

Security and Patron Satisfaction: Issues and Recommendations

Can Uslay, Rutgers Business School at Newark and New Brunswick
(can.uslay@business.rutgers.edu)

Sevincgul Ulu, Rutgers Business School at Newark and New Brunswick
(ulu.sevinc@rutgers.edu)¹

Terrorist activities occurring in venues ranging from large scale such as airports and stadiums to smaller such as clubs and restaurants have been on the rise globally. These unfortunate and tragic incidents have necessitated the employment of more strict security measures, complex procedures, and commensurate staff training. For example, the Department of Homeland Security has assigned \$3.7B of their budget to screen operations to maintain aviation security and more effectively allocate screening resources based on risk (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2016). The objective is to enhance safety and minimize the risks by utilizing state of the art technology and methods. Increasing terror threats have impacted not only public venues such as airports but also large professional organizations such as the National Football League and the National Basketball Association. These organizations have put more attention to safety measures by working towards certification or designation under the Support Anti-Terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies Act (SAFETY Act) in order to protect their arenas more comprehensively. Further complicating the issue is that it is easy for venue owners to quantify the costs of improvements in security but not the commensurate benefits.

Meanwhile, the increasing number of tragic incidents has arguably made consumers/patrons more sensitive to the notion of security. At its extreme, such concerns may deter attendances for high profile events and negatively impact overall attendance. Alas, as much as patrons like to be secure, they do not equally appreciate the security processes they have to experience when checking into venues. These venues sell more than a ticket; they sell unique, emotional experiences, and strict security measures like bag checks, electronic screening, pat-downs and long lines might not only detract from the experience, but also provide a “soft target” for an attacker. Furthermore, patron perception of randomized selection and/or security processes can be mixed due to perceptions of ethnic profiling or lack of staff training. Hence, there are concrete customer satisfaction and ultimately revenue consequences for venue owners. Ultimately, the efficacy of any security process depends on perception and compliance by the public it serves. Organizations spend significant resources to managing their customer relationships (Malhotra, Uslay, and Bayraktar 2016), yet there is limited understanding of how patrons perceive any changes to safety precautions.

¹ The authors acknowledge support from the CCICADA DHS University Center of Excellence and the US Department of Homeland Security Office of SAFETY Act Implementation, under award 2009-ST-061-CCI002-08. Any opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of CCICADA or the US Department of Homeland Security. The authors thank Fred Roberts and Paul Kantor for their helpful guidance and insights.

Despite the increasing importance and prevalence of security domestically and abroad, our review of the literature shows that not a single one of the widely used scales to measure customer/patron satisfaction directly accounts for perception of security or security measures employed by venues and/or service providers. The few studies touching upon security do not directly address satisfaction or only do so by use of a single item in a multi-item scale (e.g., Toohey et al. 2003; Mattox et. al., 2000; Taylor and Toohey 2007; Tsuji et al. 2007; Taylor and Toohey 2006). With the dramatic surge in terror incidents and corresponding strict safety procedures, this remains an unanswered but increasingly critical gap regarding understanding of patron satisfaction. *Thus, we call upon social scientists to develop a comprehensive scale to properly measure patron satisfaction by explicitly focusing on issues such as the waiting experience, changes to security processes, randomization, and impact of staff attitudes on overall satisfaction.*

The availability of a comprehensive scale would not only help empirical social scientists but also provide practical value to venue owners in understanding the impact of different security processes on patron satisfaction and enabling them to manage patron expectations and security processes more effectively.

More broadly, we call for the use of principles of marketing in an area where it has not previously been applied but where it is badly needed. For example, the potential of randomized security processes in addition to, or perhaps as a substitute for, existing security processes is currently being explored by leading teams of researchers. While randomization is highly beneficial for improving safety, some randomized procedures might generate extremely negative reactions from the patrons. For example, perceived unfairness is one of the most common problems faced by security teams when conducting security screening. The marketing literature strongly suggests that perceived unfairness (which could likely arise when patrons confuse a randomized process with ethnic or other profiling) can diminish patron/customer satisfaction (Seiders and Berry 1998; Katz et al. 1991; Sindhav et al. 2006; Goodwin and Ross 1992).

Marketing literature also suggests that the way information and related stimuli are presented can significantly influence consumer perceptions (Bitner et al. 1990; Smith et al. 1999). Security screening is not a pleasant experience for most consumers. While very worthwhile, educating patrons about the importance of security procedures represents a costly proposition. On the other hand, marketing incentives can be used to reframe how *randomized screening* is perceived, shifting sentiment from a negative one associated with loss of time, hassle, and privacy issues, to a positive sentiment associated with luck, lottery, winning, potential gains and economic savings. Overall, the joint exploration of randomization and marketing incentives appear to be particularly promising to reframe the perception of security processes.

Under certain conditions, reframing of randomization would provide clear patron benefits and aid security processes to not only reduce average waiting time but also increase both patron satisfaction and the net profits of venue owners. Consistent with effectuation theory (Sarasvathy 2001), randomized incentive programs can primarily utilize existing means of an organization i.e., they can be integrated to existing operations, do not require significant resources, and they can be cash-flow positive in weeks (Uslay and Ulu 2017).

References

- Bitner, M. J., Booms, B. H., & Tetreault, M. S., 1990. The Service Encounter: Diagnosing Favorable and Unfavorable Incidents. *Journal of Marketing*. 54(1), 71-84.
- Goodwin, C. and Ross, I., 1992. Consumer Responses to Service Failures: Influence of Procedural and Interactional Fairness Perceptions. *Journal of Business Research*. 25(2), 149-163.
- Katz, K. L., Larson, B. M., & Larson, R. C., 1991. Prescription for the Waiting-in-line Blues: Entertain, Enlighten, and Engage. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. 32(2), 44-53.
- Malhotra, Naresh K., Can Usley, & Ahmet Bayraktar, 2016. *Relationship Marketing Re-Imagined: Marketing's Inevitable Shift from Exchanges to Value Co-Creating Relationships*, New York, NY: Business Expert Press.
- Mattox, E.A., Wright, S.W., & Bracikowski, A.C., 2000. Metal Detectors in the Pediatric Emergency Department: Patron Attitudes and National Prevalence. *Pediatric Emergency Care*. 16(3), 163-165.
- Sarasvathy, S.D., 2001. Causation and Effectuation: Toward a Theoretical Shift from Economic Inevitability to Entrepreneurial Contingency. *Academy of Management Review*. 26(2), 243-263.
- Seiders, K. & Berry, L. L. 1998. Service Fairness: What It is and Why It Matters. *The Academy of Management Executive*. 12(2), 8-20.
- Sindhav, B., Holland, J., Rodie, A. R., Adidam, P. T., & Pol, L. G., 2006. The Impact of Perceived Fairness on Satisfaction: Are Airport Security Measures Fair? Does it Matter? *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*. 14(4), 323-335
- Smith, A.K., Bolton, R.N., & Wagner, J., 1999. A Model of Customer Satisfaction with Service Encounters Involving Failure and Recovery. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 36(3), 356-372.
- Taylor, T. & Toohey, K., 2006. Security, Perceived Safety, and Event Attendee Enjoyment at the 2003 Rugby World Cup. *Tourism Review International*. 10(4), 257-267.
- Taylor, T. & Toohey, K., 2007. Perceptions of Terrorism Threats at the 2004 Olympic Games: Implications for Sports Events. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*. 12(2), 99-114.
- Toohey, K., Taylor, T., & Lee, C.K., 2003. The FIFA World Cup 2002: The Effects of Terrorism on Sport Tourists. *Journal of Sport Tourism*. 8(3), 186-196
- Tsuji, Y., Bennett, G., & Zhang, J., 2007. Consumer Satisfaction with an Action Sports Event. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*. 16(4), 199-208.
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2016, *Budget-in-Brief Fiscal Year 2016*. Available from: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/FY_2016_DHS_Budget_in_Brief.pdf
- Usley, C. & Ulu, S., 2017. Entrepreneurial Marketing Meets Economics of Security: An Application to Large Scale Venues, Proceedings of the Global Research Symposium for Marketing & Entrepreneurship, San Francisco, CA, forthcoming.