The Shaping of Crisis-Resistance Among Domestic Tourists in Acapulco

Abstract
Acapulco, a famous destination on the Pacific Coast of Mexico, has been severely affected in recent years by an insecurity crisis, however, despite a dramatic decline in international tourism, a significant number of domestic tourists continue to visit the destination, many of them repeat visitors. The main objective of this paper is to consider whether this crisis-resistant behaviour is underpinned by a high resistance to change, driven by the Mexican national traits of individuality and incredulity. A qualitative approach was employed with data being collected by means of semi-structured interviews with repeat domestic visitors in Acapulco. The investigation served to determine that the participants were driven by a high resistance to change, demonstrated by a stubborn refusal to revise their holiday plans. Furthermore, it revealed that this attitude was sustained by the individualistic and incredulous nature of those involved. The study supports the view that nationality is a key determinant of tourist risk perception and that country-specific, socially-constructed characteristics influence the decision making of tourists, especially those familiar with a destination.
Keywords: *Acapulco, tourist risk perception, resistance to change, national characteristics, individuality, incredulity.*
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1. Introduction

Acapulco, a famous tourist destination on the Pacific Coast of Mexico, is in the midst of a crisis. While it has been suggested that Acapulco has been in a downward spiral since at least

1980 (Valenzuela Valdivieso & Coll Hurtado, 2010), the situation has deteriorated since the year 2006, when President Calderon's War on Drugs served as the catalyst for a vast increase in deaths and disappearances related to organized crime (Parish Flannery, 2016). As a result, the US Government has advised its citizens against travelling to Acapulco (it is listed as travel advisory level 4 - do not travel) and has forbidden personnel to enter the State of Guerrero, of which Acapulco is a part (US Department of State, 2019). Consequently, the number of international tourists visiting Acapulco, the vast majority who come from the United States, has declined alarmingly in recent years, with an actual drop of 85.2% between 2006 and 2015 (Martinez, 2016).

Nonetheless, domestic tourism continues to prevail, the high-points being the Easter, Summer and Christmas vacations and traditional Mexican holidays, when hotel occupation is usually at full capacity, and the streets, attractions and beaches are crowded with holiday-makers jostling for space. It is evident, therefore, that whilst Acapulco has largely been abandoned by international tourists, domestic tourism has not been affected to anywhere near the same degree, and for those Mexicans that visit the destination, often as repeat visitors, the security issues do not act as a deterrent (Garay Arce, 2016).

Risk perception is a key determinant when people are choosing a holiday destination, to the extent that most would substitute one destination for another if they suspect it might carry a potential risk (Cavlek, 2002). Nonetheless, there are those tourists that purposefully visit risky destinations because they enjoy the thrill of danger (Fuchs et al., 2013). Meanwhile, Hajibaba et al. (2015) propose the existence of another kind of 'crisis- resistant' tourist that travels to a destination affected by crisis because they are highly resistant to change and are unwilling to alter their plans for a situation that they do not perceive as being particularly risky. This certainly appears to be a possible explanation for Acapulco's 'crisis-resistant' domestic tourist, especially when taking into consideration Castañeda's (2011) insistence that individuality and incredulity form an intrinsic part of the Mexican national character. That is to say, an "individualistic and incredulous attitude", that combines single-mindedness with skepticism, could be reflected in the refusal to change long-established holiday traditions, and could partly explain why a substantial number of Mexican tourists continue to frequent Acapulco in spite of the security issues.

Consequently, the overall aim of this study is to consider, by means of a qualitative case study, whether a `high resistance to change´, as conceptualised by Hajibaba et al. (2015: 4), is a significant factor in the decision making of repeat domestic visitors to Acapulco, despite them being aware of the potential risks to their physical well-being, and if this 'high resistance to change' is driven by a deep-rooted 'individualistic and incredulous' attitude. Specific objectives include (i) review the tourist risk perception literature and relate it to Acapulco; (ii) consider Castañeda's (2011) claim that Mexicans exhibit an individualistic and incredulous attitude and how this could affect tourist risk perception; (iii) Determine the extent to which 'high resistance to change' affects the decision making process of 'crisis-resistant' tourists in Acapulco and assess whether inherent individuality and incredulity character traits underlie this process (iv) discuss the implications of the research.

The study is necessary in an academic sense as there is a scarcity of destination specific research that explores risk perception in a particular context. As Yang et al. (2015) note, most studies use large samples based on quantitative research methodology which fail to include the views of actual tourists, instead using residents or students. This study addresses the gap as it allows a carefully chosen group of tourists to express their opinions while they are actually located at the place in question- Acapulco. Furthermore, as far as the author is aware, this is the first study that considers the factors that underlie 'high resistance to change' in a tourism risk perception context.

In a practical sense, this study is useful for the Acapulco and Mexican tourism authorities and agencies (and those further afield) because it explains how national character traits affect the decision making of potential tourists. This information can assist in policy making, marketing campaigns and crisis communication strategy.

2. Literature Review

The following section reviews the literature pertaining to tourist risk perception. It considers the different types of risk that can affect destinations, the factors that shape tourist risk perception and the emergence of the crisis-resistant tourist who is highly-resistant to change. It suggests that in Acapulco the risk of physical harm from natural disasters is perceived as less of a risk than the possibility of being harmed as a result of crime. Meanwhile, risk perception of Mexicans, like anywhere, is rooted in the socially-constructed elements that form the national character. As Castañeda (2011) believes that individuality and incredulity are intrinsic parts of the Mexican national character, it is suggested that this could play a role in the decision-making of the crisis-resistant domestic tourist that continue to visit Acapulco, in spite of the bad publicity surrounding the destination in recent years.

2.1 Tourist Risk Perception

This is a crucial factor in the academic study of tourism crises and disasters (Laws & Prideaux, 2005) and an understanding of the issues associated with risk perception is essential for practitioners attempting to manage crises (Lee et al. 2012; Ritchie, 2004), such as the prevailing insecurity crisis affecting Acapulco. Generally, tourism destinations are vulnerable to a number of risks which can discourage people from travelling that can be summarized as follows.

The threat of physical harm while on vacation – This includes the possibility of (i) becoming sick while travelling, or at the destination (Kozak et al., 2007); (ii) being subject to terrorism and being involved in a situation resulting from political instability (Somez & Graefe, 1998b); (iv) getting caught up in a natural disaster such as a hurricane or earthquake (Floyd & Pennington Gray, 2004); (v) becoming a victim of crime (Park & Reisinger, 2010).

Conditions which tourists perceive as a threat to their emotional wellbeing – This includes equipment risk; financial risk; psychological risk (that a vacation will not reflect an individual's personality); satisfaction risk: social risk (that the vacation will negatively affect others' opinion of the tourist; time risk (that the vacation will be a waste of time (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992).

Planning risks- This include the distress posed by an unreliable airline, an inexperienced operator, theft or loss of luggage (Dolnicar, 2005); unfamiliar legal procedures, border procedures and socio-economic differences (Canally & Timothy, 2007); difficulty in being able to communicate with foreigners, or the inability to adjust to a foreign way of life (Park & Reisinger, 2010).

2.2 Perceived Risk in Acapulco

Although there is a strong threat of natural disaster in Acapulco, in the form of earthquakes, tropical storms and hurricanes, it is the risk of being physically harmed during a crime that has been the principal deterrent for foreign tourists considering travelling to the destination. This has been exemplified with the recent decline of international tourism (Bender, 2012), which has coincided with the particularly steep rise in organized crime since 2006 (Monterrubio, 2013). This upsurge in serious crime, in particular homicide, brought about by the Government's militaristic attempt to thwart the drug trade and the subsequent fragmentation of criminal groups, has resulted in Acapulco being considered one of the most violent cities in the world (Rodrigues et al., 2017).

2.3 The Shaping of Tourist Risk Perception

Jonas et al. (2011:88) suggest that: "… perceived risk is shaped by consumers' past experiences, lifestyle, sociocultural and demographic background characteristics, and the culture of each tourist consumer,". That is to say, an individual who is apprehensive about a certain risk has been 'shaped' through personal experience and thus developed a fear of being in a particular situation. According to the literature, there are a number of factors which form an individual's risk perception include: This includes personal characteristics (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992; Sonmez & Graefe, 1998b); previous travel experience (Kozak et al., 2007; Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Sonmez, 1998; Sonmez & Graefe, 1998a, 1998b); life stage/age (Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002; Lepp & Gibson, 2003); gender (Carr, 2001; Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Pizam et al., 2004); personality type (Lepp & Gibson, 2008; Pizam et al., 2004; Reisinger & Movondo, 2005); education (Sonmez & Graefe, 1998b) socio-economic status (Lepp & Gibson, 2003) socio-psychological needs (Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002), and as will be discussed in more detail shortly, nationality (Reisinger & Movondo, 2005; Koza et al., 2007).

2.4 The Crisis-Resistant Tourist

Destinations are, therefore, vulnerable to a number of risks which are perceived in distinct levels of severity according to the sociocultural background, personality and life experience of the potential traveler. Yet there also exists a tourist who appears to be crisis-resistant, absorbing "risks instead of engaging in risk avoidance strategies" as part of "an enduring behavioral pattern rather than an event-specific reaction" (Hajibaba et al., 2015: 4). One of the fundamental drivers of this crisis- resistant behavior is a high resistance to change, a personality trait that is linked with inertia, which describes the state of affairs when an individual is unwilling to deal with change because, simply put, that person is a creature of habit and change is not desirable for them (Zantvoort, 2015). As such, 'resistance to change' is not connected with a propensity to take risks, as is the case with those travelers who intentionally search for thrills and danger; rather, it can be identified as a reluctance to alter one's habits, or plans, because, for the individual in question, it would be a nuisance to do so.

2.5 The Shaping of Mexican Risk Perception

Risk perception is "rooted in the cultural values, expectations and frustrations of every society" (Korstanje, 2011: 231). Thus, each society, including Mexico, perceives risk in a unique manner, emanating from socially constructed realities that have been forged by the socio-cultural history and environment of that particular society, or nation. In other words, risk perception is shaped by the elements that form national character.

As Castañeda (2011) believes that individuality and incredulity form an innate part of the Mexican national character (and hence influence risk perception), one of the aims of this research is to investigate whether these two characteristics, both consequences of Mexico's social development, serve to underlie the decision making of Acapulco's crisis-resistant tourists.

2.6 Mexican Attitude: Individualistic/Incredulous

Castañeda (2011) uses the 2009 H1N1 Influenza crisis to illustrate his viewpoint, explaining how the Mexican Government, on becoming aware that a potentially lethal strain of influenza virus was present in the country, purposely 'exaggerated' the situation by closing many institutions and by restricting commerce for several days, the aim being to prevent, or at least slow, the spread of the virus. If they had not resorted to these measures, very few individuals "would have taken the matter seriously" (Castañeda, 2011: p. 25). That is, the Mexican authorities suspected that various "cultural, historical and enigmatic traits" (Castenñda, 2011:

p. 25), such as individuality and incredulity, would hinder attempts to deal with the situation, so it was deemed necessary to magnify the threat to gage a reaction and effectively save lives. Suffice to mention, despite these actions provoking an economic crisis which severely affected the tourism industry, the Government was later internationally praised for its reaction (Ear, 2012). If Castañeda (2011) is accurate in his portrayal of the Mexican character, and the Government's suspicions were well founded, it follows that the insecurity situation in Acapulco is likely met with a similar nonchalance by those amongst the Mexican population that fall under Castañeda's (2011) 'national character' umbrella. That is to say, if individuality and incredulity are as prevalent within the Mexican psyche as Castañeda (2011) suggests, the risks will 'not be taken seriously', especially by those who have previously visited Acapulco without incident and have formed a fond association with the destination. This correlates with the crisis-resistant tourist (Hajibaba et al., 2015), who is reluctant to make changes because in his or her opinion the situation does not warrant the effort as is not considered risky enough. It is not to suggest that such a person completely disregards the 'crisis'; however, they ultimately prefer to trust their own judgement rather than heed the advice of (dubious) others.

At this stage of this study, the existence of the crisis- resistant Acapulco domestic tourist, driven by a socially constructed resistance to change, remains a speculative conjecture still awaiting empirical inspection; before explaining the methodology and discussing the results, it is first necessary to mention that the results of a previous survey of 452 domestic tourists in Acapulco, conducted by Garay Arce (2016), confirmed that the rise in organized crime did *not* serve to increase perceptions of physical risk, or negatively affect the tourists' sense of loyalty towards Acapulco. Garay Arce (2016) does not offer an explanation as to why this is the case, thus leaving a gap which this study will now attempt to fill.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design provides the blueprint to address the overall aim of a study and its specific objectives. It was decided that the linear, reductionist quantitative methodology would not be appropriate for the research, as it would be unable to sufficiently capture the behavioural aspects of a group of people that would provide insight regarding perceived risk and resistance to change. Instead, a qualitative methodology was adopted as this perspective is more suitable for exploring participants' feelings, behavior, and emotions (Biggerstaff, 2012). Specifically speaking about tourism, Jennings (2007: 12) argues that it is a" complex and multiple phenomena and so needs to be considered in a more holistic way rather than in segmented and controlled contexts and experiments."

Consequently, the case study was chosen as the research strategy as it allows for events or situations to be explored in their natural setting, in this instance the persistence of Acapulco's crisis-resistant tourists. This permits the researcher to "retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2009:4), it enables the collection of evidence from multiple sources, and it also allows the application of a fresh perspective to existing theory. Case studies are often used in tourism research (Beeton, 2005, Botterill & Platenkamp, 2012) and are especially useful for exploring atypical social processes (Finn et al., 2000: 82), because they investigate "a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (Yin, 2009: 18). Furthermore, they provide insight concerning the success or failure of innovations; have the advantage of hindsight; demonstrate the complexity of a particular situation; illuminate the influence of personality and politics; enable the use a wide variety of information; and can explore a wide-ranging, broad problem by focusing upon one particular instance (Beeton, 2005).

3.2 Data Collection and Sampling

Information was gained from fifteen semi-structured interviews that were conducted during the summer vacation period in Acapulco in July, 2018. The interviews took part in an Acapulco beach side cafe with Mexican participants that were visiting the destination for at least the second time, and each interview was approximately 30 minutes in length. An attempt was made to gather as wide a cross-section of the Mexican public as possible so that the sample would be representative of the whole country, so to begin with the aim was to search for participants from a variety of states throughout Mexico; however, as the majority of Acapulco tourists tend to be from the nearby environs of Mexico City and its urban metropolis and the neighbouring states of Morelia and Puebla, this proved rather difficult. Consequently, the fifteen participants consisted of five individuals from Mexico City, four from the State of Mexico, two from Puebla, two from Morelos, one from Nuevo Leon and another individual from Queretaro. Eight of these were female, whilst seven were male. The average age of the participants was 34, with the youngest being 19 and the oldest being 54.

3.3 Questionnaire Development

The interview questions were designed with the aim of gathering information regarding the objectives of the research as shown in table 1 below. The idea was to elicit information that would confirm or negate that the participant displays: (a) crisis-resistant behavior; (b) high resistance to change; and to assess the extent of the individuality characteristic present in each participant and whether they demonstrate an incredulous, distrustful nature.

Table 1: Interview questions and their objectives.

To assess	Interview question
Crisis-resistant behavior.	1.Were you aware of Acapulco's reputation before your visit and do you consider it to be a risky destination?
High resistance to change.	1.Violent incidents in Acapulco are frequently reported by the news media. Even though you have spent time in the destination before and have enjoyed generally positive experiences, has there ever been an occasion in which an unpleasant event in Acapulco has made you contemplate going to a different destination for a change? For example, since you booked your accommodation and transport for this trip, has there been any incidents which made you consider changing your plans?

The existence of individualistic and incredulous elements of the participant's character.	Individuality: 1.Who am I? 2. I do my own thing regardless of what others think. 3. I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group that I am in. Incredulity: 1.The US Government have prohibited its personnel to visit Guerrero. Do you think this is necessary, or is it an overreaction? 2. What is your view of the Government's response to the 2009 Influenza crisis?

3.4 Data analysis

It was possible to identify thematic patterns from the data, first by following the allocation of pre-set codes, and then by the recognition of new elements and concepts important to the research which allowed for the assignment of new grounded themes and categories. This process was repeated various times while core categories were established and others discontinued. The themes that were established were thus used to answer the research objectives.

4. Results

4.1 Crisis Resistant Behavior

When questioned whether they aware of Acapulco's reputation as a destination suffering high levels of insecurity, and if they considered it to be a particularly risky location, all of the participants answered that they were indeed aware of Acapulco's recent notoriety, but that they did not believe that they were in significant risk of physical harm. All of the participants were confident that as long as they stayed in the tourist zone, did not over-consume alcohol in public places, did not have dealings with local drug dealers, and, in general, exercised the same caution as they would do in their home environment, becoming a victim of violence was unlikely.

> "*Acapulco is no more dangerous than where I live. At least not for a tourist, maybe it's different for the young guys that live here. I just make sure that when I come here I stay aware and I don't get too drunk when I go to a club, but I do that home anyway. The thing is, in Mexico we have problems everywhere so it doesn't feel much different coming here than in my neighbourhood.*
> (Participant 11, personal communication, Acapulco, 10 July, 2018).

> "*I come here every year with my family in spite of what the alarmists say. We stay in the Golden Zone and everything is relaxed, we have great time*".
> (Participant 4, personal communication, Acapulco, 6 July, 2018).

> "*Yes, everyone knows that Acapulco and Guerrero is known for violence, but that doesn't stop most of us from coming here.*"
> (Participant 5, personal communication, Acapulco, 5 July, 2018)

The comments correspond with the concept of the crisis-resistant tourist (Hajibaba et al., 2015), as the participants are willing to absorb, rather than avoid, the risk of physical harm in

Acapulco. They are aware of the dangers and are not ignoring the risks, but consider them avoidable as long as common-sense is used. Consequently, a trip to Acapulco is not seen as a form of ´danger zone tourism' (see Lisle, 2016); instead, it is considered a typical sun, sea and sand vacation with the aim being to have fun and relax. It is also an "enduring behavioral pattern" (Hajibaba et al., 2015: 4) of the tourists, in that they are not demonstrating resistance to one particular crisis event, but against a chronic crisis situation that has prevailed for a number of years and shows little sign of concluding. Meanwhile, an important theme arising from the data was that many of the participants insisted that Acapulco did not pose any more risk than their home environment.

4.2   High Resistance to Change
When asked if they had re-considered their plans to travel to Acapulco as a result of becoming aware of violent incidents, there was a mixture of answers. Three of the participants replied in the negative, nine said that they had thoughtfully re-assessed the situation but never felt a particular necessity to change their arrangements, whilst three responded that they had seriously considered changing their holiday plans in light of concerns for their physical safety.

> *"I come to Acapulco every summer with friends and even though you hear stories on the news and see stuff on social media none of us has even mentioned changing our plans."*
> (Participant 15, Personal communication, Acapulco, 16 July, 2018).

> *"I must admit that when there was all the trouble with the 43 students that disappeared in Iguala and the incident with the Spanish girls who got raped, I started to think maybe I should stop going until things calm down. But then I thought about all the good times that I've had in Acapulco without any trouble, and I decided that I have nothing to worry about. I would have to be very unlucky for something to happen to me,"*
> Participant 2, Personal communication, Acapulco, 5 July, 2018).

> *"My cousins got robbed in their car in a tunnel near Chilpancingo on their way to Acapulco and for a while I decided that going to Acapulco was too dangerous. It's not just Acapulco that is risky- so is the road from Cuernavaca to Acapulco. So, I decided that enough was enough and that it was too dangerous. Then I got angry and decided that I was not going to change my plans and stop going to Acapulco because of the criminals. I will not let them win."*
> Participant 14, Personal communication, Acapulco, 16 July, 2018).

Most participants were concerned enough about Acapulco's insecurity issues to consider at least to some degree the possibility of changing their plans, yet, ultimately, they made the decision to travel because of a reluctance (and at times angry refusal) to alter their arrangements. It became obvious that the term 'inertia, used by Hajibaba et al. (2015) to explain resistance to change, was not appropriate in this context, given its conations of sluggishness. In most cases, the participants did give careful thought to the risk involved and it was dogged determination, rather than apathy, that was the basis of their decision-making.

4.3 Individualistic and Incredulous Nature
Whilst individuality in cross cultural research is often assessed using etic quantitative statistical techniques (Jackson & Niblo, 2003), this study adopted a qualitative approach as

this enabled a deeper, emic perspective to be obtained regarding the suggested relationship between individuality, incredulity and high resistance to change. To determine if the individuality characteristic was evident among the participants, it was deemed necessary to assess whether they possessed an independent self-construal, in which internal attributes connected to the self are considered most important, or if they demonstrated an interdependent self-construal in which social relationships and a collectivist attitude are given priority (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Giacomin & Jordan (2017) suggest that a simple way to establish an individual's self-construal is to ask the question-who am I? Those with an independent self-construal (individualistic) will invariably mention their abilities (I am intelligent), compared to those with an interdependent self-construal who will likely focus on their interpersonal relationships (I am a member of a football team).

Meanwhile, this research also borrowed from Singelis's (1994) self-construal scale: two statements were adopted- 'I do my own thing regardless of what others think' and 'I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group that I am in'. It is important to mention that these declarations were used to initiate discussion, rather than act as question on a survey scale as was the original intention of Singelis (1994).

To assess the participants´ level of incredulity and general skepticism towards certain events reported by the media or by word of mouth, two questions were asked to elicit discussion, in the same manner as above (see table 1).

Individuality – When asked to answer the question 'who am I?', the response was generally inconclusive, in that it was mixed, with most participants mentioning abilities along with personal relationships. For example:

> *"Who am I? I am a Mexican, I'm from Mexico City, I am 21 years of age, I am single, I study at University, I live with my family, I am an honest, conscientious person. I am quite happy with my life at the moment, but there are things I want to achieve so that I grow as a person emotionally and intellectually."*
> Participant 9, Personal communication, Acapulco, 9 July, 2018).

Likewise, when requested to discuss the statement 'I do my own thing regardless of what people think', the general response was again indefinite, with participants tending to stress that they do prefer to do their own thing, but at the same time mentioning that other people's opinion of their actions was important.

> *"I like to do my own thing, yes, I do not want to always follow what the others say and do, but I also think that it is important that other people, family, friends, work, etc., have a good opinion of you. So, my answer would be I do my own thing, but I still sort of care what people think".*
> Participant 6, Personal communication, Acapulco, 6 July, 2018.)

Nonetheless, the vast majority of participants claimed that they would not sacrifice their self-interest for the benefit of the group, unless that group was immediate family. Whilst they recognized the importance of 'the group' in the workplace, all but one participant would refuse to sacrifice his own wellbeing and ambitions for the benefit of work colleagues.

> *"I have a wife and son and I would always sacrifice my self-interest for them, but I think that would be the only time. I wouldn't do it at work; maybe if it was a trivial thing, but definitely not if it was something that affects my career and my future."*

Participant 13, Personal communication, Acapulco, 15 July, 2018).

The participants' responses demonstrated that they were of a predominantly individualistic nature, although collectivist elements were also present throughout the discussions. Similar to when discussing the concept of 'high resistance to change', the participants would carefully consider other viewpoints, or the situation, but their final decision would ultimately be in their own self-interest, or that of their family. The answers regarding their colleagues in the workplace displayed an individualistic nature, because even though the participants had previously mentioned that they liked to be held good esteem by others, they were nonetheless quite ruthless in that they would not permit work colleagues to impede their career.

Incredulity – When the participants were asked about the US government's decision to prohibit personnel from visiting Acapulco, they insisted that it was an over-reaction, yet one that was only to be expected.

> *"That's a crazy rule, but it doesn't surprise me. It looks like the gringos believe their government because they have stopped going to Acapulco. I wouldn't take any notice of any government warnings because I never believe what politicians say; they lie to suit their agenda. If I want to go to a place I just go".*
> (Participant 9, Personal communication, Acapulco, 10 July, 2018).

Finally, when asked to discuss the Mexican government's reaction to the 2009 H1N1 Influenza crisis, the majority expressed the opinion that it was an over-reaction, although several did suggest that it was an appropriate response.

> *"I remember the Influenza crisis, everyone going around in face masks. Looking back, it was a massive exaggeration. They didn't react like that in the United States, why did they do it here? If that happens again nobody, I mean nobody, will take notice of them."*
> Participant 14, Personal communication, Acapulco, 16 July, 2018).

> *"It was a good way to act because nobody, including the government, knew what was going to happen with the Influenza…The problem is because of our history, most people do not trust the government and we are always suspicious that we are not being told the truth."*
> (Participant 9, Personal communication, Acapulco, 10 July, 2018).

The participants' answers mostly reflect an incredulous attitude towards both the US and Mexican Governments, while those who did agree with the Mexican Government's response to the H1N1 Influenza crisis mentioned directly, or inferred, that it was a necessary response due to what is a widespread mistrust of government, as proposed by Castañeda (2011). Meanwhile, the cynicism directed towards Government was also extended to the police force, and various financial, legal and media institutions.

5. Conclusion, Implications and Limitations

Acapulco is reputedly one of the world's most dangerous cities, reflected in the drastic decline of international tourism in recent years; yet, perhaps surprisingly, domestic tourism numbers remains mostly unaffected, especially during high season when the destination is usually at full-capacity with Mexican visitors, many of whom have visited Acapulco on

numerous occasions. Using the conceptualization of the 'crisis-resistant tourist' (Hajibaba et al. 2015) as a framework, this study focused on Acapulco's domestic visitors and considered whether an innate 'resistance to change' was a major factor in their decision to continue using Acapulco as a holiday destination in spite of the highly publicized security issues. Meanwhile, it was suggested that this display of resistance could be driven by what Castañeda (2011) believes are two vital traits of the Mexican character- individuality and incredulity. Therefore, the study sought to firstly identify whether the tourists could be classified as being crisis-resistant tourists, secondly, if they could be labelled as being highly resistant to change, and, thirdly, to seek evidence pertaining to the existence of the individuality and incredulity characteristics.

Following the interviews with fifteen repeat-visit domestic tourists, and the subsequent data analysis, it was concluded that: (i) The participants could be classified as crisis-resistant tourists, as they were aware of the risk but were willing to absorb it. Nonetheless, an important point to consider is that many of the participants originated from areas which also have insecurity issues; therefore, the risk factor was almost inconsequential for these participants. (ii) The participants could be classified as being highly resistant to change, because the majority did consider changing their plans, some more seriously than others, yet they still decided to visit Acapulco. However, there was no evidence of 'inertia' in their decision making; it was more so a steadfast refusal to change a desired course of action. (iii) The participants did display the trait of individuality, but the evidence was slightly conflicting in that elements of collectivism were also present. For example, it was considered important to make a good impression on others, yet in work-based situations the participants would put their priorities first. However, despite the inconsistency of the data, the individuality trait did appear to be the stronger of the two and would, consequently, have more influence over during decision making.

Meanwhile, an incredulous attitude towards authority *was* apparent among the participants. Suspicion regarding the integrity of governmental institutions and other forms of authority suggests that any warnings, advisories and reports that emit from 'official' sources will be questioned and not taken seriously. For instance, the US Government travel advisory was criticized, while many condemned the Mexican Government's response to the H1N1 Influenza crisis as alarmist and an over-reaction. With this in mind, it is evident that incredulity will affect the participants' perspective of Acapulco's insecurity crisis, suggesting that while it will not be ignored, participants prefer to make their own decisions and judge the gravity of the situation for themselves.

The participants of the study were crisis-resistant, and the high resistance to change was a significant determining factor, yet, in this case, the resistance was not a consequence of inertia, but instead a result of a prudent outlook born out of historical dishonesty and exploitation on the part of the Mexican Government and aristocracy. The fact that the participants displayed elements of individuality, and an undeniable show of incredulity, further substantiated the claim that their resistance to change was driven by characteristics shaped by their socio-cultural reality, rather than anything to do with inertia.

The domestic repeat visitor to Acapulco is unperturbed by the insecurity crisis that has repelled so many international tourists. On display among the participants was a single-minded, obstinate resilience that overcame any initial doubts of returning to a holiday destination that they had previously enjoyed and in which they feel comfortable. So overall, the study serves to support the conceptualization of the crisis-resistant tourist driven by a high resistance to change, as offered by Hajibaba et al. (2015) and it confirms Castañeda's (2011) claim that individuality and incredulity are an element of Mexico's national character, which hereby prompts a call for further research in alternative environments that can seek to explore other, perhaps similar, cultural and societal drivers of tourist crisis resistance.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to acknowledge that not all Mexicans will exhibit crisis resistance, a high resistance to change, nor the traits of individuality and incredulity. There will undoubtedly be many that do not fit such a characterization and, as a result, would choose not to visit Acapulco because the risk of physical harm would dissuade them from making the trip. Therefore, while this study indicates that the participants were crisis resistant, (driven by a resistance to change their plans and an attitude displaying elements of individuality and incredulity), a limitation of the research is that the participants were physically located in Acapulco at the time of the interviews, having already made the decision to travel, thus making it apparent in advance that they were crisis-resistant tourists, in that they were obviously not troubled enough by the insecurity to avoid the destination. If the interviews had taken place in a different location, such as in Mexico City, with an array of individuals considering a trip to Acapulco, then it is probable that the results would have been different, with uncertainty and doubt casting shadows over the decision making of those with substantially less crisis resistance than the participants in this study. Indeed, it would be a valuable exercise to follow-up this research with more fieldwork outside of Acapulco and to compare the results.

Even so, despite this reservation, the study *is* hugely significant in that it has demonstrated the socially constructed thought-processes that underlie the crisis-resistant behavior of a large number of domestic tourists that repeatedly visit Acapulco. Using a destination-specific case study, it serves to verify that nationality is indeed an influence on risk perception and that certain traits, unique to distinct cultures, can have a substantial effect on the flow of tourism. Such contributions are vital for the tourism discipline because the "paucity of established risk theories within the tourism discipline has further led to a fragmented understanding of tourists' risk perception" (Yang et al. (2015: 4).

For Acapulco's tourism industry, it is somewhat of a blessing that a sizable proportion of its domestic tourists demonstrate crisis-resistant behaviour to such an extent that they continue to visit the destination in spite of its difficulties. The same has not applied to foreign tourists, most of whom have not been immune to the threat of violent crime and have turned their attention elsewhere; however, it is unclear if this is due to lower crisis resistance or if it is due to a lack of familiarity with the destination. That is, a decisive, contributing factor to the levels of resilience apparent among the participants was that they were knowledgeable about Acapulco and thus had an informed opinion. With this mind, further research that seeks the opinion of first time visitors to Acapulco would be a beneficial addition to the topic, so as to explore the influence of previous visits on change resistance.

As this conclusion draws to a close, it is worth considering whether there is a limit to the kind of crisis-resistance demonstrated in this study. Will domestic tourists persevere with their visits Acapulco on an indefinite basis, whilst violence continues to infiltrate the tourist areas, or could the situation be reached in which previous crisis-resistant tourists decide that enough is enough. Perhaps this is already the case with many; again, further research would be valuable, so as to assess the point at which perceived risk outweighs culturally driven resistance to change.

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