

Geopolitics
Individual Essay
« Fake news and their impacts on tourism »

In this essay, I will try to explain how fake news can have an impact on tourism, and how these impacts can be either an asset or a drawback to a destination. I have selected three examples of fake news that were recently released in the news:

1. Fox News and their « No go zones »

Right after the terrorist attacks on November 13th 2015, Paris was on every news channel all over the world. But one of them, the American channel Fox News, decided to talk about Paris in a slight different way, and created a Paris map with no go zones. This map highlighted areas within the city, located mostly in the north and north-east, where it was unsafe to go, according to them. This map was created by them and was not officially published by the French authorities.

Following this, the mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo announced her anger against this fake news, said that « *we (Parisians) have been insulted* », and decided to sue the channel. After that, Fox News apologized and rectified this information.

We could think that this fake news was interpreted as an important threat for foreign tourists, but a group of local people from these zones created an ironical website, www.nogozones.fr (no longer online today) to show these areas were actually safe and invited the tourists to visit these zones and enjoy what they had to offer (patrimony, street arts, flea markets). Thus, in this case, we can say that this fake news benefited to those no go zones and Paris.

2. Fake alert at Disneyland Paris

In March 2019, one of the parking lot escalator broke down at Disneyland Paris, creating a loud sound, quickly interpreted as a gunshot. Many people around this escalator believed that a gun shooter was there, and ran to take shelters in the surrounding buildings, mostly shops and restaurants. Following this, a terrorist alert is launched and everyone had to take shelter and stay locked in the buildings. The Police arrived quickly to investigate for about 2 hours, whilst many visitors were already publishing posts on social media, telling they were under a terrorist threat. After two hours, the police concluded that there were no shooter or any type of threat, and found out the noise came from an escalator.

This shows how a fake news can go viral and spread really quickly, especially thanks to social media.

3. Air France and hurricane Irma

In September 2017, a category 5 hurricane called Irma was threatening the Caribbean area and especially the French Indies (Guadeloupe and Martinique). Many French inhabitants of these Islands tried to leave the Island to continental France because of that threat. One of those inhabitants, François Boquet believed that Air France would take advantage of this to blow up their airfares, knowing that the insulars would not have the choice to pay this much to escape the islands. Published on social media, Air France reacted quickly on their twitter account to show their actual airfares and prove that was a fake news.

In the meantime, Mr. Boquet created an online petition to boycott Air France, that had more than 73.000 signatures.

To conclude:

This demonstrates how fake news can have an impact on tourism in France, and shows that eventually, these fake news can have a positive impact, depending on the way we interpret them and deal with them (like the Fox news' no go zones). But it may also create panic and fear, as well as protestations, that can lead to a country like France to be less visited (Le Parisien, 2015).

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