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An exploratory inquiry into destination risk perceptions and risk reduction strategies of first time vs. repeat visitors to a highly volatile destination

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the relationships between first-time vs. repeat visitors to a highly volatile destination in terms of destination risk perceptions, risk reduction strategies and motivation for the visit. The exploratory research question centers on possible differences in tourist behavioral profiles associated with their decision to visit a foreign destination again. Set in Israel, a highly volatile tourist destination, researchers interviewed 760 international tourists using a questionnaire classifying them as either first-time or repeat visitors. Discriminant analysis revealed that first-time visitors were characterized by human-induced risk, socio-psychological risk, food safety and weather risk. In contrast, repeat visitors were associated with the destination risk factors of financial risk, service quality risk, natural disasters and car accidents. First-time vs. repeat visitors were also compared and contrasted in terms of risk reduction strategies such as consulting with people who had previously visited specific destinations and gathering information from travel agents. Differences between first-time and repeat visitors were also found regarding motivations for the visit. Similar analyses were conducted on the three sub-groups of repeat visitors, classified in terms of number of visits.

The various destination risk factors, risk reduction strategies and motivation within the different segments serve as a basis for recommending marketing strategies aimed at attracting potential tourists to highly volatile destinations.

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1. Introduction

The study of tourist destination risk perception has gained considerable visibility over the past decade. Clearly, the fragile geo-political situation in numerous parts of the world, the outbreak of potentially global epidemics, as well as the increase in political violence generate interest in this issue beyond the academic sphere. For some destinations, the issue of security and safety has become a major concern for policy makers and legislators as well as for marketing and businesspeople (Pizam & Mansfeld, 1996). These concerns are magnified in the case of destinations that are under perpetual threat and affected by geo-political unrest and acts of terror. For such volatile destinations, understanding tourists' risk perception might assist in the formulation of marketing strategies that will consider the various dimensions of risk perceptions and that will mitigate some of the psychological barriers to travel. Moreover, the study of risk perception is inadequate if it does not consider the motives for the visit to the particular destination, as well as the mechanism or "strategies" through which risk perceptions are minimized and mitigated. The most frequently studied situation is in which a consumer decides to purchase a ticket or a vacation package to a destination with a particular mix of risks. It is much more challenging, however, to examine the destination risk perception and risk reduction strategies and particular motives of tourists who choose to return to a risky destination. The study's main research question focuses on how destination risk perception, tourist risk reduction strategies and particular motivation for the visit, vary between first-time visitors and repeat visitors. This comparison between first-time and repeat visitors may add a particularly significant dimension when conducted in the context of "chronically" volatile destinations. Thus, the purpose of this exploratory study is to compare first-time visitors and repeat visitors in a highly volatile environment in terms of destination risk perception, risk reduction strategies and motives for visiting that particular destination. Specifically, first-time visitors to Israel will be compared to repeat visitors in terms of their destination risk perception, risk reduction strategies as well as motives for their visit. Utilizing a sample of 760 visitors to Israel, the expected

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differences between first-time and repeat visitors will be identified mainly by applying discriminant analysis. Identification of a particular profile of each sub-segment will increase our understanding of tourist behavior as well as enable conclusions and recommendations from destination marketing and management perspectives.

2. Literature review

For over four decades consumer behavior literature has been dealing with the theory of perceived risk. The theory assumes that consumers perceive risk in their purchasing behavior and usually act to reduce it. According to Mitchell (1999), the perceived risk concept has experienced a maturation process and established a tradition of research unparalleled in consumer behavior research. Mitchell (1999) notes that perceived risk continues to receive attention from both practitioners and academics, and has been applied in a wide range of areas, including intercultural comparisons, food technology, dental services, banking and apparel catalogue shopping. He also noted that a universally-agreed upon theoretical or operational definition still eludes marketing academics. For the purpose of the current study, perceived risk is defined as "a consumer's perception of the overall negativity of a course of action based upon an assessment of the possible negative outcomes and the likelihood that those outcomes will occur" (Mowen & Minor, 1998, p. 176).

According to consumer behavior literature (Assael, 1995; Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995; Mowen & Minor, 1998; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007), consumer perceived risk is composed of a number of types of risks: physical – the risk of physical harm to the consumer as a result of product malfunction; financial – the risk that the investment in the product will be lost; performance – the risk identified with the possibility that the product will not operate as expected, or will fail; social – the fear that the purchase will not conform to the standards of the reference group; psychological – the fear that the product will not suit the consumer's self-image; time – the possibility that product consumption will be excessively time consuming; and opportunity loss – the risk that by taking a course of action, the consumer will miss out on alternative preferred activities. Yeung and Morris (2006) examine the link between perceived risk characteristics and risk perception, and show that the latter appears to influence purchase behavior in the food industry. Risk perception is defined in terms of concerns about potential consequences, long-term adverse impacts and the involuntariness of exposure. Risk perception is measured by health, money, time and lifestyle.

As soon as the consumer has experienced a certain level of risk, his/her behavior changes from delaying the purchase to using strategies designed to reduce risk to a "tolerable" level. For example, developing brand loyalty, searching for information, purchasing a popular brand, and purchasing expensive or inexpensive brands (Assael, 1995; Mowen & Minor, 1998; Roselius, 1971; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). These strategies may boost confidence in the results of the purchase and reduce the severity of the results in case of failure. It should be noted that perceived risk influences the consumer even if, in fact, it does not exist in reality. In contrast, an unperceived risk will not affect consumer behavior, even if it is real and tangible.

Consumer perceived risk varies according to cultural background. For example, Verhage, Yava, and Green (1990) studied perceived risk and brand loyalty by comparing and contrasting Dutch, Saudi, Thai and Turkish consumers. Their results indicate that perceived risk can be used to analyze consumer behavior patterns in different cultures. The findings also suggest that the risk reduction strategy of brand loyalty may not be widely employed outside of the United States. The issue of perceived risk and differences along cultural dimensions will be elaborated on further when dealing with studies on tourism related perceived risk.

2.1. Tourist perceived risk

As service industry segment, tourism is characterized with service-specific characteristics such as intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability (Grönroos, 1990, 2007; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007; Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006). Moreover, the tourism "product" is exposed to specific factors such as bad weather, unfriendly locals, striking airport personnel, inedibility of local food, terror, crime, political unrest, disease and natural disasters. These factors often raise the tourist's level of perceived risk (Pizam & Mansfeld, 1996; Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992; Sönmez, 1998, Sönmez & Graefe, 1998a; Tsaur, Tzeng, & Wang, 1997; Witt & Moutinho, 1995).

Despite its importance, the concept of perceived risk has only recently received attention in tourism literature. Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992) pioneered the stream of research on the concept of risk perception in tourism. Utilizing factor analysis, they identified three basic dimensions of perceived risk: physical-equipment risk, vacation risk and destination risk. Tsaur et al. (1997) used an Analytic Hierarchy Process method in their study to determine the weight structure of "objectives" and "attributes" risk evaluation criteria (i.e. the relative importance of each perceived risk dimension or specific sub-items). Their study was intended to cover two main types of risk: physical risk, referring to the possibility that an individual's health is at risk, injury and sickness because of conditions such as law and order, weather and hygiene problems, and equipment risk, referring to the dangers arising from the malfunctioning of equipment, such as unsafe transportation. Tsaur et al. (1997) found that the importance of the aspects of tourist risk varies. For example, they found that law and order was the most important aspect of tourist risk. Mitchell and Vassos (1997) and Mitchell, Davies, Moutinho, and Vassos (1999) identified a list of 43 risk factors of a holiday package, which ranged from serious occurrences such as natural disasters to trivial matters such as when a tour representative did not join in activities. They found that the most important risk factor was "Your hotel may not be as nice as it appears in the brochures" and the least important was "Your representative guide will not participate in activities such as windsurfing or scuba diving". While the above factors are related to a possible vacation scenario, Fuchs and Reichel (2006a) investigated destination risk perception among foreign tourists visiting Israel. They identified six destination risk perception factors: human-induced risk; financial; service quality; social–psychological; natural disasters and car accidents; and food safety problems and weather. Moreira (2007) studies stealth and catastrophic risks to the development of tourism destinations. Stealth risks involve the gradual degradation of neutral or positive present conditions diffused over time like air quality. In contrast, catastrophic risks involve the possibility of sudden negative impacts on present reality by serious accidents or natural disasters such as earthquakes and typhoons. The findings indicate that stealth risks are considered more significant than catastrophic risks by residents and tourists alike.

Mäser and Weiermair (1998) studied types of risk that were associated with travel-related diseases, crime, natural disasters, accidents, hygiene, danger stemming from different means of transportation, culture/language barriers and uncertainty with destination-specific regulation and laws. One study finding indicated that perceived risk could be partially used as an explanatory variable, illuminating tourists' decision-making processes: the higher the perceived risk, the more information tourists seem to

seek and the more rational the decision process. Dolnicar (2005) examined various risks or "fears" in terms of both domestic and international markets. In her pilot study, she identified the following risk perception categories: political risk, including terrorism and political instability; environmental risk including natural disasters and landslides; health risk including lack of access to healthcare and life-threatening diseases; planning risk including unreliable airlines and inexperienced operators; and property risk including theft and loss of luggage. In a recent study, Law (2006) examined the probability of occurrence, magnitude of threat and efficacy of official media on infectious disease, terrorist attacks and natural disasters. Empirical findings revealed that travelers had low perceived values for the probability of occurrence of the three types of risks. "In other words, travelers expected that their travel destinations would not have these risks" (p. 293).

While the aforementioned perceived risk dimensions primarily refer to destinations, whether domestic or foreign, a recent study by Boksberger, Bieger, and Laesser (2007) examined risk perception in commercial air travel. They identified six specific perceived risk dimensions in air travel. Financial risk represents the perceived likelihood of not receiving the best value for money due to overpriced tickets and/or service replacements. In general, this financial risk refers to a purchased service not being worth the paid compensation. Functional risk is the perceived likelihood of a service failure and/or inferior service quality, implying that a passenger will not obtain the best possible benefit or utility. Physical risk is the probability that, due to a service failure, the physical and environmental circumstances of flying (reduced oxygen pressure and air humidity), the passenger may be injured or harmed. Psychological risk is the likelihood of embarrassment or the loss of self-esteem resulting from the flying experience. It is also the risk of a negative effect on the passenger's peace of mind or self-perception among airline passengers. Social risk is the probability that the chosen airline's image or reputation adversely affects the way others think about the passenger. Temporal risk represents the amount of time lost due to a service failure and/or the extra effort exerted getting the failure adjusted, repaired or replaced. In other words, the likelihood of time loss during check-in, inconvenient schedule, delays, etc. (Boksberger et al., 2007, p. 93).

Perceived risk has also been studied among distinct market segments of tourists. For example, Hunter-Jones, Jeffs, and Smith (2007) focused on the growing youth tourism market, backpackers in particular, by studying attitudes toward risk and possible responses to a crisis. Utilizing a qualitative approach, they found, for example, war and political instability as the most influential risks to pre-travel decisions, while overall terrorism was identified as the least significant risk. Also focusing on backpackers, Reichel, Fuchs, and Uriely (2007) revealed that perceived risk of backpackers' experience is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which varies according to individual's characteristics such as gender, past backpacking experience and preference for fellow travelers.

Referring to international travel, Sönmez and Graefe (1998a, 1998b) measured risk perception of various tourist destinations with four subscales. The risk types were financial, functional/equipment, physical, psychological, social, satisfaction, time, health, political instability and terrorism. One of their important research findings was that risk perception level directly influenced international vacation destination choice. The higher the perceived risk relating to the destination, the higher the likelihood of the consumer's decision to avoid visiting the foreign destination. Similar patterns were reported by Kozak, Crotts, and Law (2007), who found that the majority of travelers are likely to change their travel plans regarding a destination that has elevated risk. Kozak et al. (2007) also observed differences from one continent to another in terms of the influence of perceived risks. They concluded that travelers from different national cultures may experience varying degrees of perceived risk. Fuchs and Reichel (2004) found significant differences in the overall risk perception of a given tourist destination and a variety of risk perception dimensions among tourists of diverse nationalities. They also captured religious affiliation as associated with varying degrees of destination risk perceptions. Dolnicar (2005) found distinctly different patterns of perceived risks emerging for different destination contexts as well as sub-segments of tourists. Similarly, a paper by Reisinger and Mavondo (2006) explores differences in perceptions of international tourists about travel risk and safety, anxiety and intentions to travel. They found significant differences in perceptions of travel risk and safety, anxiety and travel intentions among tourists from different countries. Tourists from the United States, Hong Kong and Australia perceived more travel risk, felt less safe, were more anxious and reluctant to travel than tourists from the United Kingdom, Canada and Greece. In another study (2005), Reisinger and Mavondo utilized path analysis and showed travel risk perception as a function of cultural orientation and psychographic factors. Terrorism and socio-cultural risk emerged as the most significant predictors of travel anxiety. They also found that intentions to travel internationally were determined by travel anxiety levels and level of perceived safety. In essence, Reisinger and Mavondo (2005, 2006) developed an integrative theory of risk perceptions and anxiety as determinants of international travel intentions. Based on Gudykunst and Hammer's (1988) anxiety/risk-reduction management theory, when sojourners' anxiety and risk are high, they will likely perceive an environment as less safe and withdraw from it. On the other hand, when sojourners anxiety and risk are low, they will perceive the environment as safe and hence, their intentions to travel increase. The issue of anxiety has also been investigated by Mitchell et al. (1999) who noted the mediating role of anxiety on the relationship between consumers' risk and purchase intention of a package holiday. Also, travel anxiety is associated with the perception of safety and intentions to travel, and travel safety is associated with intentions to travel. Reisinger and Mavondo (2005, 2006) expanded the analysis on risk and anxiety by suggesting that in addition to the strong relationship between travel risk perceptions and travel anxiety, studies of travel decision making should include an analysis of cultural and psychographic factors, types of risk, anxiety, and perceived insecurity during traveling. Moreover, variables such as culture, personality, and motivation to travel have significant influence on perceptions of travel risk, anxiety, and safety.

In sum, there are numerous types of perceived risks associated with tourist destinations, air travel and decision-making processes of a destination choice. Several theories attempted to explore the direction of the relations between behavioral variables such as risk perception, anxiety, perception of safety and intentions to travel. Contextual variables such as culture, psychographics, personality and motivations were suggested as impacting risk perfections, anxiety and safety. Clearly, tourist perceived risk is akin to consumer perceived risk, hence the literature also relates to means adopted by consumers to alleviate the purchase risk perceptions.

2.2. Risk reduction

A common tenet in consumer behavior is the consumer's need to mitigate the risk and uncertainty involved in purchasing a product or service. According to Mitchell et al. (1999), consumers have an individual tolerance level to risk, which, if reached, will either result in abandonment of the purchasing process or the consumer's engaging in risk reduction. According to Mitchell et al. (1999), risk reduction, or "risk handling", is most often described as a process by which consumers seek to reduce the uncertainty or

consequences of an unsatisfactory decision. Mitchell et al. (1999) in their sophisticated neural network analysis indicated that uncertainty is usually reduced by obtaining additional information and by "the importance of a name that can be trusted" (p. 177). They also referred to the concept of "risk tolerance" not only as representing a level of risk the consumer cannot tolerate, but also representing the ability of the consumer to absorb the risks involved in the decision. In that sense, "risk tolerance" directly affects the risk threshold at which consumers begin to engage risk reduction strategies (p. 169).

The significant role of information as a means for risk reduction has been highlighted by several other scholars. For example, it has been found that consumers tend to look for information in order to reduce the risk involved in purchasing products (Byzalov & Shachar, 2004). The authors found that exposure to advertising increases consumers' tendency to purchase the promoted product, because the informative content of advertising resolves some of the uncertainty that "risk averse" consumers face and thus reduces the risk associated with the product. Shikhar, Sego, and Chanvarasuth (2003) study consumer perceived risk as a barrier to the adoption of new high-tech products. Constructing a theoretical framework, they illustrate how bundling a new high-tech product with an existing technology could help reduce the perceived risk consumers associated with the purchase of the new high-tech product. The authors argue that marketing new high-tech products in bundles is always likely to lower consumers' perceived risk as opposed to offering the same product in a stand-alone form. Among their findings, bundles with a credible brand name rather than a less credible brand name are more likely to lower consumers' perceived risk.

Tan (1999) studies Internet shopping risk reduction strategies. The results indicate reference group appeal as the most preferred risk reliever for Internet shopping, particularly product endorsements by expert users. In addition, the marketer's reputation, brand image, and specific warranty strategies are also effective risk relievers for potential Internet shoppers. Heiman, McWilliams, and Zilberman (2001) studied the interaction between two uncertainty or risk reduction mechanisms: money back guarantees and demonstrations. They found the two mechanisms as both complements and substitutes, identifying under which each will be used separately, together, or not at all.

As noted earlier, the concept of risk and risk reduction strategies in services has been widely investigated by Mitchell, Moutinho, and Lewis (2003). Risk in services is apparent, given their intangible nature and difficulties of standardization. In the context of a service organization, Mitchell et al. (2003) studied the purchase of high-value organizational professional services. Their costly, time consuming, high-profile and of undeterminable and variable quality service features increase the risk associated with their purchase. The study conducted by Mitchell et al. confirmed the positive relationship between risk perception and risk reduction strategy. For example, brand loyalty was found by Mitchell and Greatorex (1993) as the most useful risk reduction strategy for service purchases, with the exception of hotels. The least useful strategies were celebrity endorsement and a salesperson's advice. In addition, Mitchell (1993) surveyed factors that can influence the use of risk reduction strategies. He found age, socio-economic group, and education as factors with relatively consistent effects. For example, the search and processing of information decline with age. Also, higher educational levels lead to increasing levels of searching, but not in all product categories. Mitchell also argues that consumers with high self-confidence tend to use more risk reducers than those with low self-confidence, and high-risk perceivers tend to use more risk reduction strategies. Moreover, the type of risk – such as financial or time- seems to have an effect on the nature of the risk reduction means utilized. He also classified subjects into two types of risk reduction users: clarifiers and simplifiers.

In the context of tourism package purchases, Mitchell and Vassos (1997) found that the two most useful risk relieving strategies were reading independent travel reviews and purchasing some kind of travel insurance. Fuchs and Reichel (2006b) distinguished between the behaviors of group and FIT tourist segments in terms of risk perceptions and risk reduction strategies. According to their study, FIT travelers mainly used the risk reduction strategies of inexpensive trip choices, Internet information seeking, and preferences for short trips. In contrast, group travelers tended to acquire information about the destination through travel agents, the print and electronic media, and friends. In another study, Mitchell et al. (1999) focused on holiday purchasing and examined the usefulness of perceived risk theory in understanding how consumers reduce risks. Forty-three risky attributes and 15 risk reducers were identified, and a neural network analysis uncovered a relationship between risk and risk reduction which involved functional, financial and hotel-dominated risks, while the relationship between risk and purchase intention was mediated by trust in the tour operator and anxiety. Among the risk reduction strategies cited were reading independent travel reviews on the destination, purchasing travel insurance and personally visiting the tour operator or travel agent. According to Boshoff (2002), marketers in service industries like tourism can use several strategies to reduce risk perceptions and hence to directly or indirectly enhance the purchase intentions of prospective buyers. The risk strategies examined include providing potential buyers with general information about the service, providing potential buyers with price information and providing a service guarantee prior to actual purchase. According to Tideswell and Faulkner (1999), familiarity with a destination and information search behavior might also be linked to risk reduction.

Law (2006) suggested several risk reduction strategies for dealing with the aforementioned risks of pandemics, terrorist attacks and natural disasters. These include free insurance coverage, local government guarantees of tourists' personal safety, an increase of transparency of information related to risk incidents, and the introduction of surveillance or protection measures.

It is interesting to note that Hales and Shams (1991) found consumption behavior rather than search for information as a major means of risk reduction. Specifically, findings from a study of the holiday travel choices of 328 Gulf States Arab consumers indicated that consumption behavior, rather than information search and deliberation, may be the principal means adopted to reduce risk. Consumption behavior is explained by the concept of "cautious incremental consumption", which refers to the way in which the risks and benefits of novel and familiar experiential products are traded off incrementally over time through consumption behaviors. Consumption decision is also manifested in studies on long-haul travel by Lue, Crompton, and Stewart (1996), and Kim and Fesenmaier (1990). In essence, travelers to long-haul destinations reduce risk by forming a "portfolio" of secondary destinations (Tideswell & Faulkner, 1999). Multi-destination tourism appears to be a logical attempt by tourists to reduce the risk and uncertainty involved in long-haul travel, particularly in terms of travel time and cost involved.

In sum, consumer behavior literature as well as studies on travel decision making and behavior clearly indicate the need to alleviate travel and destination risks through a plethora of risk reduction strategies. The incidence of acts of terror, pandemics as well as more 'traditional' risk factors such as crime against tourists gives rise to questions about the possible association between particular risks and specific means of risk reduction as well as about the

association between different market segments and circumstances and tourists attitudes and behaviors in terms of destination risk perceptions and risk reduction strategies.

2.3. Repeat visit

According to Kerstetter and Cho (2004), repeat visits can be considered as past experience with the destination. Campo-Martinez, Garau-Vadell, and Martinez-Ruiz (2010) suggest that based on numerous studies the best prediction tool of future behavior is the frequency of past behavior. "This would be due to the fact that when a tourist has already visited a destination, their perception of risk declines and their costs to other destinations increase" (p. 3). As such, past experience is a significant factor in the tourist destination choice and tourist activities (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Juaneda, 1996; Kozak, 2001; Perdue, 1993; Petrick, Morais, & Norman, 2001; Reid & Reid, 1992; Ross, 1993; Snepenger, Meged, Snelling, & Worrall, 1990). Oppermann (1998) associated repeat visits with Butler's destination life cycle model. Furthermore, he suggested the law of repeat visitation that once a market has exceeded the 50% repeat visitor ratio, decline is imminent.

Understanding the different motivations and traveling group compositions of first-time and repeat visitors can provide valuable insights into the understanding of tourist behavior that will influence the positioning of a destination in the marketplace (Campo-Martinez et al., 2010; Lau & McKercher, 2004). Moreover, according to the tourism literature, a repeat visit is associated with destination-related issues and overall satisfaction with the destination. For example, according to Lehto, O'Leary, and Morrison (2004), experience and prior knowledge can partially offset consumer risk- and uncertainty-reduction needs. They quote Snepenger, Houser, and Snepenger (1990) who found that past experiences and the degree of novelty associated with a destination have an impact on the degree of travel information search. They conclude that the risk reduction literature seems to support the notion that repeaters' past experiences affect future choices and account for pre-trip behavior differences. Clearly, repeat visit is parallel to product familiarity. "Familiarity gives confidence and results in greater willingness to purchase the product again" (Lehto et al., 2004, p. 803). Repeat visit can also affect tourists' visitation pattern. For example, Lau and McKercher (2004) found that first-time visitors were motivated to visit Hong Kong to explore, while repeat visitors traveled to consume. First-time visitors intended to participate in a wide range of geographically dispersed activities, while repeat visitors planned to shop, dine and spend time with family and friends. Moreover, Baloglu (2001) found that first-timers tend to use commercial information sources such as brochures, advertisements and tour operators, while repeaters use both commercial and noncommercial sources such as articles/news, books/movies and reference groups.

According to Kerstetter and Cho (2004), repeat visit as a source of prior knowledge is comprised of three dimensions: familiarity, expertise and previous purchase or use of the product. Prior knowledge was also found to be inversely related to the use of the Internet. For example, individuals with greater levels of prior knowledge (past experience, familiarity/expertise) were less likely to use and place trust in the Internet. Kerstetter and Cho (2004) relate their finding to Perdue (2001), who identified that experienced consumers knowledgeable about destination attributes are more critical of website information. If this is the case, one would not expect such individuals to utilize the Internet as a source. The issue of repeat vs. first-time travelers' use of information was also investigated by Chen and Gursoy (2000), who studied first-time and repeat German, French, and British travelers' use of information sources. Their study indicated that significant differences existed in the utilization of external information sources between first-time and repeat travelers. They also found that regardless of the influence of previous travel experience, travel agencies were the most widely utilized external information source. In general, repeat German, British and French travelers were likely to utilize airlines and corporate travel departments relatively more than first-time travelers.

In sum, repeat visit, past experience and prior knowledge are related to tourist behavior in numerous ways, and are clearly related to information search. However, the nature of the link between repeat visit, its proxies and information search is yet to be fully understood. As noted earlier, the current study's research question focuses on possible different behavioral profiles of first-time vs. repeat segments of visitors to a highly volatile destination, in terms of destination risk perception, tourist risk reduction strategies and motivation for choosing that particular destination. No specific profiles or models for each segment can be predicted given the above literature review. Hence, the purpose of this exploratory study is to compare first-time visitors and repeat visitors in a highly volatile environment in terms of destination risk perception, risk reduction strategies and motives for visiting that particular destination. In addition, the current study attempts to further identify sub-segments of repeat visitors based on the number of visits and explore their association with tourist attitudes and behaviors toward risk related issues.

3. Methodology

The current study is based on data derived from Fuchs and Reichel (2004) utilizing a Tourist Destination Risk Perception Questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of five major components: a. questions regarding overall destination risk perception; b. questions measuring various types and dimensions of destination risk; c. risk reduction strategies; d. socio-demographic variables; and e. self-image as a risk-taker. The questionnaire was translated from English into French, German and Russian by professional translators and back translated into English and Hebrew to assure accuracy of meaning. The main field study population was international tourists who visited Israel, a country known for its long history of tourist crises (Mansfeld, 1999). 776 face-to-face interviews were conducted from August 17, 2000 through the end of September 2000. A total of 760 questionnaires were completed, 415 females (54.6%) and 345 males (45.5%). The ages ranged from 18 to 70+. The sample very closely represents the mix of tourists visiting Israel during the relevant years (Fuchs & Reichel, 2004). This accurate representation can be explained by the large sample size and by the diverse geographic data collection locations. In most cases, tourist consent to participate in the study was high (98%), except in the case of tourists from the former Soviet Union. It is assumed that the low response rate of the latter sub-segment is due to cultural biases. The high consent rate might have been due to the interviewing techniques used by qualified interviewers and by their approaching the tourists at a convenient time. According to Fuchs and Reichel (2006a) destination risk perceptions included dimensions such as "human-induced risk", "financial risk", "service quality risk", "socio-psychological risk", "natural disasters and car accident risk", and "food safety problems and weather". "Human-induced risk" includes items such as crime, terror and political unrest. "Financial risk" involves unexpected expenses and the impact of the trip on one's financial situation. "Service quality risk" consists of items such as strikes, unsatisfactory facilities and unfriendly hosts. "Socio-psychological risk" deals with self-image and reference group reactions. The two additional risk factors include natural disasters and car accidents, and food safety and weather. Risk reduction strategies include items such as collecting

information from travel agents, consulting with people who have previously visited the destination, and planning the vacation as relatively inexpensive. Cross-tabulations were utilized in order to examine the different visit motivations of first and repeat visitors. In order to reveal the destination risk perceptions and risk reduction strategies of first-time vs. repeat visitors, discriminant analyses were utilized. Furthermore, different sub-groups of repeat visitors were compared in terms of their perceived risks and risk reduction strategies by means by ANOVA, followed by post hoc Scheffe tests.

4. Results

The study's sample consisted of 760 foreign tourists visiting Israel. Within this sample, 439 tourists (57.8%) were first-time visitors, while for 321 (42.2%) it was a repeat visit. First-time visitors tend to participate in group travel, while most repeat visitors tend to prefer the FIT mode for travel. Of the 439 first-time visitors, 313 preferred organized group tours while only 126 traveled in FIT form. Conversely, out of 321 repeat visitors, 222 were FIT travelers, and only 99 preferred group travels. The tourists were asked about the primary motivation for their visit. As seen in Table 1, there are apparent relations between first visit tourists and the main motivations for the visit. Chi-square test indicated that the differences are statistically significant (see Table 1). First-time visitors more often mentioned religion (78.6%), sightseeing (74.5%) and culture (73.2%) as main motivations than their counterparts (21.4%, 25.5%, and 26.8%, respectively). In contrast, the repeat visitors tend to mention health (76.3%,), leisure (70.9%) and VFR (87.9%) motives more than first-time visitors (23.7%, 29.1%, and 12.1%, respectively).

To compare the profile of first-time visitors and repeat visitors in terms of various destination risk dimensions and risk reduction strategies, discriminant analyses were utilized. Table 2 depicts the results of the discriminant analysis, comparing first-time visitors and repeat visitors in terms of destination risk dimensions.

As demonstrated in Table 2, first-time visitors are associated with human-induced risk, socio-psychological risk, food safety and weather risk dimensions. Repeat visitors, in contrast, are associated with financial, service quality, natural disaster and car accident destination risk dimensions.

The classification results of the discriminant model indicated 66.8% correctly classified cases. The model Chi-square analysis was statistically significant with Wilkes Lambda of 0.85.

As mentioned earlier, the experience with the destination is assumed to be correlated to preferences for the use of specific risk reduction strategies. The risk reduction strategies include collecting information from travel agents, friends and relatives, the Internet, the electronic and print media, consulting with people who have previously visited the destination, and planning a brief and relatively inexpensive vacation. The results of the discriminant analysis of first-time visitors vs. repeat visitors in terms of risk reduction strategies are presented in Table 3.

As can be seen in Table 3, the first-time visitors segment is associated mainly with consulting with previous visitors to Israel, reading articles about Israel, referring to WTO, gathering information from travel agents, searching for information from friends and relatives, choosing a popular destination and watching television programs about Israel. In contrast, repeat visitors are associated mainly with making decisions in cooperation with relatives or friends and taking an inexpensive trip. The discriminant function classified 64.1% of the cases correctly.

The analysis' next step focuses on the differences between sub-groups of repeat visitors in terms of destination risk perceptions, risk reduction strategies and motives for visits. Specifically, the group of repeat visitors was divided into three sub-groups according to their "usage". Accordingly, the first category, "light repeat visitors", visited Israel once or twice in the past and consisted of 116 tourists (36.1% out of the repeated visitors). The second category, "medium repeat visitors", visited Israel between three to nine times and consisted of 114 tourists (35.5% of the repeat visitors). The third category "heavy repeat visitors" visited Israel at least ten times and consisted of 91 tourists (28.3% of the repeat visitors).

To explore the differences between the risk perception dimensions and the risk reduction strategies among these three sub-groups, ANOVA tests followed by post hoc Scheffe tests, were conducted. The results are presented in Tables 4–7.

Table 4 presents ANOVA tests on the destination risk perception of the three sub-groups.

As can be seen, statistically significant differences exist in two risk perception dimensions: "Human-induced risk" and "Natural disaster and car accident risk". The post hoc Scheffe tests in Table 5

Table 1
Cross-tabulation of first-time vs. repeat visitors and main motivation for visit.

Motives	First-time visitors	Repeat visitors	Total
Religious	243	66	309
Health	18	58	76
Sightseeing	111	38	149
Leisure	25	61	86
VFR	12	87	99
Cultural	30	11	41
Total	439	321	760

Chi-square = 226.03, $p = 0.00$.

Table 2
Discriminant analysis of first-time visitors vs. repeat visitors destination risk dimensions.

Risk dimensions	Standardized coefficients
Human-induced risk	0.95
Financial	−0.28
Service quality	−0.52
Socio-psychological	0.26
Natural disaster and car accident	−0.61
Food safety and weather	0.22
1 – First-time visitors centroid 0.36	
2 – Repeated visitors centroid −0.50	

Wilks' lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
0.85	125.90	6	.000

Table 3
Discriminant analysis of time visitors vs. repeat visitors risk reduction strategies.

Risk reduction strategies	Standardized coefficients
Gathering information from travel agents	0.18
Searching for information from friends and relatives	0.14
Searching for information on the Internet	−0.05
Watching television programs about Israel	0.10
Referring to W.T.O.	0.21
Reading articles about Israel	0.23
Making decisions in cooperation with relatives and friends	−0.42
Planning a short trip	−0.01
Planning an inexpensive trip	−0.16
Consulting with people who have previously visited the destination	0.77
Choosing a popular destination	0.14
1 – First-time visitors centroid 0.26	
2 – Repeat visitors centroid −0.36	

Wilks' lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
0.92	66.70	11	.000

Table 4
ANOVA of repeat visitor sub-groups and destination risk perception.

Risk perception		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F
Human-induced risk	Between groups	18.08	2	9.04	5.79*
	Within groups	495.9	318	1.56	
	Total	514.98	320		
Financial risk	Between groups	8.15	2	4.07	2.1
	Within groups	616.62	318	1.94	
	Total	624.76	320		
Service quality risk	Between groups	3.05	2	1.52	0.77
	Within groups	629.05	318	1.98	
	Total	632.1	320		
Socio-psychological risk	Between groups	0.48	2	0.24	0.38
	Within groups	201.04	318	0.63	
	Total	201.52	320		
Natural disasters and car accidents	Between groups	9.22	2	4.61	3.75*
	Within groups	391.34	318	1.23	
	Total	400.56	320		
Food safety problems and weather	Between groups	3.3	2	1.65	0.87
	Within groups	600.77	318	1.89	
	Total	604.08	320		

*$p \leq 0.05$.

reveal that the first sub-group, "light repeat visitors" has higher levels of "Human-induced risk" than the other two sub-groups. This sub-group also has a higher level of "Natural disaster and car accident risk" than the "heavy repeat visors" category.

Table 6 presents the differences between the three sub-groups in terms of the utilization of risk reduction strategies.

As depicted in Table 6, statistically significant differences between sub-groups were found in the adoption of the following risk reduction strategies: "Watching television programs about Israel", "Taking a short trip" and "Taking an inexpensive trip". Table 7, presenting the post hoc Scheffe results, reveals that the members of the third sub-group "heavy repeat visitors" watch more television programs about Israel and take more inexpensive trips to Israel than the "light repeat visitors" category.

An examination of the main motivations for visiting Israel reveals statistically significant differences between the three sub-groups. As demonstrated in Table 8, the most frequently mentioned motive among the "light repeat visitors" is religious. In contrast, the most frequently mentioned main motivation for visits among the "medium" and "heavy repeat visitors" is visiting friends and relatives. The second most frequently mentioned motives are sightseeing in the "light repeat visitors" category; health—in the "medium repeat visitors" category; and leisure—in the "heavy repeat visitors" category.

5. Discussion

This paper's premise is that tourist consumer behavior is often a decision-making process that culminates in the acquisition and consumption of a product or service, despite various worries and constraints that include numerous risk factors. The literature strongly emphasizes that the consumer's decision to purchase a particular service involves many more risk considerations than purchasing a product (Grönroos, 2007). Clearly, tourist destination choice, in terms of acquisition of a vacation or a visit and consumption is more complex than numerous other products and services, as it is an all-inclusive experience that requires the consumer to be away from home, often engulfed in an entirely foreign environment, with a different language, local culture and acceptable modes of behavior. Yet, the pull factors of the destination may compensate for the associated perceived risks.

In the current study, the focus is on tourists who made a destination choice, acquired a tour package or several components of tourist services and experiences, and are visiting a destination that has been the focus of continuing and numerous media reports in terms of various risk dimensions (Israel). This destination choice, tour acquisition and consumption are noteworthy. Specifically, as Sonmez and Graef (1998a, 1998b) observed, the higher the perceived risk of a destination, the higher the likelihood of the consumer to avoid visiting the foreign destination. Similarly, Reisinger and Mavondo (2005) found that intentions to travel internationally were determined by travel anxiety levels of perceived safety. Kozak et al. (2007) found that the majority of travelers are more likely to change their travel plans to destinations that are perceived as risky, while the minority reports they are unlikely to change their choice. It is most interesting to examine risk perceptions of a heterogeneous sample of international tourists while visiting a destination portrayed by the media as high risk. Moreover, repeat visitors comprised a considerable portion of visiting tourists. Can we identify different patterns of risk behavior and perceptions among these different segments? Can first-time visitors exhibit entirely different destination risk perception dimensions than repeat visitors?

The findings presented in the present paper indicate that clear differences exist between first-time visitors and repeat visitors in terms of destination risk perception factors. As noted above, first-time visitors were characterized by human-induced risk, socio-psychological risk, and food safety and weather risk. On the other hand, their repeat visitor counterparts were associated with the destination risk factors of financial risk, service quality risk, natural disasters and car accidents risk.

It seems that a better understanding of the results requires an in-depth view of the components of each factor. As noted above, first-time visitors to Israel, a country noted for its unstable and geopolitical situation and possibly other destination risk perception dimensions, focus on pre-trip concerns in terms of crime, terror and political unrest. Also, prior to their arrival at the destination, first-

Table 5
Significant results of post hoc Scheffe tests of repeat visitor sub-groups and destination risk perception.

Dependent variable	Repeat visits (*I*)	Repeat visits (*J*)	Mean difference (*I* − *J*)	Std error
Human-induced risk	Light repeat visitors	Medium repeat visitors	0.46*	0.16
		Heavy repeat visitors	0.53*	0.17
	Medium repeat visitors	Light repeat visitors	−0.46*	0.16
		Heavy repeat visitors	0.62	0.17
	Heavy repeat visitors	Light repeat visitors	−0.53*	0.17
		Medium repeat visitors	−0.62	0.18
Natural disasters and car accidents	Light repeat visitors	Medium repeat visitors	−0.24	0.15
		Heavy repeat visitors	−0.42*	0.15
	Medium repeat visitors	Light repeat visitors	0.24	0.15
		Heavy repeat visitors	−0.18	0.16
	Heavy repeat visitors	Light repeat visitors	0.42*	0.15
		Medium repeat visitors	0.18	0.16

*$p \leq 0.05$.

Table 6
ANOVA of repeat visitor sub-groups and risk reduction strategies.

Risk reduction strategies		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F
Gathering information from travel agency	Between groups	6.13	2	3.06	0.99
	Within groups	397.87	127	3.13	
	Total	404.00	129		
Searching for information from friends and relatives	Between groups	4.69	2	2.34	0.74
	Within groups	585.63	185	3.17	
	Total	590.32	187		
Searching for information on the Internet	Between groups	8.19	2	4.10	1.31
	Within groups	376.07	120	3.13	
	Total	384.26	122		
Watching television programs about Israel	Between groups	22.28	2	11.14	3.86*
	Within groups	404.55	140	2.89	
	Total	426.82	142		
Referring to W.T.O.	Between groups	8.45	2	4.23	1.28
	Within groups	119.24	36	3.31	
	Total	127.69	38		
Reading articles about Israel	Between groups	4.42	2	2.21	0.79
	Within groups	564.42	201	2.81	
	Total	568.84	203		
Making decision in cooperation with relatives and friends	Between groups	13.35	2	6.68	1.99
	Within groups	578.08	172	3.36	
	Total	591.43	174		
Planning a short trip	Between groups	22.68	2	11.34	3.59*
	Within groups	382.70	121	3.16	
	Total	405.39	123		
Planning an inexpensive trip	Between groups	15.09	2	7.54	3.04*
	Within groups	532.77	215	2.48	
	Total	547.86	217		
Consulting with people who had previously visited the destination	Between groups	7.91	2	3.96	1.31
	Within groups	490.94	163	3.01	
	Total	498.85	165		
Choosing a popular destination	Between groups	13.47	2	6.74	2.36
	Within groups	317.45	111	2.86	
	Total	330.92	113		

*$p \leq 0.05$.

time visitors worried about food safety and weather. These areas of concern seem to be congruent with the geo-political situation of the Middle East and also with the perception of this region as hot and hence problematic in terms of hygienic standards. In terms of socio-psychological risks, the issue of self-image and reference group reaction is most interesting. It can be speculated that the choice of a high-risk destination requires tourists to deal with the response of their home social environment, as opposed to choosing a serene destination. Moreover, beyond this issue of rationalizing risk taking, the strong multi-religious, cultural heritage and spiritual nature of Israel may invoke soul searching and spiritual experiences that might have a profound effect on the tourist's emotions and behavior (e.g. Collins-Kreiner, Kliot, Mansfeld, & Sagi, 2006) at the risk of social sanctions from the person's reference group. In some extreme cases, foreign tourists in Israel succumb to what is known as Jerusalem Syndrome, which involves religious delusions or religious excitement induced by proximity to the holy places in Jerusalem (Bar-El et al., 2000). This possible explanation is congruent with the dominant role of religious motives for the visit (see Table 1) for the first-time visitors. The repeat, more experienced visitors worried about service quality, natural disasters and car accidents, as well as financial risks. Specifically, these factors include the issues of unsatisfactory facilities, unfriendly hosts, strikes, natural disasters and car accidents as well as unexpected expenses and the impact of the trip on the tourist's financial situation. A possible explanation of these patterns involves a "reality check" of the Israeli environment. This possible explanation is congruent with Campo-Martinez et al. (2010) who observed that destination image is a dynamic concept that changes during the consumer's visit to a destination. Similarly, as noted by Ahmed (1991), Dann, 1996 and Kerstetter and Cho (2004), a repeat visit can be considered as past experience with the destination. Apparently, having experienced Israel before, repeat visitors are characterized by perceived risk factors that are significantly different from first-time visitors.

Given the risk associated with choosing a particular destination, acquisition of a package or travel services and then actual consumption, there remains a question about risk reduction strategies. These mechanisms are expected to lower the perceived risk to tolerable levels that facilitate actual destination choice, acquisition and consumption. Lehto et al. (2004) related to experience and prior knowledge as a means of offsetting consumer risk and uncertainty-reduction needs and may account for pre-trip behavior differences in terms of future choices. The results of the current study indicate that first-time visitors to Israel are characterized by a wide variety of risk reduction means. Specific risk reduction means include consulting with people who had previously visited destinations, reading articles about Israel, referring to WTO publications, gathering information from travel agents, searching for information from friends and relatives, choosing a popular destination and watching television programs about Israel. In contrast, repeat visitors are mainly associated with making decisions in cooperation with relatives and friends and taking an inexpensive trip.

The behavior of first-time visitors is congruent with the Tan's (1999) findings about the significant role of a reference group as a means for alleviating destination risk perception. Moreover, the findings about reading articles (about Israel) and WTO publications are congruent with the finding of Mitchell and Vassos (1998) about the role of reading independent travel reviews. Additionally, the practice of gathering information from travel agents is similar to "visiting the tour operator personally" as indicated by Mitchell et al.

Table 7
Significant results of post hoc Scheffe tests of repeat visitor sub-groups and risk reduction strategies.

Dependent variable	Repeat visits (*I*)	Repeat visits (*J*)	Mean difference (*I* − *J*)	Std error
Watching television programs about Israel	Light repeat visitors	Medium repeat visitors	−0.12	0.34
		Heavy repeat visitors	−0.94*	0.35
	Medium repeat visitors	Light repeat visitors	0.12	0.34
		Heavy repeat visitors	−0.82	0.38
	Heavy repeat visitors	Light repeat visitors	0.94*	0.35
		Medium repeat visitors	0.82	0.38
Planning an inexpensive trip	Light repeat visitors	Medium repeat visitors	−0.32	0.25
		Heavy repeat visitors	−0.65*	0.26
	Medium repeat visitors	Light repeat visitors	0.32	0.25
		Heavy repeat visitors	−0.33	0.27
	Heavy repeat visitors	Light repeat visitors	0.65*	0.26
		Medium repeat visitors	0.33	0.27

*$p \leq 0.05$.

(1999) and the depiction of first-time visitor utilization of information sources by Baloglu (2001) as relying on travel agents, among various other commercial strategies. As noted above, the current study depicted repeat visitors as associated mainly with the risk reduction strategies of making decisions in cooperation with friends or family about the intended trip and taking an inexpensive trip. These findings add another dimension to Baloglu (2001), who found that repeaters use both commercial and noncommercial sources, such as articles/news, books/movies, and reference groups. The active role of family members or friends in the trip decision-making process is congruent with Baloglu's finding about the significance of reference groups. In contrast, commercial sources such as news articles are not found in the current study as discriminating factors between first-time and repeat visitors in the current study.

Overall, first-time visitors utilized a relatively large number of risk reduction strategies as opposed to repeat visitors. The latter may replace the utilization of numerous means of risk reduction strategies by relying on their own experience, including the designing of an inexpensive trip. Clearly, the repeat visitor's prior knowledge bases of familiarity, expertise and previous purchase or usage of the product (Kerstetter & Cho, 2004) can prove very helpful. An overview of the aforementioned findings indicates that there is mounting evidence to the assertion that differences exist between various tourist segments in the utilization of risk reduction strategies. For example, Fuchs and Reichel (2006b) found differences in the utilization of risk reduction means between group and FIT travelers. Hence, from the perspective of consumer behavior, these findings allude to the fallacy of a general, all-inclusive model of consumer purchase risk reduction means or strategies.

Considering the main motivations of first-time vs. repeat visitors, the most frequently mentioned main motive of the segment of first-time visitors was religious. However, the "pilgrimage" or religious aspects are less dominant as a main motive in repeat visits. Specifically, repeat visitors mentioned a variety of main motives, including religious, health, leisure and visiting friends and family. Israel's main pull factor has long been its branding as "the Holy Land" from the perspectives of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Given its small size, the significant religious and cultural heritage sites can all be visited on a single trip. Then, repeat visitors can concentrate not only on religious motives, but on a variety of additional motives. Some of the latter could be the result of impressions and experiences gained on the first visit. The pattern of different motivations revealed in the current study is somewhat parallel to the findings of Lau and McKercher (2004) about first-time visitors to Hong Kong: the first-time visitors concentrate on a wide range of geographically dispersed activities, while repeat visitors shop, dine and spend time with family and friends. It is also interesting to note that when focusing only on the segment of repeat visitors, the "light" group exhibited considerably more religious motive inclination than the "medium" or "heavy" repeat visitors. It seems that the more visits a person makes to Israel, the lower the religious motivation and the higher the motivation for visiting friends and family.

Table 8
Cross-tabulation of repeat visitor sub-groups and main motivation for visit.

Motives	Light repeat visits	Medium repeat visits	Heavy repeat visits	Total
Religious	38	17	11	66
Health	18	24	16	58
Sightseeing	21	12	5	38
Leisure	17	23	21	61
VFR	15	36	36	87
Cultural	7	2	2	11
Total	116	114	91	321

Chi-square = 41.75, $p = 0.00$.

6. Managerial implications

It should be noted that perceived risk is a crucial determinant in the consumer's decision of whether to visit a particular destination or not. Policy makers and marketing decision makers, whether in the public or private sectors, should explore the main destination-particular risk perceptions and hence look for means to mitigate and alleviate these risk perceptions to facilitate a positive decision from the perspective of that particular destination. The current study illustrates that the messages to potential visitors cannot be homogeneous, as clear differences exist in the risk perceptions, risk reduction strategies and motivation for visits among different segments of visitors.

Given the findings of the current study, several managerial implications are suggested. First, it is crucial from a destination management perspective to find ways to mitigate and alleviate the risk perceptions associated with that particular destination from the perspectives of both first-time and repeat visitors. Focusing on first-time visitors, the main issue concerns human-induced risk such as terror, crime and political unrest. Clearly, not much can be done by tourism policy makers to alleviate these risks; as such developments are usually beyond their control. Yet, it is possible to supply potential visitors or first-time visitors with information in various media, including the Internet, that indicates the relatively safer areas within the country or suggest routes, means of transportation, types of lodging and behavior that are expected to increase the likelihood of a safer visit. In addition, it is recommended to supply accurate information regarding the concerns about food safety and weather. For example, in highly diverse destinations such as Israel, there are apparent weather differences within just half an hour drive. It is recommended to inform visitors about all means of transportation, museums, stores and hotels that are air-conditioned. Also, in the summer, open area spaces can be visited in the evenings. Information about recommended safe dining places and patterns can be easily prepared. It is also possible to issue a special certificate by the local DMO or Ministry of Tourism that indicates a safe dining institution, according to strictly enforced international hygienic requirements. From the perspective of socio-psychological concerns, it is possible to utilize testimonials in different media, on positive experiences and personal growth derived from the visit. The utilization of personal blogs should be considered for this purpose.

The aforementioned "niches" of safety within Israel and the opportunity for personal and spiritual growth can be part of a well-designed branding attempt. Given the small size of the country and the high familiarity between major tourism actors, a joint branding campaign of the Israel Ministry of Tourism, Israel Foreign Affairs Ministry, DMOs and businesses can potentially formulate and convey an imagery that encompasses the major attractions and experiences, yet addressing the various concerns revealed in this study.

From the perspective of repeat visitors there seems to be a need to distinguish factors that are under the control of tourism policy makers from those beyond their control. Clearly, in countries like Israel, noted for its cycles of wars and geo-political tensions (Mansfeld, 1999), repeat visitors can be considered as a relatively quick "panacea" for a decline in tourist demand due to sudden events. This can be attributed to the fact that they have experienced the destination before and are less concerned with human-induced risks, including terror, as opposed to their counterparts. At the same time, this segment should not be taken for granted by policy

makers. Clear risk alleviation means should be designated. For example, focusing on the financial concerns of repeat visitors, policy makers can reformulate the country's international agreements to attract low cost airlines and offer affordable packages to cater to budget-concerned repeat visitors. Also, moderately priced accommodations and restaurants can be advertised in various media to alleviate financial concerns. From a long-term perspective, governments or local authorities may offer incentives to investors to build hotels and other accommodations that will enable affordable stays. Service quality issues require a long-term perspective in terms of planning and implementation. No instant solutions or media campaign can camouflage in-depth problems of service quality (Grönroos, 2007). Consequently, a real change in the culture of service quality should be first implemented and then measured for successful operation, before it can be communicated worldwide.

The study also revealed that there are different personal risk reduction means and strategies for the two segments, respectively. These risk reduction means are of considerable importance, particularly within the segment of first-time visitors. Examples of such risk reduction means include gathering information from travel agents, searching for information from friends and relatives and from the Internet. Clearly, a well-designed marketing strategy of offering available accurate information to travel agents, the Internet and other media can contribute much to the alleviation of risk perceptions. For repeat visitors, who utilize inexpensive trips as a means of destination risk reduction, the aforementioned available sources of information on affordable tourist services can contribute considerably as risk reduction means.

Finally, given the plethora of motivations among the different visitor segments, it is recommended to try to utilize different messages for each target in international markets. In the case of Israel, when operating in countries with a considerable potential for first-time visitors, it is recommended to focus on the religious motives, and the labeling of Israel as "the Holy Land". In contrast, in countries or regions where most of the potential is derived from repeat visitors, the current study's findings seem to encourage the advertising and promotion of leisure activities and visiting friends and relatives.

7. Future research

The current study focuses on the differences between first-time and repeat foreign visitors to Israel in terms of destination risk perceptions, risk reduction strategies and motivation for the visit. It can be argued that the conclusions derived from the study are destination specific and hence their generalizability is relatively limited. However, the relationships revealed in this study and discussed in light of the emerging theories on destination risk perceptions and first-time vs. repeat visitors have implications for other destinations that fall into the category of "volatility". It is recommended to conduct similar studies in other similar destinations in order to distinguish between "universal" vs. country specific differences between first and repeat visitors. Such studies should first be conducted in highly susceptible destinations, such as those inflicted with epidemics like SARS or Swine Flu, natural disasters like Tsunami and earthquakes as well as man-induced threats such as wars, crime and terror.

In addition, the tourists in the current study were interviewed during their visit, meaning that only those who actually made the purchase decision were included. Future research should attempt to include potential tourists prior to their purchasing decision and actual travel. In ideal conditions, a longitudinal study of travel motivation, risk perception, risk reduction strategies, purchasing behavior, on-visit perceptions, long lasting perceptions and overall satisfaction, is highly recommended. Such studies will contribute to the understanding of tourist risk behavior and destination perception. Several destinations should be examined simultaneously, to examine patterns in the relationships between tourist behavior and destination characteristics.

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