

# Safeguarding Your Customers

## The Guest's View of Hotel Security

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A study of 930 hotel guests found relatively high acceptance of certain security measures, along with a willingness to pay extra for some of them. In particular, respondents were favorable to security cameras and requiring photo identification, and they would support having a first-aid kit in every hotel room. Study participants were mixed on more intrusive security efforts, such as metal detectors, visible security guards, and background checks of guests to see whether they have police records. Respondents younger than forty were both more likely to accept stringent security measures and more willing to pay for them. Women were also more supportive of strong security measures than were men, particularly men who are frequent travelers.

**Keywords:** hotel safety; hotel guest preferences

Given the turbulence of world events, issues of security have attracted the attention of hotel managers and guests. In particular, managers might wonder which security approaches will be most acceptable to guests and be correctly interpreted as improving safety and security. Over the past decade, various authors have addressed the issue of security within hotels, primarily through surveying hotel managers regarding their assessment of guests' perception of security equipment and features.<sup>1</sup> Useful though these studies might be, they are primarily anecdotal and do not provide an empirical understanding of hotel guests' security-related choices, perceptions, or needs.

This article presents the results of a survey of hotel guests' views of hotel security features. The study

also examines the extent to which guests would accept increases in room rates to pay for any of these features. Additionally, we review research regarding security issues faced by the hotel industry, including the assumptions hoteliers typically use to make security decisions. We will also discuss the complications added by the 9/11 attacks.

### Research on Hotel Security

Hotel keepers under English common law have always owed their guests a duty of security, a concept that prevails in the United States. Beyond legal tradition, hotel patrons commonly assume that hotels have created a relatively safe environment. Although travelers may carefully watch their belongings and surroundings when they are in an airport or taxi, once guests enter a hotel, they often lower their guard on the assumption that the hotel environment is secure.<sup>2</sup>

The common law concept of the innkeepers doctrine addresses the hotelier's role in maintaining a safe and secure environment by requiring the hotelier to take all reasonable measures to provide a secure environment for guests and to safeguard guests' property.<sup>3</sup> The meaning of "reasonable protection" has been expanded by the courts throughout the years, with greater levels of liability being placed on hotels. Moreover, small, independent hotels have been held to the same liability standards as large, branded hotels. That development makes hotel security an important issue regardless of hotel size.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike airports, hotels cannot resort to intrusive security procedures such as metal detectors or searches of belongings without disrupting long-established operating methods. Hotels cannot, for instance, padlock doors or completely control who enters and exits the hotel while at the same time maintaining an open and welcoming

environment. A particular problem for hotels is distinguishing legitimate guests from potential wrongdoers.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of those difficulties, creating a welcoming environment has to be the first priority if hotels are to maintain their reputation for hospitality.

### Hotel Managers' Assumptions and Actions

Guests' perception of security features is a topic subject to considerable speculation. The typical view of general managers and security managers seems to be that installing obtrusive or indiscrete security measures would only invite guests' concern, rather than project an image of safety and security.<sup>6</sup> Under this principle, it may be difficult for hotels to install features that may improve security unless those features are commonly accepted, as are security cameras in parking areas. The question then becomes, How far should a hotel go to protect its guests? Is it reasonable to place an armed security guard in uniform within the sight of guests? What if the guard is in plain clothes? As often discussed in the literature, hoteliers worry, for instance, that instead of thinking how much safer the hotel is with a security guard in the lobby, the guest may instead begin to ponder whether the hotel has security problems that justify the guard's presence.<sup>7</sup> As our results will show, this concern is not unfounded.

Although some hoteliers may see security measures as an unnecessary expense,<sup>8</sup> we believe that the consensus is that hotel security is important. In that regard, the role of the security department and its manager has increased in prominence over the years. A primary concern of hoteliers is the integration of security into the hotel's operations. Rather than having the security department isolated from other operating departments and decisions,

security must be a part of the everyday operating procedures.<sup>9</sup>

Several types of security features have become routine in hotel security, notably certain types of technology. These days, it is rare for a guest to complain about security cameras, for example.<sup>10</sup> Traditionally, hotel security systems have consisted of an electronic card-locking system, camera system, communication system, and closed-circuit television in places not easily covered by security personnel.<sup>11</sup> Additional equipment could include guest-door locks, safe-deposit boxes, and loading-dock access in addition to typical life-safety systems such as alarms, fire extinguishers, and sprinkler systems.<sup>12</sup> Beyond technical features, some companies train hotel staff members to maintain safety and security within the hotel, if only by providing timely information.<sup>13</sup>

The idea has long existed that a standard set of security features in each hotel would improve guests' acceptance of those features. To this point, though, self-regulation has proven to be most effective, given that the proposed Draft Convention on the Hotelkeepers Contract has been debated for seventy-five years without being adopted. To facilitate appropriate self-regulation, the International Hotel and Restaurant Association has developed the International Hotel Regulations and Code of Conduct for Hoteliers and Travel Agents.<sup>14</sup>

Over the years, hotel security features have been updated for such reasons as a rise in neighborhood crime, changes in technology, or shifts in the hotel's guest demographics. For example, the introduction of electronic door locks has created an expectation among customers for that level of security. This notion has been reinforced by travel agents who will not book a hotel that lacks this feature, due to liability concerns.<sup>15</sup> As another example, security features became more important

as women began traveling for business in greater numbers. Given that the most important concern to female business travelers is safety and security,<sup>16</sup> major hotel chains have taken note of that as they tailor services to the female traveler.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, as the media bring criminal actions to the forefront, hotels managers may increasingly face challenges. A CNN broadcast, for instance, reported that sexual offenders living and working in hotels unbeknownst to the manager and guests committed repeated criminal offenses.<sup>18</sup>

### The Effects of 9/11

The magnitude and location of the 9/11 attack on New York City deeply altered travelers' perceptions of safety. Despite travelers' interest in security issues, a late-2001 survey found that many hotels had not made any noteworthy changes in security procedures. One explanation for that finding is that hoteliers may have considered their existing security and safety procedures and equipment to be adequate. That said, certain hotels (i.e., airport, convention and conference, upscale, and luxury) were more likely to have made security improvements or at least reevaluate their existing equipment and procedures.<sup>19</sup>

Hotel bombings in Egypt, Jakarta, and Amman have led to a continued focus on hotel security. In that regard, a report from *Business Travel Executive* showed that 43 percent of hotels surveyed in 2005 had a formal safety program in place. An executive-program participant recently told one of the authors that his director of security is now a key person on the hotel's executive committee and is often asked to participate in negotiating sales contracts.

To those who might question the applicability of asking customers to assess security, we note a survey of the measures used by business travel managers to assess security. The top response (72 percent) was

“rely on travelers to provide feedback,” while the number-two measure (64 percent) was “stick to major chains with uniform standards.” In 2005, the most popular measure remained relying on travelers.<sup>20</sup> We conclude that recording guests’ perspectives on security is an important way to examine this issue.

## Research Procedure

We surveyed travelers who stayed in economy, midrange, or upscale hotels. In an effort to obtain a representative sample, we purchased from a well-reputed marketing research company a reliable electronic mailing list of four thousand potential respondents with residences scattered across the United States. The mailing list contained a sample of respondents balanced for various demographic criteria according to U.S. census data. Given the high number of responses and the random nature of the participant selection, we believe that our results can be viewed as an adequate representation of hotel guests across the United States.

Each of the potential respondents received an e-mail invitation to participate along with an offer to participate in a raffle for one of ten \$100 gift certificates. Of the 4,000 potential respondents, approximately 2,500 agreed to participate in the survey, but 40 percent of those were screened out because they had not taken a trip that required a hotel stay in the past year. After three weeks of data collection, we received a total of 930 responses. Since there was no indication of any response bias, the analysis presented in this article is based on survey data collected from all of those respondents.

The sample was evenly divided between men and women. While respondents ranged from fourteen to seventy-eight years of age, the sample skewed toward higher ages, with just 29 percent younger than forty.

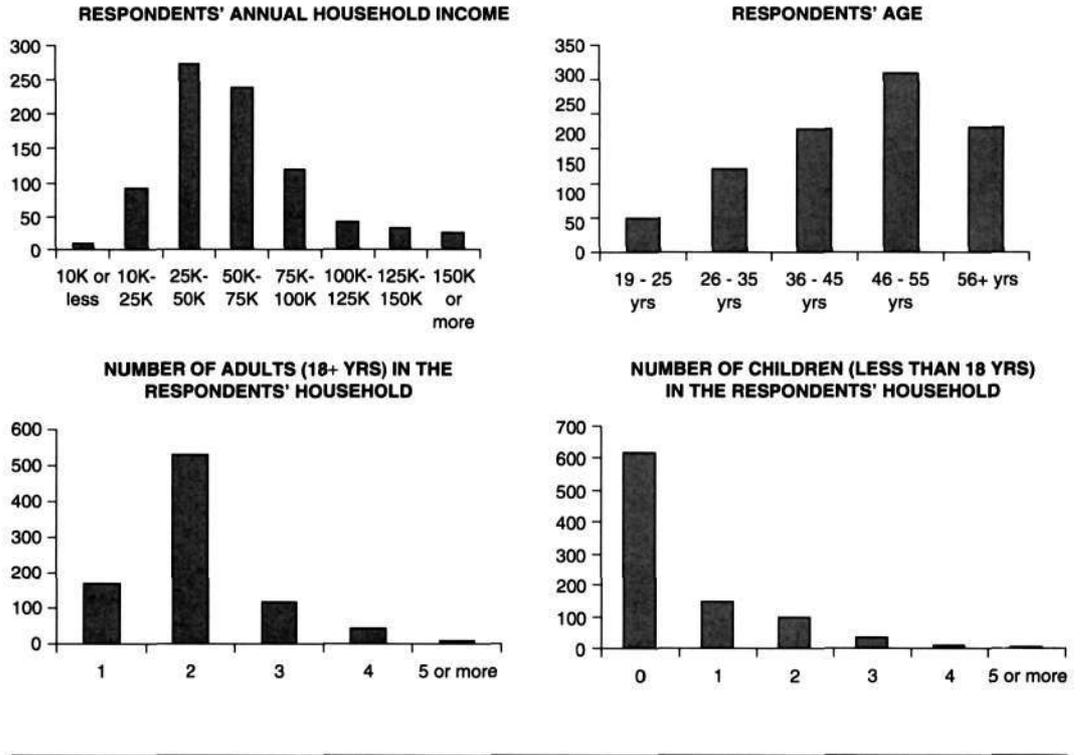
The majority of the respondents were Caucasian. Two-thirds of respondents reported an annual salary of less than \$75,000. Two-thirds of the respondents reported no children under the age of eighteen living within the household (Exhibit 1). The majority of respondents traveled for pleasure during at least half of their trips in the previous year ( $n = 691$ ), while approximately one-quarter of respondents traveled more often for business than pleasure (Exhibit 2). Almost two-thirds of the respondents took between one and three trips requiring a hotel stay during the previous year. Three-quarters of respondents reported that the primary purpose of their most recent hotel visit was pleasure rather than business. A majority of visits were made to midscale hotels, with three-quarters of those visits involving a room rate of \$100 or less excluding taxes (Exhibit 3).

The survey consisted of forty-one consumer behavior and preference questions and seven demographic questions. Several survey questions asked respondents to express the extent to which they accepted various security features and the amount they would be willing to pay for these features above the standard room rate. After removing outliers, we calculated acceptability means and standard deviations for each security feature by demographic group. We then correlated the acceptability ranking of each security feature by demographic group with the percentage above the nightly room rate that the hotel guest would be willing to pay (Exhibit 4-6).

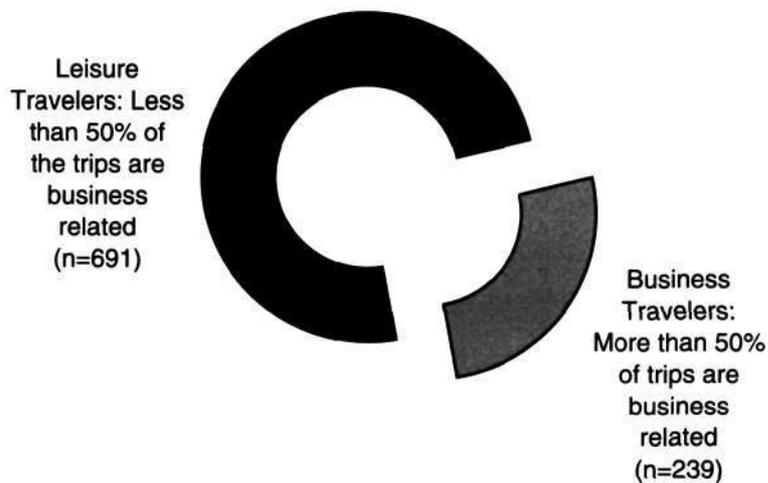
## Acceptability of Security Features

The survey data revealed that the security features considered acceptable among all respondent groups were video surveillance, requiring a photo ID at check-in, and maintaining a first-aid kit in each

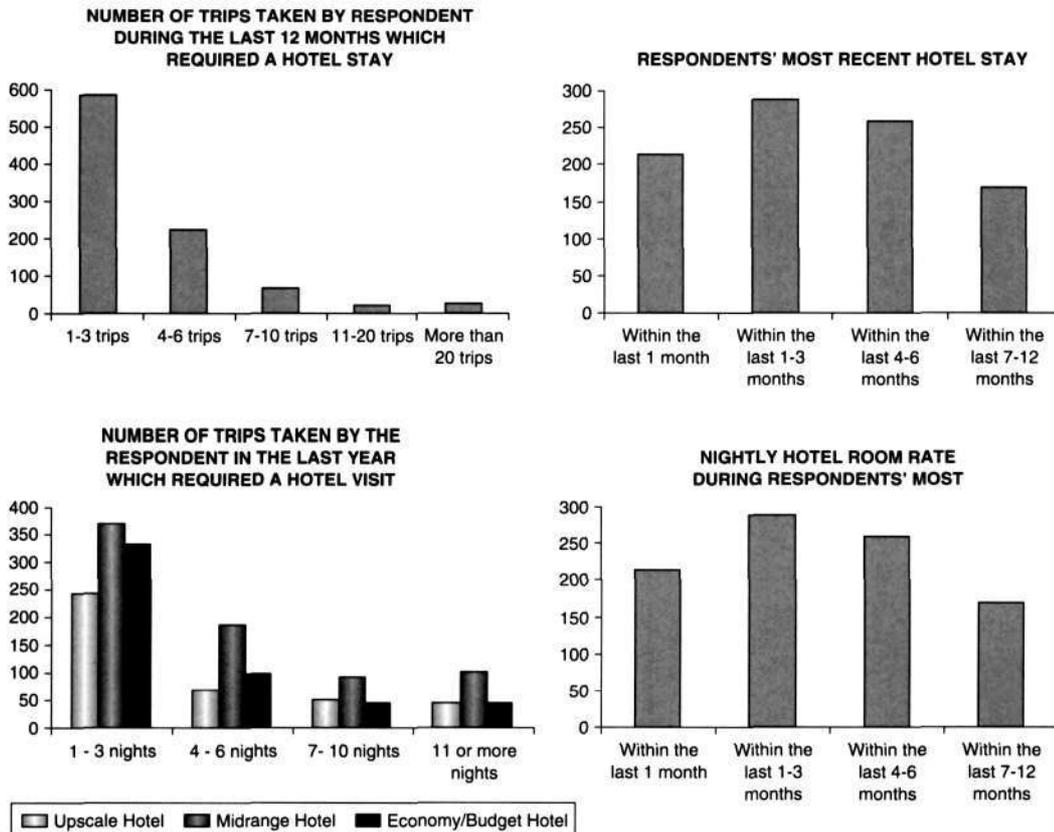
**Exhibit 1:**  
Respondents' Demographics



**Exhibit 2:**  
Business versus Leisure Travelers in Sample



### Exhibit 3: Respondents' Hotel Visit History



hotel room. Verification of photo ID is now a common practice in the hotel industry. Our respondents were neutral toward metal detectors and checking guest IDs against law enforcement records, while the presence of armed security guards was viewed in a dim light (Exhibit 5). Although these general results are certainly useful and interesting, a further breakdown of the results by demographic group and travel purpose provides further insight into guests' acceptance of security features (Exhibit 4).

*Gender.* The survey results show that regardless of travel purpose, women are generally more appreciative of security features than are men.

*Age.* Respondents younger than forty years of age were more receptive to overt security features, such as metal detectors, armed guards, and law enforcement record checks than were guests older than forty.

*Travel purpose.* Hotel patrons traveling for business tend to be more accepting of a photo ID requirement at check-in than are patrons traveling for leisure. However,

**Exhibit 4:**  
Security Feature Acceptability Across Market Segments

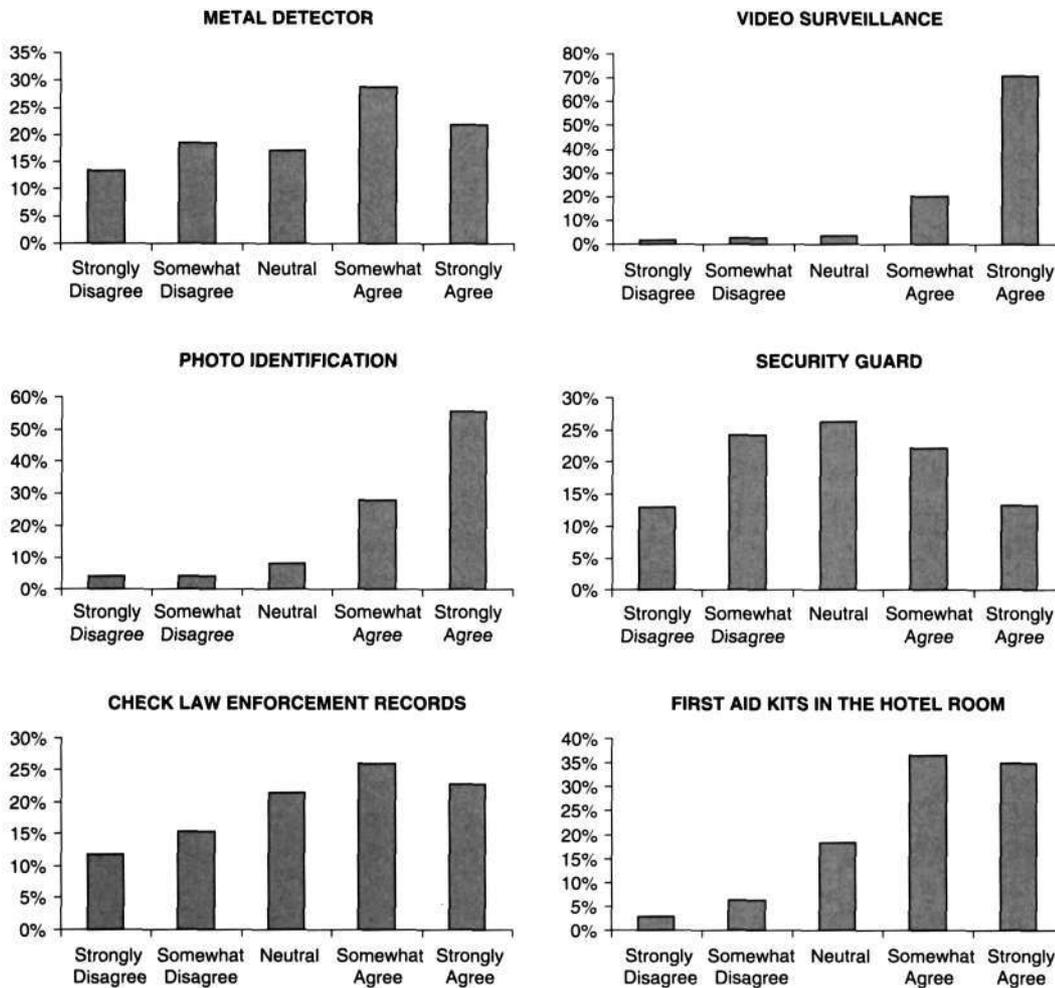
	Metal Detector	Video Surveillance	Photo ID at Check-In	Armed Guard	Check ID against Law Enforcement Records	First Aid Kits in Each Room
Gender	Acceptability: Men not accepting; women neutral Willing to Pay: Men have low correlation;*** women have medium correlation***	Acceptability: Both men and women accepting Willing to Pay: Men have very low correlation; women have low correlation***	Acceptability: Both men and women accepting Willing to Pay: Men have very low correlation; women have medium correlation***	Acceptability: Men not accepting; women neutral Willing to Pay: Men have low correlation;*** women have medium correlation***	Acceptability: Both men and women neutral Willing to Pay: Men have low correlation;*** women have medium correlation***	Acceptability: Men neutral; women accepting Willing to Pay: Men have very low correlation; women have medium correlation***
Age	Acceptability: Neutral across age groups Willing to Pay: Respondents under 40 years of age have medium correlation;*** 40 and above have low correlation***	Acceptability: Accepting across age groups Willing to Pay: Respondents under 40 years of age have a low correlation; 40 and above have a low correlation***	Acceptability: Accepting across age groups Willing to Pay: Respondents under 40 years of age have a low correlation; 40 and above have a low correlation***	Acceptability: Respondents under 40 years of age neutral; 40 and above not accepting Willing to Pay: Respondents across age groups have medium correlation***	Acceptability: Neutral across age groups Willing to Pay: Respondents across age groups have low correlation***	Acceptability: Respondents under 40 years of age accepting; 40 and above neutral Willing to Pay: Respondents under 40 years of age have low correlation; 40 and above have low correlation***
Business vs. leisure travelers	Acceptability: Both business and leisure travelers neutral Willing to Pay: Both business travelers and leisure travelers have medium correlation***	Acceptability: Both business and leisure travelers accepting Willing to Pay: Business travelers have medium correlation;*** leisure travelers have low correlation**	Acceptability: Both business and leisure travelers accepting Willing to Pay: Business travelers have high correlation;*** leisure travelers have low correlation***	Acceptability: Business travelers not accepting; leisure travelers neutral Willing to Pay: Business travelers have high correlation;*** leisure travelers have medium correlation***	Acceptability: Both business and leisure travelers neutral Willing to Pay: Business travelers have medium correlation;*** leisure travelers have low correlation***	Acceptability: Both business and leisure travelers neutral Willing to Pay: Business travelers have medium correlation;*** leisure travelers have low correlation

**Exhibit 4:**  
(continued)

	Metal Detector	Video Surveillance	Photo ID at Check-In	Armed Guard	Check ID against Law Enforcement Records	First Aid Kits in Each Room
Nightly room rate	Acceptability: No difference Willing to Pay: No difference; across room rates the correlation is medium (up to \$150***)	Acceptability: Accepting across groups Willing to Pay: Respondents paying a nightly room rate of up to \$80 have very low correlation; \$81-\$150 have low correlation;*** above \$150 have very low negative correlation	Acceptability: Accepting across groups Willing to Pay: Respondents paying a nightly room rate of up to \$150 have low correlation;*** above \$150 have very low correlation	Acceptability: Neutral across groups Willing to Pay: Respondents paying a nightly room rate of up to \$80 have medium correlation;*** \$81-\$150 have high correlation;*** above \$150 have low correlation	Acceptability: Neutral across groups Willing to Pay: Respondents paying a nightly room rate of up to \$80 have low correlation;*** \$81-\$150 have medium correlation;*** above \$150 have very low correlation	Acceptability: Neutral across groups Willing to Pay: Respondents paying a nightly room rate of up to \$80 have low correlation;*** \$81-\$150 have low correlation;*** above \$150 have very low correlation

**Note:** Acceptability: The level of the demographic group's mean acceptability score for the individual security feature, measured by whether the respondent agreed or disagreed that the security feature should be offered. Acceptable: mean score 4-5 (*somewhat agree to strongly agree*); neutral: mean score 3-3.9; not acceptable: mean score 1-2.9 (*strongly disagree to somewhat disagree*).  
Willingness to Pay: The demographic group's correlation between acceptability level of the individual security feature and the amount the guest is willing to pay above the nightly room rate for the security feature to be offered. Very low correlation: below .09; low correlation: .09 to .19; medium correlation: .19 to .29; high correlation: .29 to .39; very high correlation: above .4.  
\*\*\*Significant at  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*Significant at  $p < .01$ .

### Exhibit 5: Security Feature Acceptability Results



leisure travelers are more accepting of metal detectors, armed guards, and background checks. It would seem that hotel guests traveling primarily for leisure are more concerned with solid security and verification of hotel guests than are business travelers. Below, we will see that these results do not necessarily hold when a guest's frequency of travel is considered. Gender also plays a role when considering the acceptability of security features for business and leisure

travelers. Although female travelers were generally more accepting of security features, consistent with the gender results above, the most significant differences were between male business travelers and female business travelers with regard to the acceptability of metal detectors and armed guards, and also between male and female leisure travelers in connection with the acceptability of metal detectors and law enforcement checks.

*Frequency of hotel visits.* A respondent's travel frequency seems to play a role in the acceptability of security features. The acceptance of a photo-ID requirement at check-in increased with travel frequency up through ten trips a year. In fact, the results for travelers with up to ten hotel visits per year were distinct from those for travelers with eleven or more visits per year. For example, travelers with fewer than ten hotel visits per year were consistent in their acceptance of video surveillance, the presence of armed guards, background checks, and first-aid kits in the hotel room. However, guests with eleven or more hotel visits per year were less accepting of all those features with the exception of video surveillance. Similarly, the acceptance of metal detectors decreased as frequency of travel increased.

*Class or type of hotel.* Examining responses from travelers at different types of hotel (that is, upscale, midscale, or economy) and according to rate paid, we found that the lowest acceptability rankings came from guests staying primarily in midscale hotels. Only with regard to law enforcement checks were the results almost identical for economy and midscale hotels. Guests at upscale hotels were generally less accepting of metal detectors and armed guards than were guests at economy hotels, who were more accepting of metal detectors, although economy travelers' ratings for the presence of an armed guard were much lower. We saw little difference in the acceptability of checking law enforcement records (neutral), the presence of armed guards (generally unacceptable), and first-aid kits (acceptable) among travelers who paid different rates.

### Willingness to Pay for Security Features

We conducted a regression analysis against each group's willingness to pay for

security features, with the results shown in Exhibit 6.<sup>21</sup> Four observations stand out. First, women were more likely than men to be willing to pay a higher percentage of the room rate to support their preferred security features. Second, willingness to pay for the security features decreased as the guest's age increased. Third, frequent travelers were less willing to pay for security than other respondents were. Finally, while we found a positive relationship between preference for all security features and willingness to pay, three items (i.e., metal detectors, an armed guard, and law enforcement checks) were strongly related to a willingness to pay for security.

Overall, the survey found that hotel guests on average are willing to pay 10 percent above the regular nightly rate to cover the security features they would accept (Exhibits 7 and 8). When these findings were further analyzed by demographic group, clear differences were found.

*Gender.* The women in our survey were willing to pay a higher room rate for security than were the men. The average premium was 11.39 percent for women, compared to 8.54 percent for men.

*Age.* Women older than forty years of age were willing to pay a greater premium (13.32 percent) than those younger than forty. On the other hand, men older than forty gave the lowest average extra payment (8.03 percent). Unlike the older than forty group, both men and women younger than forty were willing to pay just more than 10 percent more (10.2 percent), but the standard deviation of the men's premiums (12 percent) was much greater than that of the women's (7.9 percent).

*Travel purpose.* Leisure travelers were willing to pay more for security (an average of 10.39 percent more) than business travelers (7.73 percent). Within that finding is a fairly wide variety of opinions

**Exhibit 6:**  
Results of Regression Analysis

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Dependent Variable</i>
	<i>Model: Percentage above Nightly Room Rate Willing to Pay</i>
Intercept	5.494** (2.165)
Gender	-.081**** (.020)
Age	-.941* (.494)
Frequency of travel	-.782* (.415)
Business vs. leisure (leisure)	.008 (.008)
Class of hotel	
Upscale	.129 (.265)
Midscale	.253 (.232)
Economy	.364 (.249)
Nightly rate	-.043 (.140)
Security features	
Metal detector	.692**** (.215)
Video surveillance	-.189 (.345)
Photo ID at check-in	.445 (.279)
Armed security guard	.787*** (.232)
Check guest ID against law enforcement records	.437* (.217)
First-aid kits in each room	-.306 (.263)
$R^2$	.517
Adjusted $R^2$	.508
F	55.10

Note: The table shows unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

among leisure travelers (as shown by the 10.1 percent standard deviation), as compared to the business travelers, who were more in agreement (standard deviation of 5.73 percent). Consistent with the gender results, women traveling on business were willing to pay more than were their male counterparts.

*Frequency of travel.* The most frequent travelers (i.e., those with more than eleven trips per year) were willing to pay significantly less than the less frequent travelers. Respondents who reported up to ten trips in the previous year were willing to pay an average of about 10 percent extra for security features, an amount consistent with

the mean results for the entire survey sample. In contrast, frequent-traveler respondents were willing to pay a premium of only 6.43 percent.

*Class of hotel.* Although overall willingness to pay extra for security in general varied little among travelers at three different types of hotel, guests split on certain specific security features. Exhibit 9 depicts the acceptability and willingness to pay for each security feature based on hotel type. For all hotel types, guests were least willing to pay for video surveillance or for photo ID checks, while respondents said they would be more willing to pay for the security features that would probably

**Exhibit 7:**

Percentage above Nightly Rate the Hotel Guest Is Willing to Pay for Additional Security Features

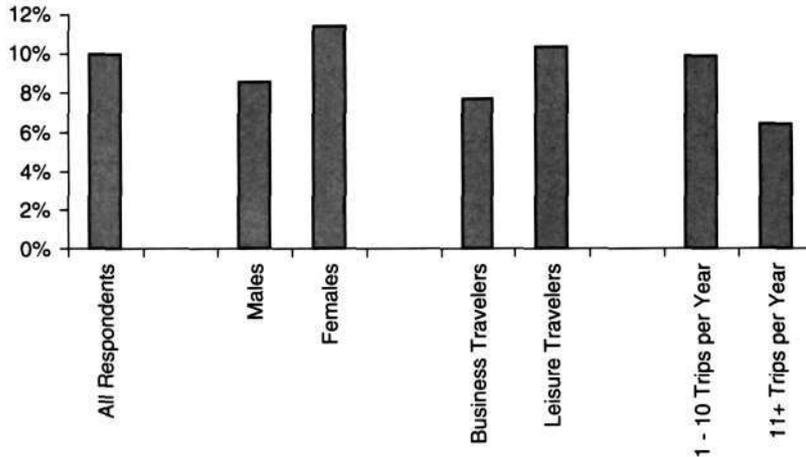
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
All respondents	9.97	9.51
Males	8.54	9.11
Females	11.39	9.71
Males forty and older	8.03	7.94
Females forty and older	13.32	11.89
Males younger than forty	10.21	12.07
Females younger than forty	10.23	7.94
Business travelers	7.73	5.73
Male business travelers	7.32	5.23
Female business travelers	8.56	6.57
Leisure travelers	10.39	10.1
Male leisure travelers	9.01	10.06
Female leisure travelers	11.54	10.01
Trips per year:		
1-3	10.39	10.55
4-6	9.38	6.84
7-10	10.08	8.67
11+	6.43	5.45
Upscale hotels	10.65	10.63
Midscale hotels	9.51	8.17
Economy hotels	10.34	10.69
Nightly rate		
Up to \$80	10.05	10
\$80 to \$150	9.81	8.4
Above \$150	10.5	10.73

be most costly to implement (i.e., armed guard, metal detectors, and law enforcement checks).

*Security features.* Generally, the acceptability of all security features was significantly correlated with the amount the hotel guest was willing to pay above the nightly rate. The highest correlations were found for metal detectors, armed guards, and checking ID against law enforcement records (Exhibit 4).

## Discussions and Managerial Implications

Our results offer a glimpse into hotel guests' view of certain security features. Some of our findings disagree with previous research. Two of the six security features presented in the survey, namely, video surveillance and checking guests' photo identification at check-in, are already fairly common in hotels across the United States.

**Exhibit 8:****Percentage Willing to Pay More than the Nightly Room Rate for Additional Security Features**

Given this observation, we are not surprised that both features received a high acceptability rating.

Although first-aid kits are not common in hotel rooms, this feature is not intrusive and promotes privacy. Thus, the high rating for first-aid kits was to be expected. Although we did not ask whether respondents were staying at hotels with their children, it would be interesting to examine whether hotel guests who commonly travel with children rated the desirability of first-aid kits higher than did other travelers.

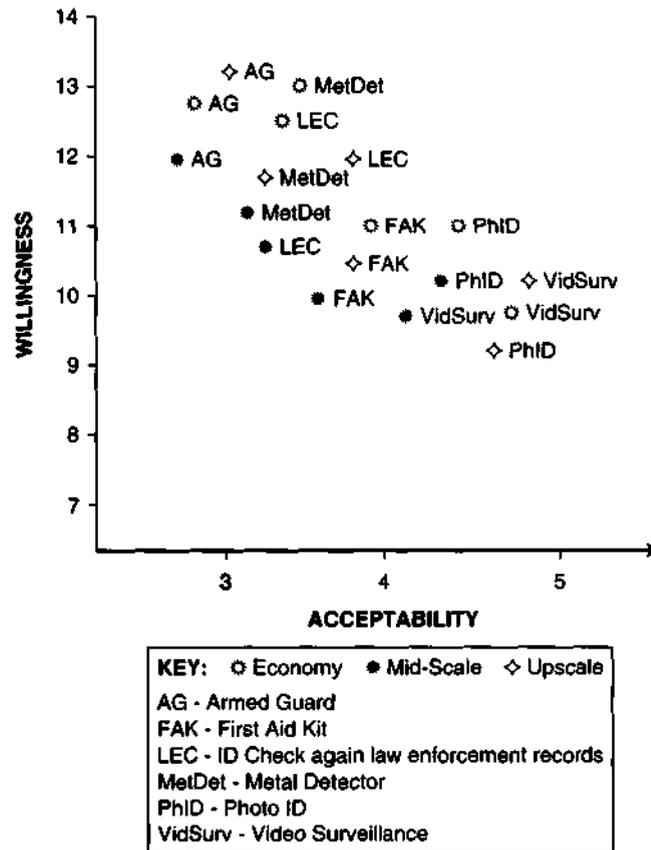
This study gave some support to the view of hotel general managers and security managers that hotel guests might worry about safety in the face of overt security measures (e.g., armed guards, metal detectors). In particular, the presence of an armed guard received a low rating, but respondents were not quite so negative about metal detectors, which were given a neutral reception. We suspect that travelers have become accepting of metal detectors as a fact of life. Similar to

the ranking for metal detectors, checking identification against law enforcement records received a neutral ranking (mean response of 3.33). This practice, which is common in other parts of the world, represents a new security practice for U.S. hotels. Although this may seem to some as an invasion of privacy, again, guests may accept this as a fact of life.

Examining our respondents' demographic differences, we found that women and young travelers were more accepting of and willing to pay for additional security features.

The survey found that leisure travelers are generally more accepting of security features than are business travelers. An exception to this finding is the higher rating for presenting a photo ID at check-in among business travelers, which is not reflected in the results for leisure travelers. (We cannot establish a causal relationship between business travelers' acceptance of this feature and their familiarity with it.) The survey revealed that increased frequency of travel generally decreases the

**Exhibit 9:**  
Security Feature Acceptability versus Willingness to Pay by Hotel Type



acceptability of security features. Other than the ID requirement, however, leisure travelers are more accepting of even the most overt security features and are willing to pay for them. We believe that leisure travelers are willing to endure a bit of inconvenience in exchange for a feeling of safety and security. If that supposition is correct, it would contradict the idea that hotel guests may be intimidated by the presence of obvious security features.<sup>22</sup>

The fact that patrons of two of the three hotel price tiers showed little difference in the acceptability of security features is a curious finding since the similarity is

shared by guests frequenting upscale and economy hotels but not those frequenting midscale hotels. Although the reasons for this finding cannot be determined with the survey data, this question warrants further investigation. One thing we did find was a high correlation between hotel guests' acceptance of costly security features and a willingness to pay for those features. We believe that guests recognize that costly features mean higher room rates.

### Recommendations for Practice

Our findings support some existing beliefs about hotel security but contradict

others. We certainly found that respondents were less accepting of overt security measures than subtle ones. We thought that perhaps obvious security features would score higher since the survey was conducted less than a year after the 9/11 attacks. Even so, we were surprised at the number of security features that our respondents considered acceptable or neutral. We wonder whether hotel guests are changing their view of safety and security, especially since they see increased security measures in other travel-related venues (e.g., airports, theme parks, sporting events). Based on our findings, hotel general managers and security managers should consider implementing additional security features beyond those typically found in a hotel. Not only that, but guests may be willing to accept an increased room rate in consideration of these additional features.

The challenge for each manager is to assess which security features are most appropriate for a particular hotel. We suggest factors to consider in Exhibit 10 and offer a typology of the resource and visibility trade-offs of each security feature in Exhibit 11. Although only the hotel manager can make the final determination of which security features are appropriate for his or her property, we offer the following recommendations. First, guests patronizing all hotel types expressed an acceptance of video surveillance, verification of photo identification at check-in, and first-aid kits in guest rooms. However, not all guests were equally willing to pay for those extra security features. Since most hotels now employ both video surveillance and verification of photo identification, we will focus on first-aid kits. Of the three types of guests, those frequenting midscale hotels were least willing to pay. We speculate that economy guests are open to the idea that additional features lead to additional cost (since those guests are theoretically

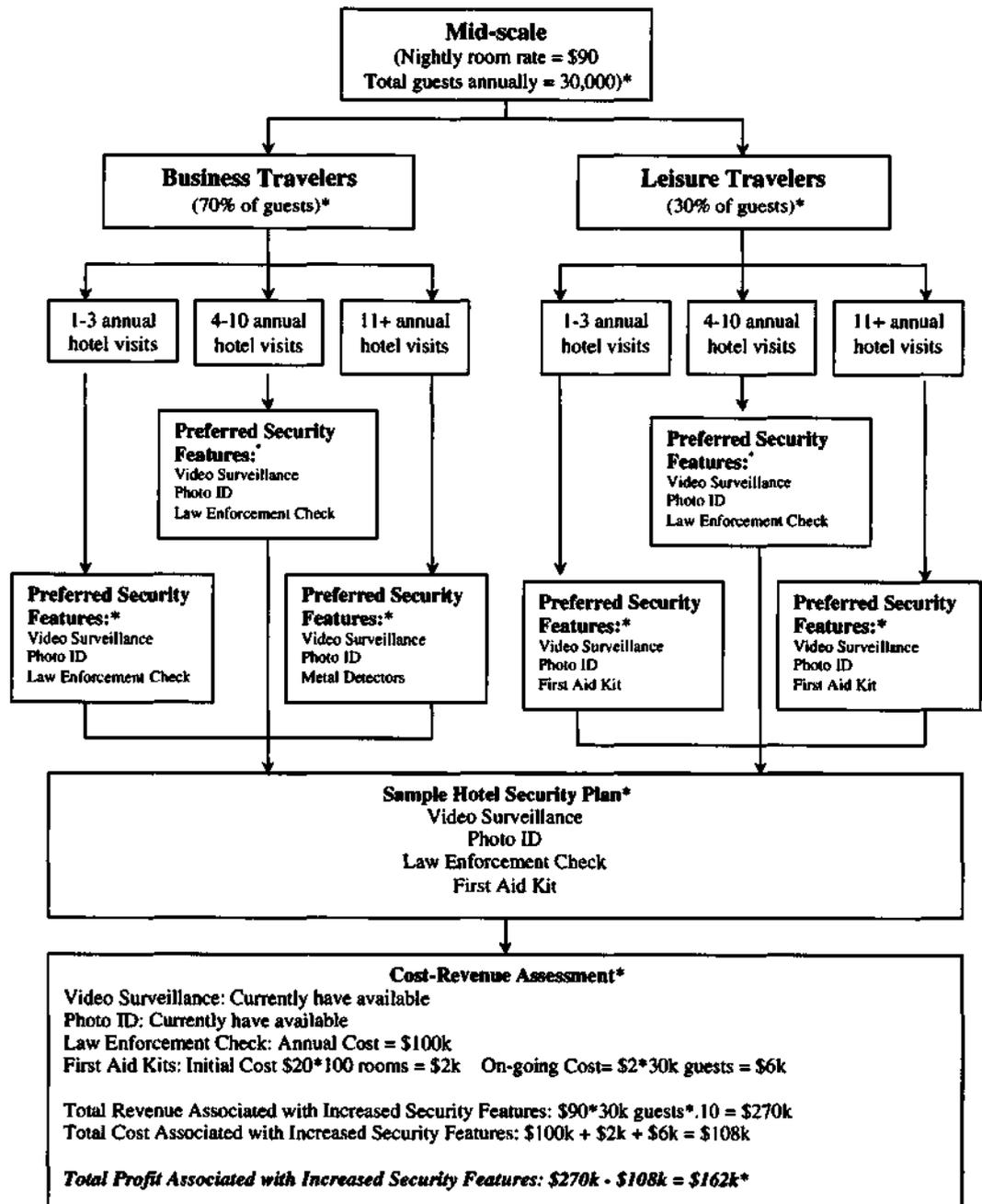
paying a rock-bottom rate), while upscale guests might understand that a first-aid kit would be an additional amenity worthy of a higher room rate. In contrast, midscale guests may be particularly price conscious but also believe that since they are paying to stay in a midscale hotel (rather than an economy hotel), small amenities such as a first-aid kit should be included in the existing room rate.

*Criminal records.* Although our respondents were at worst neutral on the practice of checking guests' background information, we found no consensus on willingness to pay for background checks. As is the case with first-aid kits, guests at midscale hotels were on the low end of the willingness-to-pay scale. This finding may be attributable to the reasons discussed above, but in addition background checks are potentially more costly and complicated than purchasing first-aid kits. Furthermore, we believe that background checks are most appropriate for economy hotels, given the aforementioned media attention on criminal actions by sex-crime offenders.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, we do not see acceptance of across-the-board installation of metal detectors and armed guards. However, those guests who expressed a preference for these security measures said that they were willing to pay for them. In particular, guests of upscale and economy hotels expressed a high willingness to pay for armed guards, while economy guests expressed a relatively high willingness to pay for metal detectors. Nevertheless, implementing these types of security features requires careful consideration.

Our data do not shed light on the questions of whether security information should be made available to hotel guests prior to booking a hotel room or whether purchase decisions are based on the presence of security features. Given that we have determined that certain groups are willing to pay

**Exhibit 10:**  
**Midscale Hotel Security Feature Decision Tree Illustration**



\*Prices, number of guests, costs, revenue, security feature preferences, etc. are presented for illustration purposes only

**Exhibit 11:**  
Security Resource Typology

<i>Security Feature</i>	<i>Resource Requirement</i>	<i>Potential Trade-Offs of Implementation</i>
Video surveillance	Equipment and staff	Few trade-offs as this feature is now common in hotels.
Photo ID verification at check-in	Staff	Few trade-offs as this feature is now common in hotels.
First-aid kits in each room	Initial equipment purchase and ongoing purchase of refill supplies	Few trade-offs besides initial and ongoing costs.
Verify ID against law enforcement records	Staff, equipment (computers, software, etc.)	Could potentially be very time-consuming. Also need contingency plan for staff action should a guest have a negative criminal record.
Metal detectors	Staff, equipment	Potentially frustrating for both staff and guests. May greatly slow down check-in time. Also detracts from creation of a hospitable environment and potentially creates the impression that the hotel has had security issues in the past rather than generating guest feelings of safety and security.
Armed guard	Staff	Detracts from creation of a hospitable environment and potentially creates the impression that the hotel has had security issues in the past rather than generating guest feelings of safety and security.

premiums for certain security features, it seems to make sense to let guests know about those features during the booking process. Still, that might not be the wisest course since discussing security in advance of a booking may introduce unnecessary

apprehension and foment speculation about a hotel's security status. A hotel also would not want to tip its hand regarding the nature of security features if that would give criminals a way to beat the system. Instead of outright announcements, one should rely on

repeat visits and word of mouth to spread the word about a hotel's security standards.

Hoteliers should be ready to explain their security procedures, however. Hotel managers whom we have taught in executive programs report that security arrangements have become a routine part of requests for proposals from travel managers and tour operators. As a result, certain international hotels are implementing the following programs. (Due to security issues, we cannot connect each practice to the hotel that uses it.) At least one hotel that we know of trains its reservation agents to be alert in the reservations process and to qualify its guests with a set of carefully chosen questions that would flag possible troublemakers. Other practices include checking all cars entering the property at a security gate (The Breakers Palm Beach), conducting random undercarriage checks as a car pulls up to the hotel (Radisson Amman), requesting photo identification and using hundreds of cameras to spot troublemakers (casino hotels), providing a gas mask in the room (Garden Hotel, Guangzhou, China), providing a flashlight in all rooms (Mandarin Oriental New York), and including first-aid items in the bathroom or the minibar. While this information is not typically communicated openly to all guests, most of it is available on request.

We conducted a brief search in 2005 of Web sites for major U.S. hotel companies and found little information on the security features of hotels. We propose that the question of whether and how security information should be publicly shared is a matter for further study. We see many ways to communicate such information, if need be, including the hotel's Web site, internet travel Web sites (e.g., Expedia, Orbitz, Travelocity), travel agents, and, for international travelers, government agencies.

Making security information available may be particularly advantageous if the hotel wishes to emphasize its security arrangements for certain groups of travelers. It is even possible that a hotel could differentiate itself on security issues (until competitors imitate the initiative). We even envision the possibility of a security rating system for hotels and that security features would be considered a desired amenity.

### Conclusions, Limitations, and Opportunities for Further Investigation

Hotel guests generally accept the practice of requiring photo identification of guests at check-in, video surveillance in public areas, and adding first-aid kits to guest rooms. At the same time, metal detectors, the obvious presence of an armed guard, and checking guests' identification against law enforcement records were generally deemed less acceptable. However, those results depend on demographic factors. On average, we found that our respondents were willing to pay an additional 10 percent above the nightly room rate for the security features we tested, although some demographic groups were willing to pay a significantly greater percentage.

We could not discount the concern that hotel guests may perceive overt security features as a sign that the hotel is compensating for an unsafe environment. However, we believe we identified a shift in guests' perceptions, as once-unthinkable security features, such as metal detectors, may be found acceptable in some instances. Such a shift would allow hoteliers to evaluate and modify their security practices. We foresee the possibility that a hotel could build a differentiation strategy on security features.

The results of this survey do have several limitations. First, while this survey

cannot be generalized beyond the hotel industry, we note that hotels are unavoidably a part of the larger travel industry. We believe that all facets of that industry are experiencing a trend toward more obvious security features. Second, we examined only six security features. Although these six features are common options, the list is by no means exhaustive. As technology improves and security features are expanded, additional research may be necessary to further validate these findings. Finally, this survey was conducted approximately a year after the 9/11 attack, and we have no comparison data from before that tragedy.

This survey represents only a small portion of the research that can give us an understanding of safety and security features in hotels. In particular, guests' perceptions and preferences should be further examined, particularly to establish which security features different demographic groups consider acceptable. One method of further examining this issue would be to conduct a longitudinal study to track preferences and acceptability rankings over time. By looking at long-term data, we may be able to determine whether a domestic tragedy such as 9/11 inclines hotel patrons to accept security features and to pay for them. A second line of future research would be to increase the overall generalizability of these results. One could, for instance, examine other circumstances involving customers' preferences and perceptions, for example, at places one visits for pleasure or infrequently (e.g., airports, theme parks, sporting events). Finally, given the different hotel security practices in countries other than the United States, it may be revealing to look at security practices in Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia to determine guests' acceptance of those security features.

### Endnotes

1. See J. Saied, "Hotel Management: Approaches to Risk Management," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (April 1990): 45; C. A. Enz and M. S. Taylor, "The Safety and Security of U.S. Hotels: A Post-September-11 Report," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 43, no. 5 (October 2002): 119-36; M. S. Taylor and C. A. Enz, "Voices from the Field: General Managers' Responses to the Events of September 11, 2001," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (February 2002): 7-20; and C. A. Enz, "Rethinking Safety and Security," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (April 2003): 1.
2. K. Groeneboom and P. Jones, "Issues of Security in Hotels," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality* 15, no. 1 (February 2003): 14-19.
3. J. E. H. Sherry, *The Law of Innkeepers* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981); Saied, "Hotel Management," 45; D. Beirman, *Restoring Tourism Destinations in Crisis: A Strategic Marketing Approach* (Sydney, Australia: CABI, 2003); and J. Wilks and S. J. Page, eds., *Managing Tourist Health and Safety in the New Millennium*, Advances in Tourism Research Series (Kidlington, UK: Elsevier, 2003).
4. Saied, "Hotel Management," 45.
5. Enz and Taylor, "The Safety and Security of U.S. Hotels," 119-36; and Groeneboom and Jones, "Issues of Security in Hotels," 14-19.
6. Groeneboom and Jones, "Issues of Security in Hotels," 14-19.
7. Saied, "Hotel Management," 45.
8. Groeneboom and Jones, "Issues of Security in Hotels," 14-19.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Saied, "Hotel Management," 45.
13. Ibid.; and Groeneboom and Jones, "Issues of Security in Hotels," 14-19.
14. Wilks and Page, *Managing Tourist Health and Safety in the New Millennium*.
15. Ibid.
16. W. Hart, "What Women Want," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (October 1993): 10; and K. W. McCleary, P. A. Weaver, and Li Lan, "Gender-Based Differences in Business Travelers' Lodging Preferences," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (April 1994): 51.

17. Hart, "What Women Want," 10; L. R. Taylor, "Women on the Move," *Government Executive* 32, no. 2 (2000): 72; and R. Rigby, "Feel Safe, Will Travel," *Management Today*, September 1996, p. 102.
18. T. Gutierrez, "Eye Opener," *Paula Zhan Now*, CNN, January 3, 2006.
19. Enz and Taylor, "The Safety and Security of U.S. Hotels," 119-36; and Enz, "Rethinking Safety and Security," 1.
20. *Business Travel Executive*, "Hotel Safety Survey," June 2005, p. 32.
21. The model was tested to determine the weighting of each demographic, behavioral, and security feature preference variable. The  $R^2$  value for the model was .517, and the model was found to be significant ( $p < .001$ ).
22. Groeneboom and Jones, "Issues of Security in Hotels," 14-19.
23. Gutierrez, "Eye Opener."



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