Niko Lancaster

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# Crimes in Hotels

## Introduction

Hotels and Motels are a huge part of travel for many. While the increase availability of travel options means that guests have more locations to choose. With the increase in travel destinations, also comes in the increase in criminal activities against lodging guests. This paper focuses on how crime shapes hotel safety for guests. Hotels are becoming more and more targets of criminal activity due to the ever-increasing popularity of options. The style and design of the hotel and its structure influence the type of crime that could potentially occur at the property.

This topic involves two disciplines; Hotel Management and Criminal Justice. These are chosen because the crimes in hotels deal with both disciplines. Hotel management is a big discipline involved because of it is the primary subject involved. Criminal Justice is the secondary discipline but still has a role in the research because this paper deals with the crimes against the hotels. The content in this paper is important because the traveler needs to be aware of whether their place of retreat is safe or not, and how to further protect themselves from criminal activity.

## Objectives

This paper’s objectives are to;

1. Explain how crime shapes hotels
   1. Crime will never cease to exist but, there are points of interest on hotels and motels. The various styles of lodging establishments have a factor of what crime could happen at each property.
2. Explain factors of causation
   1. Different factors of a hotel’s structure and security measures can be the cause of crimes. This focuses on how secure the guest is inside and outside the hotel.
3. Give advice on safeguarding one’s self
   1. A frequent to infrequent traveler need to know various ways to safeguard themselves from criminal activity.

## Problem

In the travel industry, hotels, and motels are prime targets of crime, not because they just exist. But, because travelers usually do not think of criminal activity while on vacation. Some people are blind to what is going around them. This gives criminals the perfect target. How can one protect themselves from criminal activity from occurring during their stay? How can guest protect other guests? How can hotels protect their guests from devious activity? These questions will be addressed in this paper.

## Literature Review

The sources I’ve used are hotel and motel based. The articles involve hotel security and design to understand hotel crimes. While both fields are different, they have a plausible connection. My project involves Crimes in hotels so these articles fit. *Crimes in Hotels* by Susan Bach and Abraham Pizam focuses on crimes within Central Florida hotels in 1996. This article focuses on various types of crimes that can occur in a hotel setting. The article asks points out possible remedies of hotel crimes. *Exploring the relationship between hotel characteristics and crime* by W.S. Wilson Huang, Michael Kwag, and Gregory Streib focuses on how hotel characteristics and crime intersect. It looks at multiple data points to figure out how hotel design influences crime. *Safeguarding your customers: the guest’s view of hotel security* by Julie Feickert, Rohit Verma, and Gerhard Plaschka and Chekitan S. Dev focuses on how guest view crime. The Article on *Travel Security: Hotel & Motel* focuses on the differences between hotels and motels. It is a useful article because it gives a blogger viewpoint of how hotel security works. It also gives security tips to travelers. Situational Crime Prevention by Ronald V. Clarke is a book that explains what situational crime prevention is by using case studies. I’m using these sources because they are relevant to one or both disciplines.

## Findings

Hotels are generally designed to be comfortable, relaxing, and safe. With this comes the potential of crime to occur. There are series of crimes that can occur within the hotel’s perimeter. Such as Burglary (Automotive or Hotel), automobile theft, robbery, vandalism, battery, tampering with a vending machine, and assault (Physical and sexual) (Bach & Pizam, 2016, pp. 62-63). These are just some of the crimes that a hotel can experience. However, there are many factors that are involved that could account for the criminal activity of a hotel. If a hotel has a centrally located lobby, that could deter criminal activity due to the entrance being easily monitored. There are factors that can determine how safe a hotel is compared to one another.

Target suitability is one of the reasons of criminal activity at a hotel. “Target suitability reflects the attractiveness and accessibility of an object as a crime target (Huang, Kwag, & Streib, 1998, p. 82)”. Accessibility to the hotel’s public and private areas is a key factor. This means, if a hotel’s guest corridors are on the outside, that gives criminals ease of access to commit a crime. While if the hotel room corridors are inside, it is less attractive to a criminal. This is because they will be seen easily and could be trapped if caught.

Proximity to criminals is also a factor that contributes to crimes in hotels. If the hotel is located to a popular area, there is a higher risk of criminal activity. “It also implies that hotels located downtown are more likely to be victimized than those in areas outside downtown (Huang, Kwag, & Streib, 1998, p. 83).” This has become a direct correlation because of the reason, if the hotel is located to a larger amount of people, there is potential that more of them are criminals.

Another contribution to crime rates is guardianship. This means the effectiveness of people or objects in place to secure the hotel (Huang, Kwag, & Streib, 1998, p. 83). This refers to if the security protocols are adequate to protect the hotel. These are such things as lock-protected doors, monitored video surveillance system, trained employees, and secured exterior doors.

Sometimes it is the image of the hotel that can be a contributing to the crime. If the brand name of the hotel is lower brand name, it may have a stronger reputation to attract crimes (Huang, Kwag, & Streib, 1998, pp. 83-84). Another reference to imagery is the quality of the location. Location is a big part of rating crime in a hotel. If the neighborhood is infested with crime, the hotel has a higher chance of receiving criminal activity.

I’ve found that hotel guests are more likely to be comfortable with higher security measures in a hotel when possible; this includes the check-in process (Feickert, Verma, Plaschka, & Dev, 2006). Some of these options that guests are least impacted by are, video surveillance, photo ID verification, and key access cards. However, if the hotel has metal detectors, an armed guard, or criminal background check could be a nuisance (Feickert, Verma, Plaschka, & Dev, 2006, p. 241). It is common in hotels to have video surveillance, ID check, and key card access because of socially accepted norms. However, when there is an armed guard or metal detectors, it might put a flag for some travelers that the hotel might have or had a high crime rate.

Sometimes hotels are unable to protect their guest to older security measures. However, they can be updated. Using RFID or Magnetic keys for the guests’ rooms are some ideas for exterior protection to a guest room. For interior guest room side of the door could have multiple locking mechanisms, and peepholes to help deter criminals. In the guest rooms, there should be a safe that can have a code that can be reset after they end their stay. For the public areas, installing exterior doors or lockable doors to stairs can be very useful in preventing crime. I’ve seen that having lockable side, front, and back doors are important from deterring unwanted individuals. This is done by implementing a policy that doors must be locked between certain hours, such as times where there is only one person working, such as the night auditor. Adding a simple video surveillance system can help deter criminals from approaching the hotel.

When it comes to guest safety, it is not only the building design, but the knowledge of the employees and guests. It is important that the guests are as knowledgeable about security as the employees are. This important to know situational crime prevention. “Situational prevention comprises opportunity-reducing measures that (1) are directed at highly specific forms of crime (2) involve the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in as systematic and permanent way as possible, (3) make crime more difficult and risky, or less rewarding and excusable as judge by a wide range of offenders (Clarke, 1997, p. 4). A few tips of hotel situational crime prevention are:

1. Always use the deadbolt lock after entering your room. This gives you a second layer of protection
2. Front desk should always ask for ID when checking in a guest or replacing a guest’s key card.
3. Never write your room on your room key or packet. If the front desk writes your room number on your packet, do not carry the packet with you. This is one of the easiest ways to attract criminals, especially if you leave your key somewhere while you’re not there. This could also lead to the criminal to the room.
4. Use the peephole when somebody knocks on the door. Do not open the door to strangers you may not recognize. Always make sure it is an expected visitor or employee. Always report broken peepholes or security devices that are not working in the room.
5. As an employee or guest, use the 10/5 rule. This means that at 10 feet make eye contact with the person. Then at 5 feet, make a verbal and non-verbal acknowledgement of the person.
6. When in doubt, contact the front desk if you need help with something or suspect suspicious activity. This is an easy way to let the hotel management know that something is going on and should be corrected.

These tips are some of the many tips that can keep a traveler protected from a crime. There are many tips out there, this is just a simple list. These tips are a powerful tool to behold.

## Suggestion for future research

Crime is inevitable in the lodging industry. However, there are many ways to help prevent crimes. With the current research done, a struggling hotel can use tips and guidelines to help make their hotel or motel safer to stay at. Even if the building design is not the best at deterring criminals, giving guests tips on how to protect themselves can be the best tool. Such as in the article, *safeguarding your customers: The guest’s view of hotel security,* taking surveys and handing out comment cards can gather data to help understand how the hotel is doing. If they report criminal activity, management could follow up with the guest, if not had done so, and get the police involved to get a record. With this record, researchers such as myself could learn patterns of crime. This can give more knowledge of how to modify the hotel to increase their security on an appropriate level. Some hotels need more security than some do; this is because some are in a safer area than another. I see this paper turning into a doorway to technology field and developing new innovations of guest protection during their travels.

To future researchers, learning how building structures are made secure for hotels is important to understand if one is to make it safer for guests. This could also lead into how Property Management Systems work and how to make them more secure and streamlined to work properly and efficiently. Property management systems today are good, but I believe they could be improved. But that is for future research.

## Conclusion

Hotels deal with travelers 24/7. There is a standard duty of protection to the guest that the hotel must provide; It is a duty to protect. Hotel design and procedures are key roles in hotel criminal activity levels. Mentioned before, an interior corridor hotel is more secure than an exterior corridor hotel. This is primarily because of the ease of access. Criminals do not want to be noticed in the process of their crime. So, having to travel through a populated lobby can deter criminals and it is easier to contain criminals when caught in an interior corridor hotel. Hotels, excluding the factor of corridor protections that are in an area known for crime is more than likely to experience crime (Bach & Pizam, 2016). One can only protect themselves with education on the matter.

In theory when a guest uses safety tips to the best of their abilities, it protects other guests as well as themselves. For future buildings, it is important to consider the location and what type of building design will fit the area to be secure enough to attract travelers.

## Reflection

This paper is an example of my interest and passion for the hospitality world. Because of my interest in crime and hotels, I’ve could use interdisciplinary research method to aid in the process of understanding how the two correlates. It all began when I would watch *Great Hotels* with Samantha Brown, who went around to unique hotels to take advantage of their amenities. And it also involved watching the *C.S.I.* and *Law and Order* programs on TV, which revolved around crimes. Which is why choosing Criminal Justice and Hotel Management as my two disciplines to study, I knew that combining the two with an interdisciplinary approach, I could find more information.

If hotels with inadequate security measures are outfitted with modern technology this could lead to safer traveling and guest will not have to worry as much. However, it is always up to the guest and employees to follow safety rules to protect themselves and others. I know when I go to a hotel to use these tips because I want to be safe myself. We all want to be safe, right?

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