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CRIME IN NEW TOURISM DESTINATIONS:

THE MALL OF AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

Mass tourism has resulted in the largest scale movement of goods, services and people in world history. Tourists' safety and security have become of primary importance. This research presents a preliminary investigation of the general characteristics of crime at, and near, the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, America's largest mall. This recreation/shopping destination has quickly evolved into an international destination attracting an estimated 40 million visitors per year. Crime rates did increase with the building of the Mall of America. It does, however, account for less than 11 percent of monthly crime calls in the City of Bloomington. Furthermore, when comparing crime indexes of other cities, the Mall as a "city" would have a much lower crime rate than other places of comparable population.

INTRODUCTION

"Tourism has become the largest scale movement of goods, services and people that humanity has ever seen" (9). Prior to the popularity of mass tourism, observers generally considered tourism to be a "smokeless industry." More recently, however, popular national and international tourism destinations are beginning to generate "smoke." In some magnets, part of the "smoke" is present in the form of crime. Jafari (10) has identified the evolution of the tourist research in four platforms, that are not exclusive and currently co-exist throughout the world. The Advocacy Platform appeared during the 1960s, when tourism was considered to be a "smokeless" industry and good for job creation. The Cautionary Platform in the 1970s saw tourism being perceived as a form of economic exploitation, cultural alienation, and ecological destruction. The Adaptancy

Platform in the 1980s was characterized as relativistic and introduced specific world tourism cases of study. The Knowledge-based Platform in the 1990s has and continues to generate tourism planning and development based upon integrated scientific and practical applications. Because large and popular tourist destinations are often image sensitive, it has become important for tourists and tourism professionals to identify the relationship between modern tourism and crime. The purpose of this article, using the case of the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, is to describe the level and characteristics of crime and the possible impact that this factor has on visitors' perceived safety. The objectives of this preliminary descriptive study will be to:

1. determine the types of crime committed inside malls, but specifically, the Mall of America;
2. analyze crime rate trends in the Mall of America; and
3. analyze the impact of crime at this new tourist destination on the community.

For the purpose of this study, it is useful to produce a general typology of tourists. Tourism, according to Smith, is generally classified in terms of the kinds of leisure mobility (21):

1. Ethnic tourism--the visitors are attracted by "traditional" cultures and activities;
2. Historical tourism--the main touristic "pull" factors are historical sites, museums or monuments; and

3. Recreational tourism--the tourists are motivated by a search for "fun" or "rest" activities.

The classification of the prototype tourist for this study is the visitor to the Mall of America, usually attracted by the recreation of shopping and entertainment (type 3 in Smith's classification).

The Mall of America has become a major touristic destination. The Public Relations Department of the Mall of America noted that in 1993 the American Automobile Association (AAA) ranked the Mall as the third most popular touristic destination in the United States. The same year, more than 12,000 organized tour groups and 400 Japanese groups visited the Mall of America. Additionally, Northwest Airlines offered a low-cost, same-day airfare to Minneapolis from 42 U.S. cities for the purpose of attracting one day shoppers at the destination. This service was used by 14,500 travelers. Additional international travelers also had the chance to use the special WorldVacation package to Mall of America provided by KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and Northwest Airlines. The Mall of America, as a new touristic destination, brings together by its nature the incidental relationship between crime and recreation.

METHODOLOGY

This descriptive research is an exploratory analysis of crime in new tourism destinations. The research process is based in primary field research and secondary data analysis. The researchers obtained crime statistics from the Bloomington Police Department and the Mall's Security

Department. With the data analysis, a crime index was developed to create a profile of the Mall crime characteristics. Finally, a comparative analysis of the Mall of America as a hypothetical city versus other similar mega urban attractions in popular tourism destinations was made by the researchers.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRIME AND TOURISM

A review of literature identifies the relationship between tourism and crime in several destinations. This relationship between crime and tourism has been well documented by an increasing number of authors (19, 12, 14, 18). This crime, however, sometimes is present in the form of terrorism against tourists, or tourists as accidental victims of crimes. This article, however, is focused upon some of the characteristics of touristic destinations that seem to attract crime *per se*. Organized and high level terrorism, as a form of violence and crime against tourists, is ignored by the authors because of its absence in Minnesota.

Some general common characteristics of tourist destinations can be identified (19).

1. A large number of visitors staying for a short period of time.
2. A large number of seasonal workers.
3. Cultural relationships between visitor and visitor; visitor and worker; and between tourist and tourists.
4. Leisure may be the main motivation or activity.
5. There is a change in the visitors from the home culture to the tourist culture, with an

implied change in the norms and behavioral patterns.

6. The tourists' attitude may contribute, in some cases, to enhance the criminal activity: "one of the aspects of a 'tourist culture' is the loosening of responsibility and the opportunity for self-indulgence" (19).

7. Spending money is comparatively underestimated.

8. Business reflects the economic importance of tourism.

9. The cultural expressive symbols are based on stereotypes and caricatures.

10. Some relationships based on superior and inferior status may exist.

Some of these special characteristics can generate a fertile soil for the growth of crime. In the past, touristic destinations were not concerned about the impact of crime in the amount of visitors or business. Nevertheless, the increasing competition of touristic magnets and the intervention of public agencies-like city, state and regional tourism interest groups advising tourists about the danger of visiting Bahamas in 1991 or the regular warnings of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the Consulate in St. Petersburg about the theft and violence in Russia has produced an immediate response per part of local governments or agencies. In the United States, the killing of some German tourists produced a significant loss of business in Florida, a phenomena well documented by authors like McDowell (14) or Eisman (6).

Hotels can also serve as an example of the relationship between crime and tourism: 800 room properties averaged about 20

crimes a week, with many of them unreported (15). The most reported crimes were assault and battery (34%); rapes (20%); wrongful deaths (15%); and robberies (31%); with some data suggesting that 10% percent of hotel employees are criminals (15). In fact, the lodging industry is hit too often with lawsuits related to safety and negligence in crime offenses committed within the properties.

The recent 1995 White House Conference on Travel and Tourism reviewed travel safety and security, not only as one of the greatest challenges to the potential growth of the sector, but also as a way of controlling excessive media coverage on crime which may damage the public's perception of some tourist destinations.

"Security and Risks in Travel and Tourism" was the subject of the First Global Research and Travel Trade Conference held in June, 1995 in Sweden. Program subthemes for the conference are research issues, information networks and documentation, role of media, quality assurance needs, and responsibility challenge.

Another major problem of touristic destinations is the level of crime reporting and the categorization of crime. To follow a standard classification on kinds of crimes, this study uses the Minnesota Department of Public Safety criteria (5):

- a. Crimes Type 1: the most serious kinds of crimes, including murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny and auto theft.
- b. Crimes Type 2: include lesser offenses, such as vandalism, fraud, minor weapon offenses and assaults, and prostitution.

MALLS AND THE MALL OF AMERICA

Shopping centers in the late 20th century have become urban complexes. Malls have represented a terrific shift of commercial practices by miniaturizing and magnifying the traditional business districts, and altering behavioral patterns among visitors and suburban habitants. The development of the malls' concept in the U.S. has been a steady since the early 1960s, when the small strip malls replaced main street businesses. In the 1970s, some authors like Jones and Nicholls, described the replacement by malls of "the old corner drugstore, the city park, and main street, as the new core of the community in the U.S." (13).

Other authors identified an important change in the 1990s compared with the 1980s: "Malls are no longer uniform boxes that contain the same stores carrying the same merchandise as they were in the 1980s. As consumers tired of the sameness, some retailers and malls began to differentiate. Now many consumers shop specific malls for specific purposes" (1). The recent culmination has been the Mall of America, a super regional mall with city-like characteristics. In fact, the Mall of America "becomes Minnesota's third largest 'city' each Friday, Saturday and Sunday"--in terms of individuals visiting the complex for different purposes.

Nationally, the Directory of Major Malls identifies some 2,255 locations with gross leasable area of 250,000 square feet or greater in the U.S.; an average number of cars per day of 5,685; and an average number of shoppers per day of 12,225. These figures indicate that approximately 10

percent of America's population would be a patron to malls each day--27,567,37 (4).

The Mall of America was chosen as a focus for this study because it currently constitutes the largest single shopping area, 4.2 million square feet, in the U.S. It is four times larger than the average super-regional mall, and constitutes the largest single retailing and entertainment complex in the U.S. (22).

Additional facts about the scale of the Mall may be helpful to the reader to appreciate its size and scope:

1. Seven Yankee Stadiums would fit inside Mall of America;
2. Mall of America is big enough to hold 32 Boeing 747s;
3. More than 20 St. Peter's Basilicas in Rome would fit inside the Mall;
4. Mall of America's 13,300 short tons of steel is nearly twice the amount in the Eiffel Tower, which is 7,000 short tons;
5. Walking distance around one level of the Mall is .57 mile;
6. Total store front footage is 4.3 miles;
7. 13 million rides have been given at Knott's Camp Snoopy in its first 20 months;
8. 30,000 plants under 10 inches tall and 400 trees, 10-35 feet high, grow in Knotts Camp Snoopy;
9. The Mall has more than 400 stores, 45 restaurants, 9 night clubs, and 14 theater screens; and
10. It employs 12,000 workers.

Source: Public Relations Department at the Mall of America, 1994.

Since its opening in August of 1992, the Mall has been visited by more than 60 million people. "In August 1993, the Mall of America reported that it had met its projections of over 35 million visits and more than \$600 million in sales for the first 12 months" (23).

Data indicate these visitors are spending three times more time and twice the amount of money than the average visitor of a U.S. super-regional mall (22). A recent survey developed by the Minneapolis Star Tribune illustrates that in "winter, 55 percent of the Mall's visitors are Twin Cities' residents and 30 percent come from 150 miles or more away. During the summer tourist season, 38 percent come from more than 150 miles away" (1). Visitors from Germany, United Kingdom and Japan frequently join tourists from all over the country in treks to the Mall (around 6% of the total visitors). The Mall has developed in the surrounding area an important center of lodging and catering businesses (Holiday Inn, Sofitel, Friday's, Exel Inn, Mall of America Grand Hotel, Sheraton Inn, Radisson Hotel South). The magnetism of the Mall also represents a shift in attention from the traditional crime ridden inner city street to the urban development in the U.S. of more than 185 "edge cities" (8). Bloomington, Minnesota has developed the same functions of traditional downtown centers: shopping, jobs, entertainment, services and housing. Thus, it has acquired the full right denomination of "edge city" (16).

Even the visitors' motivations are different at the Mall of America. "Recent data show how 70 percent of visitors combine retail shopping with entertainment, and about 25

percent affirmed that they go to the Mall specifically for entertainment (1). Again, this shopping center, with an average number of visitors larger than several suburbs is not isolated from some urban problems like crime.

CRIME AT THE MALL OF AMERICA

Urban Troubles Hit Megamall;
Shooting Stuns Hayward Mall Patrons;
Theater Shooting Raises Security
Concerns; Minneapolis Man Is
Charged With Attempted Second
Degree Murder of Guard at
Megamall...

These headlines of recent media reports of crime in malls around the country have raised concerns about the relative risk to the public and the level of security tactics being provided at the facilities. The National Shopping Center Security Report notes that the negative impact of both real incidents, and the perceived risk of crime in shopping centers has yet to be accurately measured (4). It is, however, extensively believed by many commerce observers that this impact runs into millions of dollars every year.

The most typical crimes in American malls have been pick-pocketing, shoplifting, and disorderly conduct. Although, some studies are increasingly reporting how gangs are using malls as a meeting point. Vandalism, auto thefts, possession of deadly weapons or simple assaults have also increased considerably during the past few months. Gang fights have alarmed the public and some shootings have been recently reported in malls in New York, New Jersey, California, Texas, and Minnesota.

It is a fact that Bloomington's crime rate has been affected by the opening of the Mall of America. From August 1992 to August 1993 about 10 percent of Bloomington Police Department calls came from the Mall of America. During that time the Mall accounted for 568 of the city's 831 shoplifting incidents (5). In Bloomington, Type II crimes were up increasingly more than the more serious Type I crimes. Surprisingly, Cook notes the opinion of Bloomington Police Chief Bob Lutz, who stated in February 1993 that "Police calls ... (from the Mall of America) ... are running well below his original projections" (2).

Since its opening, the Mall of America has experienced a significant number of criminal offenses. Cook reports more than 3,000 crime calls from the opening on August 11, 1992 to February, 1993 (2). The arithmetic mean shows that the monthly average is approximately 500 calls or more than 16 per day. Without a doubt, the safety issue has become important for the owners of the Mall of America. The most reported crime was disorderly conduct, followed by shoplifting and theft--both Type II crimes.

In January and early February of 1993, 15 police officers were assigned to the Mall of America. About 76 people, mainly juveniles, were arrested but the charges were not related to gang activities. Lutz noted that "sometimes the real problem is more insidious and harder to crack than crime: racism" (2). Some of the calls were coming from people who identify gang problems with the mere presence of African-Americans in the shopping center.

The Mall's security staff is composed of more than 100 security officers who

monthly eject from the mall an average of 150 people (normally for unwelcome behavior). The ejected people are often photographed and identified by security, and sometimes the information is shared with the police (2).

In February 1993, the public media was shocked by a shooting in the Mall of America. A handgun was fired in the Knott's Camp Snoopy amusement park when three people, ranging in ages from 15 to 25, attempted to take a popular sports team jacket from a 13-year old boy. Shots were fired when he refused to depart with his jacket. As a result, three people were injured. This incident was not the first shooting reported in a mall. It was, however, the first reported in the Mall of America.

As a result of the shooting, the Mall of America management company announced its intention to immediately increase its security efforts by taking the following action (7):

1. Brightening the lighting at the Mall's amusement park.
2. Requesting the Bloomington Police Department negotiate the hiring of three more officers, to be paid by the Mall, but stationed permanently inside it.
3. Investigating the purchase of clubs and bulletproof vests for its guards (Mall officials were also considering having guards wear state trooper-type hats to make them identifiable).
4. Releasing a memo to the press by John Wheeler, the Mall's general manager, that said, "It is important to restate our

commitment to creating an environment that is safe and secure for our tenants and guests" (5).

5. Brightening Camp Snoopy at night by turning on some new lights.
6. Assigning more guards on weekends, when more problems had been reported.
7. Hiring three officers trained in juvenile liaison work and community relations at an estimated cost of \$50,000 each.
8. Organizing a "neighborhood watch" in which tenants would be asked to report suspicious behavior, as well as, distribute leaflets on the Mall's code of conduct.

Recently (November 1994), local television (Channel 11) reported new incidents related to safety in the Mall of America. One patron suffered an attack by a group of Asian youths and announced a lawsuit against the Mall of America Co. The management company quickly created a new "division of safe guards." The "safe guards" had possessed a "SWOT Teamlike" fast capacity of reaction, and highly visible, distinctive black uniforms and combat boots. Yet, on February 15, 1995, a visitor was charged with attempted second-degree murder of a guard at the Mall of America (Minneapolis Star Tribune).

SUMMARY

The review of literature has shown how crime and tourism have appeared to be connected in recent years. The explanation may be in terms of some special economic, social, cultural, and political characteristics of tourist destinations.

In the case of the Mall of America, the data may suggest that the crime rate is important. A closer examination of the data, nonetheless, indicates that when considering approximately 40 million visitors per year, the crime rate is in reality minimum. When additional comparative analysis of Type I and 11 crimes is applied to Bloomington, Minnesota, it becomes evident that a substantial increase did occur between 1991 and 1993 (Table 1). Obviously, the bulk of the increase could be attributed to the new Mall of America and its millions of visitors. Comparing the Mall of America, however, to the other 55 geographic crime units (sectors) in Bloomington, Minnesota, it becomes apparent that this popular destination generally accounts for less than 11 percent of monthly crime calls reported in the entire city (Table 2). The major part of the calls for police service in the Mall of America were medical emergencies (8%) or Type I crimes like shoplifting (23%), theft (15%), alarms (7%), assaults (4%), and disorderly conduct (4%). Furthermore, when comparing crime indexes of other cities, it becomes further apparent that if the Mall of America could, for comparative

purposes, be considered a "city," it would have a much lower crime rate than other cities of comparable population (Table 3). Crime in public tourism attractions is often unfairly a media spectacle. To more accurately compare the results, an extrapolation of weighted data comparing the crime index of the Mall of America to a city with a similar population is included. The Mall of America, however, lacks social and spatial organizations found in cities. It does, however, present enough services, population, jobs and social phenomena, like crime, to be compared as a methodological tool to a medium sized city.

Probably, the real impact of crime on the amount of visitors at a large tourist destination like the Mall of America cannot be evaluated at this researchable level. The impact of service, however, on the amount of business of the destination is a factor that should not be underestimated by tourism observers and mall planners. Crime impact recovery rates for new tourism destinations and additional sociological analyses were beyond the scope of this preliminary study.

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Table 1

Real Crime Data for Bloomington, Minnesota

	a1990	a1991	b1992	b1993	b1994	b1992/93 %	1993/94 %
Type I Crime	3,937	3,762	4,781	5,025	3,777	5%	-25%
Type II Crime	3,062	3,150	3,986	6,954	5,889	74%	-15%
TOTAL	6,824	6,912	8,767	11,979	9,666	37%	-19%

Source: ^aDraper, 1993, and ^bBloomington, Minnesota Police Department, 1995.

Table 2
1994 Monthly Crimes Reported in Bloomington, Minnesota

Dates	Bloomington	Mall of America	% Mall of America City Total (1994)	% Mall of America (1993)
January	3,171 (1)	352	10	12
February	2,944	324	11	10
March	3,313	287	9	10
April	3,368	277	8	8
May	3,520	221	6	8
June	3,418	240	7	8
July	3,588	288	7	7
August	2,530	225	9	10
September	3,187	312	9	N/A
October	3,361	305	8	N/A
November	2,907	321	10	N/A
December	2,883	394	12	N/A
TOTAL	38,190	3,142 (*262.67)	*8.83	*9.27

(1) These figures do not represent arrest or crime statistics, but only calls for service.

(*) Average per month.

Source: Bloomington Police Department, 1995.

Table 3
Real Crime Rates 1

	1991	1992	1993
Mall of America	N/A	N/A	2,865.45
Bloomington, MN	4,263.73	5,198.80	5,835.22
Minneapolis, MN	11,281.72a	11,103.32b	11,036.11c
St. Paul, MN	7,889.12	7,744.24	7,637.33
Orlando, FL	N/A	11,926.45	12,461.81
Anaheim, FL	3,195.31	6,686.60	6,444.83d

(1) The real crime rate consists of the total number of crimes (forceable rape, aggravated assault, murder, robbery, burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson), divided by each population of 100,000 people.

(a) excluding arson

(b) excluding arson

(c) excluding arson

(d) excluding aggravated assault

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1995.