Tourists: Duty of Care

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Abstract

Utilising exploratory qualitative research, this paper investigates the need to guarantee sufficient security for tourists. The sense of safety is considered to be important and forms the foundation of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Tourists are vulnerable to a certain degree in that they are in a situation where the territory, culture and language are all unfamiliar to them. There is an expectation that their hosts will care of them. That is the hallmark of good hospitality. The crux of this paper is about security vetting staff, suppliers and contractors of the industry. This is the fundamental requirement of any successful security protocol.

To study the state of security vetting within New Zealand's hospitality industry, responses from an exploratory study with eight participants was conducted in 2011 in the lead up to the Rugby World Cup 2011 (RWC 2011). They have been used to write this paper.

Keywords: hospitality, tourism, security, safety, vetting, hotel

INTRODUCTION

> *Terrorism is a significant threat to peace and security, prosperity and people.*
>
> Ban Ki-moon

This exploratory qualitative study set out to discover whether hospitality organisations were regularly security vetting their staff. Employees and others (e.g. suppliers, contractors) involved in the education and healthcare sectors are regularly vetted because the young, old, sick and disabled are classified as vulnerable. Should tourist also be considered vulnerable since they are in a location foreign to them? Does the hospitality industry owe them a duty of care?

The infamous 9/11 incident ensured that the hospitality industry could no longer plead

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ignorance about the existence of terrorism and the associated risks and impact. Prior to the events of September 2001, the hospitality and tourism industry could have been excused if they did not pay any attention to terrorism or refused to allocate any budget towards fortifying and protecting their guests and property. Now, that excuse has been eliminated. Security is an important element in the delivery and consumption of goods and services within the hospitality industry. This has become more critical in the post 9/11 era. The consumer has higher security expectations and is less forgiving. Moreover, there have been several terrorist incidents targeting the hospitality industry post 9/11 making the need for higher security, more urgent.

Kekovic and Markovic (2009) explain that security threats are now part and parcel of the hospitality/tourism industry. They list a range of reasons why this particular industry has been selected, including the publicity around any event. They offer the idea that if hospitality properties make a reasonable effort to protect themselves and their guests, it can be used as a competitive advantage to market their business. Guests want to be reassured that they are safe in this 'foreign' location.

This exploratory paper studies the employee, supplier and contractor security vetting practices within the hospitality industry in New Zealand. This study focuses on terrorism as opposed to criminal activities. The data from the accommodation perspective was collected in July/August of 2011

This paper questions the need for regular, robust security checks on people working in tourism and hospitality, where they have direct or indirect contact with tourists. People working with the very young and elderly in our communities are subjected to thorough security checks before being allowed access to those in their care. Even after they are employed, they are checked at various intervals. The young and old are considered as the most 'vulnerable' amongst us. This paper offers the concept that 'tourists' are also vulnerable people and should be accorded the same duty of care and protected by law. They are vulnerable because they have arrived in a foreign location, with a foreign language. They are only in that foreign environment for a short period and they will not be able to acclimatise properly. Therefore, a duty of care on the part of the host must exist.

The other issue is with the properties itself. Hospitality properties like shopping malls, hospitals, airports and government buildings amongst others, are open, vulnerable public spaces. It is difficult to protect these public spaces as described in Fischbacher-Smith & Fischbacher-Smith (2013). The added difficulty for hospitality properties is that they also need to be open and inviting, while at the same time being safe and secure. Most of these spaces listed above have numerous entry and exit points. So, the people working in these places; charged with looking after their patients, guests, customers, passengers, should be trained and ready to perform their roles when the need arises. However, in order for this to take place, organisations such as those in the hospitality industry should firstly security vet their staff and ensure they are employing the correct calibre of people. After which these security cleared employees should be trained in dealing with various emergency situations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hospitality terrorism

Terrorists have correctly concluded that attacking traditional targets like government building and military installations have become harder due to the fact that these entities can afford to fortify and protect their people and physical assets quite successfully. Hotels and other hospitality operations, on the other hand, cannot afford this luxury. Hospitality properties are classified as 'soft targets' and terrorists will continue to target them (Goslin, 2008; Brandt & Sandler, 2010). Terrorists have 'limited' resources and they are judicious when it comes to utilising or deploying them. Every hit must count. Hospitality is a popular target possibly because it could potentially affect several nationalities with a single strike and it will also deter future tourism to the area/destination, indirectly paralysing the economy (Haroon, 2012; Parkinson & Heyden, 2015). In the highly publicised 2015 Paris attacks, terrorists specifically and purposely targeted a sports event, concert and several food and beverage outlets (Henley & Chrisafis, 2015). The various attacks on France have taken their toll. Their accommodation occupancy rates have been halved (Chazan & Banks, 2016). Now France is forced to provide armed security at various venues. Terrorism has, and will continue to have, a huge negative impact on hospitality and tourism (Peter, 2011, Peter, 2015, Bac, Bugnar & Mester, 2015, Peter, Polston & Losekoot, 2014).

Fanelli (2016) states that between July 2013 and June 2014 there were 87 separate terrorist attacks on hospitality properties in total. Peter (2011) collated a list of 50 hospitality properties that had been attacked between 2001 and 2011. This list was by no means complete. In discussing Radisson Blu (Mali), Imperial Marhaba (Tunisia) and Splendid Hotel (Burkina Faso) incidents, Medina (2016) states that terrorism is the single greatest threat to hospitality and by extension tourism. Claiming that terrorism has negatively affected tourism, Korstanje (2015) goes on to describe terrorism as 'the great threat'. Fleming (1998) states that there are no boundaries (demographic or geographic) and in reality, immunity from terrorism does not exist. There is a clear pattern that indicates, that if allowed to continue, terrorism will continue to negatively affect the hospitality and tourism industries globally.

In discussing the intentions of terrorism and terrorists, Pizam (2010) explains terrorists see themselves as being voiceless and having to take drastic actions just to gain some attention to their plight. They claim that they have tried all other peaceful means of seeking justice but they have been ignored; hence the reason for their attacks. In conducting their terrorist activities, Pizam (2010) argues that terrorists will always select a target where they will get a high return for their efforts.

In comparing the cynical and idealist views towards negligence, McBride (2004) had come to the conclusion that the idealistic approach should be adopted, where the service provider is expected to be careful, legally. The cynical approach merely states that if the user of the service has been negatively affected or harmed, the provider must pay damages. The cynical

approach seems to be more concerned with damages and not about avoiding or preventing harm, while the idealistic approach is more about ensuring client/customer's safety. This is a significant shift in thinking.

Jesser (2013) explains how a hotel can be held liable for actions of the hotel itself and the actions of other guests and patrons. The hospitality operation can also be held responsible for actions of general members of the public who commit the offense in the hotel. Martin, Bates and McMyne (2015) claim that affected parties turn to hotels for compensation and satisfaction because in most circumstances, they are the ones with available funds and insurances. Fundamentally, the hotel must take reasonable care to protect its guests and patrons. This responsibility should be the norm for the entire industry.

Vulnerable in society: Young, Old and Infirmed

The vulnerable in society are those that have been disadvantaged, marginalised, disabled, or simply the very young and the elderly amongst us. There are laws in most countries and societies protecting these special groups of people. If one wants to work in education, from pre-school to university, they will be subjected to some form of police security vetting. It is no different when one applies to work in the health care sector – security vetting is compulsory. Hayes (2009) explains the continual efforts made by the United Kingdom authorities to better their protocol of security vetting healthcare employees. They record all applicants/employees found to be unsuitable to work in healthcare for security reason on a register – Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA). In explaining POVA, Stevens and Manthorpe (2007), state that employers must check all applicants against the register (POVA) before accepting them. All employees who are dismissed for misconduct or for security reasons must be registered with POVA. This was to ensure that they were not employed in the sector again.

The United Kingdom continued in trying to better their system and in October of 2009 handed over the security vetting responsibility to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) to vet and bar anyone with a negative security check, from working with vulnerable people (Samuel, 2009).

Phair and Heath (2012) discuss the ways healthcare administrators can protect and safeguard vulnerable older people in hospitals. Aside from the security checks that are conducted at the employment stage, there is continued effort to look into ways to safeguard this group of vulnerable people.

Tilbury (2014), Price, Hanson and Tagliani (2013), Smith (2007) and Jenkins and Davies (2011) discuss the security vetting required for potential employees or even volunteers working with young children and also those with learning disabilities. These articles cover information concerning the United Kingdom as well as Australia. It is evident that safety and vulnerable people are taken very seriously in many parts of the world.

In New Zealand the 'Children's worker safety checking under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014' covers the entire requirement for security vetting for potential employees in this sector (Vulnerable Children Act 2014, 2016).

Pre-employment screening

Some degree of pre-employment screening is conducted by employers to ascertain that the person they employ will not cause any harm. Employers have an obligation of safety towards their employees and also their customers. They also want to ensure that the reputation of the organisation does not get tarnished due to a bad recruitment exercise. Checks may involve police security vetting, drug tests and also checks on social media use. This stringent level of vetting is performed to ensure that the 'wrong' people are not hired (McDonald, 2006). Thomas, Kitterlin and Moll (2014) state that drug testing is conducted because it is generally accepted that those using drugs have a lower productivity level.

Dwoskin, Squire and Patullo (2014) explains that when employers search social media they are looking for inappropriate comments and photos being posted, language used, whether any negative comments are made about previous employers and whether there are any lies about their qualifications. Social media provides a lot of information about the candidate which is not visible at interviews or possible to extract from applications forms and referees.

Dwoskin, Squire and Patullo (2013) claim that every time an employee is or has to be terminated it is because the hiring process was not conducted properly. The problem was at the front end. Recruiting and screening processes are extremely important and must be carried out independently and professionally. Hiring is not an activity that can be rushed. It is better not to hire a candidate than to hire the wrong one. Once hired, it will take a lot of time, money and effort to terminate that individual. Faccini (2013 explains how many organisations use short-term contracts to screen candidates before offering them a permanent role. This has become the new-norm in many hiring situations. There are two issues here: 1) hiring the wrong candidate in a permanent role and 2) the difficulty of terminating the bad hire. So, short-term contracts seem to be a logical option.

Comisky and Zubowicz (2006) state that when investigating a candidate's past, employers will use a variety of methods. They are trying to verify the information the candidate has provided in the application. They are trying to find out whether the individual has had any previous criminal convictions or whether they are currently facing any criminal charges. The candidate may have omitted these types of information in their application process.

Stoughton, Thompson and Meade (2015) explain that job applicants feel that their privacy had been invaded when a potential employer checks their social media activities to find out more about them. In those cases, the applicants are less likely to apply to those organisations. Those organisations are no longer considered attractive to potential candidates. Park (2014) describes cases where either potential candidates or existing staff have been asked to

surrender their social media passwords so that a more in depth vetting process could take place. This has either led to candidates withdrawing their application or in the case of existing staff, giving in to the request reluctantly.

Tort

The People's Law Dictionary defines 'Duty of Care' as

> 'a requirement that a person act toward others and the public with the watchfulness, attention, caution and prudence that a reasonable person in the circumstances would use. If a person's actions do not meet this standard of care, then the acts are considered negligent, and any damages resulting may be claimed in a lawsuit for negligence' (Hill & Hill, n.d.).

The Law of Tort basically states that we must take all reasonable care to protect and not to cause harm or we will be deemed as being negligent. But what is the minimum standard of care – what is the required standard? This is where it gets difficult and unclear for any manufacturer or service provider. If the industry is to be measured against a particular standard, then that standard must be made known.

In discussing duty of care, in the law of tort, Hubbard, Thomas & Varnham (2010) stressed that the foreseeability of possible hurt, damage or harm is the most important issue. By extension, if it can be demonstrated that hospitality businesses should be able to foresee that there is a possibility that the actions of their staff may cause harm to their guests, customers and/or consumers, then surely the business would be liable. So, the real question is whether terrorists attacking hospitality businesses is likely. There have been many cases documented in recent times where terrorists have attacked hotels and other food and beverage outlets. Peter (2011) collated a list of 50 hospitality business that had been attacked over a ten year period. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that terrorism affecting the hospitality industry is foreseeable. The staff or contractor itself may not necessarily be a terrorist but instead just a sympathiser who believes in the cause and supplies critical information to terrorists group. The case of the Jakarta Marriott demonstrates how a flower vendor can be involved in hospitality terrorism (Murdoch, 2009).

Personal safety and security

It is quite obvious that personal safety and security is of paramount importance to all tourists. Seabra, Abrantes and Kastenholz (2014) concluded in a recent journal article that terrorism affects one's risk perception which in turn affects their purchasing decisions. They went on to say that tourists research information via the media before making any purchase decisions.

So, if a particular hotel or destination experiences a terrorist attack, it would directly impact on their occupancy and tourists arrival numbers. Korstanje (2011) states that terrorism and the events of 2011 played a role in increased risk perceptions in tourists and it has also highlighted the need for security provisions with regards to tourists and tourism.

Robbins, Bergman, Stagg and Coulter (2003) describe safety as known in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as the need for security. People want assurances that they are safe and will be looked after. In discussing Maslow, Kinicki and Williams (2003) state that safety is about avoiding danger and violence.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study used an interpretive approach to analyse the data. Interpretivism is about story building or constructing a story. While the researcher is independent, interpretivism also understands and takes into account the biasness. The researcher interprets the data and develops an explanation as to why or how a particular situation has come to exist. According to Bryman (2008), interpretivism is an epistemological viewpoint which allows or expects the researcher to make sense of various social scenarios or situations.

The data for this study was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews. As a collection tool/method, semi-structured interviews are useful in extracting rich data especially for sensitive topics such as terrorism. Participants are comfortable talking to researchers in a semi-structured manner as opposed to completing a survey. Researchers using semi-structured interview method arrive at the interview with a list of topics and they largely stay on topic unless the participant introduces information that is new and significant. The researcher then decides whether they want to follow that track to see if it yields anything significant (Bryman, 2008). The flexibility within an interpretivist approach and also the semi-structured method of data collection creates a conducive space for research activities. It allows for easy observation of the participants as they interact with the researcher.

All the semi-structured interviews were recorded (audio) with the consent of each participant. They were later transcribed by the researcher. The data was stored on a password protected computer and later destroyed upon completion of the research. There were eight participants in the 2011.

RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The 2011 study was about hospitality accommodation properties and their security vetting protocol. This study took place in the lead up to the Rugby World Cup 2011 (RWC 2011). Part of the study focused on whether hospitality organisations ensured that all their staff were security vetted. The research showed that while some organisations did conduct security vetting to varying degrees; the majority did not carry out any kind of security checks. Many

practiced selective vetting; they vetted some staff according to their own in-house logic and reasoning. Appended below are some excerpts from this study.

Describe your procedure for conducting security checks on all your staff (existing staff, part-time staff, contractors etc)?

No Police checks – just the normal reference checks. Will only carry out checks if we have new staff members come on board. If we have the same team as now – No (P1)

We don't do Police vetting for any staff so we are not doing Police vetting for any new staff (P2)

When we hire them, we always call the references that they have provided. We don't do police vetting (P3)

Not necessary for everybody. We do three reference checks on every person. With the police checks we may do but I can't say we do for everybody. If they have filled in an application form and they indicate that they have got a criminal record – then that would lead us to think well maybe there is more to this (P4)

No police vetting for staff (P5)

No. We don't run police checks on our staff. We do have them sign off on criminal records (P7)

We don't have police checks. No - I have to admit but we make sure we have all of their visas (for internationals). For Kiwis we have copies of their driver's license or copy of their passport (P8)

Describe your procedure for vetting of all your suppliers

We mainly use commercial suppliers – plumbing example – we use a commercial plumber – so it is not Joe Bloggs from Tawa who does residential. (P1)

Well the people who supply the food over here are – we don't change them every week. They are the same suppliers we have had for years. We actually trust them and we know who we are dealing with in the first place. (P3)

The participant's responses to the two questions above demonstrates quite clearly that security vetting is not a priority. With regards to staff security vetting, employers seem to be placing a higher value on reference checks. While reference checks should be continued, it

cannot be offered as an alternative for security checks. With regards to suppliers and contractors, hotels have no way of knowing whether the employees of their suppliers and contractors are security cleared. These individuals will have access to the hotel's guests and could potentially cause harm. They may believe that because they have known their suppliers for a long time, they are safe. But they do not know anything about their supplier's employees.

Security vetting isn't mandatory and as long as hospitality employers are not legally required to security vet their staff, they won't. Aside from it being time consuming, the main issue could very well be that the hospitality industry staff are transient. The hospitality industry's large work force faces high turnover and they are made up of casuals and part-time staff. Refilling vacancies involves high cost (Lashley, 2001; DiPietro and Condly, 2007; Upamanyu, 2014). If organisations spent time, effort and money to vet a particular staff, then they would want a guarantee that staff will stay with the organisation for some time. However, that will be almost impossible to guarantee.

When checking on a subject's or individual's background in New Zealand one could approach one of two different organisations depending on your purpose and intentions. One is the New Zealand Police Force (NZPF) and the other the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The table appended below provides application process details.

	NZPF	MoJ
Certificate	Police clearance / Police check	Criminal Records Check
Information	Criminal history check and other relevant information	Includes traffic and criminal convictions
Processing time	Within 20 working days	Within 20 working days
Consent	Applicant's consent required	Applicant's consent required
Fees	Free (approved organisations)	Free

Looking at the data sheet above, the Ministry of Justice provides historical information regarding convictions only, whereas the Police check will include any other relevant information depending on the intended use of that information. So it could perhaps inform that a particular individual is unsuitable for a particular role. This is vital information because not all investigations result in convictions. Also some investigations take a long time. The processing times for both applications are the same at 20 working days. This long processing time is largely due to the volume of applications. According to Duff (2013), Police receive approximately 440,000 vetting requests per year. These are from organisations dealing with education, healthcare and also care for young children. Volunteer organsiations also make regular requests for security vetting to be conducted. The Police check is free for approved organisations. So, while there isn't any financial cost in terms of fees, a cost still exist in terms of time and effort.

LIMITATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study only included hospitality properties in the Greater Wellington region and it only interviewed eight properties. While this may be sufficient as a pilot, the findings certainly warrants a more in depth study into the issue of mandatory security vetting of hospitality employees, suppliers and contractors. The in depth study participant's list should be representative of the hospitality industry in New Zealand. This would mean that all accommodation types (e.g. backpackers, motels, hotels etc) are represented on the list with properties throughout the country and the number of properties participating should be a significant portion of the hospitality industry in New Zealand. Only then can the findings be generalised.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

With regards to hospitality organisations, they could defray the cost (if cost is an issue) of security checks by requesting the job applicant to provide a current security certificate. So the onus is on the applicant to get a valid, current certificate which they can then use for multiple job applications within a particular timeframe. While this does not guarantee that terrorist elements will not create fake certificates, it is just one additional barrier in their way. Employers will have to randomly security vet their staff. They will not have to check all of them.

We have become quite adapt at mourning after a terrorists attack; laying flowers at the various attack sites, crafting and sharing messages of sympathy, demonstrating defiance by joining protests, exemplifying our love for democracy and solidarity through our words and deeds. While these are all good and expected reactions to a terrorist event, should we not instead apply our collective energies into finding ways to prepare ourselves for a terrorist event?

Aside from this particular study, this author also conducted another study in 2013 pertaining to food terrorism which looked at whether the food sector of the hospitality industry security vetted their staff and the findings were similar to this study in that most of the employers interviewed did not security vet their staff or suppliers.

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