

# **Tourism Impact of Gun Violence**

Factors of Economic Importance

The Tourism Academy

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## **Introduction**

Gun violence has in recent years been identified as a major health issue that undermines the quality of life of American denizens. The nexus between health and economy is often cyclical with perceptions about violence inadvertently affecting key economic areas such as investments and tourism. With the rising number of gun violence cases in America, there has been a decline in tourism rates due to misconceptions and perceptions regarding safety.

The tourism industry in America is undoubtedly one of the largest in the world with millions of domestic and international tourists visiting yearly. The success of the industry has however been put to the test due to perceived risk and perceived safety levels among tourists (Locker, 2019). The subsequent essay presents an expository analysis of the impact of gun violence on tourism in and within the United States of America. The analysis is guided by the thesis that increased mass shooting incidents have a potential influence on travel attitudes and behaviors thus minimizing tourist levels in America.

## **Analysis**

The United States of America has for decades now enjoyed the supremacy and monopoly of issuing travel warnings to its denizens when it comes to countries marred by violence or terrorism. The balance of power has however shifted with foreign nations warning their citizens to avoid travelling to the United States. In 2019, Venezuela, Uruguay, and Japan issued warnings to their travelers after the mass shootings reported in El Paso, Ohio, and Dayton that led to the deaths of 31 people (Scott Smith Associated Press, 2019). Comparative analyses reveal that the travel warnings were largely politically motivated although they required the travelers to exercise caution when and if they visit the United States of America.

China also joined the group of nations issuing travel warnings with its statement indicating the possibility of mass shootings. The foreign ministry spokesperson, Wang Wanbin, reported that public security has deteriorated in the United States with up to 693 mass shootings being reported in 2021 which contributed to the deaths of 44,000 people (Scott Smith Associated Press, 2019). Furthermore, the Chinese alluded that the mass shootings are politically or racially motivated with minorities like Asian Americans being targeted (Locker, 2019). In light of this, there was a need to protect the travelers and tourists from any form of violence by cutting down outbound excursions into the U.S.

With mass shootings being reported majorly in schools, research shows that the rates of university enrollment have dwindled expeditiously. Most universities in the United States open their doors to foreign students although the increased concerns and attitudes about safety have undermined retention or enrollment rates. There has been a decline in the number of foreign students by up to 49% (The College Post, 2019). A recent survey revealed that 25% of students cited concerns about gun violence at their institution while another 37% were worried about violence in the local communities (The College Post, 2019). Consequently, students from South East Asia were likely to be worried about gun violence followed by those from the Middle East/ North Africa, East Asia as well as South and Central Asia.

The international students enrolling in U.S. universities contribute at least \$39 billion to the economy. Between 2017 and 2019, there was a 10% enrollment decrease which hampered the tourism rates in the United States (Wood, 2019). This is because the students often dabble between studying and visiting tourist locations in the United States of America. Their perceptions of gun violence are also shared with the locals in the home countries which in turn causes avoidance

behaviors (Wood, 2019). The end result is a dip in desire or proclivity to travel to the U.S. for studies or even tourist excursions.

Tourism stocks suffer too. Fortune reported, "After police say 64-year-old Stephen Paddock killed at least 58 people and wounded more than 500 in the mass shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Festival at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, the casino giant behind the hotel shed about \$909 million from its market capitalization..."

On Mass Shootings and the Performance of Tourism Stocks, "During a four-day window after the day of the event, tourism firms experienced an underperformance of 0.92% relative to the market return during the same time. This would produce an annual underperformance of nearly 40% outside of the market-wide performance."

Consumer sentiment takes a hit. Skift asked travelers: Have recent mass shootings across the United States changed your mind about visiting the country?

- 8.8% of UK, 8.5% of German and 10.3% of Japanese travelers had either already canceled or are reconsidering an upcoming trip

In the same survey, Skift asked, Which of the following is more likely to discourage you from traveling to the United States? with general political climate, President Trump, mass shootings, and the U.S. dollar as answers.

- 25.7% of UK, 27.8% of Japanese and 4.8% of German respondents answered "mass shootings."

The US is not alone. Following the Parisian terrorist attack by gunmen and suicide bombers that left 130 dead, hotel occupancy rates fell from 77 to 69 percent between 2015 and 2016, according to Statista.

Furthermore, the mentions of US gun violence in foreign media such as BBC or even DW have contributed to the creation of risk perceptions regarding safety. The media is oft tasked with agenda-setting which means that they are viewed as vital

sources of information. Agencies like BBC view gun violence as a common factor in the United States. In a recent news report, the agency cited that mass shootings characterized just another day in America filled with gunfire, panic, and fear (Ferdman, 2015). Such statements have played a role in accentuating fear and anxiety among tourists thereby undermining travel.

## **Conclusion**

In due summation, gun violence has a negative impact on tourism in the United States of America. The preceding essay shows that the increased cases of gun violence have contributed to risk perceptions and safety concerns from states and individuals respectively. Furthermore, the number of foreign students has dwindled thus undermining enrollment and retention rates. There is a need for gun control policies to be introduced which will help minimize mass shootings and reestablish America's dominance in the tourism market.

## References

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