

THE PERCEIVED RISKS OF TRAVELING OVERSEAS: EVIDENCE FROM KOREA

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This article investigated destination-related risk perceptions among two groups of Korean residents: those who have no previous experience of overseas travel and those who have traveled overseas but not to Australia. An analysis of 810 respondents to a questionnaire-based survey concluded that the two groupings view Australia as less risky than international destinations generally. Both respondent groupings cited financial risks as a strong deterrent to overseas travel, although inexperienced travelers expressed more concern about the prospective culture-related risks associated with travel to Australia. Experienced travelers expressed a lesser likelihood of encountering crime during a trip to Australia than in the case of other destinations, whereas inexperienced travelers perceived alternative destinations as equally risky, perhaps indicative of their incapacity to discriminate. The findings suggest that the experience of overseas travel increases awareness of the potential dangers and hazards that may be encountered in destination settings, which generates perceptions of risk that are closer to reality. It is suggested that tourism authorities should take note of this and direct scarce resources toward prospective market segments who have more realistic views about the destination.

Key words: Travel risk; Risk factors; Destination choice

Introduction

Tourism is an increasingly significant component of the Australian economy (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2007) and in 2005–2006 accounted for over A\$37 billion of total GDP. As such, the impacts of prospective catastrophic events pose a

significant concern to both Australian tourism and to GDP. The scale of potential repercussions was evident during the period between 2001 and 2003 when total inbound arrivals declined as a consequence of three catastrophic events: the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the Bali bombing in 2002, and SARS in 2003.

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In contrast to the declining overall arrivals, the pattern of South Korean visitors to Australia increased over the 3 years despite these catastrophic events. The inconsistency between other international travelers and South Korean travelers to Australia is potentially important because it suggests that destination authorities in general and in Australia in particular may be able to formulate contingency plans in key markets with a view to withstanding the potential impacts of catastrophic events. However, the conclusion may be challenged because such catastrophic events generally occur outside the country (i.e., Australia). At one level, this might lead to the conclusion that Australia is a "safe destination." However, the decline in total visitation to Australia during the previously noted catastrophic events indicates a potential relationship between catastrophic events and travel cancellations on a global scale. This further suggests that Australia is certainly impacted by catastrophic events occurring elsewhere in terms of declining inbound visitation.

The present study draws from the literature on the interrelationship between the theories of perceived risk and tourist behaviors. A substantial number of studies have examined perceptions of one or more specific risk factors involving catastrophic events that have influenced future tourist decision making (Ankomah & Crompton, 1990; Baxter & Bowen, 2004; Clements & Georgiou, 1998; Dolnicar, 2007; Hall & Oehlers, 2000; Ichinosawa, 2006; Kozak, Crofts, & Law, 2007; Lepp & Gibson, 2003; McKercher & Chon, 2004; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). The same could be said for contextual risk factors that have been examined by Brunt, Mawby, and Hambly (1999), Fuchs and Reichel (2004), Henderson (2003), Mitchell and Vassos (1997), Reisinger and Turner (2002), Selengut (2003), and Tarlow (2006).

Because catastrophic events are unpredictable and the associated risk factors are difficult to control, such events may lead to an "interruption to the continuity of business operations for the international travel industry, through reduction in tourist arrivals and expenditures" (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998, p. 12). Such events are likely to impact on visitation. The economic distress that is caused by such interruptions may impact substantially on tourism stakeholders including residents of the affected destinations, customer service industries, financial institutions,

investors, consumer groups (e.g., business travelers and professional convention management), the transportation industry (e.g., airlines and railways), the media, and various government departments and authorities (J. R. B. Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). In their reactions to such hostile environments, prospective travelers are likely to take such risks into account when considering their future plans. The current exploratory investigation identifies the antecedents of perceptions of risk within the expanding Korea outbound market, focusing on potential travelers to Australia and other international destinations (Chen & Hsu, 2000).

Over the past 15 years, there has been increasing awareness of the risks associated with international travel as a consequence of events such as the Asian financial crisis (1997), the 9/11 terrorist attacks (2001), the Bali bombings (2002), the SARS and avian bird flu outbreaks (2003), the tsunami disasters, the New Orleans floods (2004–2005), and the Madrid and London bombings. Over the past 5 years this fearful legacy was compounded by a series of other traumatic events including the Mumbai hotel bombings, Sichuan earthquakes, the global financial crisis, and outbreaks of pandemic swine flu. Then, in 2010, just as Europe was showing some halting indications of recovery from the global financial crisis, travelers were confronted with flight cancellations due to airborne ash associated with the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull (Guiver & Jain, 2011). Economic difficulties have continued to characterize the developed world, thereby increasing perceptions of risk toward air travel, particularly in Europe (BBC News, 2010).

In the Asia-Pacific region, which is the focus of the present study, political unrest threatened civil war in one of the most popular destinations—Thailand—prompting various governments to issue advisories discouraging travel to various destinations. Whether such calamities were real or whether consumers were exaggerating their magnitude, they affect tourism operators and create enduring concerns among prospective travelers (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2010). In response to this sometimes hostile environment, it is likely that prospective travelers will take account of such risks when considering their future plans. The current exploratory investigation identifies the antecedents of perceptions of risk within the

expanding Korean outbound market, focusing on potential travelers to Australia and other international destinations (Chen & Hsu, 2000).

Travel-Related Risks

The influence of risk perceptions on international travel has been extensively researched (e.g., Cheron & Ritchie, 1982). Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992) were the first to identify a relationship between perceived risk and travel behaviors. Subsequent studies have connected between the theories of risk-related behaviors and consumer decision making. Many authors have asserted that previous travel experience is a major influence on perceptions of risk. Pham (1998) notes that destination-related choices are influenced by risks associated with cultural factors, health, and disasters (man-made or natural). Whether they are real or simply perceptions, risks may evoke feelings, emotions, and fears that override rational decision making and influence purchasing decisions. The present study provides insights into the decision making that is associated with purchasing complex and multifaceted travel services. The findings may have implications for sectors of the tourism industry that consumers associate more or less closely with risk.

Perceptions of destination-related risk are influenced by previous experiences of international travel. According to Weaver, Weber, and McCleary (2007), destinations are "complex products, and there are a variety of characteristics of a trip and of tourists themselves that can affect evaluation" (p. 333). Gitelson and Crompton (1984) have stressed that the risk of dissatisfaction or disappointment is reduced by previous travel experiences. Sönmez and Graefe (1998) agreed and concluded that travel-related experiences influence subsequent behaviors. They argued that travel experiences have a positive and significant relationship with "cognitive images" of new and untried destinations. According to Beerli and Martin (2004), repeat visitors are more tolerant of new experiences and "realities" (p. 635). The present study investigates Korean tourist perceptions of international destinations generally and of Australia in particular. Tourism from South Korea (henceforth Korea) has been one of Australia's fastest growing inbound markets in Australia and is currently ranked seventh

largest (Tourism Research Australia, 2011). Given the importance of this market, it is imperative for Australian tourism authorities to implement applicable and targeted policies. This is the main motivation for choosing the study population.

Two groupings of tourists were examined. The first are described as Type A and have no previous overseas travel experience, although they may have traveled domestically within Korea. Type Bs have traveled overseas, but not to Australia. The choice of target groups arose from a desire to understand perceptions that have not been influenced by personal destination experiences. The researchers measured the risk estimation perceptions using eight factors that have been identified by previous researchers as the ones with the greatest influence over destination choice. These factors are, respectively, harm resulting from terrorism (Dolnicar, 2007; Drakos & Kutan, 2003; Kozak et al., 2007; Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998), political instability (Clements & Georgiou, 1998; Thapa, 2003; Hall, Timothy, & Duval, 2003), health hazards (Baxter & Bowen, 2004; Cossar, 1997; Hall & Oehlers, 2000; Irvine & Anderson, 2006), financial crisis (Juric, Lawson, & McLean, 2002; Leiper & Hing, 1998; McKercher & Chon, 2004), natural disasters (Faulkner, 2001; Ichinosawa, 2006; Mitchell & Vassos, 1997; B. W. Ritchie, 2004; Webber, 2001), crime (Brunt et al., 1999; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Pizam, 1999; Prideaux, 1999; Tarlow, 2006), and cultural barriers and religious dogma (Aziz, 1995; Fox, 1998; Fuchs & Reichel, 2004; Henderson, 2003, 2007; Hottola, 2004; Kang & Moscardo, 2006; Reisinger & Turner, 2002; Selengut, 2003).

Previous studies have shown that destination-related risk perceptions are most influenced by prior experiences of overseas travel and by socio-demographic factors. However, the prior research has been fragmented and no studies have adopted a comprehensive framework to assess the relative importance of the various factors. The researchers accept the proposition that prior travel experiences influences perceptions of risk when considering prospective destinations.

Methods

As mentioned previously, the target population for the present study consisted of two groupings of

prospective and actual Korean tourists: Types A and B. The group specifications were consistent with the focus on prospective travelers and how travel choices are influenced by perceptions of catastrophic events and contextual risk factors. For investigative purposes, data were collected via a questionnaire-based survey using convenience sampling and drawing upon the following sources: contacts obtained following initial contact with business and community networks (e.g., churches). Respondent occupations and personal circumstances included tertiary student, real-estate manager, teacher, salesperson, retiree, homemaker, small-business owner, and office worker. The consideration given to a wide range of respondent types from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds should ensure that the research instrument would be understandable and meaningful to a broad cross section of the population. Respondents were contacted using third-party networks and by means of interception in public settings including shopping centers. Within the broad category of non-probability sampling, it has been observed that a quota-based approach can improve representativeness and help to identify potential distortions (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The analysis undertaken in the present study used data drawn from questionnaires administered to a substantial sample size (810 respondents).

An initial qualitative investigation was conducted prior to embarking on the quantitative component of the study. Interviews were conducted with 21 respondents of whom three had never traveled internationally, nine were participating in an organized tour to Australia, six were traveling independently around Australia, and three were overseas at the time of the interview (in Japan) but had not traveled to Australia. Supplementing the literature review with a qualitative investigation supported the process of refining the questions for inclusion in the subsequent quantitative survey and provided substance for emerging insights and hence ultimate research quality. Although the quantitative component excluded prospective respondents who had traveled to Australia previously, the qualitative element allowed those with some experience of Australia to participate in the refinement of the instrument. In the interviews, respondents were asked about their previous perceptions of risk toward Australia (i.e., whether they perceived it as riskier than before),

their perceptions of the antecedents of risk for decision making, the risks that they associate with the current travel environment, and their perceptions of likely future risks. All participants in the qualitative component of the research were asked to review a preliminary list of risk factors. The factors that were listed included terrorism, political instability, health scares, financial issues, natural disasters, crime, cultural barriers, and religious dogma. Respondents were then asked to assess the effects of these risks on their future prospects of traveling to Australia in the wider context of international catastrophic events. The involvement of a variety of participants would minimize the likelihood of recall bias among those who had previously traveled overseas (Gartner & Hunt, 1988).

The qualitative component formed an essential element of the research by confirming the merits of the ensuing quantitative questionnaire and determining the items that have greatest relevance to those considering travel to Australia or to other international destinations. The respondents provided insights into their understanding of risk and its associations. The conduct of semistructured and in-depth personal interviews allowed the researchers to anticipate prospective response patterns. Responses were elicited by presenting hypothetical statements such as, "If I were considering traveling to Australia and internationally, I would be concerned that there may be a riot or a street demonstration." A 5-point Likert-type scale was used to ensure the internal validity of the questions and to capture a range of responses. The scale items ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. An initial analysis revealed no significant differences between the pairs *strongly agree* and *agree* and between *strongly disagree* and *disagree*. It has been previously noted that the distinction between extreme and moderate views is sometimes insignificant and not of practical importance (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2010; Kerlinger, 1986). On this basis, the analysis was subsequently repeated using collapsed response items involving a combination of *strongly agree* and *agree* into *agree* and a combination of *strongly disagree* and *disagree* into *disagree*. Summary tables were used to provide clear and readable comparisons between the various perceptions of risk. The tabulated data are presented on a 3-point scale that is a collapsed version

of the original 5-point scale and have been used for the purpose of clear and unambiguous presentation. Chi-square tests were used to investigate whether perceptions of risk differ toward Australia and other international destinations. The chi-square test was selected because of its suitability for comparing the correlated variables of risk perceptions for Australia and for other international destinations (Hair et al., 2010).

Results

General Risk Factors

In aggregate, both respondent groups perceived that Australia is less risky than other destinations. As outlined in Table 1, inexperienced travelers associated culture-related risks more closely with Australia than with other destinations, perhaps symptomatic of their lack of knowledge. This finding is at odds with the commonly held view that Australia is perceived as a safer destination than most others. Experienced travelers perceived that other destinations are riskier than Australia. Compared with their Type A counterparts, the experienced Type B respondents perceived Australia more positively than other destinations. This finding may be attributable to the fact that generic dangers and hazards are likely to be encountered in any destination.

As travel from Korea to Australia has progressively increased, it may be anticipated that customers will hold more accurate perceptions about what to expect and its likelihood. This enhanced awareness should provide an opportunity for Australia's tourism authorities to encourage experienced Korean travelers to spread favorable word-of-mouth communication, leading ultimately to increased visitation. It was found that overall, Australia is perceived as being less risky than other destinations and that the difference is statistically significant at $p = 0.000$. Next, the dimensions of each risk factor were analyzed with a view to undertaking deeper analysis.

Specific Risk Factors

Both respondent groups perceived financial issues as a strong deterrent to travel. Most Type B respondents (71%) indicated that financial issues would discourage them from traveling internationally, broadly in line with the number reported for

Australia (68%). Similar percentages of Type A respondents (62% and 64%, respectively) reported that financial issues would constrain their travel. A higher proportion of Type B than Type A respondents cited personal financial issues as a deterrent to international travel. Table 2 shows that inexperienced travelers had relatively undifferentiated perceptions about encountering fluctuating exchange rates in Australia or in other destinations. Experienced travelers perceived a comparatively greater likelihood of encountering financial risks outside Australia. From a reading of Table 2, it is evident that Type A and B respondents believe that other destinations are in aggregate financially riskier than Australia. A high percentage of Type B respondents (72%) strongly believe that fluctuating exchange rates influence their travel to other destinations, compared with an equivalent figure of 59% for Australia. Almost equal proportions (57% and 59%, respectively) of Type A respondents viewed fluctuating exchange rates as a deterrent to travel for both Australia and other destinations. Inexperienced travelers had similar perceptions about the risks of fluctuating exchange rates at both destinations. Experienced travelers associated greater financial risks with destinations other than Australia.

Almost equal proportions of Type A respondents (62% and 64%, respectively) cited financial issues as a deterrent for travel to destinations generally and to Australia in particular. A higher percentage of Type B than Type A respondents expressed concern about personal financial issues. Approximately 68% of Type B respondents believed that a low exchange rate for the Korean won is a deterrent to international travel, compared with an equivalent figure of 60% for Australia. The figure is reversed in the case of Type A respondents, with 57% stating that a low rate will impact on travel costs to Australia, compared with 51% for other destinations. Inexperienced respondents perceive a low exchange rate as a higher risk in Australia than elsewhere. This finding reveals that Korean tourists with dissimilar travel experiences at times have differing perceptions about particular destinations.

King and Choi (1999) identified an apparent compulsion among prospective Korean tourists to "be seen to do the right thing." In the present study, about half of the Type B respondents (50%) view it as improper to spend on international travel when

Table 1
Perceptions of General Risk Factors on Prior Travel Experiences

Risk Factors	Tourist	Destination	Responses (%)		
			Disagree	Not Sure	Agree
Terrorism (n = 791)	Type A, n = 322	Australia International	164 (50.9)	88 (27.3)	70 (21.8)
	Type B, n = 469	Australia International	67 (20.8)	76 (23.6)	179 (55.6)
Political instability (n = 784)	Type A, n = 320	Australia International	288 (61.4)	83 (17.7)	98 (20.7)
	Type B, n = 464	Australia International	106 (22.6)	71 (15.1)	292 (52.3)
Health (n = 789)	Type A, n = 321	Australia International	177 (55.4)	101 (31.6)	42 (13.2)
	Type B, n = 468	Australia International	87 (27.2)	116 (36.3)	117 (36.6)
Financial crisis (n = 783)	Type A, n = 320	Australia International	320 (69.0)	89 (19.2)	55 (11.9)
	Type B, n = 463	Australia International	134 (28.8)	108 (23.3)	222 (47.9)
Natural disasters (n = 783)	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	132 (41.1)	78 (24.3)	111 (34.6)
	Type B, n = 465	Australia International	69 (21.5)	72 (22.4)	180 (56.0)
Crime (n = 771)	Type A, n = 316	Australia International	226 (48.3)	89 (19.0)	153 (32.7)
	Type B, n = 455	Australia International	101 (21.5)	70 (15.0)	297 (63.5)
Cultural barriers (n = 779)	Type A, n = 319	Australia International	93 (29.1)	74 (23.1)	153 (47.8)
	Type B, n = 460	Australia International	56 (17.5)	83 (25.9)	181 (56.6)
Religious dogma (n = 784)	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	157 (33.9)	111 (24.0)	195 (42.1)
	Type B, n = 466	Australia International	91 (19.7)	71 (15.3)	290 (65.0)
	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	117 (36.8)	84 (26.4)	117 (36.7)
	Type B, n = 466	Australia International	62 (19.5)	94 (29.6)	162 (50.9)
	Type A, n = 316	Australia International	217 (46.7)	108 (3.2)	140 (30.1)
	Type B, n = 455	Australia International	95 (20.4)	102 (21.9)	268 (57.7)
	Type A, n = 319	Australia International	77 (24.3)	79 (25.0)	160 (50.7)
	Type B, n = 460	Australia International	55 (17.4)	79 (25.0)	182 (57.6)
	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	162 (35.6)	110 (24.2)	183 (40.3)
	Type B, n = 466	Australia International	89 (19.5)	92 (20.2)	274 (60.2)
	Type A, n = 319	Australia International	99 (31.0)	85 (26.6)	135 (42.4)
	Type B, n = 460	Australia International	94 (29.5)	108 (33.9)	117 (36.7)
	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	195 (42.4)	109 (23.7)	156 (33.9)
	Type B, n = 466	Australia International	160 (34.7)	111 (24.1)	189 (41.1)
	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	185 (58.2)	88 (27.7)	45 (14.1)
	Type B, n = 466	Australia International	118 (37.1)	130 (40.9)	70 (22.0)
	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	305 (65.4)	114 (24.5)	47 (10.1)
	Type B, n = 466	Australia International	177 (38.0)	143 (30.7)	146 (31.3)

Note: $p = 0.000$.

Korea is facing financial difficulties, compared with about 46% who applied this rationale to Australia. Similarly, 49% of Type A respondents felt that it would not be right to travel internationally, slightly higher than the figure of 46% for Australia. This result indicates that the perception that it is improper to spend on international travel when Korea is facing financial difficulties is unrelated to previous travel experience. This sentiment is a particular characteristic of Korean outbound tourism. Financial factors strongly influence perceptions among both types of respondents. The inexperienced

expect to encounter unfavorable Korean exchange rates more in the case of travel to Australia than to other destinations. When all factors are considered, Australia is perceived in aggregate as slightly less risky than other destinations. The different perceptions of risk are significant at $p = 0.000$ for both Types A and B. Some travelers may have gathered exchange rate-related information prior to travel. However, it may be considered a potential risk where the information gathered is either inaccurate or incomplete. Prospective travelers may take precautionary measures such as advanced purchase of

Table 2
The Risk of Financial Crisis

Specific Risk Factors	Tourist	Destination	Responses (%)		
			Disagree	Not Sure	Agree
Fluctuating exchange rates may impact on my travel to	Type A, n = 319	Australia International	47 (14.7)	91 (28.5)	181 (56.7)
	Type B, n = 473	Australia International	38 (12.0)	93 (29.2)	188 (58.9)
The Korean exchange rate might be low making travel too expensive	Type A, n = 317	Australia International	107 (27.9)	89 (18.8)	277 (58.6)
	Type B, n = 472	Australia International	66 (13.9)	65 (13.7)	342 (72.3)
Financial issues have discouraged me from traveling to Australia	Type A, n = 320	Australia International	37 (11.7)	101 (31.9)	179 (56.5)
	Type B, n = 471	Australia International	25 (7.9)	112 (35.3)	180 (50.8)
It is improper to travel overseas when Korea is experiencing financial difficulties	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	65 (13.8)	123 (26.1)	284 (60.2)
	Type B, n = 473	Australia International	48 (10.2)	101 (21.4)	323 (68.4)
	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	36 (14.4)	77 (24.1)	197 (61.6)
	Type B, n = 471	Australia International	70 (10.4)	84 (26.3)	203 (63.5)
	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	78 (16.6)	71 (15.1)	322 (68.4)
	Type B, n = 473	Australia International	59 (12.5)	78 (16.6)	334 (70.9)
	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	63 (19.8)	108 (34.0)	382 (46.3)
	Type B, n = 473	Australia International	51 (16.0)	111 (34.9)	156 (49.0)
	Type A, n = 318	Australia International	141 (29.8)	115 (24.3)	217 (45.9)
	Type B, n = 473	Australia International	118 (25.0)	121 (25.6)	234 (49.5)

Note: $p = 0.000$.

travelers' checks, international multicurrency traveler cards, and currency for use at the destination. However, such actions cannot entirely mitigate risk because currencies can fluctuate in value over short periods. Where large sums are involved or in the case of extended trips, travelers may encounter substantial losses.

Visitors to a single destination such as Australia are only required to deal with only one exchange rate (in this case between the won and the Australian dollar). Exchange rates are most problematic when they fluctuate in the period leading to and during travel. As indicated in Table 3, Types A and B perceived Australia as less risky than other destinations with respect to all crime-related risks. Approximately two thirds (67%) of Type B respondents cited theft as the greatest crime-related risk internationally, compared with about half (53%) for Australia. Nearly 63% of Type A respondents indicated that there was a prospect of being robbed in other destinations compared with about 56% for Australia. Experienced travelers appear to be more concerned about being robbed in other destinations. No significant differences were evident between Type A and Type B respondents.

More experienced than inexperienced travelers expressed concern about the prospect of being

victims of crime when undertaking international travel. About 59% of Type B respondents saw this as likely in other destinations, compared with 46% for Australia. Similar proportions of Type A respondents (51% and 52%) feared the likelihood of becoming victims of crime in both Australia and in other international destinations.

Robbery is perceived as the greatest overall concern and as a widespread risk in other destinations. Between 50% and 67% of respondents perceived a real danger of being victims of crime. Other less commonplace incidents, such as drug concealment, sexual assault, or murder, recorded lower rates of 25% to 40% among respondents. In practice the number of Korean tourists who encounter such problems is miniscule, but perceptions are still influential.

Experienced travelers perceive a greater risk of encountering crime in destinations other than in Australia, whereas the inexperienced and hence less discriminating respondents viewed the risks as equivalent in either setting. About 40% of Type A expressed concern about the risk of drug concealment within Australia, almost equal to the 39% who expressed this view about other destinations. About 39% of Type B respondents perceived drug concealment as a risk in other destinations, compared

Table 3
Crime-Related Risks

Specific Risk Factors	Tourist	Destination	Responses (%)		
			Disagree	Not Sure	Agree
I may be robbed	Type A, n = 324	Australia International	50 (15.4)	92 (28.4)	182 (56.2)
	Type B, n = 473	Australia International	40 (12.3)	81 (25.0)	203 (62.6)
I may become a victim of crime	Type A, n = 321	Australia International	93 (19.7)	128 (27.1)	252 (53.2)
	Type B, n = 472	Australia International	59 (12.4)	95 (20.1)	319 (67.4)
Someone may illegally conceal drugs in my luggage during transit	Type A, n = 322	Australia International	63 (19.7)	91 (28.3)	167 (52.0)
	Type B, n = 465	Australia International	49 (15.2)	107 (33.3)	165 (51.4)
I may be murdered in remote areas	Type A, n = 320	Australia International	108 (22.9)	148 (31.4)	216 (45.8)
	Type B, n = 463	Australia International	78 (16.5)	118 (25.0)	276 (58.5)
I may be sexually assaulted	Type A, n = 323	Australia International	89 (27.6)	129 (40.1)	104 (32.3)
	Type B, n = 470	Australia International	79 (24.5)	126 (39.1)	117 (36.3)

Note: $p = 0.000$

with a figure of 31% in the case of Australia. Inexperienced travelers are less concerned about finding concealed drugs in Australia or elsewhere, whereas experienced travelers perceived the risk as greater in other destinations.

Roughly equal proportions of Type A respondents (40% and 42%, respectively) expressed concern about the likelihood of being murdered in remote areas in Australia and other destinations. About 43% of Type Bs perceived minimal threat of being murdered in Australia, compared with 34% for other destinations. This suggests that experienced travelers view Australia as relatively safer in terms of violent crime than other destinations. Following a similar pattern, almost equal percentages of Type A respondents (about 38% and 39%, respectively) expressed concerns about the prospect of being sexually assaulted in Australia or other destinations. Almost 45% of Type B respondents perceived minimal risk of sexual assault in Australia compared with 35% for other destinations, indicative that the experienced perceive greater risk than the inexperienced.

The results indicate that perceptions of the risk of specific crimes vary on the basis of travel experience. Whereas Type B respondents viewed Australia as less risky than other destinations, Type As were largely unaware of crime-related risks within Australia. The differences are statistically significant for both types at $p = 0.000$. As shown in Table 4, Types A and B perceive other destinations as culturally riskier than Australia. However, both respondent groups viewed Australia as riskier than other destinations for language (English), customs, and food. Most Type A respondents (84%) were unfamiliar with Australian culture, whereas 69% used this description for other destinations. With no previous experience of international travel, it is perhaps unsurprising that 69% of Type B respondents expressed this view about Australia. Despite having traveled internationally, about 51% described themselves as unfamiliar with the culture, perhaps because they were asked about international destinations generally. This suggests that the inexperienced were less familiar with Australian culture than the more experienced.

Table 4
Culture-Related Risks

Specific Risk Factors	Tourist	Destination	Responses (%)		
			Disagree	Not Sure	Agree
I am unfamiliar with speaking English	Type A, n = 323	Australia International	26 (8.1)	31 (9.6)	266 (82.4)
	Type B, n = 470	Australia International	25 (7.7)	52 (16.1)	246 (76.2)
I am unfamiliar with the culture	Type A, n = 320	Australia International	135 (28.7)	49 (10.4)	286 (60.9)
	Type B, n = 467	Australia International	137 (29.2)	56 (11.9)	177 (58.9)
I am unfamiliar with the food	Type A, n = 323	Australia International	21 (6.6)	32 (10.0)	267 (83.5)
	Type B, n = 468	Australia International	35 (11.0)	65 (20.3)	220 (68.8)
I may be discriminated against because of local customs in:	Type A, n = 320	Australia International	68 (14.6)	75 (16.1)	324 (69.4)
	Type B, n = 466	Australia International	158 (33.8)	71 (15.2)	238 (51.0)
There are pockets of discrimination against Asians in the local traditions of:	Type A, n = 314	Australia International	36 (11.2)	78 (24.1)	209 (64.7)
	Type B, n = 464	Australia International	68 (30.7)	74 (22.9)	181 (56.1)
There is prejudice against Asians in:	Type A, n = 315	Australia International	104 (22.2)	109 (23.3)	255 (54.5)
	Type B, n = 468	Australia International	189 (40.4)	83 (17.7)	196 (41.9)

Note: $p = 0.000$.

The concept of "cultural barrier risk" encapsulates a lack of familiarity with the language, culture, and food prevalent in the destination. Type A respondents who have not previously traveled overseas can only imagine situations associated with these dimensions and respond accordingly. English is commonly a challenge for travelers originating from East and Southeast Asia (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, and Indonesia) because of the limited exposure that they have had to the spoken language. The very different characteristics of Western and Asian cultures can make prospective Asian tourists apprehensive, particularly where they are required to adjust to Western cultures (Juric et al., 2002). Pizam and Sussman (1995) observed that some tourists view unfamiliar cuisine as risky. The international destination category includes China and Japan where the prevailing culture is Asian, with many features resembling what is found in Korea. Koreans feel more comfortable in such environments.

Of Type A respondents, the second highest percentage (82%) viewed English language as the biggest barrier in Australia, compared with 76% for other destinations. Nearly 61% of Type B respondents lacked confidence about speaking English in Australia, compared with about 59% who expressed this view about speaking the relevant language in the case of other destinations. It is worth noting that many international destinations incorporate languages other than English in their information brochures and signage.

Nearly 65% of Type A respondents perceived the food in Australia as unfamiliar, compared with 56% in the case of other destinations. Of Type B respondents, 54% viewed unfamiliar food as a risk in Australia, compared with 42% in other destinations. Regarding prejudice against Asians, about 62% of Type A respondents viewed this as a risk in Australia, compared with 40% in other international destinations. About 29% of Type B respondents

thought that there is prejudice against Asians within Australia, whereas a much higher percentage (61%) believed that this was the case in other destinations. More inexperienced travelers appear to be concerned about the potential for prejudice in Australia. Experienced respondents perceived a greater risk of prejudice in other destinations. On this basis, travel experience appears to impact on perceptions in both Australia and in other destinations. When asked about the likelihood of encountering discrimination against Asians, 59% of Type A respondents were unaware of the situation in Australia, with an equivalent figure of 40% for other destinations. A perception that discrimination could exist in Australia was prevalent among 31% of Type B respondents, lower than the figure of 58% for other destinations.

Of Type A respondents, 43% were uncertain about discrimination as a result of local customs, compared with 46% for other destinations. Of Type B respondents, 44% believed that they would be discriminated against in Australia, slightly lower than the equivalent figure of 46% for other destinations. The perceptions of risk toward Australia were similar between Type A and Type B respondents. Type B respondents perceived language barriers and a lack of familiarity with culture and food to be riskier in Australia than elsewhere. In Table 4, it is, however, evident that a smaller proportion of Type B than of Type A respondents perceive that encountering such risks in Australia is likely. Whereas 82% of Type A respondents expressed unfamiliarity with speaking English, 61% of Type B respondents viewed English language as a risk. A high proportion of Type A respondents (61.9%) were unsure about whether prejudice against Asians is prevalent in Australia compared with a figure of 40% for other destinations. In contrast, approximately 61% of experienced (Type B) respondents perceived a prospect of prejudice in other destinations compared with a much lower figure of 29% for Australia.

Type A and B respondents had significantly different perceptions toward culture-related factors, with the more experienced viewing Australia as less risky than their less traveled counterparts. Asian travelers to Western destinations sometimes fear discrimination on the basis of color, ethnicity, and/or religion. Of these various factors, experienced travelers were more concerned than their less experienced counterparts with language-, culture-,

and food-related risks. Experienced travelers had particularly strong perceptions of discrimination regarding the relationship between local customs and Asian culture. Significantly different risk perceptions were evident in the case of a number of factors. In aggregate, Australia was viewed as culturally riskier by a larger proportion of both Type As and Bs. A possible explanation is that Koreans who have not previously visited Australia have only third-hand perceptions of these prospective problems. When the various factors and responses are combined (see Table 4), it is evident that fewer respondents perceive Australia as riskier than other destinations particularly with respect to culture-related risks. Significant differences are evident between the two alternatives at $p=0.000$. Despite their very different travel experiences, there were no significantly different risk perceptions between Type A and B respondents toward unfamiliar religious beliefs, extreme and radical beliefs, and conflicts. Experienced respondents appeared to believe that religious beliefs and practices at their intended destinations do not pose a risk. By way of contrast, most of those without prior travel experience are unable to determine whether religion-related factors are risky or not. Experienced travelers had lower risk perceptions toward religiously motivated violence than the less experienced. In the case of risks, generally a larger proportion of inexperienced travelers view other destinations as riskier than Australia for terrorism, political instability, health, natural disasters, financial crisis, and religious dogma. Experienced travelers perceived risks associated with crime and culture-related factors as greater in Australia.

Conclusions and Implications

Relative to their less experienced counterparts, experienced travelers expressed greater confidence in Australia, especially in the case of cultural barriers. Type B respondents perceived other destinations as riskier than Australia in the case of all eight factors. In terms of specific risks, Type A respondents perceived Australia as generally less risky than other destinations. However, roughly equal proportions of Type A and B respondents perceived financial crisis, cultural issues, and crime-related risks as being pronounced in the case of both Australia

and other destinations. When all factors are considered, Type A respondents perceived Australia as less risky than other destinations. It is interesting to note that although they have not previously visited, "experienced" travelers perceive Australia as less risky than other destinations. The percentage of experienced respondents who associated specific risks with destinations generally was significantly higher than was the case for Australia. A large proportion of Type B respondents associated Australia with finance-related risks. However, the proportion was smaller among those who perceived the financial crisis as posing a risk in destinations more generally. Similar patterns were evident for political instability, health issues (epidemics and diseases), and serious crime. This finding suggests that greater travel experience increases traveler awareness of prospective destination-related dangers and hazards. Overall, experienced travelers expressed confidence in Australia as a safe destination.

The less experienced respondents (Type As) had similar perceptions of the risks that they might expect to encounter in Australia and in other destinations. Types A and B respondents had similar perceptions of risk in the case of food poisoning and allergies, road accidents, natural disasters, and the possibility of being robbed and being victims of crime. More significantly, a larger proportion of respondents, regardless of travel experience, perceive English language barriers, Australian culture, and food as higher risks than equivalent issues that may be encountered in destinations elsewhere. The results confirm the findings of previous research that Koreans have a close association between Australia and the risk of encountering language and cultural barriers, regardless of the extent of their previous travel experience. This corresponds with the findings of earlier studies by Reisinger and Turner (2002), Lim (2004), and Lee and Sparks (2007), who concluded that Koreans prefer to travel as part of group tour packages, where they are able to communicate in their native language. Within Korean culture, the capacity to communicate fluently is valued highly, and Korean tourists may become frustrated and feel inadequate if they are unable to articulate their requests or desires to relevant parties, notably in service-related encounters. In light of this communication barrier, it is evident that major tourist attractions and public facilities

would be well advised to improve the communication mechanisms available to Korean language speakers, which is conveniently achieved with the use of modern communications technology. For example, it may be helpful to incorporate a Korean language version within audio guides that are used to accompany tours in either indoor or outdoor settings. Another prospective strategy that might address perceptions of risk is the incorporation of Korean translations of information in guidebooks, brochures, public signs, and other relevant landmarks. Such enhancements might assist Korean tourists to navigate aspects of Australian culture by reducing misinformation about local cultural aspects that has the potential to create misconceptions regarding their ability to deal with cultural barriers. The findings suggest that Australia's tourism industry would be well advised to enhance its awareness of the relatively homogeneous culture of Korean tourists and of the tendency to avoid interactions in English. To increase the familiarity of potential tourists with Australia and to reduce their perceived language- and culture-related risks, Australia's tourism industry may need to introduce systematic, certified job training for staff involved in handling Korean visitors. For example, tour guide training programs could focus on basic Korean language competencies (including familiarity with the polite form of address when conversing with elders or with those who are more senior in the social hierarchy), essential mannerisms (e.g., bowing when greeting), potential grounds for culture shock, and the limited access in hotels to Korean food, particularly at breakfast time (Lee & Tideswell, 2005). Improved knowledge of these dimensions among tour guides could help to reduce the widespread fear of unfamiliarity among Korean tourists in Australia. It may be helpful to offer incentives, such as higher salaries or bonuses, to tour guides who have enhanced their skills by acquired relevant competencies in the areas of culturally sensitive communication.

One notable finding is the significant discordance between reality and perception among the travelers studied. For instance, a significant proportion of the respondents believe that they would face a coup d'état during their travels in Australia, whereas there has been no instance of such an occurrence in the history of the country. It appears that such perceptions may have arisen because of

the prevalence of such incidents within the wider Asia-Pacific region and Australia's geographical proximity to Asia. Any strategies and policies articulated to address such misconceptions would benefit from an emphasis on the fundamental differences between Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. It was also notable that neither group perceived Australia as risky in terms of terrorism, health epidemics, or natural disasters. It may be the case that respondents grouped Australia along with other developed countries where the cited risks are also perceived as low, although it was notable that the Fukushima tsunami and subsequent nuclear disaster occurred in Japan, another developed country, albeit in Asia.

Limitations and Opportunities for Further Research

A number of limitations have been evident in this study. First, because the validity of the findings is confined to inbound tourists from Korea, it is evident that visitors from other Australian inbound markets have not been considered. On this basis, the results cannot be generalized to the whole tourist population. Second, although eight risk factors were considered, other possibilities were excluded including food, credit card fraud, and pollution. Third, the various risk factors considered in this article may be viewed as uncontrollable occurrences affecting daily life and do not necessarily consider personal or family circumstances impacting on respondents. Such psychological and sociopsychological dimensions could affect attitudes to travel-related risks that may have lesser or greater relevance to particular destinations (Truong & King, 2010). A number of enhancements could prospectively improve the validity of future studies. First, it is noteworthy that in this case the survey data have been gathered using convenience sampling. Although this should not be viewed as a major limitation and has certain advantages in view of the substantial sample size and more modest resources required, a random sample may be more statistically valid for the conduct of equivalent quantitative research. Second, given that perceptions of risk are likely to vary on the basis of country of residence and that the current study was confined to Korean

tourists, it may have limited application to international travelers generally. Finally, the number of risk factors that has been examined is relatively small compared with the many areas of risk prospectively related to travel decision making. For example, the research has not encompassed factors such as global warming, the global financial crisis, nuclear threats, or online credit card fraud. The present study is intended to provide a reliable measure of catastrophic and contextual risk factors and should over time lead to stronger identification of risk perceptions and its impact on travel choices, in general. The research questions raised in this study should be usefully applicable in other contexts, drawing upon samples from other parts of the world, thereby strengthening external validity. The following issues for scholarly endeavor and practical application are also noted.

1. The focus of the present study on tourists emanating from a single country, namely Korea, could benefit from replication with tourists emanating from other source markets. Such extensions could investigate the impact of country of residence on risk perceptions and could generate findings that have wider applicability.
2. The study could be replicated with a sample of tourists to Australia from other substantial origin markets such as the UK, US, and China. This approach could provide a basis for greater customization of strategies and policies by the destination authorities to build confidence that the destination is safe among both visitors and tourism operators (Tourism Research Australia, 2011, p. 23).

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