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*Isabella Crespi, Marco Taibi*

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### **1. Author information**

*Isabella Crespi*

Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, University of Macerata, Italy

*Marco Taibi*

Europroyectos Erasmus Plus, Spain

### **2. Author e-mail address**

*Isabella Crespi*

E-mail: [isabella.crespi@unimc.it](mailto:isabella.crespi@unimc.it)

*Marco Taibi*

E-mail: [marko.taibi@gmail.com](mailto:marko.taibi@gmail.com)

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# *Cultural Differences and Social Amplification of Risk of a Tourism Destination: Foreign Media Coverage after 2016/2017 Earthquakes in Central Italy'*

Isabella Crespi\*, Marco Taibi\*\*

Corresponding author:  
Isabella Crespi  
E-mail: [isabella.crespi@unimc.it](mailto:isabella.crespi@unimc.it)

## **Abstract**

Tourism destinations are very exposed to disaster that can influence tourism demands and trends. As a matter of fact, terrorist activities, political instability and natural disasters are the three main factors, in the contemporary society, which can influence and support the risk perception and thus, have an impact on the tourist decision making process. This perception and the social amplification of risk are affected by media coverage during the events. The purpose of the current study is to investigate the role of media coverage in reporting risk in the context of a 'risky destination', as in the case of the Marche region, which has been stricken by several seismic events in August and October 2016 as well as in January 2017. In particular, this study analyses cultural differences from the perspective of online newspapers media coverage in the two countries during the earthquakes period using an explorative approach. This study draws attention to the cultural differences in media coverage and social amplification of risk Italy as a risky area and could will raise awareness among tourism marketers and policy makers about the importance of customized promotion and advertising strategies considering cultural differences.

Keywords: risk perception, media coverage, cultural differences, tourism destination.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the result of a joint work of the two authors. Isabella Crespi wrote paragraphs 1, 2, 5 and 6, Marco Taibi paragraphs 3, 4 and supplementary materials.

\* Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, University of Macerata, Italy.

\*\* Europroyectos Erasmus Plus, Spain.

## **1. Introduction**

Today, tourism is one of the most significant economic pillars of our society and one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. However, what distinguishes it from other large industries is the nature of its products, which are mainly intangible and perishable (Garg, 2013) because tourism products are very often life experiences. Tourism has always been exposed to many changes and risks, and it faces different obstacles due to external factors and events that can, consequently, influence its flow. These obstacles and impediments, such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks, can affect the tourism sector due to tourists' feelings of risk perception. Several studies have argued that tourists may choose to avoid travelling to a certain destination that is perceived as risky considering crime, natural disasters, terrorism, political/cultural unrest (Chew, Jahari, 2014; Garg, 2013; Sonmez, Graefe, 1998).

The focus of the paper are the cultural and social factors involved in media coverage after seismic events, which act as mediators or amplifiers of the main causal connections between experience, trust and risk perception. The current study considers recent seismic events in central Italy, particularly the Marche region, which experienced several earthquakes in August and October 2016, as well as January 2017. Our research focused on two main countries and their media coverage, whose citizens travel consistently to the Marche region every year: Germany and UK.

To understand cultural differences and their relationship with risk and risk perception, the study analyses media coverage in German and English online newspaper in accordance with their societal and cultural differences soon after the seismic events in 2016/2017 in Italy. The method employed for the outcome of this research consisted of a content analysis using NVivo software of the main online newspapers' news in the two countries. The focus is on cultural differences in the media coverage in news articles published in Germany and UK just after the seismic events.

## **2. Literature review**

### ***2.1 Risk in a Social and Cultural Perspective***

It is important to consider risk both from a sociological and cultural perspective because what people believe and perceive as risky is mostly influenced by their values, attitudes, social influences and cultural identity. Sociological studies (Beck, 2000; Giddens, 1994; Luhman 1996; Zinn, 2008) have been of great interest and usefulness for the comprehension of the different risk interpretations for distinct social groups, as well as for the

identification of organisational problems that interfere with effective risk management and control that can, in turn, make the potential outcomes of risks worse (Lupton, 1999, 2003; Marinelli, 1993).

Indeed, based on the cultural theory of risk, introduced by Douglas and Wildavsky (1982), a selection of certain risks, in real life, it is not a selection made by a single rational citizen. It means that person's (culture's) risks are identified on the basis of a social process implying that not all risks are equally considered across cultures. This is called the process of identification and social construction of risk, which concerns the social institutions that shape the idea of risk as a culturally collective construct.

Risk is also defined as a social construction in relation to a specific historical and cultural context. Individuals act as members of a specific social group and define their perception of risk in accordance with it (Joffe, 2003; Savadori, Rumiati, 2005). So, risk is, above all, a matter of culture, the understanding of it is linked to the occurrence of a risky event or situation (Lombardi, 2011) and its management is closely connected to a particular culture and constructed by the social organisations in which people normally act. Then, what is risky or not depends on the level of a culture's knowledge in relation to the decision-making process (Marinelli, 1993).

Thus, based on this perspective, risks are not understood as an absolute representation of reality but rather constructed in relation to their social functions and consequences. So, there is no understanding of objective risks beyond social interpretations (Zinn, 2008); people judge and perceive risks in relation to different factors (probability, knowledge, experiences, common sense), and can hardly evaluate the frequency or consequences related to a specific risk.

According to Lupton (2003), this sociocultural approach is important to understanding why people perceive certain events as risky and neglect others. He argued that the inability of people to judge risk in terms of probability, in contrast with the knowledge of experts, is ascribable to a cultural difference instead of an individual estimation. Individuals do not make personal decisions or choices but they are also influenced by their own culture.

Given this assertion, it is possible to consider risk perception as a coherent and intrinsic characteristic of social structures and people's decisions (Sjöberg, Moen, Rundmo, 2004). Thus, any potential strategy of answer to situations of uncertainty and risk should be culturally constructed and institutionalised. This means that such responses are established inside each culture as heuristic solutions for a variety of different problems. For this reason, understanding cultural differences plays a major role in trying to estimate what someone's reaction will be to a risk, since cultures are commonly known to have their own beliefs that define values, even in the tourism.

## ***2.2 Social amplification of risk and media coverage after disasters***

The concept of risk is becoming a unifying cultural framework that gives shape to the daily sense of uncertainty and bewilderment of the late modern individual, linking very different social phenomena. Technological disasters, earthquakes, eating habits, travel and economic investment are the subject and object of increasingly relevant social practices for individuals and groups<sup>1</sup>. Risk has thus become a key concept to describe and explain contemporary societies, which calls into question the way we organise knowledge, manage social change and face the future, whose social relevance is closely linked to the dimensions of communication, knowledge and culture (Cerase, 2017).

Research on risk perception, especially on tourism destinations, has garnered great interest in the last few years. Scholars have studied perceived risk, rather than objective or real risk, because risk perception is believed to affect almost behaviours in different ways across cultures (Chew, Jahari, 2014; Garg, 2013; Seabra et al., 2013; Sonmez, Graefe, 1998; Wachinger et al., 2013).

Different studies regarding the risks perceived in relation to travel, as well as risks perceived at the destination, have identified several different types of risks: for example, social, natural, physical, environmental, psychological, financial, healthy, cultural and linguistic, etc. (Chew, Jahari, 2014; Cui et al., 2016; Fuchs, Reichel, 2004; Reisinger, Reichel, 2006. According to this, tourists may perceive multiple types of travel risks or even combinations of them.

Risk perception also varies according to destination images and representations: several studies have argued that tourists may choose to avoid travelling to a given destination that is perceived as risky (Chew, Jahari, 2014; Garg, 2013; Sonmez, Graefe, 1998). Thus, risk perception is strongly related to destinations, and each destination could be vulnerable to different types of risk. Therefore, some groups of tourists find travelling to a place too risky but others would find it less so based on cultural risk perceptions. Moreover, the type of risk perception is often incorporated into the destination's general image, meaning that the feelings of perceived risk, uncertainty and lack of safety have a direct influence on how anxious tourists are about a destination. This, in turn, can result in the avoidance of certain regions that may be perceived as risky (Karl, 2018; Perpiña, Camprubí, Prats 2019; Reisinger, Mavondo, 2006).

To better understand the connection of risk perception with social aspects, it is also important to consider the study of Renn, Burns, Kasperson, Slovic

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<sup>1</sup> While revising the paper, Covid 19 emergency started. The issue of risk and risk perception regarding media coverage and amplification for risk, seems to be such an important issue to be investigated from a cultural perspective as well.

(1992) on the social amplification of risk<sup>2</sup>. This theory holds that events or situations at risk are affected by psychological, social, institutional and cultural processes. This 'social amplification' plays a major role in society since it increases the importance of risks, which, in turn, exist mostly in terms of what people know about them. According to this approach, the amplification of risk can be analysed from the functional relationships of five sets of variables: the physical consequences, the amount of media coverage, individual perception, public reactions and the socioeconomic and political impacts (Renn et al., 1992). Chung (2011) explain how the dynamic process of risk amplification in the Internet environment have a special emphasis on public concern on risky destination because it provides the public with an efficient means for interactive and (im)mediate communication and an open space for active information sharing and public participation.

As explained by Wachinger et. al. (2013), what people perceive and judge as a risk, it is influenced by social and cultural acquisitions as well as by media and other communication systems, which can amplify, modify or enhance the perception of risk. For this reason, it is of great importance to mention that perceptions can vary according to the type of risk, the risk context, the individual behaviours and of course the social background.

Risk perception after disasters cannot be studied without focusing on the role of the mass media. In modern society, the significance of the media in everyday life has increased dramatically, turning the world into a global village. In postmodern society, coined by sociologists the 'risk society,' people feel threatened by all kinds of invisible risks that exist only in terms of level of knowledge, which means that all depends on the social construction of that risk. In that respect, the social definition of a specific risk can be manipulated, amplified, magnified, or minimized. Especially when key events launch new risk issues and uncertainty reigns, the public has to rely on the messages communicated to them by the media (Perez-Lugo, 2004; Vasterman, Yzermans, Dirkzwager, 2005).

After a large earthquake, broadcast and traditional media play a crucial role, fulfilling complex social and psychological functions, which can alternatively foster or hinder the return to normality of both exposed communities and society at large. Media are a relevant resource for citizens to cope with disasters. Especially in the first days after the first big shakes, media are asked to provide a lot of information of seismic phenomena, to report both what is happened and what is purported to happen in a next future (Singer, Endreny, Glassman,

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<sup>2</sup> Hence, Renn et al.'s (1992) social amplification of risk is of great importance with respect to the sociological approach since it enhances the present understanding of individual risk perception and the social processing of risk.

1991; Miles, Morse, 2007, Pantti, Wahl-Jorgensen, Cottle, 2012).

Given this assertion, it is possible to assume that risk, from a sociocultural perspective, is the interpretation and socially-constructed response to a real, objective danger, even if what people know about it is always mediated by social and cultural processes (Lupton, 2003). Moreover, several other factors could influence the opinion of people about the importance and acceptance of risks, such as personal knowledge, past experiences, values, mentality and feelings, that is cultural aspects. It sheds light on the cultural understanding of risk perception, which is an additional issue discussed in the following paragraph.

### ***2.3 Cultural differences in risk perception: an additional perspective***

Cultural differences play a significant role in understanding risk perception among different national cultures. Several scholars (Lepp, Gibbson, 2003; Reisinger, Mavondo, 2006; Roehl, Fesenmaier, 1992) found that different factors could influence risk perceptions in tourism, for instance, age, gender, personal attitudes, culture, motivation, travel plans and nationality. Other researchers (Fuchs, Reichel, 2004; Kim, Schreder, Gray, 2016) have shown that there are significant differences in perceptions of travel risk, safety, anxiety and travel intentions from different countries and cultures. It is possible to assume that cultural differences comprise a fundamental aspect to consider when analysing perception of risk and its acceptability.

According to Hofstede, culture comprises all the patterns of feeling, thinking and acting, as well as all the common activities of life, such as greetings, eating and learning. Culture is 'the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others' (Hofstede, 2011: 6).

Therefore, cultural differences are a fundamental factor to consider when analysing perception of risk and its acceptability. In this context, what is considered a risk and to what degree that risk is taken seriously is perceived differently depending on the organisation or group to which a person belongs or through which they normally act (Lupton, 1999, 2003). Considering these aspects, Hofstede (2001, 2011) introduced the study of cultural differences, identifying some dimensions that describe each culture, as well as their differences. In particular, the cultural dimension employed to analyse risk and risk perception, Uncertainty Avoidance, is defined by Hofstede as:

the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these situations. This dimension has to do with the way a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control the future or just let it happen? This ambiguity brings with it anxiety, and different cultures



have learnt to deal with this anxiety in different ways (Hofstede, 2011: 10).

This dimension influences differences among cultures about risk perception, and thus, it has been applied to the case study presented, in order to understand how media coverage in different countries responds to this cultural dimension of risk perception influenced by the belonging society.

The choice of this dimension is based upon different tourism studies that have investigated the relationship between culture and risk perceptions (Kim, Schroeder, Gray 2016; Kozak, Crofts, Law, 2007; Litvin, Crofts, Hefner, 2004; Ahn, McKercher, 2018). Garg (2013), among others, clearly demonstrated that uncertainty avoidance is considered more appropriate than other dimensions to understanding risk perception and risk-related determinants. Essentially, this dimension is related to the way a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known. Consequently, this creates feelings of anxiety, which different cultures have come to deal with in various ways. According to Hofstede (2001), cultures that exhibit a high Uncertainty Avoidance have a low tolerance for ambiguity. They tend to be risk-averse and favour rules, laws, regulations and control mechanisms, as well as a well-structured environment over unknown situations, to prevent any ambiguity or risk. Foreign behaviour and ideas are considered dangerous and people from these cultures seek stability, security, law and order.

This burden of uncertainty about the future influences decision-making processes of the present and the way people live their lives, for example, with indulgence or restraint. Tourism is an activity related mostly to leisure and having fun. Given the above explanations, it is possible to have a complete definition of the term 'risk,' including the concept of uncertainty, in accordance with Rosa's explanation of it (as cited Pidgeon, Kasperson, Slovic, 2003: 56): 'a situation or an event where something of human value (including humans themselves) is at stake and where the outcome is uncertain'. However, uncertainty should not be used interchangeably with risk since their manifestation differs. The concept of risk is exclusively used in relation to those events for which probability is known or assessable (Lupton, 2003), while uncertainty is the term used for those circumstances wherein probabilities are unknown.

Thus, it is not surprising that in the same way risk perceptions are culturally and socially shaped. Having said that, it is possible to assume that on the demand side, perceived risk mainly relies on the varying nature of national culture. For such a reason, the cultural dimensions previously presented, particularly considering the vulnerability of the tourism sector, the image of a travel destination may be damaged if there is a high level of perceived risk about a destination.

### **3. Aims and the case study**

As previously outlined, the purpose of this study is to investigate the role of cultural differences in relation to the news media coverage in the context of a risky destination in a touristic area, such as the Marche region, which was struck by several seismic events in August and October 2016, as well as in January 2017. Due to the numerous earthquakes that hit central Italy, the Marche region, as well as Umbria and Abruzzo, has been included on seismic risk maps for Italy (Rovida et al., 2016) for a long time (Mazzocchi, Montini, 2001). Even though the tourism sector in the region is well-established (Lorenzini, Calzati, Giudici, 2010), lately, it has experienced a decrease in tourists' arrivals thought to be caused by the earthquakes and the following risk perception increase.

According to the Regional Tourism Observatory and the National Institute for Tourism Researches, every year, the Marche region receives a wide range of foreign tourists, both from Europe, Asia and America. However, the number of international tourists has considerably decreased after the strong earthquakes of August and October 2016 and January 2017, (Figure 1) and tourists have started to avoid visiting the Marche region.

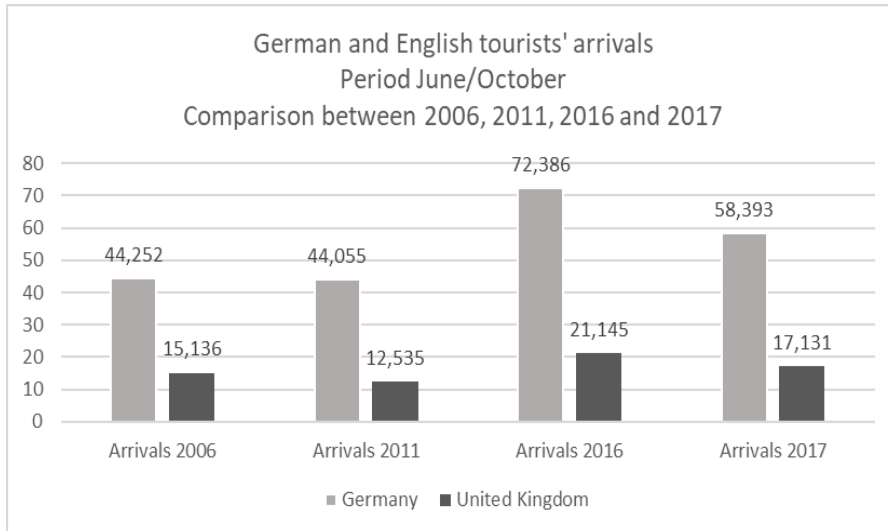
From the data available from Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo ISNART (Regione Marche, 2018) it is possible to see that foreign tourists visiting the Marche region during 2016 and 2017 (from June–October) are mainly from Europe, particularly Western Europe. Foreign tourists have been a constant presence and represent a large part of the tourism market for the region, especially German and English tourists. Considering the wide range of different international tourists, only two foreign countries were used in the case study: Germany and the UK (Figure 1). The choice of these countries is illustrated in the figure below.

As shown in figure 1, according to statistical data, German and English tourists have always chosen the Marche region as one of their primary tourist destinations. As a result, Germans account for 21%, and the English 16.6%, of all foreign tourists visiting this region (Regione Marche, 2018).

In fact, they command over a third of the tourism market in the region and there is great incentive to draw these groups back to the region. In order to do so, it would help to understand where they are coming from, from a culturally influenced perception of risk.

Indeed, according the outcome of this research, it is particularly important to get more familiar with the cultural differences of German and English in order to have a deeper understanding of the level of risk perception in both realities.

FIGURE 1. German and English tourists' arrivals in June-October 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2017.



Source: Adapted from Osservatorio Regionale del Turismo ISNART (Regione Marche, 2018).

According to Hofstede (2001), Germany and United Kingdom have many things in common. However, if one takes a critical look at the two countries, it recognises that there is empirical evidence of cultural differences between German and English societies. In addition, the choice to analyse these two countries was also based on their cultural, social and historical backgrounds, as well as their cultural differences described by Hofstede in his research, especially in relation to uncertainty avoidance.

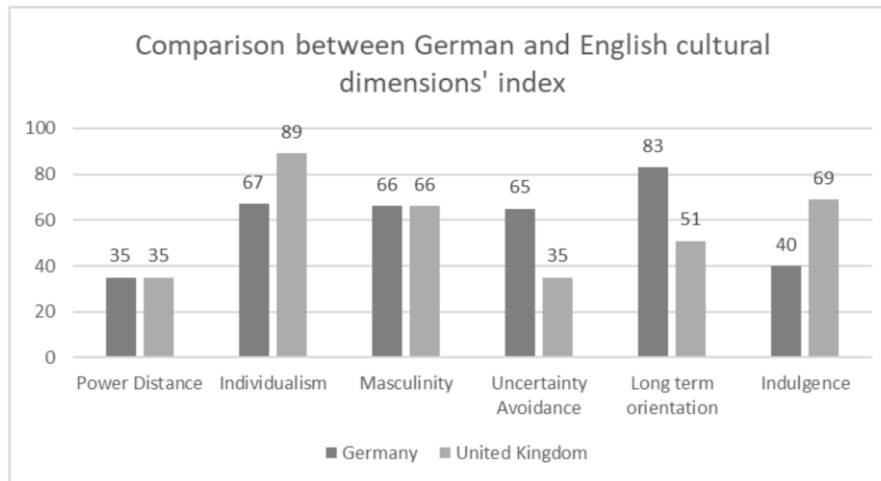
However, when looking more critically at the two countries, there is empirical evidence of cultural differences between German and English societies (Hofstede, 2001). Indeed, in Figure 2, a comparison between the two countries in relation to their cultural differences is made.

As highlighted in the figure above, one of the largest differences between the two countries is uncertainty avoidance and also Long term orientation and Indulgence.

Germany is among the uncertainty avoidant countries. It scores 65 out of 100, which means that there is a slight preference for uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2001). This is also reflected by their law system in which details are particularly important to create certainty in everyday situations. As a matter of fact, Germans are not too keen on uncertainty, by planning everything carefully and in advance, they try to avoid the uncertainty. As a result, Germany is a

society heavily relies on rules, laws and regulations. German people want to reduce their risks to the minimum avoiding conflict, disagreement, and competition (Hofstede, 2010).

FIGURE 2. Comparison between German and English cultural dimensions' index.



Source: Adapted from Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviours, institutions, and organizations across nations. 2nd ed. (Hofstede, 2001).

The UK, compared to Germany, has a low score on Uncertainty Avoidance with a 35 out of 100, meaning that, as a nation, the English are quite happy to wake up not knowing what the day brings and to 'make it up as they go along,' changing plans as new information comes to light (Hofstede, 2001). As a low uncertainty avoidant country, the English are comfortable in ambiguous situations. Indeed, the term 'muddling through' is an English way of expressing this. Moreover, unlike Germany, there are generally not as many rules in English society and people are more tolerant to opinions different from what they are used to. According to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010), in work terms, planning for goals is not detail oriented for the English. In fact, the end goal will be clear but the details of how to get there are limited and the actual process fluid and flexible to an emerging and changing environment.

Therefore, this study provides an understanding of German and English cultural risk perceptions in accordance with their cultural differences, as analysed by Hofstede (2001). To do so, the research takes an explorative approach, analysing cultural differences in relation to risk perception evidence from the analysis of online news articles reporting the recent seismic events (Hanusch, 2008). The method employed for the outcome of this research

consisted of a comparative textual analysis of the different news articles collected in order to determine and analyse the level of risk perception and uncertainty avoidance in the media coverage in two cultures.

### **3.1 Data and Methods**

To analyse cross-cultural differences in the media coverage of a risky destination, the study concentrated on German and English news media coverage of central Italy's earthquakes in 2016/2017. News articles published after the seismic events were selected in online periodicals (see below) that are among the most read online news sources in both countries as well as the most immediate and direct in reporting news.

To better understand how important cultural differences are in representing a risky destination, this study attempted to analyse and compare 12 online news articles, immediately after the event itself in Germany and the UK regarding the seismic events in 2016 and 2017 through an exploratory approach.

The news was chosen from four online high-quality periodicals<sup>3</sup> that showed great interest in the recent earthquakes in Italy:

- Der Spiegel online, daily magazine (Germany)
- Focus online, weekly news magazine (Germany)
- The Sun, daily newspaper (UK)
- Daily Mail online, daily newspaper (UK)

Periodicals were identified considering their impact on the Web, as they are the most visited and widely read newspaper websites within Germany and the UK. For example, the Daily Mail has over 11.34 million daily visitors while Der Spiegel is the most frequently quoted online media product in Germany. News online newspapers were chosen because they are generally the first information source together with television news for people soon after a natural disaster and create the first and deep idea of the event as showed in the literature.

Given the wide range of news covered by each newspaper, it was important to focus solely on significant news articles about the earthquakes in August and October 2016 and January 2017 (see Table 1). The articles' contents and publication dates (24-26 August 2016, 30 October 2016 and 18-20 January 2017) are the main selection criteria and, subsequently, they have been collected and analysed in depth using Nvivo textual analysis.

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<sup>3</sup> Due to their longevity and presence in the news market in the two countries. For the purpose of the study the circulation, the impact and reliability of the newspapers is important regarding the idea of creating a structured perception of the event. The analysis investigated two online newspaper's websites within each country, through their online websites.

Therefore, the analysis of the news identified analysis was conducted to provide the most visible differences between the two countries regarding their cultural differences in uncertainty avoidance and to determine how each talked about the earthquakes and see what emphasis they put on uncertainty avoidance.

The identification of the main aspects looking for sentences and words, was done by defining and naming different nodes (and using Nvivo software to identifying nodes and sentences), which have been employed to conduct the analysis: risk and risk perception, geographical dimension of the earthquake, sense of uncertainty, level of knowledge. These themes were chosen because are closely related to the patterns identified in the literature surrounding the earthquakes, risk and uncertainty, which were all fundamental aspects to capturing the intricacies of meanings within words and sentences in each article. Based on this set of themes, it was possible to extrapolate words and sentences from each article that could trace certain uses of language back to cultural traits of each foreign country. Considering this approach, the identification of relevant words and phrases highlighted the main differences in risk perception between these two societies in accordance with the cultural differences described by Hofstede (2010).

All the texts of the articles chosen were coded and all the data generated were then analysed through a computer-assisted qualitative analysis, carried out with the use of NVivo software<sup>4</sup>. The predominantly descriptive-exploratory nature of this text has led us to make use of the texts of the articles by identifying the elements relevant to the literature and analysing the differences between the different journals with respect to the size of the risk and the choice of the communicative style.

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<sup>4</sup> NVivo presents a set of procedures useful to describe, analyse and interpret the multiple materials and data that are produced in a qualitative research path. In this sense, it is configured as an adequate aid to manage and archive the different materials collected (in this case audio and text files); to select text segments; to organize the different annotations that are produced during a search process; to identify the possible links between the contents of the different materials put in the field; to fine-tune conceptual schemes and interpretative hypotheses; to produce qualitative data analysis reports using diagrams and to draw up the research report.

TABLE 1. A comparison of regional social care and healthcare systems<sup>5</sup>.

<b>24 August 2016</b>	<i>Der Spiegel</i> : Tragedy and destruction: Italian Quake is a test for Government in Rome	<i>The Sun</i> : GRIM AFTERMATH Italy earthquake leads to open-air mortuaries, rescue teams running out of body bags, people forced to sleep in the streets-as looting spreads through the destroyed towns
	<i>Focus</i> : 250 deaths in earthquake in Italy. Helpers look feverishly for the victims: ‘Misfortune tears the heart’	<i>Daily Mail</i> : Shocking before and after pictures of how Italian towns have been completely destroyed by the devastating earthquake
<b>26-30 October 2016</b>	<i>Der Spiegel</i> : Huge earthquake shattered Central Italy-building collapsed	<i>The Sun</i> : ‘THERE MAY BE MORE’: Italian towns warned of ‘domino effect’ aftershocks after massive earthquake that injured 20 strikes in area devastated by months of tremors
	<i>Focus</i> : Epicentre near Perugia. Violent earthquake shocks Italy again	<i>Daily Mail</i> : CRACKS appear in ST Paul’s Basilica in Rome after a 6.6-magnitude earthquake hits central Italy destroying buildings just two months after a tremor killed 300
<b>18 January 2017</b>	<i>Der Spiegel</i> : Avalanche meets hotel in earthquake area-several dead	<i>The Sun</i> : THE COUNTRY ROCKED BY QUAKES. Why is Italy hit by so many deadly earthquakes? All you need to know after deadly avalanche in Farindola
	<i>Focus</i> : Avalanche in Italy. Snowmass buried a four-star Hotel Gran Rigopiano	<i>Daily Mail</i> : Buildings are evacuated in Rome and rural areas are deemed ‘apocalyptic’ as Italian region devastated last years is hit by three earthquakes

In the research process it was fundamental to define and redefine the structure of the nodes and sub nodes that then guided the analysis process. The emerging dimensions were validated and reviewed in the research process. As stated above, the thematic analysis (using Nvivo) was used considering some main aspects related to the patterns of reporting on the earthquake, risk and uncertainty in specific sentences in each newspaper:

<sup>5</sup> The news articles analysed were written in English. However, in the case of the German newspapers, they were translated into English and then compared with online specialised dictionaries, such as dict.cc and pons.de. A copy of the articles analysed are available in the supplementary materials.

- 1) Risk and risk perception: words and sentences that can explicitly convey meanings related to risk factors and feelings of risk perception.
- 2) Sense of uncertainty: specific words and sentences that can convey feelings of uncertainty associated with risk.
- 3) Geographical dimension: words and sentences that emphasise and convey the perception of the geographical dimension associated with natural disasters.
- 4) Level of knowledge: expressions that reveal a sense of awareness about a specific topic, in this case, the earthquakes, the affected areas and their related information.

The four themes are closely connected to risk-related determinants and people's risk perception about a specific situation, whereas the last two refer to the interpretation of relevant keyword phrases that capture the intricacies of meaning within each word and sentence identified in the articles. The words and sentences identified have been used for a comparative analysis. This comparison was useful for emphasising the cultural differences between the two societies in accordance with their level of Uncertainty Avoidance.

#### **4. Results and discussion**

##### ***4.1 English and German online news compared: words and visual elements***

The periodicals and articles were analysed for their contents, images and the writing style of each. This first approach revealed significant differences between the two countries, particularly in the way they reported the news about recent seismic events in Italy. Reading about the same event from distinct newspaper companies from different countries can reveal clear differences in terms of perspective, opinions and viewpoints. This analysis was also important to better understand whether the content of the news is informative, descriptive or persuasive or a combination of these ones.

According to the analysis, German news articles did not examine nor explore the issues surrounding the earthquakes in depth but instead emphasised feelings and represent the victims' emotional states. Sentences like: 'Right now, I am thinking a lot about the refugees from Africa and [the] Middle East, and I can often image how they feel-out of place and a burden, but happy to be alive...' and 'The eyes of the 80-year-old are desperate, and his voice falls over when he tells what he saw...' clearly show how the use of feelings and emotions emphasises the critical situations of the affected areas. Given the use of such emotional states, it is possible to hypothesise that the tone employed in the



writing is worried and serious. This is in line with the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension described by Hofstede (2010), which is strong in German society and thus may reveal higher stress, emotionality and anxiety.

On the other hand, the English news examined and explored the events in depth, reporting detailed information about the earthquake, geographic dimension, rescue operations and affected areas. They did not put much emphasis on feelings and emotions but are more informative and descriptive. Unlike its German counterpart, the English news was full of elucidations, such as 'Why is Italy hit by so many quakes?' 'What caused the avalanche in Italy?' 'What is an earthquake?' or 'Where is Farindola?' This may reveal a much more reflective and tolerant tone instead of a tragic and uneasy one, as seen German news articles.

Regarding frequently repeated words, we focused on the repetition of specific words in each article associated with risk factors that could ultimately convey different meanings. Given the contents of the German articles analysed, the repetition of words such as 'devastation,' 'catastrophe,' 'violent,' 'disaster' and 'dramatic situation' seem to be clearly associated with risk-related determinates and risk perception. The frequent use of the words 'earthquake' and 'shock' show a sensibility towards natural disasters, and it could also convey a sense of risk perception. In the English news, there was the repetition of specific words that can stimulate and boost certain meanings. Given the frequent use of 'apocalyptic,' 'tremors,' 'devastation,' 'disaster,' etc., one can assume that the connection between these strong words with the earthquake is quite clear and strong for the English.

In addition, the writing style of each article offered specific insights about the ways in which stories reported the issue in terms of relative importance, tone and intended audience. The German articles exhibited a moral and judgmental tone, emphasising a sense of uncertainty regarding the Marche region as a risky destination. For example, there are sentences such as 'Will failures of L'Aquila be repeated?' or 'Italy needs to do more' and 'Particularly vulnerable Region.' Considering these reflections and observations, it is possible to assume that the German news seems to be more critical than English news. Therefore, the German news could be considered content-oriented and attempting to explain the topic in a logical order and sequence. This also supports the findings of Hofstede (2010), where Germany is identified as a strong uncertainty avoidant country, characterised by a more explicit rule system and clear need for clarity and structure.

Another factor to point out is the different use of pictures and footage. In English news, there was an extensive use of footage, a more informal approach that invites intimacy and perhaps empathy. This can provide a more realistic impression of what is happening in the earthquake zones and may characterise

a more unworried behaviour and less structured system, typical of less uncertainty avoidant countries that feel comfortable in unstructured situations (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010). Moreover, in English news, there are interviews with English tourists, who relate their experiences during the earthquakes, as well as advice and suggestions, such as ‘What areas are at risk?’ ‘What’s the advice for tourists?’ and ‘What could be done in Italy to prevent and protect?’ This could be in line with the uncertainty avoidance dimension, according to which the English display a positive attitude and have a tendency towards optimism, even if there may be risk (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010). By contrast, the German news did not provide suggestions or advice but exhibited more formality and the extensive use of written text show straightforward contents. Unlike the English, this confirms that Germany’s is a restrained culture, in which people tend to contain themselves, favour strict social norms and formal communication.

#### ***4.2 Thematic Analysis***

A thematic analysis was then conducted to identify relevant words and sentences in each article in order to determine whether any distinct cultural traits that distinguish one country and language from another could be found. This has revealed more details about the cultural differences between German and English societies in accordance with their level of risk perception.

Based on this explanation, the in-depth examination carried out has provided an understanding of the connotative meaning of the identified phrases and brought to highlight, meanings and associations connected to the specific words and sentences in each article.

The theme of *risk and risk perception*, in German news, is manifested as a sense of risk avoidance in accordance with Uncertainty Avoidance. In line with the literature (Sjöberg, Moen, Rundmo, 2004; Slovic, 2000), risk perception is linked to risk tolerance, or an individual’s capacity to accept a certain amount of risk. The identification of phrases in the German news such as ‘several earthquakes,’ ‘the risk for seismic activity is high,’ ‘buildings are not secured,’ ‘Italy has always been on risk maps’ and ‘Italy is not a country of prevention’ reveal a perception of risk that could deter people from travelling, influencing their behaviours towards a given destination. The words and sentences identified in the news indicate that Germans may feel uncomfortable with risky situations since they favour security and safety measures. Moreover, being a culture restrained in nature makes a country cynical and pessimistic about ambiguous situations (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010).

Sentences identified in English news associated to risk perception, such as ‘there will be more [earthquakes], even stronger,’ ‘earthquakes are normal for

the Apennines' or 'earthquakes will happen again,' reveal a sense of tolerance for ambiguous, risky situations. This is also confirmed by the fact that the English news provided detailed information about the seismic events, the affected areas and the seismicity of Italy, which may indicate a deeper awareness and understanding of the issue. This is in accordance with being a less uncertainty avoidant country, where flat organisational structures are favoured, and people are flexible and more willing to take certain risks.

Additionally, the words and sentences identified related to the *sense of uncertainty* also emphasise that German people seek stability, a well-structured system and are mainly risk-averse. Considering sentences like 'it robbed them of a future,' 'buildings are not secured,' 'further earthquakes are to be expected' and 'Italy is not a country of prevention' give a clear sense of uncertainty towards a future, in this case, due to the earthquake. By contrast, in the English news, fewer words or sentences could be associated with a sense of uncertainty or referred to a concern. However, the accurate reading of English news highlighted sentences such as 'powerful earthquake[s]' could continue indefinitely,' 'nothing left in the towns' and 'fragility of Italy's infrastructures could convey a sense of uncertainty connected to the future and to ambiguous situations related to earthquakes that could hit these regions again. In any case, considering Hofstede's findings (2010), as a low uncertainty avoidant culture, English society may tolerate more ambiguity and uncertainty and as such, these sentences do not put too much emphasis on uncertainty and risk-averse behaviours.

Continuing with the thematic analysis, according to the theme of the *geographical dimension* of the earthquake, the German news exhibited an imprecise idea about it, which may not coincide with the specific geographical area in which the earthquake occurred. Sentences such as 'central Italy is one of the regions [that has] severe earth shocks,' 'the quake was felt in Rome,' 'earthquakes in the region' and 'Italy is always haunted by heavy quakes' could influence the overall perception of the geographical dimension and have a negative impact on other parts of Italy not directly affected by the quakes, generating a sense of uncertainty towards several other Italian regions.

The English news displayed a much more precise and informed understanding of the geographical dimension of the quake. This is confirmed by the wide range of more precise and detailed information provided in each article: 'the quakes were felt 100 miles away in Rome,' 'the quakes hit central Italy regions of Umbria and Marche,' 'disaster area covering the Region of Rieti and Ascoli Piceno' and 'the tremors felt as far north as Bolzano.' These sentences have a greater sense of awareness and specificity about the earthquake zones, which would likely not influence decision-making, travel intentions and travel motivations for other parts of the Italian Peninsula.

Another theme closely connected to the geographical dimension is the *level of knowledge*, which refers to expressions that reveal a sense of awareness about a specific topic, in this case, the earthquakes, the affected areas and their related information. In the German news, words and sentences such as ‘central Italy has always been on risk maps,’ ‘vulnerable region’ and ‘the risk for seismic activity is high’ show a level of knowledge about central Italy earthquakes that can stimulate different reactions. On one hand, this kind of knowledge can provide risk tolerance since people are aware of what they might experience. On the other, knowledge about something negative, for example, an earthquake can also create risk avoidance reactions.

By contrast, in the English news, a higher level of knowledge about Italy and the earthquake was observed, for example, ‘Italy is one of the most seismically active countries in Europe,’ ‘highly complex and geologically active region’ and ‘minor tremors are common in the region.’ Moreover, the articles provided detailed information about the seismic events, the affected areas and the seismicity of Italy, which implies a high sense of awareness. However, as stated above, according to the level of knowledge, this can indicate either a risk tolerance or a risk avoidance.

## **5. Conclusions**

The analyses provided in this work are consistent with results confirmed by previous research, that there are significant differences in the influence of natural disasters among different cultural backgrounds (Carr, 2001; Kozak, Crofts, Law, 2007; Reisinger, Mavondo, 2006; Sönmez, Graefe, 1998). Particularly, it showed that there is evidence of cultural differences between the two cultures in analysing and reporting news about a risky situation in a tourism destination country. These findings are also consistent with Hofstede’s work (2001), which demonstrated that the English scored very low on Uncertainty Avoidance, whereas the Germans scored particularly high.

This research contributes to the existing body of literature on cultural risk perceptions in terms of natural disasters and travel risk at a destination. Particularly, it examines in detail how cultural differences may influence the media coverage of risky situation regarding the latest seismic events in central Italy.

Media coverage give a different potential perception of the same event considering the style, the wording, the use of images and the aim of the narrative discourse. Each culture expresses a specific level of uncertainty avoidance related to values, symbols and cognitive aspects and this could have an impact on touristic destination and their representations along time.

The study implies that different marketing strategies may be needed to encourage international travel from different countries depending on cultural risk perceptions, in this case after seismic events. The identified dimensions of the cultural differences between German and English news media coverage point to several strategic considerations and recommendations for tourism service marketers and managers aiming to improve the tourism demand in the Marche region.

Given these considerations, it is of major importance to develop different promotional strategies considering their cultural differences. For example, German culture, who seek stability and favour well-structured systems as well as laws and rules, could be targeted with messages emphasising the safety and security measures they may see in the region. Moreover, since this study and others determined that, they have a low tolerance for risk and ambiguous situations; it could be more fruitful to encourage them to travel to areas in the Marche region not directly affected by the recent earthquakes. Furthermore, even if English tourists feel comfortable with risk and ambiguous situations, specific promotional strategies must be developed to attract more people from the UK. Most importantly, it is crucial to foster a culture of prevention and preparation in Italy since articles analysing this aspect have emerged several times. This is crucial because other people (countries) are observing and judging and because it keeps people (Italians as well as tourists) safer, which will, in turn, improve the image of the region.

Moreover, a negative destination image in the news, in terms of safety and risk could be a deterrent for international visitors looking to travel to places that are perceived as unsafe, especially concerning earthquakes. In fact, the negative image created through a lack of safety and security in the long-term may damage the tourism and travel industry of the Marche region and the whole nation. Given the vulnerability of the tourism sector and because earthquakes are natural disasters that cannot be controlled, it is essential to keep improving the image of the Marche region as a tourist destination and to set up better positioning strategies for the future. This could be done using a more specific and oriented press releases and targeted advertisement for example and considering social diversity among tourists from different countries.

## **6. Limitations**

Although the research provides different findings that were consistent with previous academic studies and confirmed the importance of cultural differences in relation to risk perception, the current analysis is limited to comparisons with other similar studies. In this study, we were not looking at news and media

coverage in a specific period but this could be a longitudinal aspect for further research. This work could be repeated with a larger sample of news online analysis and within different countries. Further, a limitation was that only Uncertainty Avoidance was considered. Moreover, future studies might include a survey with foreign tourists in order to have direct responses from them about the perception of a risky destination and the influence of media coverage after disaster.

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## Supplementary Materials

### 1. *List of earthquakes that have caused severe damages in The Marche region throughout the years*

Date & Time	Epicentre	I <sub>mx</sub>	M <sub>w</sub>
1.05.1279 04.30	Camerino (MC)	10	6.3
25.12.1352 12.01	Monterchi (AR)	9	6.4
23.11.1380 12.25	Norcia (PG)	10	6.4
18.10.1389 10.18	Bocca Serriola	9	6.0
5.11.1599 11.06	Valnerina	9	6.0
25.12.1690 12.23	Anconetano	8-9	5.6
30.10.1790 05.12	Valnerina	9	5.9
24.04.1741 04.24	Fabrianese	9	6.2
17.04.1747 04.17	Nocera Umbra	9	5.9
27.07.1751 07.27	Appennino umbro-marchigiano	10	6.2
03.06.1781 06.03	Cagliese	10	6.4
30.09.1789 09.30	Valtiberina	9	5.8
28.07.1799 07.28	Appennino marchigiano	9-10	6.1
13.01.1832 01.13	Valle del Topino	10	6.3
12.03.1873 03.12	Marche meridionali	9	5.9
26.04.1917 04.26	Valtiberina	9	5.9
30.10.1930 10.30	Senigallia (AN)	8-9	5.8
03.10.1943 10.03	Marche meridionali-Abruzzo	9	5.8
19.09.1979 09.19	Valnerina	8-9	5.9
26.09.1997 09.26	Appennino umbro-marchigiano	9	6.0
24.08.2016 03.36	Monti della Laga	9	6.0
24.08.2016 04.33	Norcia (PG)	8	5.4
30.10.2016 07.40	Perugia	10	6.5
18.01.2017 11.14	Monteale (AQ)	8	5.5

Source: Adapted from *INGV Terremoti*

[https://ingvterremoti.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/4-marche\\_20-06\\_web.pdf](https://ingvterremoti.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/4-marche_20-06_web.pdf)

**2. Key Differences between Weak and Strong Uncertainty-Avoidance Societies**

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance
- The uncertainty inherent in life is accepted and each day is taken as it comes	- The uncertainty inherent in life is felt as a continuous threat that must be fought
- Ease, lower stress, self-control, low anxiety	- Higher stress, emotionality, anxiety, neuroticism
- People have fewer worries about health and money	- People have more worries about health and money
- Tolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is curious	- Intolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is dangerous
- Comfortable with ambiguity and chaos	- Need for clarity and structure
- In religion, philosophy and science: relativism and empiricism	- In religion, philosophy and science: belief in ultimate truths and grand theories
- Risky investments	- Conservative investments

Source: Adapted from *Cultures and Organizations. Software of the mind: Intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival* (Hofstede et. al. 2010)

### 3. *Links to the full text of the news articles selected*

#### 3.1. *Spiegel Online*

Tragedy and Destruction

Italian Quake Is a Test for Government in Rome

This week's devastating earthquake in Italy, with more than 260 deaths, will be a leadership test for Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. The state's failures after the 2009 catastrophe in L'Aquila have not been forgotten.



August 26, 2016 <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/could-italy-s-devastation-have-been-prevented-a-1109676.html>

Heavy earthquake shattered Central Italy - building collapsed

Once again a heavy earthquake hit central Italy - many people were buried, there were dozens of injured people. The center of the quake lies southeast of Perugia.



October 30, 2016 <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/schweres-erdbeben-erschuettert-mittelitalien-a-1118888.html>

Avalanche meets hotel in earthquake area - several dead

An avalanche hit a hotel in central Italy. According to local help, many people were killed in the building. There were several earthquakes in the region on Wednesday.



January 19, 2017

<http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/italien-lawine-trifft-hotel-in-erdbebengebiet-viele-tote-a-1130656.htm>

### **3.2. Focus online**

250 deaths in earthquakes in Italy Helpers look feverishly for the victims: 'Misfortune tears the heart'



August 25, 2016 [http://www.focus.de/panorama/welt/knapp-250-tote-bei-erdbeben-in-italien-helfer-suchen-fieberhaft-nach-verschuetteten\\_id\\_5859068.html](http://www.focus.de/panorama/welt/knapp-250-tote-bei-erdbeben-in-italien-helfer-suchen-fieberhaft-nach-verschuetteten_id_5859068.html)

Epicenter near Perugia Violent earthquake shocks Italy again



October 30, 2016 [http://www.focus.de/panorama/welt/staerke-7-1-heftiges-erdbeben-erschuettert-erneut-italien\\_id\\_6134394.html](http://www.focus.de/panorama/welt/staerke-7-1-heftiges-erdbeben-erschuettert-erneut-italien_id_6134394.html)

Avalanche in Italy snowmass buried four star hotel Gran Rigopiano



January 20, 2017 [http://www.focus.de/panorama/welt/lawine-in-italien-schneemassen-begraben-vier-sterne-hotel-gran-rigopiano\\_id\\_6523041.html](http://www.focus.de/panorama/welt/lawine-in-italien-schneemassen-begraben-vier-sterne-hotel-gran-rigopiano_id_6523041.html)

### **3.3. The Sun**

GRIM AFTERMATH Italy earthquake leads to open-air mortuaries, rescue teams running out of body bags, people forced to sleep in the streets – as looting spreads through the destroyed towns

August 25, 2016 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1671253/italy-earthquake-leads-to-open-air-mortuaries-rescue-teams-running-out-of-body-bags-people-forced-to-sleep-in-the-streets-as-looting-spreads-through-the-destroyed-towns/>

‘THERE MAY BE MORE’ Italian towns warned of ‘domino effect’ aftershocks after massive earthquake that injured 20 strikes in area devastated by months of tremors

October 30, 2016 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2078051/powerful-earthquake-measuring-6-6-strikes-central-italy-just-weeks-after-massive-tremor-killed-almost-300-people/>

THE COUNTRY ROCKED BY QUAKEs Why is Italy hit by so many deadly earthquakes? All you need to know after deadly avalanche in Farindola

January 20, 2017 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2652582/what-caused-the-avalanche-in-italy/>

### **3.4. Daily Mail Online**

Shocking before and after pictures show how Italian towns have been completely destroyed by the devastating earthquake

- Photographs from before and after the Italian earthquake show how hardest-hit areas have been ruined
- The epicentre of was in Norcia, Umbria, and struck towns of Amatrice, Accumoli and Pescara del Tronto
- Stefano Petrucci, mayor of Accumoli, said ‘my town isn’t here anymore’ as he surveyed the devastation

August 24, 2016 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3756203/Shocking-pictures-Italian-towns-completely-destroyed-devastating-earthquake.html>

CRACKS appear in St Paul's Basilica in Rome after a 6.6-magnitude earthquake hits central Italy destroying buildings just two months after a tremor killed 300

October 30, 2016 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3886712/Italy-struck-massive-7-1-magnitude-earthquake-near-Perugia.html>

*Buildings are evacuated in Rome and rural areas are deemed 'apocalyptic' as Italian region devastated last year is hit by three earthquakes*

January 18, 2017 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4131466/Earthquake-shakes-central-Italy-felt-Rome.html>



#### **4 Summary of German news articles**

##### **4.1 From Spiegel Online newspaper**

1) *Tragedy and Destruction: Italian Quake is a Test for the Government in Rome*

This article starts with a description of the feelings of two old residents living in the hamlet of Rocchetta in the province of Perugia. They feel like refugees since the earthquake of August 2016 left them with no place where to stay. The news goes on with a thorough description of the buildings and the churches collapsed during the quake. Moreover, it talks about the 250-people killed in the Region and it says that in Amatrice, a small town close to Rocchetta, “it is no longer possible to navigate the streets of its historic centre”. The main point of the article is the question: Will failures of L’Aquila be repeated? The journalists wonder whether the government will fail or not again in responding to natural disaster. The news stresses the fact that Italy needs to do more in order to be a country with a culture of prevention.

2) *Heavy earthquake shattered Central Italy – buildings collapsed*

This article talks about the strong earthquake of October 2016 reporting the catastrophic event and the fact that people in the affected areas panicked on the streets. Moreover, it reports the struggle of the civil protection rescuing people from the rubble. The news goes on talking about the geographical dimension of the quake, which was evident in the Region of Umbria and in cities like Florence and Ancona. The main point of the article is that the central part of Italy is vulnerable and that it is frequently hit by severe earth shocks.

3) *Avalanche meets hotel in earthquake area – several dead*

This article reports the tragedy of Hotel Rigopiano, which was completely covered by an avalanche triggered by one of the earth shocks that hit the province of Pescara in January 2017. The earthquake caused many houses to collapse in central Italy and has killed 20 people who were staying in the Hotel on the slopes of the Gran Sasso mountain. The news stresses the fact that the epicentres of the four quakes were situated in Amatrice, which had been affected by the earthquake in August.

##### **4.2 From Focus Online newspaper**

1) *250 deaths in earthquakes in Italy: Helpers look feverishly for the victims, “Misfortune tears the heart”*

The article reports the experience of an old man who is disoriented and whose voice falls over when he recalls what he saw in the early morning of

August 24th in the small town of Amatrice. The news goes on reporting the struggle of the rescuers looking for survivors. The heavy earthquake caused many houses to collapse completely in the towns of Amatrice, Accumoli, Pescara del Tronto and Arquata del Tronto. The article describes the feelings of one of the rescuer from the civil protection who says that “the suffering and misfortunes that these people have left here tear your heart”. The journalist concludes saying that “a new uncertain day is about to come”.

2) *Epicentre near Perugia: Violent earthquake shocks Italy again*

This article reports the heavy earthquake of October 2016 which has hit the same Regions of August 2016. It stresses the fact that this seismic event was particularly strong compared to previous earthquakes. The news goes on reporting that this time the quake was felt in the capital city of Rome. The main point of the article is that the risk of seismic activity is very high in these Regions. Indeed, the journalist makes an historical overview of the devastating earthquakes that have hit the central part of Italy so far.

3) *Avalanche in Italy: Snowmass buried four-star hotel Gran Rigopiano*

The article reports the disaster caused by an avalanche which has completely spilled a hotel with up to 35 people inside. The avalanche was triggered by four strong earthquakes that have shaken the territory on January 2017. The news stresses the fact that no victims from Germany were reported even if there were foreigners’ tourists among the victims. Moreover, the article reports the words of a survivor who tells the dramatic scenery he saw after the avalanche: “a tragic mixture of earthquake and avalanches”.

### **4.3 Summary of English news articles**

#### **4.3.1 From The Sun newspaper**

1) *GRIM AFTERMATH: Italy earthquake leads to open-air mortuaries, rescue teams running out of the body bags, people forced to sleep in the streets – as looting spreads through the destroyed towns*

This article reports the first seismic events of August 2016 when at least 247 people have been killed and many others injured. With the help of some photos, the news shows relevant moments focusing on the first 24 hours following the earthquake. Afterwards, it continues reporting some information about the event and the struggle of rescuers working to free survivors, with some using their bare hands to move the rubble. Moreover, the article reports one of the hundreds of heart-breaking stories that have been told by the residents and it stresses the fact that there is always one glimmer of hope.

- 2) *'THERE MAY BE MORE' Italian towns warned of 'domino effect' aftershocks after massive earthquake that injured 20 strikes in area devastated by months of tremors*  
The news starts reporting the earthquake of October 2016, stressing the fact that it was the most powerful quake in 36 years. It continues talking about a 'domino effect' of aftershocks that will probably hit the region for a long time. Moreover, it shows some relevant photos of different buildings and churches that have been destroyed or damaged by the earthquake. It continues giving information about the most quake-hit towns such as Norcia, Ussita, Arquata del Tronto and Castelsantangelo.
- 3) *THE COUNTRY ROCKED BY QUAKES. Why is Italy hit by so many deadly earthquakes? All you need to know after deadly avalanche in Farindola*  
This article focuses on the tragedy of Hotel Rigopiano in the town of Farindola, which was destroyed by an avalanche caused by one of the four earthquakes that have hit the central regions on January 2017. The news gives mainly detailed information about what caused the avalanche in Italy, where is Farindola and it explains what is an earthquake. Moreover, it reports what happened to the Hotel Rigopiano and it tells the number of survivors and the death toll.

#### **4.3.2 From the Daily Mail Online newspaper**

- 1) *Shocking before and after pictures of how Italian towns have been completely destroyed by the devastating earthquake*  
The news starts with a detailed description of the towns affected by the devastating earthquake of August 2016. With the help of photos, it shows the houses in Amatrice that have been disintegrated and left in ruins whereas the town's elegant clock tower has almost survived intact. Moreover, it reports the geographical dimension of the earthquake that was also felt in Rome, 100 miles away and across Italy. The article goes on presenting an historical overview of the most powerful earthquakes in central Italy over the years. In addition, it reports the feelings of some British tourists who experienced the quakes.
- 2) *CRACKS appear in ST Paul's Basilica in Rome after a 6.6-magnitude earthquake hits central Italy destroying buildings just two months after a tremor killed 300*  
This news reports the devastating earthquake that struck central Italy in October 2016 causing widespread damage felt as far away as Rome and Venice. It also gives information about the practicability of highways and smaller roads throughout the quake zone. The main point of the article is the geographical dimension of the earthquake. Indeed, it stresses the fact

that the quake was felt throughout the Italian peninsula, with reports as far north as Bolzano and as far south as Bari. Moreover, it reports the fact that people in both neighbouring Croatia and Slovenia also felt the tremors.

3) *Buildings are evacuated in Rome and rural areas are deemed 'apocalyptic' as Italian region devastated last year is hit by three earthquakes*

This news reports the four quakes that have struck in under an hour about 65 miles north east of the Italian capital in January 2017. It also gives information about the geographical dimension of the quake, which was felt across the Abruzzo, Lazio and Marche regions. The article goes on talking about the recent earthquakes that hit the same regions, and where more than 45,000 aftershocks have rattled the central part of Italy so far. Moreover, it reports some data about the reshaping of the Italy's land mass and it stresses the fact that central Italy is vulnerable to seismic activity due to the movement of the Eurasian and African tectonic plates.

**5 Sample of the Analysis procedure**

The following scheme shows the search of specific words and sentences that have been identified in the news articles selected (using NVIVO). In this way, it was possible to carry out a *thematic analysis* comparing different sentences and words in order to comprehend whether the language employed in the news could reveal the different cultural traits that distinguish one country from another.

<i>Germany news analysis</i>	<i>United Kingdom news analysis</i>
August 26, 2016 SPIEGEL ONLINE - Devastating earthquake - Refugees in their own country - It robbed them of a future - Wiped off from the map - No longer possible to navigate the streets - Deadly silence - Central Italy has always been on risk maps - Strong earthquake has been a regular occurrence - Italy is not a country with a culture of prevention - Turn their backs on Rocchetta to go elsewhere	August 24, 2016 THE SUN - Rescuers are battling to save survivors - Apocalyptic quake - Terrifying prospect of aftershocks - The quakes were felt 100 miles away in Rome - Dante’s inferno - Disaster area covering the regions of Rieti and Ascoli Piceno - One glimmer of hope - Apocalyptic earthquake
October 30, 2016 SPIEGEL ONLINE - Once again, a heavy earthquake - Heavy shocks - Disaster - Catastrophe - Vulnerable region - Massive damage - Central Italy one of the region to have severe earth shocks	October 30, 2016 THE SUN - Terrified Italians - “Struck like a bomb” - “domino effect” - Powerful quake - Natural disaster - Constant trembling of the earth - Powerful aftershocks could continue indefinitely - The quake was felt throughout Italy - Closure of tourist sites
January 19, 2017 SPIEGEL ONLINE - Several earthquakes - Devastation	January 19, 2017 THE SUN - Apocalyptic avalanche

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Heavy earth shocks</li> <li>- Italy is always haunted by heavy quakes</li> <li>- The earthquake was still noticeable in Rome</li> <li>- The situation is complicated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Italy is one of the most seismically active countries</li> <li>- Many devastating earthquakes</li> <li>- Minor tremors are common in the country</li> <li>- Fragility of Italy's infrastructure</li> <li>- Two-thirds of the country's municipalities are in earthquake zones</li> <li>- Apocalyptic scenes</li> </ul>
<p>August 25, 2016 FOCUS ONLINE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A picture of devastation</li> <li>- So much desolation</li> <li>- Every few years there is a heavy earthquake in Italy</li> <li>- New uncertain day</li> <li>- It is a routine for Italy</li> <li>- Again no one was prepared</li> <li>- The most earthquake-stricken country</li> <li>- It is alarming</li> <li>- This is a new phenomenon</li> <li>- Risk areas</li> <li>- Italy most affected country in Europe</li> </ul>	<p>August 24, 2016 DAILY MAIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Italian towns completely destroyed</li> <li>- Devastating earthquake</li> <li>- Nothing left in the towns</li> <li>- Highly complex and geologically active region</li> <li>- Several earthquakes in recent years</li> <li>- Apocalyptic scenes</li> <li>- Why is Italy tormented by quakes?</li> <li>- Earthquake will happen again</li> <li>- Italy could do more</li> <li>- Encourage a culture of prevention</li> </ul>
<p>October 30, 2016 FOCUS ONLINE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Violent earthquake</li> <li>- Shocks Italy again</li> <li>- The risk for seismic activity is high</li> <li>- The quake triggered panic</li> <li>- Disaster</li> <li>- The quake was felt in Rome</li> <li>- The country is often haunted by quakes</li> <li>- Dramatic situations</li> </ul>	<p>October 30, 2016 DAILY MAIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The quake has stricken central and southern Italy</li> <li>- More significant quakes can be expected</li> <li>- Repeated tremors</li> <li>- Earthquakes are normal for the Apennines</li> <li>- There will be more, even stronger</li> <li>- The quake was centred in a mountainous area in the central Italy regions of Umbria and Marche</li> <li>- "domino effect"</li> <li>- The quake was felt as far north as Bolzano</li> </ul>

Isabella Crespi, Marco Taibi  
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<p>January 20, 2017 FOCUS ONLINE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Places cut off from the outside world</li> <li>- Dramatic scenery</li> <li>- Earthquakes</li> <li>- No preventive culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Italy is the most seismically active country in Europe</li> <li>- It's not as catastrophic as it could have been</li> </ul> <p>January 18, 2017 DAILY MAIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4 strong earthquakes</li> <li>- Tremors were felt across the Abruzzo and Marche regions</li> <li>- The recent tremors have reshaped more than 230 square miles of land</li> <li>- Elsewhere building were damaged</li> </ul>
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