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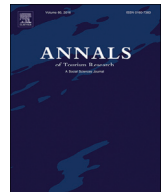
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Dirty work or working dirty? Deceiving cruise tourists

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ABSTRACT

Evidence suggests that some cruise ship employees engage in work that aligns to the poor working conditions, servile roles, or stigmatized positions of 'dirty workers'. Accordingly, we adopt Routine Activity Theory from criminology to generate insights into research into employee misbehavior, the interactions of tourists and service workers, and the dirty work of cruise ship personnel. We begin with a review of contemporary research into crime, deception, and tourism before outlining existing insights into cruise ship work. After outlining our research approach, we present the result of a study into the convergence of likely offenders, potential targets, and opportunities to deceive passengers in the context of cruise ships. We conclude with a series of implications of theory and practice.

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Introduction

While fictional detectives and amateur sleuths doggedly pursue 'means, motives, and opportunities' to track down fiendishly clever criminals in TV shows and crime novels, criminologists rely on the convergence of likely offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of a capable guardian in predicting societal misbehavior. This focus falls within criminology's Routine Activity Theory (a subsidiary of Rational Choice Theory), which emphasizes context and environmental factors in explaining societally deviant behavior (see Cohen & Felson, 1979). The sporadic but often insightful literature on tourist criminology and deviant behavior has generated valuable findings into recorded and observable crime (e.g. Ajagunna, 2006; Brunt, Mawby, & Hambly, 2000), but has neglected the more prevalent, but more nuanced and subtle forms of deviance, crime, deception, and employee misbehavior (see Harris, 2012).

Scholars and commentators have noted the growth of the cruise ship industry as an increasingly valuable segment within global tourism, albeit one significantly affected by the ongoing pandemic (Micallef, 2020). While brochures and adverts depict cruise ships as havens of opulence, critical observers have presented such settings as 'sweatships' whose deleterious treatment of many employees is to be deplored and exposed (see Klein & Roberts, 2003). In this regard, some cruise ship employees work within conditions that align to the poor working conditions of 'dirty workers' (see Hughes, 1962; Bruns, 2008). Such contingencies chime with research that suggests when employees are faced with poor working conditions their levels of deviancy increase (Harris & Ogbonna, 2009), while staff facing poor working conditions are more likely to act deceptively and even manipulate tourists (Chapman & Light, 2017; Harris, 2012).

The aim of this study is to explore interactions between cruise ship workers and passengers to elucidate the extent to which contingencies and conditions permit or facilitate employee misbehaviors. We employ Routine Activity Theory as a lens through which we can explore the convergence of conditions to support or discourage employee deception and manipulation. This

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perspective is adopted with the objective of generating insights into employee misbehavior, the interactions of tourists and service workers, as well as the dirty work of cruise ship personnel.

Crime, deception, and tourism

Cohen and Felson (1979) examined crime rate change between 1947 and 1974 and concluded that both environmental and social factors were key drivers of crime. Consequently, Cohen and Felson (1979) introduced 'Routine Activity Theory' – one of the most cited theories in criminology – in an attempt to help explain the causes and domains of criminal events. Routine Activity Theory is a macro theory of crime that places less emphasis on the offender, and takes into account social and economic factors (see Becker, 1968). Under the tenets of Routine Activity Theory, crime is planned and rational behavior, motivated by a cost versus benefit calculation, where such "behavior [is] designed to meet the offender's commonplace needs for such things as money, status, sex, excitement, and that meeting these needs involves the making of (sometimes quite rudimentary) decisions and choices, constrained as they are by limits of time and ability and the availability of relevant information" (Clarke, 1997: 9–10). Opportunities are constantly being presented for crime to occur, rendering it commonplace; crime is 'normal' and dependent on available opportunities based on how social systems are designed.

Under the tenets of Routine Activity Theory, for crime to occur requires the convergence in time and space of three factors: (i.) a likely offender, (ii.) a suitable target, and (iii.) the absence of a capable guardian. This triumvirate has proved theoretically robust in explaining offending across a range of crimes and contexts, including sexual crimes (Madan & Nalla, 2016; Wood & Stichman, 2018), residential burglary and robbery (Chon, 2017), violent and predatory crimes (e.g. murder, arson, and assault) (Martin & Maples, 2019; Trangenstein et al., 2018), fraud (DeLiema, 2018), violence against women (Hayes, 2018), and most recently, cybercrimes (Weulen Kranenborg et al., 2019; Hsieh & Wang, 2018). This framework is now briefly examined in a tourism context.

Initially, for crime to occur a *motivated offender* who is both capable and willing of committing a crime must be present (Felson & Cohen, 1980). In an insightful study of tourism employees at a seaside amusement park, Chapman and Light (2017) observe that in response to visitor 'misbehavior' (for example, violence, abusive language, and attempted theft), employees reciprocated with visitor cheating, abuse, and violence. This may be attributed to 'in-group' and 'out-group' attitudes, where employees feel justified in their actions given their poor treatment at the hands of visitors. Further, Chapman and Light (2017) note that studies have placed less emphasis on tourism employees and their transgressions.

Under the second element of this triumvirate – a *suitable target* who is vulnerable as a target of crime or deception – tourists may be particularly susceptible subjects of crime, given that they often have low levels of contextual knowledge of their destination (Brunt et al., 2000; Harris, 2012). Tourists spend more time outdoors and carry valuable items (Maxfield, 1987), and may be less likely to report a crime (Ryan, 1993). In addition, tourists may be less vigilant while on vacation and may be more disposed as targets of crime or else may not be aware of places to be avoided (Tarlow, 2011; Harper Jr, 2000). This said, little compelling evidence has been offered to demonstrate that tourists are at an increased risk as the targets of crime than any other category of visitor (Barker et al., 2002; Pelfrey, 2011).

Finally, *the absence of a capable guardian* refers to a lack control or supervision such as the presence of law enforcement, supervisory staff, and surveillance mechanisms (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Service workers engaging in petty crime towards tourists assume that their actions are undetected by managers (Harris, 2012), while supervisory staff in tourist settings may overlook petty crime viewing it as acceptable given visitor (mis)conduct (Chapman & Light, 2017).

The limited research on tourist criminology has tended to focus on recorded, observable, and serious crime (e.g. Ajagunna, 2006; Brunt et al., 2000; Chesney-Lind & Lind, 1986), and focused less attention on crime and deception that goes unreported, as well as subtle forms of crime or deception (Harris, 2012). Most studies are dependent on access to data where a crime has been reported; as a consequence, tourists as victims of crime is "...a difficult issue to analyze, [and] has led to relatively few academic studies" (Lisowska, 2017: 31). According to Prideaux (1996), how a destination is perceived also influences the magnitude of crime (for example, a destination regarded as relatively hedonistic is more likely to have higher levels of crime than a destination that is predominantly family-centric). While an economic motive is regarded as one of the key drivers of crimes against tourists (Tarlow, 2011), tourists may be subjects of a compendium of many types of crime; however, the most common would seem to be burglary, theft, robbery, pickpocketing, assault, fraud, and other petty crime (Pizam, 1982, 1999), as well as sexual assault and murder (Panko & Henthorne, 2019). In addition, levels of reported crime in some sub-sectors of the tourism industry are surprising. For example, in 2017, 106 crimes were reported aboard cruise ships embarking from U.S. ports alone (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2018).

In a study of the deception of tourists, Harris (2012: 1088) makes a number of surprising conclusions: "...many service workers are guilty of, at best, sharp business practice, and at worst, criminal acts of minor fraud, deception and even theft (none of which are reported or recorded)." In an attempt to justify this stark conclusion, Harris (2012) suggests that RAT may be a particularly helpful lens through which to explain the deception of tourists by service workers. This study remains one of the few empirical accounts that draws on the narratives of the *perpetrators* of deception in tourist settings – namely service workers.

Since its inception, RAT has been highly influential in the field of criminology (Wikström, 2009), as well as pivotal in its logical explanation of criminal acts (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1999). RAT would appear particularly well-suited to explain the deception of tourists, despite receiving limited attention in the tourism literature (Ho, Zhao, & Dooley, 2017). The present study examines the deception of passengers on cruise ships, as well as their general manipulation. If cruise vacations are predicated on the highest

levels of service, and service protocols and blueprints with clearly predicated service 'scripts' and roles, why and how would service workers deviate from these to deceive and manipulate tourists?

Cruise ships and working conditions

The working conditions on cruise ships are unlike many other contexts within the tourism and hospitality industries. Crews are typically multicultural, they remain on-board during most of the cruise away from family and friends, inhabit their own private space when not working, and remain isolated on board for long periods. Against this, customer-facing staff are expected to provide the very highest in-service standards to passengers. A key determinant of customers when choosing a cruise package is the anticipated high levels of customer service (Xie, Kerstetter, & Mattila, 2012). Therefore, cruise ships cannot operate without staff capable of delivering high levels of customer service who can adhere to managerially prescribed service protocols and (at least partly) 'scripted' roles. There is, however, also a dark counterpoint to this narrative, where employees have to work, live, and socialize in often poor working conditions – factors hardly conducive to encourage staff to consistently deliver high standards of customer service.

Previous work on cruise ships has typically privileged the experiences of cruise passengers and customer profiles (Yi, Day, & Cai, 2014; Meng, Liang, & Yang, 2011; Teye & Leclerc, 1998; Morrison, 1996; Foster, 1986), but has tended to neglect the experiences, attitudes, and behaviors of cruise ship workers (Papathanassis & Beckmann, 2011). The cruise ship industry promotes itself as a happy and harmonious working environment – a way to see the world at little cost and be remunerated for it – and for some employees this experience is undoubtedly true (Matuszewski & Blenkinsopp, 2011). The incongruity, however, between working conditions promoted by cruise ship lines and the actual experiences of many employees have been widely reported (Radic, 2019; Gibson, 2008; Chin, 2008; Klein, 2002; Frantz, 1999; Chapman, 1992), although other studies point to the satisfying and enriching nature of cruise ship work (Radic, Ariza-Montes, et al., 2020; Dennett, 2018).

Although the poor working conditions of some cruise ship workers are concealed from passengers (Klein, 2002; Weaver, 2005a), numerous accounts report cramped living quarters (Kobus, 2012a), excessive workloads and irregular hours (Bruns & Hutchinson, 2015; Kobus, 2012b), limited legal protection (Presser, 2017), safety concerns and questionable dismissal practices (Walker, 2016), as well as random (and intrusive) cabin inspections. Perhaps it is unsurprising then that some cruise ships have been labelled 'sweatshops' (Klein & Roberts, 2003) for the pernicious treatment of some workers (although methods to improve working conditions have been studied – see Praetorius, Österman, & Hult, 2018). Clearly not all cruise lines are irresponsible employers; some websites specialize in promoting positions in leading responsible cruise lines (e.g. cruisejobfinder.com). Nonetheless, these accounts of cruise ship workers' conditions align with narratives of 'dirty work' found in other occupations (Hughes, 1962), where employees are subjected to poor working conditions, servile roles, or stigmatized and degrading jobs (e.g. exotic dancer, telemarketer). Further, several texts by whistle-blowing former employees have provided sensational accounts of the lives (and treatment) of workers on cruise ships (e.g. Bruns', 2008 *Cruise Confidential* series). Overall, however, dirty work has received limited detailed attention in the broader tourism and hospitality literatures (Nimri, Kensbock, Bailey, Jennings, & Patiar, 2020; Morgan & Pritchard, 2019; Dennett, 2018; Mooney et al., 2016).

Studies of service-workers indicate that when employees are faced with poor working conditions their levels of deviancy increase (Harris & Ogbonna, 2009). Similarly, studies demonstrate that staff facing poor working conditions are more likely to act deceptively and even manipulate tourists (Chapman & Light, 2017; Harris, 2012). Such misbehavior may be considered a coping mechanism for customer-facing employees and a means to subsidize poor levels of remuneration or else triggered by customer misbehavior (Reynolds & Harris, 2006; Harris and Ogbonna, 2002). For customer manipulation to occur opportunities must be available to service workers where both financial motives/incentives intersect with extended staff-customer interaction. In this regard, similarly to the hospitality sector, cruise ships offer an abundance of retail and service opportunities, and have limited competition or alternatives, particularly while at sea, where staff can manipulate passengers.

Cruise ships afford extensive opportunity for service workers to manipulate passengers for personal gain. Designed to capture revenue from guests, cruise ships are carefully conceived (and enclosed) environments in order to encourage the consumption of various goods and services, in addition to the cruise package (Weaver, 2005b). These opportunities present cruise staff with the prospect of manipulating passengers for their own rather than their employer's benefit. While one perspective in gaining gratuities from guests is premised on the ability of service workers to establish rapport and deliver excellent levels of service, an alternative viewpoint would hold that proficiency in manipulation techniques is an alternative method of attracting tips for financial gain, to relieve boredom, and even as a means to exact revenge on 'difficult' guests.

In addition to the design of cruise ships as consumption environments – and the motivation of cruise ship workers to manipulate guests – passengers themselves are often susceptible to manipulation. For many passengers the ship is an unfamiliar environment, where they are not cognizant of the 'rules' of acceptable conduct. Passengers may be uncertain about what packages or excursions to take, or conventions such as whether or not to tip, and how much. Indeed, some cruise companies require passengers to pay tips at the time of booking to reduce such stresses. While such approaches can reduce (but not completely exclude) tip-focused manipulation on ships, workers in customer-facing roles seem well-positioned to take advantage of these circumstances to manipulate guests.

Conventional wisdom holds that cruise ship workers follow broad service scripts and roles in order to deliver excellent levels of service despite how fatigued, homesick, or otherwise upset they might feel, even when not under the gaze of management. For example, Weaver (2005a) notes that service workers on cruise ships are expected to adhere to "routinized and standardized social encounters that involve compliance with prepared scripts" (p.10); in this sense these roles are highly interactive and performative in nature (see also: Dowling, 2006; Sehkan & Sevcikova, 2011; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010). While not all guest-worker interactions

are scripted, the tone and role played by service staff are. These roles also require a degree of emotional labor, and in order to deliver an enjoyable vacation period to passengers, “employees engage in self-surveillance and subordinate themselves on behalf of management goals even when management is not looking” (Tracy, 2000: 109). Similarly to those working in the hospitality sector, cruise ship workers are expected to act the eager host – to be positive, happy, and polite when working (Kobus, 2012b). Similarly, Johansson and Naslund (2009) maintain that employees on cruise ships are deft at hiding their emotions from passengers, who expect their time on-board to be entertaining, relaxing, and enjoyable.

Some of the foregoing studies depict the ‘ideal’ cruise ship worker as diligent, emotionally controlled, and obedient; any negative feelings are suppressed and to be experienced privately, whereas in public only positive emotions are to be displayed and service scripts and roles carefully followed. Such views, however, are somewhat naïve, idealistic, and overlook the literature on service-worker deviance. While service frameworks are premised on the assumption that employee behavior observes management directives, studies of frontline service workers find that they regularly misbehave and act in deviant ways. In the context of the tourism sector – and cruise ships in particular – where customer service is an important component of a vacation experience, service worker misbehavior is likely to be particularly damaging. Further, given the typical (‘dirty work’) conditions of employment in the cruise ship industry, such behavior is likely to be more prevalent than previously believed.

Research design

Our approach is interpretivist and our philosophical underpinnings are akin to the ontological and epistemological perspectives of constructivism (see Denzin, 1989). We conducted 50 in-depth interviews with cruise ship employees and customers. Of the 50 informants, 22 were customer-contact cruise ship workers, 4 were non-customer-contact employees, 12 were managers or supervisors and 12 were customers.

Of the customers interviewed, all had spent at least six days on the ship. Nine of the passengers had taken cruises previously (mean 4.4), while three customers were new to cruise ship vacations. Employees and managers had at least three months experience of onboard service with some having worked in the industry for over twenty years. The majority of informants were male (33), ages varied from 22 to 72. While informants were drawn from a wide range of ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, customers were predominately white while frontline employees were predominately from non-European heritages. Informants were drawn from three cruise ships over a four-month period. Confidentiality clauses were employed (details have been altered to disguise other identifying details). Company managements specified as part of access arrangements that no specific details regarding companies or ships could be released (although we are able to confirm that all three ships are large vessels, serve a global market, and operate in a range of locations).

Given the nature of the study, we adopted an approach similar to that employed in previous studies exploring employee clandestine behavior (see Harris and Ogbonna, 2002, 2009). The mean length of interview was 72 min with the majority of interviews lasting around 1 h. For reasons of confidentiality, all interviews were conducted in private locations and face-to-face. In order to ensure privacy, around one quarter of interviews of employees were conducted away from the ship (the majority being undertaken onboard, in unoccupied cabins) while 7 interviews with customers took place onboard. We recognized the possibility that informants might find commenting on illicit behaviors difficult or uncomfortable. Accordingly, we began all interviews by explaining that the informants could pause or stop the interview. Three interviews were temporarily suspended when informants felt the need for a break and an ‘off-the-record’ reassurance of confidentiality clauses.

Following best practice, every interview was audio recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were supplemented by interview notes and observations (included body language, voice variations, and interpretations of emotion states). These data were afterwards analyzed conjointly with interview transcripts (see Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990). For reasons of reliability, we developed an interview schedule to guide data collection (this also assisted in adhering to data protection and mandated ethical clearance requirements). The approach taken during data collection was to probe answers and encourage informants to talk about their work. Consequently, most interview questions were open-ended rather than closed. This approach permitted more opportunities for participants to describe their experiences in their own terms. We sought to restrict potential bias by interviewing multiple, insightful informants with potentially differing perspectives (see Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

As our design was exploratory, we utilized a data analysis procedure that systematically incorporated analysis both during and after data collection. In this sense, our procedure enriched and informed data collection. This was most evident in our interview schedule which developed over time to include insights gained during earlier data collection. We adopted the recommendations of Strauss and Corbin (1998), and the often used three types of coding to analyze our data. ‘Open’ coding was utilized to discover and identify the properties and dimensions of concepts in the data. ‘Axial’ coding was employed to link the core categories together at the level of dimensions and properties. Finally, we used a ‘selective’ coding procedure to integrate and refine insights and theories. We endeavored to adopt procedures throughout data collection and analysis in order to enhance the validity and theoretical generalizability of insights gained.

Findings

The analysis of data supported the theory that employee misbehaviors were linked to the convergence of suitable target victims, potential offenders, and the absence of a guardian – the three tenets of Routine Activity Theory. These conditions are popularly reflected in investigations of transgressions to norms, rules, and laws by typically focusing on what are collectively known as the ‘crime triangle’ or ‘indicators of suspicion’ (Kleemans, Soudijn, & Weenink, 2012); means, motive, and opportunity.

Accordingly, our data themes are divided into three main sections outlining the physical convergence of potential victims with offenders, the means through which potential 'offenders' operate, and the opportunities created by limited guardianship.

Suitable target victims: pliable passengers alongside dirty workers

Passengers were widely viewed as suitable potential targets by customer-contact workers but markedly less so by non-contact employees or managers. In this regard, a victims' suitability was subjective and linked to the role of perpetrators. Customer-contact employees on cruise ships may be viewed as an exemplar of workers undertaking dirty work (Hughes, 1951). While conditions vary from company to company, between ships, decks, and roles, most customer-facing employees work very long hours in 'tainted' roles. Indeed, many inexperienced workers, unaccustomed to the hours, initially find the conditions challenging:

Some of the new ones struggle at first – twelve hours on and off is hard until you're used to it!

[[Bar Worker, Male, 34, 8 years' experience]]

Employees frequently share cramped accommodation with other co-workers undertaking similarly long hours with comparatively little privacy and social space. As such, non-working hours are often socially stressful, as Andrew notes:

You have to get on with your roommates – we live on top of each other in shared cabins that are half the size of guest cabins – you get on with people or suffer them!

[[Engine Room Worker, Male, 34, 10 years' experience]]

While the work is considered by many employees well paid (relative to pay in the predominately non-European countries of birth), the hourly rate of such workers is low and non-compliance/conformity is not accepted:

There's no union here! You get sacked and you're off the ship. They just put you off the ship with a ticket home. No appeal, no right to appeal, just off.

[[Bar Worker, Male, 44, 14 years' experience]]

Nonetheless, close working conditions onboard aids in developing a strong sense of team spirit with employees forming close bonds against the out-groups of customers and management:

You live on top of each other on these jobs. No privacy. No peace and quiet. It's just the same grind – us trying to make as much as we can and 'them' [meaning ship management] worrying about this rule or that rule. It's kinda the same on shore but here it's more intense – more pressurized, I think.

[[Casino Operative, Male, 23, 1 year's experience]]

The relationship between passengers and customer-contact workers is short-lived but intimate. While such workers are comparatively stable in their employment (most customer-facing employees signing a season long contract), their passengers change periodically. This constantly changing footfall means that interactions between staff and customers have a comparatively short time to evolve before new customers are transferred aboard. Interactions between passengers and employees are service-related, with customers wanting various services (from food and beverages to entertainment to beauty treatments). As such, customers typically view cruise ship workers primarily in terms of their ability to satisfy their needs:

They are marvelous! Always here when you need them. Very attentive and so kind!

[[Passenger, Male, 72, 8 previous cruises]]

However, customer-contact workers were not passive service providers but evaluate customers and alter their interactions accordingly, recognizing that some guests were less certain of their needs and require more guidance. For example, passengers joining the ship were regularly highlighted as in need of special attention:

Lots of them are confused or stressed or jet lagged. You take away their stress, tell them where to go, what to do, how to act, when to act and they'll pay for it. The more experienced guests know the score but lots of people will be insecure and nervous – help them and they'll reward you.

[[Galley Steward, Male, 37, 6 years' experience]]

A key theme that emerged centered on customer-contact employees' evaluations of customers. Consistently, while acknowledging that customer-oriented, management-espoused goals were important, workers evaluated customers on their malleability – often, but not exclusively, in relation to their tipping potential. For example, customers of different nationalities were commonly ranked by the largely non-European employees:

Different nationalities vary in their tipping habits. Americans – very good, automatic, no variance. Europeans – fair – Eastern Europeans very poor. Brits? Lousy, really lousy, beyond very poor! So, you target Americans with all you've got and work your way down from there!

[[Casino Operative, Female, 25, 2 years' experience]]

Similarly, party size and formation were considered important variables when assessing tipping potential:

Single men are poor tippers unless they're trying to show off. Young couples are easy prey – the man is always trying to impress. Families are variable – you need to connect – they need to feel like you're part of their family. For families it is all about their need to protect the vulnerable.

[[Restaurant Waiter, Female, 35, 4 years' experience]]

Customer demographics were also considered useful means of appraising customers; older passengers were viewed as habitually demanding and occasionally curmudgeonly but were also considered relatively easy targets for eliciting tips:

Old is better than young. Barring the school holidays, cruise ships are packed with rich old people who can't wait to show you how caring and lovely they are! They hand out tips like confetti to anybody who'll listen to their stories or look at their photos of the grandkids and their son who is 'doing ever so well'. They'll moan and complain a lot too but that's life!

[[Casino Operative, Male, 23, 1 year's experience]]

Customer behaviors from volubility to dining and drinking habits also formed bases of worker judgments, with particular traits or actions weighed and rated. One casino worker explains:

In the casino it's the quiet ones you watch out for. In a bar – loud is drunk and drunk is tips. Here – quiet is winning and gamblers are superstitious to the point of madness. Keep them happy, always do the same thing at the same time and they'll throw you a chip at the end of the night. Loud gamblers are amateurs and amateurs lose.

[[14]]

In these regards, cruise ship workers with extensive experience of ever-revolving customer types, carefully and systemically evaluate their passengers in terms of the extent to which they could be managed, controlled, or manipulated for lucrative tips. As such, in terms of RAT, customer-contact cruise ship workers and their passengers can be viewed as relational – in this sense, sufficiently convergent in time and space.

Active offenders: means and motives

As with many dirty workers, customer-contact cruise ship workers from non-European backgrounds are commonly assumed by their customers to lack sufficient skills and cognitive abilities to work in more prestigious roles. Many passengers assume that their waiters, bar tenders, and stewards are unintelligent and passive responders to customer needs. However, interviews with workers (often conducted in the third or fourth language of the informant) demonstrated that this was rarely the case:

Some of them act like we're trolly-dollies on ships – bimbos who smile and nod as the world floats by. I spent four years in college, can charm customers in five languages and I'm motivated by two kids at home who miss their Mom. Stupid, I am not.

[[Restaurant Waiter, Female, 45, 21 years' experience]]

To be employed in customer-contact roles, potential employees (nearly all of whom have non-European cultural heritages) need to be fluent in at least one European language, evidence formal training qualifications and have extensive experience in their role. The skill set of cruise ship workers requires intelligent, highly-motivated, and capable workers. Unsurprisingly, employees adapt quickly to their roles and duties – and the unwritten rules and techniques equally rapidly:

You can learn this job in a day – going to hospitality school give you the skills but the actual – what to do, where to go – is straight-forward. What takes years is learning how to maximize your returns. Some things you can pick up, but talking with the older hands is a revelation – they could get a tip from a stone statue and a 'thank you' from an iron bar.

[[Restaurants Supervisor, Female, 47, 8 years' experience]]

The social skills of workers when combined with the behaviors, techniques and tricks learned from more experienced employees, and passed from generation to generation of staff, provides customer-contact employees with the means routinely to manipulate other actors. While various forms of manipulation were uncovered, a common goal was to elicit the highest possible tips from passengers, as Jenny explains:

I've worked on cruise ships all over the world for over twenty years off and on. The Captain may think of this ship as [air quote movements] 'a smoothly running machine' and the Chief Bursar as 'a guest-focused, five-star, entertainment operation' but what this is is a ship full of people slowly being stripped of whatever money they have. This is a bank waiting for us [the customer-contact staff] to open it!

[[Bar Worker, Female, 47, 22 years' experience]]

In criminological terms, the 'means' of customer-contact employees' were both intentional ('intent' being a core legal test of guilt) and, commonly, accessories to the fact (in that, employees assisted or failed to stop the behaviors of others). 'Intent' refers to the extent to which actions of perpetrators was preplanned and deliberately executed. Cersei, an inventive bar tender, explains her means of establishing rapport with customers:

To sell a story you need props. See here [reaching into rear pocket to show a photograph of three young children]? A photo of my kids – “see, aren’t they just about the same age as yours?” Now, see [reaching into different pocket and producing a different photograph of very different teenagers]? “My kids – teenagers like yours!” [winking] People tip people they like – people like them. [[Restaurant Waiter, Female, 30, 5 years' experience]]

On cruise ships, team work is fundamental, and co-workers cooperate in formal and informal teams to maximize returns. Bran refers to his scheme to maximize tips:

We work in teams. Not the shift team, you know, but *our* own teams. I work with Jane [a pseudonym] and we’ll split the tables – she can speak French really well, so she gets them, I take the tables of ladies – they like me and we’ll share what we get between us. We figure that way we get more tips for the same amount of effort. There’s about six in our posse – we share info. and intel. [[Restaurant Waiter, Male, 37, 8 years' experience]]

Customer-contact cruise ship workers commonly had the means, intent and co-conspirators to manipulate customers to their advantage. The means to manipulate was reflected in the breadth of tactics, techniques, and tools employed by workers. For those workers with access to desirable goods or services, many employees used ‘sweethearting’ techniques to encourage customers to give higher tips. Sweethearting refers to the provision of free goods and services to selected customers for personal gain (the term originally derived from the practice of bartenders to provide romantic partners with free drinks – see Brady, Voorhees, & Brusco, 2012). Although many passengers on cruise ships purchase full-service packages, some do not and this provides well-positioned workers with the means to ‘reward’ valuable guests:

A free round of drinks to a paying table [a table without the full drinks package] costs me nothing, give them a free round, and this leads them to tip me better.

[[Bar Worker, Male, 44, 14 years' experience]]

Such activities can be easily hidden by adding these costs to other guests (with full-service packages). Conversely, paying tables can find goods ‘accidentally’ added to their bill:

Nobody keeps track of their bar chits if they’re not paying for them. They’ll sign anything – just add a few drinks to the end! If they do [adopts sing-song voice] ‘soooo sorry, silly me, I makes it wrong’ [deliberately heavily-accented and incorrectly pronounced] [laughing]!

[[Bar Worker, Male, 25, 4 years' experience]]

In addition to sweethearting tactics, cruise ship workers can also employ a variant to this approach by providing guests with goods and services that they tell guests are chargeable when this is not the case. Using this tactic, workers ostentatiously provide guests with special free ‘extras’ for which guests are told other passengers will need to pay. For example, Tywin tells some guests that the snacks he adds to their table are normally \$4 when they are actually free to all (admittedly on request):

Always give ‘extras’. I’ve given tables the free nuts for years as [winking suggestively] ‘I’m not supposed to give these out but you’re soooo nice’!

[[Bar Worker, Male, 27, 6 years' experience]]

Other tactics of manipulation include, providing selected passengers with either entirely invented ‘inside’ knowledge regarding services or actually giving tips and suggestions that is beneficial to customers. Workers with extended access to passengers strike up conversations to ascertain the customer’s needs and then judiciously feed the customers with information that is perceived to be financially or socially beneficial. This can include special offers, ‘surprise’ shows and performances, cheaper excursions, locations of shore facilities/stores, or even best restaurant tables and locations for sunbathing. Drogo notes:

I always tell them what’s happening – so they can get the best seats or get there first. A cheaper excursion? The best show times? An extra performance? Something like that whispered in their ears as if it is a huge secret and they feel like you’re giving them the inside track. Works like a charm!

[[Deck Supervisor, Male, 29, 6 years' experience]]

Finally, some customer-contact cruise ship workers used sexual innuendo or allusions to connect with customers. While any romantic or sexual contact between workers and customers is strictly prohibited, flirtation and sexually-oriented (non-physical) interactions were common. However, some customer-contact workers used their position, judiciously to flirt with customers to elicit tips. Milisandrei refers to her (largely elderly) customers:

A little wriggle here and a wink there and the old fellas get hot for you! Mostly they’re too old to try much but they do like a saucy bit of flirting – especially if they’re in a crowd.

[[Bar Worker, Female, 30, 5 years' experience]]

We have earlier concluded that a wealth of suitable targets exists and that there is a sufficiently intimate link between customer-contact workers and cruise ship passengers as to be deemed a relationship. Consequently, when exploring the issue

of 'motives' we shall focus not on the finding of suitable 'targets' but rather the motivation of customer-contact employees to 'manage' their customers. Data analysis reveals that when managing the behaviors of customers, cruise ship workers have three main motives for their actions. First, the most common motive centers on financial gain. As dirty workers, cruise ship customer-contact employees experience a difficult and challenging working environment and conditions. However, contrary to the assumptions of most passengers, such workers are often highly-trained, experienced, and skilled employees who elect to work on cruise ships for the (typically) considerably better pay than their countries of birth. In this regard, the motivations of such workers are often carefully considered and instrumentally-oriented. As indicated previously, a reflection of this motivation is the focus most workers pay to gain lucrative tips from passengers (which add considerably to the net returns of the employee). One experienced employee explains:

I wait tables for twelve hours, seven days a week to drunk, rude idiots who think that calling me 'garcon' is the epitome of wit. I speak five languages and can understand the basics of three more – when I answer them in French, they don't know what I'm saying. Motive? Money, stupid!

[[Restaurant Waiter, Male, 36, 14 years' experience]]

The motives of cruise ship workers are not exclusively financially-oriented. The second most common motive pivots on manipulating passenger behavior for the convenience of the employee. Examples include, serving multiple rounds of drinks simultaneously to save time, moving guests to more convenient locations, and misleading guests about service times to save effort. Ygritte notes:

This is a stressful role. Lots of cabins, little time. I'll do any trick in the book to make my life easier – yes, I want happy, tipping guests, but an easy life is also right up there.

[[Bar Supervisor, Female, 37, 12 years' experience]]

The third most common motive, mutual benefit, can be viewed as a hybrid motive to balance employee and customer needs. While workers were often highly-motivated to elicit tips or to save effort, there was also a widespread recognition that the role of employees is ultimately customer satisfaction. Thus, where workers see the opportunity to gain instrumentally *and* increase guest utility, this was viewed as beneficial to all parties. Neve concludes:

We're here to make as much cash as we can for the least amount of effort. If I can manage the guests so that they are happy and my life is easier in making them happy, nobody cares if I break the 'one round at a time' rule. Everybody's happy.

[[Bar Worker, Male, 34, 8 years' experience]]

Absence of guardianship: opportunity

Although cruise ship employees outnumber customers by a ratio of between two and three to one (depending on the ship), many workers have little customer contact. Only workers whose roles are primarily customer-contact have the opportunity to 'misbehave' or deviate from service protocols. Nonetheless, for customer-contact employees, misbehavior is only possible if an opportunity to do so is permitted. As such, opportunity in this context pivots on control, or rather, *the lack* of employee control. In some locations of most cruise ships, sophisticated surveillance equipment and procedures exist. For example, most ship casinos operate various technologies to monitor employee actions. However, in most customer-contact contexts, the majority of interactions between passengers and employees are not subject to electronic surveillance but are subject to superordinate scrutiny:

I oversee this section of the bar with ten-twelve waitresses. I see everything – every scam, every shortcut, every table; well, everything that needs seeing [thoughtfully]. They know this and I know that they know. I'm not here to cut their tips off – they just know to play within my rules. A quiet word [winking in a quiet aside 'enough now'] and they get it.

[[Bar Supervisor, Male, 37, 12 years' experience]]

Such surveillance is acknowledged and accepted as legitimate by frontline employees:

The waitresses jump when he [the Deck Manager] gives them the look – he's the boss-man – when he's grumpy they run from table to table. When he's not on their case; they're always ready to tell us all what's going on; they're such nice girls.

[[Passenger, Female, 65, 12 previous cruises]]

On most ships they watch the money and they check the outcomes – are the guests happy, how fast was the turnaround, what does the guest say, how many tables are cleared? Those are the important things – guest happiness and speed of service largely. How we do it is up to us. Okay, we've floor supervisors who know exactly when not to check and managers who don't know even when they should check but very little else. What we do and how we do it is down to us – outcomes matter.

[[Bar Worker, Male, 44, 14 years' experience]]

This highlights a secondary factor that facilitates the creation of opportunities for misbehavior by cruise ship workers – tacit tolerance by superordinates. Most supervisors have worked on cruise ships for many years and have experience of subordinate

roles and understand the pressures of such work. This knowledge permits supervisors to prevent or curb undesirable employee behaviors.

There's not a trick you can teach me that I don't know! I've been there, done it, bought the t-shirt, worn the t-shirt; I own the damned factory! I know the tricks and I know what hurts and what doesn't. There's a line – my job is not about hittin' them with minutiae of the Restaurant Service Manual. Nope. My job is keeping the customers happy and haul people back if they lose sight of my line – that's all. Do I turn a blind eye? Yep. Do I kick ass when needed? Yep. Do I have the highest guest satisfaction score? Yep!

[[Restaurant Manager, Male, 54, 22 years' experience]]

However, workers acknowledge that superordinates routinely tolerate such tactics:

Of course, the floor supervisors know what we do! They didn't spring out of thin air. Last year they were us – half the bloody time they tell us how to play the game better! They know what we're doing and as long as we hit our targets they don't care. Don't get me wrong, we can't give away crates of champagne but free drinks here and there, an extra this or that – no big deal. Just keep the guest quiet. Don't ask, don't look and don't tell.

[[Bar Worker, Female, 30, 5 years' experience]]

Interviews indicate that superordinates are wary of curbing such behavior by subordinates, when such actions might harm service effectiveness:

This is a special type of workplace. Yes – guest satisfaction is paramount but it's a balance. My people aren't here for the glory of [ship name]. They want to make tips and manage their work so they're not on their knees by midnight. If I enforce every little rule to the letter, it'd kill them and annoy the guests too. The spirit of the rule is more important than the letter of the rule. Efficiency is not the same as effectiveness.

[[Deck Supervisor, Male, 29, 6 years' experience]]

Overall, analysis of interviews found that superordinate complicity in subordinate manipulations was largely driven by two main reasons. First, existing manipulative behaviors by customer-contact workers are suitably tempered by a need to satisfy guests, meaning that passengers are largely kept satisfied. Second, should such activities be stopped, managers fear that subordinates will become demotivated and request reassignment (leaving the manager with 'better' behaved employees but ones less able to balance their needs with those of customer satisfaction goals).

Contributions

Our first contribution is via the adoption of criminological theories in the study of worker-tourist relations. While scholars have explored crimes both against (Chesney-Lind & Lind, 1986; Barker et al., 2002) and by tourists (Brunt et al., 2000), the main focus of such studies has been on recorded crime as well as on felonies rather than petty crime or misdemeanors (Ajagunna, 2006; Brunt et al., 2000; Chesney-Lind & Lind, 1986). The current study broadens the focus of tourism and crime, to encompass the grey area between a crime and a morally or ethically questionable behavior. Some of the behaviors studied could be viewed as criminal fraud or deception while others could equally be interpreted as morally questionable or merely judiciously manipulative. Adopting a variant of Routine Choice Theory in the form of Routine Activity Theory, our findings suggest that cruise ships constitute convergent textbook 'crime triangle' conditions where pliant passengers are exposed to active offenders who have the means, motives, and opportunity to misbehave. While it would be presumptuous, unilaterally to conclude that such conditions universally cause such behaviors, our study strongly suggests that conditions favor such deceptive acts. Routine Activity Theory appears an extremely insightful perspective to adopt when studying clandestine, covert, or surreptitious behaviors that are akin to, but not necessarily, crimes. The convergence of means, motives, and opportunities in tourist-employee interactions on cruise ships reflects the social and economic contingencies while forwarding the planned and rational (cost versus benefit) choices made by cruise workers. Rather than suggest that such actions are exclusively attributable to worker deliberations, it could be argued that cruise ships form ideal breeding grounds and conditions for such behaviors.

A second contribution centers on the parallels uncovered between 'conventional' dirty workers and the dirty work revealed on cruise ships. While existing studies of dirty workers in tourism settings have broadened the early conceptions of 'dirty work' significantly and embraced the notion of 'taint' (Chapman & Light, 2017), to date, cruise ship employees have not been associated with dirty work. Our study strongly positions many service workers onboard cruise ships as dirty workers – or at the very least workers whose working lives are 'tainted' by aspects of their role. Although such employees spend their working days surrounded by the trappings of luxury and five-star opulence, their days are very long, their pay limited, and their working conditions 'dirtied' by often unpleasant, difficult, and demanding guests who expect perfect behavior from their servers. Interactions with many guests are 'tainted' by snobbery or perceived intellectual or social superiority leading to heavy demands of emotional (as well as physical) labor.

Our third contribution centers on one of the core tenets of many business and marketing theories – customer sovereignty and orientation. As with many frontline service employees operating in hospitality and tourist contexts, many academic studies are based on the assumption that workers are pliant, passive and responsive to customer demands. While notions of customer

sovereignty abound in scholarly texts, our study suggests that while the Customer may well be King (at least in the minds of management and customers themselves), this does not mean that they are always deserving 'monarchs'. Indeed, such is the actions of many customers that customer-contact personnel consider their working lives harmful to their psychological welfare. Unsurprisingly, mirroring some studies of other tourist settings therefore (Chapman & Light, 2017), employee misbehaviors on cruise ships are common to the point of mundanity. Moreover, despite presumptions by scholars, practitioners, and customers alike, such employees are far from passive vassals to be ruled, but are rather strong, intelligent, forceful, and considered people who use their skills subtly. Whether customer behaviors trigger responses of deviance by workers in a domino effect (see Harris & Reynolds, 2004) or whether such behaviors emerge spontaneously is difficult to discern using the adopted research design but it seems logical that some dynamic relationship between customers and employee behavior exists. This study also contributes to a broader corpus of work in the social sciences, namely scholarship on employee and organizational misbehavior in the workplace, which is prevalent in contemporary work settings but often overlooked (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999, 2016; Ackroyd, 2012; Fleming & Spicer, 2007). While the manipulation practices explored in the present study may be seen as trivial when viewed in the broader context of some executive malfeasance (e.g. fraud, bribery), the study does highlight commonplace deception in tourist settings that has previously received limited attention.

The fourth contribution of this study pertains to value created by employee-tourist interactions. While some employee behaviors seem strongly linked to individual rewards (often financial rewards in the form of tips), other actions are deliberately developed mutually to benefit combinations of customers, employees, and superordinates. In this sense, cruise ships may be viewed as value eco-systems where some explicitly forbidden acts by workers are overlooked by supervisors as such acts create value for customers. Customer-contact workers, supervisors, and customers intricately dance around each other in a deliberate waltz of value co-creation wherein some acts are ignored and others celebrated for the collective good in the form of value created. This point also chimes with the work of Gerald Mars – particularly the concept of triadic occupations (Mars, 1982, 2008; Mars & Nicod, 1984; Thornthwaite & McGraw, 2012), where certain work relationships are three-way that comprise of an employee, an employer and a customer. Any two of these parties can dupe the third through tacit collusion, such as a retail employee who conspires with a customer to steal goods. Cruise ship workers occupy triadic occupations; manipulation cannot exist in a vacuum, and it requires a willing employee, a pliant passenger and often the tacit acceptance of a supervisor and employer. Hence these interactions and practices on cruise ships take place in a grey zone, or 'hidden economy' (Mars, 2008), where tourism workers may be deceitful in some way – often overlooked in tourism studies (Yildirim, 2020).

As is the case in almost all studies, the present study has several limitations. Initially, there may be deceptive practices by cruise ship workers not uncovered. While we endeavored to interview subjects with substantial cruise work experience, we do not generalize our findings across all contexts. Similarly, while our informants were drawn from a wide range of ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, the frontline employees were predominately from non-European heritages. Informants from different backgrounds might offer different insights. These limitations highlight potentially fruitful avenues for future research. Three areas seem especially worthy of pursuit. First, the context of service on cruise ships seems relatively neglected. While scholars have made valuable contributions in researching cruise ships (see Yi et al., 2014; Meng et al., 2011; Teye & Leclerc, 1998; Morrison, 1996; Foster, 1986), further research is merited. The effects of Covid-19 on the industry will undoubtedly be scrutinized while further studies focusing on service dynamics, employee conditions and wellbeing as well as human resource management seem worthwhile (see Radic, Lück, et al., 2020). Second, the adoption of a criminological lens into surreptitious employee behaviors and tourist interactions has supplied some novel insights into service dynamics. Future research should benefit from a greater immersion into this literature and the appropriate adoption of theories to explore tourist contexts. Finally, the further exploration of dirty work(ers) in tourism contexts seems meritorious. In this regard, studies focusing on factors such as employee ethnicity and the wider social and economic divisions between passengers and employees seem potentially fruitful.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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