

THE MANAGEMENT OF DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR IN GREEK HOTELS

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Abstract

The delinquency in hotels is well known both to the professionals of the sector as well as to the clients. The specificity of hotel accommodation as an area of “hospitality” and discretion, providing distinctive tranquility and security prevents disclosure of delinquency cases that occur in them. Despite the discretion which the handling of these cases entails, their existence is undeniable.

This survey, conducted for the first time in Greece, aims at exploring the extent and forms of delinquency in the Greek hotel industry, by recording and classifying phenomena of delinquent behavior and how hotel managers are dealing with them.

The survey was conducted on the basis of a structured questionnaire that was distributed to directors and managers of hotel businesses. Due to the expected reserves to make public these incidents, the sample was a “convenience sample” and was combined with personal interviews with hotel directors. The questions posed were related to the manifestation of delinquency cases, their type, the way of confronting them, the personnel responsible for their management, the existence or not of relative staff training, the employment of security officers, the involvement or not of the police, the communicative handling of the cases, etc.

The survey shows that hotel delinquency includes a wide range of actors both within and outside the hotel circuit. It also reveals the lack of security departments charged with preventing and managing these cases. In addition, the study demonstrates the necessity of carrying more targeted research by region and category of hotel accommodation in order to draw more valid conclusions on preventing and reducing offending behavior in hotels.

Key-words: hotel, hotel delinquency, hotel safety and security.

Introduction

The man was traveling since antiquity. The first trips that are recorded are professional trips. Then, the reasons for traveling were commercial, diplomatic, religious (to oracles or sanctuaries), health (to Asclipeia), and sport (participation or attendance of games). According to Gasson (1996:32), trips for sight-seeing or leisure are referred after 1,500 B.C. Such movement created certainly the traveler the need for accommodation.

In ancient Greece, the traveler was a guest and was protected by Zeus, protector of foreigners (“Xenios Zeus”). This period the traveler was obliged to accept the

hospitality (and lodging) of the locals since destinations usually had no accommodation. In this respect, the mansions of wealthy had a special guest-room, either in their home or in a separate building, the so-called “guest-house” (Igoumenakis, Kravaritis, Lytras, 1999:162). In some cities of ancient Greece there were specific clubs to provide shelter to travelers. Officials were accommodated in the “Prytaneion” (Kalogeropoulou, 1970:80).

In several cities or along busy roads, lodges operated to host travelers, called sometimes “dives” and sometimes “hostels”. Later, they were called inns/roadhouses since they hosted both their clients and their bat-horses. While initially hospitality was offered for free/gratis by the city, the sharp increase of travelers’ number led to the creation of professional inns.

In the roman times, the “hospitality installations” were abundant. The Romans called this kind of accommodation either hostels or shelters/resorts. Many inns/roadhouses are recorded all along the national road network that provided accommodation and services for draft animals and wheeled vehicles (Salles, 1998:267-279). Other inns were also built in towns and villages. There, however, the customer had often to share the room with others, two, three, or more, depending on the hosting capacity/the size of the accommodation.

During the Byzantine period, the spread of the Christian religion was followed by a rise of the clergy’s trips. The top of the hierarchy but also famous travelers were usually hosted to the houses of bishops, to churches and monasteries. Later, people who presented recommendations were also hosted. Gradually, the churches and monasteries generalize hospitality, by creating shelters¹, the operation of which was assigned to competent and trusted monks, called “Archontaris” (“guest-masters”)². Indeed, shelters created in the era of Saint Vasilios, widely known as “hostels”, provided travelers with animals and guides in order to continue their journey. They also provided accommodation and treatment to those who were ill due to the hardships of travel (Aggelidi, 2010:15). This type of hostels was known as “Vasiliades” (Igoumenakis et al., 1999:169).

From the 4th century A.C., due to the increasing number of travelers as well as the frequency of trips, inns expand and enrich their services, while gradually beginning to be called “hotels”.

At the time of the Crusades (late 11th – late 13th century), the Order of the Knights of Saint John established organized accommodation and hospitals in Rhodes (Attard, 1995:1-4; Kollias, 1991:16), and later in Northern Italy (Lundberg, 1997:26). In 1282, the union of hoteliers of Florence had acquired so much power that controlled all businesses. In 1312, the first hotel was opened in Paris, called “Eagle” (Igoumenakis, 1999:171).

¹ The hospitality offered by monasteries created the need for shelters, which they should not, however, be confused with the hospitals-asylums that were often annexed to the monasteries and which are found in the sources with the same name (“guest-houses”/hospices). Orlandos A.K. (1958), *Monastic Architecture*, Athens, p. 84-91 In Theocharidis P.L. – Poluviou M.D., *The Dorter (Welcome) and Hospitality of the Monasteries of Mount Athos*, *Archeology Journal*, Vol. 50, p. 28.

² The word “archontariki” (dorter/guest quarters) might draw its origins from the Byzantine word “archontareio”, which meant the hall of the palace where the emperor accepted the archons (princes). The term was also introduced to the monastic language to initially indicate the guesthouse of officials, while later its use was generalized. “Archontaris” (guest-master) is called the monk in charge of guests’ hosting. Theocharidis P.L. – Poluviou M.D., *The Dorter (Welcome) and Hospitality on the Monasteries of Mount Athos*, *Archeology Journal*, Vol. 50, p. 28.

During the Renaissance, the flourishing commercial activity is followed by the first inns in North Italy. The same period, many important centers, which act as polls of attraction for travelers, gradually begin to grow in Europe, fulfilling commercial, religious, cultural and political needs. Thus, the first organized hotel units appear.

The 16th and 17th century, all European cities had hotels. The term “hotel” was used for the first time in the city of London, in 1760, when the 5th duke of Devonshire constructed a building in the shape of the crescent to house the hotels Grande, Centre and St. Annes (Lundberg, 1997:26).

The technological evolution, the development of transport networks, broad social, economic, and political changes gradually led to increased mobility and hence increased needs for accommodation. Furthermore, tourism development led to a huge increase in accommodation needs worldwide.

Hotel units present great interest as an overall economic activity and form an important part of the economy of various countries. Hotels are certainly considered as key factor of tourism development, even if their services are not confined to tourism needs and henceforth to the tourism industry; in this respect, tourism and hotel activity influence each other and they are mutually constitutive.

The hotels operate either as independent units or as part of a hotel chain, that is to say hotel companies which have under their control a number of hotels which may be located either nearby or operating on an international scale (Laloumis, 2002:25).

In Greece, according to the existing legal framework, tourist accommodation is divided into two major categories (Mylonopoulos, 2012:163 ff): The main hotel accommodation (a) classic hotels, b) type motel hotels, c) furnished apartments d) classic type hotels and furnished apartments and e) organized campsites with or without hutches (camping) and non-prime hotel accommodation a) furnished tourist villas or homes, b) rooms to let in a complex of no more than 10 rooms c) rent furnished apartments.

Each of the first two categories is subdivided into different functional forms or types according to criteria which concern the type and the use of the leased premises, and basic services or service offered.

According to data of the European Union (Eurostat, 2007), in the 27 member states the operating units amount to 201,168 with an accommodation capacity of 15,773,977 beds. In 2006, there were 259,300,000 businesses employing 2.3 million people. Regarding Greece, according to SETE, the hotel capacity in the country in 2011 amounted to 9,648 units with 763,668 beds (SETE, 2012:3). The accommodation industry of the U.S. comprises over 47,000 hotels and motels with a total of over 3.3 million rooms.

Hotel delinquency

Since ancient times, the first accommodation (lodges and inns) had not a good reputation. In the Roman era, most of the inns were used, secretly or not, as places of prostitution (Salles, 1998:268). The inns and the taverns mostly serviced the most humble social groups. People of higher social class were not staying in inns but were hosted by friends or personalities of the cities (Salles, 1998:272). There are some stories in the works of Cicero (Cicero, *On Rhetoric Placement*, II, p. 14-15 and Cicero, *On Guessing*, I, p. 27 in Salles, 1998:274-275) referring that owners of inns, spurred by greed, killed their customers to keep their money. An additional danger was for a solitary traveler to be captured by the innkeeper in order to be sold as a slave (Salles, 1998:276). Narratives of this kind are indicative of the different risks that travelers of the time faced.

It is no coincidence that today the word “dive” has negative connotations mainly because of delinquency cases manifested in them. Although such phenomena have

been eliminated or even reduced, the traveler is still vulnerable to crime. Moreover, he often appears himself as offender.

Many studies demonstrate that security is an important parameter of tourism development (Pizam, Tarlow & Bloom, 1997; Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992; Ryan, 1993; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). In this respect, issues relating to the protection of tourists-clients from risks to life, their personal belongings and property are very important (Enz & Taylor, 2002).

Delinquency is a broader concept than crime and results from deviance and circumvention of the legal framework in force adopted by society and the State. The term delinquency characterizes behavior that is not only criminal but also contrary to other rules that bring milder punishment. It should be noted that the term deviation generally refers to forms of behavior, which even if they are not socially acceptable, they did not constitute, at any rate, a transgression against a legal rule, e.g. drug use, vagrancy, absence from school (Nova-Kaltsouni, 2001:14).

The term, therefore, delinquent behavior, with its various components and manifestation degrees, expresses the deviation and aberrant behavior of individuals. This behavior does not always take the form of a criminal offense, and to a large extent it is not disclosed or reported by the victims, the families of the perpetrators and the social environment (Mavroyiannis, 2003).

The phenomenon of delinquent behavior must first be defined and determined chronologically. An act which constituted a breach during the previous century or even a few decades ago may certainly not be still a violation nowadays, e.g. the era of Prohibitionism in the U.S. But also in geographic terms, if compared from country to country, a phenomenon may be treated differently. For example, the use of drugs such as marijuana and hashish, is legal in coffee shops in the Netherlands (Ossebaard, & van de Wijngaart, 1998; Korf, 2002:851), while in Greece is an aspect of delinquent behavior. In some countries, prostitution is a perfectly acceptable institution that actually supports tourism, since many tourists traveling in these countries have as their main purpose the type of tourism called “sex tourism”. Thus, what constitutes unlawful conduct cannot be studied separately, nor be studied outside the social context within which it takes place; in fact, the historical, social, economic and political conditions are those that determine which custom or morals or human behavior in general will be designated by the legislature and the criminal law as punishable acts (Farsedakis, 1996; Giddens, 2002: 254, 260-261; Hughes & Kroehler, 2007).

The delinquency is directly related to hotel accommodation from antiquity until today. The concept of hotel delinquency indicates the delinquency manifested in any area of the hotel (room, restaurant, lobby, public areas, swimming pool, gym, spa, etc.) either by the employee or by the client or by any user-consumer of the hotel product.

The range of hotel delinquency goes from refusal to pay a price for the consumption of products or services to the crime.

The Research

In an effort to determine the extent of delinquency in the hotel business, to record and categorize the phenomena of delinquent behavior and how to overcome them by the competent personnel, an extended research was conducted in hotels throughout Greece (Map 1).



MAP 1. Geographical Distribution of the Units of the Study

The survey was conducted during the period March - April 2012, when seasonal operating hotels start working. A structured questionnaire was distributed in each unit; the questionnaire was based on questions arising from the pilot survey. The questionnaires were distributed to managers of the units or people who, due to their post, regularly confront events that threaten safety. The sample has specific characteristics due to the reservations of some managers to make public such kind of incidents. For this reason, the sample was a “convenience sample” so that it had to be combined with personal interviews with managers. Respondents answered both in open and closed questions. The questions posed were related to the manifestation of delinquency cases, their type, the way of confronting them, the personnel responsible for their management, the existence or not of relative staff training, the employment of security officers (Groenenboom & Jones, 2003; Gill-Moon-Seaman & Turbin, 2002), the involvement or not of the police, the communicative handling of these cases, etc. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Then, the data was coded, categorized, summarized and analyzed in order to measure the different views on specific issues, wherever possible. The data was drawn from a total of 59 questionnaires representing 68 hotel units. This happened because some hotel chains responded to one questionnaire for all of their units.

From the study of the questionnaires, we obtained the following results as far as the class, location and operation of the hotels surveyed are concerned.

The survey involved 21 women, up 35.6% and 38 males, up 64.4%. Of these, 7 were aged 18-25 years (11.87%), 24 people 26-35 years (40.68%), 8 people 36-45 years

(13.55%), 10 were aged 46-55 years (16.95 %) and 10 individuals 56 years and over (16.95%).

Of those surveyed, 20 people have experience 1-3 years (29.41%), 24 individuals 4-10 years (35.30%), 5 persons 11-15 years (7.35%), and 14 people had greater experience of 15 years (20.59%). 5 people did not answer (7.35%).

The 68 hotels, in which the survey was conducted, cover all geographic regions of the Greek territory (Map 1). These units cover all classifications and hosting capacities and are greatly selected by guests. Of these, 34 were of seasonal operation, namely 50% and 34 of continuous operation, namely 50% too. In terms of classification ranking, one unit was a luxury hotel (1.47%), 14 units were of 5 stars (20.58%), 27 units were of 4 stars (39.70%), 16 units were of 3 stars (23.53%), and 4 units were of 2 stars (5.89%). 4 businesses of rooms to let (5.89%), a traditional guesthouse (1.47%) and a boutique hotel (1.47%) also participated in the survey.

As far as the hosting capacity is concerned, 18 units were of 10-30 rooms (26.47%), 7 units had 31-50 rooms (10.29%), 19 had 51-100 rooms (27.94%), 12 had 101-200 rooms (17.6%) and 12 had more than 200 rooms (17.65%).

The results are very interesting, since much more can be understood from in-depth study of extreme and unusual circumstances rather than statistics and averages, as Patton (1990) and Stake (1995) affirm. Although it is not possible to fully generalize from the research's findings (except from units of same capacity and being in large urban centers), results help in recording and understanding the types of delinquency encountered in hotel accommodation, contributing this way to find possible solutions to cope with.

Since the site of the hotel is a very "sensitive" area, any delinquent behavior, especially if disclosed, may cause fear, insecurity, loss of reputation, and ultimately decrease in bookings. Thus, there is a tendency of "non-disclosure" of incidents; the preferred strategy is to settle delinquent behavior and other incidents without involving external sources. In this respect, there are little incidents that see the light of day, and if it were so, the publicity usually lasts a few days. This reaction is justified. The public image of each hotel unit and the sense of security that inspires to its customers are crucial for business. Each unit or hotel chain invests both in advertising and in various programs of public relations in order to promote its services, expands its customer base (and the season when it comes to seasonal operating hotels) and creates the image which has set as an objective.

The research demonstrated that the Greek hotel industry in only a few cases has a special security department staffed by qualified personnel or employ special security officers (a security manager), and these are usually the major hotels. Very often, usually only after an incident occur, they outsource the guarding of the unit to private security companies. In most cases, there is no a competent department, and the incident is handled ad hoc by the owner, the general manager, the head of reception, etc. (Table 1). At any rate, the responsibility of handling the incidents is assumed by individuals belonging to senior levels, and varies depending on the circumstances and severity of the incident. Only in two of all cases the matter was reported to have been handled by the security officer.

TABLE 1. The Management of Delinquent Behavior

PERSON	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Owner - Director	27	39,7
General Director	41	60,3
Duty manager	4	0,6
Head of Reception/ RDM	3	0,5
Public Relations Manager/Guest relations	3	0,5
Head of Departments (ad hoc)	4	0,6
Security Department	2	0,3
<i>up to 1 answers</i>		

The Grid of the Hotel Delinquency

According to the study, within the framework of hotel industry, the term delinquency may indicate different cases, covering a wide range of offenses, from misdemeanors to felonies and serious crime. Delinquency can occur in numerous different axes. According to the data of the survey, delinquent behavior forms a lattice which may involve all the actors in the hotel circuit (Figure 1).

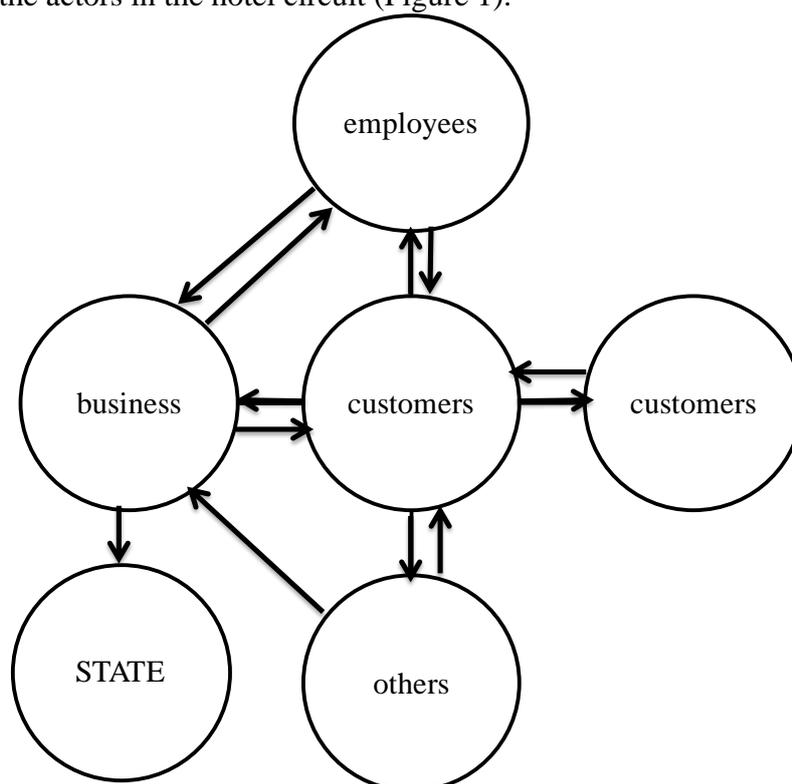


FIGURE 1. The grid of the hotel delinquency

In more detail, according to the survey results, the delinquent behavior can be categorized: a) by the company to customers (inadequate safety measures, attempt to mislead customers in relation to the services or the price of the rooms, etc.), b) by the company to employees (mainly non-compliance with health and safety rules, failure to meet the financial commitments towards employees, imposition of tire contracts,

black labor, denial of payment accruals, etc.), c) by the personnel to the company (theft, sabotage, loss of customers and therefore of revenue, drug abuse, etc.), d) by the personnel to the clients (theft, fraud, insult or defamation, etc.), e) from customers to employees (sexual or other harassment, slander, deceit, etc.), f) from customers to other customers (prostitution, harassment, theft, drug abuse, etc.), g) from customers to the company (cheating of various means e.g. fake food poisoning in order not to pay the bill, false statement and injury claiming compensation from the hotel, denial of payment, etc.), h) by the company to the state (waiving taxes or employer contributions, not paying fines for noise, absence of musical instruments permit, violations of environmental or urban rules, etc.), and i) from thirds to the business (e.g. terrorist attacks, damage during demonstrations, etc.).

From the facts recorded (see Table 2), 25 were thefts, 19 use or trafficking of illicit drugs, 14 were cases of prostitution, 13 sexual harassment from customers to employees, 13 were denied payment, 9 were injured clients or beatings, 8 distributions of the peace, 14 were violations of smoking bans in unauthorized areas, 6 damage or destruction of the equipment of the hotel, 6 bickering between customers, and 10 cases involved economic issues (lost profits and breach of the agreement). 12 cases of infringement of the public safety (burglary, robbery and public indecency) were also reported. In addition, 3 deaths of clients during their stay at the hotel, 3 cases of bickering between employees, 3 cases of mental disorder clients, 3 incidents of sexual harassment by the hotel staff to the customer, 2 cases of arson, and 2 cases of domestic violence were recorded. An incident was referred related to sex tourism, suicide, rape, drowning, commercial espionage and credit card fraud.

According to the staff, 26 cases required the assistance of the police. In 8 cases, it was stated that the company was forced to pay compensation to customers (22.22%). At 62.5% this compensation amounted to €500.

To a question about how to handle incidents of unlawful conduct on the part of staff and in particular if it is needed a special training of the staff, responses were positive at a rate of 54.41% (37 points) but training was not addressed to all staff (43.24 %). These units were of high capacity. Twenty of the companies responded that staff training took place as a measure to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents; furthermore, they consider that this training will also contribute to handle situations such as denial of payment, customer biliousness etc.

Additionally, in order to eliminate the risk of delinquency cases, businesses proceeded to take measures such as increased lighting (37 cases), installing fire detection system (33 cases) and installing closed-circuit television (29 cases). Sixteen companies said they proceeded to recruit security staff.

TABLE 2. Delinquency type

CASE	Number of cases
Thefts	25
Drugs	19
Prostitution	14
Sexual harassment (by customers)	13
Denial of payment	13
Injured customers/beatings	9
Breach of the peace	8
Smoking in public areas	7
Smoking in non-smoking rooms	7
Damage-destruction of hotel equipment	6
Bickering between customers	6
Lost profits	5
Breach of agreement	5
Burglary	4
Robbery	4
Public indecency	4
Other: cardiac arrest/sudden death	3
Bickering between employees	3
Mental disorder clients	3
Sexual harassment (by personnel)	2
Arson	2
Domestic violence	2
Rape	1
Sex tourism	1
Suicide	1
Commercial espionage	1
Drowning	1
Credit card fraud	1

TABLE 3. Prevention measures against delinquent behavior

Prevention measures	Number of companies
Personnel training	20
Recruitment of security staff	16
Increased lighting	37
Fire detection system	33
Establishment a legal department/legal protection	6
Preventive staff control	10

Use of closed-circuit television	29
No action	8
Other (letter to customers for increased attention, guard dog, fence reinforcement, etc.)	3
Not answered	11

Other findings

From the study of the responses to questions about delinquency and the incidents that were most important to the business or had the greatest frequency, it can be concluded that executives were more conservative and did not refer to incidents of gravity. The lower in the hierarchy is the person the more revealing are the answers. Elevated levels of delinquent behavior with respect to theft or burglary are observed both in large hotels and in those that operate throughout the year. The site is clearly and directly related to the above two features, as the majority of cases occur in hotels of continuous operation which are located in major urban centers.

Another factor that seems to favor the delinquency in large hotels is the volume of hotel guests, especially during peak periods, resulting in the anonymity of clients. The classification, the size and the seasonality of the hotel did not seem to affect the manifestation of events, such as the consumption of alcohol or drugs or prostitution cases. Incidents of this type may of course occur in every type or category of hotel. Usually, substance abuse is associated with the manifestation of additional delinquent behavior, such as disturbing the peace, breach of public decency, fights, prostitution, sexual harassment and various equipment wear either in public places or on the premises of the bedrooms. Robberies are recorded only in high class hotels (4 or 5 stars); the two recorded incidents are specifically identified in the wider region of the capital, in Athens.

More cases of delinquent behavior of the type of sexual harassment occur in luxury hotels. The fact that the customer pays a sufficient enough amount for the hotel facilities and services – they are usually people with great financial strength – gives him a highly developed sense of power and prestige. Arriving at the hotel, his aim is usually to relax and escape from a very demanding routine. This combination often leads to unfair harassment behavior against the hotel staff, although according to some of the questionnaires 2 cases of harassment were recorded as from customers to other customers. But sexual harassment occurs also among members of the hotel staff and sometimes comes to physical or verbal violence. Businesses condemn these behaviors when they are revealed – because, unfortunately, they are not always disclosed – by directly penalize them.

Prostitution is a phenomenon that occurs in all types of hotels; it differs, however, in the frequency depending on the economic level of customers. Factors that can affect its appearance in a hotel are linked to the hotel location, the targeted customer base of the hotel, the way of operation of said hotel, and its order and policies against such behavior. There is a slight precedence in city hotels, nonetheless.

The use of drugs or alcohol abuse occurs both in resorts and city hotels, with a slight advantage in the resorts. The same happens with incidents such as damages or disturbing the peace and quarrels both among clients and between clients and hotel staff (usually when trying to persuade them to be more quiet).

Other incidents, such as sex tourism, are mainly associated with the resorts. Incidents such as the denial of payment usually happen in hotels which work with individual clients and, in turn, the default agreement (usually from the tour operator) is a risk

that all hoteliers have to take. Especially last years, when the economic crisis has touched the tourism industry, there are many cases where hoteliers require money in advance even from travel agencies with which they work smoothly.

Conclusion/suggestions

The hotel industry is a small scale social system, which includes all kinds of delinquent behavior. The hotel delinquency includes a wide range of activities – from mild (e.g. petty) to extreme (committing crime) undue behavior. But as the hotel clientele becomes globalized and crime acquires “scientific” features, it becomes necessary for the hotels to establish security departments and to recruit security specialists. Of course, the function of this particular service should balance between privacy and enjoyment of customers and achieving peace and security of the hotel space, both for the personnel and for the consumers of hotel product.

Given the strong reluctance observed in publicizing the hotel delinquency cases, and the fact that there are no similar studies for Greek hotels, it becomes imperative to conduct targeted research into hotel businesses according to their characteristics (city hotels, resorts, etc.) and according to their geographic region (continental, coastal or island). Registering the incidents and the way of handling them and exchanging of experience and knowledge will contribute significantly to the rational management of hotel delinquency. The prevention and reduction of delinquent behavior in hotels constitutes a major purpose which, however, must be always fulfilled with the necessary discretion; the “privacy” of the client and the tranquility of other customers are certainly of an equal importance.

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