

“THE HOSTESS CITY OF THE SOUTH”: DESTINATION IMAGE AND RISK  
PERCEPTION IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

by

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Tourism is one of the largest and most powerful industries in the world today. On any given day millions of people are visiting destinations all across the world, domestically and internationally. Tourism literature suggests that cognitive, affective, and conative knowledge about locations shape “destination image” and inspire people to (re)visit destinations. These destination images are informed by a number of factors, including personal experience and knowledge, along with the things we see, hear, or read from media sources and others’ experiences. However, tourists are not the only group that creates mental images of places. For residents, their “destination image” is referred to as an evaluative image of the city where they live. This study investigates how crime mediates the images and opinions we hold about the places we live and visit. Data collection took place in Savannah, Georgia, a popular tourist destination that experienced a severe spike in violent crime in 2015 and 2016. This study will address the questions, “Are the evaluative images towards crime in Savannah different between residents and tourists? If so, how are they different?” and “Do social media and/or online travel reviews influence tourists’ destination image and risk perception of Savannah?”

Evaluative mapping exercises and survey methods collected responses from 60 individuals (26 residents and 34 tourists) in the city's Historic District. Through spatial, cultural domain, and statistical analyses, residents' and tourists' images of the city were compared to find if significant differences in crime awareness, attitudes towards crime, and/or likelihood to recommend and revisit Savannah existed. Results showed that residents and tourists had similar evaluative images of the Savannah, both of which were positive. However, residents had statistically higher crime awareness and risk perceptions than tourists and were more likely to cite crime as a reason not to recommend the city to others. They also felt that greater areas of the city were unsafe. Sources where individuals gathered information about Savannah and crime were also investigated. Special attention was given to compare how these sources and the information collected impacted the risk perception and familiarity between tourists who used social media and/or online travel reviews and those who did not. While it appeared that these sources increased familiarity and reduced risk perception, the results were not statistically significant.

Findings from this study provide insight into how various groups perceive Savannah's cultural landscape and crime risks. Currently, it does not seem that crime is affecting the city's tourism industry or experience of tourists, as 100% said they would recommend the city to others. City officials and tourism workers can use these results as validation to continue marketing and promoting Savannah's historical significance, natural beauty, and southern charm as these were common themes cited by residents and tourists. In particular, with over 70% of tourists reporting that they used social media and online travel reviews before making their trip, marketing through these avenues presents a great opportunity for the city and its businesses to generate interest and attract customers.



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PERCEPTION IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

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Master of Science in Geography, Planning, and Environment

by

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most dynamic, diverse, and powerful industries in the world today. In 2016 alone, the industry provided 292 million jobs worldwide, contributed \$7.6 trillion or 10.2% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (WTTC, 2017), and inspired the movements of over 1.2 billion international travelers (WTO, 2017). A powerful force, tourism has the potential to provide economic opportunity, increase cooperation and interaction between groups, and share information on a global level. However, in order for a tourism destination to be successful, planners and decision-makers must have an understanding of how residents and tourists perceive a destination, what information sources lead them to those conclusions, and how risk perception mediates those opinions.

Savannah attracted over 13.7 million visitors in 2015 (Savannah Chamber, 2016) and is a growing tourist destination. A great deal of Savannah's attraction is found in its well-preserved historic district. The historic district features James Oglethorpe's original "ward" plan, which groups homes and businesses together, places them around a communal open square in the middle and surrounds them with wide road paths. This simple, but organized design was easily replicable and was expanded on for decades as the area's population grew. His design is still praised by visitors from all over the world and is considered to be "one of the finest diagrams for city organization and growth in existence" (Vorse, 2012). The thoughtful layout earned Savannah the honor of being named "America's First Planned City" and since 1966 the area has been recognized as the largest National Historic District in the United States (Visit Savannah, 2016). The city's design coupled with its history and cultural significance makes it a popular tourist destination.



Figure 1.1: Johnson Square. While walking through Savannah’s downtown, you can take a moment to relax in one of the historic squares where local artwork is often displayed (as seen here) (Foyt, 2015a).

More recently, the city has added greater modern influences to the area. The diversity of tourism attractions in Savannah is also improving, with new restaurants, festivals, shopping opportunities, museums, art exhibits, and tours being added each year. Since 2010, Savannah’s tourism sector has grown by 5% every year and currently supplies 25,000 residents with jobs (Savannah Chamber, 2016). In 2015, lodging data showed the city’s success as occupancy rates grew by almost 5%, average daily room rates grew by almost \$9, and tax receipts increased by almost 13% (Martin, 2015). As a result of the city’s charm and diversity, tourism is the leading economic sector for “The Hostess City of the South”.

However, recent crime events have negatively impacted the city’s destination image and reputation. According to the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department, the number of violent crimes increased from 927 in 2014 to 1,167 in 2015 (SCMPD, 2016). Compared to 2014, in 2015, the number of homicides doubled and violent crime increased by over 20% (Bluestein, 2015), making it the city’s bloodiest year on record since 1991. This trend continued into 2016,

where Savannah saw a slight, but continuous increase in violent crime from 2015 to 2016 (a 27% increase compared to 2014). Property crimes also increased from 2014 to 2015, but showed a slight decline in 2016 (SCMPD, 2016). While the city is working diligently to combat these issues, many residents are upset with the current situation and fearful of its potential impacts. As a result, crime was a hot topic in the mayor's race in 2015. One of the candidates, Eddie DeLoach, capitalized on the public's concerns and even erected a billboard with a running ticker of gunshots detected in the city during his campaign. His commitment to end crime in the city ultimately won him the election, defeating incumbent Edna Jackson (Bluestein, 2015). The increase in crime also resulted in the addition of 15 new permanent positions to the Savannah-Chatham police force, increasing the number of budgeted positions to 620. Although the addition of officers will cost the city money, the public has repeatedly said that they would be willing to pay to improve public safety, no matter what the cost (Curl, 2015). Residents are very aware of the crime risks facing Savannah and many cite crime as the greatest problem facing the area today.

The dramatic increase in crime gained national attention when CNN covered the issues facing Savannah, stating that the homicide rates were the 10<sup>th</sup> highest in the country for cities of similar size (Drash, 2016). In 2015, Savannah was regarded with cities like Chicago and Baltimore as some of America's most rapidly growing violent crime hot spots (Peebles, 2017b). The primary cause of the violence is linked to gang activity (Peebles, 2017a) and teen gun violence (Bynum, 2017). However, despite the increase in crime, many residents and tourists do not seem to be alerted of the potential dangers (Peebles, 2017b) and thus far, luckily the tourism industry has not been impacted yet. Rather, multiple businesses throughout the Historic District report that tourist traffic has been increasing each year. This is largely because of the city's

special interest areas that include historic places, cultural activities, and exceptional culinary experiences (2017 Economic Trends, 2017).

While numerous studies have been done to investigate destination (evaluative) images, risk perception, and tourist decision-making, there are very few studies that combine all three components. Furthermore, most tourism research that looks at risk perception focuses on extreme events, like terrorist attacks or natural disasters that attract national or international attention. This research will examine all three components—destination image (as an extension of evaluative images), risk perception, and tourists’ information collection/decision making. The primary goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of Savannah’s tourist landscape and evaluative images, compare the attitudes residents and tourists have towards crime in the area, and understand how social media/online travel reviews influence tourists’ destination image of Savannah. By combining these three elements this research aims to investigate the following,

*Research Question 1: Are the evaluative images towards crime in Savannah different between residents and tourists? If so, how are they different?*

*Research Question 2: Do social media and/or online travel reviews influence tourists’ destination images and risk perception of Savannah?*

Understanding how risk perception and destination image are influenced by various information sources (in particular, social media and online customer-based review sites) will give tourism and city officials guidance in how they should market Savannah to potential visitors, especially during a time where crime rates are above average and the reputation of the city may not be at its best. This research will allow Savannah to focus its marketing campaign

more directly on the elements that influence tourist decision-making most; whether that is through promoting a positive destination image, supplying more information online or through print ads, or by promoting safety and security. Savannah will also be able to gain a better understanding of how residents and tourists understand, interpret, and interact with the city's landscape physically, mentally, and emotionally. Investigating the role of information and media coverage in congruence with risk perception and destination image is relatively new for tourism geography and the tourism industry, but the combination of the three elements will provide great insight into how evaluative images are formed and how information and risk perceptions affect them.



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Image of the City

Understanding how and why people interact with the environment and comprehend its elements the way they do is critically important in human geography and tourism studies. Rather than understanding landscapes as physical representations of space, human and cultural geography assert that landscapes (or cities) are best understood through their connection to experience (Jackson, 1980). Thus, understanding the process of creating the landscape is more important than visualizing the final landscape product. This construction of the landscape evolves from a combination of social and cultural processes, as people move across space and impose meaning upon the environment. Because it is an ongoing process, cultural landscapes and the images that surround them are dynamic and can vary widely between stakeholders—particularly between people who live in the area and those who are visiting. However, although opinions and associations may vary widely, over time, practices, interactions, and understandings begin to overlap, producing a “recognizable cultural landscape” (Nasar, 1998).

Cultural landscapes emerge over time as people impose meaning and value onto their environment. The first characteristics that contribute to a landscape are natural, including landmarks, vegetation, water resources, and climate. Once those are established, humans begin to shape the landscape based on their decisions about how the land should be used. The built environment that consequently emerges promotes and enhances those perceptions, as a form of nonverbal communication (Nasar, 1998, p. 4). In cultural geography, understanding those human-environment interactions are paramount because “we are a part of [the landscape], live with it, are limited by it, and modify it” (Sauer, 1963, 325). As people socialize and interact with their environment, landscapes can become ideologies that reinforce what is “natural” or “right” in

a particular place, including how an area will be used and who will be allowed to use it (Mitchell, 2005). While the facets and functions of a cultural landscape are many, Lynch (1960) defined five elements that, despite a person’s affiliation with the area, a city (or landscape) can be understood through—paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (Lynch, 1960).

Table 2.1: Elements of the City (Lynch, 1960, pp. 47-48)

<b>Element</b>	<b>Description</b>
Paths	Paths are the channels along which an individual regularly, occasionally, or potentially moves. They may be streets, walking paths, transit lines, canals, or trails. Many people observe the city as they move through it, so these are often the easiest elements for individuals to identify.
Edges	Edges are other linear elements the individual does not consider as paths. They may be boundaries between zones or linear breaks in continuity, such as shores, edges of development, or walls. Edges can be barriers that separate regions from one another or connectors that relate and join regions together.
Districts	Districts are medium-to-large sectors that have some common, identifying characteristic. They are easily identifiable from the inside, but are also visible and recognizable from the outside.
Nodes	Nodes are strategic points where an individual can enter the city. They are often the intensive foci to and from which he or she is traveling. These may be junctions, breaks in transportation, where paths cross or converge, or where movements shift. They are often focal points of high traffic and intensive activity.
Landmarks	Landmarks are visible reference points. Unlike districts, landmarks are external; not places individuals can enter and exit. Common landmarks include monuments, mountains, store, buildings, etc. Landmarks are identified in varying levels of detail

All of these elements are interrelated and many are defined by their relationship with one another. These images are stable, resistant to change, and easily recognizable to both residents and visitors. However, though the physical structure of the elements may be agreed upon by all parties, attitudes and understandings surrounding them may vary depending on the circumstances for viewing (Lynch, 1960).

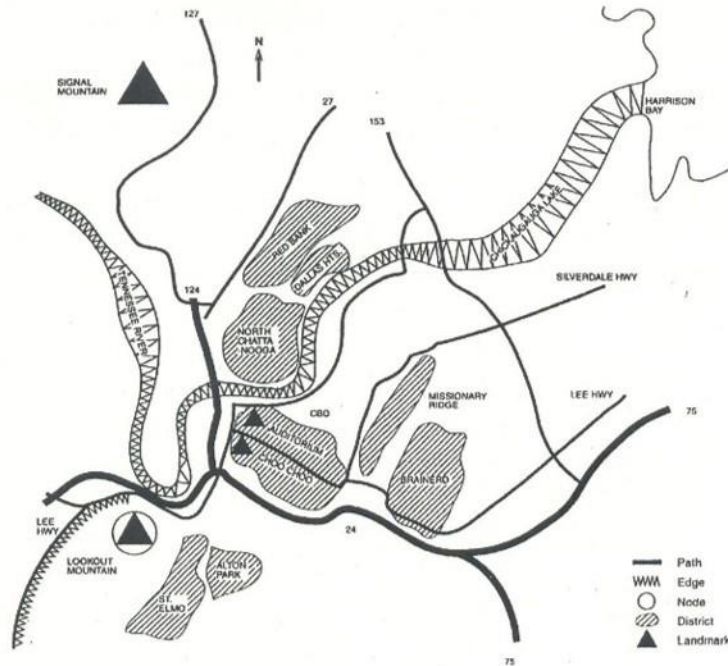


Figure 2.1: Example of Chattanooga’s Physical Form, drawn by David Miller (Nasar, 1998, p. 50)

Most commonly, perceptions of areas differ as a result of the feelings, associations, or connections people have with them (Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2013; Lynch, 1960; Nasar, 1998). For example, some people may associate certain memories with specific areas, which triggers a positive (or negative) feeling whenever they think about the area. This may cause them to assign greater importance or attachment to the area than the average person would. These shifting ideas, feelings, and perceptions exist outside of the physical landscape; the physical landscape is merely the medium where the feelings and attachments are felt. To understand these relationships, constructing an evaluative image of a place can be helpful. In tourism literature, these evaluative images are often called destination image. Where evaluative images can be collected from anyone (residents or tourists), destination image is something that is unique to the tourist industry. King, Chen, and Funk (2012) define destination image as, “an interactive construct of objective knowledge, subjective impressions, prejudice, imaginations, and emotional

thoughts toward a destination, held by individuals, which will influence their behavioral intentions” (p. 6). Like evaluative images of the cultural landscape, destination images are composed of the perceptual and symbolic dimensions of place, not so much its visual and physical components (Gkoltsiou & Terkenli, 2012).

These symbolic representations of space are created through cognitive, affective, and conative understanding (Gkoltsiou & Terkenli, 2012; King, Chen, & Funk, 2012; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2013). Cognitive information refers to what is known about a destination, both objectively and subjectively. Cognitive understanding may be true or false, but refers to what a person knows (or thinks they know) about a place. These beliefs are often a result of visual and experiential aspects that inform a person about an area’s form, meaning, and function (Gkoltsiou & Terkenli, 2012, p. 151). Alternatively, affective knowledge is how a person feels about what he or she knows (or thinks he or she knows) about a destination. Affective knowledge is often a response to cognitive knowledge. These two sources are influenced by numerous factors. Media, past experience, word of mouth, advertisement, common beliefs, and information searches all play an important role in shaping a person’s cognitive and affective understanding of place. Focusing on cognitive and affective understandings of place is one of the better ways to explain a tourist’s perception of place that is not entirely determined by its physical properties (Baloglu & Brinberg, 1997). The figures below are one example of how affective perceptions can vary spatially and among stakeholders. In environmental psychology, these are called “attitudes” and are a response to their affective and cognitive perceptions (Holahan, 1982). In this research, I will use the term “attitudes” as the representative term for affective and cognitive perceptions.

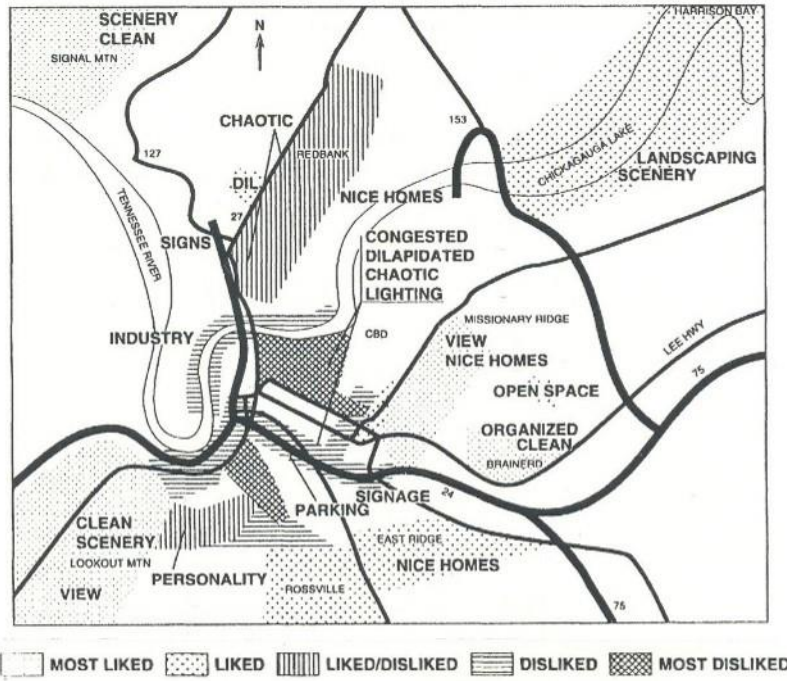


Figure 2.2: Example of an Evaluative Map of Chattanooga from Verbal Descriptions by Residents, drawn by David Miller (Nasar, 1998, p. 50)

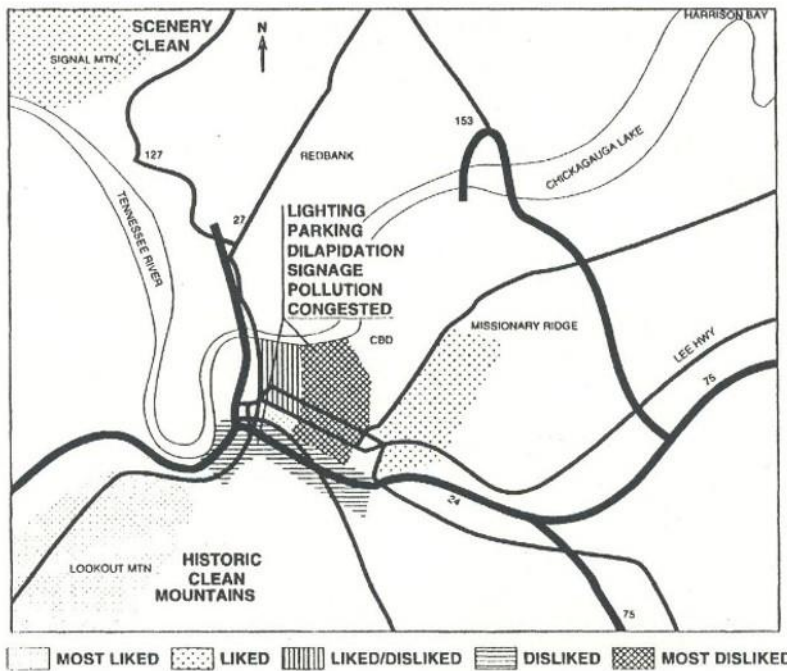


Figure 2.3: Example of an Evaluative Map of Chattanooga from Verbal Descriptions by Visitors, drawn by David Miller (Nasar, 1998, p. 51)

After a person develops an attitude (cognitive and affective understanding) of place, their conation influences their actions. Conative understanding is the applied result of cognitive and affective information; it dictates how individuals move and interact with the physical environment. Conative actions are deliberate, intentional aspects of behavior (Huitt & Cain, 2005). These actions may include any variety of things, including decisions to avoid areas during certain times (because of weather, dangerous circumstances, disease outbreaks, etc.) or the instincts that tell people to avoid certain locations or not participate in certain activities. Conative understanding is especially important for people visiting an area for the first time. As people move through an area, they gain greater information that either confirms or rejects their preconceived notions. Based on this new information, they may change their opinions, behaviors, or movements to something else they deem more appropriate (Sharifpour et al., 2013). For tourists, this may influence future behaviors—i.e., their likelihood to revisit an area or to recommend the destination to others.

Destination image is extremely important for cities with large tourist landscapes, because cities must be able to attract and maintain tourist interest to remain competitive. For an industry whose ideals are founded on location and experience, tourists often base travel decisions on the destination image of a city when price and length of stay are comparable (Garg, 2015; King, Chen, & Funk, 2012). Therefore, it is critical for destinations to promote a positive image that is accurate and appealing. Establishing a positive destination image before traveling is extremely important, because it will often determine whether or not the tourist is willing to travel to that area. However, following a trip, destination image is equally important because it influences the tourist's judgment of the trip's quality, his or her overall satisfaction, and his or her desire to return or recommend the destination to others (Chen & Tsai, 2007, p. 1115). As tourists share

trip experiences with others, it may influence the destination image perceptions and future travel decisions of those receiving the information.

This is particularly important when it comes to a destination's safety image. Once a destination is perceived to be risky by tourists, it can severely impact the area's tourism growth and development (Garg, 2015). Understandably, as risk perception and feelings of discomfort, uneasiness, or danger increase in a destination, tourists will become less likely to visit that particular location (Dimanche & Lepetic, 1999; Garg, 2015). It does not matter if the tourist has accurate information regarding the safety of the destination, if they perceive danger "perception becomes reality" (Dimanche & Lepetic, 1999; Pizam, Tarlow, & Bloom, 1997) and decisions will be made accordingly. If enough tourists share similar feelings, the entire image of a destination can be damaged as people avoid certain areas or attractions.

### Tourism and Risk Perception

Mediating risk perception is another element that is critically important to the tourism industry. Studies have found that experiential (or subjective) information is incredibly important in shaping that risk perception (George, 2010; Sharifpour et al., 2013; Wong & Yeh, 2009). Personal experience and hearing the indirect experiences that others have had with destinations give a good indication of an area's risks and destination image. If visitors have heard that an area is dangerous, they may perceive it to be risky, which may make them less likely to visit or lead them to choose another destination altogether (Dimanche & Lepetic, 1999; Garg, 2015). This relationship between risk perception and tourist decision-making is a well-researched phenomenon (Cui et al., 2016; Garg, 2015; Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992; Sharifpour et al., 2013; Wong & Yeh, 2009). However, the majority of existing literature dedicated to understanding the relationship between destination image and risk perception focuses on destinations that have

experienced extreme events and attracted national or international media attention. One example is the research done by Ryu, Bordelon, & Pearlman (2013) that measured the difference in tourist destination image of New Orleans before and after Hurricane Katrina. As expected, their results revealed that the crisis of Hurricane Katrina, along with the media coverage surrounding the event, increased tourists' risk perceptions of the area and significantly lowered their previously perceived images of New Orleans (Ryu, Bordelon, & Pearlman, 2013). Research conducted by Chew and Jahari (2014) measuring the impact of the Fukushima Disaster on tourist perceptions of Japan found similar results. While these large, publicized events are well researched in tourism studies, few studies focus on how smaller, but continuous events like increased crime rates affect risk perceptions. This paper will investigate whether or not tourists are aware of crime in Savannah and if so, how their decision-making changed as a result.

Even with careful planning, research collection, and precaution, travel is riddled with uncertainties and experiences that can be hard to regulate or control (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992; Wong & Yeh, 2009). Therefore, all forms of media are crucial in communicating a feeling of safety and security to tourists (Dimanche & Lepetic, 1999). In particular, online sources can convey impersonal, objective facts about a destination's crime rates and social atmosphere as well as more personal, subjective information about others' past experiences, opinions, and reviews of places previously visited. People often make assumptions and create images of prospective tourism destinations from these reviews. These mental images are one of the sources tourists use to choose their destinations (Garg, 2015). Furthermore, the general public relies heavily on media coverage to gather information about criminal motives. The depiction of violence, aggression, and crises in certain areas often shape tourists' attitudes towards that area (Garg, 2015, p. 4). If the situations certain areas are dealing with (political instability, recent



natural disaster, terrorist attacks, etc.) give tourists the impression that these places are unsafe, it may lead them to choose another, safer destination instead (Garg, 2015). This is important to note for Savannah because most of the city's crime coverage has focused on violent crime. However, even when a tourist believes he or she has selected the safest, lowest risk destination, it is impossible to account for everything and the potential for risks still exists. Cui et al. (2016) groups tourism risk perceptions into the following categories.

1. Five dimension risk: psychological risk, financial risk, performance risk, health risk, and social risk;
2. Six dimension risk: psychological risk, financial risk, performance risk, physical risk, social risk, and time risk;
3. Seven dimension risk: psychological risk, financial risk, performance risk, physical risk, social risk, time risk, and equipment risk (p. 6).

Along with these general categories, researchers often develop more specific risk factors to explain phenomena in particular locations. This research will focus on crime risk (fear of crime) as a specific example of psychological, social, physical, and financial risk. In general, crime risk refers to the belief that one's personal safety is threatened by becoming the target of criminals (Cui et al., 2016). As an element of psychological and social risk, tourists may feel more vulnerable to crime risk because of language barriers, cultural differences, or unfamiliarity with the area. This perceived vulnerability could be physical or financial in nature. Physical risk refers to the fear that criminals will actually attack or harm tourists. Financial risk may occur

when companies or individuals take advantage of tourists via extortion, scams, robbery, or burglary.

There have been conflicting debates in the literature regarding the relationship between tourism and crime, how tourism influences crime, and whether or not crime is more prevalent in tourist areas or not (Biagi & Detotto, 2012; Brunt, Mawby, & Hambly, 2000; Wood Harper, 2001). Biagi and Detotto (2012) argue that because crime can incorporate so many different activities, tourism certainly has the potential to, at a minimum, affect some of them (p. 694). Although crime encompasses a large range of things, the most common crimes experienced by tourists are pickpocketing (Biagi & Detotto, 2012), larceny, theft, and robbery (Brunt, Mawby, & Hambly, 2000; Wood Harper, 2001). Because tourism-crime relationships vary across time and space, it is important for cities with large tourist populations to understand how tourism and crime statistics interact.

While there are instances where criminals may specifically target tourists, it can be assumed that the probability for victimization is more dependent on an area's crime rates than a person's status as visitor or local (George, 2010). For example, if a tourist is traveling to a more dangerous area, they are certainly more likely to become a victim of a crime than if they are traveling to a safe, peaceful location. However, as mentioned above, there are multiple studies that show tourism in general leads to increased crime rates (Biagi & Detotto, 2012; Brunt, Mawby, & Hambly, 2000; Michalko, 2004; Wood Harper, 2001). Perhaps the best explanation for this is the fact that tourism brings more people into an area, giving criminals more targets and greater opportunities to act. In this sense, tourism can be considered a provider of victims (Ryan, 1993) because the industry concentrates large numbers of people in specific locations (Biagi & Detotto, 2012; Brunt, Mawby, & Hambly, 2000).

In over-crowded, well-known tourist locations, tourists are usually deemed “easy targets” because they are frequently relaxed and off guard, carrying visible items of wealth, and are unfamiliar with the local people and environment (Brunt, Mawby, & Hambly, 2000; Michalko, 2004). They are also less likely to press charges if the criminal is caught. Tourist ignorance of location or surrounding can also make it easier for criminals to escape or blend in after they commit a crime (George, 2010, p. 807). Hotel rooms, rentals, and cars marked with foreign license plates are also easy targets for criminals as they are usually left unattended throughout the day and often contain valuables (Michalko, 2004). Similarly, many tourists act differently on vacation than they would at home. They frequently engage in more careless, high risk behavior, such as drinking greater amounts of alcohol or spending more time on the streets at night (Brunt, Mawby, & Hambly, 2000, p. 418). These factors definitely increase the likelihood of victimization. Overall, tourism can affect a destination in many different ways, both directly and indirectly. Increased crime rates are only one example of the social impact tourism can bring to a community (Biagi & Detotto, 2012).

Individuals evaluate their predisposition to potential crime risk differently depending on demographic and operational characteristics. Demographically, age, gender, culture, previous travel experience, personality, and nationality can all influence an individual’s risk perception when traveling. Similarly, operational characteristics like size of traveling party, frequency of visit, proximity to home, and purpose for travel also influence risk perception (George, 2010). Other important factors influencing risk perception may include the presence of young children, connection to the destination, and whether or not tourists are staying with or visiting friends and family (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992). While this research investigates all forms of crime (violent and property), it is important to note that the city is particularly concerned with violent crime and

has dedicated much more media attention to covering incidents of violent crime than property crime.

### Information and Knowledge

It is well documented in the literature that greater risk perception encourages tourists to gather more information about the destination before arriving (Garg, 2015; Sharifpour et al., 2013). This information search is essential for many tourists because it reduces their uncertainty and makes them more confident (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Wong & Yeh, 2009). Because there will always be some level of risk associated with traveling, the goal of the information search is to lower that risk perception to an acceptable level (Cui et al., 2016; Jacobsen & Munar, 2011). Tourists most often search for information in three ways; via internal sources, external-destination specific sources, and/or external-personal sources (Jacobsen & Munar, 2011; Sharifpour et al., 2013). One's internal sources (i.e. a tourist's existing knowledge, overall travel experience, and prior visits to a destination) are often supported by an external source search (i.e. media, guidebooks, tourism websites, online reviews, etc.). Typically, tourists explore a variety of external sources to find information before traveling (Fodness & Murray, 1997). This information forms the individual's cognitive and affective knowledge of the destination. Based on this knowledge, a person's resulting conative actions determine where he or she travels, how he or she gets there, and what he or she does upon arrival (Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2013).

Although tourists make decisions based on all elements of their information search, it is widely accepted that internal, personal sources play a more significant role in tourist decision-making than external, impersonal sources (George, 2010; Jacobsen & Munar, 2011; Sharifpour et al., 2013; Wong & Yeh, 2009). Because many tourism products are service-related or based on experience, they can be difficult to describe objectively (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008) and

unsurprisingly, people trust their own experiences more than facts they may find online or in a tourism brochure. Extensive travel experience, familiarity with a destination, and awareness of others' experiences with a particular destination are all good sources of internal knowledge. This knowledge, gained through direct and indirect travel experience, can significantly reduce risk perception (Sharifpour et al., 2013). This is also counter-intuitive. Positive travel experiences and hearing good things about a destination builds tourists' confidence and creates a favorable destination image, which often leads to return visits (George, 2010; Gretzel & Yoo; 2008). However, personal knowledge is not always the most reliable source of information. This is especially true if knowledge is outdated (from one's own personal experience) or misunderstood (from another's experience).

While a great deal of research has been done to establish the importance of the information search in tourist decision-making and risk perception, much of it is outdated and doesn't account for the technology and media available today. In particular, many older studies reference the Internet as an objective information source and don't recognize it can also be a source of subjective knowledge and personal experience. Recently, the expansion of computer use, improved Web access, and increased technology skills have increased tourists' actualization and self-organization. This increased independence has led to a decrease in the use of travel agents and traditional tour operators while the use of social media, online travel review sites, and direct booking is increasing (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012). Even though social media is somewhat of a new travel resource, it has fundamentally changed the tourist decision-making process (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Hudson & Thal, 2013). As a result, a great deal of marketing and tourism research is being done to determine just how influential these sites can be. However, studies

investigating the influence of social media on destination choice are still in the exploratory stage (Jacobsen & Munar, 2011; Tham, Croy, & Mair, 2013).

Social networks, travel review sites, and blogs (this research will use “social media and online travel reviews” to refer to all of these terms) can be used by anyone to share personal experiences, opinions, or recommendations for others who are interested in visiting (Llodrà-Riera et al., 2015). Because these sites are so accessible, they can provide indirect experience and knowledge to those reading the reviews and consequently, shape readers’ destination image and risk perceptions of the locations mentioned. Customer reviews found on networking sites, travel blogs, and company websites serve two purposes—they provide information about products and services and they serve as recommendations (Park & Kim, 2008). Where comments or reviews appear on tourism company websites, companies can address negative reviews directly and mitigate their impacts, while positive reviews and posts provide a source of free, convincing advertising (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Whether negative or positive, these reviews can be quite persuasive because they provide indirect experience to fellow consumers and are often considered more up-to-date and trustworthy than information provided by marketers (Bickart & Schindlar, 2001; Gretzel & Yoo; 2008).

These kinds of consumer-based sources have been shown to be particularly influential when purchasing high involvement products, which many tourism-related products are (Park & Kim, 2008). In 2008, Gretzel and Yoo found that nearly all (over 90%) of their study participants considered online reviews to be an effective way to learn more about a destination and its products, evaluate and compare alternatives, avoid places or services they may not enjoy, and provide them with ideas of things to do while in a location. Furthermore, a great majority (80% or above) of participants stated that online travel reviews helped increase their confidence

in decision-making, made it easier to imagine what a destination would be like, and reduced the risk and uncertainty involved in making travel decisions (p. 41). These findings indicate that online travel review sites are instrumental in shaping tourists' perceived risks and destination image before traveling. They also impact behavior upon arrival (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). However, Gretzel and Yoo's (2008) sample only consisted of TripAdvisor users, a group that is more inclined to access these reviews and may be more skilled at using the Internet than the general population of travelers (p. 39). This may have resulted in slightly skewed numbers. However, although an inflated number (100%) of the participants in Gretzel and Yoo's (2008) study accessed a travel review site before planning a trip, use of these sites is expanding. A recent British study found that 42% of travelers used review websites in 2014 and 31% had posted a travel-related review on a review website at some point. Furthermore, of those who used online review sites in 2015, 59% said that those sites had the most influence on their final booking decision (Deloitte LLP, 2015). Clearly, online travel review sites have captured the attention of tourists and are empowering their decision-making. Thus, it is critical that greater research be done to investigate the degree to which social media and online travel reviews shape tourism decision-making, risk perception, and destination image formation.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

To gather the data needed to answer the research questions, a multi-methods approach was taken following approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at East Carolina University (Appendix A and B). Evaluative mapping exercises collected spatial and qualitative data that was analyzed in ArcMap 10.5 using thematic mapping techniques and ANTHROPAC 4 Free List Software using cultural domain analysis, respectively. Quantitative data was collected through surveys and analyzed in SPSS using descriptive statistical analyses, independent t-test analyses, as well as regression analyses.

### Study Area

The study area for this research was Savannah, Georgia. As a signature southern town, Savannah has a unique opportunity to support its tourism market in ways that other places are not able to. It is the oldest city in Georgia and is full of historical significance and tradition. Its cobblestone streets are lined with hundred-year-old live oaks, giving the city an authentic feel that many tourists are looking for on vacation. The walkability of the landscape is another element that appeals to tourists and gives them a greater level of interaction and involvement with the environment. In the last decade, Savannah's tourism market has grown substantially, attracting nearly 13.5 million visitors in 2014 who contributed over \$2.5 billion in direct spending. These numbers increased in 2015 with over 13.7 million visitors contributing a total of \$2.67 billion to the city in direct spending (Savannah Chamber, 2016).

A great deal of Savannah's attraction is found in its well-preserved historic district that is home to more than twenty city squares filled with churches, museums, historic homes, restaurants, shops, monuments, and forts. Since 1966, the two-mile area has been recognized as the largest National Historic District in the United States (Visit Savannah, 2016). However,



while Savannah is home to some beautiful neighborhoods and expensive homes, the city has its problems. In particular, beginning in 2015 Savannah saw its crime rates skyrocket. In the past this crime has been spread across the city, but more recently it has crept toward the downtown area. Over the last few years, shootings and homicides near and around downtown have increased dramatically, striking worry in many of the city’s tourism officials. However, thus far, despite the increase in crime, most businesses report that tourist traffic is increasing.

The study area for this research was not limited to the administrative boundary of Savannah. While data collection was centered in the Historic District in downtown Savannah, exercises and questions included the city of Savannah and its surrounding areas. It was important to include both the city of Savannah as well as periphery areas to ensure that participants would be able to recognize and also differentiate between areas they thought were similar and dissimilar.



Figure 3.1: Popular Spots in Savannah. Riverstreet (left) and City Market (right) are some of the city’s most frequently visited areas by both residents and tourists (Foyt, 2015b; Foyt, 2015c).

### Participants

Originally, approximately four hotels/motels were going to be selected from each region of the city (north, south, east, and west), with participants recruited from the hotel/motel lobby. However, this strategy did not work due to low participation among hotels. As an alternative,

individuals were recruited from Savannah's downtown area. A convenient sampling was used for both residents and tourists from Riverstreet, City Market, Forsyth Park, and the surrounding squares. These areas are all located in the city's National Historic District and are within walking distance of one another. They are also among the "top hits" on Trip Advisor's "Things to Do" when one searches Savannah. A map of Savannah's Historic District can be found in Appendix F with highlights of survey sites. If an individual declined participation, I moved on to the next person. Surveys were conducted between July 2016 and May 2017. In total 60 individuals participated, 26 residents and 34 tourists.

#### Data Collection

For data collection, I conducted evaluative mapping exercises and surveys simultaneously with residents and tourists in Savannah, Georgia. Data collection was designed to gain information about residents' and tourists' evaluative images (destination images for tourists) of the city, their associated risk perceptions, the experience and influence of travel information sources they used, and their attitudes toward crime and safety throughout the city. This collection of various forms of data helps give a fuller understanding of the affective and cognitive perceptions and the related conative action of participants (Alarasi, Martinez, & Amer, 2016).

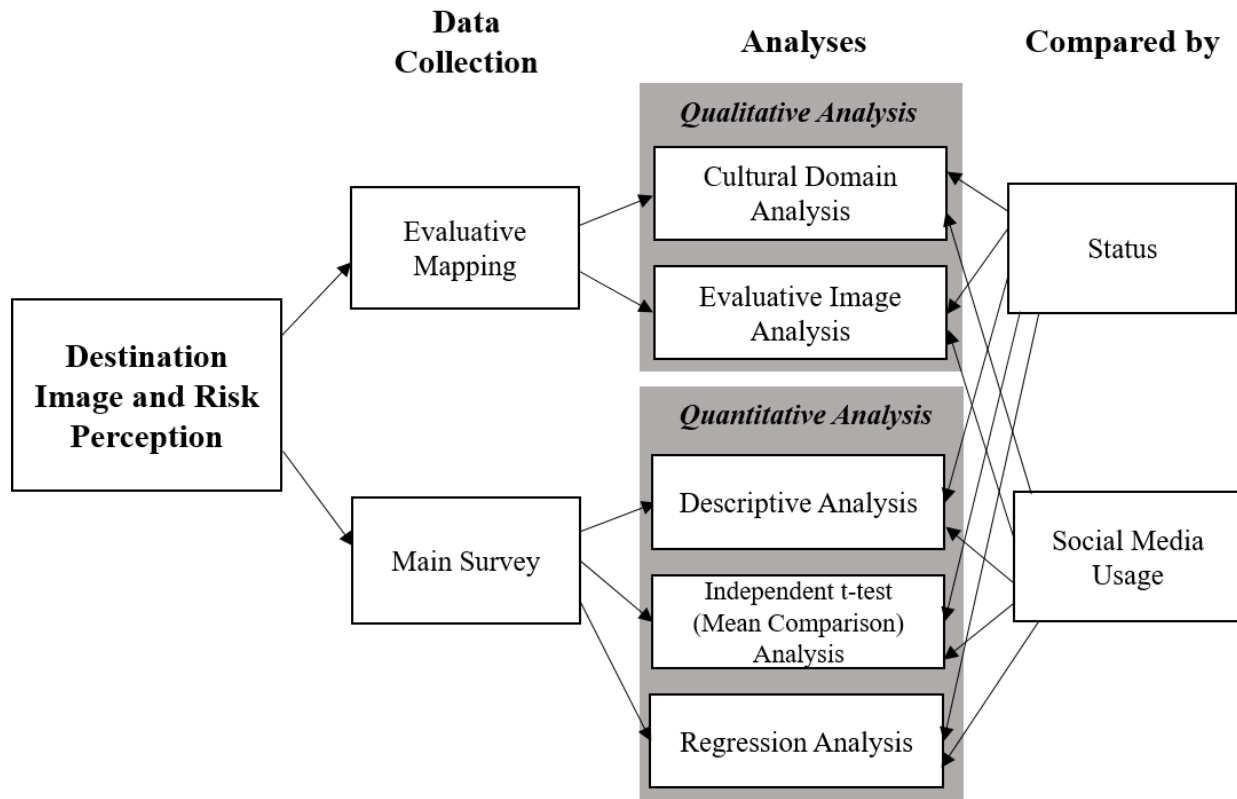


Figure 3.2: Methodology Flow Chart

### *Evaluative Mapping*

Evaluative mapping had three components: respondents were first asked to identify areas on a map, then list keywords they associated with that area, and lastly answer a short follow-up survey. A basic map was provided to help participants (both residents and tourists) express their locational understanding of Savannah by identifying which areas they recognized. A smaller scale base map, which included the municipal boundary of Savannah and its surrounding areas, was displayed on a 6.3125” x 4.75” tablet screen (iPad Mini) as a background image of Doodle Buddle—a Tablet application. Participants drew freely on the screen using a stylus. Each map was given a unique ID and later georeferenced into ArcGIS 10.5 for spatial analysis. Figure 3.3 shows the screen shot of the base map.

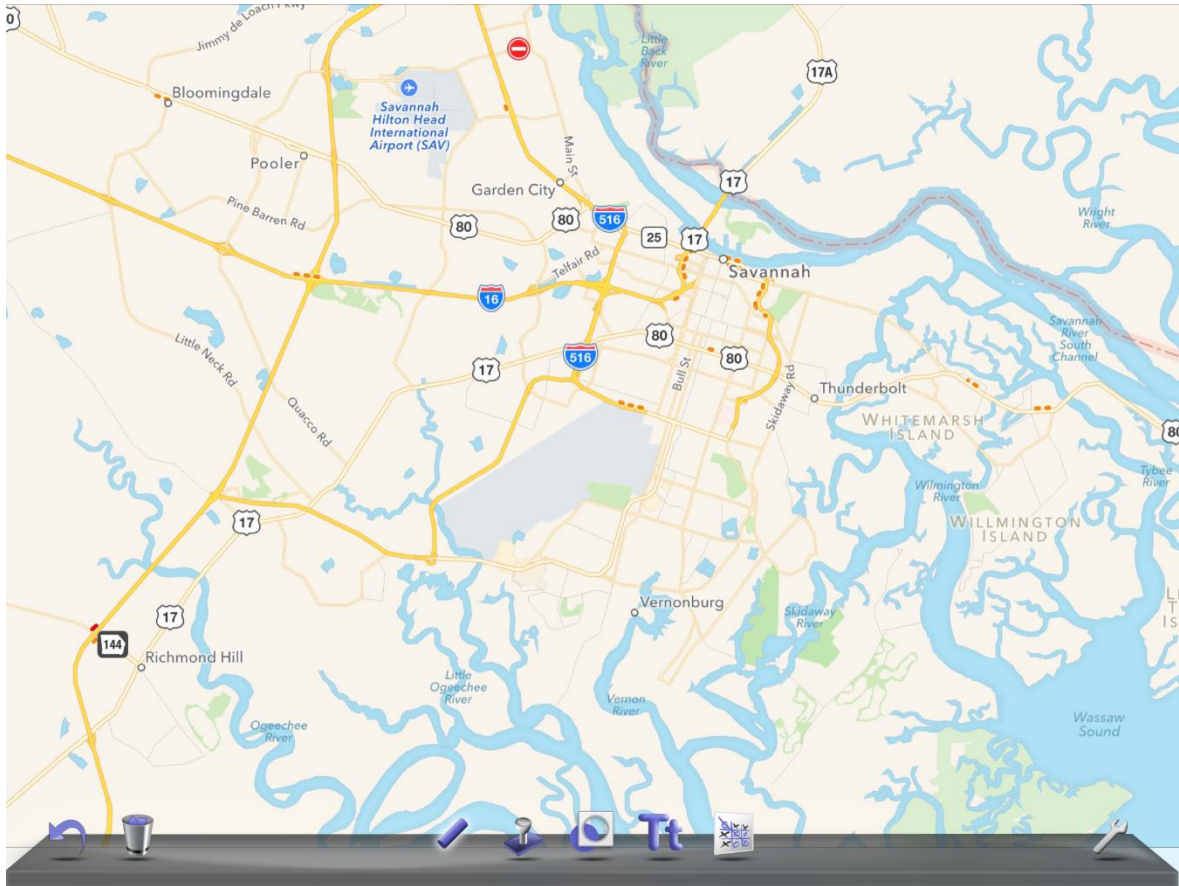


Figure 3.3: Base Map Provided to Participants for Evaluative Mapping Exercise

Upon completion, participants discussed each area individually, listing any keywords they associated with each, along with additional descriptions why, as I took notes. This technique of free listing keywords is an exploratory tool often used in anthropology for cultural domain analysis (Gravlee, 1998). Cultural domain analysis typically begins with free listing, where a small group of participants is asked to name all of the items they can think of. This technique often works best when categories have names (Borgatti, 1988), or in the case of this study are related to a particular place recognized by the participant. While this is an anthropological tool, combining it with a spatial element (linking keywords to individuals' maps via their unique ID), centers it in geography studies as a method to understand and gather information about cultural landscape creation and measuring cultural imprints. Once the

keywords were linked to individuals' maps, they were analyzed by frequency using ANTHROPAC 4 Free List Software. This analysis often results in a small core set of terms mentioned by multiple respondents, followed by a long list of distinctive terms that are only mentioned by one or two respondents (Borgatti, 1988). The free listing analysis allows researchers to discover what words are important to the people they work with (Thompson & Zhang, 2006). In essence, the words that are mentioned by multiple participants offers insight into the cultural domain of the research group. However, this is only the first step in developing a cultural domain. The next steps, including consensus analysis, that are necessary to solidify the cultural domain are beyond the scope of this research and thus, were not included. However, perhaps future research could address the building of the cultural domain further.

Because free listing is an open-ended task, it is often helpful to create categories (or themes) so data can be analyzed further in later research (Gravlee, 1998). Thus, keywords were separated by their affections (positive or negative) as well as for content (history and culture, environment, and food and beverage). When grouping affections only adjectives were included. Determining whether keywords were positive and negative terms was based on the Russell's (1988) affective appraisals of environments bipolar framework of extreme pleasantness (positive) and extreme unpleasantness (negative). Russell acknowledges that affective appraisal "is not a tidy, scientific enterprise" (Russell, 1988, p. 124) that should be taken as a "proposal and evaluated against the criterion of usefulness" (Russell, 1988, p. 128). Because of this, affective appraisals have limitations that must be taken into account when they are pressed for scientific service (Russell, 1988). However, for this research, this model was sufficient to provide useful insight into the affections participants associated with Savannah, Georgia. When keywords were grouped for content, all listed terms were included. The three themes included in

content coding were chosen because of their prominence in the data and because they are all central to Savannah's success as a tourist destination. Furthermore, each of these themes are listed as popular "Things to Do in Savannah" on the Trip Advisor site. They are also heavily marketed by Visit Savannah. In addition to listing keywords, many participants spoke freely about their experiences and impressions of Savannah. I recorded these statements in writing as field notes. The frequency of keywords was compared between residents and tourists and also between tourists who used social media and/or online travel reviews and those who did not. Keywords were also added to the evaluative maps created by participants to provide a visual representation of the data.

Once participants finished their free lists, they completed a short follow-up survey, which asked questions about each marked area. The purpose of the survey was to understand participants' attitudes towards crime and safety in the areas they marked. Eight questions were included and measured on five-point Likert scales; where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Appendix C shows the evaluative mapping exercise along with the follow-up survey. Responses to survey questions were also linked to individuals' maps via their unique ID. The only statement used in the analysis was "*I feel like this area is unsafe*". Thematic mapping techniques were used to create evaluative image maps to display the areas participants considered to be safe and unsafe. Safe areas were indicated where individuals "Strongly Disagreed" or "Disagreed" with the statement "*I feel like this area is unsafe*". Unsafe areas were indicated where participants "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" with the statement. These images were compared between residents and tourists and also between tourists who used social media and/or online travel reviews and those who did not. The other questions from the short follow-up survey did not reveal any additional information so were not included.

### *Main Survey*

The goal of the main survey was to determine if there were significant differences in crime awareness and attitudes towards crime between residents and tourists as well as between tourists who used social media and/or online travel reviews and those who did not. The main surveys were conducted after the evaluative mapping exercises were completed. Depending on status—residents vs. tourists—participants were required to answer different sets of questions in the survey. A copy of the main survey can be found in Appendix D.

The main survey included three sections. Section one asked demographic information. In this section, tourists were also asked about the details of their trip, including structure of traveling party and their reason for traveling. George's (2010) questions were adapted to see the influence of information sources on risk perception before traveling. These descriptive demographic and trip characteristic data were analyzed using frequency analysis tools in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23.

Section two of the survey asked tourists about direct and indirect travel experience. Some of the questions by Gretzel and Yoo (2008) were used. These questions were asked to help gather a better understanding of participants' previous travel experience, the influence of online travel reviews on their decision-making, how confident they were with the destination information they had gathered, and how that information influenced their travel behavior. Again, responses were analyzed in SPSS using frequency analysis tools. In this section participants were asked how familiar they were with destinations in Savannah and tourists were asked to rank how much confidence they had in their knowledge of Savannah. The confidence question, *How confident are you with your knowledge of Savannah* was answered on a five-point Likert scale where 1= Not confident at all, 3 = Moderately confident, and 5 = Extremely confident. The

familiarity questions, “*Compared to the average person I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah*”, “*Compared to my friends I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah*”, and “*Compared to people who travel a lot I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah*”, employed a similar five-point Likert scale. Here 1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. While tourists were the only group asked about their confidence, all participants were asked about their familiarity with Savannah. Independent t-tests were run in SPSS to analyze the data and compare responses between residents and tourists as well as between tourists who used social media/online travel resources and those who did not.

Finally, in section three, tourists and residents were asked whether or not they were aware of crime in Savannah, where they gathered information about crime, and if they had ever been a victim of crime in the area. They were also asked to evaluate their fear of crime (attitudes towards crime) and their likelihood to recommend and revisit Savannah as a whole. To measure risk perception and attitudes towards crime among participants, five questions were included: “*Savannah is unsafe*”, “*I feel like I might become a victim of crime in Savannah*”, “*Savannah is just as unsafe as other tourist locations*”, “*People have told me that Savannah is unsafe*”, and “*I feel worried about my personal safety in Savannah*”. These were also answered on a five-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The mean value of all of these questions should be able to represent the participants’ overall knowledge and attitude towards crime. Similarly, multiple questions were asked to gather information about participants’ likelihood to recommend and revisit Savannah as well as if crime and/or safety affected those decisions. These were written as statements using a five-point Likert scale where 1 = Extremely Unlikely, 3 = Neither Likely or Unlikely, and 5 =



Extremely Likely. Questions included: “*I would recommend Savannah to others*”, “*I will not recommend Savannah because it is not safe*”, “*I plan to revisit/continue visiting Savannah in the future*”, and “*I will not return to Savannah for fear of safety*”. To measure the difference in mean risk perception of Savannah between residents and tourists, independent t-tests were run using each of the attitude questions, as well as the likelihood to recommend and revisit questions. Frequency analyses were also conducted to compare the sources residents and tourists used to gather their information about crime in Savannah.

To further understand the difference in risk perception between residents and tourists, I ran a regression analysis to find how and to what degree variables influenced participants’ evaluation of crime. *Fear of Crime*—the dependent variable in the model—was calculated by averaging the data from all five safety questions, “*Savannah is unsafe*”, “*I feel like I might become a victim of crime in Savannah*”, “*Savannah is just as unsafe as other tourist locations*”, “*People have told me that Savannah is unsafe*”, and “*I feel worried about my personal safety in Savannah*”. Independent variables included demographic identifiers (i.e., gender, age, and status) along with crime awareness, familiarity, and travel characteristic variables. For all independent variables and their scales, refer to Appendix E on pages 84 and 85. The criteria for the stepwise regression entered variables whose probabilities were  $p \leq .050$  and removed those where  $p \geq .100$ . Because this paper is dedicated to understanding the impact of crime on Savannah’s appeal as a destination, regressions were run for the statements, “*I would recommend Savannah to others*” and “*I will not revisit/continue living in Savannah because it is not safe*” to understand what factors (if any) would influence participants’ likelihood to recommend and revisit the city. The same criteria were used for the stepwise regression. All variables and their scales are summarized in Appendix E.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents the information I collected from participants' evaluative map exercises and survey responses. Demographic information, including age and gender of all participants as well as tourists' trip characteristics, confidence in knowledge, and sources where they sought information are included. Evaluative maps measuring differences between residents' and tourists' affections as well as their attitudes toward crime can be found throughout the chapter. Differences were also measured between tourists who used social media and/or online travel reviews and those who did not. The results from the evaluative maps are supplemented with frequency, mean comparison, and regression statistical analyses of data collected through the main survey.

### Participants

In total, 60 people participated in this study, 26 residents and 34 tourists. While slightly more women participated than men, an equal number of male and female tourists participated in the study. People ranging in age from 18 to 74 participated, with the greatest percentage of residents aged between 25-34 and 35-44 and tourists between 25-34 and 55-64. Table 4.1 lists greater details of demographic characteristics of participants.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

		All Participants ( <i>n</i> = 60)		Residents ( <i>n</i> = 26)		Tourists ( <i>n</i> = 34)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	27	45.0%	10	38.5%	17	50.0%
	Female	33	55.0%	16	61.5%	17	50.0%
Age	Under 24	8	13.3%	4	15.4%	4	11.8%
	25-34	16	26.7%	7	26.9%	9	26.5%
	35-44	11	18.3%	7	26.9%	4	11.8%
	45-54	8	13.3%	3	11.5%	5	14.7%
	55-64	14	23.3%	5	19.2%	9	26.5%
	65-74	3	5.0%	0	0.0%	3	8.8%

Both domestic and international tourists participated in the survey: domestic tourists were from Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Illinois, California, New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Texas, Idaho, Indiana, South Carolina, and Ohio; and international tourists were from Australia, Canada, and Germany. Of the 34 tourists, the most common home states included Georgia, Florida, and New York, with five participants each. Data showed that Savannah was a family-oriented destination. Among 34 total tourists, 31 answered that they were traveling with family either with children ( $n = 9$ ) or without children ( $n = 22$ ). All participating tourists had arrived in Savannah recently and were planning to stay a week or less. There was almost an even split between first time visitors ( $n = 18$ ) and those who had visited Savannah before ( $n = 16$ ). For many of those who were re-visiting, it had been over a year since their last visit. The purpose of the visits were mainly for holiday/leisure ( $n = 32$ ), while two were for business and job interviews, and one was visiting friends and/or family. Most people drove to get to the city as a mode of travel ( $n = 26$ ), while a few flew ( $n = 13$ ) or used a train ( $n = 1$ ).

Table 4.2: Travel Characteristics of Tourists

			Frequency	Percentage
All tourists ( $n = 34$ )	Travel Group	Alone	2	5.9%
		With family (with children)	9	26.5%
		With family (no children)	22	64.7%
		With a group (not family)	1	20.9%
	Arrival Time	Today	9	26.5%
		Yesterday	16	47.1%
		A few days ago	9	26.5%
	Length of Stay	1-3 days	19	55.9%
		4-7 days	15	44.1%
	Purpose for Visit	Visiting friends and/ or family	1	2.9%
		Holiday/Leisure	32	94.1%
		Business	2	5.9%
	Mode of Transportation Used	Car	26	76.5%
		Plane	13	38.2%
		Train	1	2.9%
Prior Visit	Yes	16	47.1%	
	No	18	52.9%	

*Note: The Purpose for Visit and Mode of Transportation Used variables were multiple selection questions, so percentage totals are greater than 100%.*

Table 4.3: Travel Characteristics of Tourists with Prior Visits

Tourists with prior visits ( $n = 16$ )	Times Visited	1-2 times	7	43.8%
		3-5times	7	43.8%
		6-10 times	0	0.0%
		11 times of more	2	12.5%
	Last Trip	Within the last week	1	6.3%
		Within the last 6 months	3	18.8%
		Within the last year	1	6.3%
		Over a year ago	11	68.6%

### Evaluative Maps of Savannah

Research participants were asked to identify areas they “recognized” in Savannah. There was no restriction on the number of areas, the size of areas, or “in what capacity” participants identified the areas. A total of 26 residents and 33 tourists participated in the evaluative mapping exercise followed by a short follow-up survey that focused on each identified area. The average number of areas marked by participants was 1.90, with a standard deviation of 1.6. The majority of participants (38 people, 64.4%) marked only one area and the downtown area was most frequently identified (32 times). Residents marked an average of 2.73 areas, while tourists marked an average of 1.24. The greatest number of areas marked by residents was seven, while it was four for tourists. Figure 4.1 denotes all areas marked by residents (left) and tourists (right). Residents’ evaluative maps tend to cover wider areas of Savannah while tourists’ maps concentrate in the downtown area, as appeared in Nasar’s (1998) research of Chattanooga. There was a significant difference in the number of areas marked for residents ( $M = 2.73, SD = 2.03$ ) and tourists ( $M = 1.24, SD = 0.66$ );  $t(29.212) = -3.59, p = .001$ .

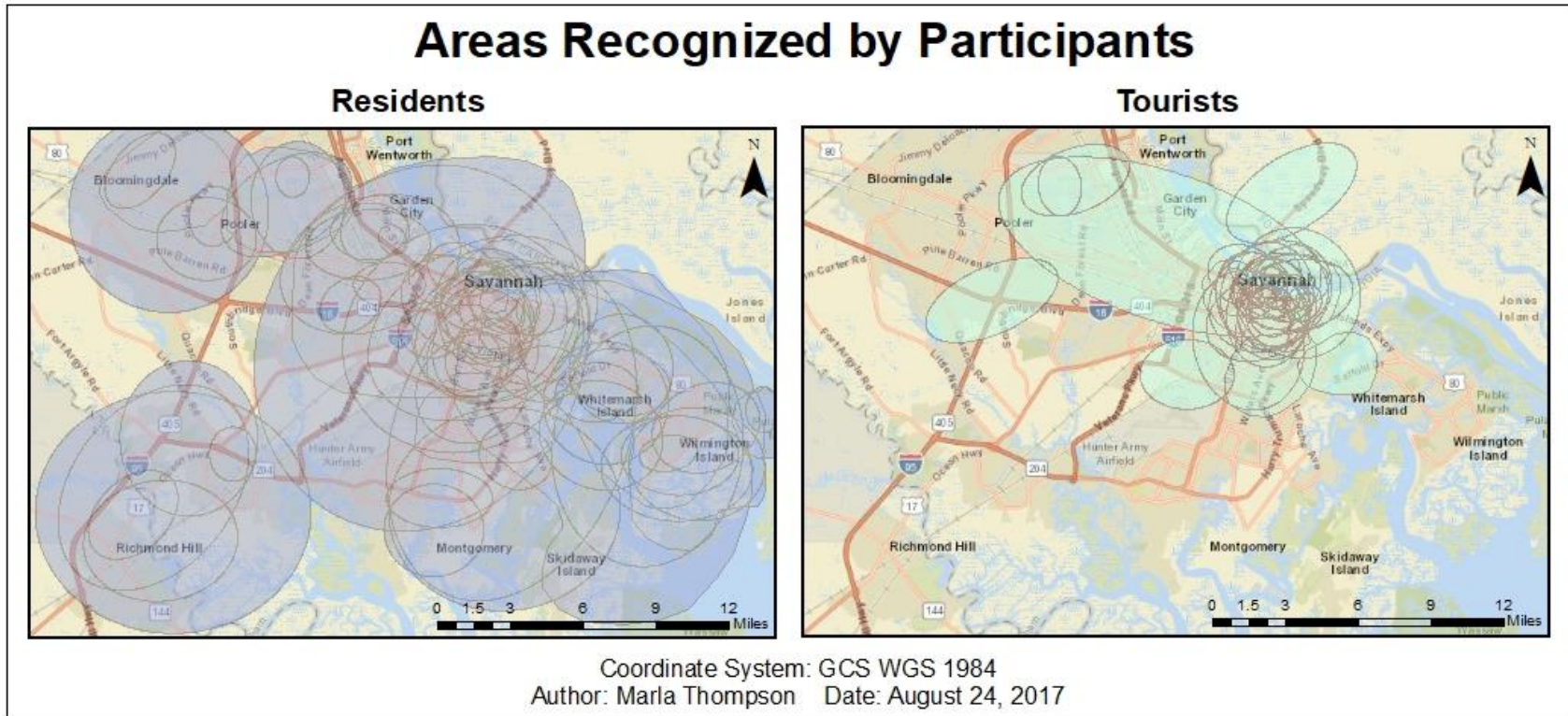


Figure 4.1: Areas Recognized by Residents (left) and Tourists (right)

While constructing their maps, many individuals ( $n = 56$ ) identified Savannah's downtown area as one that was familiar to them. Of the 59 participants, 33 individuals (55.9%, 27 tourists and six residents) marked Savannah's downtown area as the *only* familiar place that was to them. Many of the participating tourists had just arrived in the city and the downtown area was the only place they had visited. Therefore, their mapping capability may have been severely limited. While six residents also indicated that they were only familiar with the downtown area, the boundary of their marked areas was much larger than those indicated by tourists. The other 26 participants (44.1%, six tourists and 20 residents) marked additional areas.

#### *Cultural Domain Analysis of Savannah by Status*

The most important result from free listing is the frequency that terms are mentioned from all informants (Gravlee, 1998). From the evaluative maps, participants listed a total of 205 keywords, though some were mentioned much more than others. Frequency counts for the top 15 keywords can be found in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Top 15 Most Often Mentioned Keywords

Item	Overall Frequency (%)	Resident Frequency	Tourist Frequency
Historic	27.6%	23.1%	31.3%
History	17.2%	15.4%	18.8%
Squares	13.8%	7.7%	18.8%
Beach	13.8%	23.1%	6.3%
Downtown	13.8%	30.8%	0.0%
Beautiful	12.1%	11.5%	12.5%
Home	10.3%	23.1%	0.0%
Old	10.3%	7.7%	12.5%
Parks	10.3%	3.8%	15.6%
Food	10.3%	11.5%	9.4%
Hot	8.6%	7.7%	9.4%
Fun	8.6%	11.5%	6.3%
Trees	8.6%	11.5%	6.3%
Quiet	8.6%	7.7%	9.4%
Riverstreet	8.6%	11.5%	6.3%

As seen in the Table 4.4, many of the keywords were related. After running a frequency count, it appeared that many participants listed keywords related to three themes: 1) history & culture, 2) environment, and 3) food & beverage. History & culture keywords were most frequently cited by both groups, especially tourists. Residents also frequently listed keywords related to the environment. Food & beverage keywords were the least frequently cited by both groups, but was still a popular theme many participants commented on. Other themes listed on Visit Savannah’s website include Shopping and Entertainment, but these were not prominent in the data and thus were not included. Although tourists identified relatively fewer areas in Savannah than residents, they typically listed more keywords when they were asked what they thought about them. Table 4.5 groups some of those keywords based on the three themes. A full list of keywords can be found in Appendix G.

Table 4.5: Keywords Grouped by Theme

Theme	Overall Frequency (%)	Resident Frequency	Tourist Frequency
<i>History and Culture</i>	69.0%	53.8%	81.3%
Terms: Antebellum, architecture, Civil War, colonization, Confederacy, culture, Forrest Gump, Garden of Good and Evil, ghosts, haunted, historic, historic area, historic buildings, Historic District, history, New World, Oglethorpe, old, old architecture, old fashioned, old homes, Old South, planned, Revolutionary War, rustic, slavery, southern, southern comfort, southern hospitality, spared by the Civil War, squares, the South, well planned, well preserved			
<i>Environment</i>	60.3%	65.4%	56.3%
Terms: beach, bike paths, bike trails, cobblestone, country, dolphins, environment, forest, good landscape, heat, hiking, horses, hot, humid, islands, live oaks, magnolia, marsh, marshes, marshland, moss, moss on the trees, near the beach, ocean, on the water, park, parks, port, river, sandy, shaded, Spanish moss, sun, swamp, towards the beach, trails, trees, water, woods			
<i>Food and Beverage</i>	32.8%	34.6%	31.3%
Terms: alcohol, bars, candy, dining, drinking, eat, fine dining, food, good food, good restaurants, grocery shopping, restaurants, southern comfort, southern kitchen, Starbucks			

Along with grouping keywords using themes, keywords were also grouped by affection as either positive or negative. Results showed that positive keywords were listed three times more frequently than negative terms. The use of positive keywords seemed to be similar in

frequency between residents and tourists, with both slightly over 53 percent. In contrast, residents’ use of negative keywords was more than four times more frequent than tourists’ (26.9 percent vs. 6.3 percent, respectively). This might be because although tourists listed more keywords, they were often neutral regarding affection—i.e. words like history and squares. The only negative terms used by tourists to describe Savannah included “dangerous”, “gunfire”, and “smells like urine”. There were also a few ambiguous terms that were not included in the analysis as they could be considered either positive or negative depending on the context. These terms included “highly populated”, “less people”, “low population”, and “old”. Table 4.6 summarizes the results of the cultural domain analysis as well as the keywords that were included.

Table 4.6 Keywords Grouped by Affective Appraisal

Theme	Overall Frequency (%)	Resident Frequency	Tourist Frequency
<i>Positive keywords</i>	53.4%	53.8%	53.1%
Terms: affluent, artistic, artsy, beautiful, charming, comfort, considerate, convenient, fun, functional, growth, happy, hospitable, laid back, lots to see, love it, nice, nice people, peaceful, picturesque, pleasant, pretty, quaint, relax, relaxation, relaxed, relaxing, rich, rustic, safer, tranquil, vibrant, well-mannered			
<i>Negative keywords</i>	15.5%	26.9%	6.3%
Terms: boring, busy, dangerous, gunfire, not clean, not friendly, not much to do there, not safe, nothing to do there, petty crime, run down, smells like urine, snobby, traffic			

Evaluative images of the city tended to be similar between tourists and residents when described with keywords. As can be seen in Figures 4.2 and 4.3, residents listed fewer keywords that were more spread out over space with more negative word choices than tourists. However, many of these negative comments were related to traffic and excess people or to areas that were boring and did not have anything special to offer. Tourists’ evaluative maps are more positive, compact, and include more descriptors. Compared to residents, tourists were also more excited and willing to talk about their experience in Savannah and discuss the things they liked. Many



residents found it difficult to list keywords and often said things like “home” or “work” when asked why they marked certain areas. While “downtown” was a popular keyword for residents, no tourists mentioned “downtown” when referring to the Historic District and Riverstreet. Compared to less mentioned keywords, keywords that were mentioned most often are visually accentuated by larger font sizes. Bolded terms indicate that they were the most frequently cited keywords in that particular location (i.e. in the Richmond Hill area in the bottom left corner, community was cited by three participants while the other terms were only cited once). Negative keywords are highlighted in red.

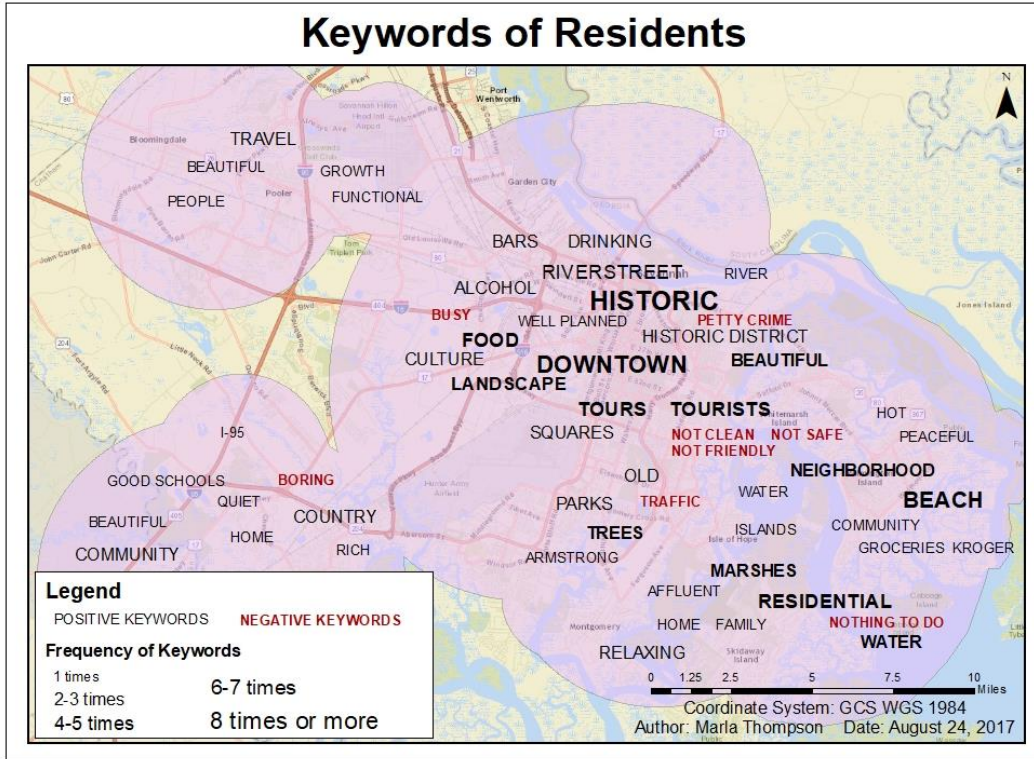


Figure 4.2: Evaluative Map of Savannah from Resident Descriptions

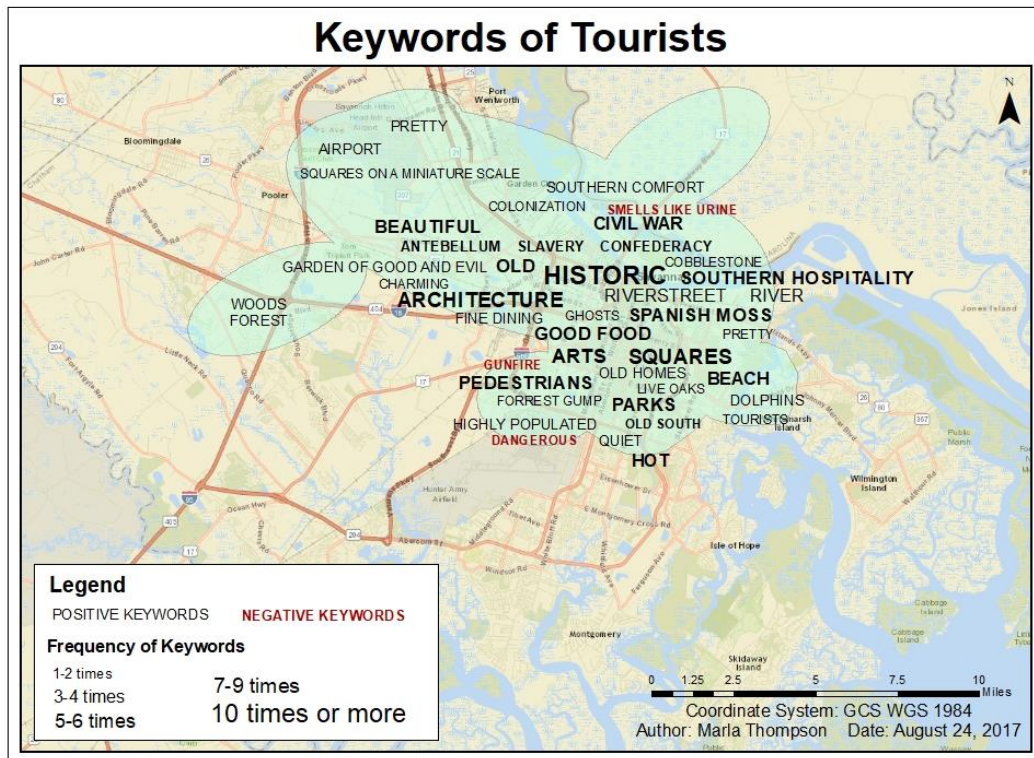


Figure 4.3: Evaluative Map of Savannah from Tourist Descriptions

## Attitudes Towards Crime in Savannah by Status

### *Mean Comparison by Status*

Table 4.7 shows the attitudes towards crime in Savannah from the main surveys of all participants. It also includes columns that break down the results by status (residents vs. tourists). Individuals were asked their risk perception in Savannah and the sample sizes vary by question (people skipped certain questions). Although both residents and tourists responded that Savannah was a safe place in general, when comparing residents and tourists, risk perceptions appear to be different. Residents' responses were much more negative compared to tourists. When all five risk perceptions were averaged, residents reported a risk perception of 3.24 and tourists 2.30 on a five-point Likert scale. (See Table 4.7 for details.)

The results showed that there was a significant difference in the feeling that "*Savannah is unsafe*" between residents ( $M = 3.20, SD = 1.00$ ) and tourists ( $M = 2.18, SD = 0.83$ );  $t(57) = -4.28, p < .001$ . There was also significance in the mean difference between residents who reported "*People have told me that Savannah is unsafe*" ( $M = 4.04, SD = .84$ ), compared to tourists ( $M = 2.12, SD = 1.07$ );  $t(57) = -7.46, p < .001$ . As a result, we can say with 99% confidence, that the differences risk perception for these questions is not by chance, but is determined by one's status as a resident or tourist. This can be attributed to the constant media coverage of crime in the area on local news outlets. Through local news coverage like television, newspaper, and other media, residents are more frequently exposed to Savannah's crime severity than tourists. Of the 26 residents, only one said he was unaware of crime in the city. Crime awareness among tourists turned out to be very different. Only nine of the 34 tourists (36.5%) were aware of crime in Savannah. When talking about Savannah's crime, one tourist said that

with everything else going on in the world right now, crime in Savannah was the least of her worries.

There was also a statistically significant difference in the feeling that “*I feel like I might become a victim of crime in Savannah*” between residents ( $M = 3.08, SD = 1.00$ ) and tourists ( $M = 2.03, SD = .94$ );  $t(57) = -4.14, p < .001$ . In fact, 13 of the 26 residents (50%) said they had been the victim of a crime either directly or indirectly during their tenure in Savannah. No tourist had experienced any crime during their stay in the city. Most residents’ crime experiences were related to property crime, in particular, theft from their vehicles, home, or work. As one would expect, being a victim of crime in the past leads to greater awareness and fear of crime in the future. As a result, there was also a statistically significant difference in the feeling that “*I feel worried about my personal safety in Savannah*” between residents ( $M = 2.76, SD = 1.30$ ) and tourists ( $M = 2.03, SD = .90$ );  $t(40.389) = -2.41, p = .020$ . The combination of residents’ crime awareness and prior experience certainly heightened their awareness and increased worry when they were asked to answer questions related to personal safety.

Among risk perception questions, only one question, “*Savannah is just as unsafe as other tourist locations*” was not significantly different based on one’s status. This may be because many participants said Savannah’s crime doesn’t compare to crime in cities like New York or Chicago that people typically associated with high crime rates. Many people commented on this during the evaluative mapping exercise. The following statements were recorded in my field notes and discuss their observations. One tourist compared Savannah with another Georgia city, Atlanta, and said that she perceived Savannah to be much safer. Others said that they expect a certain level of crime in areas that are busy and full of people and didn’t feel that Savannah exceeds that threshold. Furthermore, multiple participants (both tourists and residents)

said they felt that they could control their level of safety depending on the choices they make. They mentioned things like hiding valuables in their car, not staying out late at night, and being aware of their surroundings. These factors lead residents and tourists to hold similar attitudes about Savannah's comparative safety as a tourist destination.

Both residents and tourists had positive responses when asked whether they would recommend and revisit Savannah. Compared to residents, tourists were more likely to recommend Savannah to others and less likely to cite crime as a reason not to recommend or revisit the area. There was a significant difference in the question "*I will recommend Savannah to others*" between tourists and residents;  $t(28.276) = 2.8$ ;  $p = .009$  as well for the question, "*I will not recommend Savannah because it is not safe*" between groups;  $t(26.701) = -3.67$ ;  $p = .001$ . Therefore, it can be said with 90% certainty that likelihood to recommend Savannah is dependent on status, not other factors. There was not a significant difference in likelihood to revisit the city in the future between groups.

As expected, there were statistically significant differences between tourists and residents in terms of their familiarity with Savannah. To the question, "*compared to the average person, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah*", residents reported a higher familiarity with Savannah ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) than tourists ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ );  $t(53) = -2.98$ ,  $p = .004$ . To the question, "*compared to people who travel a lot, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah*", there was an even larger gap between residents ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) and tourists ( $M = 2.44$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ );  $t(53) = -4.52$ ,  $p < .001$ . The analysis showed that there was no significant difference based on one's status in terms of the question, "*compared to my friends, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.*" These questions were left ambiguous to highlight the fact that familiarity and destination knowledge are comparative

between people and places. Note that of the 24 tourists who answered these questions, 18 had never visited Savannah before and many had arrived the same day or just one day prior to participating in the survey.

Tourists were also asked how confident they were with their knowledge of Savannah. Answers to this question varied, with 23 participants marking moderate to high levels of confidence and nine participants marking that they were not familiar at all. Again, of the 24 tourists who answered the question, only 16 of them had ever been in the city prior to their current visit. Residents did not answer the question, so no comparison was needed.

Residents and tourists obtained their knowledge of crime from various sources. For residents who were aware of crime ( $n = 23$ ), popular sources of information included television, radio, and media coverage ( $n = 18$ ), personal knowledge and experience ( $n = 14$ ), newspapers and magazines ( $n = 14$ ), and family and friends ( $n = 12$ ). Of the nine tourists who were aware of crime in Savannah, they gathered their information from friends and family ( $n = 4$ ), television, radio, and media coverage ( $n = 3$ ), hotel employees ( $n = 2$ ), and personal knowledge ( $n = 2$ ). A full list can be found in Appendix H.

Table 4.7: Attitudes Towards Crime in Savannah by Status

Group (Scale)	Variable	All Participants		Residents		Tourists	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Risk Perception	Savannah is unsafe.*	2.61	1.03	3.20	1.00	2.18	0.83
	I feel like I might become a victim of crime in Savannah.*	2.47	1.09	3.08	1.00	2.03	0.94
	Savannah is just as unsafe as other tourist locations.	3.29	1.08	3.52	0.96	3.12	1.15
	People have told me that Savannah is unsafe.*	2.93	1.36	4.04	0.84	2.12	1.07
	I feel worried about my personal safety in Savannah.***	2.34	1.14	2.76	1.30	2.03	0.90
Likelihood to recommend and revisit	I would recommend Savannah to others.**	4.46	0.93	4.04	1.24	4.76	0.43
	I would not recommend Savannah because it is not safe.*	1.81	1.14	2.46	1.45	1.33	0.48
	I plan to revisit/continue living Savannah in the future.	4.11	1.10	4.26	1.24	4.03	1.03
	I will not return to Savannah for fear of safety.	1.47	0.83	1.61	1.14	1.39	0.61
Confidence in Knowledge	How confident are you with your knowledge of Savannah?	2.21	0.91			2.21	0.91
Familiarity with Destinations	Compared to the average person, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.**	3.07	1.25	3.67	1.07	2.71	1.22
	Compared to my friends, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.	3.20	1.06	3.52	0.98	3.00	1.07
	Compared to people who travel a lot, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.*	2.93	1.18	3.71	0.90	2.44	1.08

<sup>1</sup>Note: Asterisks show the significance level from the t-tests for group comparisons. \*  $p < 0.05$  level; \*\*  $p < 0.01$  level; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  level

<sup>2</sup>Note: Sample sizes vary by group of questions. For the risk perception questions, there was a total of 59 responses with 25 residents and 34 tourists; for the likelihood to recommend and revisit questions, 59 participants answered the first question (25 residents and 34 tourists), 57 answered the second question (24 residents and 33 tourists), 53 answered the third question (19 residents and 34 tourists), and 51 answered the last question (18 residents and 33 tourists). For the confidence in knowledge question, I had a total of 34 tourists with no residents and for the familiarity questions, slightly fewer people (total of 55) participated with 21 residents and 34 tourists.

### Evaluative Image Analysis by Status

While crime incidences have been occurring throughout the entire city, perhaps the most notable impact has been the sharp increase in violent crime in Savannah’s downtown Historic District. In particular, the homicide of a local art gallery owner in an armed robbery that went

wrong in September 2016 (Ray, 2016) grabbed the attention of many residents. Less than a year later, another violent event in City Market over the July 4 weekend brought more worry and fear to the downtown area. The incident included gunfire and reckless driving that resulted in the death of three individuals and injury of eight others. Both of these events shook Savannah's downtown business community and the latter motivated Savannah's Downtown Business Association to form a panel to discuss potential solutions (Peebles, 2017b). Since 2015, there have been multiple reported shootings in and around Savannah's Historic District, including ones in October of 2015, August of 2016, and February of 2017, just to name a few.

Figure 4.4 shows the areas residents and tourists consider to be "safe" and "unsafe". From the maps, it was apparent that residents felt that downtown was much less safe than tourists did (perhaps influenced by the crime related incidents frequently appearing in the news). Many tourists are unaware of the blood that has been shed downtown and along the periphery of Savannah's Historic District where some of the city's more dangerous neighborhoods exist (Bynum, 2017). Although a few tourists reported feeling unsafe in the downtown area, no one ranked "Strongly Agree" when asked if they felt it was unsafe. Many tourists showed curiosity when asked about their attitudes towards crime in Savannah and wanted to know about the stories and the city's actions to combat the problem. Although tourists' lack of crime awareness might be good for the tourism industry and businesses in Savannah, it also has the potential to add to the problem by bringing in people who are not mindful of what is happening in the areas they are visiting.

Depending on the individual, downtown Savannah appears to be both safe and unsafe regardless of a survey participants' status. Tourists repeatedly reported downtown areas as a safe place, while residents included surrounding areas as places they felt were safe. To residents, safe



areas tended to be suburban residential zones with light industrial or nature conservation areas. They include the Pooler and Bloomingdale areas near I-16 and I-95, the Islands (Skidaway, Whitmarsh, and Wilmington), and Richmond Hill. Residents' unsafe areas included the Downtown, Metropolitan, and Midtown Districts of Savannah. (Savannah's official downtown Historic District is considered to be the two-mile area between Martin Luther King Boulevard and East Broad Street, extending from the Savannah River down to East Gwinnett Street. Midtown is generally understood to include the space between East Victory Drive and Derenne Avenue, though some say it extends further south. The Metropolitan District comprises the area between Midtown and downtown.) These areas serve various commercial, inner-city residential, and civic/institutional purposes. Tourists' attitudes towards downtown and Midtown were very different from residents'. No tourists reported unsafe feelings towards Midtown and only a few reported unsafe feelings towards downtown. The maps in Figure 4.4 were created using ArcMap 10.5 thematic mapping techniques to denote participants' responses to the question "*This area is unsafe*" referencing the areas each individual marked in their evaluative mapping exercise. The maps compare responses of residents and tourists. Areas marked in blue were areas participants "Strongly Disagreed" or "Disagreed" were unsafe, while those in red were areas participants "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" were unsafe.

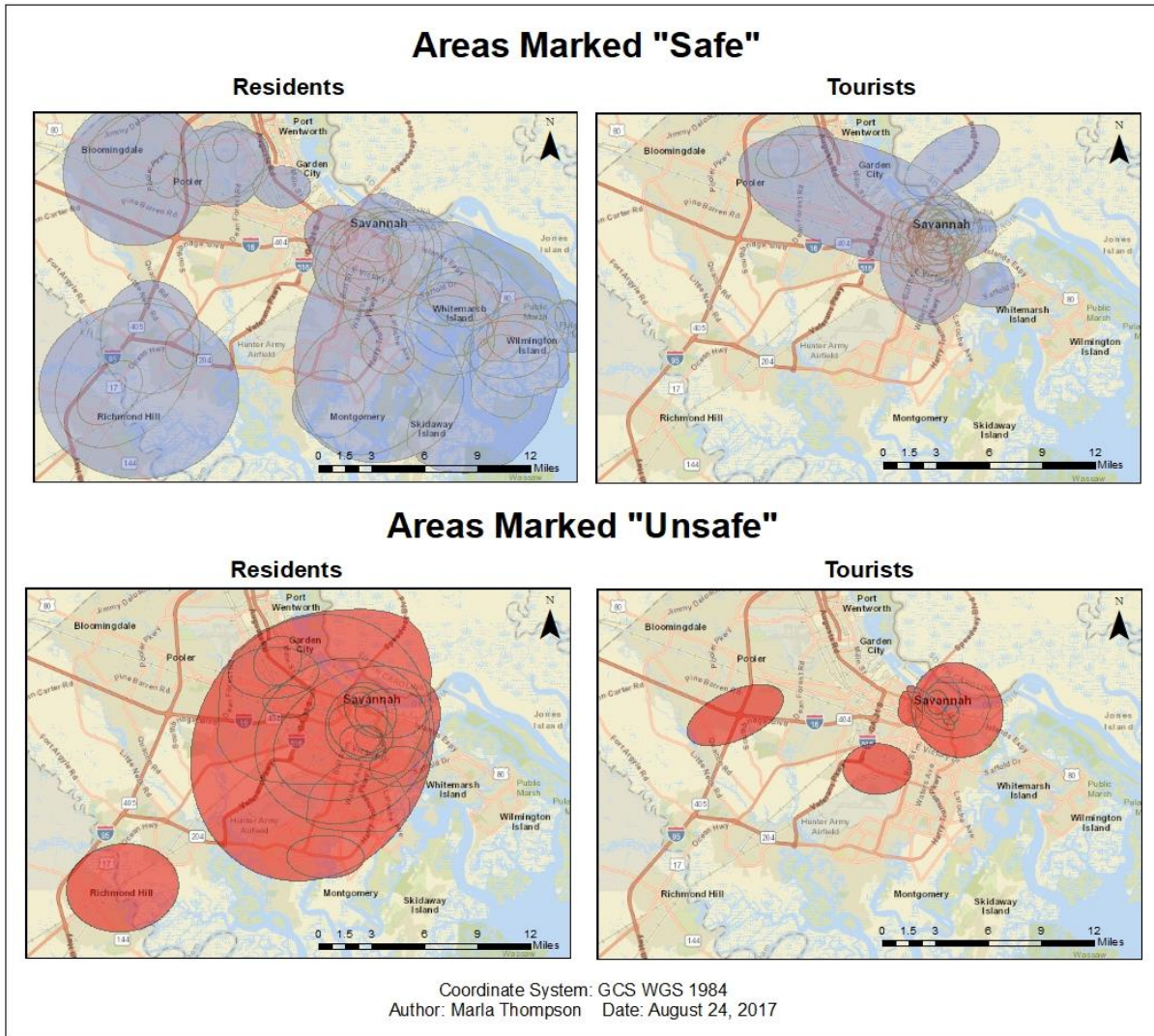


Figure 4.4: Evaluative Map of Safe and Unsafe Areas in Savannah by Status; Residents (left) and Tourists (right)

**Influence of Social Media/Online Travel Reviews on Tourist Perceptions of Savannah**

*Tourist Information Search*

The information search is critical in shaping tourists' destination choices and sources are often used for multiple reasons. In this study, the two primary reasons (identified by 19 participants) tourists were searching for information included "to learn about destinations, products, or services" and "to give me ideas". Other reasons included "to increase the

confidence in the decisions I make” and “to make it easier to imagine what a place will be like”, which were each cited by eight participants. The least common reason for using travel resources, only cited by three participants, was “to reduce the likelihood that I will later regret a decision”. A full list can be found in Appendix I.

The popularity of social media and online travel reviews (on phone apps and online) have made it much easier for people to access information. Of the 34 tourists I surveyed, 24 people (70.6%, 13 males and 11 females of various ages) reported that they used social media and/or online travel review sites before traveling to Savannah. Tourists also considered these sites to be trustworthy, with an average response of 3.63 when asked “*How much do you trust social media and online travel reviews*” on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = No trust at all, 3 = Moderate trust, and 5 = A lot of trust. Tourists who used online resources researched an average of 8.08 search items, while those who did not use online resources researched only 4.20 search items (via some other source). However, the most popular search items were the same for both groups. From all 34 respondents, the top three search items included things to do ( $n = 29$ ), places to eat ( $n = 29$ ), and Savannah’s Historic District ( $n = 24$ ). Tourists who used social media and online travel review sites ( $n = 24$ ) echoed this pattern as their most frequently searched with frequency of 24, 22 and 19 respectively. Comparatively, tourists who did not use social media or travel reviews ( $n = 10$ ) also picked those three as top three options, but with places to eat ( $n = 7$ ) ranked the highest followed by things to do ( $n = 5$ ) and Savannah’s Historic District ( $n = 5$ ). Interestingly, the least search items for people, whether they used social media/online travel reviews or not, turned out to be crime rates ( $n = 1$ ) and personal safety ( $n = 2$ ). Those who did not use social media or online travel reviews reported that they relied on personal knowledge,

experience, and friends and/or family to gather information about Savannah. Table 4.8 has a complete list of the items tourists were choosing to search for before traveling.

Table 4.8: Tourist Information Search Frequency

Information Search Options	Searches by All Tourists (n = 34)	Searches by Tourists who Used Social Media (n = 24)	Searches by Tourists who Used Sources other than Social Media (n = 10)
Things to do	29	24	5
Places to eat	29	22	7
Savannah's Historic District	24	19	5
Weather forecasts	18	17	1
Hotel prices	17	13	4
Attractions	17	14	3
Tybee Island	15	13	2
Historic homes	13	13	0
Hotel ratings	11	7	4
Shopping	10	9	1
Museums	9	8	1
Riverboat cruises	9	8	1
Ghost tours	9	7	2
Transportation	7	6	1
Parks	7	6	1
Nightlife	5	4	1
Climate	4	3	1
Personal safety	2	1	1
Crime rates	1	0	1
Total	236	194	42

*Cultural Domain Analysis of Savannah by Social Media/Online Travel Review Use*

As seen with the evaluative images of Savannah from tourist descriptions, tourists held positive images of Savannah. On average, tourists who used social media and/or online travel reviews before traveling listed more keywords than those who did not. In total, of the 205 total keywords listed by participants; 160 of these were listed by tourists. Frequency counts for tourists' top 10 keywords can be found in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Tourists' Top 10 Most Often Mentioned Keywords

Item	Tourist Frequency (%)	Tourists who Used Social Media Frequency	Tourists who Did Not Use Social Media Frequency
Historic	31.3%	36.4%	22.2%
History	18.8%	22.7%	11.1%
Squares	18.8%	22.7%	11.1%
Parks	15.6%	27.3%	0.0%
Beautiful	12.5%	22.7%	0.0%
Old	12.5%	13.6%	11.1%
Architecture	9.4%	13.6%	0.0%
Food	9.4%	13.6%	0.0%
Hot	9.4%	13.6%	0.0%
Quiet	9.4%	4.5%	11.1%

Both groups of tourists used the terms “historic” and “history” most often when referring to Savannah. The term “squares” was also a popular keyword mentioned by both groups. Terms related to the environment were also commonly cited by both groups. It is also interesting to note that a tourist who used social media and online travel reviews stated that downtown “smelled like urine” gathered that information during her current visit to the city, while the tourists who used the terms “dangerous” and “gunfire” was referring to media coverage she had seen of the area previously.

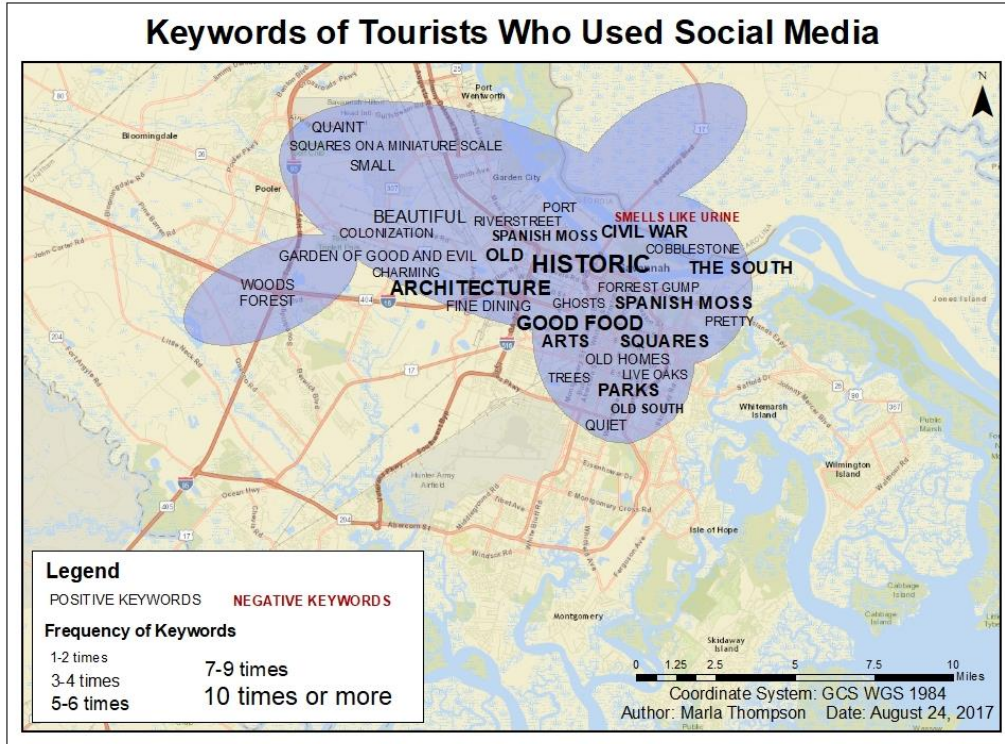


Figure 4.5: Evaluative Map of Savannah from Tourist Descriptions Who Used Social Media/Online Travel Reviews

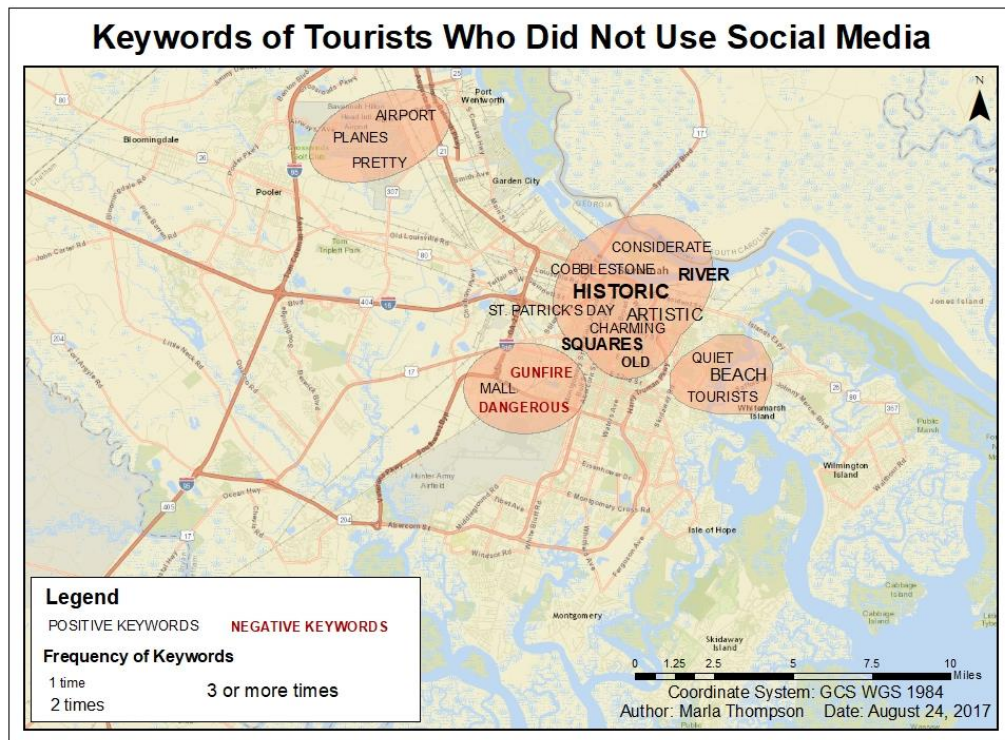


Figure 4.6: Evaluative Map of Savannah from Tourist Descriptions Who Did Not Use Social Media/Online Travel Reviews

## Attitudes Towards Crime in Savannah by Social Media/Online Travel Reviews Use

### *Mean Comparison by Social Media/Online Travel Review Use*

Table 4.10 compares tourists' attitudes towards crime in Savannah based on whether or not they used social media/online travel reviews before traveling. Attitude variables included questions from the main survey related to risk perception, feelings of safety, likelihood to recommend and revisit Savannah, and familiarity with destinations throughout Savannah, as in the previous section. The confidence in knowledge question that was only asked to tourists was also included. Findings showed that regardless of their use of social media searching for information on Savannah, answers were quite similar. When the five risk perception questions were averaged together, tourists who used social media/online travel reviews had slightly less negative attitudes towards crime ( $M = 2.25$ ) than those who did not use such sources ( $M = 2.40$ ). Among questions on risk perceptions, respondents in both groups answered relatively positively on the comparative question—i.e., “*Savannah is just as unsafe as other tourist locations*”. A few participants from New York and Chicago noted that Savannah was much quieter and inviting than their hometowns and therefore, did not alert them that there may be crime in the area. Similarly, others said the relaxed atmosphere of Savannah made them feel safer compared to being in a larger, busier city. Both groups, regardless of their use of social media/online travel reviews had positive responses about their likelihood to recommend and revisit Savannah. Both groups responded positively in terms of recommending Savannah to others or revisiting the city in general, but neither said crime would prevent them from doing so.

Independent t-tests confirmed the findings from the descriptive analyses. The statistical results suggested that there were no statistically significant differences in crime perception or familiarity between tourists who used social media/online travel reviews and those who did not.

It also suggested that social media/online travel reviews did not play a role in increasing confidence in knowledge of Savannah. Interestingly, tourists who used social media reported lower confidence ( $M = 2.08$ ;  $SD = .93$ ) compared to those who did not ( $M = 2.50$ ;  $SD = .85$ ). However, differences turned out to not be statistically significant;  $t(32) = -1.22$ ;  $p = .231$ . Along with social media and online travel review use, prior visits and number of visits also did not have a significant impact on tourists' risk perception. In fact, findings indicate an inverse relationship where prior visits seem to increase tourists' risk perception.



Table 4.10: Attitude Towards Crime in Savannah by Use of Social Media/Online Travel Reviews

		Tourists who used Social Media ( <i>n</i> = 24)		Tourists who did not use Social Media ( <i>n</i> = 10)	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Risk Perception	Savannah is unsafe.	2.08	0.78	2.40	0.97
	I feel like I might become a victim of crime in Savannah.	1.96	0.91	2.20	1.03
	Savannah is just as unsafe as other tourist locations.	3.08	1.14	3.20	1.23
	People have told me that Savannah is unsafe.	2.08	0.97	2.20	1.32
	I feel worried about my personal safety in Savannah.	2.04	0.91	2.00	0.94
Likelihood to recommend and revisit	I would recommend Savannah to others.	4.79	0.42	4.70	0.48
	I will not recommend Savannah because it is not safe.	1.39	0.50	1.20	0.42
	I plan to revisit/continue visiting Savannah in the future.	3.96	0.96	4.20	1.23
	I will not return to Savannah for fear of safety.	1.39	0.58	1.40	0.70
Confidence in Knowledge	How confident are you with your knowledge of Savannah?	2.08	0.93	2.50	0.85
Familiarity with Destinations	Compared to the average person, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.	2.75	1.19	2.60	1.35
	Compared to my friends, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.	3.13	1.08	2.70	1.06
	Compared to people who travel a lot, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.	2.42	0.97	2.50	1.35

*Note: Two tourists who used social media did not answer the questions “I will not recommend Savannah because it is not safe” and “I will not return to Savannah for fear of safety” resulting in a sample size of 23 for those particular variables.*

#### *Evaluative Image Analysis by Social Media/Online Travel Review Use*

Overall, it appears that social media and online travel reviews do not seem to have a strong influence on tourists’ familiarity with an area, attitudes towards crime, or likelihood to recommend or revisit an area. When tourists were asked to rank their agreement to the statement “*This area is unsafe*” on their evaluative maps’ follow-up survey, they often felt that the areas

they marked were safe (top two maps in Figure 4.7). Only eight tourists marked unsafe areas (bottom two maps in Figure 4.7). Disregarding whether people used social media or not, downtown Savannah was mentioned heavily as safe, with only a few people reporting it as unsafe. Other than the downtown areas, it seems the areas in north and northwest directions from downtown are evaluated as “safe” and areas in west and south directions are evaluated as “unsafe” to tourists. One tourist who did not use social media marked the Oglethorpe Mall area (located south of downtown Savannah) as unsafe based on a news piece about a shooting in the area she had learned about in the past.

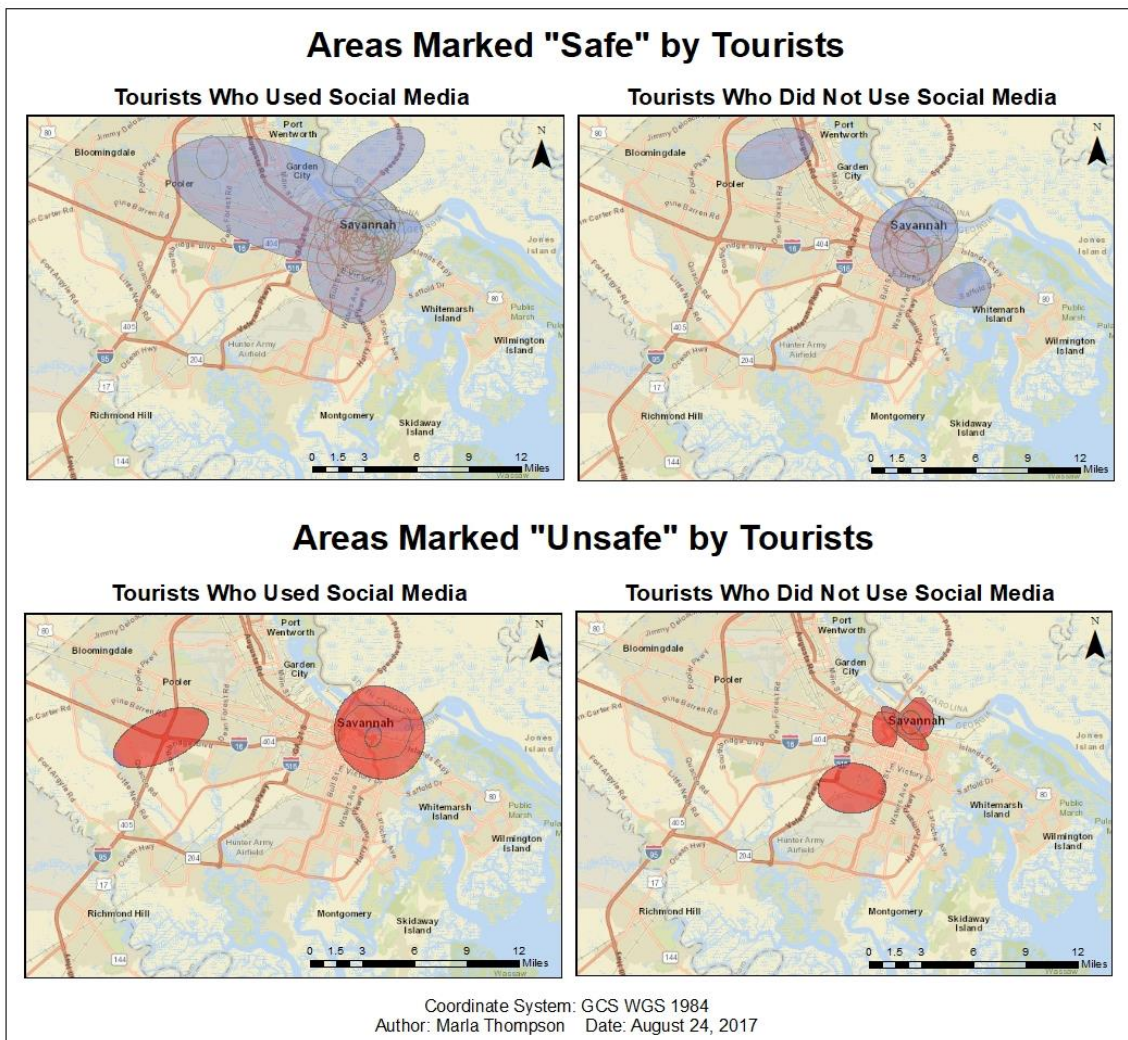


Figure 4.7: Evaluative Map of Safe and Unsafe Areas in Savannah by the Use of Social Media and Online Travel Reviews; Tourists who Used Social Media (left) and Tourists Who Did Not Use Social Media (right)

### Regression Analysis

#### *Fear of Crime*

The model (Table 4.11) shows several predictors and their predicting powers on participants' fear of crime in Savannah. When all participants were considered in the model, three predictors turned out to be significant: Areas Marked, Average Risk Perception of

Downtown, and Average Risk Perception of Marked Areas. The  $R^2$  was high (0.621) indicating the model explains 62.1% of the variable variations. The strength of impacts of all three variables was similarly strong: with Areas Marked with .422 and both Average Risk Perception of Downtown and Average Risk Perception of Marked Areas over .470. The model explains that if a person only marked downtown areas, their fear of crime in Savannah was lower. Similarly, one's perceived Average Risk Perception of Downtown and Average Risk Perception of Marked Areas has a strong influence on their Fear of Crime. As people perceive areas as more dangerous, their fear of crime increases.

Table 4.11 also shows columns with resident-only and tourist-only models. The residents-only model has the lowest  $R^2$  value (0.167) of all models. Age turned out to be the only significant and strong independent variable with influence on residents' Fear of Crime in the city. For residents, as age increases fear of crime decreases. The tourists-only model shows that the Average Risk Perception of Marked Areas had a strong positive influence on their overall fear of crime in Savannah. As people who had only experienced certain areas of the city, this makes sense. Unlike residents, most tourists only had their own experience to rely on in terms of risk perception because many of them had not even heard about crime prior to their arrival in Savannah. Therefore, their risk perception and experience in specific areas shaped their overall perception of safety, because that was the only knowledge they had to form their decision. Use of social media and online travel reviews turned out to have a strong negative impact on Fear of Crime, indicating that tourists who used social media experienced lower fear of crime. This may be because they felt more informed and read positive reviews that helped paint an optimistic image of Savannah even prior to their arrival. This is congruent with other research that shows that increased knowledge from an information search reduces uncertainty

and increases confidence (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Wong & Yeh, 2009). The  $R^2$  of this model was the highest among all of the models ( $R^2 = .765$ ).

Table 4.11: Standardized Regression Coefficients to Predict Fear of Crime (Stepwise Regression Model)

Predictor	All Participants	Residents	Tourists
	<i>n</i> = 59 <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .621 <i>F</i> = 27.726 ( <i>p</i> < .001)	<i>n</i> = 25 <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .167 <i>F</i> = 4.601 ( <i>p</i> = .047)	<i>n</i> = 34 <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .765 <i>F</i> = 22.090 ( <i>p</i> < .001)
Gender	-.007	.205	-.134
Age	-.049	-.261*	.091
Status	.172		
Areas Marked	.422*	.279	-.092
Crime Awareness	-.111	-.076	-.184
Personal Experience with Crime	-.032	-.019	
Number of Crimes Experienced	.057	-.134	
Average Risk Perception of Downtown	.473*	.376	-.042
Average Risk Perception of Marked Areas	.494**	.291	.988***
Familiarity Compared to Average Person	.098	-.216	.063
Familiarity Compared to Friends	.017	-.270	.053
Familiarity Compared to Someone who Travels a lot	.049	-.094	.017
Confidence			.058
Used Social Media or Online Travel Reviews			-.582*
Travel Group			.053
Arrival Time			.142
Length of Stay			.158
Times Visited			.104
Last Trip			-.102

Note: \* *p* < 0.05 level; \*\* *p* < 0.01 level; \*\*\* *p* < 0.001 level

Note: Shaded areas indicate that the independent variables were not included in the model (the questions were not asked to that group or there was no data present).

### *Likelihood to Recommend and Revisit*

Whether or not people will recommend and revisit Savannah in the future are the ultimate measurable conative actions related to their perceived image of the city. This is important as providing a good experience for tourists can lead them to promote a destination via free advertisement through word of mouth to family and friends (Reid & Reid, 1993). To find how and which variables influenced likelihood to recommend and revisit Savannah, I ran further stepwise regression analyses. The statement, “*I would recommend Savannah to others*” was used as a dependent variable to find which variables had significant influence. Table 4.12 shows the regression analysis results. The criteria for the stepwise regression entered variables where probabilities  $p \leq .050$  and removed those where  $p \geq .100$ .

The first model in Table 4.12 (the first three columns) shows that some predictors influenced participants’ likelihood to recommend Savannah to others. With an  $R^2$  of only 0.173, only one predictor—Status—turned out to be significant. The influence of Status (being a tourist) had a strong influence on one’s likelihood to recommend Savannah. Table 4.12 also shows columns with resident-only and tourist-only models. The residents-only model has the highest  $R^2$  value of 0.277 among all models. Crime Awareness was the only significant independent variable influencing residents’ likelihood to recommend Savannah to others. As residents’ crime awareness increased, their likelihood to recommend Savannah decreased. Conversely, the tourists-only model shows that Crime Awareness had a positive impact on one’s likelihood to recommend the city to others. The  $R^2$  for this model was low, only 0.229.

While understanding people’s intention to recommend a destination is important, it is perhaps more important to know whether or not they plan to revisit a destination again themselves. Although recommendations are important, repeat visitors are often what drive a

destination's success because as the tourism industry grows more competitive, they are a stable market (Reid & Reid, 1993). Because this paper is dedicated to understanding the impact of crime on Savannah's appeal as a destination, a regression was run for the statement, "*I will not revisit/continue living in Savannah because it is not safe*" to understand what factors (if any) would lead participants to not revisit the city because of its safety. Table 4.12 shows the regression results. The same criteria were used for the stepwise regression.

The second model, in Table 4.12 (the last three columns), suggests that most variables had minimal influence on participants' decisions to not revisit Savannah because it was not safe. When all participants were considered, only one factor had a strong, significant influence—Perceived Average Risk Perception of Marked Areas. As people perceived the areas they recognized as more dangerous, they were less likely to return to Savannah. It is interesting to note that Average Risk Perception of Downtown was not a significant influencer. The  $R^2$  for this model was low, at only 14.9%. In the resident-only model, Average Risk Perception of Marked Area also emerged as having a statistically significant influence on one's unlikelihood to revisit because of crime. The strength of impact for this variable was high, 0.59, likely because many residents felt strongly about the unsafety of certain areas they marked. As their perceived safety in certain areas decreased, so did their likelihood to continue living in Savannah. However, it should be noted that only 18 residents answered this question, because they felt like it did not apply to them stating that they would continue living in Savannah regardless of crime. However, this model had the highest  $R^2$  of all the models at .300. Interestingly, when the tourists-only model was run, a different independent variable appeared as a significant indicator of one's unlikelihood to return. Here, Familiarity Compared to the Average Person had a strong positive influence (0.561) over a tourists' desire not to return to Savannah because of crime.



Table 4.12: Standardized Regression Coefficients to Predict Likelihood of Participants to Recommend Savannah and Likelihood of Participants to Not Revisit Savannah Because it is Not Safe (Stepwise Regression Model)

Predictor	Likelihood of Participants to Recommend Savannah			Likelihood of Participants to Not Revisit Savannah Because it is Not Safe		
	All Participants	Residents	Tourists	All Participants	Residents	Tourists
	<i>n</i> = 59 R <sup>2</sup> = .173 F = 11.248 ( <i>p</i> = .002)	<i>n</i> = 25 R <sup>2</sup> = .277 F = 7.882 ( <i>p</i> = .012)	<i>n</i> = 34 R <sup>2</sup> = .229 F = 5.159 ( <i>p</i> = .041)	<i>n</i> = 51 R <sup>2</sup> = .149 F = 8.370 ( <i>p</i> = .006)	<i>n</i> = 18 R <sup>2</sup> = .300 F = 6.137 ( <i>p</i> = .031)	<i>n</i> = 33 R <sup>2</sup> = .262 F = 5.978 ( <i>p</i> = .029)
Gender	-.174	-.350	-.168	.072	-.267	.040
Age	-.031	-.128	-.185	.019	-.115	.226
Status	-.436**			.027		
Areas Marked	-.151	-.059	-.159	.197	.206	.110
Crime Awareness	-.059	-.563*	.533*	.024	.187	.093
Personal Experience with Crime	-.031	.071		-.019	.022	
Number of Crimes Experienced	.025	-.059		-.018	.024	
Average Risk Perception of Downtown	.160	.051	.290	-.063	.155	-.108
Average Risk Perception of Marked Areas	-.077	-.349	.190	.412**	.598*	.055
Familiarity Compared to Average Person	-.138	.077	-.057	.010	-.322	.561*
Familiarity Compared to Friends	-.012	.357	.081	.074	.159	-.589
Familiarity Compared to Someone who Travels a lot	-.172	.035	-.211	.086	-.155	-.389
Confidence			-.188			.120
Used Social Media or Online Travel Reviews			-.067			.072
Travel Group			-.279			-.020
Arrival Time			-.061			-.074
Length of Stay			.095			.077
Times Visited			-.161			-.276
Last Trip			.165			.024

Note: \* *p* < 0.05 level; \*\* *p* < 0.01 level; \*\*\* *p* < 0.001 level

Note: Shaded areas indicate that the independent variables were not included in the model (the questions were not asked to that group or there was no data present).

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The data collected from the evaluative mapping and statistical analyses revealed a significant amount of information about residents' and tourists' cognitions and affections of Savannah, Georgia. Both groups had positive evaluative images of the city, though tourists' were slightly more positive. On average, residents produced more comprehensive images of Savannah that were spread out and included larger areas. Compared to tourists, residents used fewer keywords to describe areas they were familiar with. Tourists' evaluative understandings of Savannah were concentrated in the city's downtown area; an area they viewed positively. Where residents sometimes struggled to find words to describe areas, tourists excelled and listed several keywords.

When asked about awareness of crime, the majority of residents (96%) reported that they knew crime was a problem in Savannah. As a result, their risk perception was statistically higher than tourists. In particular, residents felt that the commercial and inner-city residential areas in downtown and near Midtown were unsafe areas of the city. Conversely, they felt that suburban residential areas with light industrial and/or nature conservation areas away from the central city were safer. However, even though residents reported that downtown was the least safe area of the city, many still had positive things to say about its history, environmental appeal, and activities (related to food, tours, and culture). Many of the periphery areas residents considered to be safe were places they described with words like "home" and "community", but that they also felt were "boring" with "nothing to do". Many of the areas residents marked as safe were not recognized by tourists. Unlike residents, most tourists (63.5%) were not aware of crime in Savannah and on average, did not feel that the city was unsafe. No tourists who participated had

had any direct experience with crime while in Savannah and were significantly more likely than residents to recommend Savannah to others.

Social media and online travel reviews were the most popular sources of information for tourists visiting Savannah, with over 70% of participating tourists reporting that they used them before their trip. Tourists who searched for information via these sources reported high levels of trust in what they read, yet had lower confidence in their knowledge of Savannah than tourists who did not use them. While tourists relied on these sources heavily, results failed to show the impact of social media and online travel review information on risk perception. On average, tourists who used social media and online travel reviews had a slightly lower fear of crime than those who did not, but differences were not statistically significant between the two groups.

There was a significant difference in the number of areas recognized by residents and tourists, with residents recognizing twice as many areas as tourists on average. Of the 59 people who participated in the evaluative mapping exercise, 33 of them (55.9%) only recognized the downtown area of Savannah. Only recognizing downtown turned out to be a significant indicator of one's fear of crime and this group, compared to people who recognized additional areas, had significantly lower risk perceptions (i.e. they felt Savannah was safer, less like they may become victims of crime, did not report that people had told them to be careful, and were less worried about their personal safety). While likelihood to recommend or revisit Savannah was not significantly different between these groups, likelihood to not recommend Savannah because it is not safe was. Those who marked additional areas were significantly more likely to cite crime/safety as a reason not to recommend Savannah to others.

It is clear that attitudes towards crime differ based on one's status and knowledge of Savannah (how many areas they marked in their evaluative map). Compared to tourists,

residents were much more aware of crime and a greater proportion been directly or indirectly affected by it. As a result, they felt that Savannah was less safe. However, crime was not enough of a factor to cause them to move and no longer live in the city. While social media and online travel reviews proved to be a resource for a multitude of tourists, their use did not influence tourists' attitudes towards crime or likelihood to recommend or revisit the city. Regardless of social media and online travel reviews, tourists' affections of Savannah were positive and 100% said they would recommend the city to others. This is encouraging for tourism officials and marketing agencies in Savannah and reinforces that their current marketing and promoting techniques are working. Despite the city's crime, tourists believe that Savannah's positive qualities are currently outweighing potential risks.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSIONS

This integrative study drew from a number of different disciplines including geography, marketing, and psychology, while paying particular attention to the tourism field. As a result, it provides valuable insight into how people form evaluative understandings of space, gather information about destinations, and mediate risk. The results found support the Nasar's (1998) literature where he compared the evaluative images between residents and tourists. Results also showed that these evaluative understandings were highly influenced by media, similar to work done by Garg in 2015. In particular, it supports findings from Gretzel & Yoo (2008), Garg (2015), and Hudson & Thal (2013) who found that television, radio, and other media (including social media and online travel reviews) were the primary sources where individuals gathered information.

The majority of existing research measuring risk perception does not include both tourists and residents, so in many ways these results offer a new perspective in tourism studies. However, when considering tourist risk perceptions alone, the results support that tourists' attitudes towards risk do not affect their likelihood to recommend or revisit a destination (Brunt, Mawby, & Hambly, 2000; George, 2003; George, 2010). It also builds on Brunt, Mawby, and Hambly's (2000) prior research, that found that tourists are often unaware of crime while on vacation and typically are not the target of criminals. In terms of risk perception, results echoed George's (2010) findings that demographic factors like age and gender were not significant indicators on tourists' risk perceptions or likelihood to recommend or return to a destination. It also found that travel characteristics (i.e. travel group, arrival time, length of stay, times visited, and last trip) did not have a strong or significant impact on risk perception. In total, although

crime and risk can be detrimental to an area's tourism industry, findings reveal that a destination's positive attractions can overcome negative qualities (Dimanche & Lepetic, 1999).

The focus on social media, though limited, helps confirm the role and importance of social media and online travel reviews as well as shows the need for future research. Findings provide insight into why tourists are using these kinds of sites and how much they trust them. The results from this research were similar to those found by Gretzel & Yoo (2008) that tourists primarily use travel reviews to learn about a travel destination, product, or service, provide ideas, and make it easier to imagine what a place would be like. However, participants in this study were not as interested in using reviews to help evaluate alternatives or avoid places/services they would not enjoy. In the regression model, use of social media and online travel reviews significantly reduced tourists' fear of crime, a result also found by Wong & Yeh (2009). Similarly, it found that increased familiarity with a destination reduces risk perception (Wong & Yeh, 2009), although the results were not statistically significant.

Tourism officials and decision-makers in Savannah may find this research useful as it supports much of what they are already doing. Savannah has a created strong destination image, largely due to its specific marketing campaigns that highlight the city's historical significance, natural beauty, and southern charm. Participants, particularly tourists, reinforced many of these themes when they listed keywords to describe areas of Savannah. The evaluative mapping technique that was used to gather these keywords should be built upon to develop even more comprehensive visual understandings of how residents and tourists view the city. This could be useful for future building projects or marketing initiatives. For tourism officials, having a variety of stakeholders create evaluative maps is a nice place to start to learn what the city is doing well and what needs to be improved. When these evaluations of the city are combined with crime and

risk perceptions, it highlights which areas need to be addressed first. This can also be helpful for city planners making changes to the built environment to reflect people's cognition, opinions, and feelings about the use of space in an area. It could also lead to implementing potential CPTED solutions in areas that are continuously felt to be unsafe. Finally, if maps are collected over time, it could help officials determine whether things are improving or getting worse.

This research fills the gap in tourism and geography research by giving greater insight into how individuals develop evaluative maps and how tourists created destination images of areas. This, in combination with measuring risk perception of a city that has experienced a recent crime spike, helps us understand how crime and potential dangers affect those images. While prior research has looked at the impact of catastrophic events on a city's tourism numbers, little research has looked at smaller scale, continuous issues like crime. This study provides a starting point for more research in the future to look at cities that are struggling with crime, but need to maintain appearances to ensure the success of their tourism industries.

While this study produced a great amount of information, it also has its limitations. In this research, the greatest limitation was related to the data collection. I suspect the location of the survey sites influenced the research results. Participants were only recruited from downtown Savannah, which likely heavily included a certain group of people and excluded other groups of people. If residents and tourists were selected throughout the city more strategically, as the original research design planned, I expect that it is possible that more locations may have been recognized and a greater overall understanding for the city would have been shown. The use of a small-scale base map—with more areas covered, but details less likely recognizable—may also have resulted in a loss of detail and amount of information that could be gathered about the city. If a larger-scale map—with more detail and a closer view—had been chosen, individuals may

have circled more specific areas and been able to locate elements of the city they recognized.

While this technique lent itself well to creating an overall evaluative image of the city, details of individual elements were somewhat lost. Further, more detailed instructions for research participants on what and how to mark the base map (instead of circling the entire city, highlighting familiar landmarks, edges, districts, paths, and nodes with additional descriptive analysis) could have result in a much richer data analysis.

To follow-up this research, there are a few things that could be improved. In particular, greater GIS data collection and analysis would supply more information about how individuals understand and interpret a city. Although data was collected efficiently with an iPad mini, use of a computer with a larger screen that could zoom in and out of a base map would give participants even greater control and precision to mark areas (or specific elements) they were familiar with or had strong feelings about. I would also consider modifying the main survey to include questions about race/ethnicity, education level, income, and tenure of residents. It might also be helpful to conduct interviews with key informants like police, tourism officials, and residents who have lived in the area more than ten years. Lastly, I believe the inclusion of multiple sites would improve data richness and make results more generalizable. To build on the results found in Savannah, conducting research in New Orleans, Louisiana (a destination with similar attributes, with higher crime awareness) or Charleston, South Carolina (a destination with similar attributes, but less crime) would be particularly interesting. Discoveries from these sites could support the present findings and strengthen external validity.



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## APPENDIX A: IRB DOCUMENTATION



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY  
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office  
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682  
[600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834](http://600.Moye.Boulevard.Greenville.NC.27834)  
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 · [www.ecu.edu/irb](http://www.ecu.edu/irb)

### Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB  
To: [Marla Thompson](#)  
CC: [Misun Hur](#)  
Date: 6/20/2016  
Re: [UMCIRB 16-000923](#)  
The Hostess City of the South: Destination Image, Risk Perception, and Tourism in Savannah, Georgia

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 6/18/2016 to 6/17/2017. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category # 6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Consent Form.docx	Consent Forms
Final Thesis Edits.docx	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Interview Questions.docx	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Survey Questions.docx	Surveys and Questionnaires

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

## APPENDIX B: AMENDMENT APPROVAL



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY  
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office  
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682  
[600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834](http://www.ecu.edu)  
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 · [www.ecu.edu/irb](http://www.ecu.edu/irb)

### Amendment Approved

ID: [Ame1\\_UMCIRB 16-000923](#)

Title: Amendment 1 for IRB Study #UMCIRB 16-000923

Description: Your amendment has been approved. To navigate to the project workspace, click on the above ID.

APPENDIX C: SURVEY USED FOR EVALUATIVE MAPPING EXERCISE

- A. Identify an area you are familiar with or recognize in Savannah.
- B. Describe what first comes to your mind (key words or phrases) when you think of that area.
- C. Describe what makes you think or feel that way about that particular area.
- D. Based on the area you just identified, to what degree do you agree with the following statements?

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	This area is unsafe.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I feel like I might become a victim of crime in this area.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	This area is just as unsafe as other locations.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I will tell people to be careful in this area.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I plan to (re)visit this area in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I would recommend this area to others.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I will not return to this area for fear of safety.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I will not recommend this area because it is not safe.	1	2	3	4	5

- E. What other areas are you familiar with or do you recognize in Savannah?
- F. Place the areas in order from the one you like the most to the one you like the least.
- G. Thinking of crime, place the areas in order from the most safe to the most unsafe.



## APPENDIX D: MAIN SURVEY INSTRUMENT

### About You

#### Gender

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

#### Age

- Under 24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- Over 75

#### You are

- A tourist
- A resident

#### How are you traveling?

- Alone
- With family (with children)
- With partner (no children)
- With a group (no children)

#### What is your purpose for traveling?

- Visiting friends and/or relative
- Holiday/Leisure
- Business
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Where are you traveling from?

City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_  
Country \_\_\_\_\_

#### When did you arrive in Savannah?

- Today
- Yesterday
- A few days ago
- A week ago
- Over a week ago

How long are you planning to stay in Savannah?

- 1 – 3 days
- 4 – 7 days
- 8 – 14 days
- 15 – 30 days
- Longer than a month

What mode of transportation did you use to get to your destination? (Check all that apply.)

- Car
- Bus
- Train
- Plane
- Bicycle
- On Foot
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **Your Previous Travel Experience (Tourists Only)**

- Residents, skip to next section
- Tourists, continue to next question

Have you ever been to Savannah before?

- Yes
- No

How many times have you visited Savannah in the past?

- 1 – 2 times
- 3 – 5 times
- 6 – 10 times
- 11 times or more

Roughly, how many days have you spent in Savannah (all trips combined)?

\_\_\_\_\_

How recent was your last trip to Savannah?

- Within the last week
- Within the last month
- Within the last 3 months
- Within the last 6 months
- Within the last year
- Over a year ago

How confident are you with your knowledge of Savannah? (1 = Not confident at all, 3 = Moderately confident, 5 = Extremely confident)

\_\_\_\_\_ Knowledge of Savannah

**Your Travel Information Sources (Tourists Only)**

- Residents, skip to next section
- Tourists, continue to next question

Did you access social media or online travel reviews to learn more about Savannah before you arrived?

- Yes
- No

What kinds of things were you searching for on social media and the online travel review sites? (Check all that apply.)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Things to do                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal safety   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Places to eat                | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Savannah's Historic District | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weather forecasts            | <input type="checkbox"/> Attractions       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel prices                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Riverboat cruises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel ratings                | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic homes    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ghost tours                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tybee Island      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crime rates                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Nightlife         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Museums                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Climate           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____       |

Why did you read online travel reviews? (Check all that apply.)

- To learn about destinations, products, or services
- To help evaluate alternatives
- To avoid places or services I would not enjoy
- To give me ideas
- To increase my confidence in the decisions I make
- To make it easier to imagine what a place will be like
- To reduce the risk/uncertainty involved in travel decision-making
- To reduce the likelihood that I will later regret a decision
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

How much do you trust social media and online travel reviews? (1 = No trust at all, 3 = Moderate trust, 5 = A lot of trust)

\_\_\_\_\_ Your trust of social media/online travel reviews

Have you ever changed your travel plans because of something you read on an online travel review site? Please tell us the most significant factor for the decision.

- I have never changed my travel plans due to someone else's travel review
- Crime and safety
- Budget
- Weather
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What other resources did you use to find destination information before traveling? (Check all that apply.)

- Personal knowledge or experience
- Friends and/or family
- Newspapers or magazines
- Travel brochures
- Television, radio, or other media coverage
- State or city travel offices
- National government tourist offices
- Travel agents and/or travel guides
- Other tourists
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What kinds of things were you looking for when you were conducting your information search? (Check all that apply.)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Things to do                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal safety   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Places to eat                | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Savannah's Historic District | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weather forecasts            | <input type="checkbox"/> Attractions       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel prices                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Riverboat cruises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel ratings                | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic homes    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ghost tours                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tybee Island      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crime rates                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Nightlife         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Museums                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Climate           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____       |

### **Your Familiarity With Destinations**

How much do you agree with the sentences below? (1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

\_\_\_\_\_ Compared to the average person, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.

\_\_\_\_\_ Compared to my friends, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.

\_\_\_\_\_ Compared to people who travel a lot, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.

### **Risk Perception**

Are you aware of any crime incidences in Savannah?

- Yes
- No

Please specify where you obtained information about the incident. (Check all that apply.)

- Personal knowledge or experience
- Friends and/or family
- Newspapers or magazines
- Television, radio, or other media coverage
- Travel agents and/or travel guides
- Other tourists
- Social media and/or online travel websites
- State or city government official websites
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever personally encountered crime in Savannah?

- Yes
- No

What kind of crime did you experience? (Check all that apply.)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theft from Person  | <input type="checkbox"/> Assault/Battery                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theft from Vehicle | <input type="checkbox"/> Assault with a Weapon             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theft from Home    | <input type="checkbox"/> Robbery (Theft with Force)        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theft from Yard    | <input type="checkbox"/> Armed Robbery (Theft with Weapon) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____        |  |

Based on your risk perception, how much do you agree with the sentences below? (1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Savannah is unsafe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I feel like I might become a victim of crime in Savannah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Savannah is just as unsafe as other tourist locations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ People have told me that Savannah is unsafe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I feel worried about my personal safety in Savannah.

Based on your likelihood to recommend Savannah, how much do you agree with the sentences below? (1 = Extremely Unlikely, 3 = Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 5 = Extremely Likely)

- \_\_\_\_\_ I would recommend Savannah to others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would not recommend Savannah to others because it is not safe.

Based on your likelihood to revisit/live in Savannah, how much do you agree with the sentences below? (1 = Extremely Unlikely, 3 = Neither Likely nor Unlikely, 5 = Extremely Likely)

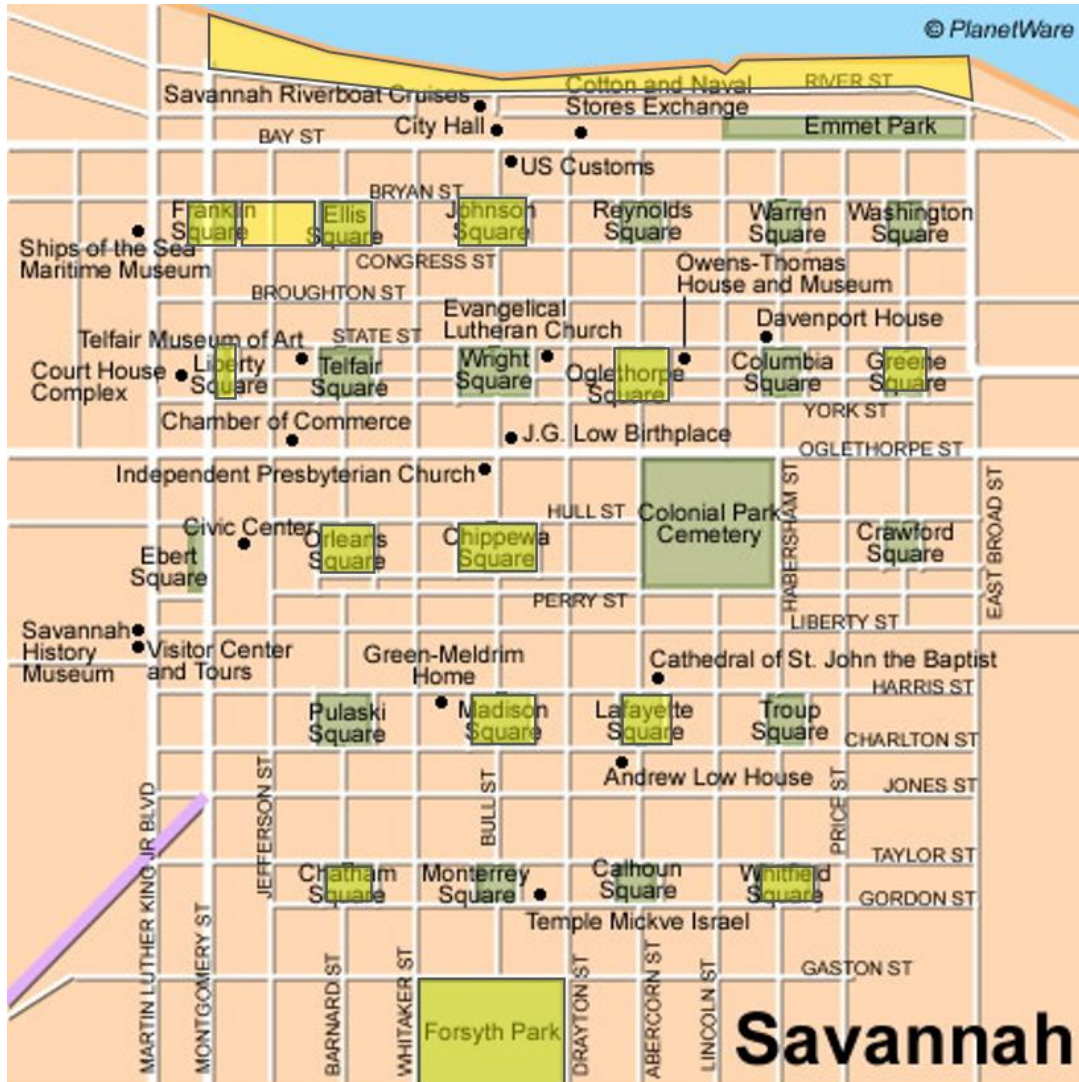
- \_\_\_\_\_ I plan to revisit/continue living in Savannah in the future.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I will not return to Savannah for fear of safety.

APPENDIX E: VARIABLES AND SCALES

Group	Variable	Scale
Risk Perception	Savannah is unsafe.	5-Likert Scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Neutral, and 5 = Strongly Agree
	I feel like I might become a victim of crime in Savannah.	
	Savannah is just as unsafe as other tourist locations.	
	People have told me that Savannah is unsafe.	
	I feel worried about my personal safety in Savannah.	
	Average Safety of Downtown	5-Likert Scale, where 1 = Extremely Safe, 3 = Neutral, and 5 = Extremely Unsafe
	Average Safety of Marked Areas	<i>* Calculated and averaged from evaluative maps' five Risk Perception questions</i>
Likelihood to recommend and revisit	I would recommend Savannah to others.	5-Likert Scale, where 1 = Extremely Unlikely, 3 = Neutral, and 5 = Extremely Likely
	I would not recommend Savannah because it is not safe.	
	I plan to revisit/continue living in Savannah in the future.	
	I will not return to Savannah for fear of safety.	
Confidence in Knowledge	How confident are you with your knowledge of Savannah?	5-Likert Scale, where 1 = Not confident at all, 3 = Neutral, and 5 = Extremely confident
Trust of Social Media and Online Travel Reviews	How much do you trust social media and online travel reviews?	5-Likert Scale, where 1 = No trust at all, 3 = Moderate trust, 5 = A lot of trust
Familiarity with Destinations	Compared to the average person, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.	5-Likert Scale, where 1 = Not familiar at all, 3 = Neutral, and 5 = Very familiar
	Compared to my friends, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.	
	Compared to people who travel a lot, I am familiar with a wide array of destinations in Savannah.	

Group	Variable	Scale
Demographic Characteristics	Gender	1 = Male, 2 = Female
	Age	1 = Under 24, 2 = 25-34, 3 = 35-44, 4 = 45-54, 5 = 55-64, 6 = 65-74, 7 = Over 75
	Status	1 = Tourist, 2 = Resident
Travel Behavior	Use of social media or online travel reviews	1 = Yes, 2 = No
	Travel Group	1 = Alone, 2 = With family (with children), 3 = With partner (no children), 4 = With a group (not family)
	Arrival Time	1 = Today, 2 = Yesterday, 3 = A few days ago, 4 = A week ago, 5 = Over a week ago
	Length of Stay	1 = 1-3 days, 2 = 4-7 days, 3 = 8-14 days, 4 = 15-30 days, 5 = Longer than a month
	Times Visited	1 = 1-2 times, 2 = 3-5 times, 3 = 6-10 times, 4 = 11 times or more
	Last Trip	1 = Within the last week, 2 = Within the last month, 3 = Within the last 3 months, 4 = Within the last 6 months, 5 = Within the last year, 6 = Over a year ago
Experience	Only Marked Downtown Areas	1 = Yes, 2 = No
	Crime Awareness	1 = Yes, 2 = No
	Personal Experience with Crime	1 = Yes, 2 = No
	Number of Crimes Experienced	

APPENDIX F: MAP OF SAVANNAH'S HISTORIC DISTRICT



<sup>1</sup>Note: Highlighted areas are locations where data was collected.

<sup>2</sup>Note: City Market is the area located between Franklin Square and Ellis Square on the west and east, and between Bryan Street and Congress Street on the north and south.



## APPENDIX G: KEYWORDS COLLECTED FROM EVALUATIVE MAP INTERVIEWS

Affluent, airport, alcohol, Antebellum, architecture, Armstrong, artistic, arts, artsy, away from town, babysitting, bars, beach, beautiful, beautiful homes, bedroom community, bike paths, bike trails, Bloomingdale, boring, buddy system, busy, candy, charming, Civil War, cobblestone, colonization, comfort, commerce, community, Confederacy, considerate, convenient, country, culture, Dad's work, dangerous, day to day activities, dining, dolphins, downtown, drinking, eat, environment, family, fine dining, food, forest, Forrest Gump, frat boys, fun, functional, Garden City, Garden of Good and Evil, ghosts, good food, good landscape, good restaurants, good schools, grandkids, grocery shopping, growth, Gulf Stream, gunfire, happy, heat, highly populated, hiking, historic, historic area, historic buildings, Historic District, history, home, horses, hospitable, hospitality, hot, hotels, houses all look the same, humidity, I-95, islands, Isle of Hope, Southern kitchen, Kroger, laid back, less people, less traffic, live oaks, lots to see, love it, Low Country, low population, magnolias, mall, marshes, marshland, Midtown area, more aware, moss, moss on the trees, movie theater, near the beach, neighborhoods, New World, nice, nice people, not clean, not friendly, not much there, not safe, nothing to do really, ocean, Oglethorpe, old architecture, old fashioned, old homes, Old South, on the water, parks, party, passageway into Savannah, peaceful, pedestrians, people, people watching, petty crime, picturesque, planes, planned, pleasant, port, pretty, quaint, quiet, relax, relaxation, relaxing, residential, respectful, restaurants, Revolutionary War, rich, Richmond Hill Middle School, river, Riverstreet, road trips, run down, rustic, safer, sandy, shaded, Shop SCAD, shopping, site seeing, slavery, small, smells like urine, snobby, softball, Sonic, southern, Spanish moss, spared by the Civil War, squares, squares on a miniature scale, St. Patrick's Day, Starbucks, sun, swamp, the South, tourism, tourists, touristy, tours, towards the beach, town, traffic, trails, tranquil, travel, trees, Truman Parkway, vacation, vibrant, water, well mannered, well planned, well preserved, Westside, Whitemarsh Island, Wilmington Island, woods, work

APPENDIX H: SOURCES OF CRIME INFORMATION FREQUENCY

Source of Information	All Participants	Residents	Tourists
Television, radio, or other media coverage	21	18	3
Personal knowledge or experience	16	14	2
Friends and/or family	16	12	4
Newspapers or magazines	15	14	1
Social media and/or online travel reviews	8	7	1
State or city government official website	3	2	1
Other	4	2	2
Other tourists	1	0	1
Travel agents and/or travel guides	0	0	0

APPENDIX I: REASONS FOR USING ONLINE TRAVEL REVIEWS

	Frequency
To learn about destinations, products, or services	19
To give me ideas	19
To increase my confidence in the decisions I make	8
To make it easier to imagine what a place will be like	8
To reduce the risk/uncertainty involved in travel decision-making	6
To help evaluate alternatives	5
To avoid places or services I would not enjoy	5
To reduce the likelihood that I will later regret a decision	3

