

THE EFFECT OF TOURIST PERSONAL THEFT ON FUTURE TRAVEL  
DECISIONS

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Past research has shown that theft is a prevalent crime against tourists. This study's purpose was to determine the effects of past incidents of personal theft on tourists' future decisions to travel by analyzing and comparing those who have experienced personal theft to those who heard of such incidents through personal accounts of friends or family. The findings, which were taken from a survey of 215 respondents, revealed that that experiencing personal theft, or knowing of someone who has, is not a deterrent for visiting a destination where the theft occurred. Results also showed that one aspect of theft that was a deterrent to travel to destinations was how the authorities handled the reporting of the theft. If these findings are confirmed by other studies, then destinations that are afflicted by such thefts should not necessarily see a reduction in tourist arrivals.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to Shelly. Thank you for your guidance and help, without which I could not have gotten through the past few years.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Crimes including personal theft occur to many tourists on a daily basis. These events cannot only cause anguish and, at times, considerable financial loss, but can ruin a vacation experience. Tourists take vacations to relax and get away from the stress of their lives but the feelings of vulnerability that can accompany victimization can create bitterness toward the destination as well as their entire vacation experience. These incidents of crime, depending upon the severity, along with previous attitudes and experiences with crime, can alter perceptions of that destination. This may even lead tourists to choose not to return to that destination, or in worse case scenarios cease to travel in the future.

One lasting benefit of taking a vacation is sharing the experience with others. Sharing pictures, brochures and telling tales of one's experiences enables one to relive the vacation. These accounts are all part of the lingering enjoyment of a vacation experience. Tourists share good experiences along with bad--especially if the event is a crime.

Vacation choices are made by information obtained in many different ways: through the media, travel books and especially from friends and family that have visited destinations. These accounts from friends and family can be very influential in one's choice of a destination, whether positive or negative. If an experience with theft is learned of, depending upon the severity and the victim's personal view towards theft, it can influence others to consider not traveling to that destination. At times, it can have the same effect as if one were to experience the theft first hand. These accounts may even cause one to decide not to travel to that particular destination.

Existing research can determine that personal theft occurs and where, but how do incidents of personal theft affect the travel habits of the victim? We can also identify that media accounts of crime in tourist areas have a negative effect on travel. Research has also shown that theft is the most common crime experienced by tourists. With this known, there have been no studies that have specifically looked at theft victimization of tourists and how this victimization affects their future travel plans. In addition, if a traveler hears of a personal account from a friend or family member who has been a victim of theft, does this affect their view on travel to that area?

Many factors may influence the relationship between personal theft and the decision to travel. One factor is the length of time that has passed since the crime has occurred. As the old saying goes, "Time heals all wounds", which may or may not be true in this situation. Theft can occur in one of two manners, off one's person or from their hotel or car. Thefts that are off one's person tend to be more traumatic because of the personal invasion by the thief. When a victim's personal space is invaded, a sense of violation occurs. The severity of the theft can influence this relationship as well. Severity is subjective; different people can measure severity in different ways. Some people may measure the severity of the theft by the dollar value of the property and/money that was stolen, whereas some may measure it by their perception of a severe crime. As mentioned above, if an invasion of personal space or even bodily harm occurred during the theft, this may increase the severity in the mind of the victim. Severity can also be measured by looking at the type of items that were stolen and where they were stolen. Previous history with crime victimization not while traveling can cause the traveler to have a tainted view of crime. If one is already fearful of crime because of past victimization, hearing of an account of victimization, or being a victim again, can only reinforce that fear. In the United States, we are

used to a structured criminal justice system. Reporting crime is the norm in our society. However, when one is traveling, reporting occurs less frequently. There are various reasons for this, the main one being the hassle to return to the destination to testify. There are also have language barriers, unfamiliarity with local criminal systems, as well as the time it takes away from a tourist's vacation to report the crime. If the crime is reported, the way it is handled by the authorities can greatly influence a tourist's perception of the theft experience. A negative experience with reporting a crime can turn a minor incident into a major catastrophe. All these factors can influence the relationship between the theft or knowledge of theft and one's decision to travel.

This research attempts to determine if a correlation exists between personal theft and the decision to travel, and if the intervening variables mentioned above influence these decisions. This research is developed using the following problem statement.

### **Problem Statement**

Theft committed against tourists causes financial loss, distress, and psychological pain.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study will be to determine the effects of past incidents of personal theft on tourists' future decisions to travel by analyzing two study groups, those who have experienced personal theft, and those who heard of incidents of personal theft through personal accounts of friends or family.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Crime and Violence**

#### **History**

The history of theft against tourists or travelers can be traced back to medieval times when highway robbers were the fashion. Their victims were well-to-do travelers in carriages, on horseback or stagecoach. One of the most famous highway robbers was said to be Robin Hood, who was known for robbing the rich (travelers) and giving to the poor (Brandon, 2001).

#### **Definitions and Types of Crime**

Criminology, the study of crime, draws its theoretical basis from many different disciplines, such as legal studies, psychology, biology, and sociology. In an effort to combine these theories, the field of criminology has developed several integrated theories. Of these integrated theories, two particularly relate to tourism crime: the routine activities theory and the rational choice theory. The routine activities theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) is based upon the theory that changes in the routine activities of everyday life can lead to criminality. This theory states that the disruption of daily activities influences criminal opportunity and that three minimal elements need to exist for crime to occur: motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians. Focusing on opportunity, the rational choice theory, also known as choice theory and situational theory, states that criminals do not randomly select their targets. They rationally choose both target of the crime and the type of crime they will commit. In evaluating crimes against tourists,

these two theories should be kept in mind. As will be discussed, the elements of each theory apply with tourist being “out of their daily activity” and a “target” of crime.

Crime has been defined in numerous ways. For the purpose of this study, we will use Tappan’s (1947) definition which states that “crime is an international act in violation of the criminal law (statutory and case law), committed without defense or excuse, and penalized by the state as a felony or misdemeanor” (Tappan, 1947).

Brown, Esbensen & Geis (1996) provide a typology for crime in three classes: violent, economic, and victimless. The fear of death or serious injury often causes one to view violent crimes as the most serious of the three classes. Violent crimes of a “serious” nature include murder, assault, rape, and robbery. According to Brown et al. (1996), “what constitutes a ‘serious’ violent crime is a function of traditional and ideological and not necessarily the result of close attention to the implications of different behaviors.” Economic crimes, are committed by those “unable or unwilling to obtain these tokens of self-value-money and goods-in a legitimate manner” (Brown, Esbensen, & Geis, 1996).

In the next section, the most prevalent crimes against tourists will be discussed. These crimes include theft, violent crimes, terrorism, and violence cause by political instability.

### **Theft**

Theft encompasses several types of crime, the broadest being larceny. “Larceny involves the taking of property from a person, without that person’s consent and with the intent to deprive the

person permanently of the use of the property.”(Brown et al., 1996) Two types of larceny are *grand larceny* and *petit* (petty), depending upon the value of the property stolen. Another form of theft is robbery. Brown et al. (1996) defines robbery as “a form of theft in which goods or money are taken from a person against that person’s will *through* the use of *violence or fear*.” The key words in this definition are violence or fear; these words distinguish this type of theft. Burglary in general is defined as a crime against a dwelling. For the purposes of this study, we consider a dwelling, a hotel room or a place where a tourist resides (except a private residence) while traveling.

For the purpose of this study, personal theft is defined as “theft of personal property, either from one’s person, a car, or lodging establishment, while a tourist is traveling.”

### **Terrorism**

The Code of Federal Regulations defines terrorism as “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (National Archives and Records Administration (2003). Terrorists use violence to draw attention to their political cause and tend to be viewed as villains by some and heroes by others. A successful act of terrorism is viewed as one that draws a great deal of international attention, clearly demonstrates the resourcefulness of the terrorist group, emphasizes the determination of the group and affords a direct strike against the enemy and its symbols (Wall, 1995).

## **Political Violence/Political Instability**

The International Law Dictionary defines political violence as “War, revolution, civil strife, terrorism, and similar acts that can result in injury or loss of property” (Bledsoe & Boczek, 1987). Political instability is also defined as “A situation in which conditions and mechanisms of governance and rule are challenged as to their political legitimacy by elements operating from outside of the normal operations of the political system” (Hall & O'Sullivan, 1995b). All these acts of political violence or even non-political instability in a region, state, country, or city can result in civil unrest. Any area that experiences any forms of general lawlessness can incur irreparable damage to its image. These types of instability can not only deter tourist visitation but also be detrimental to the growth of tourism in that area. Some areas thrive on tourist revenue and this type of strife can gravely affect the economic development of an area. It can take years or even decades for an area to recover from political violence or instability.

## **Fear of Crime and Violence**

In the United States, fear of crime has been a topic of study since the 1960's. Studies regarding attitude and opinions have revealed that fear of crime varies across subgroups of the population. Studies have found that fear of crime is higher among females and blacks. Fear is positively associated with age and community size but negatively associated with income (Garofalo & Laub, 1978). According to Gabriel & Greve (2003, p. 601) “fear of crime focuses on a person's characteristic perception and examination of a particular type of event (namely crime).”

Americans and people all over the world are preoccupied with the phenomenon of crime.

Incidents portrayed in the media regarding crime in the United States and around the world create a sense that crime cannot be controlled, which causes a generalized fear of crime. Many polls conducted in the United States by the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* show that fear of crime regarding many issues is increasing while actual crime is either stagnant or declining. These studies also show that 65% of people's influence regarding crime comes from media coverage. With media and television competing for ratings, reporting incidents of crime including crime stories with a "shock factor" seem to be the norm today.

The concept of "fear of crime" has been researched from many different perspectives; we will look at two here, criminology, and sociology. In the field of criminology alone, over 200 articles have been written about this topic. (Farrall, Bannister, Ditton, & Gilchrist, 2000), claim that "fear of crime" is the most researched topic in contemporary criminology.

From a criminology perspective, Crank, Giacomazzi, and Heck (2003) attempted to assess citizens' attitudes toward crime and disorder in order to assist local law enforcement in the development of crime strategies. Among several hypotheses that were tested, results showed that residents who witness what they think is drug and gang activity are more likely to believe that crime exists in their neighborhood. The correlating factor in this hypothesis is that residents who watch more television are more likely to believe that crime exists in their neighborhood. Results also showed that residents' out-of-the-house activities, such as recreational and social activities were affected by their feelings of safety. Finally, respondents who believed in a strong social control infrastructure were more likely to feel safe out-of-doors in their neighborhoods, even when they experienced fear of crime and disorder. These results may suggest that if a



person feels concern over personal safety in their home environment, they may be cautious about travel.

Another criminology perspective on fear of crime comes from Rountree (1998) as she looked at the fear-crime linkage. Her study focused on individual (micro-level) and neighborhood (macro-level) crime experiences as well as examining the distinct effects of property versus violent crime experiences on fear. This was done by analyzing multilevel models of fear of violence versus fear of burglary. The study showed that victims of violent crimes had an increase in both fear of violence and fear of burglary. In contrast, burglary victims and those who live in a burglary-ridden neighborhood tend only to have an increased fear of burglary. In addition, living in a neighborhood of violent crime did not tend to increase one's fear of burglary (Rountree, 1998). With this study, we can again see how fear of crime, specifically burglary, is affected by victimization and environment. These factors are important to keep in mind when looking at why people are fearful of crime and how this affects future travel decisions.

In an attempt to explain the social psychological factors relating to fear of crime, Farral et al. (2000) replicated a social psychological model of the fear of crime. This model, developed by Van der Wurff in 1989, was based upon the assumption that the fear of crime is associated with four social psychological components:

Attractivity – the extent to which people see themselves or their possessions as an attractive target.

Evil Intent –the extent to which a person attributes criminal intentions to another individual or particular group.

Power – the degree of self-assurance and feeling of control that a person has with respect to possible threat or assault by another.

Criminalizable space – the situation in which a crime may take place and the extent to which a situation lends itself to criminal activities in the eye of a possible victim.

The results of the replication of the model showed that those who feel less capable of chasing off an assailant feel unsafe. Older people, women, and those with fewer financial resources also feel less safe. The Van der Wurff study also confirmed that gender plays an important role in the fear of crime suggesting important differences in what may trigger fear for men and women. For women, the model showed that perceiving themselves as a likely victim, by having their path blocked while walking alone, produced fear. Men, on the other hand, experienced fear when confronted with distrustful people. The study also found that--for both men and women-- frequent walks alone in the dark lowered feelings of fear. This finding may indicate that tourists who frequently visit unsafe destinations may become immune to the fear of crime and hence may be more likely to return to that destination (Farrall et al., 2000).

In research conducted over the last decade, vulnerability had been found to be significantly related to fear of crime. A recent study conducted by Killinas and Clerici (2000) interviewed a representative sample of the population of Switzerland (N = 726) concerning various aspects of

fear of crime relating to vulnerability. Fear of crime in the study was measured by responses to answers relating to how safe they feel after 10 p.m. while walking in their neighborhood, riding public transportation, and walking home from train/tram/bus stops. Vulnerability was evaluated by asking the respondent to assess his or her own ability to escape or resist in case of an attack by a younger assailant. In addition, respondents were asked about physical characteristics regarding their neighborhood's signs of decay such as graffiti, "strange" persons hanging around, and the proximity of their house to a forest, park, or waste ground. Results indicated that vulnerability turned out to be a very important factor in the explanation of personal feeling of fear of crime. Even after control for vulnerability, sex remained important, but not age. The authors point out that this may relate to a women's special exposure to sexual assault and harassment. It was shown that personal vulnerability was more important than neighborhood characteristics, i.e. signs of decay in relationship to measuring fear of crime (Killias & Clerici, 2000).

Perceived risk of crime refers to people recognizing the crime around them and estimating the probability of their becoming a crime victim (DuBow, McCabe, & Kaplin, 1979). This may lead to fear of crime and anxiety (Rountree, 1998) and many people may adjust their activities in response to both (Ferraro, 1995; Ross, 1993).

Hraba, Bao, Lorenx, and Pechacova (1998) tested whether criminal victimization and the characteristics of the respondent contributed to the perceived risk of crime in the Czech Republic as well as trust in the government. The results showed that trust in government was a significant factor in explaining perceived risk of crime. Past victimization and poor health were related to

the perceived increased risk of crime, which indicated that exposure and vulnerability were associated with perceived risk. As well, education and wealth were positively related to perceived increase risk of crime. The authors attribute this to the possibility that the educated may be more aware of reports on rising crime (Hraba, Bao, Lorenz, & Pechacova, 1998).

Tulloch (2000) discovered that perception of personal risk is strongly influenced by age and gender. He conducted 5 focus groups and 25 interviews with participants from the states of New South Wales and Tasmania. Their research found that perception of personal risk is strongly influenced by age and gender, with younger women perceiving themselves to be at greater risk. Older adults were less worried about personal crime because they saw themselves at less of a personal risk. This is perhaps because of their tendencies, as opposed to younger adults, to avoid riskier situations (Tulloch, 2000).

The perception of crime and violence can also be looked at from the perspective of crime seriousness. How serious one considers a crime can be based upon many factors. The study of the perception of crime seriousness dates back to 1964 when it was introduced by Sellin and Wolfgang. They argued that in order to assess the seriousness of crime one should not only look at the prevalence of criminal behavior reflected in crime rates, but also consider the nature of criminal acts (severity of victimization, cost to society, etc.). Before the Sellin and Wolfgang study, crime seriousness was measured by legal experts, Sellin and Wolfgang wanted to use a method that would reflect public opinion (Sellin & Wolfgang, 1964). Since then, much research has been conducted regarding this subject. These studies have focused on people's perception of how serious particular deviant or criminal behaviors are. Some studies focused on criminal

intent as the dimension affecting perceived seriousness. Many researchers have attempted to measure perceived seriousness by presenting typologies of crime and dividing them into different classifications. Sellin and Wolfgang (1964) began by dividing offenses into two classifications, Class I and Class II. Class I offenses included ones that cause bodily harm and/or property loss and/or property damage. All other offenses were classified as Class II. Research performed by Rossi, Waite, Bose, and Berk (1974) asked respondents to rate 140 acts in terms of seriousness based upon eleven characteristics. They found that the characteristics they developed could explain 68% of the variation in perceived seriousness. Other studies have used various methods to rate the perceived seriousness of crime; they include offense scenarios, surveys of the general population, and measurement scales (Stylianou, 2003).

### **Effects of Crime and Violence**

The effects of crime can be viewed from two perspectives: macro and micro. The macro effects of crime pertain to how crime affects society in general. This relates to the effect of crime on a community or a tourist destination. The micro effects relate to how crime affects a person or victim.

#### **Macro**

Crime affects society on a macro level in many ways. Economically, crime costs consumers billions of dollars each year; the economic effects are passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices. “Economic costs of crime arise when crime causes society to divert time, energy and resources from more productive resources” (Entorf & Spengler, 2002). Because public authorities are given the charge of preventing crimes and prosecuting criminals, the citizens are

the ones who end up paying for these services through increases in local, state, and national taxes. Another economic cost to society is the expense of incarcerating convicted criminals.

The effects of crime and terrorism on societies as a whole can be devastating. Societies can cease to function normally if crime becomes the overriding concern, an example being Israel, where the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has caused the cessation of a normal functioning society and deteriorated into one where citizens have to be concerned about terrorist acts every time they step outside of their homes. On a lesser scale, the sniper shootings of 2002 in the Washington DC area interrupted the function of normal life for the majority of citizens. Fear spread throughout the area causing citizens to avoid gas stations, craft stores and other places where previous shootings had occurred. Parents stopped taking children to parks, school recesses were cancelled, and virtually all outdoor activities were halted (Sernike, 2002). Hence, crime in many forms can interrupt “normal” life.

### **Micro**

The micro effects of crime involve its consequences on individuals. As discussed earlier, fear of crime can have a major effect on an individual’s life whether or not the fear is actually rational. Fear of crime can cause people to remain in their home, curb activities, and even avoid travel. Victimization of individuals can have various physical as well as psychological effects. Medical costs, counseling and lost wages, can cause great burdens for victims. In 1997, it was estimated that in the USA firearm injuries alone cost \$802 million in hospital charges (Srikameswaran, 2003). In 1998, according to the FBI, the cost of criminal victimization (excluding medical

treatments) in the United States was said to exceed \$15.8 billion (Justice & Statistics, 1999).

The financial costs of crime to victims may be minor compared to the pain and suffering experienced by victims and their families. These effects can be long lasting. Even victims of burglary can cause an individual to become fearful of being victimized again. Those fears may lead to interruption in normal life functions.

### **Crime and Violence at Tourist Destinations**

The most basic of all questions, when discussing crime and tourism, is whether there is a relationship between the two. Pizam (1982) attempted to test empirically the association between tourism and crime on a national level. His study used ten sociodemographic variables and tourism expenditures as possible predictors for nine types of crimes in the U.S. in order to investigate the relative contribution of tourism to crime levels. The results showed that tourism had an extremely small effect on crime levels. In only four out of the nine studied crimes (property, robbery, rape, and aggravated assault) tourism expenditures were found to be a statistically significant predictor of crime levels. However, the relative importance of tourism expenditures on crime levels was so low compared to the other variables that it led to the conclusion that tourism does not constitute a meaningful determinant of crime. Hence, in looking at the relationship between tourism and crime, the tourism industry in the United States as a whole should not be considered a meaningful contributor to crime (Pizam, 1982).

In an effort to classify the attributes of acts of tourism-related crime and violence, Pizam (1999) created a typology, which was developed from an extensive examination of 300 case studies over

a period of 10 years. He classified acts of tourist crimes by the nature of the criminal/violent act, namely motive, victim, location, severity, frequency, and type. Motive was divided into four categories: economic, social, political, and personal. Economic crimes such as theft, robbery, and burglary were considered nonviolent criminal acts, which are committed with economic motives. Crimes committed with a social motive--such as theft, burglary, vandalism, or arson--are committed to right some perceived form of social injustice that was committed against the criminal's group. Political and religious motives are often associated with terrorist acts. Criminals that commit these acts are motivated by some political or religious injustice. Finally, personal motive is fueled by the fact that the victim and the criminal know each other and have some personal relationship.

Another way that Pizam classified acts of tourist crime was by victim. He subdivided victims of crime into resident, political figures, famous personalities, tourists, and businesses (all types). Crimes at tourist destinations against all these types of persons can affect the image of that tourist destination. Location was divided into off-tourism business premises and on-tourism business premises. Pizam questions if the location of the criminal or violent act affects the magnitude of the impact. He suggests that it is possible that the severity of the criminal/violent act would affect the magnitude of the impact. He divides severity of act of the act into loss of property, bodily harm, loss of life, and mass destruction of life and property. Frequency of act is classified as rare, occasional, rapid succession, and constant. The more frequent the act, Pizam feels, the greater the impact on tourist demand. Lastly, type of act is divided into crime, civil or political unrest, riots, terrorism, and war. With war having the most serious impact on tourist



demand, these classifications are divided according to their differential impact on tourist demand (Pizam, 1999).

## **Types of Crime and Violence at Tourist Destinations**

### **Terrorism and Political Instability**

Terrorism and violence caused by political instability are two forms of crime and violence that are usually politically motivated. According to Richter and Waugh (1986 p. 231), “There is a logical connection between terrorism and tourism, indeed travel has been associated with increased vulnerability to all types of crime from biblical days. But, throughout most of history, tourists were individual victims of crime, not symbolic targets for major acts of political violence.” Terrorism is by no means a new form of political expression, it has become all too familiar to the world, not only since the events of September 11, 2001 but during the last century. Our familiarity with this phenomenon was not the result of the nature of the violent act themselves or the psychological, economic, political and physical damage that they cause to their victims, family and society at large but mostly because of the awareness that was created by the mass media (Richter & Waugh, 1986). Live television has perhaps made the greatest contribution to making tourists aware of terrorism and violence caused by political instability. Many people viewed the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> as they unfolded before the world’s eyes. Before this horrific event, CNN subscribers around the world watched tanks as they rolled into Beijing’s Tiananmen Square to subdue the student protesters (Hall & O’Sullivan, 1995a). Live

events such as these, as well as media coverage of ongoing political strife, can influence the travel plans of many.

Not only does the news media provide negative images to the world regarding terrorist events, but terrorists also count on the potential for media coverage when attacking tourists. This exposure provides them a stage to demonstrate their self-proclaimed “political statement” to the world. As an example, in the 1980’s, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) () used the hijacking of planes as their stage. World events have also created a stage for terrorist activity, such as the PLO attack on the Israeli team at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich (Hall & O’Sullivan, 1995a).

There are several reasons why international tourists have become attractive targets for terrorists:

1. Tourist facilities provide an easy means of escape in regards to transportation facilities and channels for transportation of weapons.
2. The large number of foreign-speaking visitors at a destination make it is easy for terrorists to fit in and not be noticed.
3. Tourist attractions and tourist events provide cover for terrorists due to the large numbers of people that visit these areas.
4. The transfer of money by terrorists is easily conducted in tourist areas (Richter & Waugh, 1986).

A number of different types of political instability can affect tourism. Hall and O’Sullivan

(1995) cited several forms: international wars, civil wars, coups, terrorism, riots/political and social unrests, and strikes. All types of warfare are not only devastating to the influx of tourism but also damage the actual infrastructure of a tourist destination. Coups are another type of political instability that can affect tourism, although they are often shorter lived than wars; for example, the change of regime in Afghanistan between 1978 and 1979 was accompanied by a 60 percent fall in tourism. Whether it be terrorism or political instability, tourists who are aware of this instability may tend to decide avoid visiting an affected tourism destination for fear of becoming victims themselves.

### **Violent Crimes**

Although rare, tourists do become victims of violent crimes such as robbery, rape, assault, and even murder. These crimes have a more negative effect on tourists than personal property crimes. Violent crimes are, at times, life altering and can be more devastating to a victim than a theft.

Incidents such as the killing of a disabled American tourist on the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship bring massive media attention. This incident caused tourists to avoid Mediterranean cruise travel and opt for the Caribbean and Alaskan lines instead ("Caribbean and Alaska cruise report record demand," 1986). Other incidents of violent crime against tourists were the killing of a pregnant German mother in Miami and a male English tourist near Tallahassee. These murders in Florida caused a decrease in tourist arrivals to the state and tarnished the image of Florida as a safe tourist destination.

Fujii & Mak (1980) studied crime in Hawaii and found a statistically significant relationship between tourism and violent crimes such as murder/homicide and rape. They performed a time series analysis of crime from 1961 to 1975. This analysis showed a “significant relationship between tourism and murder/homicide”(Fujii & Mak, 1980). In the resort area of Waikiki, their cross section results of crime showed a positive relationship between tourism and assault. Chesney-Lind, Lind, and Schasfsma (1983) found a similar significant relationship between tourism and the rate of assault in Honolulu. In addition, the murder rate was close to significant (Chesney-Lind, Lind, & Schaafsma, 1983).

Another study performed in Hawaii looked at violent crimes in two different cities, Honolulu and Kauai. The study showed that tourists were significantly more likely to become victims of the violent crimes of robbery and rape. In Honolulu, violent crimes against tourists were 27% higher than against residents. Specifically, the robbery rate was 62% higher than residents and tourists were 11% more likely to be a victim of rape. Comparing these statistics with national averages for crimes against residents and tourists, tourist robbery in Honolulu was even higher than the U.S. average and tourist rape was slightly under. The city of Kauai showed similar results. The assault burglary rate for tourists was higher than residents. The rape rate of tourists was nearly three times that of residents and two times that of the national average.

### **Theft**

Theft is the most prominent crime against tourists as shown in many studies regarding crime and tourism (Brayshaw, 1995; Chesney-Lind & Lind, 1986; de Albuquerque & McElroy, 1999; Harper, 2001; Mawby, 2000). In a study by Mawby (2000), burglary was found to be the most

prominent crime experienced by tourists with theft from person and attempted theft from person being the next most common. The study showed a rate of victimization of 467 out of 10,000 for burglary, 350 out of 10,000 for attempted theft from person, and 331 out of 10,000 for theft from person. In order to compare the responses from this survey against victim survey data from the BCS British Crime Survey, the responses were multiplied by 26 (52 weeks per year /2) in order to achieve approximate annual incidence rates using an average length of vacation of two weeks. When the authors compared these results against the BCS, they found the rates estimated in their survey to be much higher than the BCS rates and concluded that people generally experience considerably higher rates of victimization while they travel than they do at home (Mawby, 2000).

In a study of tourist crimes in the Caribbean, statistics show that burglary and larceny against tourists in Barbados between 1989 and 1993 were far more prevalent than murder, wounding, rape, or robbery. Statistics were also reported in the form of rates per 100,000 persons in an attempt to compare rates of crimes against tourists to those against residents. As the hypothesis of the study stated, residents were much more likely to be victimized by violent crime, (over six times more likely to be murdered or be a victim of aggravated assault) than residents. The statistics showed that tourists were disproportionately victimized by property crimes and robbery and they were between four to six times more likely to be robbed than residents were. Tourists were also much more likely to have valuables stolen from their persons, rooms, or vehicles than residents were. The study also indicated that police in several Caribbean destinations sometimes expressed a rather offhand attitude towards tourist property crimes and tended to respond in an apathetic way to these types of crime. Police often looked upon tourists as being incredibly naïve, at times even blaming the victims. The authors states: “Popular destinations would do

well to specially train a handful of officers to investigate and report crimes against tourists since sympathetic handling by the police goes a long way toward softening the impact of being victimized while on holiday” (de Albuquerque & McElroy, 1999).

A study conducted using data regarding criminal victimization from two of Hawaii’s police departments, Honolulu and Kauai. The authors found that tourists were significantly more likely than local residents to be the victims of crime. In both areas, statistics showed that tourists experienced a higher rate of larceny than residents did. In Honolulu, rates for burglary larceny, and robbery were substantially higher for tourists. The data showed that the robbery rate among tourists was 62.9% higher than the comparable rate for residents. The results also indicated that tourists in Honolulu were robbed at a rate above the national average. The results from the county of Kauai illustrated that tourists were victims of robbery at a rate 6 times higher than that of residents. As in Honolulu, tourists had higher rates of robbery, larceny, and rape in the county of Kauai than residents. The authors conclude that tourists are disproportionately the victims of crime compared to residents (Chesney-Lind & Lind, 1986).

Barker, Page and Meyer (2002) conducted a study of crimes against tourists attending the 2000 America’s Cup in Auckland New Zealand. The main purpose of the America’s Cup study was to compare the rates of crimes conducted against international versus those against domestic tourists. Data was collected by interviewing non-resident tourists attending the America’s Cup as well as the use of tourist victim information reports (TVIRs), which are police reports used for reporting crime against tourists. The results show that property crime was predominant over violent crimes, 98.5% versus 1.5%. Fifty five percent of crimes reported were theft from

vehicles; other theft comprised 39.1%. The study also compared victimization of overseas versus domestic tourists. It was found that overseas tourists were more likely to experience theft from accommodations or their person and the dollar value of items stolen was higher than that of domestic tourists. On the other hand, domestic tourists were more likely to experience theft from vehicles. In regards to location, 55% of thefts occurred in public places, 15.8% occurred in accommodations, and 10.4% occurred in campervans. Of the total crime reported in the tourist victim information reports, 50% involved theft or burglary from accommodations and 29.4% theft from vehicles.

In an attempt to analyze the results of several studies, one study compared tourist and resident populations' crime experience in five international locations. The study confirmed the findings of previous studies, stating that tourist victimization is higher than non-tourist victimization. The author also confirmed that tourists are more likely to experience larceny, theft, and robbery than residents (Harper, 2001).

As demonstrated by the studies cited above, theft is undeniably the most prevalent crime against tourists. Studies have shown time after time, that tourists are more likely to be a victim of theft of personal property than a victim of violent crime. In cases where comparison data between residents and tourists are available, studies also show that tourists, at certain destinations, are even more likely than residents to be victims of theft of personal property.

All previous studies regarding crime against tourists have used crime, in general, as their focus. The focus of this study is on theft of personal property, since previous studies have indicated that

theft is the most prevalent type of crime against tourists.

### **Prevalence of Crime and Violence at Tourist Destinations**

Several theories of criminology have been used to understand how destinations expose visitors to the risk of criminal victimization (Crotts, 1996). Two predominant theories, the Hot Spot theory and the Routine Activities Theory, (Cohen & Felson, 1979) were used to attempt to place the location and incidence of crimes against tourists into theoretical contexts. The Routine Activity Theory suggests three elements for a predatory crime to occur: a suitable target, a motivated offender, and the absence of capable guardians (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Tourist destinations seem to fit into this framework. Usually, tourists make a suitable target because of their tendency to carry large amounts of cash and unknowingly roam in areas that residents would consider dangerous. The offenders are motivated to victimize tourists because of their view of them as the “haves” and view of themselves as the “have-nots,” the so-called Robin Hood theory. In addition, because many tourist destinations are not willing to admit that tourist crime is a problem, they may not have the “capable guardians” or law enforcement agents in place in order to deter tourist crime.

The Hot Spot theory can also be used to explain the reason why certain locations in tourist destinations seem to expose tourists to incidences of victimization. As suggested by Crotts (1996), “Places where tourists are at the greatest risk of becoming victimized have been shown to cluster in a few specific types of places” or “Hot Spots” (Crotts, 1996). These places or “hot spots” provide a place of opportunity in which predatory crimes can occur. From the Uniform Crime Reports, Crotts provided statistical information for the state of Florida. For example,



Dade County (the greater Miami area) was the location of 29 percent of all reported property crimes against tourists and 37 percent of all reported violent crimes against tourist in the state of Florida during 1993. To put these statistics in perspective, in the same year Dade County hosted 16 percent of the state's tourists but was the location of 30 percent of the total crimes committed against tourists.

Cochran, Bromley, and Branch (2002) also used the Hot Spot theory in their study analyzing victimization and fear of crime in the entertainment district of Ybor City in Tampa Florida. The study tested Meithe and Meier's (Meithe & Meier, 1990) "structural choice" model developed in 1990. This model examines "structural" features such as proximity to offenders and exposure to risk and "choice" features such as target attractiveness and guardianship. The results of the study indicated that victimization and fear of crime were significantly associated with two constructs of the structural choice theory, proximity, and guardianship. However, victimization and fear of crime were not significantly associated with exposure or target attractiveness. The proximity construct was demonstrated by findings showing that living or working in Ybor city carried a higher risk of victimization. Ybor City patrons who report having victimized friends were 4.6 times more likely to be crime victims themselves than those who did not live or work in Ybor city. The guardianship construct of the theory was demonstrated by findings that patrons who perceived higher levels of guardianship were less likely to be crime victims. This is the case, even though the Ybor City entertainment district tends to host a great amount of local residents.

In a comparison of tourist crime and tourist seasons in Miami, seven major crimes, namely murder, rape, robbery, assault, larceny, burglary, and auto theft, were studied from 1963 to 1966.

The study investigated whether seasonal tourism generated increased crime rate against persons and property. The results indicated that the “tourist season” (which is December through April) and the “crime season” seem to show a similar pattern. More specifically, major economic crimes, such as robbery, larceny, and burglary, had a similar season as tourism, while auto theft and crimes of passion did not (McPheters & Stronge, 1974).

### **Tourist Victimization**

Today, many tourist destinations put a great deal of time and effort in battling the victimization of tourists and the negative destination image that results (Bloom, 1995).

Studies have shown that tourist victimization—or, in other words, the probability of becoming a victim of crime, particularly in larceny, theft and robbery crimes—is higher than resident victimization (Bloom, 1995; Chesney-Lind & Lind, 1986; de Albuquerque & McElroy, 1999; Harper, 2001; Jud, 1975; Mawby, 2000; Pelfrey, 1998). In the Caribbean, tourists in mass tourist destinations were significantly more likely to be victims of property crime and robbery, while residents were more likely to be victimized by violent crimes such as murder and aggravated assault. This finding was substantiated by data collected from the Royal Barbados Police Force from 1989-1993 (de Albuquerque & McElroy, 1999).

Mawby (2000) studied tourist victimization using subscribers to the British travel magazine *Holiday Which?*, and found that 50 respondents, or about 10%, reported 92 incidents of crime. The most common crime committed against the respondents was burglary. The second and third most common crimes were attempted and actual theft from person/items temporarily left.

Mawby also found that those who had been victimized while on vacation were more likely to be fearful when going out, felt unsafe going out in the evening and worried about being victimized again. These responses were almost double than those of the non-victims in these areas (Mawby, 2000). This proves that victimization produces fear of crime, which can in turn affect one's perception of a destination. Individuals who have been victimized will go on to tell friends and family of their victimization, which will in turn affect *their* perception of that destination. This demonstrates how the effects of victimization reach far beyond the victim itself.

Other studies on tourism victimization have measured the frequency of incidents during special events. During the 2000 America's Cup in Auckland New Zealand, it was found that there was no significant difference between the victimization rates of domestic and overseas tourists. The differences that existed in the victimization rates were affected by ethnicity and form of accommodations. In addition, crimes against overseas tourists were more likely to involve large property theft from accommodations while crimes against domestic tourists were more likely to involve theft from vehicles (M. Barker, Page, & Meyer, 2002).

In order to show that tourist robbery reflects a rational, rather than spontaneous process, Harper (2001) undertook a study from a unique perspective--that of the criminal. Four police informants were interviewed providing valuable information regarding how they perceive tourists as victims and their thought process of preying on those victims. The authors concluded that criminals seem to take advantage, in a rational and calculated manner, of tourists in vulnerable situations(Harper, 2001). Hence, this shows that, from a criminal's perspective, tourists are vulnerable to victimization.

Tourist can be considered vulnerable to criminal victimization for many reasons:

1. They are obvious in their dress
2. They carry items of portable wealth
3. They are relaxed and off guard
4. They are less likely to press charges should the criminal be caught

Tourists tend to dress like tourists, with clothes that say, "I'm on vacation", and in the case of tourists from foreign countries tend to stand out even more with clothes not typically found in the host country. Because they are traveling and tend to spend money, they are likely to be carrying large amounts of cash and expensive items such as cameras. Since they are on vacation to relax, they tend to have a carefree attitude and are not as cautious as if they were at home. Tourists tend not to press charges because of the expense and inconvenience to return to the destination to testify. It is both difficult and expensive for tourists to return to the resort area to testify in a subsequent trial (Chesney-Lind & Lind, 1986). Criminals are aware of this and prey on tourists because of this fact (Ryan, 1993). There has been consideration by some tourist destinations to pay tourists' travel expenses to return to testify (Chesney-Lind & Lind, 1986; Haitch, 1981; Zonana, 1980). This would be done in an effort to encourage more tourists to press charges and in turn reduce the tourism crime rate. In addition, tourists are more vulnerable to victimization because they take more risks, are not familiar with their surroundings, and spend time sightseeing and not paying attention to their surrounding. Tourists tend to engage in activities that facilitate their victimization, such as frequenting bars at late hours, traveling to remote and unfamiliar areas or wandering into areas that locals would consider dangerous. Tourists also

have no social support (no one related to them) in the area to assist if they are victimized (Chesney-Lind & Lind, 1986). These are all reasons why tourists are susceptible to victimization while traveling. This vulnerability can lead to victimization, which in turn can cause tourists to decide not to return to that destination.

### **Effects of Crime on a Tourist Destination**

Terrorism, war, and criminal activity directed against tourists have affected many destinations. The shooting of international tourists in Orlando and Miami in 1993 (Stoker, 1993), terrorist attacks in Egypt in the early 90's (Aziz, 1995) and most recently the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001 (Goodrich, 2002) are just a few examples of incidents of crime and violence that had serious effects on tourism.

Most tourist destinations try to paint a beautiful picture of the area in order to entice travelers to visit. In addition, tourist destinations often try to maintain silence about crimes in and around their destination (Kathrada, Burger, & Dohnal, 1999), though statistics about crime and travel destinations are collected and made public. In the United States, the State department issues travel warnings for certain countries and or areas to warn potential tourists of safety/security concerns, sometimes suggesting that Americans to avoid traveling to certain areas. The news media also plays a role in the dissemination of this information. As an example, an Annual Personal Safety Survey by Mercer Human Resource Consulting, cited in the British *Daily Telegraph* (Starmer-Smith, 2003), listed the world's most crime-prone tourist destinations. In order of severity, they were Kingston, Jamaica; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Cape Town, South Africa; Mexico City, Mexico; St. Petersburg, Russia; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Bangkok, Thailand;

Washington D.C., USA; Rome, Italy; and Athens, Greece. Because appearing on this list could be detrimental to the reputation of a city as a tourist destination, many cities often do not discuss the issue of crimes in public (Kathrada et al., 1999). Information obtained by tourists from media accounts or articles such as these could greatly affect a tourist's travel decisions.

Hong Kong, another tourist destination known for crime prevalence, has recently experienced an escalation of street crime. Hong Kong had three times as many pick-pocketing cases in 2003 as for the same period in 1998. The cause was determined to be mostly mainland criminals working for organized crime syndicates and were themselves posing as tourists. This however, put tourist officials in a quandary because they needed to devise a mean of restricting criminal visitors without limiting the influx of legitimate tourists (Fraser, 2003).

Another obstacle for tourist destination officials to overcome is the amount and types of media attention particular incidents receive. Negative media attention on a tourist destination in relationship to crime incidences' can sometimes be blown out of proportion (Crystal, 1993). In the case of the murder of a pregnant German mother in Miami and a male English tourist near Tallahassee, Florida, tourism to Florida declined significantly. Media accounts suggested that crime was rampant against Florida tourists when official statistics told another story. These statistics showed that crime reported by non-residents had in fact been on the decline in Florida since 1990, however the "perception" of crime became reality following the much publicized shootings and tourist arrivals declined (Schiebler, Crotts, & Hillinger, 1995).

Although often ranked by travel intermediaries as one of the top three U.S. urban destinations, New Orleans, another destination known for its high crime rates, has been threatened by the negative perceptions of potential tourists and meeting planners. Over the past decade, New Orleans had experienced growth of its tourism industry with the construction of new attractions, new hotels, convention centers, and gambling facilities. However, with growth came crime. The poor condition of education, public health and the level of poverty have contributed to rising crime statistics in New Orleans. During that period, New Orleans had a murder rate eight times that of the national average and five times that of New York City. Residents as well as visitors experience theft and muggings, even in the streets of the French Quarter. Negative media coverage as well as anonymous letters sent to meeting planners regarding high crime rates contributed to this negative perception. In a study of 350 meeting planners and tour operators conducted by the University of New Orleans, New Orleans scored the lowest of eight cities regarding perception of visitor safety (Research, 1996). These safety concerns seem to be more prevalent among travel intermediaries than tourists themselves. At the time of the article, a New Orleans visitor profile report indicated that 82.4% of the respondents perceived New Orleans to be somewhat safe or safe destination (Dimanche & Moody, 1997). The authors note that the results could be explained by the fact that visitors who have actually made the decision to travel to New Orleans could be considered risk takers and they have chosen the destination for its risqué image (Dimanche & Lepetic, 1999).

Impact in regards to tourist arrivals is a major concern to tourist destinations. In order to confirm the hypothesis that high crime rates in Jamaica had a negative impact on tourist arrivals Alleyne and Boxill (2003) examined the relationship between tourist arrivals and crime rates. For a

period of 37 years, crime rate statistics were analyzed using a transfer function to account for the variation in the total arrivals to the destination. The transfer function model allowed the researchers to analyze immediate and delayed impact of crime rates on tourist arrivals. Two markets were studied, European and total arrivals. The data showed that the crime rates had a negative effect on both markets, however, there was a greater concern regarding arrivals from the European market. The impact of crime for the overall market was relatively small. The authors provided several reasons for the above results. First, tourists in all-inclusive resorts have very little contact with the outside of the hotel. This limits the exposure of these tourists to crimes. In analyzing the market trends, it was found that the European market did not frequent all-inclusive resorts, making this market more susceptible to crimes. In an effort to counteract the negative effects of the high crime rates, the Jamaican Tourist Board increased advertising as well as the promotion of various discount packages by hotels. These efforts, the authors suggested, had a positive impact on arrivals for the overall market (Alleyne & Boxill, 2003).

### **Terrorism, War, and Civil Unrest**

The political and economical effects of terrorism on tourism are immense. “Since tourism is particularly sensitive to changing tastes and external dangers, violence--actual or potential--can seriously impede tourist activity” (Pizam, 1999).

During the height of terrorist activities in mid 80’s, over 20 acts of terrorism were publicized. The effects of this publicity were extremely detrimental to the tourism industries of the countries affected. In 1985, more than six million Americans visited Europe, but following a large number of terrorist acts against tourists, the flow of tourists to Europe decreased by 30% the following



year (Richter & Waugh, 1986). The economic effects were devastating as well. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) cited \$105 billion loss in unearned tourism receipts due to the threat of terrorism in 1985. During the same period, most Mediterranean countries experienced a 50% decline in international tourism while Egypt had a 65% decline in bookings due to cancellation by American tourists. A Gallup Poll conducted by Newsweek in April of 1986 showed that 79% of Americans cited the threat of terrorism as the reason why they would not travel overseas. In the 90's, terrorism incidents declined but the lethality increased according to the Department of State. In the 90's, major terrorist attacks on U.S. soil began to have effects such as the bombing of the parking garage of the World Trade Center, the derailing of an Amtrak passenger train in the Arizona desert and the bombing of TWA800 en route from New York's JFK Airport to Paris (Sevil F. Sonmez & Alan R. Graefe, 1998). Richter (1983) suggested that, "travelers might be targeted for violent attacks because they are perceived as ambassadors for their countries, as well as being 'soft' targets". Because the media normally magnifies the severity of terrorist incidents at tourist destinations, terrorists achieve their aim of getting the attention they are seeking. This confirms the usefulness on the part of terrorists, of involving tourists in terrorist activities (Richter, 1983).

By now, it is evident that the terrorist incident that caused the largest impact on tourist destinations was the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Because the weapons used in the attack were commercial airplanes, the consequences on the tourism and travel industry were immediate and severe (Butler, 2002). The immediate effects were declines in airline passenger loads of 50% and more, with similar declines in hotel occupancy. During the first month after the attacks, many airlines announced layoffs--some as

high as 20,000 employees. It is estimated that the hotel industry suffered a loss of at least two billion dollars within the first month after the attacks due to cancelled trade shows, conventions, and corporate meetings (Goodrich, 2002). Particularly hard hit were luxury hotels in major cities (Enz & Canina, 2002). The effects of September 11<sup>th</sup> have not only been financial but have extended to other areas as well. Perhaps the most visible effect is the heightened state of security across America, which can be seen on airplanes, in hotels, at tourist attractions, mass transit, cruise ships, and many other areas that affect the tourism industry. Most importantly, the September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy has changed the infrastructure and security in the tourism industry as well as the psychology of travel (Goodrich, 2002).

### **The Effects of the Perceptions of Safety and Security**

As suggested by Pizam and Mansfeld (1996, p. 1), “Leisure tourism is a discretionary activity, and most tourists will not spend their hard earned money to go to a destination where their safety and well-being may be jeopardized” (Pizam & Mansfield, 1995). Perception of a tourist destination is gained in various ways, through accounts on television, whether it is a travel channel or the news media. Promotional literature that is produced by a destination as well as accounts from friends or family who traveled to a destination can create certain impressions about the quality and desirability of that destination. Hence, potential travelers who have never been to that destination can be influenced by these accounts in a positive or negative manner. The following will look at studies that analyze perception of a destination while traveling or after travel. A later section will deal with perceptions of potential tourists before actual travel affecting destination choice.

In a 2001 study conducted in Cape Town, South Africa – a destination that has a reputation of being unsafe – tourist perceptions of safety were analyzed. George (2003) conducted the S. African study, in which he claims that “if a tourist feels unsafe or threatened at a destination, he or she can develop a negative impression of the destination.” Thus, the destination’s image can be damaged in three ways:

1. Prospective tourists may decide not to visit the destination because of its reputation for crime.
2. Tourists might not take part in activities if they feel unsafe in a particular destination.
3. Tourists may not return or recommend a destination to others if they have felt unsafe while visiting there.(George, 2003)

Visitors in the study stated that they were wary of going out after dark and using public transportation. Several factors influenced their perception of safety, these included nationality, purpose of trip, age, and whether the visitors encountered crime during their stay. In regards to nationality, of the 9% of British respondents that stated they were unlikely to return to Cape Town, 30% were concerned about crime. It was also found that leisure travelers felt less safe than those traveling for business. Younger visitors felt less safe, with results showing that 21% of the respondents under the age of 35 had encountered a dangerous incident or felt unsafe. Neither females nor males felt safe walking the streets after dark, while female visitors felt less safe during the day. Overall, a little less than 50% said that they would likely not return to Cape Town (George, 2003).

As previously reported in another section, perception of safety was analyzed during the 2000 America's Cup in Auckland, New Zealand. International and domestic tourists were studied and results showed that tourists with the following characteristics showed a higher perception and concern regarding crime and safety than their counterparts:

1. Overseas visitors
2. Tourists with English as their first language
3. European tourists
4. Older tourists
5. Male tourists
6. Group travelers

Those who were victimized by crimes were Non-European and traveling alone. Factors that affected risk of victimization were domestic versus overseas status, age, accommodation choice, and the number of traveling companions. The authors conclude that, based on the results, one can suggest a relationship between a tourist's risk of crime, his/her subsequent perceptions, and the likelihood that he/she will become a victim. The levels of concern for safety, although not high, between domestic and overseas visitors, differ between these two groups. The authors attribute this difference to the fact that domestic tourist may have had more exposure to different forms of local media, which would cause them to be more cautious regarding safety; overseas tourists, on the other hand, might not have had this type of local media exposure. Although the level of reported tourist crime was low during the event, the authors point out that perceptions of crime by tourists are critical to understanding and satisfying their inherent needs for safety

(Michael Barker, Page, & Meyer, 2003).

The perception of crime is an important issue when analyzing crime victimization. Many studies analyze different areas of perception relating to crime, perception of risk and perception of crime itself and perception as it relates to fear of crime. Lepp and Gibson (2003) identified seven perceived risk factors associated with international tourism in hopes to contribute to a better understanding of destination image as related to risk and safety. As in the case of the foot and mouth epidemic in the United Kingdom, the perception of risk associated with a destination can have substantial consequences (CNN, 2001). According to Lepp and Gibson (2003), “the image that individuals hold of the risks at a destination may influence the likelihood of visiting it. In an attempt to identify the association between tourist seeking novelty and level of risk, they classified tourists into three groups based on their perception of risk: risk neutral, functional risk and place risk. The neutral group did not consider tourism or their destination to involve risk. The functional risk group considered the possibility of mechanical, equipment, or organizational problems as the major source of tourism related risk. The place risk group perceived vacations as risky and the destination of this group’s most recent vacation was very risky. They concluded that novelty seekers might tolerate higher levels of risk. Hence, they suggested that it would be beneficial to market an image that may have a real or perceived risk to tourists with a higher tolerance for risk. Although the sample for the Lepp and Gibson study included only U.S. college students, the authors believe that the study contributes to a better understanding of perceptions of risk associated with international tourism for young, largely middle class Americans (Lepp & Gibson, 2003). The perception of risk plays a large role in the decision process of tourist destination choice. If a tourist destination is perceived “risky” either because

of experience or from accounts from friends and/or family, a decision may be made not to travel to that destination.

Fear of crime is not only a highly researched topic in criminology but in tourism as well. In an effort to determine how tourists view crime while on vacation, subscribers to the British magazine *Holiday Which?* were surveyed. The focus of the survey considers two areas: worry and fear; the survey examines how these areas vary among population groups and according to experience of crime. The results show that few tourists saw crime or disorder as a problem when they went on vacation even though they took into account safety when choosing a tourist destination. This was even though crime, as noted by the authors, against tourists was prevalent. The results indicate that, on one hand, there is a close relationship between fear and direct personal experience. On the other hand, tourists are disproportionately at risk from crime, but do not register high levels of fear or concern. The authors point out that this is the opposite than what is found in conventional crime surveys, but equally suggests that sometimes fear of crime -- or in this case lack of fear of crime -- is irrational (Mawby, Brunt, & Hambly, 2000).

Despite the negative image portrayed of some tourist destinations due to high crime rates, two destinations have been able to overcome their history for being crime ridden. South Africa has shown strong resilience and growth despite damning information about its high crime rates. In 1993, arrivals from India and the UK have increased by 195% and 18.6% respectively over the previous year (Warnings, 2003). In the same year, Belfast, in a United Nations poll, was voted the world's second safest destination, shedding its reputation as a tourist "no go" area. This destination is expected to experience a 15% growth in the number of visitors by 2006 (Scholes,

2003). Hence, this provides support to the idea that conscientious efforts by a tourist destination can improve the image in the eye of the tourist.

### **Tourists' Destination Choice**

When deciding to travel or return to a destination a tourist faces a “choice.” “Choice,” according to psychological theory, is characterized by conflict, uncertainty, and cognitive activity. Choice involves the decision making process. A decision is an outcome of a mental process, whereby one action is chosen from a set of available alternatives. There are five steps in the decision process: problem identification, information search, evaluation of alternatives, choice, and post-choice process. When alternatives are not available, a choice is not required. In the case of tourism and crime, the choice or decision process would be whether a tourist would return or travel to a destination where a crime against tourists had occurred after the “information” about the crime incident was acquired (either first or second hand) (Moutinho, 1987).

When deciding to travel to a destination that is known to be affected by crime, a risky decision is involved. Weber and Bottom (1989) define risky decisions as “choices among alternatives that can be described by probability distributions over possible outcomes” (Weber & Bottom, 1989). They state that at least one of the possible outcomes must be undesirable for risk to exist. In the case of choosing a crime-prone destination, this outcome could be considered undesirable. The risk can be real or perceived and still affect travel decisions (Weber & Bottom, 1989). “Risk that potential travelers associate with specific destinations may help form lasting images” (Sevil F Sonmez & Alan R Graefe, 1998). These lasting images, either from personal experience or from accounts from others, influence travel decisions. When risk or safety concerns are introduced in

the travel decision process they can become overriding factors, which can change or even cancel travel plans (Sevil F Sonmez & Alan R Graefe, 1998).

Two theories that support the association between risk and the decision-making process are the integration theory (Anderson, 1981, 1982) and the protection motivation theory (Rogers, 1975, 1983). The integration theory proposes that individuals use complex decision-making steps in order to form value and psychophysical judgments. This theory relates to the travel decision process by stating that impressions, evaluations, and judgments that have already been formed by the potential traveler can change if three factors exist. If additional destinations are added into the decision process, new information regarding the destination is learned (i.e. crime wave at the destination), or if traveler's perception of a destination change based upon new information learned prior to their final choice (Anderson, 1981, 1982).

Another theory relating to the decision process is Roger's (1975, 1983) protective motivation theory. This theory addresses the cognitive process individuals go through when involved in a risky decision process. This process may lead to risk avoidance depending upon the degree of the following:

1. Magnitude of danger
2. Probability of occurrence
3. Effective actions to control consequences
4. Capacity to control consequences



These two theories provide the foundation for the idea that images that individuals acquire, or experiences relating to safety and risk, can influence future travel decisions.

Contrary to previous reports cited, Mawby (2000) found that perception of safety in relationship to actual crime could be partially irrational. The study looked at how high-profile incidents impacted a tourists' destination choice. The results were contradictory. While 10% of the respondents thought about crime and violence when choosing a destination, 42% said that they had ruled out at least one country or area because of crime related concerns. In addition, 36% said that they had chosen a destination because they perceived it as being safe. When asked why they had chosen a particular destination, "feeling safe" was rated, in regards to importance, below environment, weather, scenery, relaxing location, and activities. In regards to influence, 53% said that they were influenced by a safe location, but only 15% regarded it as one of the three most important factors when choosing a destination. This statistic seems to indicate that when choosing a destination, safety is a concern but not a top priority (Mawby, 2000).

Safety can play a role in the tourist destination decision, causing travelers to, at times; amend their travel plans, as was seen with the decline of travel after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. Sonmez and Graefe (1998) claimed, "If the destination choice is narrowed down to two alternatives which promise similar benefits, the less costly one--one that is safe from threat--is likely to be chosen." Their study showed that over half, 57% of respondents, considered other people's experiences when seeking out information regarding a destination. Fifty-three percent consulted friends and or family, 47% asked peers or business associates, and about 50% listened to word-of-mouth accounts. This assists in providing a foundation for the use of accounts of friends and

or family in this study, showing that that the opinion obtained from friends/family/acquaintances regarding destination choice is relied upon greatly when choosing a destination.

### **Tourist Decision to Return to a Destination**

Little information is available in the area of re-visitation of a tourist destination, especially in relation to crime victimization. Mawby (2000) looked at re-visitation as a very small aspect of his study. In the study cited earlier of *Holiday Which?* magazine subscribers, decisions to return to the destination were analyzed. The research looked at victims and non-victims in relation to re-visitation. The statistics indicated that 56% of victims and 55% of the non-victims would definitely return to the destination. Only 14% of both victims and non-victims said they would probably or definitely not return. These statistics are surprising since, as presented earlier, fear of crime or even victimization can be devastating, but in this study by Mawby, victimization does not seem to have a significant influence on one's decision to return to a tourist destination.

In a study of international travelers, Sonmez and Gaffe (1998) examined the influences of international travel regarding past experiences, types of risk, and the overall degree of safety felt during international travel. These factors were examined in conjunction with the likelihood of individuals to travel to or avoid various regions on their next international trip. The findings showed that past travel experience and risk perceptions influenced future travel behavior. Regarding safety, interest in future international travel was influenced by the degree of safety individuals felt during past international travel trips. As well, past travel experiences, in which perceptions of risk and feelings of safety were experienced, influenced the avoidance of those areas rather than the likelihood to return. Results also showed that travelers experienced with a

particular region may become more confident and thus more likely to return. The researchers also contend that evaluation and judgment of regions could change, positively or negatively, because of either influence from social interactions or the media. This study by Sonmez and Gaffe, lays a solid foundation for the decision process of travelers showing that perceptions, past experience and interactions with others can influence future travel decisions.

Last but not least, in a study conducted by George (2003) and cited elsewhere in this report, tourists' decisions to return to a destination were analyzed. Overall, a little more than 50% said that they would very likely return to Cape Town. As expected, an association between whether respondents had encountered any incidents of crime or felt unsafe negatively affected their likelihood to return. More than half of those who claimed that they were very likely to return to Cape Town had not encountered an incident, or had not felt that their life was in danger during their stay. The purpose of the respondent's visit played a factor in their perception of safety as well. Respondents who were traveling on holiday and visiting friends and family were less likely to return than business travelers were. The authors felt that this response was possibly because business travelers most likely do not have a choice of whether they return.

When a personal theft occurs, property is replaced and the physical damage often heals, but fear is often the most enduring legacy of victimization. Fear can have long-lasting negative consequences on one's future decisions and actions. Fear can also spread beyond the actual victim to influence the lives of those who, through others' accounts, vicariously experience crime. As previous research has indicated, the amount of crime that exists might not be highly related to the degree of fear expressed by tourists. This research attempts to identify if a

correlation exists between personal theft and the decision to travel and if several intervening variables influence that decision.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Selection of Subjects**

The data sample consisted of a net of 1,017 respondents who were interviewed on the phone during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of May 2004 by NOP World, a commercial research firm out of Princeton, New Jersey. NOP World was engaged to add 13 original questions on the subject of “incidences of theft while on a trip” to their ongoing weekly telephone omnibus survey called OmniTel. This method of “piggybacking” is commonly used in order to reduce the cost of conducting your own survey. The NOP World OmniTel surveys 1,000 households per week. The sample is based upon a random digit dialing probability sample of all telephone households in the continental United States and represents households with both listed and unlisted numbers. All sampled numbers were subject to an original and at least four follow-up attempts to complete the interview. All completed interviews were weighted to ensure accurate and reliable representation of the total population 18 years of age and older according to the latest United States census figures.

The raw data are weighted by a custom designed computer program, which automatically develops a weighting factor for each respondent. This procedure employs five variables: age, gender, education, race, and geographic region. Each interview was assigned a single weight derived from the relationship between the actual proportion of the population with its specific combination of the variables mentioned above, and the proportion in the total sample that week. Results provided showed both weighted and unweighted bases for all demographic points.

Additional demographics that were provided and used in the study are listed below:

1. Family size and composition
2. Marital Status
3. Gender
4. Race
5. Employment status
6. Education

### **Research Instrument**

The survey consisted of 13 questions that were added to a weekly Omnibus household survey conducted by NOP World. With the exception of one open-ended question that asked for the location of the incidence of theft, all other questions were close-ended. To be included in the survey, the respondents had to pass one of two qualifying questions as follows: (1) Having traveled over 50 miles outside of their home for business or pleasure – excluding commuting to and from work - within the past 10 years; and/or (2) knowing someone who experienced a theft while on a business or leisure trip. Respondents were eliminated from the survey if they neither traveled over 50 miles nor knew anyone who had experienced a theft while on a business or pleasure trip. Those who traveled over 50 miles were asked whether they experienced a theft while on a trip or not. Those who did not experience a theft were asked if they knew anyone who did. Thus, the actual survey consisted of two groups, those who experienced a personal theft while traveling, and those who knew of someone who had such an experience.

The actual survey questions related to:

1. The geographical location of the theft.
2. The date of theft
3. Whether the items were stolen of the respondent's person or from a location occupied by the person.
4. The perceived severity of the theft.
5. The physical location of the theft (car, hotel, room, bus, etc)
6. What other crimes (not while on a trip) has the respondent been a victim of in the past.
7. Whether the theft had been reported to the local law enforcement agency and how was it handled.
8. The size of the group in which the respondent (or person that they knew) traveled.
9. Future intention to travel to the destination where the theft occurred and for those that did not intend to travel to those destinations.
10. What factors might change the respondent's decision to travel to the affected destination.

The survey questions were tested in a pilot study conducted over the telephone with respondents who were victims of theft while traveling.

### **Data Collection**

The data sample size of 1,017 was representative of the U.S. population at the time of the survey (May 2004); of that sample, 215 valid responses were received. A valid response indicated that the respondent either had been a victim of a crime while traveling within the past five years or knew of someone who had been. Of the 1,017 respondents surveyed, 69 had experienced theft personally while traveling and 146 had known of someone who had.

This study will attempt to prove or disprove the following hypotheses:

### **Hypothesis 1**

Tourists who experienced a personal theft while traveling will be less likely to travel to the destination where such theft occurred than those who did not experience such theft but knew someone who did.

### **Hypothesis 2**

All else being equal, the longer the time between the incidence of a personal theft that occurred to a person or his/her friends or relatives at a tourist destination and the decision to travel to the same destination, the higher is the likelihood of visiting that destination.

### **Hypothesis 3**

Tourists who have experienced a theft on their person while traveling will have a lower tendency to return to the same destination than tourists who have experienced a theft of their belongings in a property they were occupying (i.e. hotel room, car, etc.).

### **Hypothesis 4**

The more severe the incidence of theft that occurred to a person or his/her friends or relatives while traveling, the lower is the likelihood of visiting the affected destination.

### **Hypothesis 5**

The more satisfied a person is with the way the destination's authorities handled his/her personal



or friends'/relatives' crime report at a tourist destination, the higher the likelihood of that person to visit the same tourist destination.

#### **Hypothesis 6**

Tourists who have previously been victims of crimes in their own community will be less likely to travel in the future to a destination where either they or their friends or family members experienced an incidence of crime.

#### **Hypothesis 7**

The passage of time will positively affect the decision to travel to a tourist destination where a theft crime occurred to a person or his friends or relatives.

#### **Hypothesis 8**

Learning of someone's positive experience at a destination where a tourist or his/her friends or relatives experienced an incidence of theft in the past, will positively affect the decision to visit the affected destination.

#### **Hypothesis 9**

Learning from the media about the efforts to improve security in a destination where a tourist or his/her friends or relatives experienced an incidence of theft in the past will positively affect the decision to visit the affected destination.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### Respondent's Profile

Of a total sample of 1,017 respondents, 215 were found to have either experienced personal theft or knew of someone who had. Of these 215 respondents, 69 or 32% had experienced personal theft while traveling and 146 or 68% had known of someone who had experienced personal theft while traveling. The data shows that 53.4% or 114 of the respondents were male and 46.6% or 101 were female.

**Table 1: Population Age Groups**

	Percent
18-24	17.7
25-34	18.7
35-49	32.0
50-64	19.7
65+	11.8
Total	100.0

1-7 scale where 1=poor and 7=extremely well

Table 1 shows that a plurality of the respondents (32%) were between the ages of 35 and 49. A large majority of the respondents, 68.5%, was under the age of 49 and only 11.4% of the respondents were over the age of 65. Among those who personally experienced theft while

traveling, 37.3% of the respondents were between the ages of 35 and 49, with 74.6 % of the respondents under the age of 49 and only 4.5% over the age of 65. Of those respondents who knew of a friend or relative that had experienced theft, 29.4% were between the ages of 35 and 49, 65.4% were under the age of 49, and 15.1% were over the age of 65.

**Table 2: Household Income**

	Percent
<\$20K	19.1
\$20-\$29,9K	13.9
\$30-\$39,9K	10.8
\$40-\$49,9K	5.2
\$50K+	31.2
\$75K+	19.9
Total	100.0

Table 2 shows the household income for the respondents. The average household income for 31.2% of the respondents was over \$50,000 per year. The next largest category, 20%, was respondents whose average household income was over \$75,000 per year.

### Length of Time Since Theft Occurred

**Table 3: Length of Time Since Theft Occurred**

	Percent
Less than 6 months ago (0.5)	19.4
6 months to less than 2 years ago (1.25)	32.2
2 years to less than 5 years ago (3.0)	27.5
5 years to less than 10 years ago (7.5)	15.6
10 years ago or more (12.5)	5.2
Total	100.0

As can be seen in Table 3, 51.2% of the responses indicated that most of the crimes discussed in the survey occurred less than two years ago while 78.4% occurred less than 5 years ago. Only 5.2% of the responses indicated that the theft occurred 10 years ago or more.

**Table 4: Composition of Travel Party**

	Percent
Alone	22.8
With Family, Friends, Relatives	69.4
With a Tour Group	6.8
Other	1.0
Total	100.0

Table 4 shows the composition of the travel party as indicated by the respondents. The majority of the respondents or their friends/family who incurred theft (69.4%) were traveling with friends, family or significant others when the theft occurred, while 22.8% were traveling alone.

## Location of Theft

**Table 5: Location of Theft**

	Percent
At an Airport	9.3
In a Vehicle (Rented or Self Owned)	26.3
In a hotel	24.9
While Sightseeing (Off your person/off the person of whom you learned of the theft)	3.9
While on Public Transportation (Off your person/off the person of whom you learned of the theft)	9.8
While Visiting a Tourist Attraction, Park or Museum (Off your person/off the person of whom you learned of the theft)	5.9
Bar/Restaurant	3.9
Home	4.4
Other	11.7
Total	100.0

Table 5 indicates the location of the theft discussed in the survey. The most prevalent locations indicated by the study respondents were “in a vehicle” and “in a hotel” with 25.1% and 25.7% of the responses respectively. Of the specific answers to this question, (N=181) 76.4% of the responses indicated that the theft did not occur off the victim’s person (i.e. the items were not

stolen from somewhere on their body).

### **Severity of Theft**

**Table 6: Severity of the Theft**

Mean	4.73
Median	5.00
Std. Deviation	1.87

1-7 scale where 1=not severe at all and 7=very severe

Respondents were asked to rate the severity of the theft that they or their friends/relatives experienced on a scale of 1 through 7, where 1 indicates “not severe at all” and 7 “very severe.” The mean rate of severity reported by the respondents was 4.73, with a median of 5.0 and a standard deviation of 1.87. Fifteen percent of the respondents indicated that the theft was not severe and 35% of the respondents indicated that the theft was either somewhat or very severe.

## Reporting Theft to Authorities

**Table 7: How Theft was Handled by Authorities**

Mean	4.03
Median	4.00
Std. Deviation	2.12

1-7 scale where 1 = poor and 7 = extremely well

One hundred fifty seven respondents or 78.9% indicated that the thefts were reported to the authorities, while 20.1% were not. When the respondents were asked to rate the manner in which the theft report was handled by the authorities on a scale of 1 through 7, where 1 indicates that the theft was handled extremely poorly and 7 indicating that the theft was handled extremely well, the mean and median were 4.0, and the standard deviation was 2.12. Of the 138 respondents who indicated that the theft discussed was reported, 32% claimed that it was handled “poorly” by the authorities and 31% indicated that the theft was handled “very well” or “extremely well.”



## Likelihood to Consider Traveling To the Affected Destination

**Table 8: Likelihood to Travel to the Destination**

Mean*	5.51
Median	7.0
Std. Deviation	2.18

\*1-7 scale where 1 = definitely not likely to return and 7 = definitely likely to return

Table 8 reports the respondents' likelihood of traveling either now or in the near future to the destination where the theft occurred. When asked to rate their likelihood to consider traveling to the affected destination now or in the future on a scale of 1 through 7, 1 indicating definitely not and 7 indicating definitely yes, the mean response was 5.51 (most likely yes) and the median response was 7.0, with a standard deviation of 2.18. A very large portion of the respondents (55%) said that they would definitely travel now or in the near future to the destination where the theft occurred.

## Factors That Might Change the Respondent's Mind about Traveling

**Table 9: Factors that Might Change Respondent's Mind About Traveling\***

	Percent
Passing of Time	12.2
Someone Positive Experience	12.2
Learning From Media	4.1
Other	4.1
Nothing Will Change My Mind	67.3
Total	100.0

\*Restricted to those respondents who indicated that they would “Definitely Not Travel to the Destination”.

Table 9 indicates the factors that might change respondents' minds about traveling. These represent only the responses of those persons who indicated that they would “definitely not travel to the destination” where the theft occurred. Of these respondents, an absolute majority (67.3%) said, “nothing would change their mind” followed by “passing of time” (12.2%) and “learning of someone's positive experience” (12.2%).

## Previous Crime Victimization

**Table 10: Personal Experience with Other Crimes**

	Percent
Personal Theft	56.9
More Serious Crime Such as Robbery, Assault or Rape	13.8
Both Personal Theft and More Serious Crime	23.1
Refused	6.2
Total	100.0

The data provided in Table 10 shows that a majority of the respondents (56.9%) indicated that the person (the respondent or the person the respondent knew who experienced the personal theft) had been a victim of personal theft in the past. Table 10 also shows that 23.1% of the respondents had been a victim of thefts as well as more serious crimes.

## The Geographic Location of Theft

**Table 11: Top U.S. Cities (District) Where Theft Occurred**

	Percent
Washington D.C.	6.3
Las Vegas	5.1
Atlanta	3.8
Chicago	3.8
New York City	2.6
Other Cities*	78.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*Each individual city in the "Other Cities" category had a frequency of less than 2%

**Table 12: Top Countries Outside of the U.S. Where Theft Occurred**

	Percent
Italy	12.7
Mexico	12.8
Canada	10.6
France	6.4
Spain	6.4
Other Countries*	51.1
Total	100.0

\*Each individual country in the “Other Countries” category had a frequency of less than 5%

Tables 11 & 12 show the geographical location of the thefts discussed in the survey. Of the 204 responses to this question, 157 or 77% of the theft incidents took place in a domestic location and 47 or 23% took place outside of the US. As can be seen from Table 11, the top US states/districts where the incidents took place were Washington D.C. (6.3%), followed by Las Vegas (5.1%), Atlanta (3.8%), and Chicago (3.8%).

Internationally, Italy, Mexico, Canada, France, and Spain respectively were the most prominent with 49% of the incidents occurring in these countries. Both Italy and Mexico each consisted of 13% of the responses.

## Hypotheses Testing

### **Likelihood of Travel Differences between Respondents Who Have Personally Experienced Theft and Those Who Know of Someone Who Have Experienced Theft**

As previously indicated, hypothesis #1 stated that “Tourists who experienced a personal theft while traveling will be less likely to travel to the destination where such theft occurred than those who did not experience such theft but knew someone who did.”

In order to test for the statistical differences between those who have experienced theft themselves versus those who have heard of such experiences, an independent t-test was conducted. The results, which are provided in Table 13, show that there were no statistical significant differences between the two groups. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was not confirmed, indicating that there is no significant difference regarding travel decisions between those who have experienced personal theft and those who know of someone who has.

**Table 13: Likelihood of Travel to the Destination**

	N	Mean*	Std. Deviation
Respondents Who Personally Experienced Theft	63	5.47	2.27
Respondents Who Knew of Someone Who Experienced Theft	144	5.52	2.04
	t = -.14	df = 205	Sig. (2-tailed) = .889

\*1-7 scale where 1 = definitely not likely to return and 7 = definitely likely to return

### **Relationship between Likelihood to Travel and Length of Time Since Theft Occurred**

Hypothesis #2 stated that “All else being equal, the more time passes between the incidence of a personal theft that occurred to a person or his/her friends or relatives at a tourist destination and the decision to travel to the same destination, the higher is the likelihood of visiting that destination.”

In order to test this hypothesis, a Pearson product moment correlation was conducted between likelihood to travel to the destination and the length of time since the theft occurred. The results indicate that there is no statistically significant correlation ( $r = .07$ ) between the two variables (Sig. = .34). Hence, hypothesis #2 was not confirmed, indicating that the passing of time had no effect on the decision to travel now or in the near future to the destination where the theft occurred.

### **Comparison of Type of Theft, Whether Off One’s Person or Not Off One’s Person, and Likelihood to Travel to the Destination Where the Theft Occurred**

Hypothesis #3 stated that “Tourists who have experienced a theft on their person while traveling will have a lower tendency to return to the same destination than tourists who have experienced a theft of their belongings in a property they were occupying (i.e. hotel room, car, etc.).”

In order to test the above hypothesis an independent t-test was performed comparing the type of theft -- whether off one’s person or not off one’s person -- and the likelihood to travel to the destination where the theft occurred. This was done by dividing the original categories (see Table 14) into two groups as outlined in Table 15. As can be seen from this table, there is no

statistically significant difference between these two groups and the hypothesis was not confirmed. Furthermore, the results were in the opposite and unexpected direction. Group 1, those who experienced the theft not off their person (i.e. hotel room or tourist attraction, etc.) are surprisingly less likely to travel to the destination where the theft occurred.

**Table 15: T-Test Groups for Table 15**

Group 1 (Not off Person)	Group 2 (Off Person)
At an Airport	While sightseeing (Off your person/off the person of whom you learned of the theft)
In a Vehicle (Rented or Self Owned)	While on public transportation (Off your person/off the person of whom you learned of the theft)
In a Hotel	While visiting a tourist attraction, park or museum (Off your person/off the person of whom you learned of the theft)
Bar/Restaurant	
Home	



**Table 16: Comparison of Type of Theft, Whether Off One's Person or Not Off One's Person and Likelihood to Travel to the Destination Where the Theft Occurred**

Group	N	Mean*	Std. Deviation
1 (Not off Person)	123	5.2439	2.20410
2 (Off Person)	40	6.0000	1.76867
t = -1.972		df = 161	Sig. (2 tailed) = .050

\*1-7 scale where 1 = definitely not likely to return and 7 = definitely likely to return

#### **Relationship between the Perceived Severity of Theft and Likelihood to Travel to the Destination Where the Theft Occurred**

Hypothesis #4 stated that “The more severe the incidence of theft that occurred to a person or his/her friends or relatives while traveling, the lower the likelihood of visiting the affected destination.”

In order to test the relationship between the perceived severity of the theft and the likelihood to travel to the destination where the theft occurred, a Pearson product moment correlation was conducted between these two variables. The results indicate that there was no significant correlation ( $r = -.09$ ;  $p = .17$ ) between the two variables. In an effort to determine if both groups (those who experience a theft and those who knew someone else who experienced a theft) would produce the same results, a Pearson product moment correlation was separately run for only the group of respondents that experienced personal theft themselves. The results were similar to the one with both groups and showed no significant correlation ( $r = -.12$ ;  $p = .35$ ) between the

perceived severity of the theft and the likelihood to travel to the affected destination. Hence, hypothesis #4 was not confirmed.

#### **Satisfaction with the Manner in Which the Authorities Handled the Reporting of the Theft**

Hypothesis #5 stated that “The more satisfied a person is with the way the destination’s authorities handled his/hers personal or friends/relatives crime report at a tourist destination, the higher is the likelihood of that person to visit the same tourist destination.”

To test the relationship between the satisfaction with the manner in which the authorities handled the reporting of the theft, and the likelihood to travel to the destination where the theft occurred, a Pearson product moment correlation was conducted. The results showed that the relationship is positive and statistically significant ( $r = .46$ ;  $p = .003$ ). Hence, hypothesis #5 was accepted, indicating that there is a positive association between the two variables. In other words, the better the crime was perceived to be handled by the authorities, the higher the likelihood to travel to the destination where the theft occurred.

#### **Relationship between Previous Victimization and Likelihood to Travel to the Destination Where the Theft Occurred**

Hypothesis #6 stated that “Tourists who have previously been victims of crimes in their own community will be less likely to travel in the future to a destination where either they or their friends or family members experienced an incidence of crime.”

In order to test the relationship between previous victimization and the likelihood to travel to the

destination, an independent t-test was performed. The respondents were asked whether they or anyone close to them have ever been a previous victim of crime in their own community (“not while traveling”). To conduct the t-test, two groups were established, those (or anyone close to them) who have been previous victims of crime in their own communities (“not while traveling”) and those who have not been victims of crime in their own communities. The results of this t-test are shown in Table 16, and indicate that there was no significant difference between those who have been previous victims of crime as compared to those who have been. Thus, hypothesis #6 was not confirmed.

**Table 17: Relationship Between Previous Victimization and Likelihood to Travel to the Destination Where the Theft Occurred**

Group	N	Mean*	Std. Deviation
Previous Victim	7	5.42	2.29
Not Previous Victim	122	5.52	2.12
t = -.116		df = 127	Sig. (2 tailed) = .908

\*1-7 scale where 1 = definitely not likely to return and 7 = definitely likely to return

### **Factors That Would Change One’s Mind to Travel to the Destination Where the Theft Occurred**

Hypothesis #7 stated that “The passage of time will positively affect the decision to travel to a tourist destination where a theft crime occurred to a person or his friends or relatives.”

Hypothesis #8 stated that "Learning of someone's positive experience at a destination where a tourist or his/her friends or relatives experienced an incidence of theft in the past, will positively affect the decision to visit the affected destination."

Hypothesis #9 stated that "Learning from the media about the efforts to improve security in a destination where a tourist or his/her friends or relatives experienced an incidence of theft in the past will positively affect the decision to visit the affected destination."

As shown elsewhere, of the 215 respondents in this study only 49 (22.8%) indicated that they would choose not to return to the destination. With this subset of 49 respondents, a One-way ANOVA was performed to compare the three variables that related to hypothesis #7 (Passing of Time), hypothesis #8 (Learning of Someone's Positive Experience) and hypothesis #9 (Learning From the Media of Efforts to Make the Destination Safer) as well as a fourth variable (Nothing Would Change Their Minds). A post-hoc SNK (Student-Neumann-Keuls) test found no statistically significant difference between each of the individual groups on their likelihood to return to the affected destination. All three groups fell into one subset. Therefore, hypotheses 7, 8, and 9 were not confirmed, showing that of those who had decided not to return to the destination, the passing of time, learning of someone's positive experience or learning from the media of efforts to make the destination safer would have no differential effects on changing the respondents' minds about not returning to the destination where a theft occurred.

**Table 18: One-Way Analysis of Variance for Factors That Would Change One's Mind to Travel to the Destination by Likelihood to Travel to the Destination**

	N	Mean*	Std. Deviation
Passing of Time	6	2.66	1.21
Learning of Someone's Positive Experience	4	2.75	1.50
Learning From the Media of Efforts to Make the Destination Safer	0		
Other	2	1.0	.00
Nothing Would Change Their Mind	33	1.94	1.27
Total	45	2.07	1.29

  

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.84	3	2.28	1.42	.25

\*1-7 scale where 1 = definitely not likely to return and 7 = definitely likely to return

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

### Summary

This study provides many unique perspectives regarding crime against tourists. Few studies have surveyed crime victims at tourist destinations and none have specifically focused on thefts at tourist destinations. In addition, this research looks at the effects of friends and or family discussing incidents of crime with potential tourists, another area not previously documented. Therefore, this study provides valuable information for tourism destinations regarding the effects that incidences of crimes have on tourists' travel decisions.

In short, the results of this study indicate that with the exception of one hypothesis (H<sub>5</sub> "Satisfaction with the handling of the theft report by the local authorities") all others were not confirmed. The following is a brief summary of the results.

The study did not find a difference between those who have experienced personal theft and those who knew of someone who had, regarding their decision to travel. Furthermore, it was found that the passing of time since a theft occurred had no effect on the decision to travel to the same destination. The results did not find any statistically significant difference between those who experienced the theft off their persons and those who had not. The perceived severity of the incident did not have an effect on one's decision to travel to the destination where the theft occurred.

As stated above, the study's results confirmed the hypothesis that there is a direct correlation between the satisfaction with the manner in which the authorities handled the reporting of the theft and one's decision to travel to the destination where the theft occurred. Since the results indicated that over 41% of the respondents gave a negative evaluation to the manner in which the authorities handled the crime report, it is of great importance to study this phenomenon further so that the destination's authorities could improve their performance and thus lessen the negative feelings experienced by the theft victims. As indicated by numerous studies, the effects of victimization could have grave consequences on future tourism. Destinations should take lessons from the city of Amsterdam, which has developed a victim's assistance program. This program, sponsored by Amsterdam's Chamber of Commerce, the police, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, was developed to reduce victim's negative feeling towards the city (Hauber & Zandbergen, 1999). The study found that almost 80% of the respondents claimed to be eager to return to Amsterdam, partly because of the tolerant atmosphere in that city. This positive appreciation, the authors feel, indicates that the victim assistance program was quite effective (Hauber & Zandbergen, 1999).

This study also found that there was no significant correlation between previous crime victimization and the likelihood to travel to the destination where the theft occurred. Finally, it was found that the passing of time, learning of someone's positive experience, and learning from the media about the destination's effort to make it safer, would not change the mind of tourists once they have decided not to travel to a destination where a theft occurred. This question yielded another interesting result, showing that 67% of those who indicated that they would not return to the destination where the theft occurred said that nothing would change their minds.

This result poses a challenge for the tourism industry. Perhaps additional research could determine what (if any) actions could be taken by destination managers to change the affected tourists' mind and make them return to the destination.

This study provided some valuable information for tourist destinations regarding one's decision to travel to a destination where a theft occurred. Over 55% of the respondents stated that, even though they experienced theft or knew of someone who did, they would definitely travel to that destination. These results support the findings of Mawby (2000), who in a survey of British tourists found that 56% of victims and 55% of non-victims would definitely return to the destination where the theft occurred. These findings are also similar to results obtained by George (2003) who in his Cape Town study found that over 54% of his respondents said they would very likely return even though they had encountered an incident of crime or felt that their life was in danger during their stay.

The present study suggests that many preconceived notions regarding theft and the likelihood to travel to a destination seem to be false. Hence, the results indicate that experiencing personal theft, or knowing of someone who has, is not a deterrent for visiting a destination where the theft occurred. Therefore, destinations afflicted by such thefts should not necessarily see a reduction in tourist arrivals.

Though the following are speculations suggested for the sake of future research, we would like to propose some rationale for the research results obtained in this study.



The fact that the majority of the hypotheses were not confirmed may indicate that the attractiveness of the destination is stronger than the “minor perceived” loss incurred from a theft. Mawby (2000) in his study found that only 15% of respondents regarded safety as one of the three most important factors when choosing a destination.

We also speculate that the way the victim views money or its loss affects his or her future travel decisions. As an example, some people may see the loss of any money as a major traumatic event, while others might consider it just a minor though annoying incident. This loss may be compared to gambling. Some individuals would not consider gambling to be an enjoyable pastime due to the high probability of losing money. To some, on the other hand, the loss due to gambling is considered just a part of an overall enjoyable experience. This factor may also apply to a theft occurred while traveling, assuming the loss was relatively minor, those who have a “gambler’s” attitude might consider the loss from the theft as just an unanticipated vacation expense and part of the travel experience. This may be especially true if the traveler knew that the destination was unsafe before he/she traveled there.

Last, but not least, it is possible to speculate that the victims in this study could be considered as risk takers and therefore not hesitate to travel to a destination that might have been classified by others as risky. According to research by Lepp and Gibson (2003), these respondents might be classified in the “place risk” group. In an attempt to identify the association between tourist seeking novelty and level of risk, Lepp and Gibson (2003), classified tourists into three groups based on their perception of risk: risk neutral, functional risk and place risk. The place risk

group perceived vacations as risky and the destination of this group's most recent vacation was very risky.

### **Limitations**

Although this study investigated numerous issues relating to theft at tourist destinations, there are nevertheless some limitations. First, regarding crime severity, one must consider that one's evaluation of crime severity is subjective and can be interpreted in many different ways.

Second, the respondents may have had preconceived opinions about the destination in question which were not taken into consideration in this survey. These opinions might have affected their intentions to travel to the affected destinations, regardless of the thefts that occurred there.

Fourth, it is indeed possible that there were additional reasons why a relative proportion (20%) of the respondents did not report the crime to the authorities. This might have been because (a) they did not want to waste precious vacation time, (b) they could not communicate with the authorities because of language barriers and custom differences, and (c) they were afraid of dealing with what they thought might be corrupt authorities.

Fifth, the study did not ascertain how often respondents travel and whether they actually traveled to the destination before they or their friends/relatives experienced the theft. In a study performed by Sonmez and Graefe (1998) results showed that previous visitation tended to reduce the proportions of respondents who stated they would avoid various regions. Since this information was not ascertained from the respondents in this survey, it is difficult to deduce if it

would have had any effect on the results.

Sixth, another aspect that might have affected the likelihood to travel to an affected destination could have been the purpose of travel and more specifically whether it was for business or leisure. For example, if a respondent is a business traveler he/she may have no discretion whether to travel or not to the affected destination.

Seventh, the survey did not ascertain the dollar amount of the loss from the theft. This could have had a significant effect on how the theft was perceived. If the theft equated to a small percentage of the total trip expenditure, respondents might have seen the theft as having a nominal effect on their pocketbook and thus not hesitate to visit the destination in the future. However, if the stolen items had a sentimental value or had a high dollar value, this might have caused a significant distress and affected the likelihood of future visitation.

In closing, we are proud to present findings that prove the resilience of the tourism experience. It is amazing to realize that the tourism experience can be such a powerful one that even a crime cannot deter it. It is refreshing to see a study relating to crime that positive light on tourists' decision to travel.

Based upon information from the study using this particular sample, we can conclude that theft is not a deterrent for future travel. Taking into consideration the limitations listed above, this research provides tourist destinations with several pieces of important information. As shown with statistical significance, how authorities handle the reporting of a theft affects one's decision

to travel to the destination where the theft occurred. The destination can use these findings to work with law enforcement authorities to ensure proper handling of tourists' theft reporting situations. The results also show that many theories that can be developed from the existing literature regarding crime against tourists may not necessarily be applied specifically to the crime of theft. This is important since theft is the most common crime against tourists. With further research to support these findings, destinations can realize that efforts to control theft need to be addressed but cannot be blamed entirely for a decline or reduction in arrivals. Efforts can be placed elsewhere to determine other reasons why tourists either choose alternative destinations, or decide not to travel at all.

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