

CRISIS IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM: A STUDY ON THE IMPACTS OF TERRORISM ON INDIAN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Indian Hospitality Industry has flourished in the past few years, significantly contributing to the nation's Gross Domestic Product, foreign exchange earning and employment. India is facing the war with terrorism for decades, but of late the things have been changed. The terrorists have changed their methods of strike. They now target hospitality and tourist locations as it has direct impact on human lives and economy; also they get the attention world wide. Many countries have issued travel advisories before visiting India due to recent terror attacks in Mumbai and in other destinations. The terror attacks have affected the tourism season, especially the inbound tourism. Due to this, Indian hospitality and tourism sector is witnessing low level in the recent times and thus, many of the travel agents and agencies are now witnessing a spell of booking cancellations by overseas visitors. Terrorism has shaken the hospitality and tourism industry of both developed and developing countries. Terrorists also try to disrupt the entire administration of their target nation. Questions are often asked on the various long term impacts of these kinds of activities on the Indian Hospitality Industry. Based on the above issues this study provides a discussion on the impacts of terrorism on the hotel and tourism industry in the affected countries. The study reveals that though the hospitality and tourism sector entrepreneurs are trying to improve upon the security measures but still a lot is required to be done and to this there are few suggestions given by the author of this study.

Keywords : terrorism, hospitality, tourism

INTRODUCTION

For most international travellers, tourism is a discretionary act. Many countries have invested heavily in tourism and have acquired a high level of economic dependence on inbound tourism. Events which compromise the viability of a destination may result in considerable economic disruptions to the country, state or region. For individuals, this situation could result in loss of income, unemployment and poverty. However, few tourists will consider these implications in determining their choice of destination. Their prime concern is to travel to a destination satisfying their desires with a minimum of complications or threats to their safety and well being.

The threat of terrorism is understandably a major issue in destination choice. The popularity and desirability of specific destinations is influenced by many factors. These include economic factors such as affordability, special events such as Olympic Games or world expos. A wide range of perceptions governs the desirability and appeal of a destination to the potential traveler (Suvantola, 2002).

A major determinant in a traveller's decision to visit a destination is the perception of safety and security. Specific events or a series of events may undermine these perceptions of a destination. These events or circumstances, individually or in a combination have a negative impact on perceptions of safety, security or desirability of tourist destinations (Suvantola, 2002).

The start of the 21st century was marked by a wave of terrorist attacks, outbreaks of disease and devastating natural phenomena. Many of these incidents had local, regional and global repercussions and prompted tourism crises at corporate, industry and destination levels. Although some events were more unprecedented, crisis and disaster have acquired prominence in recent years and the modern world appears to be one of heightened uncertainty and insecurity. Hospitality industry cannot isolate itself from these forces and developments in the external environment have the capacity to precipitate hospitality crises, as do the industry and organizational circumstances.

Hotels appear to be regarded as "soft" targets. Islamic militants killed 16 Greek tourists in front of an Egyptian property in 1996 (Henderson, 2007). Popular attractions are vulnerable and over 50 tourists were murdered at one of Egypt's ancient temples in 1997. Bombs were detonated at night clubs in Bali in 2002 and again at restaurants in 2005. ETA struck coastal tourist resorts in Spain and Kurdish groups did the same in Turkey (Henderson, 2007).

OBJECTIVES

To researcher knowledge, there is no reported research done specifically on the impacts of terrorism on Indian Hospitality and Tourism sector. The objective behind carrying out this research is to find how the hospitality and tourism industry is affected by terrorism thus; this research title will be crisis in hospitality and tourism: a study on the impacts of terrorism on Indian hospitality and tourism sector. The various objectives are :

- To find out why the hotels and tourism destinations are becoming a soft target for the extremists.
- To analyze the impacts of terrorist activities on hospitality and tourism industry.
- To provide the various measures which can be useful in order to prevent the possible attacks on hotels and tourist destinations.

INDIA AS A DESTINATION

In India, hotel industry has seen a tremendous boom in the recent years. Hotel Industry which is linked directly to the tourism industry and recently the growth in the Indian tourism industry has added to the growth of Indian hotel industry. The arrival of low cost airlines and the competition for the price wars have given domestic tourists a host of options. Two of the destination campaigns like 'Incredible India' and the 'Atithi Devo Bhavah' (ADB) (www.iloveindia.com) helped in the growth of domestic and international tourism and consequently the hotel industry.

India, a place known for its hospitality around the world. The hospitality which spreads from Kashmir in the North to Kanya Kumari in the South, from Manipur in the East to the Gujarat in the West. The Hospitality Industry in India has developed significantly in the past few years, contributing to the country's GDP (Table 1), foreign exchange earnings and employment. Service sector emerged as one of the main driving force in country's high GDP. It grew by 10.8 per cent in comparison of 11.1 percent of 2006-07. It was increased by 12 per cent in trade, hotels, transport and communication sectors.

Table 1 Sector wise GDP growth rate of India

Sector wise GDP growth rates		(In %)				
Sectors	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Agriculture*	-7.24	9.96	-0.05	5.92	3.76	4.55
Industry	6.79	6.00	8.51	8.02	10.63	8.09
a. Manufacturing	6.81	6.63	8.65	8.98	12.00	8.78
b. Mining/quarrying	8.84	3.09	8.15	4.87	5.70	4.75
c. Electricity	4.75	4.77	7.90	4.68	5.98	6.27
Services	7.52	8.84	9.87	11.01	11.18	10.66
a. Construction	7.52	11.98	16.14	16.46	11.98	9.81
b. Trade, hotels**	9.44	12.01	10.69	11.51	11.82	12.02
c. Finance/Insurance+	7.98	5.58	8.69	11.41	13.92	11.79
d. Community++	3.93	5.41	6.85	7.21	6.89	7.25
GDP at factor cost	3.84	8.52	7.45	9.40	9.62	9.03

Source: www.indianindustry.com

* Includes 'forestry & fishing', ** Includes 'transport & communication'

+ Includes 'real estate & business services', ++ Includes 'social & personal services'

But in the recent time, the Hospitality and tourism industry in India is under a great threat from the people who want to destabilize the country's hospitality and tourist destinations. Recent economic crisis and the depreciation in the value of rupee add another woe to the Indian tourism growth, thus making the situation more critical.

Mumbai which is the commercial capital of India and the home for Bollywood is famous across the world among the travelers. The recent terrorist's attacks on two famous hotels of Mumbai along with the other places like a hospital, a railway station, a nearby residential building and at least another four locations have made the tourists to think twice before visiting to the place. The attacks were huge as they resulted in loss of both life and money. The terrorists involved didn't planted any bomb in the evil act, rather they used the rifles and machine guns to terrorise people, bring loss of revenue, breaking country's economic growth and cause as much damage to the city as possible.

The two hotels involved, the Taj Mahal palace & Towers and the Oberoi Trident have approximately 1700 rooms collectively and have higher occupancy most of the time of the year and also on the night of attacks. According to an estimate there might be around 2500 people present in these hotels which include both guests and staffs (Thadani, 2008).

Due to the recent terrorist attacks on Mumbai and various other parts of the country, many countries have issued travel advisories (Jain, 2008) for their nationals before visiting the Indian cities. The attacks which saw the death of 22 foreign tourists has spread a wave of fear among foreign nationals slated to visit India.

HOTELS - AN EASY TARGET

Hotels are regarded as comparatively soft targets (Henderson, 2007). This may be because the people from various places gather at the hotels and the restaurants without having any security and safety concerns. They never think that a place like hotel or restaurant can be the target of terrorists. But lately it has been seen that hotels are becoming the popular targets of terrorists. The reason may be because the terrorists have an easy access to these places. There are many points in the hotels which gives terrorists many opportunities to make an attack. The lobbies at the hotels are large and have open spaces and daily hundreds of people walk through them. It is not a difficult job for the terrorists to bring a car or any vehicle loaded with the bomb right near to the reception area of the hotel (Cetron, 2004).

Another area which is seemed to be a prime target for terrorists is transportation. They would just fix a bomb or leave a bag or packet containing the bomb and walked away. There have been such incidents in the past where terrorists have used transportation as their mean to spread destruction. If one looks at the history, it is found that bombing at Pan Am flight in Scotland in 1988 and in 2001 hijacking of four aircrafts to use them to attack world trade centre in 9/11 attacks in New York (Cetron, 2004).

Most recently the extremists are aiming to attack the sports events. Their recent attacks on Sri Lanka cricket team in Karachi in which six players in the Sri Lankan national cricket team were shrapnel. In 1972 Munich Olympics games, attacks on Israeli team resulted in the assassination of 11 Israeli athletes (Cetron, 2004). Any country who is hosting an International sports event has to spend more money to provide tightest security.

The table 2 below gives some incidents of tourism and hospitality crises in the last decade and recently, and this pattern seems to continue in the years ahead.

Table 2 List of terrorist incidents that hit hotel and tourism sector

Year	Event
2009	Bomb attacks at Jakarta JW Marriott and Ritz Carlton hotels.
2008	Terrorist attack on two hotels in Mumbai killed 170.
2008	Bombings at Marriott Hotel in Islamabad killed 40, injured 100.
2005	Suicide bombings at an Amman hotel in Jordan killed 57 and injured 120.
2005	Bombs at New Delhi killed 61 and injured 200.
2004	Indian Ocean Tsunami in which over 200,000 estimated to have died, including 2,000 tourists in Thailand.
2003	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus epidemic in Asia and Canada impacted on tourist movements and air travel.
2002	Terrorist bombings at night clubs on the Indonesian Island of Bali killed 191 and injured 300.
2001	9/11 bombings at twin towers of world trade center in New York, killing 2645 people and injured more than 700.
1999	Indian Airlines plane hijacked from Nepal: 178 passengers released after 8 days.
1998	Abduction of 16 tourists on an organized tour in Yemen, four of whom were killed.
1997	Terrorist attacks on tourists visiting an historic site at Luxor in Egypt killed 62.

Sources: BBC News assorted reports; US Department of State, 2004; Wikipedia, 2005, 2009

REPERCUSSION ON TOURISM

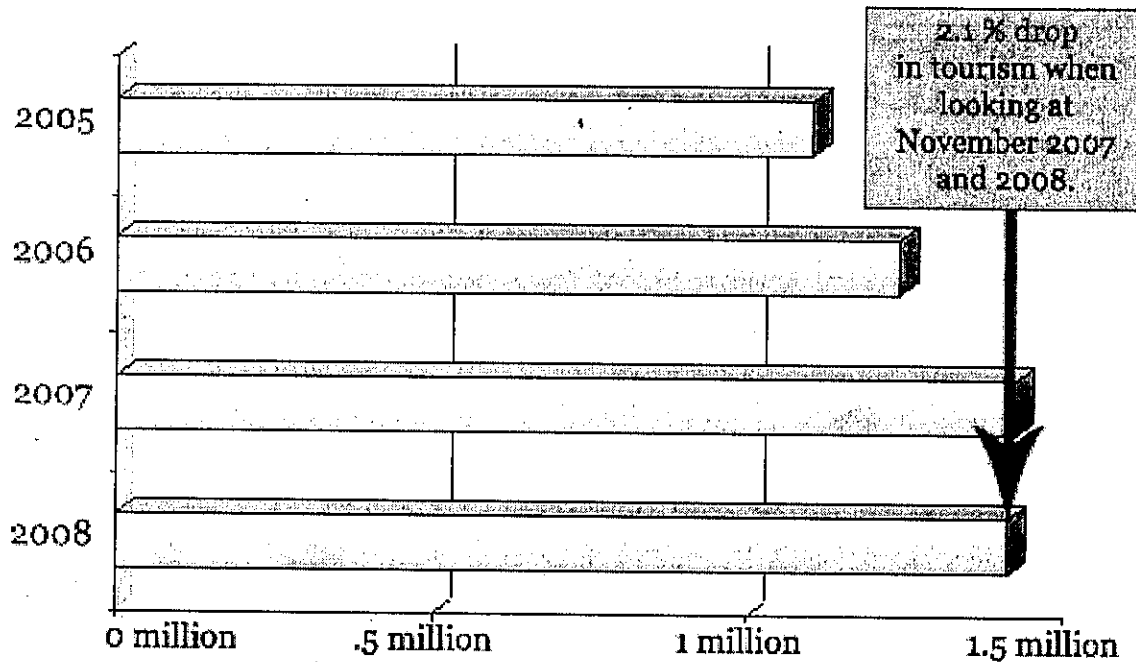
Hospitality and Tourism becomes the first victim of the terrorist attacks and the recent attacks added to the anguish to the Indian hospitality industry (Jain, 2008). The current global recession has already seen a large number cancellation of hotel bookings and air charters from European and American countries (approximately 40-60%), Mumbai attacks have sent a message of panic among the tourists who were willing to travel India. After the attacks in Mumbai, Many tour operators and the hotels have recorded a large number of booking cancellations. Delhi and Bangalore have also been reporting significantly lower bookings during the current season (Kumar, n.d.): If it continues like this the Indian tourist market will come down by 40% in the coming months which is already affected by the current recession situation, and the things might get worsened.

Since the year 1996 and particularly after 2002 the Foreign Tourist Arrival (FTA) in India has increased significantly but the first six months of year 2008 have shown a decrease in the FTA by up to 2.1% (chart 1), where

the tourist arrival has gone down from 5.32 million in November 2007 to 5.21 million in November 2008. This comes on the heels of a 15% to 20% annual growth rate in number of tourists for the past three years. This fall in FTA has also recorded a drop of approximately 12.5% in foreign exchange earnings.

Chart 1. Foreign Tourist Arrival in India

□ Number of India's foreign tourists in millions



Source - www.gourkanjilal.com

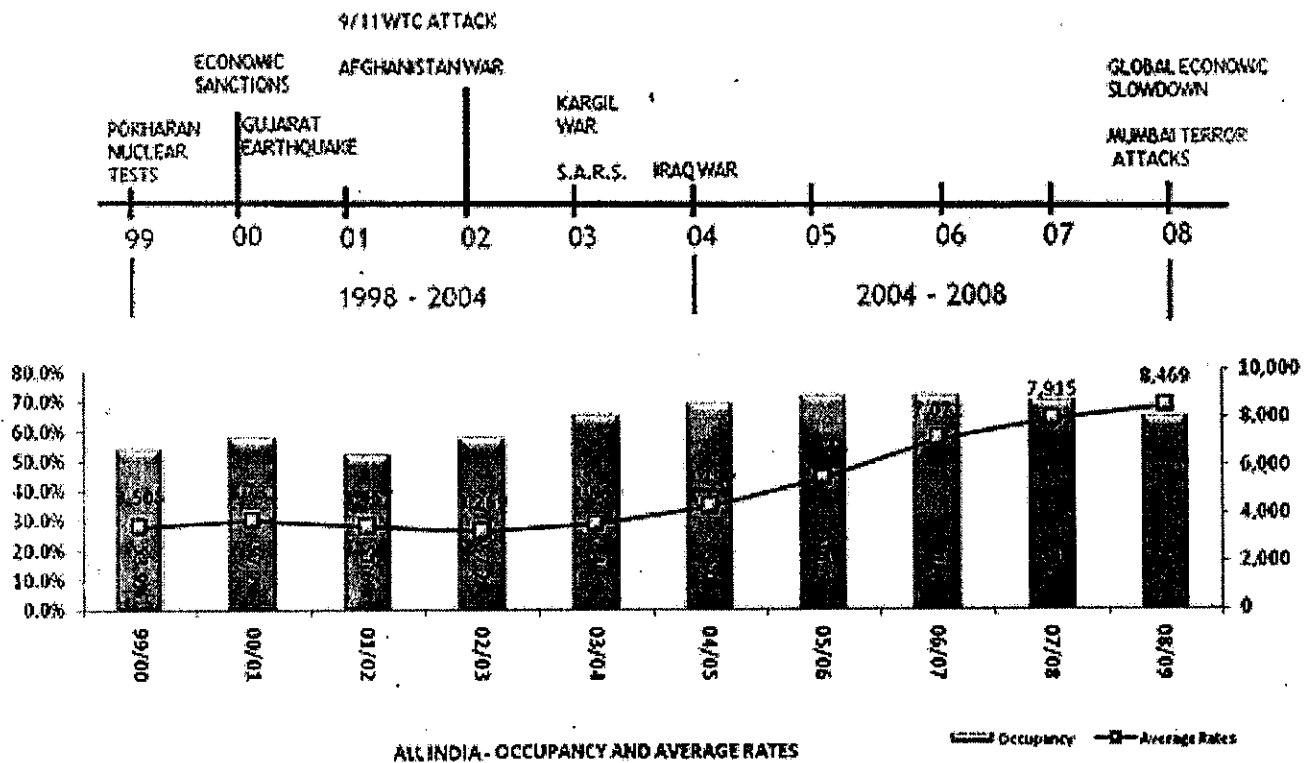
Tourist arrivals to India were down by more than 17 percent in January 2009s. In December 2008, approximately 521,990 tourists visited India which is a decline of 12.5 % as compared to December 2007. In January 2009, 487,262 travelers visited India, which was 17.6 % less as compared to the same month of 2008. The chart below explains the Average Room Rates (ARR) and occupancy level across India. There has been a steady increase in ARR since 2002 onwards. This is same for the occupancy level which has increased from 57% in 2002, went up to 71% in 2006 and then came down to 64% in 2008.

Trend analysis of occupancy and average rates for the industry over the last ten years indicates that while hotel occupancies and rates were under pressure in the immediate short term period post such events; the industry has been successful in effective substitution of key feeder markets, market segment mix and rate re-alignment. During the Five Year period, FY99 to FY04, when the industry was witness to three wars, the worst terror attack in history on 9/11, and the SARS outbreak, the response has been quick and effective resulting in hotels witnessing

positive growth both in terms of occupancy and average rates in four out of the five years, the only exception being FY01 (Thaker, 2008).

In 2001, post 9/11 and in 2002, post SARS, while international tourist arrivals witnessed a negative growth trend, the outbound tourist market in India decided to travel to leisure destinations within India and was instrumental in helping industry sustain itself through tough times.

Chart 2. All India Occupancy and Average Room Rates



Source: www.hvs.com (December 2008)

The Occupancy levels of various hotels in the metro cities are also expected to go down from the current average of 65-66% to 57-58% levels. Average Room rates (ARR) are also expected to decline by 15-20% in the coming six to eight months.

In fact the attacks were made to diminish the image of 'Incredible India' and also to make it difficult for the 'brand' to achieve its goal of doubling tourist arrivals from last year's five million to ten million by 2010 (Jain, 2008).

If this is indeed India's 9/11, then it is about time that the forces of terror be given a loud and clear message – India may be the land of hospitality, but do not confuse hospitality with cowardice.

SECURITY CONCERNS (FINDINGS)

In India, most of the hotels often deploy security persons mainly for any ceremonial and cultural reasons rather than for hard core security in the hotel premises. The security persons or the guards are dressed very elegantly, may be in their regional outfits, sometimes carrying daggers by their side. The main reason why these guards or security personnel are positioned is to bow and salute the guests and fawn on foreigners (Kumar, n.d.). Dressing the security personnel in this manner definitely looks very elegant and impressive but after the 26/11 acts, it seems to be unwise and foolish. One can imagine that a security person welcoming and bowing to a guest who comes in a very nice car and whose suitcase contains the deadly explosives and the shoulder bag contains rifles and pistols. A few minutes after that guest goes inside the hotel, the so called 'guest' starts firing randomly all over and killing everyone who comes in front of him, be it the security person, guests or the hotel staff (Kumar, n.d.).

It has been seen in most of the hotels of both public and private sector across the country that they don't have their own security team and they hire untrained personnel offered by various security agencies. The management thinks that it is an unnecessary expenditure so they give the contract to the agency which offers the maximum number of security men with the least cost.

It is the need of the time for the hotels to revamp their security and stop thinking about the cost factors. The guests spend a large amount of money for their stay in the hotel. The people are now more educated concerning personal safety. Now-a-days before planning their stay at one particular hotel or destination, people also think about the safety and security of that place. Though in recent time, hotels have done to improve on the security measures but that does not seem to be enough. Many hotel companies are now considering an airport style approach to deter terrorists. The Karachi Sheraton Hotel and Tower in Pakistan, which was attacked in May 2002, has a system of checking all vehicles and screening packages and luggage (Henderson, 2007). Clearly the events of 26/11 and their emerging impacts on global tourism will have a significance influence will on destination marketing well into the future. Tourist authorities in many parts of the world must tailor their own marketing programmes in accordance with their specific needs. Operators, agents and also the governments in generating countries, also have obligation to educate travellers about security matters and what to do when faced with suspicious behaviour. The international tourism industry faced a challenge in which it needed to restore global confidence – not in any specific region or destination, but in travel as a form of leisure and as a means of conducting business.

IMPORTANT MEASURES FOR HOTELS SECURITY

Security in the lodging environment presents a wide range of challenges if only because the lodging business is in operation every hour of the day, every day of the year. Hotel guests depend upon the hotel to maintain an environment in which they will be as safe as possible. The likelihood that a hotel will be terrorism target has increased recently. Managers in all properties should be concerned about and reconsider security procedures (Hayes

& Ninemeier, 2006) so as to take practical steps to protect lives in the event of an intentional explosion, fire, or other disaster, possibly even including the use of biological or chemical weapons.

No hotel has an unlimited amount of money to spend on to guarding against a terrorist attack (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2006). In the recent times, though many hotels have improved their security by adding security cameras in the lobbies and the corridors and have also installed the electronic locks on the guest rooms, but a lot of more has still to be done. There are still many hotels that have done just absolutely nothing in the area. For the small hotels and restaurants it will be very difficult to have a sound security system at their property as they can not afford the expenses.

What, then, are practical tactics that all hoteliers can use to address this concern (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2006)? They include :

1. The proper maintenance of existing security and safety equipment/procedures. For example, if surveillance equipment is in current use, it should be properly maintained. Information about building evacuation procedures should be an integral part of new employee training.
2. Controlled access to non-public areas of the property. (Who comes in the back door? Where do they go?)
3. The screening (background checks) of employee applicants in accordance with applicable laws.
4. The use of practical building safety tactics, such as plastic film affixed to windows, where applicable, to protect them from bursting.

There are several other specific actions that the hospitality tourism and industry can do in order to prevent the possible attacks.

- Establish an international marketing crisis team with representatives from the international tourism industry bodies such as WTO, IATA, WTTC, International Hotel Association, and PATA. This body would liaise and engage with the media, national governments and the United Nations. Its mantra would be to ensure that the interests of the international tourism industry are effectively represented to the international media and governments.
- **Proper verification of employees before recruitment :** Before the appointment of any employee in the hotel, applicant's identity and his past work record should be verified, check for any arrest record in the past. This is more important in the case of those who have been fired from their previous job. Biometric IDs can be used by the hotels for their employees, as they ensure that the person who is reporting for the duty is actually the one who got the job (Lakshman, 2008, Murthy, 2008).
- **Know your suppliers and their people:** There are many things in the hotel which are carried out by the suppliers or the contractors. A few of them may be electricians, air conditioner repairing, laundry equip-

ment repairs, lift servicing and repairing, mason services for construction or expansion work, external florists, suppliers for vegetables, meat, etc. and the part timers for the banquet operations. Each one of them may represent a potential risk of an attack (Cetron, 2004). It is important that suppliers' previous record should be checked and the screening of their workers before entering the hotel premises should be done to the hotel's satisfaction.

- **Knowing the guests properly :** Any one (who might be an extremist) can enter a hotel in the form of a guest. Ask for the guest's identity, especially in the case of foreigners. If the guest is paying by cash, double check his/her identity thoroughly. If your hotel is hosting an international meeting, ask the sponsors for the list of attendees in advance and check their identity as well (Cetron, 2004).
- **Keep eye on the entrance :** All the doors, entrances of the hotel should be under the eye of a camera keeping an eye on every person passing through them. Also the parking areas, both for the guests and the staff and the staff-only areas should also be under security camera. If any kind of suspicious activity is being noticed, the security personnel should be alarmed immediately (Cetron, 2004). Large hotels can also be equipped with the metal detectors, and baggage screening systems.
- **Training the staff for emergency :** The staff of the hotel should be given the training for emergencies like earthquakes, tornadoes, terrorist attacks, fire, etc. They should also be given the proper medical training for such emergencies. Hotels can also organise periodic drills for emergency procedures (Hayes & Ninemeier 2006).
- **Hire the professionals :** The small kind of disruptive activity like rowdy guests and small thieves etc can be easily handled by the hotels' own guards, but to avoid big events like terrorist activity, a top private security firm who has the proper anti terrorist skills should be hired to identify and eliminate the vulnerabilities.
- **Plan ahead :** One of the important things in dealing with an emergency is to have a proper plan in advance. The things should be known clear about what action has to be taken during the emergency. Systematic risk measurement should be compulsory for all the hospitality business. The staffs should be trained and informed about the evacuation, where to take the guests and the injured people for medical assistance, if required during a terrorist attack (Cetron, 2006). Infact this should be the part of every new employee's orientation with periodic classes and exercises to remember the lessons.
- Special attention should be given to the food and water as these can be contaminated with poison or some bacteria and which might cause a heap of casualties. Make sure that the suppliers' personnel are scrutinised carefully (Cetron, 2004).
- Hospitality and tourism training and educational institutions can play a vital role in addressing the safety

and security threats by incorporating safety and security subjects in hospitality programmes across the world. This will enable the students to learn at the beginning of their career only before they face the actual world.

CONCLUSION

The service industry always gives priority to providing outstanding service with a view to ensuring customer satisfaction, and in this respect, hospitality sector is always the leader. A safe and secure property alone can enable the customer to enjoy the experience of quality service, in an idyllic and conducive environment. The recent targeting of hotel Taj and Oberoi in Mumbai by terrorists points to the fact that we in the hospitality business should do our utmost to secure the property and guarantee safe havens for our guests and staff alike.

It is important that every hospitality employee is not only trained to deal with emergencies and crises situations, but also should be able to prevent catastrophes through safety and security awareness programmes. This requires continuous and planned efforts facilitating and equipping all employees of hospitality industry. Organized training programmes. Covering employees at all levels on safety and security equipments and devices and its working conditions at all times is highly desirable. The requirement for through monitoring of every movement of the guests and positioning of smart people in key locations of the establishments is felt in the present day.

Crises and their management are thus matters of great importance generally and with specific reference to Hospitality and Tourism industry. These crises display a striking diversity and have a variety of causes found in economic, political, socio-cultural, environmental, technological and corporate domains.

As the entire world comes to term with the death and destruction caused by the terror strikes in the Mumbai, questions are often asked on the various long term impacts of these kinds of activities on the Indian Hospitality Industry. The hotels targeted are the icons of luxury and hospitality in India, the Taj Mahal Palace and Towers is India's most famous and historic hotel because of its association with the Indian Independence Movement.

The events of 26/11 and their repercussions on the hospitality and tourism industry of India and the global travel patterns are yet to be fully analysed. Hoteliers, conference venues, tour coaches and operators all had to visibly address consumer concerns about tourism safety in the wake of November 26 attacks. International bodies such as World Travel and Tourism Council, the World Tourism Organisation, the International Hotel Association, IATA and similar national bodies needed to address the global concerns through a coordinated information campaign.

No tourist destination is immune from crisis. Consequently the global hospitality and tourism industry requires strategies and a set of directions which enable and prepare destination tourism authorities to manage a crisis event from its onset and rapidly implement a recovery strategy.

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