

# **Is safety an important consideration when making travel plans? An interpretive study of guest's perceptions.**

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## **Abstract**

This research was conducted to understand guest's perceptions around security with regards to New Zealand. Prior to Covid-19 lockdowns and closed borders (2019), international tourism expenditure accounted for \$17.5 billion (Tourism Industry Aotearoa, 2021). In comparison, revenue from the dairy industry in 2019 was at \$18.11 billion (Hinton, 2022). Tourism is important to New Zealand and only second in earning potential to dairy. It makes a valuable contribution to the New Zealand economy. Hence, the reason for this research.

The assumption from the onset was that to preserve and protect the tourism industry, security had an important part to play, especially with terrorism shifting its interest to softer targets. However, the specific needs, wants and expectations of tourists and hotel guests in New Zealand, were not clear. Using interpretivism and semi-structured interviews, this study focused on hotel guests and their security expectations. A total of 10 guests participated in this study and they were each asked 10 questions. However, the responses of only eight of those questions have been analysed and presented in this article.

The findings confirmed that security was a concern for guests when they made travel plans. It also found that most guests considered New Zealand to be safe. A significant finding from this study was that guests were willing to pay extra for a better quality of security protocols. Well-travelled guests were able to compare the difference between New Zealand hotel security and that of other hotels around the world.

## **Introduction**

This exploratory study was conducted in New Zealand as part of a PhD thesis. The intention of this research is to understand guest's perceptions of New Zealand's hospitality security. In an era where terrorism is a major concern, is it common practice for emphasis on safety and security? How does it affect planned travel behaviour? What are some of guest's expectations around security? Will guests be willing to pay a higher room rate for a better level of security?

The data for this study was collected in 2018. Prior to 2019, New Zealand hadn't experienced

any major terrorist events. So, the data in some ways perhaps demonstrates the attitudes prior to the March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Christchurch attacks. On Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021, another terrorist attack occurred in New Zealand. A Sri Lankan born terrorist, attacked and stabbed several shoppers at a supermarket in Auckland. While New Zealand has been largely terrorism-free for a long time prior to 2019, the events since 2019 have certainly changed the security landscape quite a bit.

This research was designed to draw on the perception of the hotel guests; trying to understand their expectations, wants and needs, and what the hospitality industry is doing to meet those needs. This article is purely from the perspective of the guests.

In this study, hotels referred to are generally variations of paid commercial accommodation where they have guest rooms, restaurants, and other services. Some hotels will have gyms, swimming pools, nightclubs, banquet rooms and other facilities. What this definition of hotels does not include are Airbnb, small motels, caravan parks, backpackers etc. The reason for this is that it is not reasonable to expect an Airbnb (for instance) to have security guards or other security features. Also, the guests referred to in this study are guests who stay in paid accommodation, not the likes of caravan parks and backpackers.

## Literature review

### Concept of safety and security

Security as an attribute has been ranked very high when compared to other attributes of a hotel. It scored 4.8 out of 5 with 5 being ‘*absolutely relevant attribute*’ Marić, Marinković, Marić, & Dimitrovski (2016). Safety and security, broadly refers to a desire to be harm free. Blokland & Reniers (2020), provide an indepth study around what each word means and they also discuss risk as a part of the discussion around the definition of safety and security. In everyday use, safety and security are used interchangeably. By wanting to be safe & secure, in the context of this study, it can be said that guests want to avoid harm, disruptions to their travel plans and they largely want to avoid threats and the associated stress (Anichiti, Dragolea, Hars, Haller, & Butnaru, 2021). Safety and security become more important when people are away from their normal habitat, their home, all that is familiar to them. While travelling overseas, they could be in an unfamiliar environment, or they may not be fluent in the local language and dialects. Despite this, there is a reasonable expectation to be safe and secure. Who bears that responsibility to keep guests safe and secure? Is it a case of *caveat emptor*? Is it the guest’s responsibility to do due diligence or can they reasonably expect the hotel to ensure their safety?

It is not just about being harmed; it is about identifying and mitigating the risk. Studies have shown that females tend to be more risk averse, they tend to be more careful. Males on the other hand, tend to ignore risks or pay less attention to risks. This is known as the *white male effect* (Sansani, 2018). This would explain the risk-taking activities and sports men tend to partake in.

### Travel behaviour

Planning a holiday or even a work-related trip takes a lot of effort. With work related travel, the destination often has already been decided. Its just the logistics of the trip that needs to be worked out. With a family holiday or even a holiday for one, the planning must include

destination choice, budget, routes, and requirements of all the travellers amongst other considerations. Its not easy to organise holidays especially if it is for a group of people. It is much easier when the planning is just for yourself. You know what you want from your holiday.

Security and safety considerations limits options and makes planning slightly more difficult. Which destination is safer? Which hotel will be more secure? Where can we travel unimpeded? People don't want their holidays plans disrupted. Even if they are not personally hurt or injured, travel and movement in general, might be disrupted. So, the tendency is to find stable destinations for their holidays. Opinions of family and friends, news stories, travel advisories etc may impact on the travel planning (Kapuscinski & Richards, 2016; Buigut, Braendle, & Sajeewani, 2017).

Tourists tend to change their travel plans once news about a particular destination is released e.g. terrorist attack. Hajibaba, Boztug, & Dolnicar (2016) have concluded a study to explore how hotels can avoid cancellations. Their findings show that a change of accommodation and if coupled with a room upgrade could possibly work. Another finding that could possibly help to avoid cancelations is if tourists/guests are provided more up to date information about the situation. Basically, guests want to know whether it's safe for them to travel.

### **Hotel security**

There is a realistic expectation that hotels are safe for guests to stay. In accepting a reservation, the hotel enters into a contract to protect, service and take care of their guests. This a serious obligation and one that hotels should undertake, secure in their minds that they have done their utmost to keep their guests safe. Efendi (2020) and Nwokorie & Igbojekwe (2019) both discuss safety and security and the issues hotels face but from different perspectives. The bottom line is that security is important and that there is a reasonable expectation that hotels will ensure that their guests are safe.

Hotels are generally very public spaces, with several entrances and exits. It is extremely difficult to secure all points of entries and exits. Hotels, by their very nature, are expected to be porous, with very little restrictions. The reason for this is to emit a welcoming and inviting feeling. If there are too many restrictions, guests will not feel comfortable.

### **Hospitality terrorism**

The relationship between hospitality, tourism and terrorism has been around for a long time. Now, with the increased difficulty for terrorists to penetrate or attack military and government properties, soft targets, such as hotels have become the preferred targets. Terrorists want to utilise their limited resources effectively and efficiently. So, they make every attack count. They want to ensure that they get the best return for their effort. Zeman (2020) describes soft targets as places that have a high chance of being attacked but they don't possess the means to protect themselves. Hotels along with restaurants, shopping malls and schools, will fall in this category.

Bac, Bugnar, & Mester (2015) describe the effects of a terrorist attack as being temporary. What they mean is that the destination will not suffer long term. However, it must be noted that not all destinations are built the same, nor are they all similarly resilient. Some may fall over after just one, single attack. They present Northern Ireland and Turkey as examples of destinations that have bounced back after countless attacks. Gurtner (2016) also states, using

the example of Bali, that returning to normalcy is possible, but it is fraught with difficulties and challenges. Even today, Bali is vulnerable because the threat is still alive. Seabra, Reis, & Abrantes (2020) state that destinations that are geographically close to existing terrorism targets are also affected. So, the threat is not just to that particular destination or country. The surrounding areas will also be negatively affected.

Paraskevas (2013) understanding the close relationship between hospitality and terrorism devised a six-step strategy to prevent or disrupt any terrorist attempts on hospitality properties. If properties can break up one of the six-steps, they would have effectively prevented a terrorist attack. Hotels must be watchful and try and avert terrorist attacks. They must find ways to implement deterrents into their properties.

### **Risk and insurance**

Morakabati & Kapuscinski (2016) discuss risk and how reactions to threat depends on the personality of the individual. Not everyone reacts in the same manner. The article also goes on to explain how the cycle perpetuates. If tourists are fearful, they will avoid specific destinations. This in turn affects the tourism in that area and that reduces employment opportunities. Some destinations are very dependents on tourism. So when tourism ceases, there is mass unemployment and hardship, and this now becomes the breeding ground for terrorists. Terrorist groups find new recruits in these affected areas.

Insurance will not prevent any incident or accident from occurring. It is merely a tool used to help after an event occurs. It can compensate when you need to change flights, travel itinerary and even in cases where medical assistance or evacuation is required. It is also useful when someone dies, and the body needs to be repatriated to their home country. But it does nothing before the event, aside from providing some comfort knowing that should one have to alter their travel plans due to terrorism, they will be compensated. This does not alter the fact that insurance is useful, and tourist should always be insured when travelling.

Fanelli (2016) describes and discusses in detail a myriad of claims by victims, their families, and guests against hotels. These are cases involving acts of terror. Hotels must defend these lawsuits which can be costly and damaging to their brand.

Risk profiles differ according to the destination, property, event, time of year etc. Travelling in a pandemic for instance will be harder to insure. Similarly, travelling to a known warzone will also be difficult to insure.

From the perspective of the hotel property, they too will find it difficult to insure against terrorist acts, if they do not have basic security. Hotels are eventually liable to provide safety and protect their guests. To provide this protection, hotels will need to be insured. But insurance companies may steer clear of protecting against terrorist acts because of the many unknowns involved. Hotels need to be able to show that they have provided reasonable care and security for their guests, and they could not have known about the possibility of an attack. This means that they could not foresee a specific danger or attack. Even if a court rules in favour of the hotel property, any drawn out lengthy court process will be expensive for hotels.

### **Paying extra for security**

The idea of paying extra for security, even though it should already be a part of the package, is

because tourists are now more security conscious. The general idea is to avoid terrorist or criminal acts at all costs. So, guests tend to lean towards a more expensive property due to the implied additional security.

Mekinc and Cvikl (2013), discuss the importance of recognising safety breaches, especially the type of breach. Breaches that are deemed to be beyond the control of the hotel are less likely to be of concern to tourists and guests. Guests are more concerned about situations where hotels could take reasonable actions to prevent breaches.

A study conducted by Kim, Brewer and Bernhard (2008), about guest's understanding of biometrics concluded that guests are security conscious and support the use of such technology to keep them safe. Such high technology comes with a big price tag attached. Yet, it appears that guests are willing to pay that extra for security. Will hotels invest?

Another piece of evidence that guests are prepared to pay extra for security comes from a study conducted by Hilliard and Balogu (2008). This study covers guests as well as conference organisers and their expectations around security. The conclusion is that guests and other users of hotels expect to be safe and secure. There is perhaps a need for safety and security certification so that consumers can be assured that the property has been checked and certified. Kekovic and Markovic (2009) have extended the concept in that they have concluded that hotels that have a security certification or security rating, can use it as a competitive advantage. They will rank higher when compared with hotels that are not certified.

### **Methodology**

This exploratory, qualitative research used interpretivism extensively. In total ten hotel guests were interviewed using the semi-structured interview method, and they were asked a total of ten questions each. That makes it 100 responses in total to analyse and discuss. The main reason for using semi-structured interview method is because, especially with sensitive topics such as security and terrorism, they elicit better, richer responses. People are more likely to respond to questions around security and terrorism only if they feel safe discussing them. Adeloje, Carr, & Insch (2020), Cohen-Louck (2019), Cornejo, Rubilar, & Zapata-Sepulveda (2019), Fenge, Oakley, Taylor, & Beer (2019) have all employed qualitative research methods in research including sensitive issues such as war, terrorism, health, drugs, violence etc. A survey will not do the job effectively. With semi-structured interviews, the researcher can follow new lines of questioning if they discover something interesting or significant during the interview. They start of with a list of question that Bryman (2016) refers to as interview guides. It is a very flexible method. Only concern is the bias of the interviewer or researcher themselves. They need to know their own biases and be mindful of them and not allow their biases to interfere with the research itself.

One of the biggest challenges with this group of participants was their English. They could not articulate properly what they wanted to say. So, the discussions were very limited. There were a lot of hand gestures to make up for the lack of English. Some participants relied on their electronic dictionaries or discussed with friends before providing answers.

### **Findings, analysis, and discussion**

While a total of ten questions were asked of the ten guest participants of this study, only a eight of those questions will be addressed here. They are the ones that will help us

understand the importance placed on safety and security when travelling.

Q1 - What kind of security arrangements have you encountered in your stay at various accommodation properties around the world e.g x-ray machine, luggage checks and explosives detecting dogs? Where have you encountered this? How did you feel about this level of security? Did you feel safer or more concerned?

*G1 - No. We were only staying at bed & breakfast [motel type accommodation]. They all just mainly have gates and locked doors.*

*G2 - No. No actually [nothing special].*

*G3 - Not really. Maybe only luggage checks.*

*G4 - No [no special checks]*

*G5 - No. I haven't seen those [x-ray machines, luggage check etc]*

*G6 - The only thing is like lockers, to lock our [valuables]. Nothing special to be honest*

*G7 - Not really about luggage and stuff. About earthquake. Security - no I didn't pay attention to that. In New Zealand - not really. It looks pretty safe country to be honest.*

*G8 - No. There's not been really much security at all. No bomb dogs. No one's checking my luggage. Nothing out of the ordinary.*

*G9 - I've worked a bit offshore so there has been a number of x-ray machines. I've stayed in Iraq so you would expect some sort of level of security. And Middle East, Qatar. It's only in the Middle East that I've had x-ray machines. No [New Zealand]. Nowhere that comes to mind [security in Asia].*

*G10 - We have a card that we use to lock the door. No [x-ray machines or luggage checks]. It's just a normal hotel.*

Question one was designed to ascertain what security features guests had encountered in their travels and what they thought of that experience. Security features such as luggage x-ray machines, vehicle undercarriage checks, explosive detecting dogs are popular in some parts of the world but not all. They are generally not part of the security protocol in New Zealand. So, it wasn't surprising that they had not experienced any of the security features discussed while travelling through New Zealand. Some participants were perplexed and puzzled by the question. Feickert, Verma, Plaschka and Dev (2006), through their study have concluded that some segments of the population would appreciate more security features.

The only discussion around security they have had with hotels was around the use of key cards, and public access to guest room floors. They appeared to be more concerned about criminal activities as opposed to terrorism. They also appeared to think the higher the quality of the hotel itself, the better the security protocols. This was concerning because providing good, effective security should not be dependent on the quality of the hotel.

Q2 - Were you informed about security by the property at any time before or during your stay?

This question was to find out what, if any, information was provided about the property's security protocols. This would give an idea of the emphasis on security or whether security wasn't an important feature.

*G1 - Yes [was briefed about security].*

*G2 - Yea [briefed about key cards]. When we checked in, they tell us that.*

*G3 - No. Not really.*

*G4 - Yes*

G5 - *Yes. They tell us that they have security outside, both doors and that the rooms and hallways are checked.*

G6 - *No.*

G7 - *Yes, of course. They are pretty clear about it [security provisions].*

G8 - *No. There was nothing [they weren't informed].*

G9 - *With regards to safety aspects regarding earthquakes, but nothing else.*

G10 - *We were just pointed to the room, and that's it*

50% of the participants stated that security information wasn't provided, nor did they ask. They did not feel the need to. There was some mention about natural disasters and earthquakes but noting that was specific to security. The other 50% had some interaction around security but they seemed to focus on key card and Closed-Circuit Television cameras (CCTV).

Q3 -Do you consider personal security and safety when making travel plans?

This question tries to understand individual tourist's decision-making process when it comes to travel plans. Is security important when making travel plans?

G1 - *Yes*

G2 - *It's very important to us. Ya, it's important.*

G3 - *Ya. It's very important.*

G4 - *I think so [important]*

G5 - *No.*

G6 - *Yea, sometimes*

G7 - *Yea, of course [laughs].*

G8 - *No, I never think about it at all [laughs].*

G9 - *Yes, I do because of some of the places I go.*

G10 - *It's like life risks. No, we never consider things like that. I reckon this country is safe enough. We always consider our belongings, not being stolen and things like that.*

70% claimed that security was an important factor when making travel plans but they were not able to elaborate. For instance, did they specifically choose better quality, more expensive hotels to ensure better security? The balance 30% did not make security a deciding factor. G10 seems to imply that risks are a part of life. However, they also stated that New Zealand was safe and so security wasn't a consideration. Brossman (2016) stresses the importance of security in his book about travel risk and findings from this study generally tends to agree with that sentiment. Henderson (2016) also expresses the same sentiments in that people need to always feel secure, even when they are out and about in commercial spaces. The relevance of Maslow's theory around security is very clear (Abulof, 2017).

Q4 - What do you do to mitigate security risks while traveling? e.g. avoid particular destinations or activities.

This question was about understanding how guests mitigated travel risks? Did they have specific strategies that they employed?

G1 - *I avoid particular countries.*

G2 - *Ya, if I travel alone, I won't go out at night.*

G3 - *Try not to go out at night. Only stay in big cities.*

G4 - *I don't go outside at night.*

G5 - *I would avoid destinations and certain activities if I know that its life threatening. Or if people [say] that's dangerous. There's usually more than one person with me.*

*G6 - Probably [not go out at night].*

*G8 - We might avoid small alleyways at night. Probably stay in the central part.*

*G9 - Usually common sense stuff. As you would in your home cities. Stick to well-lit streets. Take care when you are carrying things of obvious value. Be aware of your surroundings.*

*G10 - Yes. Pretty much. That's true. Sometimes if we are informed or if we get information about whether they are not safe, we will just choose whether to go out.*

A few participants said it is as easy as simply avoiding some countries that they deemed unsafe. They took their advice from the experiences of others such as from friends, family, and even social media. This is not necessarily good because the advice they are receiving may not be accurate and is often biased. Some claim that they will not go out at night when they are travelling because for some reason, night-time is when it is unsafe. Also, one participant claimed that keeping yourself safe, was basic common sense. That again is not necessarily true. They suggest that people should follow whatever they did in their home country to keep safe. However, it must be noted that when you are travelling, you are in an unfamiliar environment, you may not be familiar with the language, and you will also not have your support network around you in case of an emergency. So how you behave when you are travelling will be drastically different to how you live your life in your home country.

Q5 - Are there any particular countries/regions that you would not visit and why?

Here the purpose was to understand whether participants avoided specific countries, whether New Zealand was one of those countries and how they came to decide which countries to avoid.

*G1 - Probably some in the Middle East that I would not visit.*

*G2 - Maybe India. Just some news that make me a little bit nervous when I will go to travel.*

*G3 - No. Not really. Maybe another country I take a group. So that I am not alone.*

*G4 - Africa*

*G6 - Papua New Guinea. I would really love to go but I heard that it's really dangerous as a tourist.*

*G7 - Iran, Iraq, Syria - not fun at all.*

*G8 - I would avoid North Korea and stuff like that. I would avoid all advertised 3rd world countries.*

*G9 - No. I tend to go everywhere. They won't send us to Iraq at the moment, or Afghanistan.*

*G10 - That's hard to say but I think probably like the country where they have war, terrorism [avoid].*

Their answers seem to imply that they considered New Zealand safe since it did not make it into the list of countries to avoid. However, the list does not appear to be fair. They seemed to have taken negative stories from the media and made decisions based on that. The list did not include United States of America, United Kingdom and France. They seemed to have omitted western countries. These countries and many other have experienced terrorism first-hand. Yet they did not make the list. So, at the very least, the list is biased and not well-thought through.

Q6 - Do you think that accommodation security is important and why? Would you choose a particular property because of its high level of security? Do you think security will be rated



highly like cost and location? Security, Cost, Location – Prioritise them (1 most important – 3 least important)

Evaluating the importance of security and gaining respondents perspectives on it is the main crux of this study. The question is not just whether security was important, but also how important is it. That is where the ranking exercise comes in. A 100% of the respondents, stated that security was important to them. They understood that the study was specifically about security while traveling. Security in our home country is different to security while traveling. If there is a terrorist incident in our home country, we are in an environment that we are familiar with and we will have our support networks around us.

*G1 - Yes. Just a personal safety.*

*G2 - Ya, it's really important.*

*G3 - Yes.*

*G4 - Yes, it's important.*

*G5 - Yes, because it's like really important.*

*G6 - Yea. I think so. Depending on how high or low the normal [security standard] standard of a hotel are [stay in accommodation with extra security]. I've never asked or looked for it. I cannot say whether it's worth it for me to pay extra.*

*G7 - Yes*

*G8 - Yes, it is.*

*G9 - I think so. In Australia, we are very complacent. I am sure New Zealand might be the same. Until there has been an incident and then everything will escalate.*

*G10 - Yes, of course. Definitely*

**Table 1: Security ranking**

Security	
1st choice	40%
2nd choice	30%
3rd choice	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

While all the respondents consider security to be important, the degree of importance varied when we compared security with cost and location. Marić, Marinković, Marić, & Dimitrovski (2016) and Blokland & Reniers (2020) both demonstrate through their research that security is important and that tourists/guests want to avoid harm and disruptions at all cost. From the ranking exercise (Table 1), 40%

of the respondents put security in 1<sup>st</sup> position, meaning that security would be their most important criteria when making travel decisions. Another 30% placed security in 2<sup>nd</sup> position, meaning that either cost or location was more important to them. With regards to location, travellers tend to stay close to their activities or planned reason for travel. This means if one was traveling for medical reasons, they would stay close to the hospital or if they were visiting to attend a concert or a conference, they would tend to find a hotel close to the venue. Cost and budgetary constraints will also dictate where one stayed or the quality of the hotel selected. So, with 70% of the respondents placing security in either 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> position, makes security an important consideration for travellers. So, hotels should be aware of this and work their best to make their property safe.

Q7 - How do you rate accommodation security in New Zealand? Why is this so?

The seventh question looks to understand how guests rank New Zealand's hotel security. This is a key question to this study. The very essence of this study is to ascertain the perception around security in New Zealand. What do guest think about security and why? The ranking ranged between high, medium, and low. It is expected that guests will base their ranking on

their own knowledge and experiences. They should be able to provide an explanation to justify their responses.

### **High**

*G1 - Very high. Everything has been wonderful.*

*G2 - It's quite good.*

*G3 - It's perfect, I think.*

*G4 - High [standard].*

*G5 - 9 [out of 10]*

*G6 - I have just been to Huka Lodge which have a pretty high standard. They were all pretty good. And now I start going to other places, where I realise there is no [security] - a bit dodgy. But I think you can still keep your things safe.*

*G9 - I think it's very good but I am not aware that there is any concerns or alerts or anything like that. There are security cameras everywhere. It's very subtle.*

*G10 - It's very good*

The vast majority (80%) of the respondents in this study categorically stated that they considered the security to be high. Most of them arrived at this conclusion based on their own experiences, knowledge, and observations. To many, New Zealand feels safe and looks like a safe destination. Up until March 2019, New Zealand had not experienced any serious terrorist incidents that were noteworthy. So, the feel is that New Zealand was generally terrorism free. Guest generally go about enjoying their country and their stay relatively unimpeded. Generally, nobody bothers them. This gives a sense of security. Respondents used the words, wonderful, perfect and good to describe their time in New Zealand. When discussing Huka Lodge, Taupo (a luxury resort), G6 felt the security standard was very high. When staying at smaller, lower standard, cheaper properties around the country, G6 said they were a little more concerned, but not so concerned that they decided to pack up and leave. G9 observed that there a lot of security cameras within properties and all over the country. This again must provide some sort of sense of security. However, it must be noted here that when security cameras are unmanned, the recorded footage is only used after an event occurs. This means that when a complaint about a criminal activity is made, the authorities can go back to a specific date and time and download the required evidence. This does not help anyone that is in danger and requires immediate help. The security cameras can be a deterrent in some cases. However, criminals and terrorists will make the extra effort to avoid these cameras where possible. But a suicide bomber, for instance, doesn't worry about being recognised. They have no intention of coming out alive from a mission. In many ways, its an unfair fight. Terrorists do not seem to care about dying as a result of the mission, whereas counter-terrorism forces have to think about how to deal with the situation without any loss of lives.

### **Medium**

The balance 20% ranked their security experience in New Zealand as medium. They felt it was just right and quite average.

*G7 - It's nice. For me, it's pretty peaceful place.*

*G8 - The ones we are have staying at. They are very average. The first place we stayed in Auckland, it was dodgy. They would leave your luggage wherever and it wouldn't matter. They didn't give us tags. It was very dodgy.*

20% of the respondents described the security as being medium. This means that no one considered the security as bad or low. So, it is good that 100% thought the security was either high or medium. G8 made a very useful and important observation. This was regarding left luggage. G8 claimed that luggage can be seen left around with nobody taking any action.

This is very risky. All luggage must be accounted for. It is common for guests who are on a long visit in a country and planning to return to the same property at a later date, to request to have their luggage stored by the property till their return. These are commonly known in the industry as 'left luggage'. Left luggage must be properly identified and tagged and stored in a separate area, a luggage storeroom. This luggage storeroom should ideally be checked on a regular basis to make sure only properly tagged items are stored. Some hotels in Asia tend to use explosive detection dogs (EDD) to patrol the storeroom several times each day. The dogs will be checking to make sure that the left luggage does not contain any explosives.

In 1984, an incendiary device, which was meant for the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, was planted in the Brighton Hotel. It was planted more than three weeks ahead of schedule utilising a long delay timer. When the bomb, planted by the Irish Republican Army (IRA), eventually exploded, it missed its intended target, instead killing five others and injuring a few dozen more. According to Carroll (2021), time delay bombs are quite commonly used. It is unfortunate that nobody found or noticed the bomb for more than three weeks.

Q8 - Do you think that it is the responsibility of the property to protect you? Why? Would you be willing to pay a higher room rate if a particular hotel had extra security?

This question also ended up forming a very important part within this study which was to find out from guests who they believed should be responsible for security. Specifically, did they think the hotel was solely responsible to look after them and provide all security measures. Also, the study also hoped to find out whether guests valued security and whether they would consider paying a higher room rate for better protection.

A 100% of the respondents stated that they believed that the hotel should be responsible to look after them. It is logical in some ways in that the hotel knows its own property best and the hotel will know its client base and the type of security required. For instance, a business class hotel will need different security protocols to a resort. G2 said that the hotel will be the first place they would turn to in the event they needed help. So, in a way, it makes sense that the hotel took care of the security arrangements. G9, while agreeing that the hotel should provide security and keep everyone safe, they felt that guest also should bear some responsibility. They should be careful and minimise risk.

*G1 - Yes*

*G2 - Ya, of course. If I have some problem, they need to help me. If I can handle it, I will pay [pay extra for more secure accommodation]*

*G3 - Yea. Yea, maybe [pay extra for more secure accommodation].*

*G4 - Yes, I think so. I choose more expensive hotel [extra security]*

*G5 - Yes. It depends on what the security is doing. Okay [will pay for extra security]*

G6 - *If there is any safety issues, definitely*

G7 - *Of course, it's their [responsibility]. Yes [will pay for accommodation with extra security].*

G8 - *To an extent. You get what you pay for. Depends on which country I am staying in [pay more for extra accommodation security]. I guess New Zealand - No [won't want extra security].*

G9 - *A bit of both. If you are paying to stay somewhere, there should be an implied sense of security, keeping your belongings safe and keeping yourself safe. But it's not entirely on the hotel. Yea [pay more for extra security].*

G10 - *I think so. That's true. You mean protect me from a terrorist attack? Terrorism - maybe they don't consider that enough, but for fire and from stealing - ya. They can protect me from disasters. It will depend on the country where you live [pay more for extra security at accommodation]. If here [New Zealand], you probably won't pay that extra.*

With regards to paying extra for a better class hotel with better security arrangements, 70% said that they would be willing to pay extra if its affordable. This finding agrees with the literature where Kim, Brewer and Bernhard (2008), explain that guests expect better security and are willing to pay for it. However, the balance 30% feel refused possibly because they believe that the hotel should bear that cost. They expect good security anyway. Also, the 30% claimed that since New Zealand is a safe destination, they don't expect any problems or safety issues. Hence, the refusal to pay anything extra.

## Themes

**Table 2: Themes - Guests**

	Code	Theme
<b>GUEST</b>	GT <sup>1</sup>	Security is important
	GT <sup>2</sup>	New Zealand is safe
	GT <sup>3</sup>	Hotels responsible for guest's safety
	GT <sup>4</sup>	No x-ray machines, bomb dogs
	GT <sup>5</sup>	Insufficient security briefing
	GT <sup>6</sup>	Security conscious
	GT <sup>7</sup>	No need to ask about security
	GT <sup>8</sup>	Security rating (High/Med)
	GT <sup>9</sup>	Stay indoors/ No night outings
	GT <sup>10</sup>	Avoid selected countries
	GT <sup>11</sup>	Pay extra for security

A few important themes came from these interviews, including a few that are significant and worth exploring further. In general, a 100% of the respondents took security seriously and they all stated that security was important. Chan and Lam (2013) also express the importance of security and their study shows that guests want and, in some cases, demand certain security features. They claim that managers need to fully understand the sentiments and security requirements of their guests. Ritter (2020), describing the settlement of the Mandalay Bay

Resort shooting case, stated that the parent company and their insurers paid about USD \$800 million to the victim's families. The shooter was able to accumulate more than a dozen rifles and other weapons including about 1000 bullets. With these, he succeeded in killing 60 people and injured many more. How were these weapons brought into the hotel without anyone noticing or suspecting anything? Compensations and settlements as described in Ritter (2020) will become a common place unless hotels take security seriously.

With regards to making travel plans and decisions, 70% said that they made decisions with safety and security in mind. That would mean that they were security conscious even while travelling. Traveling often meant people were in unfamiliar territories and in some cases where even the language was unfamiliar. Respondents gave the impression that to them New Zealand was a safe destination and so they must have been wondering about the need for this study. This data was largely collected in 2018, prior to the March 2019 Christchurch terrorist attack.

Respondents were also generally in agreement when it came to who should be responsible for the provision of security. They agreed that the hotel should ensure their safety. Anichiti, Dragolea, Hars, Haller, & Butnaru (2021) concluded from their research that hotels should consider providing sufficient level of security and this agrees with the findings of this particular study. There wasn't any discussion or mention of local government or central government responsibility. For them, the host hotels should take care of them. Aside from just one respondent, all other guests had never encountered x-ray machines, luggage checks or explosive detection dogs (EDD) during their travels. They might have seen them in some airports, but not in their accommodation. Security features such as encountered x-ray machines, luggage checks or explosive detection dogs are a common sight in Asia. In larger properties, cars are not even allowed near the hotel until they have been checked properly. This can include checking the boot (storage compartment), bonnet (engine compartment) and undercarriage of vehicles. Often explosive detection dogs are used to check the vehicles as well.

About 50% of respondents weren't given any security briefing nor were they expecting any by the sounds of things since they deemed New Zealand to be safe. They weren't told what to do in an emergency. Most (90%) didn't have any security related questions either. Their key cards were issued, and they were shown where the elevators were.

If they felt unsafe in any destination, they said that they would opt not to go out of the hotel at night. Somehow, they believed that the threat was only outside the hotel. They did not think that the threat could come to the hotel or already be inside the hotel. In their minds, the threat is external to the hotel or that the hotel would have taken steps to ensure the premises is safe. In reality, this may not always be the case. They also claimed that they would avoid selected countries due to security reasons.

A 100% of respondents said that security was important but only 70% of them said that they would pay extra for security. It seems that the remaining 30% said that New Zealand was already safe and there was no need for additional security. Considering the 70% that were willing to pay a higher room rate, it can be concluded that there is a large segment within the tourism population that want safer properties, and this means that hotels can use this as a point of difference to market their properties. It is a clear competitive advantage. Paying extra for security is consistent with the literature and it is a significant finding.

### **Limitations and opportunities for further research**

While this is only an exploratory study, the sample size limits the ability to generalise the findings or make any business decisions based on them. However, given the

findings and the recent terrorist events in New Zealand, it warrants a bigger, more in-depth study. The new research could also ascertain how much guests extra will guests be willing to pay for better security. This will help hotel make investment decisions.

### Conclusion

It can be concluded from this study that security is important and when travelling, guests place a huge emphasis on security and a large majority would pay extra for a safer stay. The willingness to pay extra is significant and hotels need to factor this into their thinking. So, it is safe to conclude that because of its importance, hotels can use security to differentiate themselves from the competition.

The two recent terrorist attacks (March 2019 and September 2021) would impact on any post-2019 research on New Zealand's hospitality security. It is possible, while New Zealand will still be classed as a safe destination, tourists would be more wary and careful when making travel plans. It is recommended that a more in-depth study be conducted.

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