SENSATION SEEKERS, RISK-TAKERS & DARK HERITAGE TOURISTS: ARE WE HERE FOR PAIN OR PLEASURE?

Prof. Emeritus Arie Reichel
Are sensation seekers = risk takers?

Do tourists avoid risk, or are they attracted to it?

What are the risks involved in tourism?

Terror risks:
The case of the Sinai vs. Bil’in
Dead Sea health tourists vs. Scuba divers

who looks for negative feelings in heritage sites?
In 2001, Sensation Seekers tourists:


Zuckerman conceptualization (1994), a personal trait.

**Scored H** on Zuckerman SSS = extreme sports, own travel arrangements.

**L scores**: cultural/heritage attractions, man-made attractions, view sporting games or travel with guided tour groups, packaged tours, family or friends.
Next, we expanded our research on sensation-seeking and added a measure of Risk Behavior.


Scores for the Zuckerman’s SSS and Jackson’s JPI-R were measured.

Correlation SSS and Jackson’s JPI-R was .56.

Eleven country comparative study: individuals and cultures.
Risk: “The possibility of experiencing a negative outcome”.

Sensation-seeking: a personality trait, a person’s desire for novelty and intensity of sensory stimulation.

The two can occur independent of each other.
FROM PERSONAL TO DESTINATION RISKS PERCEPTIONS

[Relying on earlier, now considered classical work, of Lepp and Gibson (2003); Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992); Sönmez and Graefe (1998a, 1998b and many others)]

Eight dimensions of destination risk perceptions:

- **Site-related Physical**
  (e.g. physical safety, crime and diseases)

- **Sociopsychological**
  (e.g. what friends and family think)

- **Physical harm**
  (e.g. natural disaster and terrorism)

- **Expectations**
  (e.g. wrong choice, waste of time)

- **Socio-political issues**
  (guests' hostility, political unrest)

- **Financial loses**

- **Masses**
  (commercialized, overcrowded)

- **Self-behavior**
  (side effects of drugs, negative impression on locals)

(Reichel, Fuchs & Uriely, a study on backpackers, JTR, 2007)
| Avoiding Politics - apparently, a must. Ex-territory | “making friends” - albeit instrumental or contrived | Stressing similarities | Distinguishing between “Good Guys” vs. “Bad Guys” |

Three deadly terror attacks shattered the bubble. (2004-2006): practices provisionally abandoned after terrorist attacks, to be gradually reinstated.
Enclave of very limited risk perceptions:

“financial”

“natural disaster and car accidents”

Rational decision makers?
Personal risk taking

Scuba divers: the thrill of risk or the search for tranquility. Fuchs, Reichel and Shani, (2016), Tourism Recreation Research.

Are they for risk, or risk is the by-product of pleasure?
THESE PRESUMED HIGH RISK TAKERS ACTUALLY:

Six major themes that emerged through the triangulation and content analyses:

- The search for tranquility
- Other motives for engaging in scuba diving
- Perceived risks
- Divers’ means for risk reduction
- The significant role of the diving partner - the ‘buddy’
- Patterns of over-confidence and risky behavior

The quest for the flow experience
(Feeling so engrossed in the experience, that other needs become negligible-Mihály Csíkszentmihályi)
Finally: Two examples of search for negative emotions

First, Oren, Shani & Poria (2021), as well as current work by Oren, Poria and Reichel, related to dark heritage tourism. Site studied: Auschwitz.


Conclusion: a suitable platform for the performance of political tourism
In sum:

- Risk is not always negative to the tourism experience
- Risk is often sought after
- Risk as a side effect to be controlled
- Risk is often manipulated in our mind to justify our decisions
- Risk is not necessarily irrational
THANK YOU!