



## **IS THE TOURISM INDUSTRY A FRAGILE HEAVY WEIGHT? VALIDATION THROUGH A LITERATURE REVIEW OF TOURISM SYSTEM SHOCKS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The global tourism industry has arguably become the world's pre-eminent sector, contributing about \$3.6 trillion to the global gross domestic product (GDP) and employing 225 million people (World Travel and Tourism Council, 1997). Despite its acknowledged economic power and apparent resiliency, tourism is highly vulnerable to internal and external shocks ranging from political conflicts, natural disasters to epidemic diseases. This article argues that the tourism industry is increasingly becoming susceptible to crisis events to the extent that tourism players have to contend with this reality in their daily operations. The study employed literature narratives as data sources from primed tourist destinations that have been hit by tourism crises. This study has some significance of confirming that tourists evaluate destinations according to safety and risk factors. The study further revealed that tourism crises do not only impair a tourist destination's image but also weaken and destroy the competitive advantage of the destination. The review identified the quartet of terrorism, epidemic diseases, tsunamis and political conflicts as having the most devastating effects on the global tourism industry. Recommendations include less reliance upon tourism as an economic sector in favour of economic diversification, identification of potential destination specific crises and putting in place pro-active crisis management and recovery strategies. Future studies should explore how positive tourism shocks impact on the global tourism industry.*

**Keywords:** Tourism industry, UNWTO, Tourism crisis, Shocks, Epidemic diseases, Tsunamis, Terrorism, Political conflicts.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

A tourism system shocker is a negative or positive phenomenon that affects the global tourism traffic thereby causing a crisis or euphoria at a tourist destination. A destination crisis is normally a result of external factors beyond the direct management control of destination authorities impacting negatively on the marketability of a tourist destination concerned (Beirman, 2003). Such factors may be acts of terrorism, natural disasters, health issues, crime or international conflict. Hudson (2008) stated that the patterns of demand in tourism can be

affected by factors that cannot be pre-determined or forecasted but which influence change, sometimes with very little advance warnings.

Factors which influence changes in the tourism demand may include changes influenced by economic or political circumstances, climate and natural and artificial disasters. A tourism system shocker on further reflection could be any spontaneous and unexpected event that affects traveller confidence and interferes with the tourism industry's ability to continue operating normally. The travel and tourism industry is vulnerable to such events which have had far reaching negative impacts of re-configuring the contours of the tourism landscape at tourist destinations.

The global tourism industry is very sensitive to both positive and adverse economic, social, environmental and political events/ phenomena. Such tourism system shocks have the potential to either depress or increase global tourism traffic at any given time at a tourist destination. A tourism system shock that depresses international tourism traffic is referred to as an adverse tourism system shocker. Wars and tsunamis are a case in point. These can depress the movement of tourists from one area to another as well as destroying infrastructure hence impacting negatively on the performance of the global tourism industry (Beirman, 2003). However, there are other positive tourism system shocks, that is, those events or happenings that have the potential to increase global tourism traffic at a given time on a tourist destination. Mega events such as FIFA World Cup, Africa Cup of Nations, UEFA champions, Olympic Games, Africa Tavel Association (ATA) congress and United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) General Assembly are classic examples of such events.

Positive tourism system shocks such as the UNWTO General Assembly might have a direct impact on global tourism traffic as delegates, international news reporters and many others from the entire universe flock into a particular destination hosting the event. On the other hand, such events might not have immediate significant impacts on the global tourism industry or a particular destination hosting the event. A hosting nation is set to capitalise on the spin offs arising from the successful hosting of the event hence improving the performance of the global tourism industry.

In the African tourism bloc, South Africa is a splendid example of a destination that is now enjoying the benefits of successfully hosting the FIFA World cup in 2010. Most mega sporting events are now going there hence contributing a lot to the global tourism traffic. In the not so distant past, Zimbabwe and Zambia co-hosted the 20<sup>th</sup> session of the UNWTO's General Assembly from August 24 to August 29, 2013 in Victoria Falls and Livingstone respectively. This helped both Zimbabwe and Zambia to build awareness, brand and positioned them as prime tourist destinations hence improving the performance of the global tourism industry. However, the performance of the global tourism industry has been affected a lot by adverse tourism system shocks. Phenomena such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARs), tsunamis, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions as well as human caused calamities, for example, wars, crime and terrorism have made headlines adversely impacting on the global tourism in a diverse way as shall be seen as the yarn unfolds.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study used secondary data sources in form of literature narratives purposively drawn from tourist destinations which went through a tourism crisis. The tourist destinations were selected from across the globe so as to have a representative sample. The adverse effects spawned by crises were combed through to arrive at the aggregate impact on the performance of the global tourism industry. In the basket of the selected tourist destinations include Asia Pacific, Africa, Europe, North America and The Middle East to represent the international tourism industry. The choice of these destinations conform to [Bhatia \(2001\)](#) who identified these destinations as constituting the five functional tourism regions of the global tourism industry. The data employed relate to those specific tourist destinations which were impacted upon by tourism crises.

## 3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The ensuing is the discussion and analysis of findings gleaned from literature narratives showing the extent to which the tourism industry was affected by diseases, tsunamis, terrorism, and political instability, and a host of other adverse system shocks.

### 3.1. Impacts of SARs and Volcanoes

According to [Lee and Mckibbin \(2004\)](#) the rising impact of disease on a worldwide scale has affected global travel. The emergence of more virulent and vaccine-resistant forms of malaria in Africa and Asia has discouraged tourists from visiting those areas. Countries in Asia suffered a serious blow as a result of the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARs) early in 2003, which led to the cancellation of many flights and tourist movement. Respiratory infections are one of the leading causes of human mortality. In late 2002 the first reports arrived in the Western media of an outbreak of new respiratory diseases in Southern China which came to be known as SARs. The first cases of SARs emerged in mid November 2002 in Guangdong Province, China. In relation to [Lee and Mckibbin \(2004\)](#) six months after its first outbreak, the disease had spread to at least 30 countries and regions including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Spain, US and South Africa ([Smith et al., 2010](#)). SARs travel bans were put in place for the major affected areas in April 2003, initially in China especially Hong Kong and other cities in Asia and Canada followed. It was estimated that almost half the planned flights to South East Asia were cancelled during the month of April and total visitor arrivals declined by about two thirds over the course of the crisis, with corresponding effects on related parts of the economy, including hotels, restaurants, retail and shipping ([Bell and Lewis, 2005](#)).

According to [Bell and Lewis \(2005\)](#) the World Health Organisation (WHO) advised against all but essential travel to Toronto, noting that a small number of persons from Toronto appear to have “exported” SARs to other parts of the world. Toronto public health officials noted only one of the supposedly exported cases had been diagnosed as SARs and new SARs cases in Toronto were originating only in hospitals. Never the less, the WHO advisory was immediately followed

by similar advisories by several governments to their citizens. On 29 April, the WHO announced the advisory would be withdrawn on 30 April. Toronto tourism suffered as a result of WHO's advisory, prompting The Rolling Stones and others to organise the massive Molson Canadian Rocks for Toronto concert, commonly known as SARs stock, to revitalise the city's tourism trade.

According to (Heyman and Rodier, 2004) Singapore instituted thermal imaging scans to screen all passengers departing Singapore Changi Airport. It also stepped up screening of travellers at its Woodlands and Tuas checkpoints with Malaysia. Singapore had previously implemented this screening method for incoming passengers from other SARs affected areas, but it was to include all travellers into and out of Singapore by late May. Taiwan Taoyuan International airport added SARs checkpoints with an infrared screening system similar to Singapore's Changi airport. According to (Heyman and Rodier, 2004) most conferences and conventions scheduled for Toronto were cancelled and the production of at least one movie was moved out of the city. On 22 April, the CBC reported the hotel occupancy rate in Toronto was only half the normal rate and tour operators were reporting large declines in business. None the less, on 24 April the WHO extended its travel advice urging postponement of non essential travel to Toronto. At the time, city officials and business leaders in the city expected a large economic impact as a result and an official of the Bank of Canada said the travel ban would drastically affect Canada's national economy (Heyman and Rodier, 2004).

In Hong Kong tourism declined by 10 per cent to 15 per cent over the period with ripple effects felt through-out the region's economy, including 50 per cent drop in retail sales. However, tourism was affected across the entire East and South East region, in part because of inaccurate perceptions in tourism generating regions of which places were dangerous to travel to. Bell and Lewis (2005) cited that at the height of the epidemic, visitors and tourism declined by 80 per cent in Taiwan and almost as much in Singapore.

The outbreak of SARs affected the performance of the global tourism in a negative way as it created concern because of its newness, its ease of transmission in certain settings, and the ease of its spread through jet travel combined with widespread media coverage. Restrictions imposed by various national and international authorities diminished international travel in 2003 (Page and Connell, 2009).

Abbot (2006) stipulates that East and South Asia were affected by SARs in 2003 and 29 countries were victims of the syndrome. 774 deaths were recorded and about 8000 people were seriously affected by SARs. This resulted in a 41 per cent drop in international tourist arrivals in the East Asia Pacific tourism region (EAP). In addition to that, an 11 per cent fall in hotel occupancy was also recorded as a result of the syndrome. This led to a significant loss of revenue due to cancellation of bookings. Apart from the above, the FIFA women championship which was scheduled to be hosted in Beijing in the same year was rescheduled to America leading to the loss of revenue in hotels and tour operators. China was the hardest hit tourist destination within the EAP bloc. According to Parker *et al.* (2004), China's booming domestic and international tourism industry had suffered losses in tourism and related service industries as a result of SARs epidemic

in 2003. In face of the events concerning the SARs, World Health Organisation (WHO) had advised international travellers to avoid visiting some areas in China that had the most number of SARs cases. In this regard, SARs impacted severely on China`s tourism sector which had suffered significant business losses hence depressing the performance of the global tourism industry.

Britain was severely hit by outbreaks of diseases. Firstly, there was the discovery of the BSE in British herds although with only limited ability to cross the species to humans scared away many potential visitors (Bell and Lewis, 2005). Secondly, there was also an outbreak of foot and mouth disease which despite being less dangerous to human beings received massive negative publicity in the form of scare stories in the foreign press and to some extent the results of the inept and draconian control measures in the UK that were perceived as actively discouraging tourist from visiting rural areas (Blake and Sinclair, 2003). The outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the United Kingdom was deemed one of the dreadful events that shook the tourism industry to the marrow in 2001. The rapid spread of the disease led to the imposition of restrictions on the movement of tourists on historic sites and other tourist attraction areas were closed. The accommodation industry in the United Kingdom suffered a great loss with England experiencing a 78 per cent loss, Scotland 91 per cent and Wales 95 per cent. In addition to that, there was a US\$2 billion loss in domestic visitors. The inbound tourism was the most affected as the country experienced a 90 per cent loss in revenue (Page and Connell, 2009).

Volcanoes are a equally devastating in the global tourism industry. Volcanoes can spew ash into the atmosphere and disrupt the movement of airlines. For example, airlines and international airports in Europe spluttered back to life after a week in 2010 subsequent to a volcanic eruption which spewed ash into the atmosphere and disrupted air transport over much of Europe.

This had negatively affected the global tourism industry as it led to the cancellation of flights and bookings in hotels and tour operators (Guomndsoon, 2010). However, the same author goes on to say that there have been some winners during the volcanic ash eruption. Cruise and ferry operators, car rental firms and the railways experienced a surge in business and a few lucky cab drivers were able to benefit from wealthy individuals who were prepared to pay premium prices to be driven long distances. Some hotels and resorts found that tourists extended their stay because they were unable to return to their home country. On another case, the Caribbean Island experienced a catastrophic blow due to a Soufriere Hills volcano at Montsenat on 8 January 1997 (Abbot, 2006). The event led to the destruction of both the inhabitants and Plymouth the capital.

This led to the subsequent loss of jobs and 90 per cent of the inhabitants were forced to move from the island. In addition to the above, the Soufriere Hills volcano destroyed infrastructure such as road networks and airports that facilitate the smooth flow of tourism. This discouraged potential investors to invest in the country as they fear to lose their resources to such events. On a positive note, volcanoes have proved to be a blessing in some destinations in Europe. They produce spectacular scenery and attract tourists from all over the world to bring income hence improving the performance of the global tourism industry. For example, in 2010 Iceland had a volcanic eruption which interrupted the operations of airlines but is now one of the

greatest natural attractions that draw tourists from many parts of the globe (Guomndsoon, 2010).

### 3.2. Impacts of Earthquakes and Tsunamis

Earthquakes can be comprehended as the collision of tectonic plates that form the upper crust of the earth and can trigger tsunami at times (Abbot, 2006). The performance of the global tourism industry has been severely affected by the frequent occurrence of earthquakes and tsunamis mainly in the EAP bloc. Earthquakes and tsunamis destroy infrastructure as well as discouraging travellers to visit a particular destination for safety reasons. This has a serious negative impact on the performance of the global tourism industry as some international travels to some destinations are cancelled. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2008, South West China suffered from a Sichuan earthquake which led to the death of 7000 people and many more people were left homeless and jobless. This impacted negatively on the country's economy as tourism is the main activity in South West China. In the previous year tourism is said to have brought 121.73 billion Yen to the country, which is about 11.6 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). In addition to that the frequency occurrence of earthquakes discouraged investors to invest in that province of China hence depriving the excellent performance of the global tourism industry (Guomndsoon, 2010).

According to Hall (2010) Japan also suffered tremendously with cancelled travel bookings after it experienced a devastating earthquake in 2001 and also the Fukushima nuclear plant disaster. Following the earthquake, the US government issued advisory for Americans not to travel to Japan and many other destinations in the EAP region unless absolutely necessary. In the same year, Hawaii also suffered from tsunami waves hitting the island as a result of the massive earthquake. The wave led to the destruction of road networks and shores. The resorts on the Hawaii Island remained closed for a long period of time after the occurrence of the wave (Hall, 2010).

According to the Post Tsunami Global Travel Research report, of the 13 256 travellers polled in 10 countries, 52 per cent said their travel plans to affected countries had not been changed because of the tsunami, while 30 per cent admitted that they were deterred from visiting disaster affected tourist sites. Hall (2010) pointed out that the report commissioned by the UNWTO and Visa Asia-Pacific revealed that some 49 per cent Japanese and 60 per cent Koreans were less likely to travel in Asia and 54 per cent Japanese and 63 per cent Korean travellers were less likely to visit tsunami hit countries. Tourists in some countries are more afraid and refrain to travel to tsunami-affected tourist destinations. The scenario above clearly shows how earthquakes and tsunamis negatively impacted on the performance of the global tourism industry.

According to Hall (2010) the hardest hit countries in the global tourism industry as a result of Japan's earthquake and tsunami were New Zealand, India and Australia. New Zealand was affected as Japan is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner therefore business travel between the countries had been suppressed. Travel to and from India for business was also affected. Japan is the 5<sup>th</sup>

largest inbound group of tourists to Australia therefore it severely impacted on Australia's tourism business. Many other countries had tourism and other economic sectors affected negatively as a result of Japan's earthquake and tsunami hence these became adverse tourism system shockers to the global tourism industry. On December 2004 travel into the East and South Asia was severely curtailed as a result of the occurrence of a tsunami. 7000 tourists are documented to have died in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. There was also a massive destruction of property, road networks, lodges and airports. Thailand in particular recorded a whopping 60 per cent drop in tourism receipts (Abbot, 2006).

As stated by Beirman (2003) climate change is also contributing to the occurrence of natural disasters thereby affecting tourist destinations globally. Areas already prone to heavy rainfall or hurricanes have witnessed conditions that have been catastrophic for locals and tourists alike. On 26 December 2003, an earthquake off the coast of Sumatra triggered a tsunami that struck more than a dozen countries throughout the Indian Ocean. The tsunami had a substantial impact on tourism around the Indian Ocean but its greatest impact in terms of tourism was on Thailand (Hudson, 2008). The tsunami had an overwhelming human and physical impact. Before the tsunami in 2003, tourism in Thailand was an all-time high, continuing its strong growth with a 20 per cent rise and the visitor numbers reaching 12 million. According to Hudson (2008) the tsunami had devastating effects on Thailand's Andaman coast, leaving more than 8000 people nearly half of them foreign tourist dead or missing. Damages and losses were close to US\$2.2 billion, hitting the tourism sector particularly high.

In 2004 there were 11.68 million visitors to Thailand. The Tsunami killed more than 5000 people half of them were tourists. The greatest effects were in respect to the image of the destination in terms of safety in areas affected by the tsunami. According to (Bell and Lewis, 2005) the Authority of Thailand announced that the losses the Thai tourism could be as high as 50 billion bant (US\$1.2 billion, 52 per cent higher than the government's original forecast. In the aftermath of this catastrophic event, tourists did not return as quickly as expected to Thailand's South-West resorts including Phuket, Krabi, Khao Lak and Phi Phi substantially affecting earnings of hotels, airlines, restaurants, tour operators and souvenir vendors. According to Cooper and Hall (2008) since the disaster, the hotel and airline bookings for the affected areas were down by 70 per cent as at mid 2005. There was no change in the global tourism traffic despite the clean-up efforts, development of a tsunami warning system and the government rebuilding budget of US\$750 million. On August 29, the Gulf coast region of the New Orleans, US was hit by one of the most destructive hurricanes in modern times. Hurricane Katrina devastated the city damaging 80 per cent of it and killing 1836 people on its path. According to Hudson (2008) New Orleans had received about 10 million visitors a year but after the disaster, hotel bookings were still down by 25 per cent.

The impact of Hurricane Katrina on tourism in Louisiana and New Orleans was dramatic. By mid 2006, the Development of Culture and Tourism (DCRT) reported that 'negatives images of affected areas portrayed by the media had resulted in a significant loss of interest in tourism'.

Louisiana was expected to have lost 20 per cent of its visitors in one year which is approximately US\$2.2 billion and New Orleans was losing an average of US\$15.2 million per day, with a consequent loss in state and local tax revenue of approximately US\$125 million per year. Documented literature to date indicate that total enquiries to the Louisiana office of tourism via the internet, telephone and mail dropped by over a third after Hurricane Katrina from over 3 million in 2003 to 2005 to just under 2 million in 2005 to 2006. The impact on the region's image was demonstrated in a study conducted by Horner and Swarbrooke (2004) which indicated that travellers were most concerned over their personal safety and their finances when considering a trip to New Orleans.

### 3.3. Impacts of Terrorism

Terrorism is the threat or use of anxiety-inducing, extra normal violence for political purposes by any individual or group, whether acting for or in opposition to established governmental authority, when such action is intended to influence the attitudes and behaviours of a target group wider than the immediate victims and when, through the nationality or foreign ties of its perpetrators, its location, the nature of its institutional or human victims, or the mechanics of its resolution, its ramifications transcend national borders (Mickolus *et al.*, 2006).

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon in tourism circles, what is new is its use to attain political ends and global media coverage (Hudson, 2008). Terrorism as already alluded to involves the use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce, especially for political purposes. Terrorist attacks are usually done by anti-government groups or rebels in an effort to humiliate the reigning government. When terrorist attacks on tourists do take place, they have a number of interrelated effects on the global tourism industry. They may lead to a fall in tourism demand from specific national markets or the market in general. Swarbrooke and Horner (2004) recognise that terrorist attacks may be deliberately targeted on the tourist. For example, the massacre of 58 tourists at Luxor in Egypt in 1997 had a negative impact on the global tourism industry as tourists were no longer willing to visit Egypt for safety reasons. Apart from the above, Egypt went through political violence and demonstrations. This posed a threat to many national football teams that were billed to play Egypt in its home grounds. Zimbabwe, for example, petitioned FIFA to have its match against Egypt on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2013 moved to a neutral venue since the country was purported to be unsafe for the players and fans. The continuous publication by the media of the horror of terrorist attacks and their subsequent results are often enough to sway away many international travellers towards reconsidering their vacation plans. In accordance with Beirman (2000) and Hall (2010), terrorism has been a factor with which the tourism industry has had to cope with for at least the past 25 years.

Summarising the attacks that have occurred since 2002 and resulted in deaths, ten out of fifteen countries have had red flags raised as prone to terrorist attacks, hence not safe for tourism (Page and Connell, 2009). This has impacted negatively on the global tourism traffic. The escalation in the number of attacks together with the near certainty of the predictions that

further attacks will take place, especially on the United Kingdom and United States of America has led to long term uncertainty about growth prospects for global tourism travel.

On further reflection, although all the preceding phenomena have impacted negatively on the global tourism they also had positive effects. According to [Hudson \(2008\)](#) most tourism boards after the crises partnered with local businesses to offer lower airfares to destinations attacked by acts of terrorism. To be specific, Lguna-Phuket cut the hotel rates by 50 per cent as a way of restoring and marketing the destination. Other hotels offered two for one deals, extra meals included in the price of hotel rooms, lower room rates and as well as offering special packages to stimulate depressed demand. In accordance to [Hudson \(2008\)](#) 'the tsunami cleansed the water and beaches thereby improving and helping the ecosystem'.

[Page and Connell \(2009\)](#) cited that terrorism can take many forms from simple hijackings, skyjackings, kidnapping, bombing of the transport systems and resorts through to the new phenomenon of undetectable germs. The direct effects of terrorism in tourism are manifold, encompassing reduced tourism activity, relocation of tourism to other areas, damage to the public images of the tourist destinations and economic damage to the tourism industry. This has pessimistically affected the global tourism traffic. In line with [Lee and Mckibbin \(2004\)](#), wild cat events are high impact and these events have a global impact. The terrorist attack in the United States of America on 11 September 2001 (9/11) is an example of a wild cat event.

Another scenario identified by [Swarbrooke and Horner \(2004\)](#) is whereby terrorist attacks are not deliberately targeted on the tourists but tourists may be victims by accident. The attack on the World Trade Centre in USA on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2001 is a case in point. A civil airline was used to deliberate the attack. This made people frightened to travel though it was not targeted on tourists. The attack also led to the destruction of infrastructure hence hampering development.

Apart from the above, the same authors stipulate that the publicity given to the attack damaged tourism to the destination where the attack took place. Therefore, terrorism makes people frightened to travel to a destination where terrorist attacks are a common disaster. Tourists could fear for the loss of their lives hence impacting negatively on the performance of the global tourism industry.

Terrorism attacks clearly show how events in a specific location can affect the global political and economic system. According to [Cooper and Hall \(2008\)](#), the impacts of the 9/11 are still reverberating through the tourism industry system to the present day in terms of airport and transport securities and the perception of the destination. The international tourism to the US dropped precipitously following the attack and for a variety of reasons had not yet fully recovered as of 2007. The 9/11 crisis occurred at a time when the global tourism sector was facing an economic down turn and slow growth. The 9/11 sped up many problems facing specific sectors of the tourism industry such as the US airline industry and made it to face major financial and operational challenges. The immediate impact of the 9/11 on the global tourism was a 10 per cent drop in the number of tourists travelling, 10 per cent drop in US domestic flights, cancelling

of business travel, events, conferences and a sharp fall in the room occupancy in US and also theme parks which were left empty. [Blake and Sinclair \(2003\)](#) point out that a loss of US\$30 billion on GDP could have occurred through the tourism sector had it not been the state intervention in the airline industry.

Nepal is a classic example of a country where global terrorism, coupled with the on-going Maoist war wrecked its image as a popular adventure tourism destination between 2000 and 2003 ([Hudson, 2008](#)). [Blake and Sinclair \(2003\)](#) cited that security concerns sapped the vitality of the country as a desirable destination, especially for those from the West as they seemed to be the target of terrorist acts in international hubs. Turkey's terrorists have made it a point to targeting tourism. In 2006 after the bombings in the two Turkish resort towns, Kurdish militants warned tourists not to come to Turkey as it was not safe. In accordance with [Hudson \(2008\)](#) tourism was Turkey's second most lucrative sector and was worth US\$20 billion in 2005 before the bombings. Tourists from Western markets fear to travel to Muslim countries and there seemed now to be an entrenched general inertia of travel to cities threatened by Islamic extremists. In view of the foregoing, the threat of terrorists' attacks, actual or perceived has inhibited global travel.

On further analysis, the increasing rate of occurrence of terrorism has left many tourists feeling vulnerable, especially given sensationalist reporting in the media and the rapid dissemination of threats and attacks from all parts of the globe. As already illustrated, the September 11 crisis had a more dramatic impact than any other crisis. This led to a fear of additional terrorist attacks and a military response that had the potential to last a significant amount of time and spilled over into other geographical areas ([World Trade Organisation, 2001](#)). The initial reaction from the tourists after the 9/11 incident was to return home as soon as possible. Even though before the attacks the airline industry was already on the rocks in the US, the attacks just accelerated the process with massive job losses. According to [WTO \(2001\)](#) some areas of the US suffered 60 to 70 per cent decrease in occupancy and major job losses that totalled around 260 000. Ireland, Mexico and The Caribbean were badly hit due to their dependence on the US tourists to vacation on their countries. Some airline carriers were closed, so did some tour operators and travel agencies. Hotel occupancies dropped by over 2.7 per cent. More so airlines witnessed a 23 per cent decline in airline users. The sum total of all this was a huge toll on global tourism industry.

### **3.4. Impacts of War and Political Instability**

[Hall and O'Sullivan \(1996\)](#) assert that political instability is a condition of a country where a government has been toppled or is controlled by factions following a coup. The basic functional pre-requisites for social order, control and maintenance are unstable and periodically disrupted. Political instability in both the generating and destination regions influence travel propensity in a negative way. The facets of political instability are civil wars, coups, terrorism, riots and political protests or social unrest and strikes as summarised by [Hall and O'Sullivan \(1996\)](#).

Since 1950 to date, civil wars impacted negatively on the global tourism industry.

International war is a scenario whereby two or more countries enter into a battle field for political reasons, whilst on the other hand, civil wars are situations whereby two or more tribes of the same nation fight against each other as a result of political difference, for example, the Tutsi and Hutus in Rwanda, the Kikuyu in Kenya, Shona and Ndebele in Zimbabwe during the gukurahundi disturbances in the early 1980s. The occurrence of international war between Iran and Iraq over the Persian Gulf is one of the most dreadful events that took place in the 1990s and shook the international tourism industry. This severely crippled the performance of the global tourism industry as there was the destruction of infrastructure as well as making the environment unsafe for tourism activities. According to the information collected by the UNWTO, it was revealed that the Gulf war in 1991 and the Kosovo conflict in 1999 triggered a significant slowdown of tourism phenomenon.

According to [Sevil \*et al.\* \(1999\)](#), the outbreak of incessant wars has been the greatest threat to foreign travel for the past half century. Millions of tourists are reported to have patronised the former Yugoslavia every year during the 1980s but this market virtually disappeared in the 1990s when civil wars broke out. The Vietnam War and its aftermath killed off much tourism to South-East Asia in the 1960s and 1970s while the various wars in the Middle East curtailed travel there.

The on-going wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, coupled with concern over relations in 2008 between Russia and Georgia are further destabilising the desire to travel. In view of this, civil wars and ethnic strife have a record of inhibiting the development of tourism resulting in depressed global tourism traffic.

Along the same vein, the Chinese government crackdown on Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 led to a temporary down turn in tourism. The Chinese authorities cracked down on student protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989. According to [Page and Connell \(2009\)](#), the prime news coverage of the army tanks and chaos coincided with a period when the People's Republic of China had officially opened itself to international tourism. There was a negative world view of the government which resulted to changes in tourists' travel behaviour. Hotel occupancy rates in Beijing dropped below 30 per cent, 300 groups cancelled their travel plans and tourism earnings declined by US\$430 million in 1989 ([Page and Connell, 2009](#)). months of 1989 only 1092 tourists arrived from 5000 in the same period the previous year ([Page and Connell, 2009](#)).

The Phuket region which usually accounts for almost a third of Thailand's international tourist arrivals took long to recover after the tsunami. According to [Nidhiprabha \(2007\)](#), an average 12 per cent of Phuket's hotel rooms were damaged and occupancy rates were as low as 10 per cent in January 2005. In 2005 Phuket received 2.5 million visitors compared with 4.2 million in 2004. According to Chan Wangsatgarian, a regional executive of the Thai Tourism Service Association in April and May hotels had an occupancy rate of 15-20 per cent and the forecast for June that year was below 10 per cent. In accordance with [Cooper and Hall \(2008\)](#) Thailand is regarded as the land of smiles but the on-going concerns about the negative publicity on Thailand was not only because of the tsunami but also on political instability in Thailand. The

democratically elected government was disposed in a military coup in 2006 in Bangkok and there was on-going political violence due to actions of separatist groups seeking independence from the Muslim majority area and government forces. A series of deadly bomb blasts in tourism hot spots resulted in thousands travellers cancelling their holiday (Hudson, 2008). In summary, tsunamis, political instability, terrorism, and disease outbreak have wrecked havoc in the global tourism industry. Future prospects for the tourism industry though bright, growth trends have been dimmed due to the occurrence of these adverse system shocks.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS ON FUTURE RESEARCHES

The above discourse has made it clear that the growth of the tourism industry has been retarded by the frequent occurrence of adverse tourism system shocks. The discourse further bolsters the argument proffered by scholars that the tourism industry though fragile to crises is indeed a resilient sector since it defiantly managed to weather all the negative system shocks as attested to by the aggregate global tourism traffic that has been on an upward trend. Another insight highlighted is that of positive tourism system shocks which are capable of improving the performance of the global tourism industry and are happening at an improved pace and therefore research along this dimension is necessary.

Whilst it is concluded from the review that shocks to the tourism industry tend to have temporary rather than permanent effects, solidifying Lockwood and Medlik (2001)'s argument that the sector is resilient, it does not mean that tourism practitioners sit on their laurels, instead they should put in place recovery strategies. Also the discussion has shown that negative tourism system shocks particularly SARs, earthquakes, terrorism, are increasingly becoming a hindrance to tourism development especially among those tourist destinations that are ill-equipped to re-tool after such disasters. Literature to date has concentrated more on negative shocks at the expense of positive shocks which also have an effect on tourism traffic. Such dearth of literature on positive tourism shocks which include sporting events like the Sydney Olympics of 2000 which stimulated massive tourism development needs to be explored in order to ascertain their impact on investment and tourist destination's of GDP. Other positive tourism system shocks is the FIFA 2010 World cup that was held in South Africa and is speculated to have created 614 direct and 834 indirect job opportunities for the tourism sector needs empirical studies. It is the contention of the writer that there is need in future to give adequate academic space coverage of positive system shocks as these also are occurring at an equally increasing rate.

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