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# PERCEPTION OF RISK AS A BARRIER IN TOURIST DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT. A KEY STUDY FROM COLOMBIA

Percepce nebezpečí jako bariéra rozvoje turistické destinace. Případová studie Kolumbie

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#### Annotation

The goal of research is to identify the perception of the safety of a tourist destination on the basis of a simple and generally applicable method and then verify it on the example of the perception of the safety of the Colombia. To assess the perception of security situation of Colombia as a tourist destination, the DELPHI method of joint expert estimates was selected from the methods used for risk analysis, complemented with specific territorial and destination security features. Potential tourists have been assigned to the role of experts. For the data collection, a separate questionnaire was developed with the selection of standardized threats processed. The research realized in 2018 year was based on 200 respondents. From our research it's clear, that there is a quite considerable difference in a perception of Colombia as a tourist destination from the real state of the situation in this country. Potential visitors perceive high rate of a risk in five segments, and three of them belong to the military threads and to the safety threads (street criminality - 90%, activities of a mafia and/or organised crime - 82%, and social conflicts, protests, demonstrations - 78%). Remaining two threads are connected to a tectonic activity, for example an earthquake or landslides. But analysis of the real safety situation in the country doesn't confirm this assumption. In general we can say, that the media image of the country doesn't help its development of tourism. People are afraid to go there, even though, in comparison with previous years, the situation is significantly better and it continues to improve.

## Key words

safety, risk, tourism, travel safety, Colombia

#### Anotace

Cílem práce je najít jednoduchou a obecně použitelnou metodu, jak identifikovat percepci bezpečnosti dané turistické destinace a ověřit ji na příkladu Kolumbie. Pro hodnocení percepce bezpečnostní situace Kolumbie jako turistické destinace byla z metod užívaných pro analýzu rizik zvolena metoda společných expertních odhadů DELPHI, doplněná o specifické prvky územní a destinační bezpečnosti. Do role expertů byli dosazeni potenciální turisté. Pro vlastní sběr dat byl vyvinut samostatný dotazník s výběrem standardizovaných hrozeb. Výzkum proběhl v roce 2018 a byl založen na vzorku 200 respondentů. Z provedeného zkoumání vyplývá, že existuje poměrně značný rozdíl v percepci Kolumbie jako turistické destinace od skutečného stavu situace v zemi. Potenciální návštěvníci vnímají vysokou míru rizika v pěti segmentech, přičemž tři z nich patří do segmentu vojenských a bezpečnostních hrozeb (pouliční kriminalita – 90%, činnost různých mafií a/nebo organizovaného zločinu – 82%, a sociální konflikty, protesty, demonstrace – 78%). Zbylé dvě hrozby jsou spojené s tektonickou činností, jako je zemětřesení a sesuvy půdy. Analýza skutečné bezpečnostní situace zemi, ale tento předpoklad nepotvrzuje. Obecně lze zhodnotit, že mediální obraz země rozvoji jejího turistického ruchu neprospívá. Lidé se do země bojí jezdit, přestože se situace oproti letům předchozím výrazně zlepšila a nadále zlepšuje.

#### Klíčová slova

bezpečnost, riziko, cestovní ruch, bezpečnost cestování, Kolumbie

#### JEL classification: Z32

## **1. Introduction**

In view of the relatively high performance of our economy, Czechs are, over time, becoming an important group of tourists discovering distant and exotic destinations. The decision which destination to visit or to avoid is always subject to a wide range of variables and the choice of a tourist destination is increasingly examined in relation to its safety situation. Non-professional and wider professional discussion linked to the safety of individual tourist destinations was triggered in the recent past by a number of factors, such as the growth of global terrorism (Liu and Pratt, 2017), the recent refugee crisis in Europe (Pappas and Papatheodorou, 2017), the impacts of climate change (Pondělíček, Touška, 2017), and others.

#### 1.1. Goals and methodology

Cui et al. (2016) draw attention to the fact that objective safety conditions in the destination and their perception by tourists, or potential tourists, are not always symmetrical. On the one hand, the level of risk in the "traditional" tourist destinations is underestimated, on the other hand, the "unconventional" destinations, or the generally unknown destinations, are perceived as more dangerous (entirely in the style of saying "what I don't know, I don't eat"). The question, therefore, is how to describe or measure the perception of the safety of a tourist destination. Karl and Schmude (2017) created an "overview" of factors that influence the selection of a tourist destination, among other things from a safety point of view; and Korstanje and George (2017) attempted to create a model to evaluate the perception of the safety of tourist destinations through arranged travel insurance. Since the accurate data on arranged travel insurance may not always be available and the insurance policy is influenced by many other factors, we have set as the goal of our research activity to identify the perception of the safety of a tourist destination on the basis of a simple and generally applicable method and then verify it on the example of the perception of the safety of tolorist (South America) as an up-and-coming tourist destination for Czech tourists, and compare the results with the actual situation in the given destination.

The Republic of Colombia was chosen for the research case study, as it is a newly opening and very interesting destination for Czech tourists. Colombia, as such, is generally unknown to Czechs and mostly not considered to be a common and available tourist destination. The reason was a long-standing conflict inside the country, bordering on civil war. In 2016, a ceasefire agreement was signed in Cuba, and a way to stabilize life in the country was opened - the FARC rebels were disarmed and left their bases.

The methodology chosen to prepare this article is based on the research and analysis of expert texts dealing with the research of the safety of tourist destinations, and in particular on the methods of risk analysis. In general, risk analysis is a method of analysing a situation or state through which the risks are recognised, identified and evaluated in a timely manner and information about them is communicated to the appropriate management level to make decisions on how to resolve (minimise) or eliminate the identified risks (Procházková, 2011). The risk analysis process is based on several follow-up steps. These steps are: risk identification, risk verification, analysis of the probability of risks, analysis of the undesirable impact of risk, determining the significance of the risk (Veličko, 2017). Procházková (2011) names 14 types of risk analysis from which the DELPHI method was chosen to solve the assigned task, which is a procedure for determining professional estimation of future development or state by a group of experts. In this case, as experts are used potential tourists - visitors to Colombia. Potential tourists are considered as the experts, because their decision and willingness to actually visit the country depends on their perception of the safety of the tourist destination, so they are taken as experts on their own - personal safety. The basis for the evaluation of the safety situation of a tourist destination is the set of threats, according to Antušák (2009). Antušák (2009) divides threads to asymmetric threads, factual threads and internal (subjective, domestic) threads. For this study and its needs we use only factual threads, because asymmetric threads as for

example global threads aren't relevant for our selected target, the same goes for internal threads, which we can't analyze in the given task. The chosen factual threads are complex of threads of natural, anthropogenic, social and sociable character, and out of those we identified an partially modified 36 topics - questions, that are describing a perception of a territorial/destination safety. The topics are about threads in these categories: naturogenic threats as extreme weather, tectonic activity and infections, anthropogenic as technogenic and ecological (environmental) threats and sociogenic as social, community and economical threats and military and security threats.

## 2. Risk Analysis Methods Usable for Territorial / Destination Safety Measurement

For example, Procházková (2011) defines safety as "a state of the human system or other entity in which the occurrence of damage to protected interests has an acceptable probability (it is almost definite that the damage will not occur). Safety depends on the processes, actions and phenomena that take place in human society, the environment, the planetary system, the galaxy, and other higher systems". The notion of security then relates to the notions of threat and risk, where the threat can be understood as any subject that can damage or destroy a particular protected value or interest of another subject with its actions. It can also be a phenomenon that is the direct cause of damage or destruction of a particular protected object or interest (Antušák 2009). The risk is then an abstract quantity that represents the possibility of an event with a result different from the intended goal, with a certain objective mathematical expectation or statistical probability. It is therefore quantification of uncertainty that we are talking about, the extent or weight of the threat (Antušák 2009). Káčer (2016) explains the notion of risk as the possibility that an event that is considered unwanted from a safety point of view is likely to occur. The degree of risk posed by the threat can be assessed on the basis of a risk analysis.

Risk analysis is then understood as a method, which can identify risks or threats and recognize them in time (Veličko, 2015). Procházková (2011) names 15 types of risk analysis, some of which were already verified for the territorial safety assessment (Vránová, 2016, Čonka, 2016, Tökölyová, 2017, etc.). From the results so far, it is clear that for the needs of the analysis of the destination safety assessment, the level A analysis is sufficient, i.e. a preliminary risk (threat) analysis. In this category, the Delphi method - DELPHI, appears to be optimal. This method is based on an expert estimate. The method is carried out by asking the approached experts to submit a list of relevant threats. In the DELPHI method, the direct expert contact is replaced with a sophisticated programme of gradual individual interviews, usually in the form of surveys (Procházková, 2011). For the purpose of the destination safety assessment, potential tourists were assigned to the roles of experts. Therefore, a separate questionnaire based on threat classification according to Antušák (2009) was developed for the actual data collection. Relevant threats were selected for destination safety assessment and a questionnaire was created for the actual research. For the evaluation, a four-point scale was chosen to "force" the evaluator to side with one side or the other to avoid the generally known "centre" effect of evaluation. The completeness and clarity of the above mentioned questionnaire was verified in a pilot in October 2017 by a group of about 30 students of the Master's Degree Programme at AMBIS College. The students evaluated various destinations (Czech, foreign and exotic according to their main holiday). On the basis of this verification, the questionnaire was slightly modified to the final form (more in Šilhánková et al., 2018).

#### **3. Determining Destination Safety Perception of Colombia**

The actual survey of destination safety perception of Colombia began with a pilot phase in January 2018, involving 37 respondents, and more than 200 questionnaires were subsequently collected during spring 2018. Respondents were young and middle-aged people (approx. 20-50 years old), middle and higher-earners who have not visited Colombia so far, but under certain circumstances would be willing to consider visiting the destination.

The overall results of destination safety perception of Colombia were summarized and evaluated in three ways. From the answers to the individual types of threats mentioned in the answers – the median, average and frequency of answers were calculated. The results obtained showed that median assessment is not suitable for this type of task and therefore wasn't further implemented. There is not enough space in this article to describe the evaluation using the average, but it can be said to have very similar results to an assessments method based on the frequency of responses described below. The following table lists the results and the threat perception level determined which is calculated as the ratio of positive responses to the total number of responses. Individual threats are then divided into four bands, namely 0-25% - very low risk level perception (dark green), 26-50% - low risk level perception (light green), 51-75% increased risk level perception (orange) and 76-100% - high risk level perception(red).

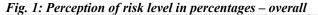
<i>Tab. 1: Evaluation of the relevance of the threat accordi</i> Threat type	The frequency of individual responses in percentages				Risk level
	Yes very much	Likely yes	Likely no	Definitely not	perception
Naturogenie					
Extreme w		52	22		(7
Is there a danger of flooding? Is there a danger of fires due to natural influences?	12 14	53 60	32 25	3	65
Is there a danger of storms, hurricanes, wind gusts, torrential rain,					74
and hail?	18	50	29	3	68
Is there a danger of snow calamities, icy conditions, ice barriers?	2	5	29	64	7
Is there a danger of a long-lasting drought?	17	51	26	6	68
Is there a danger of an extreme heat and the formation of thermal islands?	18	55	25	2	73
Tectonic a	ctivity				
Is there a danger of an earthquake?	20	59	19	2	<b>79</b>
Is there a danger of landslides?	20	60	19	1	80
Is there a danger of a volcanic eruption?	8	34	49	10	41
Infecti Is there a danger of an epidemic?	ons 25	48	25	2	73
Anthropogen			20		15
Technog					
Is the traffic situation unstable, chaotic and dangerous? (Transport infrastructure, traffic intensity, traffic accident risk)	21	50	26	2	71
Is the power network unstable? (Depending on the frequency of outages.)	13	55	28	3	69
Is the supply of gas and heat unstable? (Depending on the frequency of outages.)	7	44	43	6	51
Is the telecommunication network (telephone, internet) unstable? (Depending on the frequency of outages.)	8	49	37	6	57
is there a danger of building destruction (construction resources are in poor condition)?	13	52	30	4	65
Is there a danger of a lack of drinking water? Or does a lack of drinking water exist already?	14	46	32	7	60
Are drinking water supplies unstable? (Depending on the frequency of outages.)	11	45	38	6	56
Ecological (env	ironmenta	al)		1	
Is the air quality poor? (Are large amounts of harmful substances emitted into the atmosphere?)	8	34	48	10	43
Is the quality of drinking water poor? (e.g. tap water cannot be drunk)	17	55	25	3	72
Is the disposal of municipal waste and cleanliness poor (is there dirt)?	32	44	22	2	75
Sociog	enic				
Is the sanitary situation in accommodation facilities poor (dirt, insects, etc.)?	15	49	33	4	64
Is it a problem to find accommodation? (The method of booking is unclear and confusing; the price does not match the quality.)	8	35	43	13	43
Is the cleanliness in the catering facilities poor (dirt, insects, etc.)?	12	47	37	4	59
Social, community and		al threats			
Military and	security			,	
Are the security forces that ensure freedom of citizens, civic and human rights themselves a security risk?	14	35	43	8	49
Are there social conflicts, protests, demonstrations?	31	47	20	2	78
Are there any mass street unrests, looting?	22	52	25	1	74
Is the activity of various mafias and / or organized crime apparent?	47	35	15	2	82
Is there an ethnic, religious and cultural tension between different social groups?	13	51	30	5	65
Is there a risk of a terrorist attack?	11	30	46	13	41
Is there a danger of street crime (theft, attack)?	48	43	8	1	90
Is there a large and harassing presence of sociopaths (beggars, etc.)? Source: own preparation based on Antušák (2009)	23	47	27	2	70

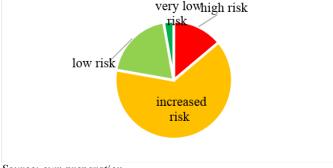
#### Tab. 1: Evaluation of the relevance of the threat according to the frequency of responses

Source: own preparation based on Antušák (2009)

The table above also shows that during the evaluation of the risk perception of the 36 evaluated items, 5 items are perceived as high risk and 23 are evaluated with an increased perception of risk involved. Percentages are shown in the following figure.

In general, it can be stated that the Republic of Colombia is perceived as an increased risk destination. The respondents consider it safe only in the segment – a danger of snow calamities, icy conditions, and the formation of ice barriers; which, of course, is understandable in view of its location near the equator. More important, however, is the evaluation on the other side of the spectrum, namely the high risk level perception, where three of the five perceived threats belong to the segment of military and security threats (street crime - 90%, mafia and / or organized crime - 82%, and social conflicts protests and demonstrations - 78%). The remaining two threats are associated with tectonic activity such as earthquakes and landslides.





Source: own preparation

#### 4. Risk Level Perception of Colombia with Destination's Reality

Jaime (2017) specifies that Colombia becomes little by little one of the most important South American tourist destinations thanks to its natural beauty: cultural variety, beaches, landscapes, music, hospitality and other factors that travellers emphasise. It is a strategic country within the hemisphere due to its geographical position; it has had access to the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean allowing the world to interconnect, having the closeness to Central America and the United States through the Panama Canal. It is relevant, it is pertinent to recognise the essential aspects of the country, such as the Happy Planet Index, highlights Colombia as the second happiest country in the world. Conditional reference for travellers who see specific scenario of its people and environment in this country. However, to consolidate itself as a better option, there is still a way to go, especially when news from the Colombian media centres on an apology to drug trafficking, crime and violence, generating an imaginary in foreigners even worse than it is. Carreón and García (2015). The obsessive disclosure of violent events, without context, only with the desire to perform and seek the audience, does not favour objective information and generates a wrong perception of society. Not for that reason, the reality ceases to be worrisome; there are risks that the tourist considers when making decisions and that turn out to be a challenge to be overcome by the country. The most relevant ones are highlighted:

#### 4.1. Homicide

The report on the evaluation of homicidal violence in Colombia by the National Police (2018) notes that the number of deaths associated with the armed confrontation went from 1,710 combatants in 2007 to 440 in 2016, contributing to the reduction of the national homicide rate. In this aspect, the peace process with the FARC has been decisive. Regarding Colombian cities, from a historical perspective, there are notable decreases in this item.

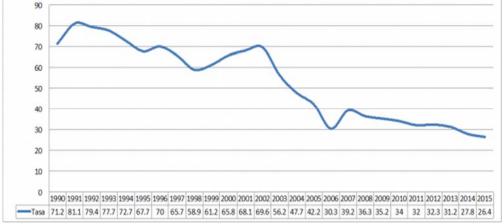


Fig. 2: Homicide rate per one hundred thousand inhabitants between 1990 and 2015

Source: National Police of Colombia. Prepared by the FIP

Cali went from a rate of 100 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2010 to 53.8 in 2016; Medellín went from 152 to 21.6 in the same period and Bogotá from 35.9 to 16. However, in the list of cities that concentrate the largest population, there is still a substantial number that exceeds 20 homicides per 100,000. In this group are Barranquilla (31.9), Cúcuta (40.2), Cartagena (23.8), Pereira (30.7), Villavicencio (27.5) and Montería (21.9). To have a reference, you can take the capitals in Latin America: Quito has a rate of 4.12, Lima of 6, Mexico City of 10.7 and São Paulo of 5.5. If one looks at the trend since 1990, the result of the decrease in homicides in Colombia is even more satisfactory.

#### 4.2. Thefts and kidnappings

According to the observatory of the crime of the DIJIN, the National Police in general, thefts went from 99,647 cases in 2008 to 127,118 in 2017 (27.6% increase).

#### 4.3. Drug traffic

One of the most complex crimes in Colombia is drug trafficking, which causes stigmatisation that exists in many parts of the world. In this direction, efforts have been made that have fluctuating results between effectiveness and little impact. The seizures, for example, are mainly on the rise of coca shipments, marijuana and the inputs used for drug processing; during manual eradication under its effectiveness, as well as the seizure of heroin.

Type of drug	2009	2017
Coca - manual eradication (has)	60.557	52.001
Coca - seizure -t (tons)	203.1	435.4
Heroin – confiscation -t	737	444
Marijuana - seizure - t	210.4	235.2
Immobilization of solid inputs - t	19.890	36.090
Confiscation of drug trafficking vessels	459	234

## Tab. 2: Drug traffic

Source: National Police of Colombia. Prepared by the FIP.

However, according to Ideapaz, it is striking that the lethal violence in the municipalities with coca crops has become less intense. That is, the increase in coca crops does not represent an increase in violent deaths, as you might think. In fact, the rate went from 74.6 per 100 thousand inhabitants in 2006 to one of 36.4 in 2016 (decrease of 51%) This trend could be explained by the peace process with the FARC.

#### 4.4. Manifestations and Social Protest in Colombia

Colombia has a tradition of social protest in reference to the search for the implementation of the protection of human rights. In recent years there has been an unprecedented increase in social protest in Colombia, led by peasants, workers, students and citizens who claim peace and support the process of negotiations with groups outside the law. Part of what is established in the Peace Agreement establishes that there must be guarantees for peaceful protest and mobilization. The protest has two dynamics that mainly take place in the opposition and

resistance of different social actors against government policies. As a result of them, organizations were created, networks of social relations, and social fabric that consolidated the basis of peaceful protests and claims.

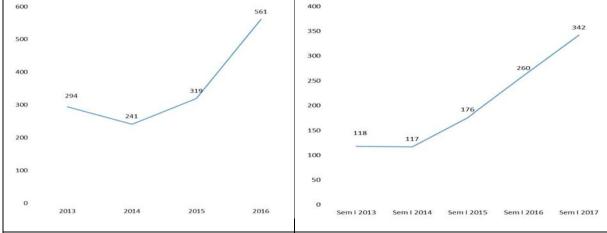


Fig. 3: Mobilizations in Colombia, 2013-2016 and sem I 2013 - sem I 2017

Source: FIP 2017

In a timeline the social protests have marked benefits for the population in Colombia as it is:

<u>Educators</u>: Since 2014 almost once a year, teachers stopped activities to demand three things: guarantees in teacher evaluation, salary leveling and improvement in the health system.

<u>In the Pacific</u>: 2017 was a critical year in which the inhabitants of the Pacific protested the state's insecurity and neglect. The first strike was made in May in Chocó because the population claimed, among other things, the recovery of the Quibdó-Pereira and Quibdó-Medellín roads. At the beginning of 2018, the Invías, began working on roads that already have close to 500,000 million pesos allocated.

So far, the Ombudsman's Office has learned about 283 protests, 70 of which resulted in sit-ins and rallies, 69 in marches and demonstrations, 50 in blocks to mobility and 38 in situations of cessation of activities. (FIP 2017)

The most mobilised actors in the last four years were the communities, the peasants, the students, the workers and the transporters, who participated in 73% of the registered mobilisations. The first semester of 2017 was highlighted by the growing participation of educators, which had increased by 17 percentage points.

#### 4.5. Disaster risk management

Risk management focuses on preparing the response to emergencies, post-disaster recovery and the execution of such intervention and recovery. Now, according to the IDEAM, specifying the risks involved in climatic anomalies, particularly in the Andean region and given the drought, the increase in insolation and high temperatures cause fires of vegetation cover, becoming a determining factor in environmental transformation. Its effects extend to the air, soil, water, living beings, infrastructure and others. The fires, at least in Colombia, have an anthropic origin and according to figures from the National Prevention Protocol, Control of forest fires and restoration of affected areas (PNPCIFRA) MAVDT, amounts to 95% of the total reported events. For its part, the IDEAM provides inputs for inter-institutional management through the generation of establishing the zoning of the fire risk as a frame of reference.

On the other hand, concerning the ATD (Early Warning of Deforestation) in the DANE report, IDEAM, Amazon Vision made in 2017, establishes that 12 of the 24 ATD nuclei are located in the Amazon region, which doubled the deforested area to 2016, increasing by 74,073 ha. That is, 65.5% of deforestation occurred in this region. In only seven municipalities in this region, almost half of the country's forest loss is concentrated (49.1%).

The Andean region is the second with the largest deforested area but decreased by 8,861 hectares, as well as that of the Pacific region, which decreased by 15,535 ha (it accounts for 6.1% of the total deforested area in 2017). A decrease is also detected in the Caribbean region (8,854 ha), which accounts for 7.1% of the entire area. In contrast, the Orinoquía, which concentrated 4.5%, increased its deforestation by 555 ha. From elsewhere, the report states that 10% of the deforestation was presented in indigenous reserves.

## **5.** Conclusions

From our research it is clear, that there exists quite considerable difference of the perception of the safety of Colombia as a tourist destination from the real state of the situation in the country. Potential visitors perceive high rate of a risk in five segments, and three of them belong to the segment of military and safety threads (street crime as theft, attack - 90%, activity of various mafias and / or organized crime - 82%, and social conflicts, protests, demonstrations -78%). The two remaining threads are connected to a tectonic activity, such as an earthquake and landslides. Analysis of the real safety situation of the country doesn't confirm this assumption (National Police of Colombia). In general we can validate, that the media image of the country doesn't help its tourism. People are afraid to go there, even though the situation is better, in comparison with previous years, and it still improves (Fernandes-Osorio et al., 2019). The homicides and kidnappings have decreased significantly in Colombia, giving rise to other crimes such as theft, a situation that is already widely recognised and is being addressed by the authorities through strategies to strengthen the authorities. The drug trafficking is another scourge that has been effectively combated. However, the criminal structures remain very strong, it is vital that the authorities consolidate the purpose of ending them with new impact exercises, a situation foreseeable by the decrease in crime. The increase in theft is a phenomenon that must be addressed urgently. In this sense, it can be thought that the significant reduction in the majority of crimes related to armed groups gives the state the possibility of concentrating on the other phenomena that have arisen, in particular, in large cities.

Work on the project shows that destination safety issues are at the forefront of interest of the professional public as well as the competent authorities and interested professional groups in the field of tourism. However, the destination safety assessment tools are only in their infancy. Some of them are difficult to access for regular evaluation (e.g. a method of assessing arranged travel insurance) or are too complex. In addition, however, there are common methods of general risk analysis that can be relatively easily adapted to destination safety analyses. For the preliminary assessment (of a large territorial unit), the chosen DELPHI method proved to be very suitable for its simplicity and broad comprehensibility. The assessment itself showed that the fear of the "centre" evaluation was justified, because extreme evaluation values were rather rare.

For the destination safety assessment in individual sub-localities, it would be advisable to elaborate detailed analyses of risks, or their perceptions (up to category C - see Procházková, 2011) e.g. by the method of expert estimates (see Čonka, 2016) or the semi-quantitative method "PNH" (Ryšavý, 2018). We anticipate that our further research will proceed in this direction.

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