has a considerable influence on tourists' destination choices (Akama & Kieti, 2003; Fletcher & Morakabati, 2008; Hall, 1994; Henderson, 2004; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998) and specific travel preferences. For example, when visiting destinations that have an extreme risk level travel advisory, tourists are significantly more concerned with whether cancellation policies were flexible (Walters, Wallin, & Hartley, 2019). Research on the policy aspects of travel advisories and how governments use them is still scarce (Seyfi & Hall, 2019a). Deep and Johnston (2017)

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approached this topic from a conceptual perspective, and some studies identify strong political biases in the wording of official advisories (Babey, 2019). In this regard, Löwenheim (2007) noted that excessive or biased language in travel recommendations can become a tool of penalization of governmental institutions against other nations.

This paper offers a critical discussion of the treatment and terminology used in TAs issued by different countries and sheds new insights on their elaboration. At the same time, it helps to bring the content in line with the actual circumstances of developing countries, which are heavily dependent on the tourism industry and thus on protecting the right to freedom of movement (Deep & Johnston, 2017). The objective of this work is twofold: first, to identify the key concepts used in TAs issued by the main tourism-sending countries with respect to a developing country, and second, to explore how the language used by each country for the different security categories is related to the culture of the country and the actual risk events at the destination.

Kenya has been chosen as a case study for this analysis. As in other developing countries, terrorism and political unrest have a large effect on international visitor arrivals (Santana-Gallego, Fourie, & Rosselló, 2019). A series of terrorist acts and riots in the decade 1998–2008 damaged Kenya's image as a tourist destination (De Sausmarez, 2013), therefore, security and anti-corruption are strategic objectives and a challenge for Kenya's tourism.

2. Travel advisories

Bærenholdt (2013) notes that mobility is often associated with flow and freedom; nonetheless, it is also about power and governance. Decisions that affect an individual's possibility to travel certain locations arise out of politics (Hall, 2011). State security concerns have the potential to affect the flow of international travellers, and governments often intervene to attract or hinder mobility (Hall, 2005). Where perhaps tourism becomes more closely related to global geopolitics is in security threats through the mechanism of state travel warnings. Rather than being objective catalogues of security threats, they are often highly politicized and can be seen as an extension of a state's geopolitical concerns (Bianchi, 2006). In order to ensure that the interests of the various stakeholders are taken into account, Beirman (2006) points to the need for an approach that ensures open communication between governments, travel industry associations and professionals.

Outbound tourists have a low level of awareness and knowledge of travel warnings; in comparison, travel agencies and insurance companies report that this warning system is useful in the pursuit of their business (Tsang, Wong, & Prideaux, 2018). Tour operators, retailer travel agencies, travel guides and specialized magazines are among the most significant sources of information for travellers (Bieger & Laesser, 2004; Slevitch & Sharma, 2008). The information provided by such sources is ultimately strongly dependent on official travel advisories [TAs], mainly when it comes to information in areas of safety and risk (Lovelock, 2004). Thus, mass media are careful to not qualify as safe any destination which is considered hazardous by governmental sources (Cavlek, 2002), and regular practice of tour operators reveals that they focus their safety and risk analysis on just a few select variables, including governmental decisions about the destination countries in the form of travel suggestions, advice and warnings (Pottorff & Neal, 1994).

Tour operators take seriously every official warning, and in some cases they even cancel all travel to a country or region which is affected and refund customers who had a scheduled trip (Löwenheim, 2007). Moreover, it is common practice among insurance companies to exclude from any coverage for travel assistance or apply a premium rate to those countries listed as not-recommended in the information provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or which are under sanctions from the UN Security Council (Cavlek, 2002). In the case of risk, warnings profoundly affect travellers' perception of a country, to the extent that such an impression may remain long after the actual reason for a threat has vanished (Pike, 2004).

Governmental institutions bear responsibility for warning their citizens about the dangers of visiting any country or area where traveling is not safe. Mansfeld (2006) questioned the credibility of travel advisory information by proposing that the real intention is to protect the governments of tourist-generating countries from possible future liability lawsuits. Developed nations are morally obligated to protect the interest of their citizens. However, warnings issued against potential threats may produce more information than is required to satisfy citizens' right to make informed decisions. In this sense, TAs can act as a tool of covert diplomatic sanction by restricting the mobility of citizens to certain countries. The inappropriate use of direct expressions such as “do not travel” or indirect expressions such as “avoid travel” or “recommend against travel” may imply sanctions as a governmental tool to influence individual behaviours, which can cause important economic and social impacts in a sanctioned country (Seyfi & Hall, 2019).

Unlike many other forms of international trade, tourism does not normally suffer from the imposition of trade barriers such as quotas or tariffs (Sharpley, 2015). However, the tightening of passport and visa requirements, whether general or country-specific, can be understood as a type of non-tariff barrier. Despite substantial growth in international mobility because of technological, economic and political changes, national borders remain major barriers for tourism (Coles & Hall, 2011). For example, at the time of this writing, the COVID-19 vaccine passport has become an indispensable document for travel to many countries, and for many potential travellers, following advice warning against all travel is almost mandatory because the lack of travel insurance coverage effectively imposes restrictions on the nature and timing of their travels (Coles, 2008).

Tourism is inextricably linked to issues of politics (Hall, 2011). Richter (1983) highlights the relationship between politics and the development of the tourism industry, especially in developing countries. The very existence of international agreements among different countries is a barrier against the spread of travel warnings regarding the countries which enjoy those agreements (Sharpley, Sharpley, & Adams, 1996). In many cases, tourist destinations that suffer from discouraging travel warnings are located in developing countries (Buigut, Braendle, & Sajeewani, 2017; Shankman, 2015), although such also happens in the Western world (Schroeder & Pennington-Gray, 2014). Travel alerts and bans can be very damaging to fragile economies when they are unfairly applied. Security issues and risk perception in developing countries have a major impact on the image a country projects to travellers (Akama & Kieti, 2003). Okumu (2007) notes that travel alerts on African countries usually exaggerate the security threat, are inconsistent or unreasonable and seem politically motivated.

With the developed world's security situation becoming better, the developing countries see TAs as an ostensible diplomacy tool that undermines the security image of their nations. They further aver that TAs violate bilateral and multilateral treaties, such as the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), created in part to protect freedom of movement, and the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism of 1999, which states in article 6.5 that “governments have the right – and the duty – especially in a crisis, to inform their nationals of the difficult circumstances, or even the dangers they may encounter during their travels abroad; it is their responsibility however to issue such information without prejudicing in an unjustified or exaggerated manner the tourism industry of the host countries (…)”.

3. Kenya as a case study

Despite the favourable trend in the number of international travellers to Africa (UNWTO, 2020), Africa faces continuous competition from alternative travel destinations that enjoy a better impression in travellers' minds (Omotayo, 2000). There are a number of interrelated factors to blame for such an image; in particular, one of the largest obstacles is the high frequency of military strikes and the ensuing political instability embedded in every level of the socioeconomic structure of some

African countries (Teye, 1988). Ankomah and Crompton (1990) point to inhibitors of tourism development in Sub-Saharan Africa, discerning the following: political instability, institutional weakness in matters related to the planning of the tourism industry, scarcity of specialized or specifically trained workers and a general unfavourable impression.

Among the 42 countries belonging to Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya is the second-largest in terms of development of this industry and possibly stands out as the best instance of the growing effect of tourism. Kenya allocates a sector of the tourism consumer market, which is based on the resources provided by its national parks and the natural wonders of the Indian Ocean coast. The tourism sector has had a significant impact on Kenya's national economy. In ,2019, growth in the tourism and travel sector was 4.9%, and the contribution to the country's GDP was 8.2%. The travel and tourism industry provided 1.58 million jobs, representing 8.5% of total employment in the country (WTTC, 2020). A significant element contributing to the rapid development of tourism in Kenya has been its political stability – in sharp contrast to neighbouring East African countries which have suffered from continuous social and political revolts. Such social and political stability has contributed to projecting an impression of peacefulness and normality that has fostered an increase of international visitors to the country – especially in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s.

Nevertheless, the image of Kenya as a destination country for international travellers has suffered as a consequence of a series of events and circumstances which led to alarms in the countries of origin and thus to lowered income from international visitors (De Sausmarez, 2013). There is strong evidence that terrorist attacks, human rights violations, conflict, and other politically motivated violent events negatively affect tourist arrivals (Neumayer, 2004; Santana-Gallego et al., 2019). The tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) to Kenya (see Fig. 1) seems to indicate that tourism have been affected by a series of violent events marking the country's history in the first decade of the twentieth century, the main ones being the following:

- Attack against the American Embassy in Nairobi (August 7, 1998) causing 213 dead and more than 4000 injured people.
- Attack to a hotel in Mombasa (November 28, 2002). Suicide attack to the Paradise Beach hotel near Mombasa as a consequence of which 13 people die and 80 are injured.
- Riots after the presidential polls (December 27, 2007 – February 28, 2008). After Mwai Kibaki was elected for president, extremist followers of the opposition party start a wave of violence with a political aim driven also by ethnic intolerance. It is estimated that between 800 and 1500 were killed.

The United Kingdom (UK), the USA, Italy, Germany and France are among the leading origin markets for Kenya. Fig. 2 makes a strong case for the discouraging influence that political revolts and terrorist attacks in Kenya have, starting in the year 1998, had on travellers from those countries. While these five markets added up to 50% of the international arrivals to Kenya in 2007, after events in 2008, their weight dropped to 42% (KTB, 2011).

Serious terrorist acts targeting civilians, students and tourists continued from 2013 to 2015, mostly perpetrated by the terrorist group al-Shabaab (see Table 1). Al-Shabaab targets Kenya more than other states because it achieves greater international visibility, i.e., tourism sector provides easy targets, and terrorist attacks are widely publicized in the media. Other reasons support these attacks, such as the existence of terrorist cells in Kenyan territory and the high level of corruption in the country (Cannon & Ruto Pkalya, 2019).

Improved security in the country and changes in al-Shabaab's strategy resulted in fewer attacks in 2016. In this year, several western nations such as the United States, the UK and France lifted TAs, and international tourism arrivals rose 13.8% in 2016, boosted by security and marketing (World Bank, 2019). But on January 15, 2019, Kenya suffered its worst terrorist attack in four years when al-Shabaab attacked the Dusit D2 hotel complex in Nairobi, killing 21 tourists and injuring 28. Terrorists continued to exploit Kenya's largely uncontrolled land borders to conduct attacks (U.S. Bureau of Counterterrorism, 2019). Table 2 shows the good trend until 2019 of the data on international tourist arrivals from the three countries outside Africa with the most weight in Kenya's tourism.

Sources: KTB (2019) and Global Tourism Forum (2020).

In 2017, the USA, the UK and Germany represented 40% of the 3,401,600 overnight stays of non-resident tourists in hotels. Traditionally, France and Italy have been the fourth- and fifth-largest countries in the number of overnight stays in Kenya, but since 2015, China has overtaken them (UNWTO, 2018).

Diplomatic relations between Kenya and the countries under review are stable and cordial, and they have intensified in recent years. Following the 2014 and 2015 terrorist attacks, several countries rushed to make statements on the importance of establishing security ties. In 2015, British Prime Minister Cameron explicitly argued in favour of Kenya's point of view that Western countries should not issue “travel warnings” about visiting Kenya, as this hurts the Kenyan economy and therefore undermines Kenya's fight against terrorism (Malingha, 2015). Prime Minister Theresa May visited Kenya in 2018 to enhance cooperation between Kenya and the United Kingdom on subjects such as trade, crime fighting and the War on Terrorism. In December 2020, President

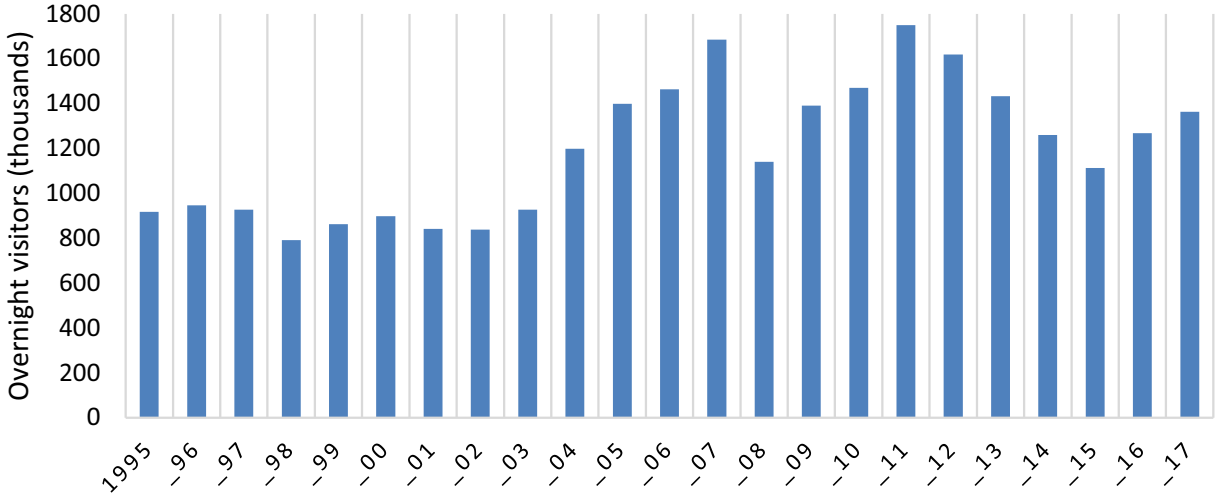

Fig. 1. Overnight visitors (tourists) in Kenya from 1995 to 2017.
Source: UNWTO (2018)

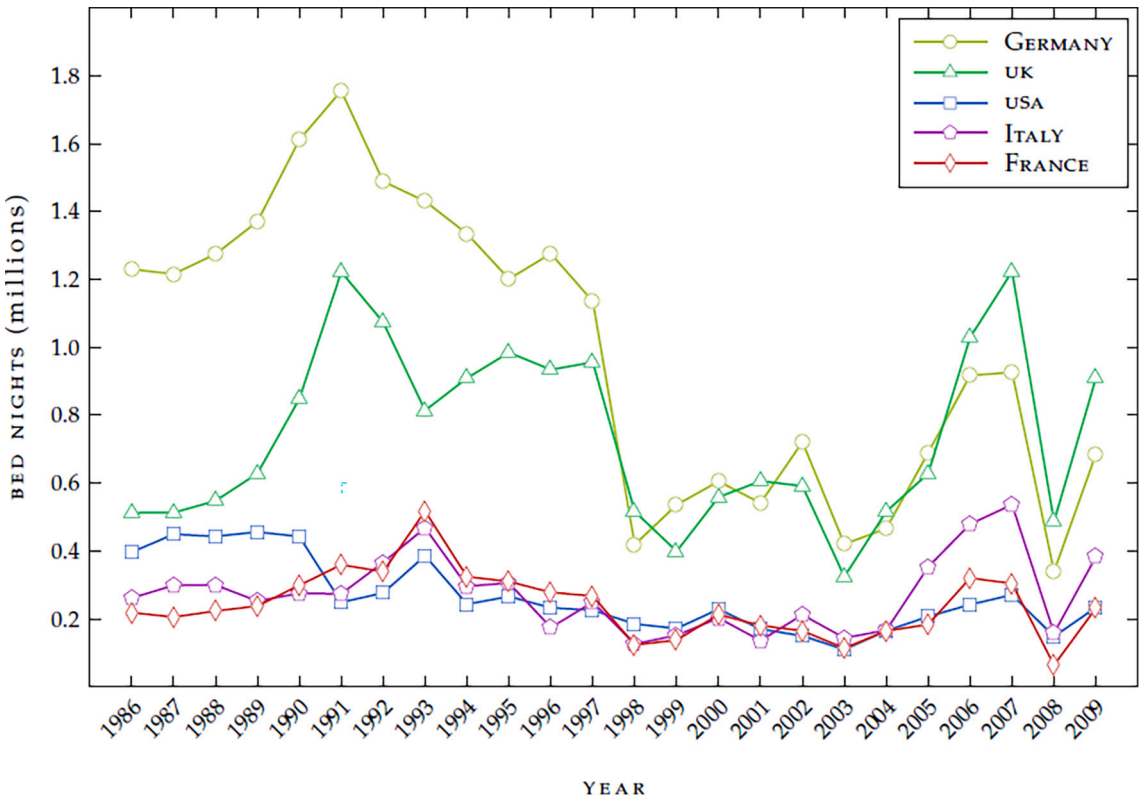

Fig. 2. Total number of bed nights occupied in Kenya by tourists from the five most significant countries of origin between 1986 and 2009.
Source: KTB (2011)

Table 1
Major terrorist acts in the last decade in Kenya.

Date	Event	Location	Death	Wounded
September 21, 2013	Westgate shopping mall. Mass shooting	Nairobi	71	200
May 4, 2014	Nairobi bus bombings. Improvised explosive devices (IED)	Thika Road, Nairobi	3	62
May 16, 2014	Gikomba bombings. IED	Gikomba market, Nairobi	12	70
June 15–17, 2014	Mpeketoni attacks. Terrorist attack, mass murder, arson	Mpeketoni; Lamu county	>60	
July 5–6, 2014	Hindi and Gamba attacks. Mass shooting	Lamu and Tana River counties	29	
April 2, 2015	Garissa University College attack. Hostage-taking. Mass shooting	Garissa county	148	79

Table 2
Number of international tourist arrivals to Kenya with the variation from the previous year.

	2016	2017	2018	2019
USA	97,883	114,507 (+16.98%)	225,157 (+96.63%)	245,437 (+9.01%)
UK	96,404	107,078 (+11.07%)	184,002 (+71.84%)	181,484 (−1.37%)
Germany	43,502	49,247 (+13.21%)	78,388 (+59.17%)	73,150 (−6.68%)

Uhuru Kenyatta and Prime Minister Boris Johnson signed a trade deal which ensured that British trade with Kenya would continue uninterrupted after Brexit. Relations between the United States and Kenya have also became closer in recent years. In August 2018, Presidents Trump and Kenyatta formally elevated the relationship to a strategic partnership and established a corresponding annual strategic dialogue. In May 2019, the United States hosted the inaugural U.S.–Kenya Bilateral Strategic Dialogue in Washington, D.C. (U.S. Department of State, 2020). Relations between France and Kenya intensified considerably following President Macron's visit to Kenya in March 2018 and President Kenyatta's visit to France in September and October 2020. Bilateral trade between France and Kenya has grown steadily over the past ten years, and French investments in Kenya span multiple sectors, including transport, health, construction, energy, automotive, telecommunications, financial services and retail. France is the third largest foreign investor in Kenya, with a stock of foreign direct investment (FDI) of 464.7 million euros and around 100 establishments in the country (France Diplomatie, 2021). Italy also has renewed interest in Kenya's economy, fostered by synergistic events between the two countries, such as the Italian–African Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale initiative (MAECI, 2021) and high-level reciprocal visits. In July 2015, Prime Minister of Italy Matteo Renzi made an official visit to Nairobi. There he held bilateral talks with President Uhuru Kenyatta which mainly concerned collaborative efforts by both countries on the War on Terror and investments in Kenya. In September 2015 and November 2020, President Kenyatta visited Rome to meet with the president of Italy. Germany and Kenya traditionally have close relations based on partnership. The Federal Republic of Germany was the first country to recognize Kenya under international law after it gained independence in 1963. Relations between the two countries have been revitalized in recent years, and bilateral trade has developed positively. President Kenyatta met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin in April 2016. Germany regards Kenya as an important partner in a crisis-ridden region and its most important economic partner in East Africa (Federal Foreign Office, 2021).

4. Methodology

In this study, the content analysis methodology is applied in a novel way to travel advisories as key information sources in travellers' decision-making which significantly influence the tourism sector in developing countries (Cavlek, 2002). With content analysis, the components of the information are systematically described and categorized so that the content of the news can be compared objectively and one can carry out a study of its evolution (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). Content analysis is a frequently used methodology in the field of tourism research and has specifically been applied in areas such as destination images (Choi, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007; Hammett, 2014; Wang, Chan, & Pan, 2015), disaster impacts (Dyer Jr, Miller, & Boone, 1991) and travel warnings (Noy & Kohn, 2010). Krippendorff (1989) argued that content analysis can be used for intelligence gathering in political studies and social sciences.

4.1. Study design

We carry out a content analysis of the TAs issued by the five main tourist origin markets to Kenya (UK, USA, Germany, Italy and France) within a time span of five years (August 2016–September 2020). Since "content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (…) as to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18), and so that we can get an accurate representation of a series of messages (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013), we use both qualitative (text mining) and quantitative approaches (correspondence analysis) to content-analyse the narrative information in the sampled TAs (Feldman, Dagan, & Hirsh, 1998). The compiled information comprises recommendations about safety and security in the main subcategories – i.e., terrorism, crime and violence, disease and health information, natural disasters, political instability and road security (UNWTO, 2005: 74; Law, 2006). Content analysis has the ability to capture the diversity of vocabulary used. Different uses of language can produce distinct psychological impressions on the reader (tourist) and influence emotions (Vine, Boyd, & Pennebaker, 2020) in such a way that excessively alarming or negative vocabularies can cause rejection or psychological distress.

TAs issued by official government websites from each of the five countries in August 2016, May 2017, July 2018 and September 2020 were used as units of analysis. Sections of the TAs that referred to safety and risk aspects in any area, including summaries, general information and last minute notices, were collected and compiled for further analysis. These sections are representative of the phenomenon under investigation (Krippendorff, 1989). Table 3 shows the sections collected for each country with the corresponding official websites.

Prior to the text-mining process, appropriate arrangements were made in the text. First, the texts of the TA from France, Germany and Italy were translated into English; in this process, the automatic translators DeepL and Google translator were used. International students with a university degree in tourism from the respective countries reviewed the texts to ensure the accuracy of the translations. Secondly, several debugging and filtering operations were carried out. Textual connectors, grammatical words and common words without the ability to provide information on their own, such as "the", "we" and "are", were excluded. Words that share the same root were unified by, for example, replacing plural forms with singular ones and verbs in past tense with ones in present tense.

Sampling units were then merged and saved into five separate Word files for each country for further content analysis. A double evaluative criteria was used for information extraction and codification from unstructured textual data (Krippendorff, 1989). In a first phase, the QDA Miner Lite v.2 software was used to measure how often recording units (words) occur in the text (automatic counting and sorting process), and in a second phase, the researchers carried out a semiotic analysis of the hundred most-repeated words and expressions in the TA of each country. The aim was to give full meaning to the information gathered by grouping names composed of two or more words into one so that they would not be counted separately (e.g., "al-Sahabbab"). Groups of words such as "yellow fever" were also considered as one keyword, even if the text mining process had extracted them separately. In addition, special consideration was given to differentiating verbs and nouns (e.g., "stay and "stays").

Keywords provide important and significant information about content and allow one to know the essence of information or text (Rajman & Besançon, 1998). In this paper, the frequency-of-occurrence measure of the words or expressions is taken to indicate the importance of or attention to an attribute appearing in the message (Carney, 1972; Denscombe, 2014; Krippendorff, 2004). This inference is key to interpreting the threats and risks found in the text as well as to drawing inferences about countries' worldviews from their idiosyncratic styles.

After performing the above procedures, an initial analysis was carried out to assess changes in the nature of advisories over time for the period 2016–2020. In this analysis, no significant changes were found in the use and frequency of words related to risk and safety. This might be due to the cordiality of diplomatic relations in recent years between Kenya and the countries under study,as well as the political stability of the respective governments during the period under review. In Germany, the United Kingdom and France, the same political party remained at the head of government. In the United States, the change of the presidency from Obama to Trump did not cause a change in diplomatic relations with Kenya. In addition

although Italy had three prime ministers between 2016 and 2020, relations remained friendly. Above all, the few changes in travel advisories over time are surely due to the period of relative tranquillity that Kenya has experienced in recent years, during which the terrorist alert level remained stable, with hardly any terrorist acts. Those that did occur were certainly milder than those indicated in Table 1

Therefore, the research focuses on the use of terms related to risk and security and the differences between countries, rather than on the temporal evolution. The following classifications are shown in the results section:

- The ranking of the 100 most-used words for each country and the combined ranking for the five countries.
- The ranking and frequency of the keywords related to risk for each country and the combined ranking.
- The frequency of the TA keywords for each country is coded in quantifiable data to carry out a correspondence analysis and assess the relationships among the most-used words for each of the countries.

Table 3
Sections of the TA that were collected in the units of analysis.

Country	Sections	Official travel advisories to Kenya
UK	Summary. Safety & Security. Terrorism. Health. Natural Disasters	https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/kenya
USA	Travel advisory. Embassy Messages-Alerts. Safety & Security. Health. Travel and transportation	https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Kenya.html
German	Security instructions. General travel information. Medical notes. Global security warning	https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/laender/kenia-node/keniasicherheit/208058
France	Last minute. Security. Health	https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/conseils-aux-voyageurs/conseils-par-pays-destination/kenya/
Italy	General Information. Security. Health situation	http://www.viaggiaresicuri.it/paesi/dettaglio/kenya.html?no_cache=1

5. Results

5.1. Analysis of textual information

Table 4 displays and compares the 55 most frequently used keywords for each country and shows the combined total frequencies for the five countries. The four most-used words in the combined classification were "Kenya", "area", "travel" and "attack". Of the first ten words in the combined ranking, three referred directly (attack, risk, security) and two indirectly (not, avoid) to threats. The rest are words that we would expect to find in a TA to any country – i.e. the name of the country, the capital city, the demonym and the words "travel" and "area".

The word "not" is used very frequently, and although it appears with a wide variety of meanings, it has been included in the analysis because it is mostly related to recommendations or prohibitions; for example, the expressions "do not travel", "not recommended", "not by road" and "not to drive at night" are widely used. Other words repeated with high frequency, such as the adjectives "high" and "increased", acquire full meaning when linked to other words. Thus, "high" usually qualifies words such as "risk", "threat" and "level", and "increased" is associated up to 18 times with "risk" and "crime" in the case of Germany's TAs.

Although there seems to be some similarity in the classification of the words by country, a detailed analysis finds that only two words, "Kenya" and "area", were in the top ten words of all five countries. The greatest similarities were found between France and Italy, which share six of their top ten words, and the greatest differences between those two countries and the UK, among which only two words are shared out of the top ten for all three countries. Some words that are frequently used in the TAs of Italy and France do not appear in a top position of the other three countries' rankings. For example, the word "recommend" was the

Table 4
Most frequent words or expressions in rank order.

Rank	Total combined	USA	UK	Germany	Italy	France
1	Kenya	Kenya	Kenya	risk	country	not
2	area	travel	travel	Kenya	area	area
3	travel	crime	area	not	recommend	risk
4	attack	area	attack	travel	local	recommend
5	not	information	airport	attack	Kenyan	avoid
6	risk	county	county	information	place	Kenya
7	Kenyan	safety	advice	country	not	travel
8	Nairobi	local	security	area	Kenya	Kenyan
9	security	citizen	British	Nairobi	high	mosquito
10	avoid	Nairobi	threat	traveller	avoid	against
11	recommend	medical	Kenyan	possible	against	attack
12	country	terrorist	border	security	particular	Somalia
13	information	not	against	avoid	Nairobi	Nairobi
14	local	aviation	island	card	risk	terrorist
15	terrorist	attack	place	recommend	travel	security
16	against	Kenyan	Lamu	region	only	border
17	airport	country	Nairobi	especially	public	vigilance
18	border	government	Mombasa	against	caution	water
19	county	security	road	medical	center	zone
20	Lamu	victim	river	coastal	city	center
21	threat	police	police	always	authority	vaccination
22	Mombasa	road	risk	German	disease	coast
23	high	avoid	target	terrorist	police	health
24	health	hour	government	cases	advisable	Lamu
25	place	kidnapping	particularly	Kenyan	border	fever
26	Somalia	Mombasa	terrorist	vaccination	company	local
27	safety	traveller	coast	airport	county	particular
28	traveller	emergency	check	fever	Lamu	disease
29	medical	overseas	north	health	information	especially
30	armed	violence	Somali	safety	medical	high
31	coast	vehicle	Manda island	trip	hotel	measures
32	crime	authority	national	hotel	terrorist	park
33	advice	border	Tana River	malaria	airport	region
34	only	embassy	al-Shabaab	mosquito	cases	reason
35	center	health	Garissa	only	coast	recommendation
36	police	sexual	information	water	health	strongly
37	Garissa	visit	not	increased	armed	night
38	north	armed	Somalia	international	attack	particularly
39	road	city	armed	necessary	limit	south
40	possible	coastal	avoid	people	Mandera	traveller
41	especially	department	essential	strongly	Mombasa	treatment
42	city	event	local	credit	security	cases
43	particularly	federal	safety	local	stay	country
44	disease	Garissa	driving	bus	precaution	discourage
45	public	high	number	doctor	force	Garissa
46	cases	Mandera	terrorism	parts	Garissa	maritime
47	bus	plan	vigilant	stay	imprisonment	threat
48	vaccination	risk	advise	center	necessary	people
49	British	threat	incident	armed	particularly	place
50	people	time	vehicle	entry	traveller	unless
51	mosquito	program	company	visiting	crime	city
52	region	insurance	kidnapping	individual	present	imperative
53	government	Wajir	crime	day	embassy	contact
54	Somali	state	nationals	high	transport	stay
55	international	often	high	more	crowded	compelling

third-most frequent word in Italy's TAs, the fourth-most frequent word in France's TAs, the fifteenth-most frequent word in Germany's TAs and the ninetieth-most frequent word in the USA's TAs; in the case of the UK, it does not appear in the top 100 most frequent words.

The country analysis shows that Italy's TAs are the least likely to repeat words directly related to threats. Among the twenty most-repeated words, "risk" only appears in the fourteenth position. The Malindi area, on the coast of the Indian Ocean, is a popular destination for Italian citizens, and although other countries such as the USA qualify it as an "area with higher security risk", Italy's TAs seems to take a position of recommending "caution" rather than prohibiting or discouraging visits to the area.

The United States seems to stand out as the country with the greatest interest in pointing out threats in TAs. Among the twenty most frequent words in its TAs, six were found to be directly related to threats – "crime", "safety", "terrorist", "attack", "security" and "victim" – and another two, "medical" and "not", can be considered indirectly related to risks.

The word "risk" was the most-repeated in Germany's TAs and took third place in France, 14th place in Italy, 22nd place in the UK and 48th place in the USA. Moreover, unlike the rest of the countries, an important interest in the Germany's TAs in aspects of monetary exchange can be observed by using the word "card" 34 times in expressions such as "credit card" or "bank card".

Words related to geographical features or cities, such as "area", "county", "airport", "border", "island", "place", "road" or "river", as well as to cities or counties, such as Lamu, Nairobi and Mombasa, were among the most-repeated in the United Kingdom's TA. This may indicate a greater effort to georeference the information provided.

5.2. Keywords related to risk and threats

The ranking and frequency of keywords related to risk and hazards for each country is presented in Table 5. The words "attack", "risk", security" and "terrorist" were among the most-repeated words related to risk and threats, and the word "risk" is the most-repeated word in the TAs of Germany, France and Italy.

Italy's TAs seem to give more importance to health-related risks; thus, "disease" was the second most-repeated word, "medical" the third, "cases" the fourth and "health" the sixth. The word "cases" is linked to expressions such as "cases of cholera" or "cases of contagion". Concern about health risks also seems to be evident in the TAs of France and Germany. In France, "mosquito" was the second most frequent word, and "vaccination" the seventh. In Germany, "medical" ranked fourth, and "cases", "vaccination", "fever" and "health" ranked from sixth to ninth.

In the US and UK TAs, health-related threats were less important; for example, in the UK, the word "health" does not appear until the fourteenth position. The threats reflected in these two countries are more related to terrorism, so "crime", "terrorist", "attack", "security", "victim" and "kidnapping" were among the most-repeated threats in the US. The US travel advisories used words that other countries' advisories hardly utilized; for example, "crime" was the most-mentioned risk in the USA, but in the rest of the countries occupies lower positions. Something similar applies with the word "safety".

5.3. Correspondence analysis

A correspondence analysis was carried out to analyse the relationships among the most-used words in each of the countries. To do this, a frequency table of the 50 most-used words in the TAs of each country was used (Table 6). The frequency rates of each word were used as a distance measure among the frequently occurring words and the five countries in constructing a correspondence map.

The results of the correspondence analysis are given in eigenvalues and the percentage of variance explained by each dimension. The eigenvalues for the dimensions obtained from the data were 0.17 for Dimension 1 and 0.11 for Dimension 2. Dimension 1 accounted for 43.47% of the percentage of the variance explained, and Dimension 2 for 27%; accordingly, the associations of the frequent words and each

Table 5
Types of risk included in the 100 most frequent words.

Words Rank-frequency rate (%)	Total combined	USA	UK	Germany	Italy	France
attack	1 (0.87)	5 (0.64)	1 (1.55)	2 (0.84)	8 (0.39)	3 (0.54)
risk	2 (0.8)	13 (0.36)	4 (0.5)	1 (1.16)	1 (0.58)	1 (1.13)
security	3 (0.59)	6 (0.55)	2 (0.89)	3 (0.52)	9 (0.37)	5 (0.48)
terrorist	4 (0.49)	4 (0.76)	6 (0.49)	5 (0.39)	4 (0.45)	4 (0.5)
threat	5 (0.38)	14 (0.36)	3 (0.74)	19 (0.21)	13 (0.21)	13 (0.3)
health	6 (0.36)	10 (0.39)	14 (0.27)	9 (0.35)	6 (0.42)	8 (0.41)
safety	7 (0.34)	2 (0.94)	9 (0.4)	10 (0.35)	15 (0.21)	
medical	8 (0.32)	3 (0.76)		4 (0.43)	3 (0.45)	18 (0.22)
armed	9 (0.32)	12 (0.36)	8 (0.4)	13 (0.25)	7 (0.39)	17 (0.22)
crime	10 (0.3)	1 (1.12)	13 (0.3)		10 (0.32)	19 (0.2)
disease	11 (0.26)	17 (0.27)		18 (0.21)	2 (0.5)	10 (0.35)
cases	12 (0.22)			6 (0.36)	5 (0.42)	11 (0.3)
vaccination	13 (0.22)			7 (0.36)	16 (0.21)	7 (0.42)
mosquito	14 (0.2)			12 (0.32)		2 (0.55)
kidnapping	15 (0.18)	8 (0.46)	12 (0.3)	22 (0.17)		
target	16 (0.17)	14 (0.33)	5 (0.52)			
fever	17 (0.17)			8 (0.35)		9 (0.37)
al-Shabaab	18 (0.15)		7 (0.41)		11 (0.29)	
terrorism	19 (0.13)	18 (0.27)	6 (0.37)			
incident	20 (0.11)	20 (0.21)	11 (0.31)			
victim	21(0.1)	7 (0.55)			12 (0.24)	
yellow fever	22 (0.1)			20 (0.2)		16 (0.24)
sexual	23 (0.1)	11 (0.39)			14 (0.21)	
vigilance	24 (0.09)					6 (0.46)
malaria	25 (0.09)			11 (0.32)		

Table 6
Frequency rates of keywords for each country's travel advisories[a]

Key words	USA	UK	Germany	Italy	France
Kenya	2.06	1.85	1.14	0.79	0.85
area	1.06	1.72	0.73	1.31	1.14
travel	1.70	1.74	0.94	0.58	0.65
attack	0.64	1.55	0.84	0.39	0.54
not	0.73	0.41	0.94	0.81	1.24
risk	0.36	0.50	1.16	0.58	1.13

[a] Only the first six rows of the 50 rows are presented here for illustrative purposes.

country were mostly explained by Dimensions 1 and 2 (70.5%).

Table 7 shows that the highest values of inertia are those of the UK (0.101) and the USA (0.091), so these variables –in this case the countries- are the ones with the highest weight, or relative importance, in the correspondence analysis. The absolute contributions indicate the weight that each variable has in the formation of each of the dimensions. In the first axis, the keywords are differentiated, preferably according to the UK (31.9%), France (26.7%) and the USA (21.2%). The second dimension is mainly determined by the UK (41.5%) and the USA (36.5%). Therefore, these are the variables which best differentiate the keywords.

The relative contributions indicate the weight of each dimension in the explanation of each of variable. Thus, the variable represented by UK is explained 53.6% by the first dimension and 43.3% by the second. The variables represented by Germany and France are explained 41.8% and 68.2%, respectively, by the first dimension.

With regard to interpretation of the dimensions and their correspondence to frequent words, we gathered that the words with more inertia were "advice" (0.019), "recommend" (0.017), "crime" (0.016) and "country" (0.015). "County" (7.8%), "recommend" (6.8%), "government" (6.2%) and "mosquito" (5.5%) were the most important words in the formation of Dimension 1. As for Dimension 2, the most important words were "advice" (12.5%), "airport" (8.1%) and "crime" (7.1%). With regard to the relative contribution, the weight of Dimension 1 stands out in the explanation of the words county (96.8%), Mombasa (95.2%) and vaccination (95.1%). The weight of Dimension 2 stands out in the explanation of the words attack (68.3%) and advice (68.1%).

A correspondence map is used to investigate the association between the risk projected in the TAs – by repeated word representation – and the different countries. In the correspondence map, closer proximity means greater perceived similarity (Whitlark & Smith, 2001). Fig. 3 provides graphical information on the relative proximities of the frequently used words and the five countries.

As can be seen in Fig. 3, the weight of the first two dimensions in explaining the associations of the frequent words for each country is quite acceptable (70.5%). In the case of the UK, the variance explained by Dimensions 1 and 2 reaches 97%. Italy is the country where the variance explained by the first two dimensions is the lowest (34.7%); the third dimension, which does not appear in the graph, explains 59.1% of Italy's variance, so in the case of Italy, substantial information is lost.

On the graph, France and Germany appear very close in the same quadrant, and the UK, the USA and Italy are relatively distant from each other, each occupying a different quadrant. With respect to the words represented, words related to crime and terrorism issues are located on the left side of the map, mainly in the upper zone, where the USA is located (crime, security, police, kidnapping, terrorist, armed), but also in the lower zone, where the UK is located (threat, security, attack). Words denoting health issues are located on the right side, both in the upper zone with Italy (health, disease, medical, cases) and in the lower zone with France and Germany (vaccination, mosquito). Two groups seem to be differentiated, one formed by the Anglo-Saxon countries (USA and UK) and one by the continental European countries (Germany, France and Italy). The Anglo-Saxon countries seem to be more direct in identifying threats, whereas the three continental European countries use more words related to recommendations (recommend, avoid, risk, possible) and people (traveller, people, international).

Dimension 1 also seems to place on the left side the countries that make the greatest use of geographical descriptors and locations. Thus, country and city names are mostly grouped in that area, including Nairobi, Garissa, Mombasa and Lamu. Geographical descriptors such as "area", "border" and "place" and words related to infrastructure such as "road" and "airport" are mainly used in the UK TAs.

6. Discussion

From 2016 to 2019, Kenya experienced a period of reduced terrorist activity. Data on international tourist arrivals showed a favourable evolution in this period until 2019, the year of the attack on the Dusit 2D hotel complex in Nairobi. The main countries of origin of tourism to Kenya have continued to publish TAs abounding with words and expressions that induce alertness and risk perception.

Compared to some of the countries discussed in this paper, Kenya does not have excessively high terrorist threat rates. In 2017, Kenya was ranked 22nd on the Global Terrorism Index with a score of 6.17 out of 10 – only one place ahead of France in danger, which scored an index of 5.96. In 2018, Kenya's index was 6.11, which fell to 5.76 in 2019 while the US scored 5.69 (Global Institute for Economics & Peace IEP, 2019). On the other hand, the ratios of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 people during the period 2016–2018 were lower in Kenya than in the USA: in Kenya, the ratios in that period were 4.82, 4.91 and 4.93, while those in the USA were 6.39, 5.32 and 4.96 (UNODC, 2019). Among Kenyans, perception of risk seems to be low, as in the case of a survey of over 1000 businesses in Kenya conducted by the World Bank, in which only 1.2% of businesses felt that crime, theft and disorder were serious obstacles to their operations (World Bank, 2018).

Since the reconciliation between President Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga, his main opponent in the 2018 election, relative political stability has prevailed in Kenya. Extreme cases of political violence have declined in recent years and the country has improved its ranking on the corruption index (CPI, 2020), and even the president of the International Monetary Forum notes "significant changes in the economic, political and social landscape in recent years" (Lagarde, 2014). However, the reality is that the country continues to face a situation in which institutions have been weakened and diffuse violence is widespread (Mueller, 2011). Externally, there have been some occasional institutional frictions, such as US, UK, Germany and France's disagreement with Kenya over the Security Laws Amendment Bill signed by President Uhuru Kenyatta in December 2014 (LOC, 2014). Negotiations have also begun with the United States on a trade agreement, which could conflict with the rules of the East African Community and the future Pan-African free trade area (Coface, 2021).

The analysis carried out in this paper shows that the use of words related to risks and potential threats is very intense in travel advisories concerning Kenya. Although warnings and alerts are updated with some frequency, they remain active for long periods of time, even if the level

Table 7
Dimensions and correspondence to countries' TAs.

	Coordinates		Inertia	Contribution to dimension(%)[a]		Explanation by dimension[b]		
Countries	1	2		1	2	1	2	Total
USA	−0.421	0.435	0.091	21.207	36.453	0.399	0.426	0,825
UK	−0.489	−0.439	0.101	31.902	41.497	0.536	0.433	0,970
Germany	0.405	−0.154	0.068	16.709	3.899	0.418	0.061	0,479
Italy	0.167	0.281	0.065	3.486	15.796	0.091	0.256	0,347
France	0.499	−0.117	0.066	26.696	2.355	0.682	0.037	0,720
Active total			0,392	100.0	100.0			

[a] Weight that each country has in the formation of each of the dimensions.
[b] Weight of each dimension in the explanation of each of the countries.

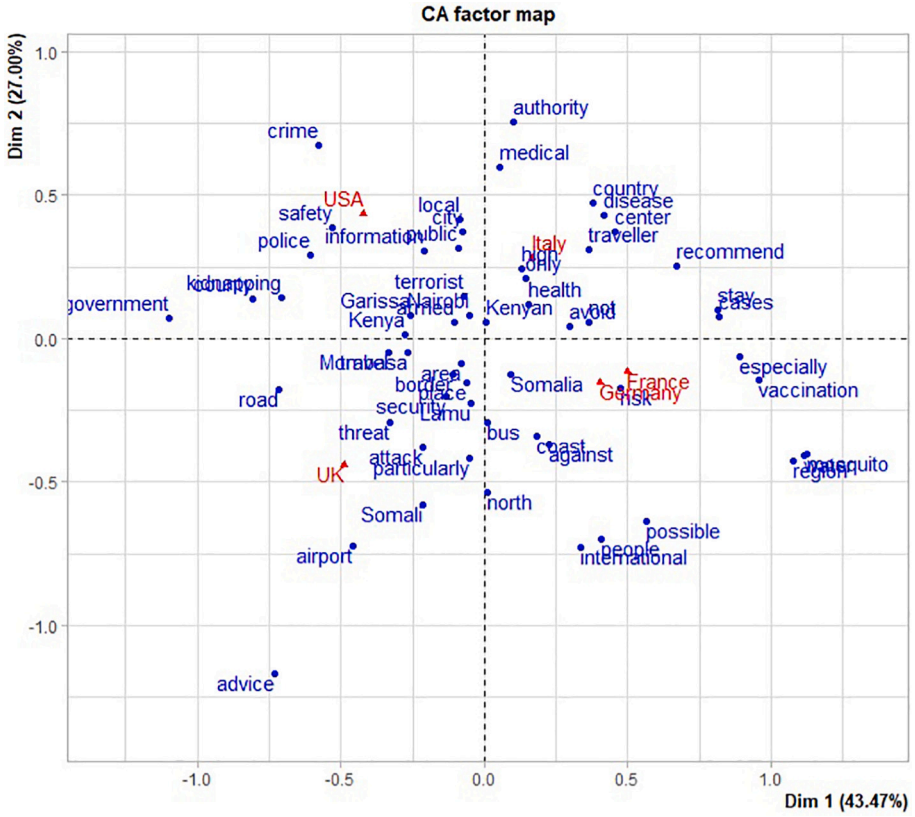

Fig. 3. Correspondence map for the frequent words represented in five countries' TAs.

of danger has declined significantly. There is room for significant improvements in the periodic updating of TA information. This can be done in such a way that the elements discouraging travellers from visiting a country are removed once there is no longer a reason to include them, thus contributing to the recovery of a net incoming flow of travellers. In this sense, Pike (2004) states that many of the travel advisories issued after some discouraging events keep their warnings active for a longer time than necessary – even after the hazard and any ensuing effects have ceased and travellers' safety can thus be fully assured. Authorities in some countries use this approach as a safeguard to prevent future subsidiary responsibility for possible dangers suffered by citizens who travel to destinations after warnings have been issued. In some instances, providing no travel advice at all may be a viable option for certain travel providers to avoid severe civil penalties that may arise if they do offer advice (Lee & Spisto, 2001).

The World Tourism Organization [UNWTO] has expressed concern that the content and issuance of travel advisories should follow a number of guidelines (UNWTO, 2005). When determining the advising elements, one must consider every relevant piece of information, whether it is provided by governmental or by non-governmental sources. The language used must be accurate, pertinent and appropriate, with clear avoidance of any ambiguities, tendentiousness or political bias. UNWTO resolution A/RES/578 (XVIII) advocates that all TAs should be free of bias and prejudice and most importantly be "strictly proportionate to the gravity of the situations encountered and confined to the geographical areas where the insecurity has arisen".

Advisories on travel threats and risks must include, whenever feasible, the specific geographic spots where the hazards are located, and corresponding maps must be available that include detailed distance specifications. Usually, governments wait for an entire territory to be safe before lifting any travel restrictions, thus obliterating the availability of specific information provided via georeferences and time-stamping systems and contradicting the practice advocated by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2011).

Most governments emphasize their sense of responsibility for the security of their own citizens. This should be appropriate as long as one does not fall into the trap of indoctrination on the spectrum of travellers' choices (Sharpley et al., 1996). Excessive language of travel advisories opens the door to the possibility of government institutions misusing this channel of communication, ultimately transforming it into an instrument of penalization against other nations or simply an excuse to abandon the government's cooperation commitments in relation to the development of Third World countries (Löwenheim, 2007).

In this research, we found some linguistic affinity by geographical areas. In other words, it seems that the culture of each country influences the risk terminology used in travel advice. This is not unusual, previous research has found that there are significant differences in perceptions of travel risk and safety, anxiety and travel intentions among tourists from different countries (Mitchell & Vassos, 1998; Reisinger & Mavondo, 2006). Fuchs, Uriely, Reichel, and Maoz (2013) also found that political views are a determining factor in tourist behaviour, specifically in rationalizing the choice of a destination under travel advisory.

Despite the phenomenon of convergence of cultures, differences are still significant today and diversity has tended to increase (Hofstede, 2001), specifically, cultural dimensions exert differential effects on consumer perceived risk (Keh & Sun, 2008). Differences in values between different cultures also influence communication; in fact, cross-cultural communication studies are based on these differences (Trompenaars, 1993). The two linguistic groupings in terms of risk assessment and risk communication that we have found in this paper - broadly speaking, Anglo-Saxon countries and continental European countries - seem to correspond with research in this area that shows how subjective assessments of risk issues in general, as well as of risk sources in particular, have different relevance in different countries (Rohrmann, 2000).

6.1. Theoretical and managerial implications

The results of this research show that, despite the good bilateral relations between the countries and the stable situation at the destination, a large amount of risk-related terminology is still used. Terms that warn of dangers are still very common in travel advisories issued by governments, without the need for confrontation or diplomatic discord. This language might be alarmist, even if there is no specific reason for it, which leads us to draw the following conclusions.

The countries affected must continue their efforts to establish diplomatic, cultural and economic ties with the countries that issue the warnings. As noted above, the existence of international agreements between countries, especially when developing countries are involved, is a barrier to the indiscriminate dissemination of travel warnings among the countries that enjoy those agreements (Richter, 1983; Sharpley et al., 1996). Some studies indicate that the countries issuing the warnings take advantage of the weakness of the developing countries, which in many cases suffer from discouraging travel warnings (Buigut et al., 2017; Shankman, 2015). Increasing developing countries' power and influence will undoubtedly produce positive results and will be a major leverage.

Countries in Africa have an added disadvantage. The recent history of insecurity in Kenya has a profound influence on the preparation of travel warnings by Western countries. Moreover, African countries face constant competition from other travel destinations that have better images in the perception of travellers, as travel alerts to African countries often exaggerate the security threat (Okumu, 2007; Omotayo, 2000). Overcoming such negative perceptions is a long-term task in which each country concerned must be able to leverage its positive aspects.

For developing countries with a high dependence on the tourism industry, security must be a strategic issue and a permanent challenge (Mayaka & Prasad, 2012). This means investing in risk management and being flexible in order to strive for a continual readjustment of tactics and reallocation of resources, as things can change more rapidly in emerging markets and have more devastating impacts (Olsson, 2002). However, there is consensus that the global community needs to focus on prevention rather than crisis response by building partnerships across humanitarian, development, security and diplomatic communities (IMF, 2016). For the countries concerned, the first step in managing risk is ensuring that the right strategy is pursued. Among the measures that the Kenyan government – and the governments of other developing countries with security challenges – should take is reducing corruption in order to properly invest in intelligence efforts and relevant homeland security measures (Cannon & Ruto Pkalya, 2019).

7. Conclusion

One of the factors impinging more profoundly on the inflow of tourists to developing countries is the perception of safety: when advisories lead travellers to think that their safety is in jeopardy – whether the safety-related advice is based on actual events or on miscommunication – a favourable trend can be reversed which may not be recovered even in the long term. Those responsible for composing travel advisories must be aware throughout the process of the necessity of collecting and providing fair, complete and properly focused information on the current circumstances of a country.

This work provides a critical discussion on the treatment and terminology used by different countries and sub-categories of risks in official travel advisories. It offers insights on the elaboration of advisories, which contributes to the accuracy of their contents according to the real circumstances of developing countries with a high dependence on the tourism industry. This paper conducts a textual analysis of travel advisories' contents with the aim of critically assessing the status quo of such advisories, from the perspective of governments in the developed world on extraterritorial security information for their citizens, on the one hand, to the documents' conception as a covert diplomatic tool for governments in the developing world, on the other.

The results show substantial differences in the treatment of language between countries as well as a persistent use of words related to risk and potential threats even though the reasons for them are no longer present. The coding procedure carried out in this work added human analysis to computer content analysis in order to evaluate words and expressions with ambiguous interpretations; this can be a limitation on the replicability of the methodology. Other limitations relate to the significance of the results; although the number of words in the analyzed sample is 46,277, this volume is small compared to the total warnings and alerts published by the five countries in the years of study, so it is not possible to establish statistical significance of the quantitative analysis performed.

COVID-19 related travel restrictions have been implemented in all countries worldwide in 2020. They are likely to remain in place throughout the rest of this year and extend into next year. In the current crisis, the recovery in demand is linked to government announcements. Now, more than ever, arises the need for precise and transparent communication, far from manipulation and self-interest. Alarmism in the use of language in the official travel recommendations of the main tourist source countries have a significant influence on the visitor's perception of risk, as well as the image and brand value of the most vulnerable countries.

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Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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