

Tourism and Crime: A Preliminary Assessment of the Relationship of Crime to the Number of Visitors at Selected Sites¹

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Tourists and visitors represent a valuable and appreciated element of many countries and many communities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these tourists and visitors are at great risk of being victims of violent and property crimes in the cities they visit. This paper assesses the relationship between the number of visitors to various cities and the types and patterns of crimes, over time, in two cities engaged in mass tourism. If the anecdotal reports are valid indications, crime should fluctuate directly in proportion to the number of visitors. If other factors have stronger explanatory power, the relationship between tourists (visitors) and crime will not be strong or consistent. Based on the data, this research showed that the number of tourists over the course of an eleven year period does not adequately explain the variations in violent crime rates of either of the two cities. Violent crime rates in Honolulu and Las Vegas from 1982 through 1993 showed less of an increase than the increases experienced by other similar cities in the United States for the period studied. The data showed that there was no significant correlation between any of the four serious violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) and the number of visitors to Las Vegas. For Honolulu, there was an inverse relationship between the number of visitors and the violent crimes of murder and robbery but a direct and significant relationship to aggravated assault. The results could assist these and other cities in studying more idiosyncratically the relationship between crime and tourism as well as the localization of crimes on visitors in order to engage in measurement and prevention efforts which would serve visitors as well as residents.

Introduction

Tourism in the United States, as in many other countries, is a major economic force, producing more than \$100 billion in revenues annually. Foreign tourists alone represent a \$71.6 billion industry (Fisher, 1993). Florida's tourism business, estimated at \$31 billion (DeGeorge, 1993) has been dealt a vicious blow in recent years due to crime and fear of crime. Deneen (1994) reported that because of the murders often tourists in Florida, reservations from British and German tourists had declined 50 percent and statewide tourism was down five percent for 1994. The leading cause of the decline was concern for safety (Fisher, 1995). If fear of crime was, in fact, the reason for the tourism decline in Florida, it cost the economy of that state \$1.55 billion and negatively impacted the quality of life of citizens and visitors. Marshall (1994) reports that in 1993 the number of foreign visitors to the United States fell 3.7 percent, the first decline since 1985. Crime was cited as the primary

reason. For example, following the murder of two Japanese students in Los Angeles in 1994, Japanese tourists threatened to avoid the city as a destination (Schine, 1994). While some communities have employed measures to address solutions to tourist crime (Deneen, 1993) and while industries such as hotels, motels and convenience stores have taken steps to ensure the safety of tourists and other customers (Pacyniak, 1993; Gatty, 1994), there is little criminological research on the relationship between tourism and crime.

Interestingly, almost all the recent assessments of the relationship of tourism and crime have been anecdotal. One of the first scientific assessments of the relationship was conducted by Chesney-Lind and Lind (1986). That research was based on estimates of crimes against residents as compared to non-resident victims in Honolulu in 1982. The conclusion reached was that "tourists are disproportionately the victims of crime." Similarly, Chesney-Lind, Lind and Schaafsma (1983), in assessing the relationship between tourism and crime over a 23-year period after the statehood of Hawaii, found that "regression analysis revealed that the number of tourist present in the community was significantly related to the rates of most major crimes with the exception of murder and auto-theft. Tourism was, during the period under study, the single most powerful predictor of crime in the resort community of Honolulu" (Cited in Chesney-Lind and Lind, 1986: 170).

Early research in Florida produced similar conclusions. Potter, Johnson and Edwards' 1982 assessment suggested that variations in violent crime in Florida were related to tourism and urbanization. Howsen and Jarrell (1987) reported that tourism, among other socioeconomic variables, had an effect on property crime in the 120 counties in Kentucky. The conclusions drawn from previous research compel one to accept the hypothesis that crime and tourism are inexorably related. Much of that research, however, focused on aggregate crimes rather than crime rates and virtually all of the research is more than ten years old. There is reason to believe that the picture has changed and, indeed, fear and victimization have changed remarkably in the past ten years (Pelfrey and Pelfrey, 1996).

More recently, research on the effects of gambling and crime (Albanese, 1985; Giacomassi and Stitt, 1994) has been significant to the subject of tourism and crime. Albanese (1985) assessed the crime trends and patterns in Atlantic City before and after the legalization of gambling. Unlike other researchers, he adjusted the population figures and included the tourists in the "population at risk," showing a reduction in crime rates after the introduction of legalized gambling.

Giacomassi and Stitt (1994) applied the routine activities approach in analyzing crime trends in Biloxi, Mississippi for the twelve month period prior to legalized gambling compared to the twelve month period after the initiation of legalized gambling. They note "the population at risk has expanded greatly due to the large numbers of tourists visiting the casinos" and when this fact is taken into consideration, the modest increases in crime rates will likely reverse (1994: 127).

It is almost axiomatic that high density in housing and population are associated with high rates of violence; but poverty, teenagers in the population, single parents and other variables may intervene in the association between population and violent crime making it difficult to apply high tourist populations to high violent crime rates (Reiss and Roth, 1993). As has been done by others, however, the preliminary assessments of relationships may point to some answers as well as some questions. The issue is important enough, based on the economic impact and the quality-of-life impact, to research the relationship between tourists and crime.

Theoretical Basis for Crime Rate Changes

Routine activities is the most obvious theoretical basis for the proposition that crime rates will increase as does the number of visitors to an area. It would be too simple and convenient to suggest the population-violence nexus that as population in a jurisdiction (most notably a city) increases, the rate of violence is likely to increase. Social disorganization and ecological theories, among others, could and should be strong bases for that well-established phenomenon (Reiss and Roth, 1993, for example). Still, increases in visitors to a city do not necessarily contribute to social disorganization and an argument can be made that the influx of income would even ameliorate some of the effects of social disorganization. The notion that visitors attract crime is better explained by the routine activities approach.

Routine activities theory posits that there are three elements of direct-contact predatory crime: (1) motivated offenders, (2) suitable targets, and (3) absence of capable guardians (Cohen and Felson, 1979). Felson (1987) as well as Roncek and Maier (1991) have clarified the applicability of routine activities to the urban environment. By focusing on land-use attractors, serving as magnets for potential offenders and potential victims, this research has laid the groundwork for suggesting that an increase of visitors, attracted to an area, could serve as potential victims, absent suitable guardians. This general proposition is supported by the research of Roncek and Maier (1991) though they studied the effect of locations of "recreational liquor establishments" (taverns and lounges) on crime in Cleveland. Their research results "reaffirm the value of new developments in routine activities theory that now stress the importance of facilities" (Roncek and Maier, 1991: 725).

Schiebler, Crotts and Hollinger (1996) most directly assessed the issue of tourism and crime by analyzing crimes against visitors (non-residents) in ten counties in Florida in 1993. They applied routine activities theory to the data, though they point out that their analysis was not a definitive test of the theory. Their research, the most focused and applicable of the contemporary tourism-crime studies, was a cross-sectional analysis rather than one which analyzed trends and patterns over time. The analysis reported here utilizes the trend approach similar to that used by others (Chesney-Lind and Lind, 1986; Al-

banese, 1985; Giacomassi and Stitt, 1994) in testing the relationship of the numbers of visitors to an area and the subsequent crime rates of that area.

Methodology

This research represents a pilot project to assess the relationship between tourism and crime. The impetus for the research was the author's earlier assessment of the patterns and trends in violent crime in Hawaii for the years 1989 through 1993. That assessment was conducted at the request of the Attorney General, State of Hawaii, with the support of the Hawaii Governor's Committee on Crime and the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. Although the assessment was not intended to focus on tourism (and could not focus directly on tourism due to data limitations), an examination of data seemed to indicate that the number of tourists and the crime patterns were *not* significantly related for any of the serious crimes other than larceny and auto-theft. This observation led to interest in collecting data from other locations to see if the pattern in Hawaii was isolated. Data were requested from several cities, each of which supports a mass tourism industry. The city which supplied the most accurate and extensive data was Las Vegas, Nevada.

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department supplied data related to official crime statistics (Uniform Crime Reports) for the years 1983 through 1993, though the data were not separated by crimes against residents and crimes against visitors. The department also supplied data on the total visitors per year for each of those years. These data allow the basic macro-analysis of the relationship of annual visitors to the crime rates for index offenses for the eleven year period. Similarly, data were available from Honolulu regarding both crime and tourism for the years 1983 through 1993, though, again, crime victims were not identified as residents or non-residents. Other cities made data available for briefer periods of time or partial data was provided so the analysis is limited to those two jurisdictions for which the most data are available for the full eleven years. It is noted that this analysis could have been more comprehensive had victim-specific information and location-specific information been available, which was not the case. In this regard, this analysis is a *preliminary* assessment of the issue of tourism and crime.

Honolulu is a city/county which occupies the island of Oahu. The 1993 population of Honolulu was 875,455 persons. While there are several locations which cater primarily to tourists, such as Waikiki, there are few clear differentiations between resident areas and tourist areas. Museums and sites of interest are dispersed throughout the island and residential areas. Las Vegas, on the other hand, has a similar population, 725,760 in 1993, but the areas most frequented by visitors, businesses and hotels along the "Strip" and the downtown casino areas, are separate and distinct from the residential areas. In spite of these dissimilar aspects, both jurisdictions have a significant tourism industry.

In 1983, Las Vegas had 12.4 million visitors. By 1993, the number had increased to 26.2 million. Honolulu had 4.3 million visitors in 1983 and 6.1 million in 1993. While Las Vegas' visitors increased by 111 percent during the eleven year period, the city's population increased by only about 66 percent. Honolulu had a more modest increase of 40 percent in the number of visitors and an increase of only 8 percent in its population. The population changes in the two cities can most readily be explained by the "service-style" of tourism industry in Las Vegas and the "self-service style" in Honolulu. Las Vegas has experienced a relative explosion of growth in tourism and in population while Honolulu has experienced a more modest growth in tourism and a very small growth in population to serve them. The variances in the patterns of tourism in the two cities make them even more amenable to the current analysis.

Crime data for each of the seven index crimes (arson was not included in the analysis) were collected from the Uniform Crime Reports for each year of the eleven year period. These data were then converted to crime rates per 100,000 population, consistent with the current formula used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in order to provide comparability and to take into consideration the population growth in the two jurisdictions. As noted by other researchers (Albanese, 1985; Giacomassi and Stitt, 1994), the population as a denominator for a city or county engaged in mass tourism or high numbers of visitors is inherently flawed but it still stands as the standard method of calculating crime rates and the only viable method of conducting comparisons with other jurisdictions.

Calculations of crime rates for the United States and metropolitan areas of the United States were then performed for each of the eleven years. The Uniform Crime Report defines Metropolitan areas as those which include a central city of at least 50,000 people or an urbanized areas of at least 50,000. Each of the two cities in the analysis fits in this category and this is an arguably better comparison group for violent and property crime rate trends.

Results

The analysis of the data showed surprising variation for several key crimes. Table 1 shows the changes and relationships of violent crime rates for the United States, metropolitan areas of the United States, the city of Las Vegas and the city/county of Honolulu. "Violent crime" is defined as the crimes of murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault, based on standard usage by the Uniform Crime Report, normalized by crimes per 100,000 population.

As Table 1 shows, violent crime rates in the United States increased 41 percent during the eleven years and violent crime rates in metropolitan areas increased almost 36 percent. During the same period, violent crime rates in Honolulu increased only 8.1 percent and violent crime rates increased 23 percent in Las Vegas during the eleven years. Parenthetically, were it not for a surge in violent crime rates in Las Vegas the final year of the eleven-year period, the increase would have been less than six percent. Inspection of the

Table 1. VIOLENT CRIME RATES PER 100,000 POPULATION
1983-1993 UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS

Year	U.S.	Metro U.S.	Las Vegas	Honolulu
1983	529.1	627.1	813.1	264.3
1984	539.2	639.0	736.5	240.5
1985	555.9	658.5	772.9	220.4
1986	617.3	732.4	804.1	252.2
1987	609.7	720.0	766.7	271.2
1988	637.1	752.0	734.9	260.7
1989	663.2	779.7	698.3	270.6
1990	731.6	856.2	708.9	288.4
1991	758.1	885.5	834.6	240.3
1992	757.5	871.5	860.9	272.1
1993	746.2	852.2	1003.6	285.7

(Violent crimes include murder, rape robbery and aggravated assault)

Source: Uniform Crime Reports of the Federal Bureau of Investigation

data related to specific crimes shows that virtually all of the increase in violent crime during the eleven years in both cities is due to increases in aggravated assault, the least serious of the violent crime index offenses. During this period, the murder rate decreased in both cities with a 57 percent decrease in Honolulu and a 23 percent decrease in Las Vegas; the robbery rate increased slightly in Las Vegas (8.7 percent) and decreased substantially (19 percent) in Honolulu; and, the rape rate increased slightly in both Las Vegas (7.7 percent) and Honolulu (6.3 percent).

The only violent crime rate to have shown a substantial increase, aggravated assault, is probably the serious violent crime feared least by visitors and tourists. Indeed, it may well be that tourists represented as many offenders as victims for that particular crime since it is a crime in which it is unlikely that the offenders are typical predators and often the offenders are acquainted with their victims. Even with aggravated assault surfacing as the crime with the greatest increase in rates in the two cities, it should be noted that the average aggravated assault rate was 312.6 per 100,000 population for Las Vegas for the eleven year period, and for the same period the average rate for metropolitan areas in the United States was 415.4 per 100,000 population. As shown in the bivariate analysis, aggravated assault rates are significantly correlated with the number of visitors in Hawaii but Hawaii's aggravated assault rate averaged only 104.1 per 100,000 population during the eleven year period. This rate was one-fourth that of the metropolitan rate and less than one-third the average for the United States (378.7 per 100,000 population). Additionally, during this eleven year period, the tourist rates were steadily increasing.

The serious violent crime which was highest in Las Vegas, as compared to the U.S. metropolitan average, was robbery. The robbery rate in that city was consistently twice that of the average for other metropolitan areas. If tourists were normally victims, however, the rate should increase as the numbers of tourists increase — a general proposition of this paper. The Uniform Crime Report data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation showed that while the number of visitors to Las Vegas increased 111 percent, robbery rates increased only 8.7 percent, a far more modest increase than that recognized by other metropolitan areas (14.3 percent increase) of the United States during the same period.

**Table 2. PROPERTY CRIME RATES PER 100,000
POPULATION 1983-1993 UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS**

Year	U.S.	Metro U.S.	Las Vegas	Honolulu
1983	4629.6	5225.2	7223.3	5456.3
1984	4492.1	5078.3	7011.8	5255.5
1985	4650.3	5261.2	6731.0	4925.7
1986	4861.6	5503.3	6497.8	5390.3
1987	4939.6	5574.8	6645.9	5607.8
1988	5027.2	5675.6	6106.9	5635.9
1989	5077.3	5716.8	6058.5	5961.6
1990	5089.0	5690.0	6198.9	5813.7
1991	5140.0	5731.0	6357.8	5718.4
1992	4901.0	5401.0	6266.4	5846.7
1993	4736.9	5193.0	5660.8	6157.3

(Property crime include burglary, larceny and auto theft)

Source: Uniform Crime Reports of the Federal Bureau of Investigation

Serious property crime is defined by the Uniform Crime Report as burglary, larceny and auto theft (arson is included by the FBI but is not included here). As Table 2 shows, property crime rates in Las Vegas and Honolulu were generally consistent with those of the United States and other metropolitan areas. Las Vegas realized a decrease of 21.6 percent in its serious property crime rates during the eleven years while Honolulu had an increase of 12.8 percent and the United States and metropolitan areas ended the period at about the point they began it. Las Vegas had an increase of 60.6 percent in auto theft rates for the period but a decrease of 47.5 percent in burglary rates and a decrease of 18 percent in larceny rates. Honolulu had a decrease of 14.6 percent in its burglary rates during the period, a slight increase in auto theft rates (6.8 percent) and a 22.7 percent increase in larceny rates.

A bivariate analysis is difficult with only annual data for eleven years, but it may provide some insight into the interaction of visitors and crime, complementing the descriptive information above. This analysis is shown in Table 3. Considering the violent crime rates and the relationship to numbers of visitors, Honolulu showed an *inverse* but insignificant relationship between murder rates and visitors (Pearson's $r = -.33$, $p = .32$), a strong and significant inverse relationship between robbery rates and visitors (Pearson's $r = -.84$, $p = .002$) and a direct significant relationship between visitors and aggravated assault rates. Las Vegas rates of violent crime, collectively and individually, showed no significant correlation with the numbers of visitors for the eleven year period.

Table 3. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NUMBERS OF VISITORS AND CRIME RATES: CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS HONOLULU AND LAS VEGAS 1983 TO 1993

Crime	Honolulu Crime/Visitors	Las Vegas Crime/Visitors
Murder	-.33	-.17
Rape	.45	.10
Robbery	-.84*	.49
Aggravated Assault	.86*	.43
Burglary	-.14	-.89*
Larceny	.79*	-.86*
Auto Theft	.03	.94*

* Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Significant at .01 Level

The bivariate assessment of the number of visitors and property crime rates should be considered with similar caution. Collectively, property crime rates in Las Vegas were significantly, but *inversely*, correlated with the number of visitors (Pearson's $r = -.865$, $p < .001$). Individually, burglary and larceny were significantly and inversely related to visitors ($r = -.89$ and $r = -.86$ respectively, $p < .001$) while auto theft was positively correlated to the number of visitors (Pearson's $r = .94$, $p < .001$), which is consistent with the research of Giacompassi and Stitt (1994). Honolulu had a positive relationship between property crime rates and the number of visitors (Pearson's $r = .73$, $p = .01$) with larceny rates representing the crime with the most significant relationship to the number of visitors (Pearson's $r = .79$, $p = .003$).

Conclusion

A healthy community and economy contribute to the quality of life of citizens. The importance of tourism to many countries and many communities

is incontrovertible. More importantly, the criminal justice system must understand the relationships between phenomena such as crime and visitors so that preventive measures may be considered as well as systemic responses to increases or decreases in tourism. The specific goal of this study was to preliminarily examine the relationship between visitors (tourists) over time and the patterns and trends in crime rates for two cities engaged in mass tourism. The results may produce more questions than answers for the time being but they show little support for the popular assumptions that increases in tourists necessarily lead to increased crime.

Clearly, the number of tourists over the course of an eleven year period does not explain the variations in violent crime rates of either of the two cities. Violent crime rates in the two cities showed less of an increase than the increases experienced by other similar cities or the United States. The data showed that there was no significant correlation between any of the four serious violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) and the number of visitors to Las Vegas. For Honolulu, there was an inverse relationship between the number of visitors and the violent crimes of murder and robbery. It appears that tourism is more accurately related to property crime in Honolulu and to auto theft in Las Vegas. The localization of tourist activities in Las Vegas combined with a high number of security personnel as an adjunct to public police, may explain the relatively low rate of property crimes other than auto theft.

Conversely, the dispersion of tourist attractions in Honolulu and the juxtaposition of those attractions to low-security, residential areas may explain the growth in property crime in that city. Murder, rape and robbery rates appear unrelated or negatively related to the number of visitors in the two cities. These three crimes are the most feared and the ones most linked to tourism in the anecdotal comments reported earlier. Aggravated assault in Hawaii is the only serious violent crime directly and significantly related to the number of visitors. While this crime is probably the least feared by visitors, it is also likely that it seldom involves visitors in Hawaii. A victimization survey conducted in Hawaii in 1994 for the year 1993 projected that 7,983 residents were "attacked with a knife, gun or other weapon," which is consistent with the definition of aggravated assault. Only 1,408 aggravated assaults were reported to police by residents and visitors (Green, et al., 1994). Even if a small fraction of the resident-victims reported the crimes to police, it would appear that there were few visitor-victims. Taken as a whole and considering both cities, the data fail to support the justification for fear of or the anecdotal reporting of tourist-related violent crimes.

The third element of the routine activities approach involves the presence or absence of capable guardians. Had the ratio of police officers to citizens in the two cities been at high levels, that could represent an explanation for the crime patterns. It appears, however, that the two cities had unusually low numbers of police officers, compared to other similar cities. In 1993, for example, the average number of officers for U.S. cities with populations over

250,000 was 3.6 per 1,000 residents. During that same year, the rate of officers for Las Vegas was 2.0 per 1,000 residents and in Honolulu the rate was 2.2 per 1,000 residents. The rates of officers per 1,000 residents was consistent over the years of the analysis. This element, police officers as capable guardians, does not explain or even influence the changes in crime rates of the cities as the number of visitors increased. Other explanations which could be explored through other than official data might include private security officers as capable guardians or, as suggested by Felson (1997), ordinary citizens as guardians.

While Miami did not supply sufficient data to be included in the analysis, the city did provide some interesting information. While it was the target of reports of crimes against tourists, there has been a substantial decrease in such crime. Since 1992 the Miami Police Department maintains data on robberies of tourists and from 1992 to 1994, the number of robberies of tourists decreased from 1,469 robberies in 1992 to 945 robberies in 1993 to 332 robberies in 1994 — a 77 percent decrease over the three years.

On February 23, 1996 the first murder in Florida of a foreign tourist in more than two years occurred (Associated Press, 1996). Following a series of ten homicides of foreign tourists in Florida from August 1992 to September, 1993, Miami and other cities took extraordinary preventive measures including electronic mapping systems and "panic" buttons in rental cars as well as police videos on safety which tourists could watch at Miami's airports to heighten awareness of the dangerous areas of the city. These actions have failed to attract the attention of the media as much as the suggestions of the initial crime problems. While the assessment of crime in Las Vegas and Honolulu does not adequately answer the question of the relationship between crime and tourism, it does suggest that other factors are more responsible for variations than simply the number of visitors to a city.

Clearly, there are implications for future research in order to provide a more comprehensive assessment of the issues related to visitors and crime. A study which includes a temporal and spatial analysis of crime and tourism in selected cities could address the issues of routine activities of tourists, "hot spots" of tourism, crime and the convergence of the two, and the relationship of social, economic and demographic factors which might better explain the occurrence of crime. Such a study could assist locations in better addressing their crime problems by considering the visitor (tourist) traffic, the areas of the city affected by visitors and prevention strategies, and the use of security officers. This information would be valuable for tourism managers in cities already engaged in mass tourism as well as those developing in that direction.

Theoretical as well as applied impact would arise from better explanations of stranger crimes and the routine activities of a particular group, visitors. Far too little attention, other than anecdotal, has been given to these issues. It is the responsibility of social scientists to provide viable explanations of phenomena and relationships so policy-makers can best utilize their resources to enhance the quality of life of residents and visitors.

NOTES

1. A previous version of this paper was presented at the annual conference, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, Las Vegas, Nevada, March, 1996.

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