

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Bournemouth University		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 17		
Title of case study: Understanding and helping to minimise the effects of terrorism on tourism destinations		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014 – December 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Anna Hillingdon	Associate Professor	01/09/2012 – current
Professor John Fletcher	Professor	01/09/1996 - current
Professor Stephen Page	Professor of Tourism Management	01/01/2012 – 30/11/2016
Dr John Beavis	Principal Academic Quantitative Research Design and Analysis	01/10/2012 – 31/07/2020
Dr Gregory Kapuscinski	Lecturer in Retail Management	01/10/2012 – 18/08/2017
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 – July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p><i>(Note: Dr Anna Hillingdon was previously known as Dr Yeganeh Morakabati. All references to Morakabati in publications or evidence refer to the work of Dr Hillingdon)</i></p> <p>The increasing incidence of terror attacks in popular holiday destinations in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt in recent years has led to concerns amongst tourists about their safety while abroad, as well as a popular perception that such incidents negatively impact tourist flows to those destinations. However, there is a lack of research underpinning these perceptions. The work of Dr Anna Hillingdon has led to a better understanding of risk perception, improvements in the ways that levels of risk are disseminated to the public, and recommendations to improve these communications. Her research has helped to enhance tourism in countries such as Tajikistan, creating increases in employment and living standards. Her work has also informed NATO and UK government policy regarding the risk posed by hybrid threats.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Dr Hillingdon has been recognised as a leading expert in the field of terrorism - both conventional and hybrid threats - and its impacts on tourists and tourism destinations. Her research has been funded by both the World Bank (USD12,000) [G1] and the United Nations World Trade Organisation [G2] (GBP23,509). Her work offers a number of key insights:</p> <p>1. An analysis of international tourism arrivals across the USA, Bali, Spain, UK and India - the first comparative study to use a consistent methodology to compare the effects of terrorism across numerous different states - has shown that terrorist attacks seem to have a larger effect in developing countries than in large European capitals [R2]. In developing countries, where there is a greater dependence on tourism in GDP terms, it is important to restore tourist confidence through efficient and effective post-crisis communication.</p>		

2. Additionally, demonstrating infrastructure which can quickly restore safety and order can help restore tourist confidence more quickly [R2]. Research has not generally identified tourists as a major target group for emergency planning; Dr Hillingdon has proposed a responsibility allocation building-block framework that could help speed up the emergency management responses by “knowing who is going to do what” with a particular focus on dealing with international tourists as a community in a disaster zone [R3]. This finding is grounded in a survey of 195 senior professionals involved in tourism globally (including airlines, airports, tour operators, hotels, cruise ships, tourism ministries, civil protection agencies, cabinet offices, university academics, and relevant consultancies), which found that drawing on collective knowledge and expertise appears to be the most effective way of effective planning for how to support tourists in the wake of a terrorist incident [R3].

3. Overall there is no “fingerprint” or “signature” pattern when it comes to the effects of terror incidents on tourism, and some of the media coverage surrounding this is therefore overinflated and inaccurate [R2]. International incidents including terrorism do not necessarily have a long-lasting economic impact on tourism receipts. For example, Dr Hillingdon has shown that in the wake of the Arab Spring, tourist spending recovered faster than the economy as a whole [R1].

4. Dr Hillingdon has shown that willingness to travel to a destination after a terrorist attack differs according to personalities. For example, a survey of 475 UK residents found that the higher one’s travel confidence or the further they are along the psychographic-allocentric spectrum, the lower their risk perception, including those related to man-made hazards [R4]. Different tourists respond differently to the threat of terrorism when booking holidays, particularly when the benefits of travelling to the destination are judged to outweigh the risks.

5. Dr Hillingdon’s work shows that government action can help to ameliorate the impact of terrorism on tourism [R2]. However, further research into hybrid threats – that is, a type of threat which combines conventional military aggression with non-conventional means including disinformation, cyber-attacks, espionage, political subversion and terrorism - has revealed that hidden sources of funding pose a major challenge to organisations seeking to mount a response to such threats. An analysis of 250 case study hybrid threats conducted by Dr Hillingdon and colleagues found that “economic leverage” is a key area of threat, and that governments need to develop resilience by building strong and adaptive infrastructures to counter their susceptibility to this threat [R5].

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

R1 - 4 were published in high quality journals, following a rigorous peer-review process. Data for R1 and R2 come from the World Bank database, the findings in R1 and R5 fed into G1. Data for R3 was collected by the UNWTO through a global survey. This paper is as a result of G2.

R5 is the result of Travelzoo's commissioned research into global consumers' perception of safety and security on holiday for the ITB Berlin 2017, using independent research company Norstat to facilitate the research worldwide. R5 has been used to inform strategic communications practices on hybrid threats in NATO and subsequent recommendations to an elite team of policy makers within the governments of NATO.

Journal Articles:

R1. Morakabati, Y. (2020) 'A question of confidence. Is tourism as vulnerable to civil unrest as we think? A comparative analysis of the impact of Arab Spring on total reserves and tourism receipts' – *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 22 (2), 252-265. [DOI: 10.1002/jtr.2333](https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2333)

R2. Morakabati, Y. and Beavis, J. (2017) 'Do terrorist attacks leave an identifiable ‘fingerprint’ on international tourist arrival data?' *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 19 (2), 179-190. [DOI: 10.1002/jtr.2095](https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2095)

R3. Morakabati, Y., Page, S., Fletcher, J. (2016) 'Emergency management and tourism stakeholder responses to crises: A global survey' *Journal of Travel Research*, 56 (3), 299-316. [DOI: 10.1177/0047287516641516](https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287516641516)

R4. Morakabati, Y. and Kapuściński, G. (2016) 'Personality, Risk Perception, Benefit Sought and Terrorism Effect' *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 18 (5), 506-514. [DOI: 10.1002/jtr.2068](https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2068)

Report:

R5. Morakabati, Y. et al (2019) Hybrid Threats: A Strategic Communications Perspective, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence

Grants:

G1. Morakabati, Y. (2018-2019) Poverty reduction, World Bank (USD12,000)

G2. Morakabati, Y., Gordon, R., and Fletcher, J., (2014) The integration of the travel and tourism industry into national emergency plans, UN WTO (GBP 23,509)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Over the past two decades, the nature of warfare has changed: terrorist attacks now occur at an increased frequency and with higher fatalities, while nations are also increasingly susceptible to hybrid threats. It has become increasingly important to understand how the changing nature of terrorism affects tourism in order to communicate this with the public, enabling them to better understand the risks of travel to particular regions of the world, and to help governments understand how to counter the risk of terrorism and hybrid threats.

The impact of Dr Hillingdon's research has been demonstrated in the following ways:

1. Enabling better communication with potential travelers in the wake of terror attacks

Most holidays are sold to customers without any communication about the safety of a destination until after the point of sale, despite safety and security being the top concern when choosing a destination for 97% of people [E1]. In 2017, Travelzoo - a major online travel company with over 28 million members in North America, Europe and Asia Pacific and 25 offices worldwide - invited Dr Hillingdon and colleagues to undertake research into consumer perception of safety & security on holiday. Dr Hillingdon worked on the design and analysis of a survey of 6,000 consumers in: China, Russia, India, Germany, France, Japan the USA, South Africa and the UK, with data collected between December 29 2016 and January 24 2017.

Analysis of this data, in conjunction with insights from Dr Hillingdon's prior research into risk perceptions amongst tourists [R4], was used to inform a media campaign in 2015-17, in which Dr Hillingdon undertook over 100 interviews to discuss her research [E3], including with: The Telegraph, BBC News, The Daily Express, The Daily Mail, Newsweek and NBC [E6]. This media coverage helped convey the important message that while terrorist attacks might contribute towards a decline in tourism in one specific region, this would simply redirect demand elsewhere, rather than reducing overall tourism demand. This helped shore up the confidence of tour operators in continuing to invest in tourism, as an overall fall in demand for tourism could have caused "huge job losses [...] for British workers both in and outside of the UK industry" [E3].

The Travelzoo research was published in a White Paper entitled "State of Play: The Impact of Geopolitical Events on International Tourism in 2017" [E1]. This concluded that the tourism industry and governments should unite to provide clearer information regarding the safety & security of tourism destinations; and to develop a standardised kitemark system to enable tourists to assess potential destinations. The White Paper was circulated to 200,000 European businesses and the UK Foreign Office. The Travelzoo CEO (CEO at the time of the report), states that: "The research enabled the travel industry to be better informed about the potential

risks to the industry from terrorism; provided accessible analysis of the current risk climate and acted as a catalyst for debate over the quality level of security information provided for tourists” [E3].

In light of the White Paper, and in tandem with their own review, in April 2017 the UK Foreign Office advised that they would be removing the terrorism threat level descriptors “in their current form” and would in future “use more narrative to provide the clearest possible information” to travelers, with descriptions of the terrorist threat now expressed in terms of its predictability, extent, context and any mitigations taken [E2]. This has provided travelers with a more realistic perspective of travel risks and also helped destinations, through the rapid response of tour operators, to get back to business as quickly and safely as possible in the wake of terrorism incidents.

2. Encouraging countries which have suffered from terrorism attacks to invest in tourism development

In 2018, Dr Hillingdon’s expertise in the impact of terrorism on tourism led to the World Bank approaching her to be part of a major project investigating the effects of terrorism on tourist development and growth in Central Asia [E4]. Dr Hillingdon gathered data in a questionnaire survey of tour operators, which ascertained whether operators had experienced a reduction in demand and whether they planned to divest or to reduce their investments for tourism activities. Dr Hillingdon’s own comparative research examining the actions governments can take to mitigate the impact of terrorist activities on their tourism sectors [R2] also fed into the project, which compared the effectiveness of government responses in Egypt, Tunisia, Israel and Tajikistan.

The World Bank stated that this was “an ambitious and complex” project and highlight the “significant impact” of Dr Hillingdon’s body of work on the outcomes [E5]. Dr Hillingdon was able to provide evidence which led to a full risk analysis, and pointing to two clear conclusions:

1. The impact on tourism of specific terrorist attacks is likely to be negligible unless other attacks happen.
2. Therefore, tourism stakeholders in Central Asia - previously reluctant to invest economically in an industry that was perceived to be vulnerable to attacks - should be encouraged to go ahead with tourism development. This in turn would detract from the likelihood of future attacks, as it would decrease the poverty which makes countries such as Tajikistan an easy recruitment target for groups including ISIS [E5].

The World Bank further state that Dr Hillingdon’s analysis has enabled them to “support the Government of Tajikistan to reduce frailty and strengthen resilience through... strengthening the tourism sector... thereby creating business and employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, such as women and young people” [E5].

3. Aiding the UK government and NATO with their understanding of hybrid threats

Dr Hillingdon’s expertise on terrorism in the Middle East [R1] and hybrid threats [R5] enabled her to contribute to a major NATO research project aiming to deepen understanding of the wide range of measures which come under the umbrella of terrorist “hybrid threats” and explore how to assess such threats [E7]. Dr Hillingdon was instrumental in providing a framework for understanding hybrid threats in the Middle East and was also involved in a NATO Workshop in Riga where the research was presented [E8].

A Director of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (COE), states:

“The body of work that [Dr Hillingdon] has completed, relating to hybrid threats, has already had a significant impact on an ambitious and complex NATO research project... The COE’s ability to assist NATO and the nations in developing effective security policies... depends heavily on the active support and insights provided by esteemed academics such as Dr Morakabati [Hillingdon]” [E8].

In March 2019, Dr Hillingdon submitted written evidence to the House of Commons Defence Committee in regard to their inquiry about how the UK should respond to hybrid threats, emphasising the need for the UK to focus on building a stronger and more competitive economy [E9a]. This was subsequently published with Dr Hillingdon being invited to give evidence in person to the Select Committee hearing in April 2019 [E9b].

Subsequently, Dr Hillingdon's work with NATO and in particular her focus on the need for strong and resilient economic infrastructure [R5] fed into a multinational handbook on hybrid warfare. This handbook is in use by the UK government and 13 other governments globally (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, South Korea, Switzerland and the US), and provides guidance on the most effective ways to counter hybrid warfare [E10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[E1] Morakabati, Fletcher and Beavis (2017) *State of Play: the impact of geopolitical events on international tourism in 2017*, TravelZoo <https://bit.ly/35QpWHI>

[E2] Tobias Ellwood MP, Minister for the Middle East and Africa (10 April 2017) *Testimonial letter, dated April 2017*.

[E3] Former CEO of TravelZoo (2021) *Testimonial email, dated March 2021*.

[E4] World Bank (2019) *International Development Association project appraisal document on a proposed grant to the Republic of Tajikistan*: <https://bit.ly/3nxyg4A>

[E5] World Bank (17 August 2020) *Testimonial letter from Senior Operations Officer, dated August 2017*.

[E6] Media citations: Telegraph, BBC News, Daily Express, Daily Mail, Newsweek and NBC

[E7] Morakabati, Y. et al (2019) *Hybrid Threats: A Strategic Communications Perspective*, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence <https://bit.ly/2XM8dfL>

[E8] NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (18 April 2019) *Testimonial letter*.

[E9a] HoC Defence Committee (21 March 2019) *Written evidence published by the - UK Response to Hybrid Threats*: <https://bit.ly/3byMb7Z>

[E9b] HoC Defence Committee (30th April 2019) *UK Response to Hybrid Threats, Oral evidence*: Audio: <https://bit.ly/2XFoXVz> Transcript: <https://bit.ly/2K8mSyp>

[E10] Multinational Capability Development Campaign (March 2019) *Countering Hybrid Warfare*. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3nH2KBc>