TERRORISM RISK IN MEXICO AND THE IMPACT

ON TOURISM DISCOURSE

by

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Abstract

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This study examined the framing effects of TripAdvisor users' discourse and the impact it had when considering travel to a destination facing terrorism risk or considered riskier than other destination choices. News about drug-related terrorism and major events in the war on drugs affected Mexico's tourism and discourse on TripAdvisor reflected whether or not to visit Mexico. An examination of hundreds of online tourist discussions were used to determine the change of discourse before and after three significant news events. The results of this study could assist communication and marketing professionals in the tourism and hospitality industry, specifically Mexico, in understanding the feelings and views potential customers have when considering travel to destinations that might be considered riskier than other destinations.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Some expected the arrest on February 22, 2014 of drug lord Joaquin Guzman Loera, "El Chapo" to increase tourism and foreign investment in Mexico. El Chapo was one of the most wanted criminals in the world and officials say he was largely responsible for Mexico's negative image due to drug-related violent crime which produced an estimated 50,000 deaths. Mexico suffered from a global economic slump, falling out of the top ten popular vacation destinations according to International Business Times (2014). The U.S. Department sent out travel warnings to U.S. citizens about the risks of traveling to Mexico due to safety concerns. Mexico, faced with an ongoing public relations crisis, fought back with a campaign promoting tourism.

Regarding media coverage of violence in potential travel destinations, Sonmez and Graefe (1998a, p. 137) wrote,

"Watching violent images of terrorism or regional war on television is probably enough to discourage most people from traveling. Media sensationalism can cloud actual probabilities of being the victim of terrorist attack. Perceived risk may overcome reality when personal safety is involved."

Mexico's timeline of drug-related terrorism acts includes the capture and extradition of drug lords, deaths of federal police agents, attacks on foreign visitors, and other events. Such events, made known to the public by the media, can affect people's decision-making regarding travel to Mexico. By looking at the discussion on forums, we should be able to gain insight to people's perceptions of Mexico and travel concerns due to the various events that have occurred in recent years.

Literature Review

Media and Mexico's Tourism

In a study by Lepp and Gibson (2003, p. 619-620), the authors discussed how perceived risk can be influential to the success of a country's image and economy, therefore, it is essential for researchers to study risk perception in tourism studies. Most individuals perceive a destination as risky or safe and the image they have created of a tourist destination may influence whether or not they visit. The authors claimed that the mass media can "sensationalize" news stories that could affect the perception of real or imagined risks by individuals and controlling those risk perceptions for marketers could be a challenging competition between marketers and the mass media.

Lepp and Gibson (2003, p. 620) made their argument about a destination's risk perception and the strong impact it can have on its economy. In the spring of 2001, the notion was evident when the United Kingdom's "foot and mouth epidemic" cost the U.K's tourism industry a loss of $140 million in revenues per week, (CNN Europe, 2001). After mad cow disease was popularized in the news and international headlines were paired with "mad cow" and "Britain", The British Tourism Authority spent $6 million on advertising trying to protect their $21 billion tourism industry (CNN Europe, 2001). Reporter for CNBC, Shelly Schwartz, reported that in 2011 the Mexican government launched a marketing campaign to help improve the country's image abroad since it fell from 12th position in 2000 to 23rd in 2011 in the United Nations World Tourism Organization revenue rankings. Mexico's campaign showcased it as a top travel destination for Europeans and also encouraged the opening of a direct flight from Beijing. Beginning in 2010, Mexico also relaxed its visa requirements for foreign tourists, granting an auto-

matic entry to anyone with a U.S. visa while creating a faster application process for citizens of Brazil, Russia and China. Those citizens could fill out an electronic application allowing them to obtain a visa online without having to travel to the Mexican consulate in their country. Evidence showed that the number of foreign visitors from outside the U.S. climbed 23 percent since 2009 according to the article. However, the number of American tourists traveling by air and cruise, a big source of tourism profit had declined. Destinations such as Mazatlan and Acapulco once drew 50,000 cruise passengers per year and fell to 600 annual cruise passengers. According to the story, vice president of an international strategy consulting firm told Schwartz Mexico's tourism was growing, but not as fast as they needed because of the negative image in the U.S. media.

Schaefer (2006, p. 588) wrote in his study about domestic newspaper coverage of terror attacks in Kenya that one of the implications is that mass media may believe that part of their job responsibility is to be a "watchdog". He claimed that the mass media "watchdogs" want to hold officials liable and make sure government officials are competent. Schaefer states that the mass media will target incompetent government officials and put them in the spotlight which could create "better counter-or anti-terrorism efforts". Inevitably, individual's perception are created by mass media and in turn, the public's confidence in the government could be at a loss. Schaefer's beliefs about the mass media's "watchdog" function holds significance in that this belief could be extended into other media and content in other countries. "Watchdogs" in the United States may respond to government advisories of traveling to Mexico and see it as their duty to keep Americans informed of all terrorist activities in Mexico while forming individual's perceptions of Mexico.

Magpanthong and McDaniel (2012. p. 9) found that news reports in Thailand portrayed the United States favorably as a "partner", while Malaysian news, editorials and letters from readers viewed the United States as neutral, neither "bully" nor "aggressor". The implications of this study shows us the differences in the mass media's framing effect on public opinion when it comes to terrorism. The framing effects of terrorism news stories can impact tourists' decisions based on perception risk derived from news information according to local, national or foreign sources.

The U.S. State Department issued a long-term travel warning on Mexico recommending Americans to avoid or consider very carefully the risk of travel. The warning put Mexico on a list with countries such as North Korea, Afghanistan, Yemen and The Democratic Republic of Congo (Tovrov, 2012). According to the article the travel warning had not seemed to deter tourists and international visitors spent more $3 billion more in 2010 than in 2009 and figures were said to have grown again in 2011. In a Forbes article (2013), written by Nathaniel Parish Flannery, he states U.S. tourists are still likelier to visit Mexico than any other country according to a report from Mexico's tourism ministry who saw a 6.1 percent increase in August 2012 from August 2011 despite deadly events that were taking place throughout Mexico. However, from August 2011 to August 2012, there had not been any reports of tourist destination attacks until February 2013 which took place in Acapulco. It was reported that six Spanish women had been raped by an armed gang.

Lepp and Gibson (2008, p. 747) concluded in their study that individuals regarded as high or low sensation seekers perceived travel risk the same. The authors believed a possible explanation would be because of the impact of the media on the con-

struction of perceived risk. They stated that previous research showed travelers and non-travelers' perceptions are likely influenced by news story images and popular travelogues (Carter, 1998; Hawk, 1992; Keim, 1999). Lepp and Gibson believed risk perception for both high and low sensation seekers could similarly be influenced by popular images "society attaches to these regions of the world." They stated that despite similar perceptions of risk in both high and low sensation seekers, high sensations seekers are more likely to travel to regions perceived as risky.

Lepp and Gibson (2008, p. 748) suggest to marketers that different individuals may find touristic promotional media such as images as appealing or repelling (Reisinger and Mavondo, 2005) as they found no difference in risk perception between high and low sensation seekers.

Mexico's efforts to promote tourism earned them a Travel Weekly Magellan Award for their "Live it to Believe It" campaign. The award is presented through Travel Weekly, a news source for the travel industry. According to their website, the Magellan Award is a premier award for the travel industry, "honoring the best" in design, marketing and services. On the Elite Traveler site, an article stated "the campaign through visual imagery, powerfully showcased Mexico's wide diversity, culture, nature, flavors, history and state-of-the-art destinations". The article called the campaign "aspirational, elegant and meant to evoke memories through visitors experiences". The Mexico Tourism Board was published having invested $36 million in the campaign which incorporated all media platforms including public relations.

In addition to the federal-promotion budget, more than $10 million will be spent on the U.S. and Canada on the rebranding of Vallarta Nayarit over a period of 12

months (Travel Weekly, 2012). Social media is also an important resource for the campaign. The campaign implemented platforms such as Pinterest travel boards and #LiveItToBelieveIt on Twitter as well as a Facebook page, with more than 1 million followers existing by October 2013 (International Marketing Communications, 2013), which is expected to increase with the marketing campaign.

<div align="center">Perceived Risk and Tourist Decision Making</div>

Sonmez and Graefe (1998a, p. 118) stated that tourist decision making may be interrupted when risk is introduced as a factor in destination choice. The threat of risk will naturally create consideration of alternative destination choice where individuals will compare their perceptions of costs/risks and benefits of each before making a decision. The authors assumed that if individuals were provided with a choice between two destinations with similar benefits, but with a threat to one, individuals would choose the less costly, perceived a safe from threat. As cited in Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992, p. 1), a choice is seen as risky when a decision has been made and an individual is uncertain about effects of their decision or if the results are more "desirable than others" (Kogan and Wallach, 1964, 1967; MacCrimmon and Wehrung, 1986; Pollatsck and Tversky, 1970; Rapoport and Wallsten, 1972).

Information search behavior has been identified as a strategy to reduce common risk. Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992, p. 25) found interestingly, that the groups who perceived the most risk were the least likely to have participated in an information search.

Sonmez (1998, p. 437) claimed that when the tourism industry is seriously setback due to political instability, political disruption, violence and other negative occurrences, it needs to be treated as a crisis to be managed. Sonmez argued that it "can no

longer rely on traditional marketing efforts" and needs "recovery marketing" which in-cludes "marketing integrated fully with crisis management activities."

As cited in Sonmez (1998, p. 437) and Bramwell and Rawding (1996), the au-thors point out that the development of images are formed in two ways; internally or "or-ganic[ally]" from prior knowledge, experiences or visitation or from external influences such as advertisements, publicity, news reports or input from acquaintances (Gartner, 1993; Gunn, 1972). Just as positive media coverage can impact attitudes and percep-tions of destinations, negative coverage can also influence the way a destination's im-age is perceived. As the vice president of a tourism consulting firm told a CNBC reporter that the tourism industry was suffering because of the negative media attention in the U.S., it is evident that tourism destinations rely on positive images and depictions to be successful. Sonmez (1998, p. 438) argued that as a result, "image becomes a crucial factor in travel choice and tourism marketing." (Bramwell and Rawding, 1996; Dann, 1996; Echtner and Ritchie, 1991).

Lepp and Gibson (2003) found that previous investigations identified four major risk factors: *terrorism* (Sönmez, Apostolopoulos and Tarlow 1999, Aziz 1995, Bar-On 1996, Leslie 1999, Richter and Waugh 1986, Enders, Sandler and Parise 1992, Sönmez and Graefe 1998a, Sönmez and Graefe 1998b and Sönmez 1998); *war and political in-stability* (Gartner and Shen 1992, Hollier 1991, Ioannides and Apostolopoulos 1999, Mansfeld 1996, Mansfeld 1999, Richter 1992, Richter 1999, Seddighi, Nuttall and Theocharous 2001, Teye 1986 and Wall 1996); *health concerns* (Carter 1998, Cossens and Gin 1994 and Lawton and Page 1997); and *crime* (Brunt, Mawby and Hambly 2000, Dimanche and Leptic 1999, Ellis 1995, Garcia and Nicholls 1995, Hall, Selwood and

McKewon 1995, Moore and Berno 1995, Pizam, Tarlow and Bloom 1997 and Pizam 1999). The authors discuss the relationship between tourism and terrorism after terrorist events gained international notoriety because of the attacks on tourists. Tourists can be often specifics targets for terrorists organizations, and "a common perception among tourists is that they are 'easy targets' for people, " (Lepp and Gibson, 2003, p. 608). They added that the perception of risk can increase due to terrorism, political instability and war. It was evident in 1989 when approximately 11,500 tourists canceled visits to Beijing, China because of the conflict in Tiananmen Square. (Gartner and Shen, 1992). Based on how tourists perceive themselves as "easy targets", Lepp and Gibson (2003) suggested that tourists may feel less safe in unfamiliar environments and see it as a pose for a greater risk.

In Lepp and Gibson's (2003, p. 610) literature, they discussed findings from Sonmez and Graefe's study (1998a) where they found from surveying 500 international tourists, "perceived risk was a stronger predictor of avoiding a particular region than of planning to visit one." Lepp and Gibson added that touristic travel decision making was significantly impacted by past experience as experienced international tourists per-ceived less risk. Lepp and Gibson (2003) offered an explanation using the Travel Career Ladder concept by Pearce (1988, 1996) which is grounded in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Lepp and Gibson wrote about Pearce's hypothesis regarding tourist satisfac-tion of higher order needs, that more experienced tourists seek to satisfy those needs, while lower order needs such as food and safety are more likely to be sought by less experienced tourists. Pearce also linked travel career and life stage with the assumption that older tourists may be more experienced. However, Sonmez and Graefe (1998a) did

8

not find in their sample that age influenced an individual's perception of risk. Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) investigated the preference of the tourist role over the life course and found that with age, the preference for risk related tourism decreased.

Nationality has also been found to influence the perceptions of risk associated with international tourism. Seddighi, Nuttall and Theocharous (2001) found that risk perceptions vary by nationality and the levels of perceived risk were different among travel agents from six Western European countries. These findings suggest in an effort to try to understand risk perception among international tourists the following should be considered tourist role (degree of novelty sought), past tourist experience, age, gender and nationality (Lepp and Gibson, 2003, p. 612).

Lepp and Gibson (2003, p. 216) found in their study the perception of risk due to war and political instability varied significantly in their sample of 290 U.S. born college students. Drifters perceived war and political instability to be less of a risk than the other roles, according to Lepp and Gibson. They also found the perception of risk associated with war and political instability did not vary significantly by gender or experience. The authors concluded that the tourists' preference for novelty is associated with perceived risk. They also found that previous experience was related to perceptions of health, terrorism and food risks. Perceptions of risk levels attached to international tourism were found to be different among novelty seeking tourists. Novelty seekers opposed to those who prefer familiarity, perceive health, war, political instability, terrorism and strange food as less risky. "What may be a source of fear for the organized mass tourist may be a source of excitement for the drifter."

Lepp and Gibson (2008) investigated the relationship between tourists' preference for "novelty" and "stimulation" or familiarity and their perception of risk associated with international tourism. They found that the personality trait of sensation seeking (SS) that is associated with tourists behavior and the need for novelty and stimulation was not related to the perceptions of risk. They found both "high and low sensation seekers perceived risk similarly", (p.640). Although, "those higher in SS were more likely to have traveled internationally and to have traveled to regions of the world rated as riskier" (p. 740). They state that high sensation seekers look for more of an authentic experience and engage in more of the host culture while traveling freely without a well defined itinerary. On the other hand, low sensation seekers are likely to to travel with tour groups, pre-plan most of their trip, find familiarity and maintain a barrier between themselves and the host culture (p. 747). Lepp and Gibson's findings found no difference in the way risk was perceived by high and low sensation seekers in regards to travel of a particular region of the world. They offered a possible explanation for this would be due to the impact of the media and the construction of perceived risk (p. 747).

Lepp and Gibson (2008, p. 748) stated that their finding was consistent with Zuckerman's SS theory; countries perceived as risky are also likely to be perceived as new or fresh and more exciting than countries with similarity and familiarity to US citizens.

A study by Law (2006, p. 295) revealed that generally, the threat of risks would not be considerable to travelers. The sample included 1,304 respondents from the U.S., China, Western Europe and Australia. Fifty-nine percent were Western visitors and 40 percent were Asian visitors. However, ANOVA results revealed US travelers viewed the

threat of infectious disease and terrorist attack significantly lower than those from China and Taiwan. Law states his results were consistent with Seddhighi et al.'s study (2001) which showed nationality varies the risk perceptions associated with international tourism.

In regards to perceived efficacy of official media in Law's study, disseminating the information about risks, ANOVA results showed significant differences among travelers from different regions. Visitors from the U.S. and Western Europe has less perceived value than those from Taiwan. Law states that "[the] observation could be attributed to the strong influence of official media in disseminating information in Taiwan" (p. 295). The study showed a significant difference with higher perceived values by Asian travelers than Western travelers, and Asian travelers perceived all types of risk significantly higher than Western travelers in the dimension of efficacy of official media according to Law. He concluded that "[the] difference could probably be due to the over reporting (or even over exaggerating) of risks in Western media. Sonmez (1998) stated that North American tourists have been exposed to more intense media coverage of terrorists events" (p. 295).

Law (2006) also found that when respondents were asked how likely they would change their original travel plans if any risks were to occur in their travel destinations, respondents stated they were likely to change their plans (p. 295). Law noted his findings were consistent with Sonmez and Graefe (1998a) which claimed travelers intended to avoid destinations they viewed as risky. ANOVA results revealed mainland visitors from China, Taiwan and Malaysia were significantly more likely than visitors from Western Europe and Singapore to change their travel plans (p. 295-296).

11

Sonmez and Graefe (1998a, p. 118) wrote, "Despite their low probability, risks carrying high costs-- such as terrorism--appear to provoke serious consumer reaction (Richter and Waugh, 1986)". They added that in 1985, as a result of a terrorism act, 162 out of 28 million Americans who traveled abroad were either killed or injured. The probability of being targeted is .00058% (The Economist, 1986ab), and as a result of the terrorism acts, 1.8 million Americans changed their plans to travel internationally the following year. (Edgell, 1990; Richter and Waugh, 1986).

Sonmez and Graefe,(1998a, p. 119) argued that a risky travel decision is perceived as such when the outcome of the decision is uncertain. In the decision-making process, decision-makers continue to make their decision by comparing the benefits and costs of destination choices, seeking the one that "promises the most benefits for the least cost", while being likely to eliminate destinations that are perceived as costliest or riskiest. Information search behavior, where potential tourists gather more information about destination alternatives, can decrease part of the perceived risk. However, it is important to keep in mind individuals that are risk takers or high sensation seekers as their response to risky situations can vary or be determined by personality traits, types of risk perceived and situational factors.

Sonmez and Graefe (1998a, p. 119) point out in their literature Tversky and Kahneman's studies (1981, 1986) that the concept of "context" was introduced where decision-makers evaluate alternatives based on the occurrence of the "framing effect". They state that the "framing effect [primarily occurs] in situations with time constraints and causes equivalent outcomes to appear as gains or losses." The authors argued:

> "Because the framing effect generates a more extreme response to possible losses than that to possible gains by individuals, potential tourists are likely to

choose the prospect perceived as less dangerous. Exposure to media coverage and negative word-of-mouth regarding terrorist threat can create the framing effect by causing one of two equally safe or dangerous destinations to appear safer or more dangerous than the other."

In a study by Tversky and Kahneman (1983, p. 343) the authors argued that "risky prospects are characterized by their possible outcomes and by the probabilities of these outcomes." However, the framing of the option can be described in different ways such as a gain or loss while the framing effect can "resemble perceptual illusions more than computational errors". The authors (p. 350) described the framing effects as pervasive and the relationship between decision values and experience values as complicated. They state that the framing outcome can have a significant influence on choice but an unlikely affect on the experience.

Tversky and Kahneman (1986, p. 273) believed psychological considerations such as framing was "[enriching] and complicat[ed] the analysis of choice." They stated that decisions are dependent on the framing of language, context of choice and the nature of the display creating incomplete information. The authors argued that a specific frame to a problem can be controlled by its presentation using the decision maker's expectancies, norms and habits (p. 257). They write, "an adequate account of choice cannot ignore these effects of framing and context, even if they are normatively distasteful and mathematically intractable" (p. 273).

Levy-Garboua et al. (2012, p. 133) found that most subjects chose the safe option for a high payoff with a small probability, but when the high payoff increased significantly for the riskier option, the subjects switched to the riskier option. The results of this study were consistent with previous results found in their literature. They also reported the results showed inconsistent behavior by a small group of subjects. In the study,

Levy-Garboua et al. also investigated the extent framing affects the subject's attitude toward risk and found that individuals tend to oppose higher risk under high payoff conditions (p. 138).

<center>Frames, Framing and Framing Effects</center>

Callaghan and Schnell (2005, p. 126) wrote:

"Once a focusing event occurs, the news media become 'massive search engines' looking for dramatic ways to frame issues linked to the events (Wolsfeld, 2003). Normal journalistic routines are suspended, as selected frames dominate coverage for extended periods. Media attention to 'event-related' frames assures them a prominent place on the public agenda."

To assess the impact of terrorism frames on the public's attitudes, emotions, and political behavior, Callaghan and Schnell conducted a laboratory experiment where different versions of a newspaper article were created. To create external validity in the experiment, the subjects were given the opportunity to read and think about the article at their leisure. The results concluded there was significant relationship between focusing events and framing effects. (p. 131, 141).

In the Handbook of Journalism Studies by Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas (2009, p. 181) touched on public opinion scholar, Druckman's work stating what Druckman defined as a framing effect is "how individuals form their opinion on a given issue" after they have been exposed to a media frame. The frames in communication, such as what the media presents, have an important role in shaping the frames in thought of individuals. Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas also cited Nelson, Oxley and Clawson (1997) stating that the authors argued that frames dealing with issues that people face on a daily basis, tell people "how to weigh the often conflicting considerations", creating a strong possibility to affect public opinion. Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas (pg. 182) also men-

<center>14</center>

tioned that by creating a frame that influences the way people think and omitting opposing frames, certain preferences could be activated over others (Feldman and Zaller, 1992; Price and Tweksbury, 1997) and "declare certain frames as more important than others" (Iyengar, 1991; Nelson, Oxkley et al., 1997; Nelson and Oxley, 1999).

Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas suggested from existing literature persuasion is an effect of framing (p. 183). Because individuals process information at a limited capacity (Fiske and Taylor, 1991) and cannot recollect every piece of information they know about an issue or event at a certain moment, the impossibility of considering everything "allows room for persuasion". Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas also discussed other research from Zaller (1992) and Kinder and Sanders (1996) which suggested "framing is an extension of the priming literature" and the the effects of framing derive from the accessibility to information. They argued that because people's inability to recall every piece of information they know about something at a specific moment, they will rely on information that is "accessible, easily retrieved or recently active in their minds", according to the Cognitive Accessibility Model (Zaller, 1992). Kim et al. (p. 217) claimed that when participants had to explain their selections (detailed processing), the effects of framing are not as prominent (Sieck & Yates, 1997; Takemura, 1993). Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas claimed that recent framing literature notes that availability, accessibility and applicability must be present for an evident framing effect to occur (Chong and Druckman, 1007; Price and Tweksbury, 1997) (p. 183).

Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas wrote that there were studies that concluded that competition of frames negates the effects of framing. Studies demonstrated a framing effect difference between two competing frames and the exposure to one, creating the

distribution of results to be different when there was competition between two frames (p. 186).

The Handbook of Journalism Studies states that in schema research, "people remember information that confirms their existing schemas, and forget information inconsistent with them" (p. 184). However, the availability of time may depend on whether or not an individual can retrieve and process inconsistent information, which means inconsistent information isn't necessarily disregarded. It is also possible that "people may very well try to make the inconsistent information fit into an existing schema" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

In a study by Kim et al. (2005, p. 215), researchers found that language used to describe options in a context of a framing effect greatly influences the decision maker's choice in that older adults are more likely to use heuristic processing that younger adults. The authors pointed out that in framing-effect literature people who are experienced or with expertise still are affected by the effects of framing (Loke & Tan, 1992; Roszkowski & Snelbecker, 1990). Some authors agree that in many circumstances framing is produced by heuristic information processing (McElroy & Seta, 2003). It has been proven that younger adults rely less on heuristic processing than older adults (Johnson, 1990). Kim et al. believe in the probability that "older adults are more likely to show framing effects."

The results of Kim et al.'s study showed that the the present framing effect was reduced in both younger and older adults when participants were asked to provide rationale for their decisions. The results were expected because of other studies that focused on younger participants who were asked to justify their decisions (Sieck & Yates,

1997; Takemura, 1993). The authors suggest that older adults are more analytical in processing information and "base their decisions on a problem's deeper structure, rather than on its superficial language" (p. 217).

Kim et al.'s data was consistent with a resource allocation hypothesis proposed by Hess, Rosenger and Waters (2001). The hypothesis states that older adults tend to use heuristic information processing (memories) more because of their limited cognitive resources which is used for other demanding or important tasks. It argued that the performance of older adults can be as adequate as younger adults in situations where they are motivated to process information systematically (analytically) in a small demanding task. Kim et al.'s data coincided with Hess and his colleagues' explanation. The low demand decision situation showed older adults to show more framing effects than younger adults. It can be explained because of the older adults' heuristic processing information rather than the younger adults' systematic processing. However, the study showed that older adults' performanced increased to the younger adults' level when they were suggested to process information systematically (p. 218).

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

Druckman (2001a) explained in an essay the meaning of the terms *frames, framing* and *framing effects* and how the concepts have been used. He argued the importance of the usage of the terms as he noted that [some] scholars do not recognize the differences in the multiple uses and use the terms in conflicting manners or inconsistently (p. 226). Druckman observed several definitions by scholars and revealed *frame* and *framing* have two distinct differences. He called the first difference, *frames in communication,* how the speaker chooses words, images, phrases and presentations styles to relay information they see relevant to the topic (Capella and Jamieson, 1997; Gitlin, 1980; Iyengar, 1991). He called the second use of the terms*, frames in thought,* which is an individual's "understanding of a given situation" (Goffman, 1974; Sweetser and Fauconnier, 1996; Tversky and Kahneman, 1981, 1986). Druckman reasoned that this *frame in thought* is not a communication frame rather an individual's perception of the situation in which what an "individual sees as relevant to understanding the situation" (p. 227-228). Druckman argued that *frames in communication* and *frames in thought* are similar in that both focus on emphasizing what is important but are different in that *frames in thought* is an individual's thinking while *frames in communication* is what the speakers says. He pointed out that the *frames in communication* shape the *frames in thought* which creates the *framing effect* (p. 228).

Druckman (p. 228) identified one type of framing effect as *equivalency framing effect, "*which examines how the use of different, but logically equivalent, words or phrases [such as 97% fat-free] causes individuals to alter their preferences" . Druckman

18

claimed that this framing effect occurs when the same information is presented in either a positive or negative frame which causes the different preferences in individuals (Levin, Schneider and Gaeth, 1998, p. 150).

The other type of framing effect Druckman referred to is *emphasis framing effect*. "[It] shows that by emphasizing a subset of potentially relevant considerations, a speaker can lead individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions" (p. 230). Druckman claimed that this framing effect works on individuals by causing them to focus on certain parts of an issue instead of others. He pointed out that scholars have found that the difference in frames in the *emphasis framing effect* have lead individuals to omit or alter overall opinions, disregarding considerations. Instead individuals base them on another point of focus.

The *emphasis framing effect* is different than *the equivalency framing effect,* where the latter creates *frames in communication* that can make the same statement in different words that are equivalent. The *emphasis framing effect* "focus on different potentially relevant considerations" (p. 230). Druckman identified *emphasis framing effects* to have five moderators; predispositions, citizen deliberation, political information, source credibility, and competition (p. 241).

Druckman cited "If, as Nelson, et al. (1997) show, *emphasis framing effects* work through a deliberative psychological process, people may be selective in choosing whom to believe" (p. 243). Druckman tested the possibility by conducting two experiments that tested the hypothesis "that a speaker can engage in successful framing only if his or her target audience believes the speaker is credible" (p. 243).

The results from Druckman's study (2001b) supported the source credibility hypothesis. Druckman stated that the results suggested that people tend to look for and entrust credible sources than the information they hear based on manipulation of frames. People look for credible sources to help them sort through the information received from frames. Druckman suggested that framing may be related to "a competent learning process rather than manipulation." (p. 243-244).

Sonmez and Graefe's study on the influence of terrorism risk revealed 88 percent of respondents agreed that politically unstable countries should be avoided by tourists (p. 128). Additionally, 57 percent said the possibility of terrorism discouraged them from international travel. The study also showed that the respondents preferred social sources of information to more formal sources and 84 percent reported using personal experiences most often and 57 percent considered other people's experiences. The results suggested that concerns for safety were associated with higher risk perception levels but could be lessened with communication associated with more positive attitudes.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

This research is guided by the framing effect model which suggests that how messages are presented to the audience influences how people process that information. The "frame", or how the message is presented, works to organize or structure message meaning (Taversky & Kahneman,1981,1986). Sonmez and Graefe (1998a) applied this concept in their study:

"Because the framing effect generate a more extreme response to possible losses than that to possible gains by individuals, potential tourists are likely to choose the prospect perceived as less dangerous. Exposure to media coverage and negative word-of-mouth regarding terrorist threat can create the framing effect by causing one of two

equally safe or dangerous destinations to appear safer or more dangerous than the other" (p. 122-23).

Sonmez and Graefe's proposed framing effect will be used to examine what type of impact high-profile events from the continuous drug war in Mexico has on online discussions. High-profile events covered by news sources during the drug war in Mexico and the impact it had on tourism led to the development of the following research questions. The research questions are based on three significant events based on the generation of media coverage. The events are the killing of American Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent Jaime Zapata in February 2011, the rapes of six Spanish women in Acapulco in February 2013 and the arrest of kingpin Chapo Guzman in February 2014.

This study will attempt to answer the following questions:

RQ1: How did high-profile events in the Mexican drug war change the framing of online discourse regarding the safety of traveling to Mexico?

RQ2: How does the discussion before and after each of the three high-profile events on TripAdvisor's forum compare?

Chapter 3

Methods

The attack of ICE agent Jaime Zapata in San Luis Potosi generated coverage from 892 world wide news sources according to Lexis Nexis. The rapes in Acapulco, Guerrero received coverage from 661 world wide news sources according to Lexis Nexis. The arrest of kingpin Chapo Guzman in Mazatlan, Sinaloa was covered by 999 world wide news sources according to Lexis Nexis.

Because the purpose of this study was to examine how the framing effects of TripAdvisor users impact tourists' discourse on travel to a destination facing terrorism risk, it is important to note that the three news stories were selected on the basis of news coverage it generated. In addition, Acapulco was selected because of its previous long-term history of being known as a top travel destination in Mexico. San Luis Potosi selection was based on its violent history with Los Zetas drug cartel and the news coverage it received the past several years. Although not considered a tourist destination, such coverage can still impact perceptions of Mexico and how potential tourists assess travel risk. The final selection of Guzman's arrest was selected because of the expectation by some that tourism would increase, considering he was one of the most wanted criminals in the world was arrested. Mexican officials said Guzman was largely responsible for Mexico's negative image due to drug-related violent crime.

The research questions were examined through a quantitative content analysis and qualitative thematic analysis of the popular TripAdvisor.com website. According to their website, "TripAdvisor is the world's largest travel site, enabling travelers to plan and have the perfect trip. TripAdvisor branded sites make up the largest travel commu-

nity in the world, reaching nearly 280 million unique monthly visitors, and more than 170

million reviews and opinions." The TripAdvisor.com database now contains thousands

of travel discussion threads and has been used for data collection in many published

articles (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; O'Conner, 2008; Ricci & Wiesma, 2006).

TripAdvisor Forums > Mexico Forums

Search Forums		
Search in: Mexico forums ⬍ [ ] GO		

Choose a destination below to browse forums:

Forum	# Topics	# Posts
📁 Baja California	60,416	501,103
📁 Central Mexico and Gulf Coast	10,856	58,829
📁 Jalisco	44,911	453,666
📁 Northern Mexico	2,130	10,313
📁 Pacific Coast	53,210	411,899
📁 Southern Mexico	11,670	80,130
📁 Yucatan Peninsula	378,270	3,133,557

Figure 3.1 TripAdvisor Mexico Forum

TripAdvisor enables users to read or post topics on its discussion forums. This

study used TripAdvisor user content posts as a sampling unit to examine the type of

framing effect on travel discourse to Mexico that were generated by news coverage of

crime in Mexico and the framing effect TripAdvisor users had in response to questions

regarding travel to Mexico. The framing effect is defined as perceptions of it being safe

(positive) or more risky (negative) to visit Mexico known as the safety frame, including

encouragement (positive) or discouragement (negative) to visit Mexico which is identi-

fied as the travel frame.

To answer the two research questions, data was collected by visiting TripAdvi-

sor's online forums, selecting the Mexico Forum and conducting searches based on the

keywords, "violence" and "safety." The two words were selected to identify discussions

related to the topic of this study. The keywords were based on recurring themes in news articles and travel discussions. Both terms provide an opportunity for the discourse to either go in a positive, negative or neutral direction. The collection of samples that appeared with the selected keywords was proceeded in order from the first page of the results, post by post until all posts were accounted for within the date range of the news event. Only the start of a thread regarding relevant questions to personal safety or safety from drug-cartel related crime were selected. The individual posts (not threads) resulting from the search produced 1,062 posts for Event 1 that were not related to drug violence and were omitted from the analysis; Event 2 resulted in 978 posts and Event 3 produced 572 posts that were not able to be used for the study. The total number of threads for Event 1 were 105 but only 84 were coded based on relevancy. The total for Event 2 resulted in 36 out of 48 threads coded and Event 3 had 35 threads out of 52 that were coded. The ratio of coded posts divided by coded threads for Event 1 equaled 8.69, Event 2: 8.72 and Event 3: 5.25. The threads selected were based on the relevant keywords; violence and safety and were sorted by TripAdvisor's options *by date and by relevance*. The years 2012, 2013 and 2014 were added to the keyword safety in order to obtain more results for a larger sample that would be sufficient for a chi square analysis. The threads also had to be posted within 45 days before and 45 days after each of the three incidents. The dates are January 1-March 31, 2011; December 22, 2012-March 21, 2013; January 7-April 6, 2014.

POST A NEW TOPIC

Search in: Mexico forums ⬍ safety **GO**

Sort by: Relevance ⬍

Topic	Forum	Author	Post Date
safety ... gangs, shootings, pollution and general *safety* issues in Acapulco. Does anyone know ...	Acapulco	travelangel1	February 09, 2006
↳ nothing is happening with gangs in the hotel zone.....what we have ...		zzaa	February 03, 2006
↳ Actually, one of my brothers asked me about the shootings which occurred ...		RonVal	February 04, 2006
14 more matching replies (view all)			

Figure 3.2 TripAdvisor Mexico Forum with keyword search

Safety
Feb 22, 2011, 1:27 PM

RandeeSt_Louis_Mo_
St.Louis, Mo.

posts: 25
reviews: 3

We have a trip planned for playa next week, but every time I tell a friend or family member that we are going south of cancun I get told Americans were murdered or kidnapped there. I am also told this was on the news. This is our third time going to the area and have never seen any problems. Whats up with these stories? Any suggestions on how to diffuse this issue with family members?

Report inappropriate content

1-10 of 13 replies Sorted by Oldest first ⬍   « 1 2 »

1. Re: Safety
Feb 22, 2011, 1:33 PM   Save this Post

Vancouversundog
Vancouver

Destination Expert
for Akumal, Riviera
Maya, Quintana Roo,
Puerto Morelos

posts: 29,169

Tell them this area in Mexico has a lower crime rate than your own home town

Report inappropriate content

2. Re: Safety
Feb 22, 2011, 1:40 PM

nadonl
Gatineau. Qc. Canada

Tell them that where most of the action and murders are happening is about 3500 km or 2400 miles from Playa Del Carmen........North of Mexico is where everything is happening!

Figure 3.3 TripAdvisor thread

The sample was collected based on the keyword search which produced the start of a thread. The posts of replies within the thread were coded, however, if there were irrelevant posts within the thread that did not relate to personal safety, the posts were omitted from being coded.

The posts were coded by a Post I.D. which consisted of the month, day and year of the post, the forum name (specific region of Mexico), username, positive safety frame, negative safety frame, neutral safety frame, encouragement to travel frame, discouragement to travel frame and neutral frame. A chi-square test was used to test for significance which looked at safety frames 45 days before and 45 days after each news event as well as travel frames 45 days before and 45 after each event. A t-Test (two-sample assuming unequal variances) was conducted to compare the means of each individual's safety frame and travel frame before and after each event.

There were two variables; safety frame and travel frame, which contained three values; 1-positive, 2-neutral and 3-negative. In a study by Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955) the researchers applied semantic differential to measure the connotations or meaning of words to acquire the attitude towards objects or concepts. Scales were used to record judgments categorized as positive, negative or neutral.

The safety frame variable consisted of TripAdvisor discourse on safety about a location, while the travel frame identified discourse that could encourage or discourage a user to visit Mexico. A codebook was created for the researcher and second coder containing how to code the categories; positive safety frame, negative safety frame, neutral safety frame, encouragement travel frame, discouragement travel frame and neutral travel frame. The descriptions are below. For the analysis, the researcher coded the total amount of relevant posts, 1,228, regarding safety related to the drug war while the second coder coded 123 units, ten percent of the total, for the purpose of computing coder reliability to ensure that coding instructions and the code book were reliable. Coder 2's posts were a subset sample of the full sample. There were three rounds of

coding between Coder 1 and Coder 2 and refinements to the code book before reaching

reliability. The initial training was approximately 10 minutes of discussion about how to

code the frames. Initially scores were below acceptable therefore a second round was

needed. More examples were added to the codebook and questions were clarified such

as how to code posts which included positive and negative frames within one posts.

Such type of posts were coded as neutral. After the second round scores improved but

further coder training was needed before finally reaching acceptable reliability on the

third coder reliability check. Statistics for reliability are reported below. Each round of the

subset sample included coding in order of each post from one of the three years and is

not considered as random or systematic sampling. For example, for the final coding, a

starting point from the 2011 posts was selected and coding proceeded in order of the

posts until ten percent of the total of posts were coded. The ten percent of the total con-

tains posts for years 2011, 2013 and 2014. The subsample also included posts that

were coded for the analysis. Ideally, the subsample would not include such posts but

because there were a limited amount those posts were used.

A positive safety frame explicitly stated the location is safe and/or did not indicate

concern for safety. A negative safety frame explicitly stated the location is unsafe and/or

indicated concern for safety. A neutral safety frame did not explicitly state location is

safe or unsafe, did not mention concern for personal safety, or had a mix of positive and

negative comments. For the majority of coding neutral frames consisted of an equal

amount of positive and negative discourse but in some instances there were some

judgment calls for the neutral safety frames were there was an unbalanced amount of

positive vs. negative or vice versa. For instance, if there were five positive statements followed by one negative statement, it would be coded as positive.

An example of a positive safety frame would look like the first statement below followed by a negative safety frame.

> "I think if there were a lot of trouble in SLP [San Luis Potosi] it would reach the news (and it hasn't). SLP is not known as a dangerous place, the people I know living there have no safety concerns and recent visitors mentioned nothing so."

> "My wife is concerned about safety, particularly on the drive from Cancun [airport] to the ferry, since there have been many reports on our news stations about drug-cartel violence in Mexico. Can you tell us if there have been problems like this, or if it is safe?"

Encouragement to travel frame explicitly stated or provided encouragement to visit and enjoy the trip, indicated reassurance or provided helpful information for the trip. Encouragement examples include comments such as "this will be our fourth trip", "don't have anything to worry about" and about women traveling alone. Discouragement to travel frame explicitly stated not to visit and/or indicated discouragement to travel. For example, "Our family lived there for about 5 years until 2001. Most Americans we knew there moved out due to drug violence," would be coded as a discouragement travel frame. Neutral to travel frame did not explicitly state to visit or not to visit and/or did not encourage nor discourage travel plans.

Intercoder reliability was also calculated using an online resource, ReCal (2010, 2013). Documentation for ReCal consisted of entering the first and second coder's data for the safety frame variable into the first two columns, with one unit of analysis per row. Each row represented the same unit of analysis. The second variable, travel frame, was calculated by using the third and fourth columns.

The percent agreement was 96.7 percent for the safety frame and 95.1 percent for the travel frame. Krippendorf's Alpha (for interval data) was .889 for the safety frame coding and .835 for the travel frame coding.

The data was also coded by Mexican regions associated with the forum post to determine if a rise in safety or violence concerns occurs in some regions more than others and how discourse was affected (increase or decrease in positive vs negative safety frames).

Lastly, a qualitative thematic analysis was conducted as supplemental to the quantitative findings. The coding process of the thematic analysis was performed as semantic themes where themes touch the surface and did not inquire more depth of what the users stated. This approach identified patterns or themes about TripAdvisor user discourse about travel to Mexico. The content selected derived from the same posts used in the quantitative method which included dates January 1-March 31, 2011, December 22-March 21, 2013 and January 7-April 6, 2014 under the keyword search in the Mexico forum. The analysis was conducted in four phases to find surface meanings of the data to answer *RQ2: How does the discourse before and after each of the 3 high-profile events on TripAdvisor's forum compare?* In the first phase, data was read to the point of familiarization. The second phase consisted of generating codes based on separating types concerns, reassurance of traveling and other In the third phase, the collection of the themes were gathered from the codes. The final stage analyzed the sample for completion and an accurate representation.

Chapter 4

Results

Quantitative Posts Unit of Analysis

Posts Safety Frames, Event 1: Murder of American ICE agent

(January 1-March 31, 2011)

The data was inserted in Microsoft Excel with the categories mentioned earlier

then a chi-square analysis was conducted to answer *RQ1: How did high-profile events*

in the Mexican drug war change the framing of online discourse regarding the safety of

traveling to Mexico? The selection of threads consisted of 45 days before and 45 days

after each of the three incidents. There were two rows and three columns of categories;

Before News Event 1 (row 1) and After News Event 1 (row 2); Positive Safety Frame

(column 1), Negative Safety Frame (column 2) and Neutral Safety Frame (column 3).

The following statistical tests are based on number of posts within the threads.

Before Event 1, 228 frames were positive in discourse, while 35 were negative

frames and 45 were neutral safety frames as shown in Table A.1. After Event 1, 354

frames were positive, 24 negative and 44 neutral. The result of discourse before and

after the event was significant and did change the framing of the online discourse to

more positive after the event, where c^2 (2, *N* = 730) = 11.82, *p* = .002.

Posts Safety Frames, Event 2: Rapes of six Spanish women in Acapulco

(December 22-March 21, 2013)

The results Before Event 2 consisted of 114 positive frames in discourse, 8 nega-

tive frames and 16 neutral safety frames as shown in Table A.2. After Event 2, 161

frames were positive, 10 negative frames and 5 neutral frames. The result of discourse

before and after the event was significant and did change the framing of the online discourse to more positive after the event, where c^2 (2, N = 314) = 9.55, p = .008.

Posts Safety Frames, Event 3: Arrest of "Chapo" Guzman

(January 7-April 6, 2014)

Results Before Event 3 included 104 positive safety frames, 13 negative frames and 12 neutral frames as shown in Table A.3. After Event 3, 40 frames were positive, 8 frames were negative and 7 frames were neutral. The result of discourse before and after the event was not significant, there was no statistical change in frames. c^2 (2, N = 184) = 1.41, p = .49.

Posts Travel Frames, Event 1: Murder of American ICE agent

(January 1-March 31, 2011)

Before Event 1, there were 188 encouragement to travel frames, 7 discouragement to travel and 113 neutral to travel as shown in Table A.4. After Event 1, 251 frames were encouragement to travel, 6 discouragement to travel and 165 neutral to travel. The result of discourse before and after the event was statistically insignificant where, c^2 (2, N = 730) = 1.06, p = .58.

Posts Travel Frames, Event 2: Rapes of six Spanish women in Acapulco

(December 22-March 21, 2013)

Before Event 2, 82 were encouragement to travel frames, 0 discouragement to travel frames and 55 neutral to travel frames as shown in Table A.5. After Event 2, there were 90 encouragement frames, 2 discouragement frames and 85 neutral frames. The result of discourse before and after the event was statistically insignificant where, c^2 (2, N = 314) = 3.76, p = .15.

Posts Travel Frames, Event 3: Arrest of "Chapo" Guzman

(January 7-April 6, 2014)

Before Event 3, 87 were encouragement to travel frames, 1 discouragement to travel frames and 42 neutral to travel frames as shown in Table A.6. After Event 3, there were 33 encouragement frames, 3 discouragement frames and 18 neutral frames. The result of discourse before and after the event was statistically insignificant where, c^2 (2, N = 184) = 4.23, p = .12.

Quantitative Individual User Unit of Analysis

The individual user unit of analysis was conducted on coding based by individual users and whether their comments represented a particular type of frame. The data was computed into Microsoft Excel which was consolidated by UserName, totaling the amount per each frame; positive safety frame, negative safety frame, neutral safety frame, encouragement travel frame, discouragement travel frame and neutral travel frame. After calculating the sum of each individual's frame for each variable; safety frame and travel frame, means for each individual were then computed for each variable.

A t-Test (Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances) was conducted to compare the means of each individual's safety frame and travel frame before and after each event. There was little overlap between the before and after groups resulting in the samples not being entirely independent. For Event 1 (2011) 19% of users commented both before and after the event. In Event 2 (2013), 17% of users commented before and after the event and six percent of users comments before and after Event 3 (2014).

Individual User Analysis, Event 1: Murder of American ICE agent

(January 1-March 31, 2011)

There was a significant effect for safety frame discourse, with the discourse being more positive after the event (M=.60) than the the discourse before the event (M=.76), $t(403) = -2.89$, $p < 0.00$.

The travel frame discourse is not significantly different after the event than before the event, where (M=.59) before the event and (M=.57) after the event, $t(469) = .50$, $p < 0.30$.

Individual User Analysis, Event 2: Rapes of six Spanish women in Acapulco

(December 22-March 21, 2013)

The safety frame discourse resulted in a significant difference in more positive discourse where (M=.74) before the event and (M=.85) after the event, $t(236) = -1.67$, $p < 0.04$.

Results from the travel frame discourse showed discourse became more negative after the event (M=.59) than before the event (M=.49) and was statistically significant, $t(258) = 1.65$, $p < 0.04$.

Individual User Analysis, Event 3: Arrest of "Chapo" Guzman

(January 7-April 6, 2014)

The safety frame discourse results showed an insignificant difference in the discourse before the event where (M=.68) and after the event where (M=.55), $t(82) = 1.13$, $p < 0.13$.

The travel frame discourse results were not significantly different where (M=.64) before the event and (M=.54) after the event, $t(78) = 1.13$, $p < 0.13$.

Regional Discourse

The data was also coded by Mexican regions associated with the forum post to determine if a rise in safety or violence concerns occurs in some regions more than others and how discourse was affected (increase or decrease in positive vs negative safety frames). The data is based on posts unit of analysis rather than individual user level analysis since some users posted about multiple locations.The tables below are representative of the data. Before Event 1, discourse was in the top three highest for Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Cabo San Lucas, Baja California Sur and Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo. After Event 1, discourse was highest in Playa del Carmen (Quintana Roo), Cancun (Quintana Roo) and Ixtapa (Guerrero), closely followed by Mazatlan, Sinaloa and Cozumel, Quintana Roo. At one point Mazatlan, Sinaloa, home state for drug lord, "Chapo" Guzman was a popular tourist destinations with thousands of cruise ships porting in the city of Mazatlan. Throughout the years, cruises lost passengers and eventually the cruise lines ceased porting. Puerto Vallarta also considered a popular resort destination, over the years it has become less popular because of violence near the resort town according to news outlets. Some scheduled cruise stops to Vallarta were also canceled due to the violence. According to discourse among TripAdvisor users, Cancun, Cozumel and Playa del Carmen, all located in the state of Quintana Roo in the Yucatan Peninsula are perceived as less risky and safe for tourists throughout the years. Other areas which will later be presented which also part of the Yucatan include Tulum and Isla de Mujeres.

Travel frames that encouraged tourism to Mexico Before Event 1 included Playa del Carmen, Puerto Vallarta and Cabo San Lucas. After Event 2, encouragement was

provided to Playa del Carmen, Cancun and Cabo. It is apparent that during 2011, Cabo, Cancun and Playa del Carmen were popular consideration for tourism.

In 2011; Event 1, the amount of posts before the event were counted at 308 and increased to 422 after the event. The number of positive to negative safety posts were 228:35 before the event and 354:24 after the event. Encouragement to discouragement posts before the event were 188:7 and 251:6 after the event. In 2013; Event 2, the posts counted before the event were 138 which increased to 176 after the event. The number of positive to negative safety posts were 114:8 before the event and 161:10 after the event. Encouragement to discouragement posts were 82:0 before and 90:2 after. In 2014; Event 3 produced 129 safety posts before the event and 55 after the event. Positive frames were 104 to 13 negative frames and 40 positive safety frames to 8 negative safety frames. Travel frames created 129 posts before the event and 55 posts after the event. Positive travel frames were totaled at 104 and 13 for negative frames. The change after the event reflected 40 positive travel frames to 8 negative frames. Encouragement to travel before the event was calculated to 87 while there was one negative frame. After the event encouragement frames were at 33 and discouragement frames were at three.

Top representative regions before Event 2 include Cabo San Lucas, Puerto Vallarta and Mazatlan in the safety frames category. After Event 2, Playa Mujeres (Quintana Roo), Puerto Vallarta and Acapulco (Guerrero) were on the list. Playa Mujeres is on Isla de Mujeres, a ferry ride from Cancun. Travel frames encouraging users Before Event 2 included Cabo, Playa del Carmen, and Acapulco. After the event, Playa Mujeres, Acapulco and Playa Paraiso (Quintana Roo) were represented. Event 3 reflected

safety frames for Playa del Carmen, Puerto Vallarta and Huatulco (Oaxaca) before and Ixtapa, Cabo San Lucas and Tulum (Quintana Roo) after the event. Travel frames before the event included Playa del Carmen, Huatulco, Puerto Vallarta and Acapulco. After the event, locations, Ixtapa, Cabo San Lucas and Tulum were represented.

Figure 4.1 Before Event 1 Safety Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis
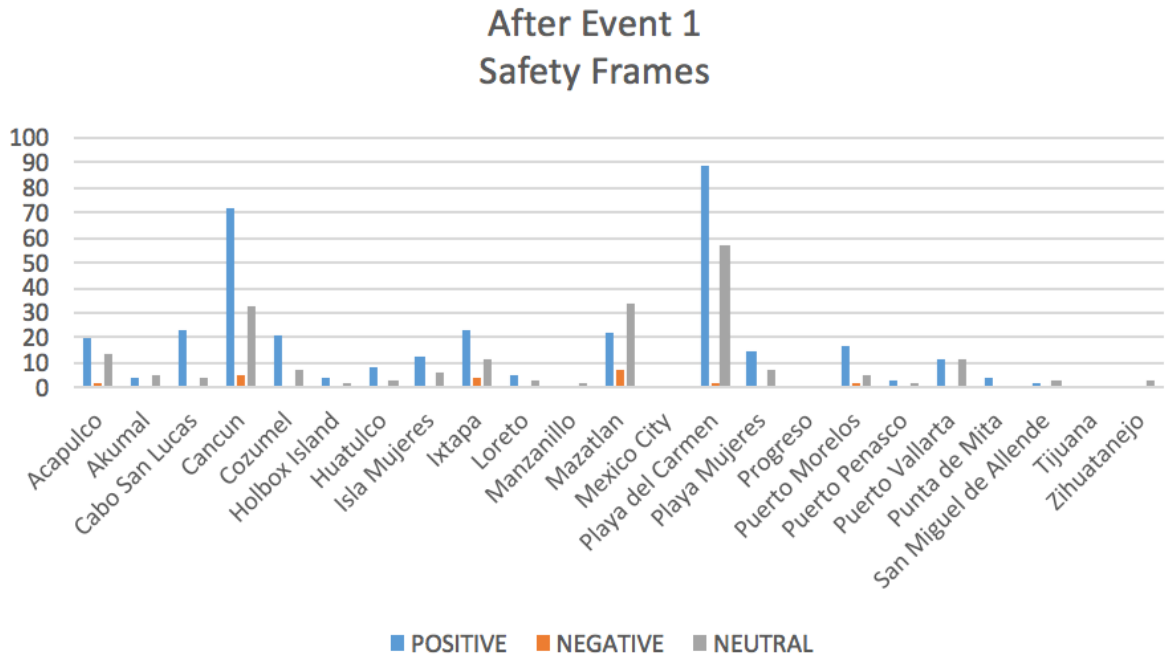
Figure 4.2 After Event 1 Safety Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis

Before Event 1
Travel Frames
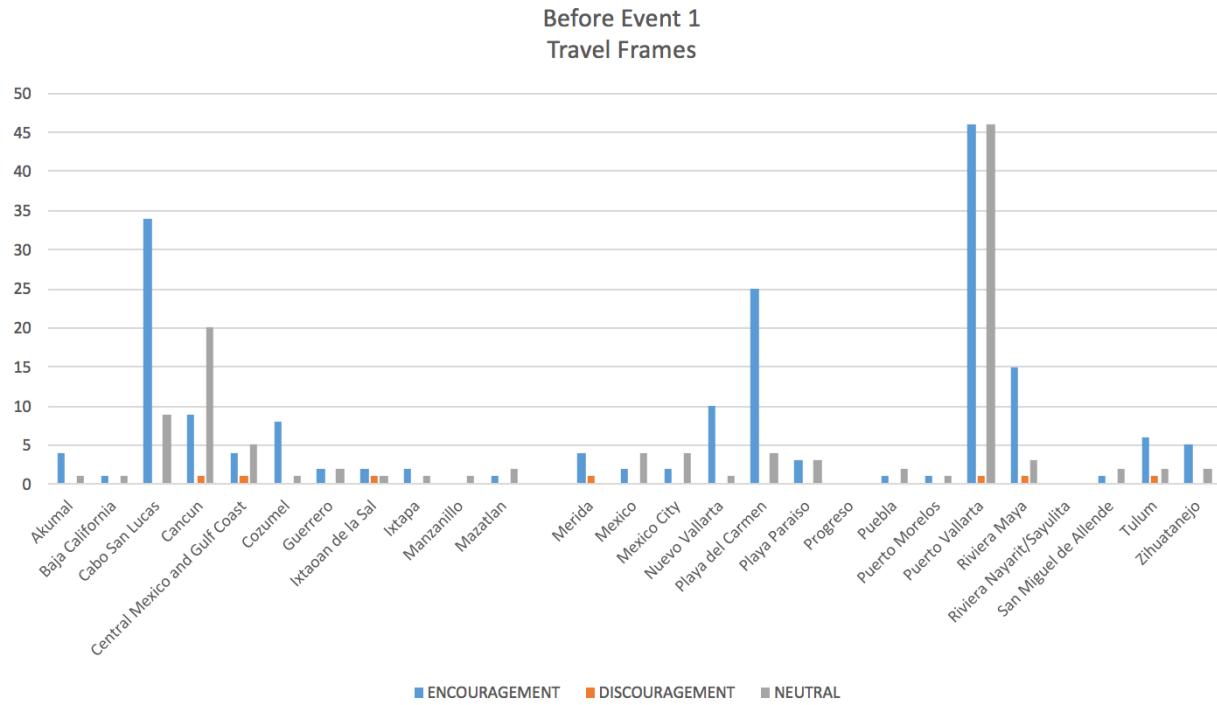
Figure 4.3 Before Event 1 Travel Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis

After Event 1
Travel Frames
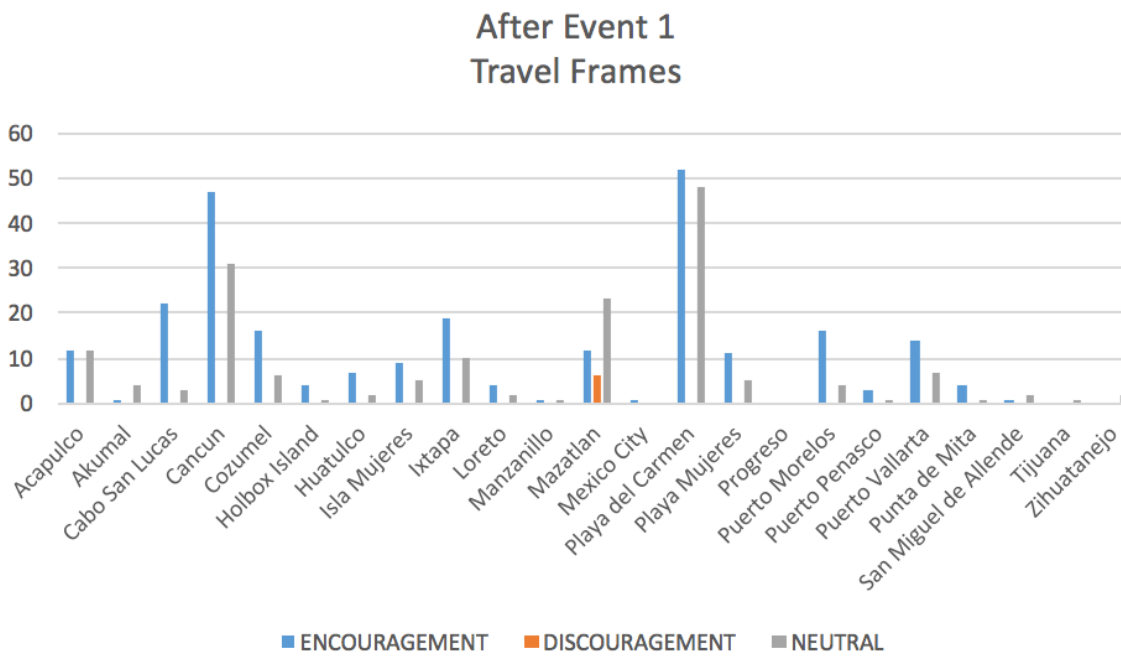
Figure 4.4 After Event 1 Travel Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis
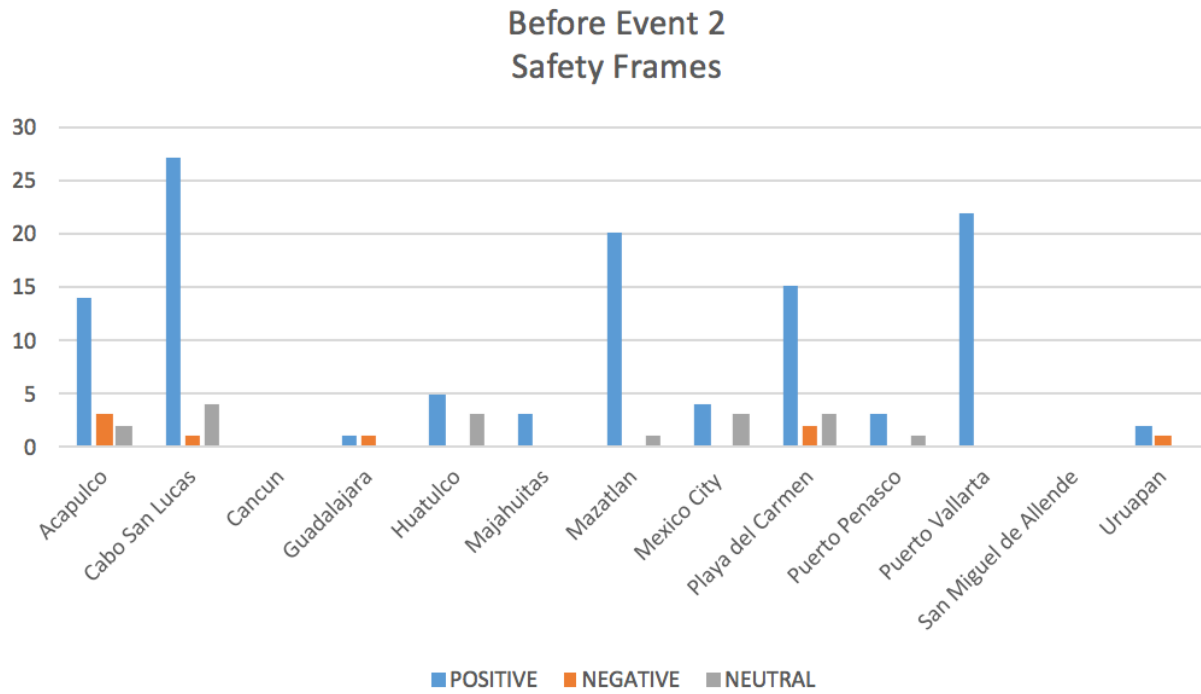
Figure 4.5 Before Event 2 Safety Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis
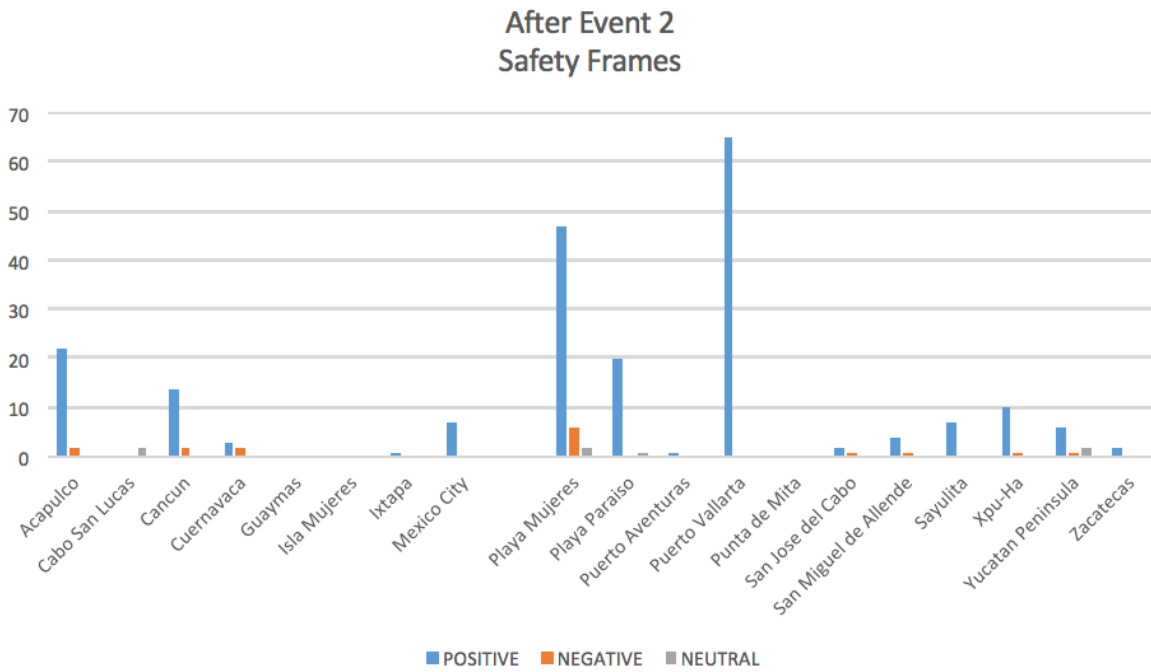
Figure 4.6 After Event 2 Safety Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis
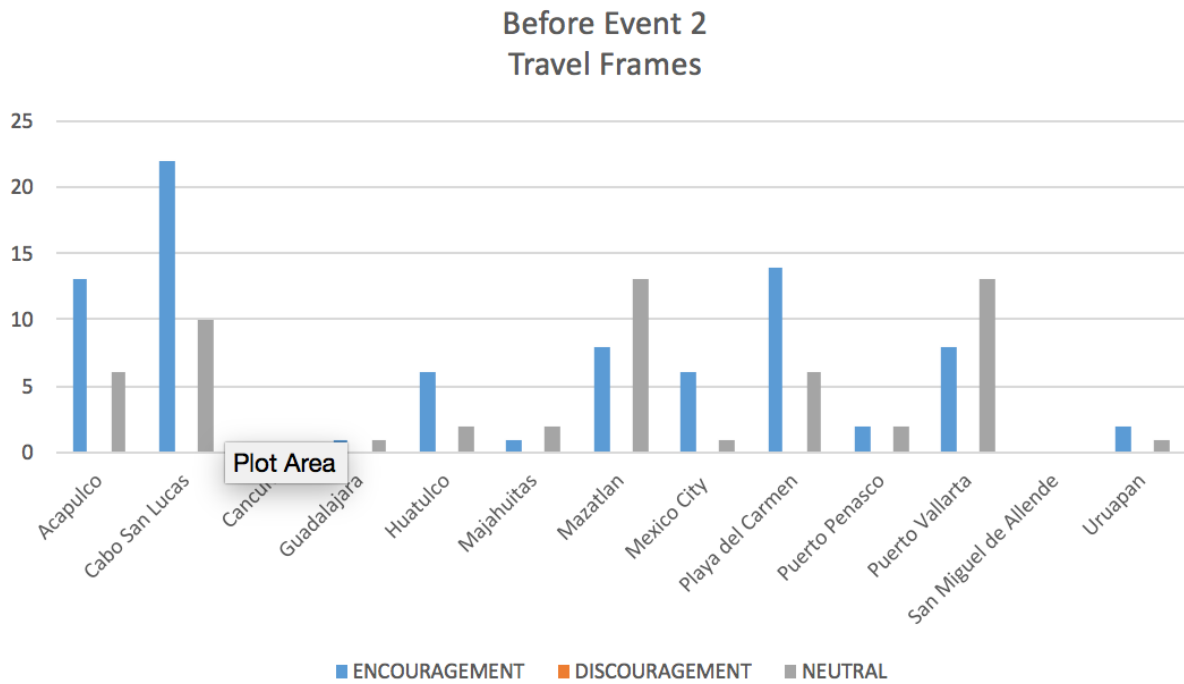
Figure 4.7 Before Event 2 Travel Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis

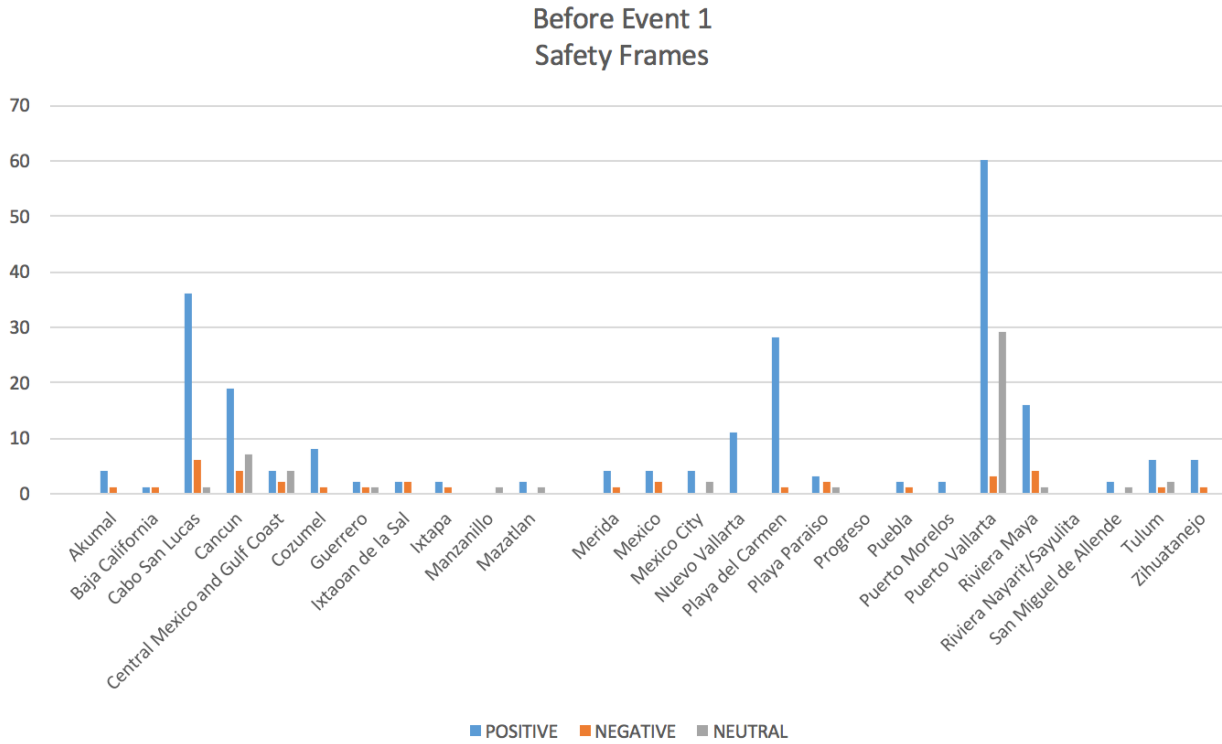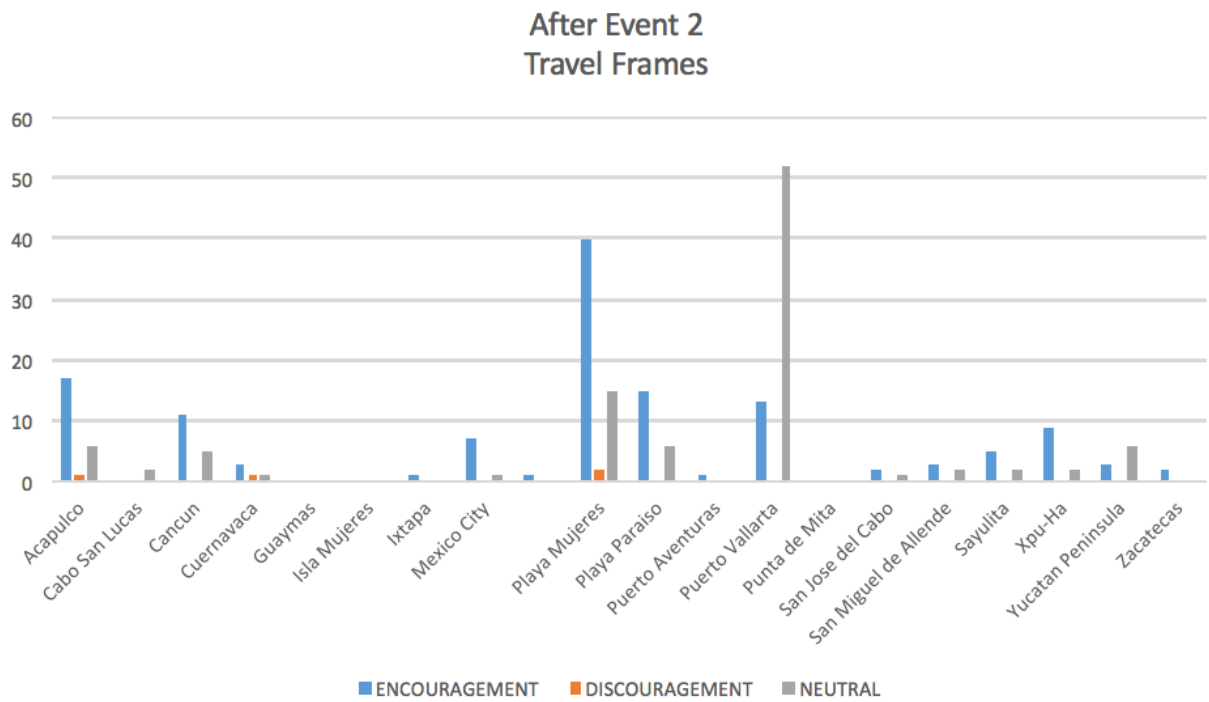
Figure 4.8 After Event 2 Travel Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis
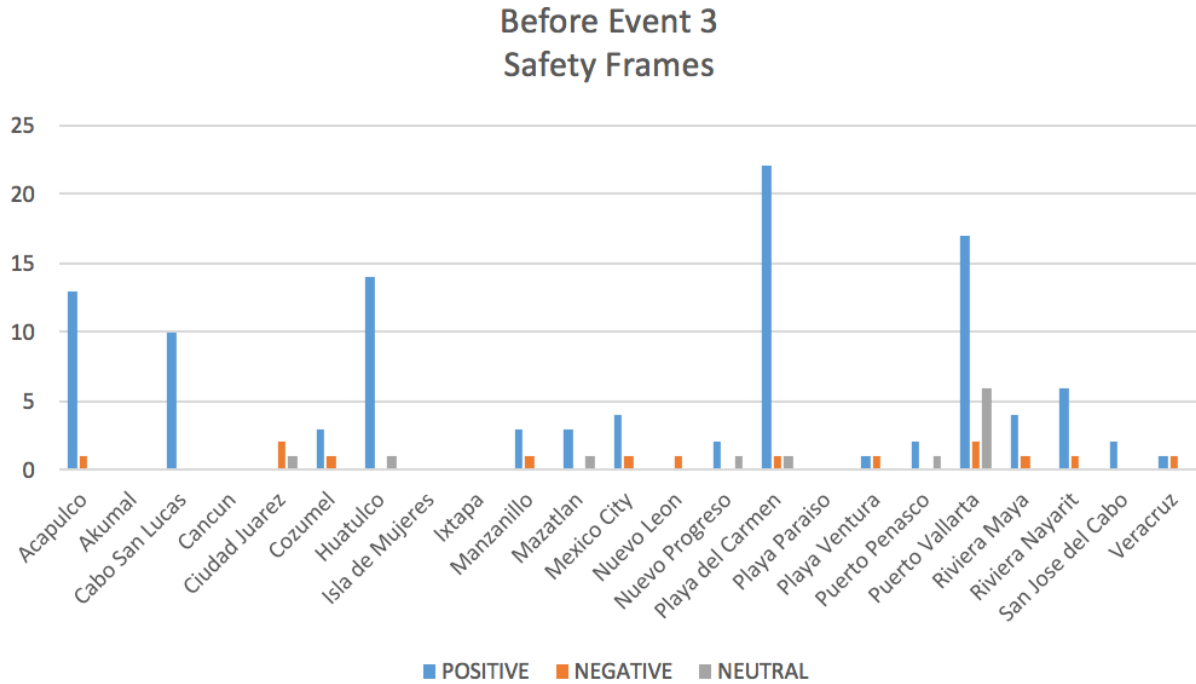
Figure 4.9 Before Event 3 Safety Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis
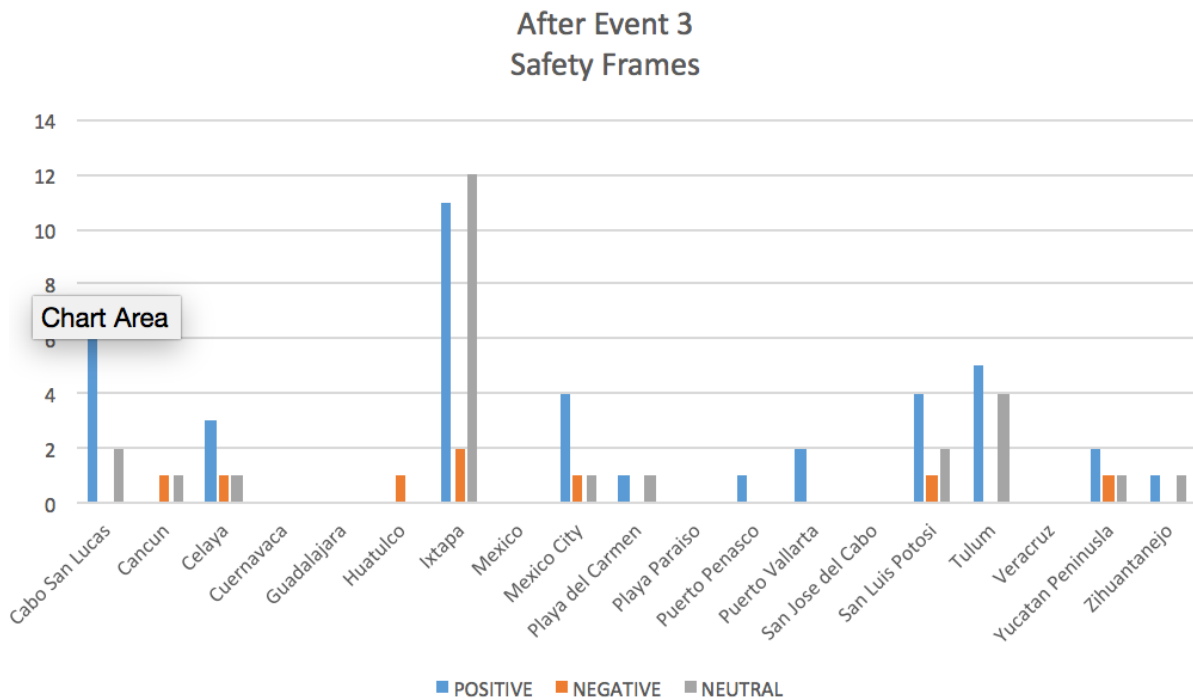
Figure 4.10 After Event 3 Safety Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis

Before Event 3
Travel Frames
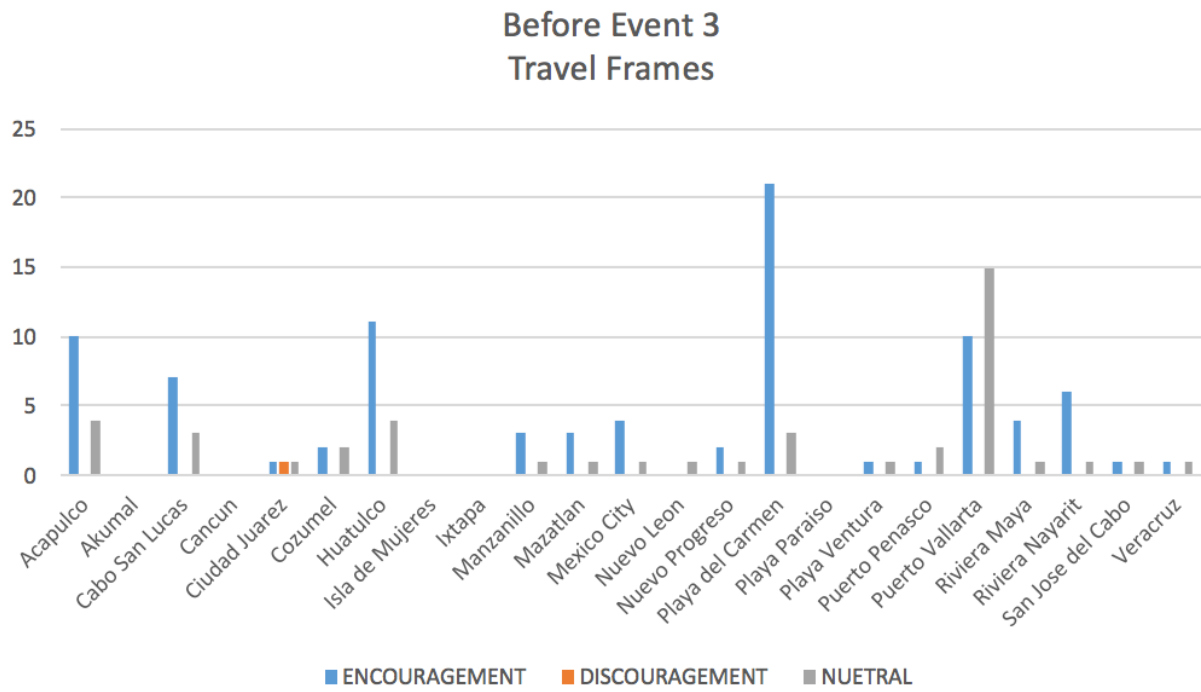
Figure 4.11 Before Event 3 Travel Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis

After Event 3
Travel Frames
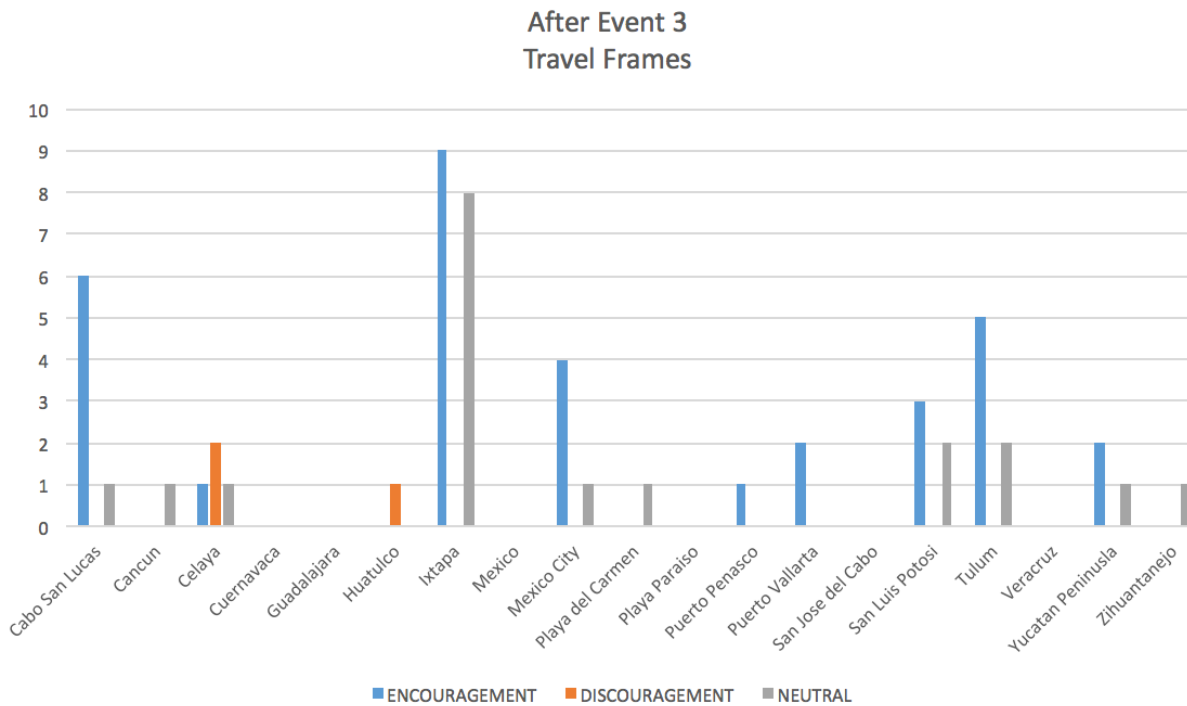
Figure 4.12 After Event 3 Travel Frames, Posts Unit of Analysis

Figure 4.13 Map of States from Posts Unit of Analysis

1	Quintana Roo, Mexico		16	Morelos, Mexico
2	Guerrero, Mexico		17	Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico
3	Baja California, Mexico		18	Heroica Veracruz, Veracruz, Mexico
4	Ixtapan, Camp., Mexico		19	Nuevo Leon, Mexico
5	Colima, Col., Mexico			
6	Sinaloa, Sin., Mexico			
7	Federal District, Mexico			
8	Nayarit, Mexico			
9	Puebla, Puebla, Mexico			
10	Jalisco, Mexico			
11	Guanajuato, Gto., Mexico			
12	Oaxaca, Oaxaca, Mexico			
13	Sonora, Son., Mexico			
14	Michoacán, Mexico			
15	Zacatecas, Zac., Mexico			

The map from Figure 4.13 shows the location of the Mexican states for the regions discussed in the Posts Units of Analysis. The following is the list of states for touristic city destinations; Baja California Sur (Cabo San Lucas, Loreto, Tijuana, San Jose del Cabo) Puebla, Jalisco (Puerto Vallarta, Guadalajara, Majahuitas), Guanajuato, Oaxaca, Michoacan (Uruapan), Zacatecas, Chihuahua (Juarez, Texas border), Sonora (Puerto Penasco, Texas border) and Nuevo Leon (Texas border).

Beach tourism includes the states of Quintana Roo (Akamul, Cancun, Cozumel, Playa del Carmen/Riviera Maya, Playa Paraiso in Tulum, Puerto Morelos, Hotbox Island, Isla Mujeres, Puerto Aventuras, Xpu-Ha) Guerrero (Acapulco, Ixtapa, Zihuatanejo) Baja California Sur (California border), Colima (Manzanillo), Sinaloa (Mazatlan), Nayarit (Nuevo Vallarta, Sayulita) and Oaxaca (Huatulco).

Tourism for other city destinations based on Spanish Colonial history interest includes Guerrero, Mexico, D.F., Puebla (Puebla), Guanajuato (Celaya), Oaxaca, Michoacan, Zacatecas (Zacatecas), Morelos (Cuernavaca) and Veracruz (Veracruz).

The state of Quintana Roo in the Yucatan Peninsula generated the majority of discourse on the trip Advisor forums. Quintana Roo is known for its popular beach resort destinations in Cancun and Mayan Ruins in the Riviera Maya.

Qualitative Thematic Analysis

The data used for the quantitative analysis was also used for the qualitative thematic analysis. The data consists of user comments on the TripAdvisor Mexico forum. The search performed used the selection of *violence*, *safety, safety 2012, safety 2013 and safety 2014* as the keywords were based on the recurrence of those themes found in news articles and travel discourse. The user generated content was selected into

44

three time frames based on three significant drug-related war events according to the amount of media coverage identified by Lexis Nexis. The discourse on the travel forum was separated by Event 1, which took place January 1-March 31, 2011; Event 2, which took place December 22-March 21, 2013; Event 3, which took place January 7-April 6, 2014. The discourse selected for the thematic analysis considered the total use of comments and not solely those relevant to the drug war in Mexico. The sample for Event 1 (killing of American ICE agent in 2011) includes more than 1,400 user comments and 730 related to crime and personal safety regarding the drug war. Event 2 (rapes of six Spanish women in 2013) includes more than 900 total comments and 314 relevant to crime and personal safety. Event 3 (arrest of kingpin "Chapo" Guzman in 2014) consisted more than 600 comments with nearly 200 (184) comments relevant to the drug war.

Top TripAdvisor user representation consisted of the following U.S. states and countries: California, Texas, Mexico and Canada. Canada and the U.S. were the two countries with significantly largest representation, followed by the United Kingdom. This could be possibly be explained because many consider themselves as *snowbirds*, people from colder climates of the U.S. and Canada who migrate towards the south in winter to warmer locations including Mexico with consideration of the United States' proximity to Mexico.

The thematic analysis was conducted to answer RQ2: *How does the discourse before and after each of the three high-profile events on the TripAdvisor forum compare?* Three themes were produced from discourse during Event 1 (killing of American ICE agent in 2011). The two general themes identified includes travel concerns and

forms of reassurance to travel. TripAdvisor users expressed concerns regarding their

personal safety from drug-related acts of violence including transportation from the air-

port to the resort/hotel.

> "My wife is concerned about safety, particularly on the drive from Cancun [airport] to the ferry, since there have been many reports on our news stations about drug-cartel violence in Mexico. Can you tell us if there have been problems like this, or if it is safe?"

> "I am not familiar with the safety of travel by van from Mexico City Airport to the Spa resort at Ixtapan...Have there been any problems? I would really like to return by have qualms."

> "Just concerned about [the] drive from [the] airport to [the] hotel-am I being way to[o] paranoid; or not paranoid enough. Should I just cancel?"

> "But does anyone have any thoughts on safety getting to the boat from the airport? Should we set up a shuttle or something instead of getting a random taxi when we arrive?"

> "How safe is the drive now from Manzanillo Airport to Punta Serena Villas and Spa?"

> "...but we are getting cold feet re[garding] safety in [the] aiport, the Ixtapan van itself, the drive to and from airport to hotel. Encouragement/discouragement, please."

Aside from drug-war related violence and personal safety, users also expressed

concern for their physical safety as they warned future travelers about the dangers from

the flooring of Mexican facilities and street construction.

> "I am actually more concerned about slipping on a wet marble floor, getting sunburned or getting caught in [a] strong surf than I am about crime.

> "And I am a good example of what 'duckbilled' said about other safety concerns such as slipping...fell on the uneven side of the road. So keep one eye on the ground and you will be fine!"

> "Our friend feel & broke her wrist & arm while walking near Pueblo Bonito...Be careful when walking anywhere in Maz[atlan], you will encounter cracks in the

sidewalks, missing manhole covers, air conditioning units jutting into the side-walks, ect."

Users were also left uneasy about their personal safety when the issue of driving rental cars and dealing with police bribery became a topic of discourse for those with uncertainties of renting a car for further exploration. Several users confirmed there was an issue related to police bribery while offering advice to potential tourists on how to deal with those type of situations.

> "We continue to read bad news out of Acapulco, mostly police corruption, bribes and payoffs, and the drug violence. Since Zihua is only a few hours north of Aca-pulco we are getting very concerned about our personal safety."

> "Police in Mexico seem to target tourists as rental have a red license plate. You need to bribe them to avoid a ticket."

> "In each case it was you pay this to me or you will go to the police station and the fine will be paid there...A couple from Winnipeg with 2 teen girls were threatened with being handcuffed if they didn't pay 4,000 pesos.

> "If for some reason you get pulled ove[r] ask for a ticket. Don't pay a bribe."

> "I believe police corruption in Vallarta is less than it was. There's not a prominent sign on the way downtown (tunnel road) that says "No te caigas", (kind've slang for don't pay) and a number to call to report bribes."

Many users were also worried about the noticeable or increased police presence and their weapons such as machine guns. They questioned their personal security from acts of violence from the drug war as they were uncertain if there was an increased risk because of the police presence.

> "I know we love Mazatlan, but is it getting too risky? The sight of the police armed with machine guns last November sitting outside restaurants made me very un-easy."

> "Mazatlan is not as safe today as it was a year ago or two years before that. There is a reason there are pickups with heavily armed, masked, federal police & soldiers traveling the streets of Mazatlan."

47

"I still feel just about as safe in that region[Playa del Carmen-Tulum areas]...if you're talking about the drug wars, no, I haven't seen any evidence of that other than a somewhat increase police presence, but they're not looking at tourists or anything."

While many of the users posted about feeling dismayed with the armed police presence, other users reassured their safety and precautions taken by the Mexican government to protect tourists.

"The lady who I know staying at Casa Corazon has responded to me already about the story. She says she has noticed an increase police presence...I already feel a little better knowing what's happening on the ground, and that there are more patrols."

"Once you get there [Mayan Riviera] and you see the police presence and you see how busy it is, you'll feel a lot safer."

"Police and military do walk the beach, often armed, they always have a big smile for me and I suspect there a few perks to walking the beach in long pants all day keeping tourists safe."

"...maybe a bit more military presence...even a search wouldn't bother me cuz I know they are looking for drugs and weapons."

Additionally, TripAdvisor users expressed insecurity regarding their safety by using taxi transportation and the association of being ripped off or robbed.

"And now I'm even reading to be careful about which taxis to take."

"I find hailing them off the street fine but you can use hotel taxis which will charge you 3-5 times as much but are supposedly safer. At least this [is] what the hotel will tell you. Basically, since the new licensing system came into force, taxi crime is way down and shouldn't be a concern."

"I still avoid hailing most street cabs because I've heard of too many robberies occurring in the past few years, even while safety in the rest of the city had already improved...It's generally agreed that taxis waiting in front of metro stations and restaurants (except those known by staff) are more risky. And of course you should never accept an unsolicited offer of a ride shouted by the taxi driver."

"...heard about are along the lines of people being drunk and coming out of nightclubs and feeling they were ripped off [by] a taxi driver."

The second theme which consists of forms of reassurance that travel to Mexico is safe. The reassurance considers advocating for travel and includes measuring safety by tourists walking on the beach, visiting outside tourist areas and walking during the night.

"Along the beach area of town [Nuevo Vallarta] you will see many ex-pats strolling around, walking dogs or jogging."

"I was not at a resort accommodation [in Cabo San Lucas and San Jose Del Cabo], but local B&Bs so did a lot of walking (to town, beaches and restaurants etc.). I was a single female travelling alone, and felt 100% safe the entire visit.

"We even saw two armed police officers watch the beach each day [in Ixtapa] but we have seen this in Playa del Carmen too!! We felt so safe…"

"Huatulco really, truly did feel safe, whether in the towns, neighborhoods or any of the beaches we visited."

"I felt perfectly safe going to the beach, walking around town and going to dinner on my own."

Users also provided reassurance by providing comments about protection of tourists by the Mexican government, comments about targets in the drug war are not tourists, rather those associated with buying or selling drugs.

"Even the State Department mentioned that the Mexican Government has gone to great lengths to protect the tourist areas and as tourist areas go, Cancun to Tulum is the big kahuna. Don't worry."

"...Mazatlan also has a questionaire that you can complete that is seeking information on how to improve the city for the local and state government."

"Yes it IS safe for you to come. UNLESS you plan to buy, sell, or transport drugs, and UNLESS you plan to party at one of the wild discos at 5 a.m. In those cases, it certainly would NOT be safe. Otherwise, come and relax."

"The only extraneous violence there [in Cancun] in the past year has been drug related and nowhere near the hotel zone. So, if you aren't going to deal drugs you should be just fine."

"Unless you are looking to buy or wanting to sell drugs, you will be fine."

"Avoid solicitations for purchasing drugs, don't get drunk outside your resort and you'll be fine."

Users commented on the problems in the drug war are associated in border

towns and not in tourist areas, the biggest problem facing tourists is petty theft.

"The violence in Mexico is mostly in the border towns and other areas OUTSIDE of tourist places like PV [Puerto Vallarta], and it's not being directed at tourists."

"Please assure your ex that you will be in a friendly city that is about 800 miles away from the border."

"I think people hear about the crimes on the border and assume that they are occurring in Mexico City, especially since many of these articles carry a Mexico City byline."

"If you play close attention to the news reports, they usually occur in the border cities."

"What is different with Mexican murders is that they are geographically centered right where traffickers want to pass drugs from Mexico to the US and the cartels are fighting on who gets control of the border traffic."

Suggestions to reassure planners of their safety included map research to un-

derstand the proximity between tourist areas and locations along the border.

"In order to educate people, send them links to a map...and explain that the border area and west coast (Acapulco) are where the violence is. The east coast (ie Cancun and the Riv[era] Maya are as safe as any other large city."

"Cabo does not border the US nor does it have a major port for drug shipment."

"People watching FOX news and cannot read a map and have never been here are not the people to take advice from."

"I think a 1st step would be to look at a map of Mexico and then find where in Mexico the reports of violence are."

"The place is safe, when you listen to the US news please get a map of Mexico, pay attention to the areas where there are problems, look at the distance to where you are planning to stay."

"If you were to vacation in Florida, would you worry about violence/crime in New York?"

Comparisons of traveling to other U.S. cities or countries was also used to reassure Mexico's safety as equal to or better than visiting the other places listed (mostly where the planner's listed location).

"Now that I live part-time in Mexico, I feel just as safe, if not safer, than I feel when I'm back in the Chicago area."

"Yer from Detroit and you['re] worried about safety in Mexico?"

"...it's no different than going anywhere else."

"I often feel safer in and around the tourist areas in Mexico than I do in some of the inner city areas here in the UK."

"You're from New York City and you want to know if Cancun is safe."

"I 100% feel safer in Playa (and always have!) than I do in my own city that is quickly gaining a rep for violence."

"I definitely feel safer here than when I travel to New Orleans."

Planners were also reassured by identifying Mexico as a country with kind and helpful people.

"With the exception of an obnoxious timeshare hawker and the guy from Princesa Rebeka, everyone was very nice and friendly."

"When a guy who has not been to PV [Puerto Vallarta] for 35 years say that he can't believe how nice everyone is, it means something."

"Locals and tourists are helpful and supportive, and I never worried about thefts or other dangers."

51

Themes developed from Event 2 (rapes of six Spanish women in 2013) include

discourse on the influence of media on perceptions of travel safety to Mexico, specifical-

ly media sensationalism and discourse about the impact of Mexico's tourism economy

and contributing factors. It was evident in the forums that the content reflected more ad-

vice on safety in cities, Mexico City and Mazatlan than for tourist resorts. Users again

expressed that tourist safety should not be of any concern so long as common sense is

exercised.

> "If you are where you should be at a decent time of the day, minding your busi-
> ness, not flashing your cash or jewels, using common sense, you will usually
> keep out of trouble."

> "You just have to use common sense and you should be fine."

> "...[Cabo] is a very safe tourist town. Just use common sense like you would in
> any other place and you will be just fine!"

> "You just have to use common sense, don't get drunk and wander down dark
> all[ies] by yourself, pick fights with anyone, you know the usual drill. Relax and
> have a good time."

In Event 2, TripAdvisor users pointed out the influence media has on making

travel decisions. Users mentioned media paranoia, media hype and scare tactics by the

media all contributed to the idea that Mexico is not a safe destination choice. Some

users argue that certain parts of Mexico are not safe, while others such as tourist desti-

nations are, not that *all* of Mexico is not safe according to attitudes users believe exist.

The discourse shows many users including American and Canadians who live part-time

in Mexico (expatriats) or a frequent travelers, traveling twice or more a year find it their

duty to provide accurate details concerning any posts on the forums. Many of them are

advocate for tourism travel to Mexico and fight the battle against negative perceptions of

Mexico and providing tourists with information that could or could not possibly jeopardize their safety. A travel destination expert user for Puerto Vallarta shared that the conversations on TripAdvisor have changed over time where five years ago people asked if the water or food was safe, now they just ask if "IT" (Mexico) is safe.

> "I think Mexico did get a bad reputation via the media and people who never been here got sucked into it. You can tell by the questions here on this forum...Mexico has been tainted and stereotyped in such a way people are a bit warier about travel here than they were before."

> "I think people hear about the crimes on the border and assume that they are occurring in Mexico City, especially since many of these articles carry a Mexico City byline."

> "Enjoy your holiday and stop worrying about what you hear in the sensationalised media."

> "I also can't understand why Americans get such a rap either, esp. seeing how they swallow the media's sensationalist reporting hook, line, and sinker."

> "The issue of safety has been covered in this forum ad nauseum, yet those too lazy to at least look up those recent posts on the issue are doomed to languish in their media driven paranoia."

> "It's not any reality in PV [Puerto Vallarta], it is the media hype that is hurting the tourist economy with scare tactics."

> "...there is still the safety issue (overblown in the media--we know it's not true but new folks are wary."

> "Hopefully it will help those lurking and undecided to feel safe about visiting PV [Puerto Vallarta] instead of listening to the media."

> "No, it's quite slow here. Still the media hype in the USA, notice how many posts here mention safety. Makes me sick that so many people are ill-informed."

Further discourse in Event 2 included what many believed were contributing factors on the impact of tourism in Mexico. Those users blamed the shortage of flights, less direct flights/cancellations of Mexico and U.S. routes, long layovers, and price increase

in airfare. Canadian users contributed that their financial welfare had also been affected

by a higher cost of living and lack of wage increase to meet those demands.

> "If we could get those prices and direct flights from Pittsburgh, I'd be happy! We have no direct flights whatsoever to any of those locations. Prices to MZT [Mazatlan] are $650-$700 and are overnights with long layovers."

> "I've noticed our Canadian flights are up at least 20% over last year."

> "The reason flights are full is simply because they have cut WAY down on flights to Vallarta."

> "It was more expensive for me to go to Mazatlan and there are no direct flights anymore."

> "Would come more often if flights were a little cheaper."

> "I'll address the one that is affecting my plans. We are finding far fewer flight options than in previous years."

Blame for the downturn in Mexico's economy was also put on the "decline phase"

of popular tourist destinations such as Puerto Vallarta. Some users argued there was

competition from other tourist getaways, and once "hot" travel destinations were declin-

ing while more travelers visit the new "hot" destinations.

> "We asked our children who have traveled to Mexico a few times, and the luster seems to have worn off with them."

> "...find that there just isn't the type of destination promotion from the tour companies up here as there is for the Mayan, and Cuba or the DR [Dominican Republic]."

> "Right now it's competitive or even less for us to fly to Costa Rica, Aruba, too, than to Mazatlan."

It was also debated whether all-inclusive resorts which cover the costs of meals

and beverages including alcohol, were a part of the problem creating less money being

put into the economy for expenses in the food and beverage industries. The counter ar-

gument was that all-inclusives could be bringing in people who normally would not be visiting.

> "Everyone commented that they didn't understand why the restaurants were dead during what is considered to be the high season...I do think it is a combination of safety concerns, the All Inclusives and an ailing economy."

> "The philosophy of reducing prices in low economical times has not seemed to become a part of business practices in PV [Puerto Vallarta]. All inclusive packages are more attractive than planning your whole vacation piece meal."

> "Also a whole lot of those counted are staying in all inclusives and may never bother to travel into town."

The amount of discourse in Event 3 (arrest of kingpin "Chapo" Guzman in 2014) was less than the previous years, 2011 and 2013. It can be speculated that the cause could be a change in travel warning from the U.S. State Department from July 2013 to January 2014 to reflect updated security situations.

The question of protests whether peaceful or violent in a foreign country can be a question of safety for many potential tourists, considering that a peaceful protest could at any time turn violent. It was evident in Event 3 that not only did a peaceful protest in a tourist area ensue fear about livelihood and well-being, but the disruption of transportation, working out alternative routes was enough to develop discouragement to return for a visit for *one* user. Most of the users showed an understanding and acceptance of the protests. They realized that tourists are used to put pressure on the Mexican government so locals could get their needs met. One user stated, "Roadblocks, such as you experienced here in Huatulco, happen all too often in Mexico. It is the locals way of protesting to get some attention for whatever cause they're fighting for."

> "I'm aware of several roadblocks (protests) in the recent past where small outlying pueblos who are trying to get some basic services for their town such as reli-

able supply of clean water, have blocked major highways to get the attention of the local government."

"It would be scary and unexpected encounter in a tourist zone. I hope you don't wrote all of Mexico off as a result though. It is a wonderful interesting place."

"It is a way of life though-there is far more tolerance to protests in Mexico compared to most countries."

"Wasn't scared at all. Just pissed that we had to walk. Just glad someone had things organized to have buses on the other side. Can't wait to go back next year."

"Most of them [protests] are peaceful and in no way they are a threat to tourist, but it is the tourist that are used to put more pressure on the government to fix the problems, the more people are affected, the more exposure this protest will have."

As in the previous years, safety concerns regarding the cartel drug violence obtained from some being news sources and the U.S. State Department's travel warnings were still influential factors in tourism decision making. The forums for Event 3 which consisted the same time period—45 days before and 45 days after each of the events did not produce as many posts mentioning personal safety from violence as Event 1 and 2. However, there was discourse in whether or not it was safe to visit locations which were considered touristy and non touristy (San Luis Potosi and Ixtapa). Many of the users expressed the same reassurance as previous years that tourists are not in additional danger from the drug cartel. One user posted, "Tourist safety and resident safety are very different things." It was evident from the posts in the forums that frequent visitors or expats wanted to advocate that perceptions of Mexico have been tainted by negative media attention and while violence does exist, it does not mean all of Mexico is suffering from random acts of violence which are targeted to those who have an involvement with drugs. These users do not deny there is crime (most say petty crime)

and want to assure potential visitors that there are safe places to visit and tourists remain protected.

> "I think if there were a lot of trouble in SLP [San Luis Potosi] it would reach the news (and it hasn't). SLP is not known as a dangerous place, the people I know living there have no safety concerns and recent visitors mentioned nothing so."

> "I find that the news always sensationalizes the murders in Mexico. Every time a Canadian is murdered in Mexico it is all over the new[s] up here. More often than not, it turns out that they are involved in the drug trade in Mexico."

> "The the OP [original poster], if your question is am I and my children in danger going to Club Med Ixtapa? The answer is probably not. Is the area safe? Probably yes. Are there areas safer? Definitely yes."

> "There are serious issues in Mexico with the cartel violence and corruption and other problems, to be sure. And yes, it IS much worse generally in Mexico than here at home (the personal security and safety aspect)…for me the bottom line is simple-as a tourist who uses common sense… doesn't buy or sell drugs…we feel that we are very safe when traveling to Mexico. We certainly don't worry about things like being a victim of violence."

The following is a recap of themes from the discourse of the three significant news events which occurred in Mexico during a prominent time for the drug cartel. The events include the murder of an American ICE agent in February 2011, the rapes of six Spanish women in Acapulco in February 2013 and the arrest of kingpin "Chapo" Guzman in February 2014. The 2011 forums revealed several safety concerns in the areas of transportation from the airport to the resort/hotel, flooring of facilities and street construction, increased police presence and taxi transportation. Furthermore, users with prior travel experiences to Mexico or part-time residents expressed reassurance to potential tourists in the forms of being safe outside of resort areas, protection from the Mexican government, targeted violence of those involved with drugs, drug war mainly

existing in border towns and not tourist resorts and assurance that Mexico is just as safe as visiting anywhere else.

The 2013 forums produced discourse about the influence of media sensational-ism on perceptions of travel safety to Mexico which contributed to the idea that Mexico is not a safe destination choice. TripAdvisor users also blamed the negative impact on the tourism economy on the shortage of flights, less direct flights/cancellations of Mexi-co and U.S. routes, long layovers and price increase on airfare. Canadian users con-tributed that their economy—higher cost of living and lack of wage increase affected their vacation plans of traveling to Mexico.

In 2014 the discourse was a debate over all-inclusive resorts and the impact on the local tourist economy. Some believed less money was put into local businesses be-cause of the all inclusive meals and beverages included with the hotel package. Others believed all inclusive hotels were bringing in more tourists who would normally not be visiting. Protests also entered the discourse for Event 3 where many expressed their understanding and acceptance of the protests with intentions of returning to Mexico. Again, many users encouraged potential visitors to visit as not all of Mexico is consid-ered dangerous and a place where tourists remain protected.

$10 million in rebranding Vallarta Nayarit

Previously mentioned, the Mexico Tourism Board was published having plans to rebrand Vallarta Nayarit alongside the $36 million crisis management campaign. And additional $10 million would be allocated to the specific area of Vallarta Nayarit. It be-came evident in the forums that the rebranding of the area was needed as all three events being studied showed Puerto Vallarta was the most discussed tourist destination

on the TripAdvisor forums in terms of asking if it was a safe destination choice. Puerto Vallarta lies approximately 11 miles from Vallarta Nayarit according to a Google Map search. One user from Seattle in 2011 posted, "If you look at the *facts* not rumors, not media hype, there is not now and never has been any problems with tourist safety in Puerto Vallarta." While many concerns exist about visiting Puerto Vallarta, there are many responses to ensure travelers that Puerto Vallarta still feels safe regardless of the media attention. However, some do not deny the decline in tourism has impacted "convenience crime".

> "As tourism has slacked in PV [Puerto Vallarta] over the last couple of years, my friends and I have discussed about being even more diligent about our personal safety and that of our belongings...That's not to say that people traveling to PV should stay holed up in their resorts and never venture out." (2011, Dallas, Texas)

> A user in 2011 posted,

> "We always have felt safe in PV. We leave on Feb 5th for two weeks. This will be our 4th trip there and have already booked a property for Jan 27th, 2012." (2011, Swift Current, Saskatoon)

> "I will be returning to PV [Puerto Vallarta] for my 7th visit this May. I have always felt safe, but of course crimes can happen everywhere." (2011, Washington)

Information Search Behavior and Development of Images

Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992) found that groups who perceived most risk were the least likely to have participated in an information search. Information search behavior has been identified as a strategy to reduce common risk. Many travelers have become part of that information search utilizing the TripAdvisor forum, a site enabling travelers to plan a trip. In the Mexico travel forum more than 5 million posts have contributed to information search behavior. While information search behavior is shown to reduce common risk (even when selecting a destination choice), authors Sonmez

(1998), Bramwell and Rawding (1996), pointed out that the development of images are also formed by external influences such as input from acquaintances. Druckman's (2009) results suggested that people tend to look for and entrust credible sources and as communication studies have shown in the past, word-of-mouth is the most persuasive. It became evident from discourse in the forums that as users were looking for answers to their safety concerns on the forums and replies to those posts decreased the perception of risk. The discourse also showed that the original posters trusted the replies of the others and viewed them as credible sources, ultimately convincing those with safety questions of less risk. This occurrence shows the strength of the impact word-of-mouth has when developing images from external sources such as input from a travel community.

"Great! I'm feeling better with every message."

"Thanks everyone for [their] reply. I have looked at the maps and have listened to the news and the cities where they say "not to visit", however, I believe a lot of us like to be reassured...this sounds like a wonderful place to visit, relax and explore."

Frames in Communication, Emphasis and Equivalent Framing Effect

Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas (2009) stated that by creating a frame that influences the way people think and omitting opposing frames, certain preferences could be activated over others. Druckman 2001(a) defined *frames in communication* as how the speaker chooses words, images, phrases to relay information they see relevant to the topic. Druckman also identified one of two framing effects as *emphasis framing effect* in which a speaker can lead individuals to focus on these consideration when constructing their opinions. Druckman claimed this framing effect works on individuals by causing them to focus on certain parts of an issue instead of others.

In the TripAdvisor forums for all three events, responses to safety posts demonstrated an emphasis framing effect. There were more than 25 instances where posts referred to news events. It became obvious responses to those news story mentions did not focus on the negativity of those events, rather reiterated safety precautions and positive personal experiences. Many speakers in this case showed to omit opposing frames and focused on positive words than including negative information from news stories or other sources information seen as creating more risk. Other speakers might have referenced the news information, but created frames to minimize its legitimacy.

> "With the gang rape, it's the first time in my traveling history (I've been to almost every continent and over 30 countries) that I am considering canceling the trip. What is the perception of safety there with the locals?"

> "That incident should not change [yo]ur plans. Wasn't in town. It's not a common occurrence. Just be aware of your surroundings."

> "The stuff I saw in the local papers was so sensationalist I wouldn't call it journalism. I never felt unsafe and there was a Mexican biker gang sharing the same hotels.Tourists (of all kinds) get respect in Acapulco."

> "Just returned from ten days in Acapulco and my impression on safety, I never at one time felt uncomfortable."

> "I felt very safe everywhere I went in [A]ca[pulco] and I do get around. I'm in Taxco right now which TA [TripAdvisor] has safety warnings posted for and it also feels very safe."

Druckman (p. 228) identified the other type of framing effect as *equivalency framing effect,* "which examines how the use of different, but logically equivalent, words or phrases [such as 97% fat-free] causes individuals to alter their preferences." It can make the same statement in different words that are equivalent. The TripAdvisor posts also demonstrated the use of equivalent framing when it came to comparing travel to

other U.S. cities or other locations. Many of the equivalent frames could have potential to create frames that could alter concerns to something of less risk.

"Now that I live part-time in Mexico, I feel just as safe, if not safer, than I feel when I'm back in the Chicago area."

"Yer from Detroit and you['re] worried about safety in Mexico?"

"...it's no different than going anywhere else."

"Come and enjoy Mexico. It's about the same risk of staying home."

"Just use the same common sense you would use in Boston or anywhere else and you will be fine."

The qualitative findings showed the majority start of a thread were safety concerns. These safety concerns included some that were unrelated to personal safety from the drug cartel violence but other issues previously discussed; transportation from the airport to the resort/hotel, flooring of facilities and street construction, increased police presence and taxi transportation. Although the usual start of a thread were sometimes concerns, the replies to the threads showed a significant amount of positive responses regarding safety as mentioned in the quantitative findings. Throughout each event, repetition of encouragement or safety reassurance existed and potential tourists were reminded of the measures the Mexican government takes to protect its visitors.

Chapter 5

Discussion/Conclusion/Implications

Media coverage of the drug war unmistakably generated safety concerns about tourism in Mexico and inevitably tourism dropped. However, there was a significant presence of Mexico's "defenders" from U.S. and Canadian residents or expats who shared recent travel experiences. The findings from the forums were unanticipated in regards to discourse being positively affected rather than negatively. The posts unit of analysis from After News Event 1 and 2 showed the raw numbers of the safety frame regarding tourism safety (rather than Mexican resident safety) as more positive. The positive comments were made in regards to safety in tourist resorts or towns and not necessarily in non-touristy destinations. The realization of drug violence was obvious and not denied. The defenders in this instance are what made the discourse more positive by providing knowledge about the regional proximity of drug cartel violence and targeted violence against those involved with narcotics and tourists. It is valuable to note that although there was not a statistical significance in travel frames that provide encouragement or discouragement, that the neutral frame could have affected the results. The analysis shows an overwhelming amount of positive safety frames, but the discourse did not necessarily encourage travel according to the guidelines in the codebook.

In the 2011 posts unit of analysis, 730 relevant posts were coded, followed by 314 in 2013 and 184 in 2014. It is a possibility that a larger sample for this event could have also produced significant results for both safety and travel frames. It is clear that the amount of discourse during the same time period decreased each year and a con-

63

siderable amount from 2013 to 2014. Two of the chi square analysis were close to sig-

nificance (p =.15 and p = .12) which included travel safety frames from Events 2 and 3

which encouraged or discouraged potential tourists. It appears that a larger sample

could possibly produce a statistically significant result where the dependent travel safety

frame variable is more encouraging after the independent timeframe variable. We can

speculate that the audience has become more informed on the situation involving the

drug cartel in Mexico and created an image of a safer destination. This could explain

fewer posts by TripAdvisor users and the increase in tourism. The discourse that oc-

curred on the forums included information provided explaining that Mexico's violence is

not as common and widespread as it appears and virtually non existent in tourists desti-

nations and more so in the Yucatan Peninsula. Positive safety frames and encourage-

ment to travel were consistently representing the same information and undeniably

users were answering the same occurring questions. In many instances, original

posters with violence concerns were referred to the commonly asked questions on Tri-

pAdvisor. Those frequently asked questions and popular forums about violence and

safety could also have attributed to the decrease in discourse.

The individual unit of analysis safety frame from the t-Test showed the discourse

from Event 1 and 2 became more positive after the event, replicating the results from

the chi-square test. The travel frame posts also reflected similar results from the t-Test

and chi-square test showing insignificant findings for Event 1 and 3. The only difference

in the findings is in Event 2 where the individual unit of analysis for the travel frame in

the t-Test showed the discourse to be more negative after the event, where Event 2 for

chi-square showed insignificant. The negative result from the t-test travel frame is due to the increase from 0 negative posts before the event to 2 after the event.

As the vice president of an international strategy consulting firm stated earlier, Mexico's tourism was not growing as fast as they needed because of the negative images in U.S. media and perhaps because Mexico has been in a drug war since 2006. Public relations experts for Mexico tourism continue to battle the crisis and were reported to spend a total of $46 million in a crisis management campaign. As previously mentioned in the literature review, Sonmez (1998) claimed that when the tourism industry is seriously setback due to political instability, political disruption, violence and other negative occurrences, it needs to be treated as a crisis that needs to be managed. Sonmez argued that it "can no longer rely on traditional marketing efforts" and needs "recovery marketing" which includes "marketing integrated fully with crisis management activities" (p. 437). In many public relations crisis management events, addressing concerns is a common strategy. Some tourists may have avoided Mexico because of safety concerns and an increased travel risk because of drug cartel terrorism. Mexico's public campaign sought to address this concern through a campaign emphasizing visual elements such as nature and culture. One could only speculate the reason for the increase in tourism after so many years could be because of the campaign, media sources or shared experiences by others including electronic word of mouth (eWOM). However, from the data collected on TripAdvisor, those who were uncertain about their safety and concerned were turning to TripAdvisor users to share their recent experiences, ultimately looking for reassurance. This tells us that Mexico's campaign could have benefited from further recovery marketing strategies by utilizing non-traditional marketing efforts

as Sonmez suggested and should have provided reassurance, which was a missing element from the campaign. It is commonly known that word of mouth is a trusted source of consumer information as well as most trusted and is most likely to be acted upon. This was evident from the threads that many began the the post with feelings of concern and others wanting to cancel trips, but once there was the statement of reassurance about personal security from cartel violence, most if not all, had a change of plans and stated they would follow through with visiting Mexico.

The basis of this study was essentially electronic word of mouth. Electronic word of mouth is an influential factor on consumer behavior and can be potentially cost-effective. eWOM allows consumers to communicate information and opinions that can influence whether or products or services should be purchased. Ardnt in 1967 concluded that favorable WOM increases the probability of purchase which has remained unchanged and continue to stand true. In this consumer technological savvy generation and more of an online presence by businesses, travelers are relying more on search engines to locate reviews, travel guidance and information, etc. Because of this there are more opportunities for marketers to become part of that information exchange. Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2007) identified strategies for managing eWOM in the hospitality and tourism industries. The authors suggested harvesting information from discussion and feedback created online to accomplish tasks such as what visitors say whether good or bad about their experiences, analyzing competitive strategies and monitoring company or in this case reputation/image. Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan go on to say that EWOM efforts could also be used to spread good WOM about destination experiences

which in turn could help potential tourists seeking information by providing reinforcing images and opinions or reassurance.

With the the introduction of eWOM, and being aware that more recently (since Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan's study) that marketing tactics many times include employees posing as consumers online, creates the question whether the frames studied could be of property owners and/or other business owners with an investment in Mexico tourism. It is essential to note that many posts were replied by TripAdvisor's Destination Experts. According to the website, Destination Experts are regular contributors and volunteers that have up-to-date knowledge of what is going on in their destinations and can be nominated by TripAdvisor members.

Discourse from the thematic analysis showed an undeniable frame of concern from potential tourists about the presence of police patrols and the dangers of drug car-tel violence. What is specifically interesting is that National Public Radio (NPR) news among other sources produced stories about the Sinaloa cartel and cartel leader, Joaquin Chapo Guzman known as "El Chapo", being the Robin Hood of Sinaloa, just as the infamous Pablo Escobar of Colombia. After his arrest, it was reported that many in his home state were not pleased as Guzman was seen as the "helper of the poor and a keeper of the peace", according to NPR (2014).

The researcher became aware of stories that showed native Mexicans' fondness of Guzman and allegedly how many instances in the drug war were not cartel related. In March 2015, in a taxi ride in Chihuahua, Chihuahua, the researcher learned that many were saddened by the arrest of Guzman and Sinaloans did not want to believe Guzman was arrested. To this day, many do not believe or do not want to believe Guzman was

arrested. The taxi driver attributed that events in the drug war were often not associated with the cartel but delinquents in cities such as Juarez used the excuse of the drug war and leading people to believe it was drug related violence. It is intriguing to notice how perceptions of the same drug lord are influenced by different sources and experiences for the natives of Mexico and American and Canadian tourists. It would be compelling to use this study to look at how discourse is affected by other factors such as gender, age, and ethnicity--specifically looking at culture ties to Mexico. It would also be useful to measure the subject's home location and its proximity to Mexico as some users from the TripAdvisor forum in the United Kingdom mentioned that safety concerns about traveling to Mexico were not an issue. In the literature review scholars (Lepp and Gibson, 2003) have also found that touristic travel decision making was significantly impacted by past experience as experienced international travelers perceived less risk. Pearce, (1988, 1996) also linked travel career and life stage with the assumption that older tourists may be more experienced. However, Sonmez and Graefe (1998a) did not find in their sample that age influenced an individual's perception of risk. The findings are inconclusive and this study could have benefited from measuring age and the discourse in travel safety to investigate how age affected positive or negative safety frames. Nationality has also been found to influence the perceptions of risk associated with international tourism. Seddighi, Nuttall and Theocharous (2001) also found that risk perceptions vary by nationality which could also be measured and compared to previous findings.

Chapter 6

Strengths/Limitations

Utilizing TripAdvisor for a sample collection presented itself with limitations. The study was intended to use violence and safety as keywords that would be sorted by date; both are features within TripAdvisor. In gathering data there were minor glitches with the website such as not able to retrieve posts in that manner. Posts for Event 1 were able to be obtained by violence and safety sorted by date, however, Event 2 posts had to be gathered by sorting violence by date and safety by relevance. Event 3 had to be sort violence by date, safety by relevance and an additional keyword, Safety 2014 had to be added to produce more results because posts earlier than July 2014 were not available. The website deemed unreliable at one point because at one point there were posts earlier than July 2014. There were instances where certain pages would become repetitive and post dates from the forum where different when the thread was opened. The site was revisited several of times but the same issues persisted. The site's errors could have been avoided by downloading all of the pages needed before coding and is recommended for future studies where TripAdvisor forums would be analyzed. It is imperative to mention the parameter of the TripAdvisor search engine leads to limited results and does not function with archival features.

Retrieving a sample from the forums allowed for a large collection of information for the thematic analysis thus providing a strong analysis, covering repetitive themes.

An additional limitation that could have potentially affected the statistical significance was the sample size. To obtain a larger sample for a chi-square analysis it would be suggested for a longer time frame, from 45 days before and 45 days after each event

to 90 days before and after. A strength from this sample occurred from the posts of the chi square analysis which contained 730 posts where the user chi square analysis that consolidated frames by individuals consisted of 550. The numbers for Event 2 and 3 by post then user are 314/270 and 184/160. This tells us the representation had a convincing sample from various users and not repetitive posters.

Also, because this study looked at terrorism risk in Mexico which was created by major news events and three stories served as benchmark points for an analysis, the study became limited because there is little knowledge of whether TripAdvisor users were exposed to these news events.

Chapter 7

Future Research

Mexico's situation is one like Colombia's. In the mid-1980s, Pablo Escobar was one of the most powerful men in the world, a cocaine trade empire created by an army of soldiers and criminals and wealth reported at $30 billion (Business Insider, 2012). Terrorism plagued Colombia with violence, corruption and crime under Escobar's organization. Escobar was reportedly responsible for 80 percent of the world's cocaine traffic during the late 1970s and early '80s. He was known as ruthless, a reckless Robin Hood to the people of Medellin and a natural at public relations and to this day admired by many across the globe.

Today's reality of Colombia is different, Colombia has reinvented itself and is stable. According to an article by National Public Radio, NPR, in April 2012, foreign investment has quadrupled over the past decade and Colombia was recently awarded investment grade status and has a new free-trade agreement with the U.S. In 2005, Colombia launched an international marketing campaign, "Colombia is Passion" promoting tourism. The campaign was a cooperative effort between public and private institutions, celebrities and international media figures (Berger, Herrera, Roberts, 2012). Whether or not Mexico learned anything from Colombia fighting a long-term battle with the drug cartel, managing a public relations crisis and making an effort for reform is unknown. Mexico and Colombia are not the only countries in the world who have battled negative imagery for their country being an unsafe or riskier destination. Throughout the years, past and present, and even future, there will be a country battling the crisis of perception and reputation. Presently there is research in tourism management including

managing travel destination perceptions including celebrity involvement. For instance, American actress, Julianne Moore was recruited by Turkey tourism for a promotional film about Turkey before she was dropped in April 2015 from the campaign. This type of study regarding destination risk is important in research as the cost of damage control and promotional campaigns are a big investment. And countries such as Mexico are one of those that rely heavily on tourism. There is opportunity for future research that could examine how relevant pieces of information whether they are TripAdvisor threads, travel advisories, media messages, tourism campaigns, etc. carry its value and weight and which message has the greatest impact and how those pieces of information affect people's decision making process to visit a country considered as riskier than other travel destinations. Such a study could apply the Information Integration Theory (II). This theory considers the ideas in a persuasive message to be pieces of information, and each relevant piece of information has two qualities; value and weight. The value is the evaluation of favorable or unfavorable and the weight is the information's perceived importance. This theory explores how attitudes are formed through the integration (mixing, combining) new information with existing cognitions or thoughts. II theory states that when obtain new information, often from persuasive messages, those new pieces of information will affect our attitudes, not replace our existing attitudes (Communication Institute for Online Scholarship, 2014).

Appendix A

Tables

Table A.1 Chi Square by Posts

			Results			
	POSITIVE SAFETY FRAME	NEGATIVE SAFETY FRAME	NEUTRAL SAFETY FRAME			*Row Totals*
BEFORE NEWS EVENT 1	228 (245.56) [1.26]	35 (24.89) [4.10]	45 (37.55) [1.48]			308
AFTER NEWS EVENT 1	354 (336.44) [0.92]	24 (34.11) [2.99]	44 (51.45) [1.08]			422
Column Totals	582	59	89			**730 (Grand Total)**

Table A.2 Chi Square by Posts

			Results			
	POSITIVE SAFETY FRAME	NEGATIVE SAFETY FRAME	NEUTRAL SAFETY FRAME			*Row Totals*
BEFORE NEWS EVENT 2	114 (120.86) [0.39]	8 (7.91) [0.00]	16 (9.23) [4.97]			138
AFTER NEWS EVENT 2	161 (154.14) [0.31]	10 (10.09) [0.00]	5 (11.77) [3.89]			176
Column Totals	275	18	21			**314 (Grand Total)**

Table A.3 Chi Square by Posts

			Results			
	POSITIVE SAFETY FRAME	NEGATIVE SAFETY FRAME	NEUTRAL SAFETY FRAME			*Row Totals*
BEFORE NEWS EVENT 3	104 (100.96) [0.09]	13 (14.72) [0.20]	12 (13.32) [0.13]			129
AFTER NEWS EVENT 3	40 (43.04) [0.22]	8 (6.28) [0.47]	7 (5.68) [0.31]			55
Column Totals	144	21	19			**184 (Grand Total)**

Table A.4 Chi Square by Posts

			Results			
	ENCOURAGEMENT FRAME	DISCOURAGEMENT FRAME	NEUTRAL FRAME			*Row Totals*
BEFORE NEWS EVENT 1	188 (185.22) [0.04]	7 (5.48) [0.42]	113 (117.29) [0.16]			308
AFTER NEWS EVENT 1	251 (253.78) [0.03]	6 (7.52) [0.31]	165 (160.71) [0.11]			422
Column Totals	439	13	278			**730 (Grand Total)**

Table A.5 Chi Square by Posts

Results					
	ENCOURAGEMENT FRAME	DISCOURAGEMENT FRAME	NEUTRAL FRAME			*Row Totals*
BEFORE NEWS EVENT 2	82 (75.04) [0.64]	0 (0.87) [0.87]	55 (61.08) [0.61]			137
AFTER NEWS EVENT 2	90 (96.96) [0.50]	2 (1.13) [0.68]	85 (78.92) [0.47]			177
Column Totals	172	2	140			**314 (Grand Total)**

Table A.6 Chi Square by Posts

Results					
	ENCOURAGEMENT FRAME	DISCOURAGEMENT FRAME	NEUTRAL FRAME			*Row Totals*
BEFORE NEWS EVENT 3	87 (84.78) [0.06]	1 (2.83) [1.18]	42 (42.39) [0.00]			130
AFTER NEWS EVENT 3	33 (35.22) [0.14]	3 (1.17) [2.84]	18 (17.61) [0.01]			54
Column Totals	120	4	60			**184 (Grand Total)**

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