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## What Does the Landscape of Tourist Safety Videos on Social Media Look Like? Exploring the Presence of Tourist Safety Videos on YouTube

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# **What Does the Landscape of Tourist Safety Videos on Social Media Look Like?**

## **Exploring the Presence of Tourist Safety Videos on YouTube**

### **Introduction**

Social media has become an important communication platform that can influence tourist decision-making (Liu, Mehraliyev, Liu, & Schuckert, 2020). This influence extends beyond normal times, as tourists often turn to social media for information when faced with a risk or crisis (Schroeder, Pennington-Gray, Donohoe, & Kiouis, 2013; Schroeder & Pennington-Gray, 2014). Social media is also considered to be an effective channel for communicating about risks and crises because it can be used to raise awareness among the public, and reach audiences that may not be reached through traditional communication channels (Wendling, Radisch, & Jacobzone, 2013). While tourism researchers have been examining the role of social media in tourism risk and crisis communication (Barbe, Pennington-Gray, & Schroeder, 2018; Schroeder & Pennington-Gray, 2014; Sigala, 2011), there are still unanswered research questions and knowledge gaps. One gap in our knowledge is related to the use of video-sharing social media platforms in tourism risk and crisis communication. YouTube is the most popular video-sharing social media and has become a powerful communication tool (Statista, 2021). Academic scholars have used YouTube as a mode of research to learn about social phenomena based on agenda-setting theory in the field of communications. According to agenda-setting theory, the media influence the public's perceptions of the most important issues (McCombs & Bell, 1996). Thus, issues that are frequently covered in the media are typically considered to be salient issues in the minds of the public.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to explore the landscape of tourist safety videos on social media. This study focused specifically on English-language tourist safety videos published on YouTube, an influential video-sharing social media platform. Particular attention was given to understanding the video source and content attributes through content analysis. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Who has been posting tourist safety videos to YouTube?
2. What types of risks have been featured in tourist safety videos on YouTube?
3. Have tourist safety videos on YouTube focused on travel in general or specific destinations?
4. What destinations have been featured in tourist safety videos on YouTube?
5. When have tourist safety videos been published on YouTube?

By answering these research questions, this study will illuminate what agendas have been set to the public and who has communicated issues of tourist safety on YouTube.

### **Literature Review**

In tourism, there has been limited research on the role of YouTube in communicating safety information. Amir, Pennington-Gray, Barbe, and Hanafiah (2018) examined how National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) used the popular video-sharing social media platform for this purpose. Their research indicated that NTOs made limited use of YouTube as a platform for communicating tourist safety information. To the best of the authors' knowledge, there has been no study that has examined the comprehensive landscape of tourist safety videos published on YouTube. Accordingly, this research fills a gap in the literature by expanding the scope to focus on tourist safety videos published on YouTube - not just those posted by NTOs.

Content analysis is a prominent methodological approach that enables researchers to understand tourists' and service providers' perspectives by analyzing a variety of content formats posted on the internet (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2017; Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). Researchers have used content analysis to understand how tourism promotion and management content are communicated to tourists (Liu, Kim, & Pennington-Gray, 2015), as well as to understand tourists' preferences and emotions at tourism destinations by analyzing user-generated content that allows users to express their travel experiences (Kim & Stepchenkova, 2017). Since content provided on social media provides meaningful and rich perspectives, the use of content analysis in tourism and related fields has been gaining in popularity.

## **Methodology**

The following keyword combinations were used to scrape English-language tourist safety videos published on YouTube:

1. Travel AND safe
2. Tourist AND safe
3. Tourism AND safe
4. Travel AND risk
5. Tourist AND risk
6. Tourism AND risk

Data scraping occurred on June 27, 2020 with Python, which allowed the researchers to retrieve the data based on the aforementioned keywords. Once the data was cleaned and duplicate videos were removed, there was a total of 4,992 videos. Two trained coders then reviewed the titles and descriptions of the retrieved videos to determine whether the videos were relevant to this study. After this initial screening, 2,320 videos remained, which was 46.5% of the initial retrieval. This provides a perspective which suggests that using automatically retrieved data with keywords alone may not be appropriate to answer research questions and serve research purposes. Researchers, instead, may need to take additional steps to identify the relevant data. The remaining videos were published between April 10, 2008 and June 26, 2020. To obtain a manageable sample that can be watched by researchers, the authors generated random numbers in Excel to select 327 videos to represent the total video sample. Randomization minimized sampling bias.

During the data scraping process, the URL, title, description, publish date, number of views, number of likes, number of dislikes, comments, number of subscribers, and video category within YouTube were automatically retrieved. Content analysis was used to collect additional information about the tourist safety videos published on YouTube. Two trained coders were provided with the coding guidelines. The coding categories captured whether the videos featured risk to tourists, the video sources, the types of risks featured in the videos, whether the videos focused on travel in general or a specific destination, and the countries, sub regions, and regions featured in destination-specific videos. Reliability was examined by measuring agreement between the coders. For each coding category, the requisite reliability threshold was satisfied - ranging 0.60 to 0.99 (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005).

## **Results**

After the initial screening of video titles and descriptions, the trained coders watched the 327 tourist safety videos to determine whether the videos featured risk to tourists. The results revealed that 56.3% of the videos did feature risk to tourists (Table 1). These videos were deemed relevant to the study context. The other 143 videos (43.7%) that did not feature risk to tourists were deemed irrelevant to the study context and, as a result, were excluded from further analyses.

**Table 1.** Video featured risk to tourist (n=327)

|     | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-----|-----------|---------------|
| Yes | 184       | 56.3          |
| No  | 143       | 43.7          |

*Research Question 1***Table 2.** Sources (n=181)

|                        | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Individual             | 87        | 48.1          |
| Media                  | 61        | 33.7          |
| Private sector         | 25        | 13.8          |
| Other                  | 6         | 3.3           |
| DMO                    | 2         | 1.1           |
| Nonprofit organization | 0         | 0.0           |

Individuals posted approximately one-in-two tourist safety videos on YouTube (48.1%), while the media posted approximately one-in-three tourist safety videos (33.7%, Table 2). Notably, private sector tourism organizations (e.g., hotels, tour operators, and attractions) posted 13.8% of the videos and DMOs posted 1.1% of the videos.

*Research Question 2*

The most frequently mentioned type of risk in tourist safety videos on YouTube was crime (48.1%, Table 3). The other most frequently mentioned types of risk were health (30.1%), internal affairs (14.2%), physical (13.7%), infrastructure/functional (13.1%), and natural disasters (12.6%). No tourist safety videos featured financial risks (0.0%).

**Table 3.** Types of risk featured

|                                   | Yes       |               | No        |               |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
|                                   | Frequency | Valid Percent | Frequency | Valid Percent |
| Crime (n=183)                     | 88        | 48.1          | 95        | 51.9          |
| Health (n=183)                    | 55        | 30.1          | 128       | 69.9          |
| Internal affairs (n=183)          | 26        | 14.2          | 157       | 85.8          |
| Physical (n=183)                  | 25        | 13.7          | 158       | 86.3          |
| Infrastructure/functional (n=183) | 24        | 13.1          | 159       | 86.9          |
| Natural disaster (n=183)          | 23        | 12.6          | 160       | 87.4          |
| Terrorism (n=183)                 | 15        | 8.2           | 168       | 91.8          |
| Foreign relations (n=183)         | 8         | 4.4           | 175       | 95.6          |
| Other (n=183)                     | 6         | 3.3           | 177       | 96.7          |
| Social/cultural issues (n=182)    | 5         | 2.7           | 177       | 97.3          |
| Unexpected weather (n=183)        | 4         | 2.2           | 179       | 97.8          |
| Financial (n=183)                 | 0         | 0.0           | 183       | 100.0         |

*Research Question 3*

Approximately three-in-five tourist safety videos on YouTube focused on a specific destination (60.7%), while approximately two-in-five focused on travel in general (39.3%, Table 4). In total, 35.0% of the videos focused on a country, 18.0% focused on a city, and 7.0% focused on a region/province/state.

**Table 4.** General vs. destination-specific focus (n=183)

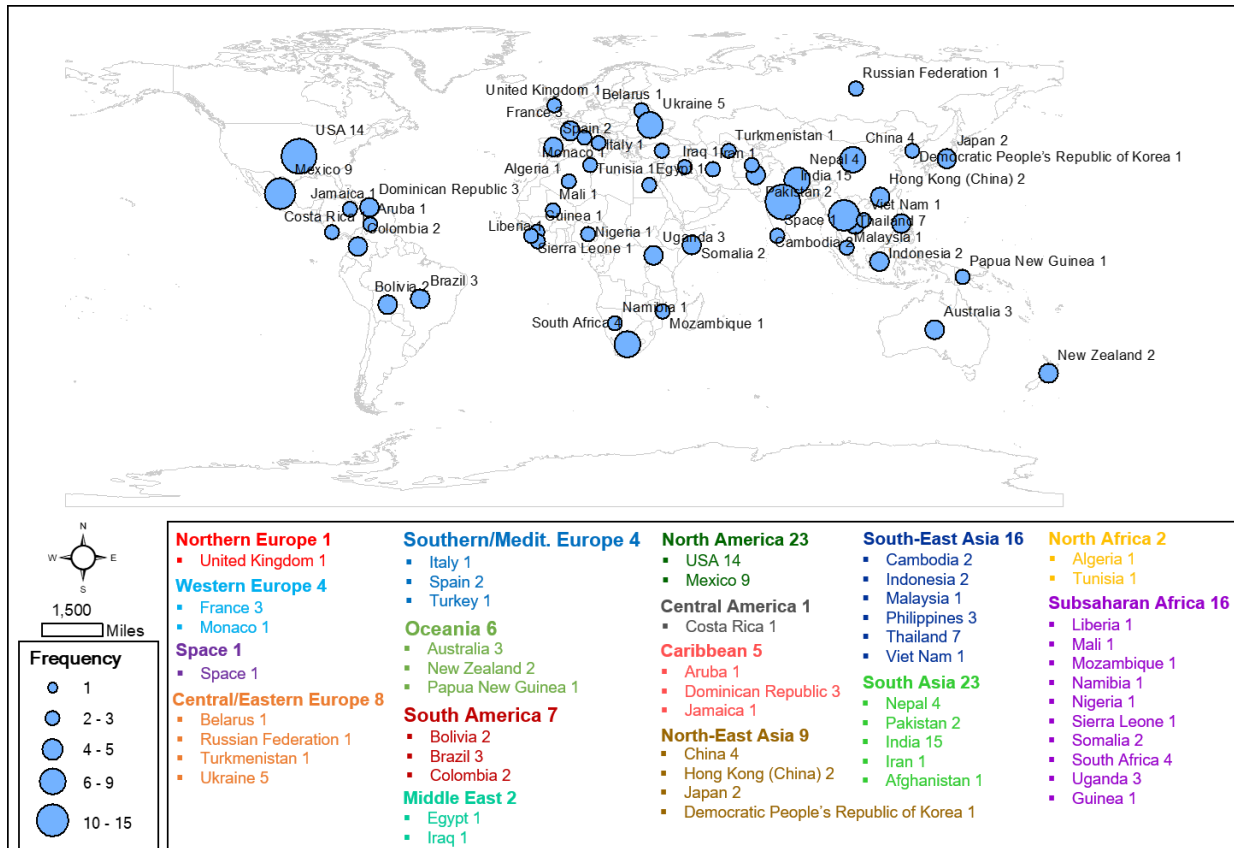
|                   | Frequency | Valid Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Travel in general | 72        | 39.3          |

|                                |    |      |
|--------------------------------|----|------|
| Country-specific               | 64 | 35.0 |
| City-specific                  | 33 | 18.0 |
| Region/province/state-specific | 14 | 7.7  |

*Research Question 4*

The five most frequently featured countries in tourist safety videos on YouTube were India (11.7%), the United States (10.9%), Mexico (7.0%), Thailand (5.5%), and Ukraine (3.9%, Figure 1). The four most frequently featured sub-regions were North America (18.0%), South Asia (18.0%), South-East Asia (12.5%), and Subsaharan Africa (12.5%).

**Figure 1. Destinations featured (n=111)**

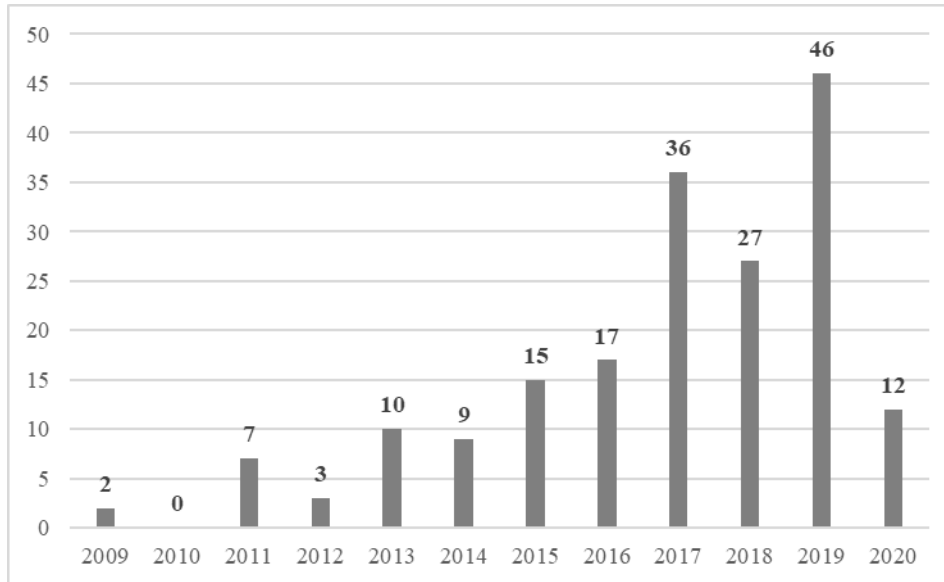


\*2020 included videos published between January and June

*Research Question 5*

When comparing the number of tourist safety videos published on YouTube by year, there was a general upward trend (Figure 2). The years with the greatest amount of videos published were 2019 (25.0%) and 2017 (19.6%). The years with the least amount of videos published were 2010 (0.0%), 2009 (1.1%), and 2012 (1.6%).

**Figure 2. Videos published by year (n=184)**



\*Does not equal 100%. Multiple responses allowed.

## Conclusion and Discussion

A methodological contribution of this study resulted from the combined use of data mining and content analysis. Specifically, there was a substantial difference between the number of videos retrieved from the data mining process and those deemed to be relevant after two rounds of data screening by coders (reviewed titles and descriptions, and watched videos). This data screening process revealed that a significant proportion of the original sample was not relevant to the study context, which suggests that there is a need to supplement data mining with human coding to ensure that the data being analyzed is actually relevant to the research. The results also revealed that individuals and the media posted an overwhelming majority of the tourist safety videos on YouTube. Members of the tourism industry, including private sector tourism organizations and DMOs, were relatively inactive (in comparison). The latter supports Amir et al.'s (2018) research on NTOs' use of YouTube to communicate safety information to tourists. Interestingly, health-related risks were one of the most frequently mentioned types of risk in tourist safety videos on YouTube, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, the results indicated that YouTube has been an increasingly popular platform for publishing tourist safety videos in recent years. Additional discussion of the findings and implications, as well as suggestions for future research will be presented at the conference.

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