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## The Political Nature of Tourism: How A Country's Political Factors Influence Tourist's Willingness to Travel

Camilla Alarcon  
*Brigham Young University - Provo*

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Honors Thesis

THE POLITICAL NATURE OF TOURISM: HOW A COUNTRY'S POLITICAL  
FACTORS INFLUENCE TOURIST'S WILLINGNESS TO TRAVEL

by  
Camilla Alarcón

Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of graduation requirements  
for University Honors

Political Science Department  
Brigham Young University  
June 2021

Advisor: Dr. Dan Nielson

Readers: Dr. Jay Goodliffe and Dr. Scott Sanders

Honors Coordinator: Dr. Ethan Busby



## ABSTRACT

### THE POLITICAL NATURE OF TOURISM: HOW A COUNTRY'S POLITICAL FACTORS INFLUENCE TOURIST'S WILLINGNESS TO TRAVEL

Camilla Alarcón

Political Science Department

Bachelor of Arts

Hard currency earned from travel and tourism feeds an important share of currency reserves in many countries and is often a key source of income, but how do political factors influence travelers' decisions to visit and spend money in destination countries? In this paper, I argue that political factors such as regime type, political violence, and corruption can override traditional tourism attractors in determining potential visitors' professed likelihood of traveling to hypothetical vacation destinations. In addition, I expect that political factors will hold less weight in determining self-reported likelihood of traveling when proper nouns are used to describe country profiles instead of hypothetical profiles. In a conjoint design, participants sampled from Amazon's Mechanical Turk are randomly exposed to details for hypothetical countries and for actual destinations revealing actual country names. The vignettes that contain the actual country names will randomly reveal actual countries' political features compared to controls in which political and governance features are omitted. The conjoint design also randomly exposes participants to additional factors such as geographic location,

attractiveness of the tourist destination, crime rates, disease prevalence, and COVID-19 health risks. Participants are asked a series of outcome questions measuring their willingness to travel to the country, the perceived safety of the country, and how much money they would be willing to spend to vacation at the chosen destination. Population marginal means are estimated for the conjoint design based on a basket of high-tourism countries' attributes. I find that corruption is a stronger predictor of travel propensity than nearly any other attribute in the conjoint profile and that political factors produce some of the strongest effects compared to other country features. I also find that in both Thailand's and Egypt's vignette profiles, the presence of political factors decreases interest in travel, perceived level of safety, and how much money respondents would be willing to spend to vacation at the chosen destination.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis came to life because of the help I received from departments, faculty members, mentors, friends, and family. I would like to thank the Honors Department and the Political Science Department for funding this project. Specifically, I would like to thank Vika and Julie for their endless support. There were many road bumps that I experienced, and moments where I didn't think I would be able to complete my thesis. However, it was with their encouragement, and their patience, that I was able to successfully complete my thesis.

I am especially grateful to my thesis committee Dr. Dan Nielson, Dr. Jay Goodliffe, Dr. Scott Sanders, and Dr. Ethan Busby. I have had the privilege of knowing Dan for my entire undergraduate career at BYU. Not only was he the one who taught me how to conduct a research project from start to finish, but it was his Political Inquiry class that re-ignited my love for political science and founded my new passion for research experiments. His passion and dedication to better understanding international relations helped me identify, and interpret, important findings in my thesis and make broader connections to the field. I have worked for Dr. Goodliffe for the last three years, and it is because of his incredible teaching skills that I am able to interpret such rigorous statistical methods. As Dr. Goodliffe's research assistant, I was able to help him find evidence in support of his working papers, as well as learn advanced statistical methods, all of which helped me progress and develop my Honors Thesis. Dr. Goodliffe is not simply a professor I work for, he is also my mentor and someone who I reach out to for career advice. While I have been directly working on this thesis for the last year, this has been a

broader interest of mine for quite some time; it was an interest that I learned I had while taking Scott's *Sociology of International Development* class. I'm thankful for Scott and the way his style of teaching allows for students to express their creativity in analyzing social issues. I would also like to thank Dr. Busby, who is someone I did not think I would get to work with so closely in a time span of less than a year. Dr. Busby really helped me push my thesis to the end of the finish line. Although he came into my committee halfway through the development of my thesis, Dr. Busby took the time to help me with some of the harder aspects of it. I'm extremely grateful for his willingness to jump right in, help me when I needed it, and for reassuring me that I was not a bother.

I would also like to thank my family members who supported me, encouraged me, and fed me every step of the way. To my friends who stayed up late with me discussing my thesis and celebrating every milestone with me, thank you. Lastly, I would like to thank Professor Monson and Professor Pope for providing me with critical feedback as I designed my experiment.



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## I. Introduction

In 2019, the *United Nations World Tourism Organization* (UNWTO) recorded 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals and projected that this number would only continue to increase (“WORLD” 2019). The tourism industry is one that affects the social, political, and economic facets of a country. Because of this, understanding how various countries' features impact perceptions of a country's safety is critical for the development of the tourism industry. Existing tourism literature has focused on the push and pull factors that affect travelers' choice of vacation destinations; however, there has not been a thorough study that investigates how different political factors influence travel decision making. By acquiring a better understanding of how political factors and other traditional tourism attractors influence one's decision to travel, it will show how the political makeup of a country directly influences tourism rates.

The expansion of globalization has led to an increase in the number of open borders. This increase has served to strengthen the development of the tourism industry in various countries as more tourists are being welcomed in. Once governments started to recognize the positive effects tourism was having in their country, they began to encourage it: “All governments recognized the economic benefits, [and] others also viewed the arrival of international tourists as an indication of political legitimacy...” (Jamal and Robinson 2012, 191). Despite political conflicts consistently arising within countries, the local tourism industry has been able to diffuse such issues by “emphasizing the economic rewards of tolerance” (Jamal and Robinson 2012, 193). However, if tourists' safety and security concerns cannot be controlled or managed, it can lead to a decrease in future tourism arrivals which can ultimately lead to subsequent economic

consequences for the host country. While it is clear that the tourism industry is dependent on the political stability of a country, it still remains unclear whether a country's political makeup influences tourists' decisions to travel or if there are other traditional tourism attractors that have more of an influence in the decision-making process.

Although there are many countries involved in the tourism industry, research has shown that Global South countries are more dependent on money generated by tourism than Global North countries (Kővári and Zimányi 2011). Due to this economic dependency on the tourism industry, the development of political freedoms and social opportunities are often ignored. While it is undeniable that the tourism industry has the potential to influence a country's economic development, the relationship between tourism and politics is one that is not often examined. Does political violence have the power to deter foreigners from visiting a country despite its famous tourist sites? The regime type, corruption, and political violence in a country are factors that can depress rather than boost tourism rates.

## **II. Literature Review**

Although there is not much literature from political science scholars that seek to understand how tourism and politics intertwine, there is rich and diverse literature from tourism scholars that strive to explain the relationship between politics and tourism. One of the few political science scholars who acknowledges the interplay of politics and tourism is Political Scientist Harry G. Mathews, who advocates for the inclusion of international tourism within political science research. Mathews believes that there are three types of political activities that relate to the tourism industry: "politics of tourism in

the marketplace, that is, in the metropolitan countries; politics and tourism in developing host nations; and ideological perceptions of international mass tourism” (1975, 198).

My research will mainly focus on the last two types of political activity in relation to tourism. Mathews notes that while the tourism industry is an “attractive source of foreign exchange” and one that has the appearance of modernization, the industry can create problems that need to be dealt with through the political system, such as unequal economic distribution, corruption, and dependency (Mathews 1975). In relation to this observation, I will examine how the appearance of modernization, measured by regime type and other tourism factors, influences tourists’ perceptions of safety, interest in traveling, and how much money they would be willing to spend to vacation at the chosen destination. Does regime type, such as a full democracy, overshadow the negative characteristics associated with a country, such as levels of political violence and corruption? Additionally, how do traditional tourism attractors influence perceptions of a country’s safety when the country is experiencing political unrest?

In explaining the ideological perception of international mass tourism, Mathews examines the differences between the two main competing ideologies in the tourism industry. The first ideology, which I will label as a “positive good,” sees tourism as a means to promote development and cultivate peace and understanding; the second ideology, which I will label “negative tourism,” critiques the industry and claims that it is an elite activity that exacerbates cultural tensions and alienates locals from controlling the industry (Burns and Novelli 2007). These competing ideologies should be examined when understanding what influences a tourists’ destination choice. To gain a better understanding of how these ideologies play out in the tourism industry, I will ask

respondents what ideology they subscribe to and assess how that influences their interest in traveling and spending money in a host country. Additionally, I will examine how respondents' tourism ideology impacts what factors they deem most important in determining the safety of a country. Analyzing these effects is something that hasn't been done within the field of political science or tourism.

Most scholars use case studies to examine how changes in safety and security affect vacation destination choices (Sirakaya, Sheppard, & Mclellan 1997; Stepchenkova et al. 2017; Gelbman and Timothy 2010; Chen et al. 2016; Kóvári, István, and Krisztina Zimányi 2011; Hall and O'sullivan 1996; Pizam, Tarlow, & Bloom, 1997; Sönmez 1998). One researcher, Stepchenkova et al. (2017), examined how Russians' desire to vacation in the U.S. was affected by "perceptions of the U.S. as a country and as a vacation destination, animosity toward the U.S., and Russian tourists' level of national attachment and ethnocentric tendencies" (553).

Another study investigated the transformation of hostile borders to tourist destinations and found that tourism development has the potential to "strengthen relations of peace and cooperation" (Gelbman and Timothy 2010). In addition to the examination of a country's perception and political environment, many tourism scholars have studied how the images of political entities influence evaluations of a foreign nation (Chen et al. 2016; Alexander et al. 1999; Hermann et al. 1997; Bilali 2010). My research will investigate how attitudes towards a country's safety changes when participants are exposed to facts about the regime type, political violence, and level of corruption in a real and hypothetical country.

Most closely related to my study is research done by Chen et al. (2016), which examines how the concept of international stereotypes influences the overall image of a foreign nation and an individual's perception of that foreign nation as a vacation destination. In this article, international stereotypes "refer to [the] overall images of a foreign nation, stemming from the perceived relationship between two nations" (26). These researchers studied "how stereotypes of China, as perceived by Taiwanese residents, influenced their destination image of China" (29). Destination image here refers to the perception of China in relation to the international conflict between Taiwan and China. To understand how international stereotypes impact China's destination image, they conducted interviews with Taiwanese residents who were "asked to freely express how they perceived the political relation, ... goal compatibility, relative power, and relative cultural status between China and Taiwan" (29).

Their results show that international stereotypes impact the overall image of a foreign nation and an individual's perception of that nation as a tourist destination (Chen et al. 2016). My research will build off this study by measuring the weight political factors have on perceptions of a country. Rather than studying how international stereotypes influence the image of a country, I will examine how indirect measures of tourism shape the perceived safety of a country and tourists' interest in traveling and spending money.

It is also important to note that Nielson, Hyde, and Kelley (2019) use a similar survey experiment as the one I developed. However, their experiment serves to evaluate how certain attributes of election monitoring influence actors' perceived legitimacy of the organization (2019). They argued that the credibility of election observers ought to

depend on their characteristics and performance. To test their hypothesis, they used three survey-based experiments that primed actors with information about specific attributes of an organization and randomly varied whether respondents saw “real or hypothetical election observer groups”(2019, 2). They used this type of experimental model to assess how certain characteristics would influence the perceived legitimacy of an organization (2019, 2). Upon their exposure to the profiles, respondents were asked to “vote on which organizations should be invited to observe future elections in their country” (2019, 6). This response was used as a behavioral outcome measure. Randomizing certain information about organizations, as well as randomizing if the profile used real or hypothetical organizations, allowed the researchers to isolate the effect substantive features had on the legitimacy of an organization. Although they found that their primes were not effective in “producing consistent, measurable changes in responses among NGOs across both the hypothetical and real-world observer groups,” they did find that real-world organizations were preferred over hypothetical ones (2019, 1).

The effect found in this study is crucial for my experiment, as I follow a similar experimental structure. In addition to the conjoint profiles, I will use vignettes that describe characteristics of two real countries: Egypt and Thailand. Some vignettes will contain solely traditional tourism facts of the country while others will randomly expose participants to a country’s political factors. Ultimately, respondents will be randomly exposed to a conjoint hypothetical country profile and vignettes that contain brief information about a real country’s tourism industry and/or its political makeup. Similar to Nielson, Hyde, and Kelley, this randomization feature allows me to identify what effect

hypothetical country profiles have versus a real country profile, irrespective of its political features (2019).

As I have illustrated, research within this field typically focuses on country-specific case studies to see how politics affects the tourism industry. I want to expand this area of knowledge by exploring how the contextual factors of a destination image, such as safety and security, can also affect the likelihood of traveling. By showing varying information on the level of safety and security within a real or hypothetical country – such as framing regime type, political violence, and corruption – as well as including other traditional tourism attractors, I will be able to identify what country characteristics matter most in determining a country’s perceived level of safety, tourists’ likelihood of traveling and willingness to spend money.

### **III. Hypotheses**

According to Blake and Martin (2008), it is a commonly held belief that democratic regimes are better equipped to hold governing officials accountable, and therefore, should experience lower levels of corruption. Essentially, it is assumed that if a country is democratic, then corruption and levels of political violence are less likely to occur. To confirm this assumption, Blake and Martin explore the relationship between corruption and regime type with the 1991 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) data. They find that consolidated democracies are associated with lower levels of perceived corruption. Their findings lead me to believe that regime types, such as a “full” and “flawed” democracy, will overshadow corruption levels and political violence because once respondents are exposed to the regime type of a country, they will assume that

democratic governments are better equipped to manage corruption and political violence.

This leads me to my first hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 1:** Regime type will maintain a statistically significant impact on perceptions of safety and willingness to travel, even when compared to political violence and corruption. Specifically, the levels “full democracy” and “flawed democracy,” in the conjoint will overshadow non-democratic elements such as political violence and corruption.

When deciding where to travel, there are certain factors that *push* or *pull* tourists from potential host destinations. Push factors are defined as things that push tourists towards a country and are seen as travel motivations. Potential push factors are, socialization incentives, geographic location, attractiveness of the destination, and the need for adventure. Pull factors are defined as tangible and intangible resources that deter tourists from traveling. This can include cost, lack of time, and security and safety concerns. A study examining the effect safety had on the likelihood of traveling to a destination found that concerns for safety did in fact decrease the likelihood of traveling (Sirakaya, Sheppard, Mclellan 1997). Vacations are most typically known for their relaxing and invigorating experiences. Certain political factors, such as political violence and levels of corruption, can alter the experience that tourists have if they fear that the environment they are in is not safe for them. As such, if tourists perceive some type of threat in a potential tourist destination, such as political violence and corruption, they will pick an alternative destination “with similar characteristics but in a more stable condition” (Neumayer 2004, 260). The fear of potential involvement in political violence will have detrimental impacts on tourists' perceived level of safety, which leads me to my second hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 2:** High levels of political violence and corruption will decrease the likelihood of selecting that country as a travel destination and the perceived levels of safety compared to the absence of political violence and corruption.

Although there have not been very many studies that examine the impact COVID-19 health risks have on the potential likelihood of traveling, I want to see if varying levels of COVID-19 depresses traveling and perceptions of safety. In the beginning of the pandemic, countries all over the world shut their borders to limit the spread, and while some borders have remained closed to tourists, some countries have slowly started welcoming tourists back in. The Department of State still recommends that US citizens “do not travel abroad during the pandemic to slow down the global spread of COVID-19” (“COVID-19” 2021). While this is the current advice of the government, how influential will it be when borders are beginning to open, and tourists see that a country has low rates of COVID-19 infections? This question leads me to my third hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 3:** The negative perception of COVID-19 health risk in the host country will influence willingness to travel.

My next hypothesis is an observational hypothesis that I did not test experimentally. It is built off of Mathews’s research on the relationship between international tourism and politics and how different perspectives of the tourism industry will change perceptions of potential tourist destinations. Residents of developed countries see tourism as a symbol of “affluence and leisure,” which is not as easily applicable to residents of developing countries, who do not believe that tourism represents development, “but rather a kind of exploitation in which their countries become playgrounds for the metropolitan societies” (Mathews 1975, 201). While not all individuals may adopt this same stance, it is important to consider how an individual’s ideology towards the tourism industry influences the likelihood of them traveling and

being more aware of political features within a host country. Mathew's theory is built off citizens in the tourist country, but I want to focus on the tourists themselves to see how much influence their ascribed ideology has as they decide which country to travel to. This leads me to my observational hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 4:** Tourism ideology will influence willingness to travel. Specifically, if respondents subscribe to the "negative tourism" ideology, then political factors will be more important to them than traditional tourism attractors.

Because tourists value their safety and security when traveling abroad, I hypothesize that they will be willing to spend more money to travel to countries that ensure that their safety and security will not be compromised. Not only has Neumayer's (2004) study confirmed that tourists are less willing to travel to countries that have unstable conditions, but the countries where tourists originate can also issue travel bans or advisement warnings to deter tourists from traveling to unsafe regions of the world. If tourists are given the option to pick between two countries that have similar characteristics, but the only difference is that one is experiencing levels of political violence, then they will choose the safer option. This leads me to my fifth hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 5:** The emittance of political factors will increase participants' projected vacation spending in a country.

While hypothetical countries may sway tourists' potential vacation destinations, the use of a real country profile will be more influential in determining the perceived safety of a country. To truly grapple with the effects that a country's political factors have on tourism, using real country examples will allow me to examine the different weight those political factors hold in hypothetical profiles versus real profiles. Nielson, Hyde, and Kelley's (2019) findings suggest to me that real country profiles will be more influential than hypothetical country profiles. Their experiment contained information

about real and hypothetical organizations, and they found that real organizations were perceived as more legitimate than hypothetical ones. However, I anticipate that the use of a proper noun when describing the political factors of a potential tourist destination, will not hold as much weight in determining the likelihood of traveling because of the potential of having already visited the country, or knowing someone who has visited the country. This leads to my final hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 6:** Political factors will hold less weight in determining likelihood of traveling when participants are exposed to a real country profile.

To test these hypotheses, I first use a conjoint design to measure respondent's perceptions of a hypothetical tourism destination when presented with a variety of traditional tourism attractors, physical and health safety factors, and political features. The conjoint design allows me to independently identify the causal impact of several possible predictors of traveling to a hypothetical country. To further support the conjoint design and its findings, I also used a survey experiment in which respondents read two vignettes that contained information on a real country's tourism attractions and randomized whether respondents were exposed to the political features of the country. By comparing the substantive effects, I will be able to determine the difference between the conjoint profiles and the real country vignette profiles.

The results from the conjoint study show that political factors, specifically negative political factors, deter respondents from choosing that country as a travel destination. The findings from the survey experiment supports the findings from the conjoint design. Thus, showing that there is not a dramatic difference in willingness to travel between respondent's perceptions of a hypothetical country and the relationship between these same factors and respondent's actual willingness to travel to a real country,

when political factors are present. Furthermore, I show that corruption levels, not regime type or political violence, are the strongest predictors of traveling to a country in the conjoint experiment. Even more specifically, I find that corruption is a stronger predictor of travel propensity than nearly any other feature in the conjoint profile. Additionally, the effects of corruption are among the highest across the other attributes in the conjoint, with similar effects to whether a country is in Europe or Africa, or whether there are high or low rates of murder, rape, and assault.

#### **IV. Data and Methodology**

Due to the lack of data in this specific area, I created my own survey to generate internally valid experimental findings to answer my research questions. I gathered respondents through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) service, an online labor market in which many participants sign up for social science research studies and other small online tasks. MTurk employs individuals of all ages, races, and backgrounds to participate in surveys. Participants self-select into the study. For this reason, I had very little control over who was included or excluded from my proposed research. However, the MTurk population is fairly representative of the U.S. population so it is a good sample to use because it enables the causal identification of political factors on travel propensity to a broad cross-section of Americans, even if the sample is self-selected and not fully representative (Berinsky et al. 2012). This was ideal for my research, because I wanted to examine perceptions of safety and likelihood of traveling from a wide range of demographics.

Before beginning the questionnaire, participants were informed that they were about to begin a survey that asks them about their opinions on tourism and traveling.

Participants were also made aware that the survey would take roughly ten minutes and that any answers given would be completely anonymous and unable to be associated with their identifying information. Prior to exposure of the conjoint study or country vignettes, participants were asked questions about their travel history. These questions were meant to understand the relationship respondents have with traveling and the tourism industry.

To assess the effects various factors have on determining the perceived safety of a country and the likelihood of traveling to a country, participants were randomly exposed to a series of vignettes and factors in a conjoint study. A conjoint study is a type of survey design that presents respondents with hypothetical profiles that rotate through a random set of factors. Within the survey, and prior to exposure of the conjoint profiles, respondents were shown the following text: “Next, you will be shown a series of country profiles, places you might consider visiting. Although most travel is restricted at the moment, imagine that at some point in the future, when it is deemed safe, you are given an opportunity to travel to some destination. By clicking the button below, you will be presented characteristics of a vacation destination.” Each participant saw four conjoint designs and two out of four country vignette profiles. The conjoint design contained ten travel factors whose features were randomly assigned and ordered. Table 1 shows the different factors and their associated levels that could appear in the hypothetical country profile.

Table 1: Description of Factor Levels Randomly Chosen in the Conjoint Profiles

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Level</b>
Geographic Location	North America Including Central America Europe South America Africa Asia Oceania

Level of corruption	Highly corrupt Partly corrupt Mostly not corrupt Very clean
Attractiveness of the destination	UNESCO World Heritage Site National Parks Historical Significance Natural value Cultural value Religious value Monuments Buildings and structures (such as castles, bridges, skyscrapers, etc.)
Regime type	<b>Flawed democracy</b> (Has free and fair elections but there are problems in governance and low levels of political participation.) <b>Full democracy</b> (Basic political freedoms and civil liberties are respected and there are effective systems of checks and balances.) <b>Hybrid regime</b> (Has democratic elements, but elections are not free and fair.) <b>Authoritarian regime</b> (Elections, if they do occur, are not free and fair and there is disregard for abuses and infringements of civil liberties.)
Political violence	Currently in a civil war Frequent protests and riots Terrorism is a persistent problem Excessive cases of police brutality Political violence is extremely rare
Disease prevalence	High likelihood of contracting malaria Medium likelihood of contracting malaria Low likelihood of contracting malaria High likelihood of contracting dengue Medium likelihood of contracting dengue Low likelihood of contracting dengue High likelihood of contracting cholera Medium likelihood of contracting cholera Low likelihood of contracting cholera
COVID-19 health risks	35,000 positive COVID-19 cases per million 20,000 positive COVID-19 cases per million 5,000 positive COVID-19 cases per million 500 positive COVID-19 cases per million
Crime rates	High rates of theft Medium rates of theft

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Low rates of theft
High rates of murder
Medium rates of murder
Low rates of murder
High rates of rape and assault
Medium rates of rape and assault
Low rates of rape and assault

A conjoint study was most useful in this research design because it granted me the freedom to measure multidimensional preferences. A conjoint study “estimates the causal effects of multiple treatment components and assesses several causal hypotheses simultaneously” (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2013, 1). Since there are multidimensional factors that affect the tourism industry, the use of a conjoint study provided greater understanding to how those factors influenced the decision-making process of potential tourists. By evaluating which features increased willingness to travel, the conjoint study enabled me to isolate characteristics that are more important in the decision-making process (Sen 2017).

To increase the external validity of my conjoint study, I calculated the marginal means. Marginal means present the probability of selecting a profile with a given attribute, averaging over the other aspects of the profile (Leeper, Hobolt, & Tilley 2020). Using the marginal means for each of these factors is necessary for my study because I can determine which of these factors weighs more heavily in the minds of my respondents as they assess which country they are more likely to travel to. The results confirm that a country’s political factors do hold a significant amount of weight in determining if a respondent is willing to travel there, regardless of whether they are exposed to a hypothetical conjoint profile or a real country vignette profile.

For the second half of my experiment, I used vignette profiles. The vignette profiles contained the actual country names and randomly revealed actual countries' political features compared to controls in which political and governance features were omitted. I chose Egypt and Thailand as the countries that would be included in the vignette profiles. Both of these countries have high rates of tourism and have experienced, or are currently experiencing, some type of political unrest. Table 2 shows the content of the vignette for each of the country's control and treatment groups.

Upon exposure to the vignettes, participants were asked a series of outcome questions, which measured their interest in traveling to the country, the perceived safety of the country, and how much money they would be willing to spend to vacation at the chosen destination. To conclude the survey, participants were asked demographic questions such as sex, age, education, income, race and ethnicity, religion, party ID, and ideology.<sup>1</sup>

Table 2: Country Treatment and Control Vignette Profiles

<b>Country</b>	<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Control</b>
<b>Egypt</b>	“Egypt is most famously known for being the home to seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Some of the top-rated tourism attractions in Egypt include the Pyramids of Giza, – which is also considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World – Luxor’s Karnak Temple, and the Valley of the Kings. After years of political turmoil and violence, its tourism industry has made a rapid recovery. In 2018, approximately 9 million tourists visited Egypt. However, Egypt remains under an authoritarian regime where terrorism is a consistent problem. In addition, it experiences high levels of police and judicial system corruption. Most tourists	“Egypt is most famously known for being the home to seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Some of the top-rated tourism attractions in Egypt include the Pyramids of Giza, – which are also considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World – Luxor’s Karnak Temple, and the Valley of the Kings. In 2018, approximately 9 million tourists visited Egypt. Most tourists visit Egypt to marvel its ancient pyramids and temples, to shop for souvenirs at Khan El-Khalili Bazaar, and to relax at the Nile River. Egypt not only boasts its popular UNESCO World Heritage Sites, but also holds historical significance, and natural and religious value.”

<sup>1</sup> A more detailed layout of the survey design can be found in Appendix A.

	visit Egypt to marvel its ancient pyramids and temples, to shop for souvenirs at Khan El-Khalili Bazaar, and to relax at the Nile River. Egypt not only boasts its popular UNESCO World Heritage Sites, but also holds historical significance, and natural and religious value.”	
<b>Thailand</b>	“Thailand is the most famous tourist destination in Southeast Asia. Recently, Thailand experienced an improvement in their democracy rating, moving from a “hybrid regime” to a “flawed democracy.” Additionally, it is considered to have a mostly clean government, meaning that corruption is rarely a problem. Its tourist attractions range from national parks to ancient temples. Some of the top-rated tourism attractions in Thailand include The Grand Palace, the Floating Markets, and Ayuthaya Historical Park. Currently, Thailand is experiencing political protests with officers arresting pro-democracy advocates. Its tourism rates have experienced steady growth throughout the years, with the highest peak in 2019 with 39.8 million international arrivals. Most tourists visit Thailand to enjoy its tropical beaches, visit elephant wildlife sanctuaries, and to experience its rich food and culture. Thailand is a multifaceted tourist attraction that thrives off of its national parks, natural and cultural value, and its buildings and structures.”	“Thailand is the most famous tourist destination in Southeast Asia. Its tourist attractions range from national parks to ancient temples. Some of the top-rated tourism attractions in Thailand include The Grand Palace, the Floating Markets, and Ayuthaya Historical Park. Its tourism rates have experienced steady growth throughout the years, with the highest peak in 2019 with 39.8 million international arrivals. Most tourists visit Thailand to enjoy its tropical beaches, visit elephant wildlife sanctuaries, and to experience its rich food and culture. Thailand is a multifaceted tourist attraction that thrives off of its national parks, natural and cultural value, and its buildings and structures.”

I used an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression which allowed me to estimate the relationship between my independent variables and my dependent variables while controlling for covariates such as sex, race and ethnicity, and income. I also used a t-test to determine if there is a significant difference between the treatment and control group means. This test indicates if there is a difference between the perceived likelihood of traveling and levels of safety when political factors are present, versus when they are not.

The data from this project comes from a fairly representative survey of Americans collected through the use of MTurk in the winter of 2021. From this survey, a sample size

of 4,613 respondents were gathered. 50% of my respondents were female, and 50% were male. MTurk is known to have a more liberal pool of participants, and most participants identified as Democrats (42%), 40% identified as Republican, and a small portion identified as Independents (18%). The average age in the sample was 38, and over half of the population identified as White (72%). Additionally, almost half of the sample's (48%) highest level of education was a 4-year degree and the next highest level of education was a professional degree (18%). The average household income was between \$70,000 - \$79,000, and most respondents stated Catholic (37%) as their present religion. Compared to the national averages in the U.S., these demographics are fairly representative of the United States population. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2019 the female population was 50.8%, 76.3% of the population identified as White, 32.1% of the population had a bachelor's degree or higher, and the average household income was \$62,843 (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). While my sample is not exactly the same as national averages in the U.S, I believe that in comparison, it is a fairly representative sample.

In addition to these demographic statistics, I asked respondents a series of questions to gauge their interest and frequency of travel. I found that on average, respondents travel about once a year (33%) and typically stay in the host country for more than 1 week, but less than 1 month (34%). Most respondents also state that they believe that it is moderately important and very important to travel outside of their native country. Additionally, on average, respondents have traveled to approximately 20 countries and the most frequently visited regions are North America, including Central America, and Europe. The least traveled regions are Antarctica, Oceania, and Africa.

## V. Results

### *Conjoint Results*

Figure 1 shows the main conjoint results. This figure represents the impact of seeing a country with a particular factor and its associated level. Points that move to the right of the 0.5 marginal mean line indicate an increase in the likelihood of selecting a country with that particular feature. Points that move to the left of the 0.5 marginal mean line means that feature depressed the likelihood of selecting the country. Since the outcome measure in the conjoint is binary, the 0.5 line represents indifference, or the lack of effect, from an attribute. Probabilities that are significantly different from 0.5 indicate an effect from an attribute level. Figures 2 and 3 are the same results as Figure 1, but Figure 2 only shows the traditional tourism attributes, and Figure 3 only includes the political attributes in the conjoint profile.

In discussing the results of Figure 1, I will start at the top and work towards the bottom. The “attractiveness of the destination” feature in the conjoint had eight different possible levels that offer unique insight into whether this feature holds significant weight in determining a place of travel. As we can see, there are not statistically significant differences between *all* eight levels within this particular feature. A country’s religious value is the level that has the strongest negative effect on traveling to the selected country, with a UNESCO World Heritage Site being behind it. These two levels are not significantly different from each other but are significantly different from other “attractiveness” features. The levels with the greatest positive effect are cultural value and national parks, and they are statistically significant. While at first many would believe that the attractiveness of a destination would have a significant amount of

influence on a person’s decision to travel, I find that compared to other features within the conjoint, this didn’t have a very significant effect on respondent’s decision to travel to the selected country.

Corruption was one of the first political features that was presented in the conjoint profile, and it offers interesting results. When a country’s level of corruption is described as “very clean” or “mostly not corrupt,” I find that it has a positive statistically significant impact on propensity to travel to the hypothetical country. When a country’s level of corruption is described as “very clean,” it makes it between 3 and 8 percentage points more likely for the respondent to select that country as a preferred place of travel over the other country in the conjoint profile. When a country is stated as having a corruption level of “partly corrupt” and “highly corrupt” it significantly decreases the likelihood of selecting that country as a travel destination. A highly corrupt country has the most negative influence on travel. It makes it between 3 and 8 percentage points less likely to pick that country as a place of travel.

Figure 1: Attribute Influence on Chosen Country

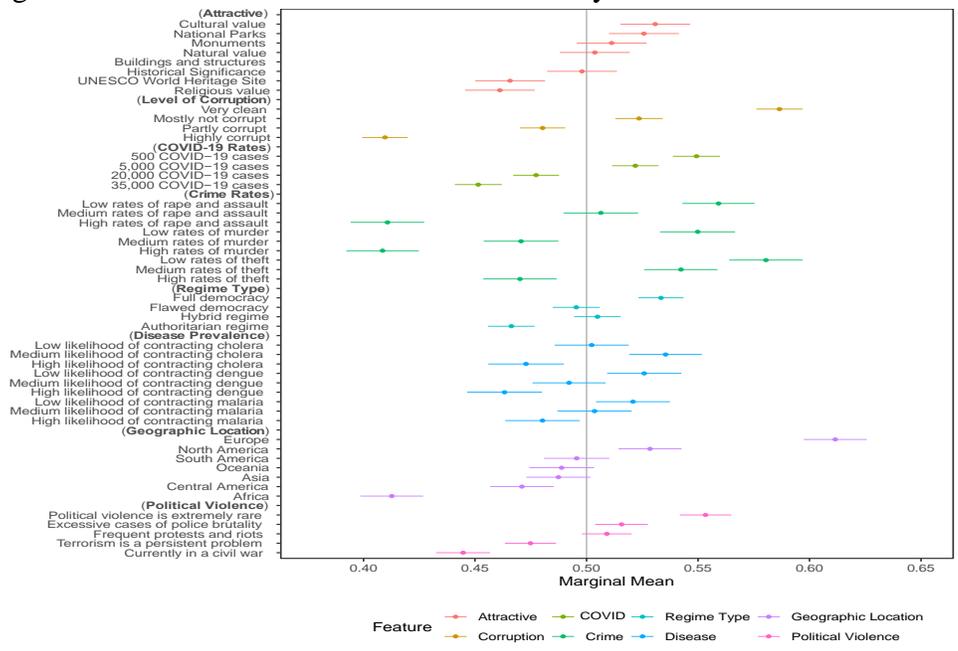


Figure 2: Traditional Tourism Attributes

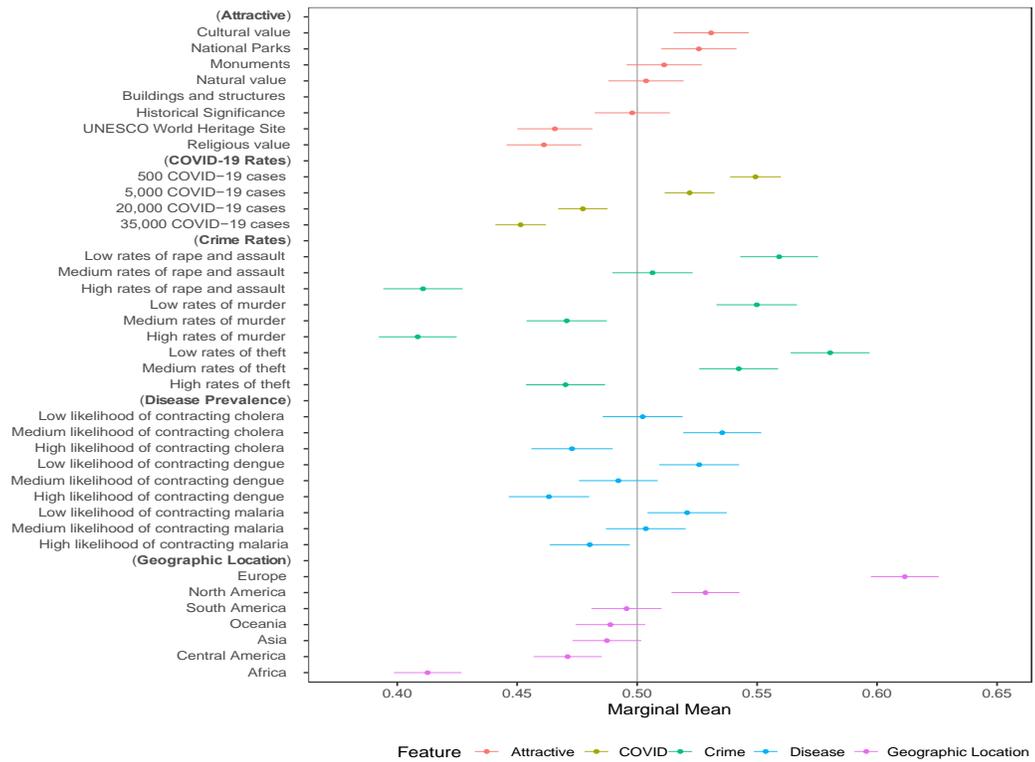
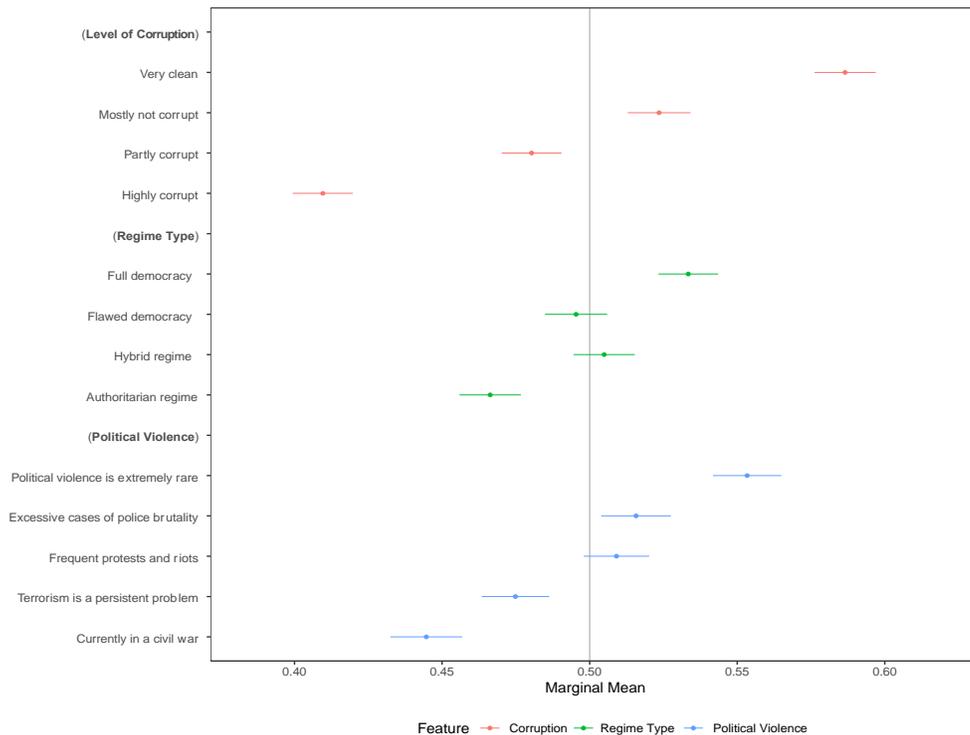


Figure 3: Political Factor Attributes



I find that the most influential political factor is corruption, which has the strongest effect on one's decision to travel to the hypothetical country. This finding supports Hypothesis 2, that high levels of corruption decrease the likelihood of selecting that country as a travel destination. Because there is such a strong effect on all levels of corruption, I am able to interpret the effect against each level, as well as compared to other features in the conjoint profile. This result demonstrates the significance a country's level of corruption has in the tourism industry.

Taking into consideration all the other factors, this is one of the features whose levels have the most impact on travel propensity. For example, a country with a "highly corrupt" government decreases travel propensity by 9 percentage points and a country with a "very clean" government increases travel propensity by 8.6 percentage points. The effect is nearly as big as the differences between travel propensity to Europe and Africa. Specifically, if Europe is the region in the conjoint profile, it increases travel propensity by 11 percentage points; but, if Africa is the region in the conjoint profile, it decreases travel propensity by approximately 9 percentage points. Corruption levels even have nearly as big of an effect as crime rates. High rates of murder decrease travel propensity by 9 percentage points, compared to low rates of murder increasing travel propensity by 4 percentage points. A similar pattern holds for other types of crimes and their associated rates. These findings suggest that corruption's effect on travel propensity is nearly as big, if not bigger, than traditional tourism factors. This finding further supports my hypothesis that levels of corruption have a significant effect on travel, compared to other traditional tourism factors, and in certain cases, it has an even larger effect.

COVID-19 also has a unique effect in the conjoint experiment. As expected, the lower levels of positive COVID-19 cases per million have a positive effect on the likelihood of selecting that country as a travel destination. High levels of positive COVID-19 cases per million have a negative effect. This finding supports Hypothesis 3, that a negative perception of COVID-19 health risk in the host country will influence one's willingness to travel. While this factor may not always be relevant later in the future, it still offers unique insight into the importance health concerns can have on traveling. COVID-19 put a complete halt on the tourism industry, and because of that, it also significantly impacted countries economic development. Understanding the potential impact COVID-19 could have on the tourism industry, even after the borders are opened again, is crucial to best predict how to mitigate its impact.

Crime rates were randomized on two aspects: the type of crime and the rate of crime. As expected, low rates of threat have a positive effect on the likelihood of traveling, and high rates of threat depress the likelihood of choosing that country as a place of travel. Interestingly, compared to other types of threats and their associated rates, theft was the most consistent type of crime that ranked higher than the two other types of crimes, despite its different rates. This could suggest that respondents felt that theft was a more likely crime to occur than rape and assault, or murder. Or, perhaps it shows that respondents are more concerned about their physical well-being than their material well-being and choose to travel to a location where they physically feel safe.

Some of the most important traditional tourism factors are health, safety, and security. As we saw with COVID-19 rates, health is an important factor in the tourism industry. Tourists want to travel to a place where they have minimal exposure to health

risks, and rates of COVID-19 increase health risks. This is similar to safety and security concerns. When there are high rates of safety and security concerns in a country, such as theft, murder, and rape and assault, tourists are more hesitant to travel there. The safety and security risks outweigh some of the other features of a country that may attract tourists. A successful tourism industry should focus on decreasing health, safety, and security concerns.

Hypothesis 1 states that democracy will maintain a statistically significant impact on perceptions of safety and attractiveness of a tourist destination, even when compared to political violence and corruption. Even more specifically, the levels “full democracy” and “flawed democracy” will overshadow non-democratic elements such as political violence and corruption. The randomly varying democracy levels in the conjoint results do not support this hypothesis. Compared to political violence and corruption, a country’s regime type is not as statistically significant in the respondent’s decision to travel compared to corruption levels. When a country’s regime type is labeled as “authoritarian,” it decreases travel propensity by 3.4 percentage points and when a country’s regime type is a “flawed democracy,” travel propensity decreases by 0.46 percentage points. When a country’s regime type is a “full democracy,” it increases travel propensity by 3.3 percentage points.

Although “full democracy” countries have a positive influence on one’s decision to travel, regime type’s overall significance is not as important as the level of corruption or political violence. One possible explanation to this finding is that regime type is not as quickly associated with threats, or health, safety, and security concerns. Originally, I believed that a country’s regime type would overshadow other features of political

instability, yet this finding shows that it does the opposite: corruption levels and political violence overshadow a country's regime type. Another possible explanation to this result is that perhaps even countries that lack democratic elements or have oppressive governments are able to overcome that political feature and highlight other positive aspects of their country and its tourism industry. For example, China and Russia are countries that are considered authoritarian, and yet both countries experience high rates of tourism. Because the conjoint illustrated characteristics of a *hypothetical* country, it may have been easier for respondents to overlook this feature in their decision-making process.

Similar to crime rates, disease prevalence was randomized on two aspects: the type of disease and its associated level. Here I find that disease prevalence does not have a statistically significant influence on one's decision to travel. There are not statistically significant differences between *all* levels of disease prevalence. A medium likelihood of contracting cholera had the largest positive effect on traveling to the selected country and the high likelihood of contracting dengue had the largest negative effect on traveling to the selected country. Specifically, a medium likelihood of contracting cholera increased travel propensity by 3.5 percentage points, and a high likelihood of contracting dengue decreased travel propensity by 3.7 percentage points. Despite the different effects on travel propensity, all high rates of disease are statistically significantly different from low rates of disease prevalence. Because COVID-19 rates were the first health risk that participants were exposed to, it is possible that other health risks, such as disease prevalence, did not matter as much for subjects. What is interesting is that disease

prevalence mattered significantly less than corruption. This finding reaffirms that political factors hold more weight in travel propensity than traditional tourism factors.

The last traditional tourism factor that was included in the conjoint was the location of the tourist destination. The results from this factor align with some of the observational results presented above. For example, within my sample, I find that the most frequently visited regions are North America, Central America, and Europe; and the least traveled regions are Antarctica, Oceania, and Africa. In the conjoint, I find that respondents are roughly 3 percentage points more likely to select a country profile with a location in North America and 13 percentage points more likely to select a country profile whose geographic location is Europe. The continents that were the most frequently visited are the same continents that have the greatest influence on choosing that country profile as a place of travel. Africa is a location that significantly decreases the likelihood of selecting that profile as a place of travel and Central America is another region that makes it less likely to anticipate travel to the selected country profile, although the effect is significantly smaller than Africa. Respondents are roughly 8 percentage points less likely to select a country profile that has Africa as its location and Central America reduces travel propensity by approximately 3 percentage points. This finding from the conjoint profile also supports my observational findings that the region that is the least traveled to – Africa – is also the region that most deters one's decision to travel. The effects for the other regions – Asia, South America, and Oceania – are negative but the results are not significant statistically.

The last conjoint feature, and the last political feature, is political violence. Political violence offers unique results, similar to levels of corruption. The results from

this feature support Hypothesis 2: that high levels of political violence decrease the likelihood of selecting that country as a travel destination. The two levels that had a statistically significant impact were the levels “terrorism is a persistent problem” and “currently in a civil war.” When “terrorism is a persistent problem” is the political violence level, respondents are roughly 2 percentage points less likely to select the country profile as a place of travel; and when “currently in a civil war” is the type of political violence, respondents are approximately 5.6 percentage points less likely to select that country profile. This result suggests that when a country is unable to maintain its political stability and instead displays meaningful levels of political violence, it can negatively impact its tourism industry.

However, “frequent protests and riots” does not significantly affect travel propensity. Interestingly, “excessive cases of police brutality” slightly increases respondents’ likelihood of selecting that profile as a place of travel by approximately 1.5 percentage points. One of the reasons I wanted to include these levels in the conjoint profile was to see if the United States’ type of political violence had a negative effect on likelihood of traveling to countries. One potential reason that these political violence levels do not substantively deter rates of tourism is because these activities are more geared towards citizens of the country, and therefore may not seem as threatening to tourists. It is also possible that police brutality might be seen by potential tourists to decrease the likelihood of being victims of a crime. Lastly, as expected, the level “political violence is extremely rare” significantly increases the likelihood of choosing that conjoint profile as a tourism destination by 5.3 percentage points.

In order to understand how respondents' tourism ideology influences the effect political and traditional tourism attractors have in their decision to travel, I conducted subgroup analyses. As I mentioned, respondents were given two types of ideologies to subscribe to: “positive good,” which sees tourism as a means to promote development and cultivate peace and understanding; and “negative tourism,” which criticizes the tourism industry and claims that it is an elite activity that exacerbates cultural tensions and alienates locals from controlling the industry. Roughly 90 percent of respondents identified with the “positive good” ideology, and 10 percent with the “negative tourism” ideology. It is important to note that the much smaller sample size in the “negative tourism” subgroup increases the size of the confidence intervals, so the statistical significance of treatment effects is less detectable.

Although the way this question was asked may potentially increase acquiescence response bias and satisficing, I believe that it was necessary for respondents to identify with one of the ideologies so that it was clearer how it may affect the political and traditional tourism attributes within the conjoint. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the differences that the political factors in the conjoint had on the likelihood of traveling according to respondents' tourism ideology.

The findings from these subgroup analyses support Hypothesis 4 that one's tourism ideology influences travel propensity; however, it does not support the second part of the hypothesis, that respondents who subscribe to the “negative tourism” ideology would care more about the political make-up of a country. For example, before breaking down the sample population into tourism ideology subgroups, level of corruption was the political factor that had the greatest influence on willingness to travel. However, that

finding does not hold for respondents who stated that they most agree with the “negative tourism” ideology. There are no statistically significant differences between the responses to the randomly assigned levels of corruption across the two subgroups. Thinking that the “highly corrupt” and “partly corrupt” levels would have the greatest influence on respondents with a “negative tourism” ideology, I find instead that only the “highly corrupt” level has a stronger negative influence on respondents with a “positive good” ideology. For respondents with a “negative tourism” ideology, “highly corrupt” makes respondents between 3 and 9 percentage points less likely to travel to the selected country, whereas respondents with a “positive good” ideology are between 11 and 8 percentage points less likely to travel. However, when “partly corrupt” is associated with the attribute “level of corruption”, it has a greater influence on the “negative tourism” ideology, although it is not statistically significant. Specifically, it has an effect of -5.6 and 0.74 percentage points. But, when this level is present in the conjoint profile, respondents with a “negative tourism” ideology are between 1 and 6 percentage points less likely to select that country profile, whereas “positive good” respondents are only between 1 and 3 percentage points less likely to travel there.

The results for the political violence treatments and their associated mean levels of response also do not support Hypothesis 4; however, there are unique differences between those who identify with the “negative tourism” ideology and the “positive good” ideology. Respondents who subscribe to the “negative tourism” ideology are less likely to travel to a country where excessive cases of police brutality are present compared to respondents with a “positive good” ideology. While this type of political violence detracts respondents with a “negative tourism” ideology from traveling to that country, a

country with frequent protests and riots makes these respondents more willing to travel to that country compared to respondents with a “positive good” ideology. Specifically, the “negative tourism” adopters are 7 percentage points more likely to travel to a country that is experiencing frequent protests and riots, and “positive good” respondents are only between -1 and 2 percentage points more likely to travel to the selected country.

Additionally the absence of political violence does not increase willingness to travel for “negative tourism” respondents, as it does for those with a “positive good” ideology.

Mathews recognized the importance one’s tourism ideology could have on travel decisions, but the reason still remains unclear. Perhaps those with a “positive good” ideology did not think that the presence of political violence could help the tourism industry to promote development, or cultivate peace and understanding; and therefore, they were less inclined to go and add to the unstable environment. Perhaps those with the “negative tourism” ideology may not have had political violence influence their decisions as much as I thought because they did not see how certain levels of political violence could be attributed to the tourism industry.

While regime type did not have a significant effect with all respondents, in a subgroup analysis, I find that regime type does hold more weight in the travel decision making process for those who adopt a “negative tourism” ideology. Other than a country’s regime type being a full democracy, other regimes deter those “negative tourism” respondents from selecting that country as a place of travel. For respondents with a “positive good” ideology, the only regime type that has a negative effect on willingness to travel – and an even greater effect on those with a “negative tourism” ideology – is authoritarianism. While the different regime types had a greater effect

Figure 4: “Positive Good” Tourism Ideology

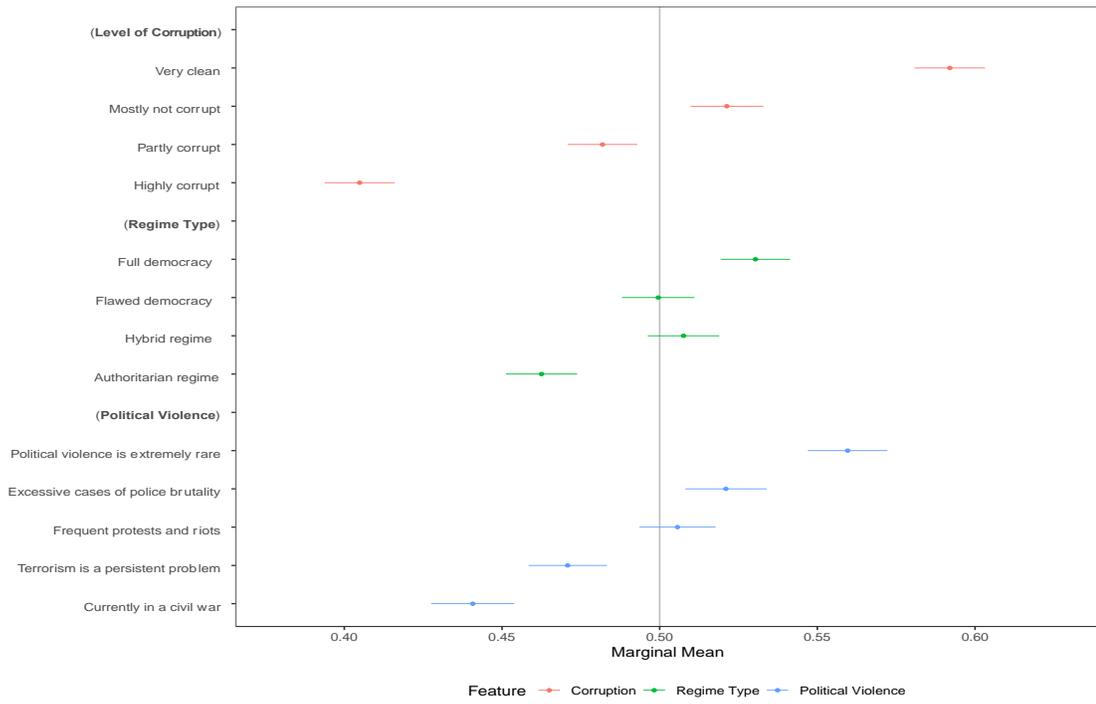
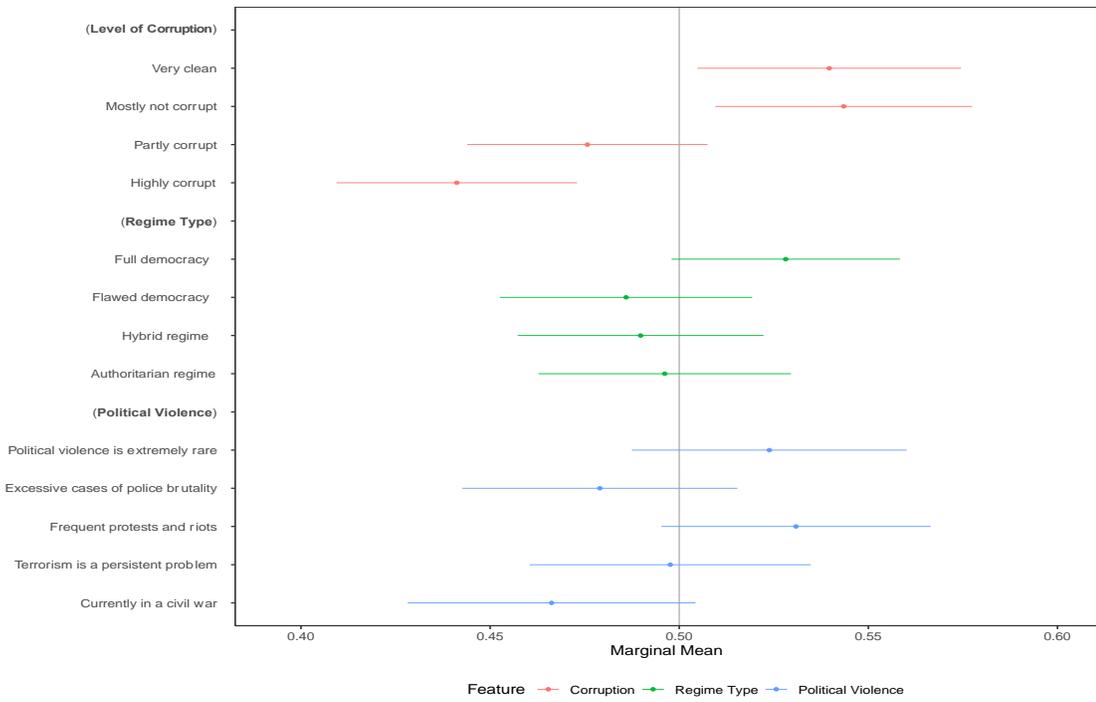


Figure 5: “Negative Tourism” Ideology



on those with a “negative tourism” ideology, there were not statistically significant differences between the levels of political violence.

Tourism ideology did have an influence on travel propensity, but not in the way that I expected. It did, however, make political factors, such as level of corruption, regime type, and political violence have a greater effect on travel propensity than other traditional tourism attractors. Overall, in general, people perceive political factors to be predictors of willingness to travel, with levels of corruption being considered one of the best political predictors.

#### *Egypt and Thailand Vignette Results*

Does the presence of political factors influence one’s decision to travel to a country? According to a t-test, which compares the means of two samples, I can say that there is a statistically significant difference between the treatment and the control, and that the presence of political factors in a vignette does have an effect on the sample’s decision to travel to Egypt and Thailand. When political factors are present in Egypt’s vignette profile, it decreases the likelihood of subjects stated interest to travel there by 0.3 points. The same holds for Thailand. When the political factors of Thailand are present, it decreases the likelihood of respondents’ wanting to travel to Thailand by 0.13 points.

These findings contradict Hypothesis 6, that political factors will hold less weight in determining the likelihood of traveling when participants are exposed to a real country profile. When political factors such as regime type, level of corruption, and type of political violence, are present in the vignette profiles, it actually decreases respondent’s interest in traveling to that country. To confirm the results from the t-test, I run an OLS regression to gain better precision of the impact political factors have on interest in

traveling while also controlling for other key variables. Table 3 presents the OLS regression results of interest to travel to Egypt and Thailand, after controlling for independent variables such as treatment, importance of travel and tourism ideology, and covariates such as age, income, education, and partisanship.

Table 3: Interest in Traveling to Egypt and Thailand

Variables	(1) Interest in Traveling to Egypt	(2) Interest in Traveling to Thailand
Egypt Treatment	-0.279*** (0.045)	
Thailand Treatment		-0.133*** (0.042)
Tourism Ideology	-0.100 (0.072)	-0.238*** (0.072)
Travel Importance	0.301*** (0.020)	0.314*** (0.019)
Age	-0.008*** (0.002)	-0.008*** (0.002)
Income	-0.026*** (0.008)	0.000 (0.007)
Education	0.044** (0.021)	0.048** (0.020)
Partisanship	0.026 (0.025)	0.107*** (0.023)
Constant	2.145*** (0.118)	2.019*** (0.112)
Observations	2,714	2,713
R-squared	0.120	0.144

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Even after controlling for these variables, I find that when respondents are exposed to the treatment conditions of the Egypt vignette, their interest in traveling decreases by 0.28 points on a five-point scale. This effect is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level, meaning that I can say with 99% confidence that when

respondents are exposed to the political features of Egypt, their interest in traveling to Egypt also decreases.

Additionally, from the regression results, I find that a “negative tourism” ideology decreases the interest to travel to Egypt by a 0.10 point reduction on a five-point scale. Although this is not statistically significant, it does support Hypothesis 4 that a “negative tourism” ideology has a negative effect on interest in traveling to Egypt because the presence of political factors overshadows traditional tourism attractors.

I also find that as respondents' importance of travel increases by one point, interest in traveling to Egypt increases by 0.301 points. This finding is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. This suggests that individuals who believe that traveling is important, are more likely to overlook the political instability of Egypt. Another possible explanation for this finding could be that respondents who state that traveling is extremely important do not see political factors, such as political violence, regime type, and level of corruption, as major determinants in their decision to travel to a country.

Age, income, and education are all covariates that are statistically significant. The older an individual is, the less interested they are to travel to Egypt when its political factors are present in the vignette profile. The same appears to be true with income, the higher the income, the less interested respondents are in traveling to Egypt. A possible explanation for this could be that respondents with a higher income are less willing to spend money to travel to a country that could put them at risk. While age and income decrease interest in traveling to Egypt, education and partisanship increase interest. The higher the education attained, the more interest respondents have in traveling to Egypt.

This means that as the respondents' level of education increases, their interest in traveling to Egypt also increases by 0.04 points. Lastly, partisanship has a positive relationship with interest in traveling, although it is not statistically significant. A one unit increase in partisanship leads to a 0.03 point increase in interest in traveling to Egypt.

The results I find for Egypt are fairly similar to what I find for Thailand; however, I find smaller treatment effects. When respondents are exposed to the treatment, there is a 0.13 point reduction in interest to travel, yet it is still statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. One interesting difference between the Thailand and Egypt vignettes is that in the Egypt profile, tourism ideology was not statistically significant, yet in the Thailand profile, it is. Respondents who identify with the “negative tourism” ideology experience a 0.24 point reduction in interest to travel to Thailand. One possible explanation for the reason that the “negative tourism” ideology has a greater influence on interest in traveling to Thailand is because despite some of Thailand’s positive political factors, such as an improvement in their democracy rating, the negative political features that were primed in the profile overwhelmed the positive aspects.

The overshadowing of the positive political features of Thailand serves as an interesting explanation to the “negative tourism” ideology. Since “negative tourism” critiques the tourism industry and claims that it exacerbates cultural tensions, it is possible that respondents saw the more democratic label as something insincere since it followed with political protests and police officers arresting pro-democracy advocates. I believe that it is not simply that the negative political features primed in the profile overwhelmed the positive ones, but that respondents were able to decipher the true intentions of the government, and therefore, see how the tourism industry would only add

on to the narrative that tourism is an elite activity that exacerbates cultural tensions and alienates locals from controlling the industry. Rather than simply looking at the democracy rating, respondents paid more attention to *why* citizens of Thailand were protesting the government instead of focusing on what the government *wants* international tourists to see – that their democracy rating improved.

One covariate that had greater effects on interest in travel to Thailand than Egypt was partisanship. A one unit increase in partisanship led to a 0.11 increase in interest in traveling to Thailand. Other covariates and independent variables had similar effects in both country profiles.<sup>2</sup>

Aside from wanting to understand how political factors influence interest in traveling to a country, I also wanted to understand how the presence of political factors in a vignette profile influences perceived levels of safety. In Hypothesis 2, I predicted that high levels of political violence and corruption would decrease the perceived levels of safety compared to the absence of those political factors. Additionally, I predicted in Hypothesis 6, that political factors would hold less weight in determining the perceived safety of a real country profile. My results support Hypothesis 2 by showing that the presence of political factors does indeed have a negative influence on respondents' perceived level of safety in both Egypt and Thailand, but it does not support Hypothesis 6. Table 4 presents the OLS regression results of perceived levels of safety in Egypt and Thailand, after controlling for independent variables such as treatment, importance of travel and tourism ideology, and covariates such as age, income, education, and partisanship.

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<sup>2</sup> Table 3 contains all the variables included in both the Thailand and Egypt regression for greater detail.

Table 4: Perceived Safety of Egypt and Thailand

Variables	(1) Egypt Perceived Safety	(2) Thailand Perceived Safety
Egypt Treatment	-0.451*** (0.040)	
Thailand Treatment		-0.110*** (0.035)
Tourism Ideology	-0.034 (0.070)	-0.200*** (0.066)
Travel Importance	0.156*** (0.018)	0.142*** (0.016)
Age	-0.005*** (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Income	-0.023*** (0.007)	0.005 (0.006)
Education	0.053*** (0.018)	0.075*** (0.017)
Partisanship	-0.009 (0.023)	0.046** (0.020)
Constant	2.233*** (0.100)	2.024*** (0.090)
Observations	2,714	2,713
R-squared	0.085	0.063

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

I find that the treatment effects in Egypt's vignette profile are greater than the treatment effects in Thailand's vignette profile. Specifically, when respondents are exposed to the political factors of Egypt, it decreases their level of perceived safety by 0.45 points. However, when participants are exposed to the Thailand treatment, their perceived level of safety only decreases by 0.11 points. Both treatment effects are statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. It is hard to directly compare these treatment effects because the political factors in each country profile were specific to one country, but one possible explanation for the difference is because Egypt's vignette

profile contained more negative political features than Thailand. These negative political features in Egypt's vignette profile clearly overshadowed the traditional tourism attractors, and made participants consider how level of corruption, regime type, and political violence would influence the level of safety that they felt in Egypt.

I also predicted that political factors would not be as influential in determining the perceived level of safety in a real country profile. Additionally, I thought that perhaps naming the actual country would potentially serve as a positive prime to respondents who believe that traveling is important and to respondents who have been to the country before or know someone who has previously traveled there. However, I found the opposite to be true for the latter. Rather than thinking that political factors would hold less weight in determining the perceived level of safety, respondents used those factors to determine their perceived level of safety and it negatively affected the outcome.

Interestingly, the effect the "negative tourism" ideology had on perceived level of safety in each country is similar to what happened with interest in traveling. For Egypt, a "negative tourism" ideology decreases the perceived level of safety by 0.03 points, but this effect is not statistically significant. For Thailand, a "negative tourism" ideology decreases the perceived level of safety by 0.2 points. A couple of other interesting results include income and education. For Egypt's profile, a one unit increase in income, leads to a 0.023 point decrease in perceived level of safety and is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. But, in Thailand's profile, a one unit increase in income, leads to a 0.005 change in the perceived level of safety and is not statistically significant. Levels of education have a similar effect in both the Thailand and Egypt profile and are both

statistically significant at the 99% confidence level – so the higher level of education a respondent has, leads to a positive increase in perceived level of safety.

One of the most important features tourists consider when traveling abroad is their level of safety (Neumayer 2004). As such, I wanted to know if respondents were willing to spend more money to vacation to a country where this feature is secured. I find that when political factors of a country are present, it decreases how much money participants are willing to spend to vacation in that country. My findings support Hypothesis 5, that the emittance of political factors will increase participants' project vacation spending in a country. Specifically, when political factors are present in the Egypt vignette profile, it leads to a -0.22 change in willingness to spend to vacation to Egypt. In Thailand, when participants are exposed to the treatment conditions of the vignette profile, it leads to a -0.05 change in willingness to spend – however, this specific finding is not statistically significant.

Additionally, respondents who adopt the “negative tourism” ideology decrease their willingness to spend money to vacation in both countries. I believe that this finding aligns with what it means to adopt the “negative tourism” ideology. Rather than spending money in a country where respondents believe that the tourism industry exacerbates cultural tensions and alienates locals from controlling the industry, they choose not to spend as much money to vacation there. Table 5 presents the results from the OLS regression.

Table 5: Willingness to Spend to Vacation to Egypt and Thailand

Variables	(1) Willingness to Spend to Vacation to Egypt	(2) Willingness to Spend to Vacation to Thailand
Egypt Treatment	-0.215*** (0.076)	
Thailand Treatment		-0.047 (0.070)
Tourism Ideology	-0.236* (0.124)	-0.377*** (0.116)
Travel Importance	0.207*** (0.033)	0.183*** (0.031)
Age	0.005 (0.003)	0.009*** (0.003)
Income	0.116*** (0.013)	0.131*** (0.012)
Education	0.049 (0.035)	0.125*** (0.033)
Partisanship	0.063 (0.042)	0.072* (0.039)
Constant	2.120*** (0.191)	1.823*** (0.180)
Observations	2,712	2,711
R-squared	0.065	0.097

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

One of the last tests left to interpret are the results of willingness to travel between the conjoint profiles and the Thailand and Egypt vignette profiles. While the two tests are not directly comparable, I can broadly compare the substantive effects between the political factors in the conjoint and the real-country experimental items using the regression coefficients.

In the conjoint profile, the substantive effects of the different levels of corruption ranges from -9 percentage points to 8.7 percentage points, the substantive effect of the different regime types ranges from -3.4 percentage points to 3.3 percentage points, and

the substantive effect of the types of political violence range from -5.5 percentage points to 5.3 percentage points. As I mentioned, I find that some of the largest negative effects occur when the level of the political factor is seen as negative or positive, but negative factors still have a greater effect on travel propensity than positive political factors. For example, countries that are highly corrupt result in a 9 percentage point decrease in selecting that country profile as a place of travel, countries with an authoritarian regime decrease travel propensity by 3.4 percentage points, and countries that are currently experiencing a civil war decrease travel propensity by 5.5 percentage points.

In addition to this substantive significance, all three of these conjoint levels are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. These findings support my research question that political factors do have an effect on willingness to travel, and as such, it means that political factors influence tourism rates. Specifically, I find that negative political factors that are associated with more risk and lack of safety and security will result in a decrease in tourism rates. Although these findings are based on hypothetical countries, it supports what is happening within the tourism industry: countries that are experiencing political instability consequentially feel those effects on key sources of income, such as the tourism industry.

In the country vignette profiles, I find negative effects on interest in traveling for both Egypt and Thailand. When the political factors of Egypt are present in the vignette profile, interest in travel decreases by 0.3 points on a five-point scale. In Thailand, when political factors are present in the vignette profile, it decreases interest in traveling by 0.1 points on a five-point scale. While there are bigger effects in Egypt, it should not go without notice that there are similar negative effects in Thailand, despite its positive

increase in democracy rating. The findings from the vignette profile align with the findings from the conjoint profiles: that the negative political factors of a country have a greater influence on travel propensity than positive political factors.

Again, these findings are not directly comparable, but they both show that political features of a country have an effect on travel propensity. These results do not support Hypothesis 6, that there is a difference between hypothetical country profiles and real country profiles when political factors are present.

## **VI. Conclusion**

There has not been much research done in the field of political science that investigates how political factors coupled with more traditional tourism attractors, impact perceptions of safety in a country and tourists' interest in traveling and spending money there. I find that political factors do hold more weight in the travel decision making process, compared to traditional tourism attractors. Out of all the political attributes, and the traditional tourism attributes, corruption is the strongest predictor of travel propensity, even when compared to attributes in the conjoint that had a similar magnitude. I also find that in both countries' vignette profiles, the presence of political factors decreases interest in travel, perceived level of safety, and how much money respondents would be willing to spend to vacation at the chosen destination.

While I was able to come to these conclusions, it is important to note the limitations of the study. I chose to only study what effects including the political makeup of Egypt and Thailand would have on interest in traveling, perceived level of safety, and willingness to spend, and therefore, the results from the vignette profile lack generalizability. To see if these effects hold, it is important to consider other countries

and how their political makeup might have a different influence on these outcome measures. Additionally, because I included all three political factors in the vignette profile – corruption level, regime type, political violence –, it is not possible to examine their individual effects on interest in traveling. Perhaps a different way to examine the effects a country's political factors have on travel propensity is to randomize which political factor is included in the vignette profile. Doing this will allow one to independently examine each political factor's effect on travel propensity.

One of the biggest limitations to the conjoint portion of the experiment is the lack of randomization in the attributes presented in each conjoint profile. While I was able to randomize the levels within the attributes, the attributes were set at a fixed order, and because of that, I had to strategically think of attribute placement. It is possible that corruption served as the most influential political predictor because that was the first political attribute to present itself in the conjoint profile. Additionally, since the conjoint design and vignettes had very different experimental setups, the results generated were not directly comparable.

To build upon this research, more work should be done to understand how people adopt tourism ideologies, as well as create more solidified definitions of the terms. Another potential way to build upon this research is to see if the results hold for countries with high levels of democracy ratings, such as the U.S., or a country in Europe. Additionally, other political factors of a country could be replaced, or included, such as a country's GDP. Including a country's GDP in the conjoint has the potential to offer interesting results and could serve as a less salient political factor in the profile. Researchers could even be more specific and include what percentage of a country's

GDP is from the tourism industry, and then examine how this attribute influences respondents with a “positive good” or “negative tourism” ideology.

The results of this study are relevant and important for political scientists wishing to better understand how the two industries – politics and tourism – are seemingly interrelated. From this experiment, I find that political factors matter more in the tourism industry than one may originally think. These findings lead us to a more complete account of how politics plays a major role in the tourism industry.

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## VIII. Appendix A

Prior to seeing the conjoint study or the country vignettes, respondents will be asked:

1. Generally speaking, how often do you travel outside of your native country?  
(Options include: Never, Hardly ever, Once a month, Once a year, Twice a year.)
2. How long do you typically stay when traveling abroad? (Options include: Less than 1 week, Approximately 1 week, More than 1 week, but less than 1 month, Approximately 1 month, More than 1 month.)
3. How important is it for you to travel outside of your native country? (Options include: Extremely important, Very important, Moderately important, Slightly important, Not at all important.)
4. What continents have you traveled to? (Please select all that apply: North America including Central America, Europe, South America, Africa, Asia, Antarctica, Oceania. There are examples of commonly visited countries in each continent to help respondents answer the question.)
5. Now, think about all the places you've traveled to in your lifetime. Approximately how many countries, not including your native country, have you visited? Please write the number in numerals. (Ex: 3)

In order to assess the effects various factors have on determining the perceived safety of a country and the likelihood of traveling to a country, participants will be randomly exposed to a series of vignettes or factors in a conjoint study. A conjoint study is a type of survey design that presents respondents with hypothetical profiles that rotate through a random set of factors. If they are randomly selected for the conjoint treatment they will

be shown multiple profiles that contain ten travel factors whose features are randomly assigned and ordered. The travel factors and their associated features are as follows:

- Geographic location
  - North America including Central America
  - Europe
  - South America
  - Africa
  - Asia
  - Oceania
  
- Attractiveness of the destination
  - UNESCO World Heritage Site
  - National Parks
  - Historical Significance
  - Natural value
  - Cultural value
  - Religious value
  - Monuments
  - Buildings and structures (such as castles, bridges, skyscrapers, etc.)
  
- Crime rate (Crimes such as theft, murder, and rape or assault will be randomized.)
  - High
  - Medium
  - Low
  
- Disease prevalence (Diseases and infections such as malaria, cholera, and dengue will be randomized.)
  - High
  - Medium
  - Low
  
- COVID-19 health risk
  - 35,000 positive COVID-19 cases per million
  - 20,000 positive COVID-19 cases per million
  - 5,000 positive COVID-19 cases per million
  - 500 positive COVID-19 cases per million
  
- Regime type
  - Flawed democracy
  - Full democracy
  - Hybrid regime
  - Authoritarian regime
  
- Political violence

- Currently in a civil war
  - Frequent protests and riots
  - Terrorism is a persistent problem
  - Excessive cases of police brutality
  - Political violence is extremely rare
- Corruption
    - Highly corrupt
    - Partly corrupt
    - Mostly not corrupt
    - Very clean

Following the conjoint profiles, participants will be randomly exposed to two out of the four vignettes:

Control Group 1:

Egypt is most famously known for being the home to seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Some of the top-rated tourism attractions in Egypt include the Pyramids of Giza, – which is also considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World – Luxor’s Karnak Temple, and the Valley of the Kings. In 2018, approximately 9 million tourists visited Egypt. Most tourists visit Egypt to marvel its ancient pyramids and temples, to shop for souvenirs at Khan El-Khalili Bazaar, and to relax at the Nile River. Egypt not only boasts its popular UNESCO World Heritage Sites, but also holds historical significance, and natural and religious value.

Treatment Group 1:

Egypt is most famously known for being the home to seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Some of the top-rated tourism attractions in Egypt include the Pyramids of Giza, – which is also considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World – Luxor’s Karnak Temple, and the Valley of the Kings. After years of political turmoil and violence, its tourism industry has made a rapid recovery. In 2018, approximately 9 million tourists visited Egypt. However, Egypt remains under an authoritarian regime where terrorism is a consistent problem. In addition, it experiences high levels of police and judicial system corruption. Most tourists visit Egypt to marvel its ancient pyramids and temples, to shop for souvenirs at Khan El-Khalili Bazaar, and to relax at the Nile River. Egypt not only boasts its popular UNESCO World Heritage Sites, but also holds historical significance, and natural and religious value.

Control Group 2:

Thailand is the most famous tourist destination in Southeast Asia. Its tourist attractions range from national parks to ancient temples. Some of the top-rated

tourism attractions in Thailand include The Grand Palace, the Floating Markets, and Ayuthaya Historical Park. Its tourism rates have experienced steady growth throughout the years, with the highest peak in 2019 with 39.8 million international arrivals. Most tourists visit Thailand to enjoy its tropical beaches, visit elephant wildlife sanctuaries, and to experience its rich food and culture. Thailand is a multifaceted tourist attraction that thrives off of its national parks, natural and cultural value, and its buildings and structures.

#### Treatment Group 2:

Thailand is the most famous tourist destination in Southeast Asia. Recently, Thailand experienced an improvement in their democracy rating, moving from a “hybrid regime” to a “flawed democracy.” Additionally, it is considered to have a mostly clean government, meaning that corruption is rarely a problem. Its tourist attractions range from national parks to ancient temples. Some of the top-rated tourism attractions in Thailand include The Grand Palace, the Floating Markets, and Ayuthaya Historical Park. Currently, Thailand is experiencing political protests with officers arresting pro-democracy advocates. Its tourism rates have experienced steady growth throughout the years, with the highest peak in 2019 with 39.8 million international arrivals. Most tourists visit Thailand to enjoy its tropical beaches, visit elephant wildlife sanctuaries, and to experience its rich food and culture. Thailand is a multifaceted tourist attraction that thrives off of its national parks, natural and cultural value, and its buildings and structures.

After each country profile, participants will be asked the following questions:

1. How interested would you be in traveling to this [Egypt/Thailand]? (Options include: Extremely interested, Very interested, Moderately interested, Slightly interested, Not interested at all.)
2. If given the option, would you prefer to visit a country other than [Egypt/Thailand]? (Yes or No)
  - a. If yes is selected: “Please explain why you would choose to travel elsewhere.”
3. Based on the information presented to you, how safe do you think [Egypt/Thailand] is? (Options include: Extremely safe, Somewhat safe, Neither safe nor unsafe, Somewhat unsafe, Extremely unsafe.)

4. In a few words, please explain why you rated the safety of the [Egypt/Thailand] this way?
5. How much money would you be willing to spend to vacation to [Egypt/Thailand]? (Answers will range from \$0 to \$20,000)
6. How important were these factors to you when determining whether or not to travel to [Egypt/Thailand]? (Possible answers will be the same factors that were presented in country profiles.)
7. There are two main competing ideologies within the tourism industry. The first is “a positive good” which sees tourism as a means to promote development and cultivate peace and understanding. The second is labelled as “negative tourism” which critiques tourism and claims that it is an elite activity that exacerbates cultural tensions and alienates locals from controlling the industry. Where do you fall in this category? (Options include: “Positive good”, “Negative tourism”, and Somewhere in the middle.)

To conclude the survey, participants were asked basic demographic questions such as: sex, age, education, income, race and ethnicity, religion, party ID, and ideology. The demographic questions and their associated order are as follows:

1. What year were you born? (Open text response)
2. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received? (Answers range from Less than high school to Doctorate)
3. Which race or ethnicity do you self-identify with? Please select all that apply. (White; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; Hispanic or Latinx)

4. What is your gender? (Male; Female; Nonbinary; Prefer not to say)
5. What is your ideology? (Extremely conservative to Extremely liberal)
6. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a...? (Strong Republican; Weak Republican; Independent Leaning Republican; Pure Independent; Strong Democrat; Weak Democrat; Independent Leaning Democrat)
7. Please indicate your entire household income in 2019 before taxes (best estimate).  
(Answers range from less than \$10,000 to more than \$150,000)
8. What is your present religion, if any? (Protestant; Catholic; Latter-day Saint (Mormon); Jewish; Other; No religious preference; Prefer not to say)