

# teaching note

## *Combating Human Trafficking, Concerns with Digital Keys in a Hotel*

### Summary

This case brings attention to and analysis of human trafficking in the hotel industry and looks at how recent technological advancements have made this industry even more vulnerable to these illegal activities. This case study features a front desk agent at a luxury hotel who observes the suspicious activity of human trafficking in the hotel and thus addresses the importance of awareness of human trafficking in the field and identification of the indicators of this illegal activity. Ultimately, this case study makes it easier for readers to respond to the situations in a timely and proper manner by placing them into the scenario.

### Target Audience

This case study is most suitable for classrooms in college and training sessions in a hotel. The case study will help college students majoring in hospitality management and business administration to be aware of human trafficking and will prepare them to identify signals of human trafficking and know how to properly respond to the situation if it occurs. Relevant courses include introduction to hospitality management, human resource management, organizational behavior, and business ethics. Furthermore, hotels can use this case study as a part of their human trafficking awareness training programs or orientation programs, not only for their employees but also for their managers, to improve awareness of possible illegal activities occurring during their daily work. By reviewing the case study, managers can consider ways of properly addressing the issues when they happen and educate their employees to solve the issues in a safe and timely manner. Furthermore, they can consider developing detailed policies and guidelines for their employees.

### Learning Objectives

After reviewing the case study, the readers will be able to:

- Define human trafficking and its types,
- Discuss why the hotel industry is affected by human trafficking and its impact on the industry,
- Identify signals of human trafficking in hotels,
- Develop proper actions for employees, managers, and hotels to resolve the possible situations of human trafficking in hotels,
- Explain how technological advancement affects human trafficking in the hotel industry,
- Evaluate the issues of customer privacy vs. security in the hotel industry, and
- Appraise solutions and action plans that the hotel industry can use to protect customers while maintaining their privacy.

### Instruction

This case study is suitable for a 60- to 75-minute class period in face-to-face, hybrid, and online delivery formats. The instruction guidelines below are created based on a 75-minute class period with a face-to-face format. Instructors can craft their own class by utilizing the resources listed at the end of the teaching notes in a way that works best for their delivery format.

**Before the class:** Prior to coming to the classroom, students will be asked to read the case study to get a general idea of the topic. Instructors may want to provide students with online resources to increase awareness of the topic.

Polaris: <https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking>

Blue Campaign by Homeland Security: <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign>

**During the class:** Introduction (10 minutes)—Instructors introduce learning objectives and explain the definition and types of human trafficking and why it is significant in the hotel industry. Please feel free to use the videos provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in explaining definitions and types of human trafficking. Please follow this link: <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/videos>.

Instructors can choose from the following.

- General awareness video (4 minutes 21 seconds)
- Labor trafficking awareness video (Rest area, 3 minutes 43 seconds)
- Sex trafficking awareness video (7 minutes 44 seconds)

In addition, the instructor should ask questions to see if students already know how digital keys work. If not, please feel free to use the following video to help them understand it and work on the case study.

- Why Hilton's digital key means staff can focus on customer delight (5 minutes 14 seconds)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mu5mizfDM0dTo>

**Debriefing of the case study (20 minutes):** Before getting to the discussion questions, instructors can ask general questions to check students' comprehension of the topic. In addition, students can be more engaged in the case study by participating in a skit when answering the case-specific questions.

The general questions include the following.

- a. What is the possible use of hotels and motels for human trafficking?
- b. Why are hotels easily used for this illegal activity by traffickers?
- c. Have you heard about human trafficking before reading

this case study?

- d. What is the difference between human trafficking and other illegal activity such as human smuggling?
- e. Who are the victims of human trafficking?
- f. What is the process of guest check-in/check-out using the digital keys and how is it different from the traditional check-in/check-out process with a front desk clerk?
- g. What are the impacts of customer engagement technology (e.g., digital key, kiosks, mobile apps) on the interaction between employees and guests?

When debriefing the case study, the instructor can conduct a skit to reenact the scenario. This skit would allow the students to get a visual idea of the content in the case study. It would involve students playing the roles of Christine, the Baldwin Hotel's manager, the suspicious man, and the victim. Instructors create nametags for each role and invite students to play the role based on the information given in the case study. This reenactment would demonstrate Christine noticing the suspicious activity between the man and the victim and Christine reporting the situation to her manager. It would also include the demonstration of how management decides to handle the situation. This reenactment would give the students an opportunity to ponder what they would do if it were them in this situation.

The case-specific questions are listed below.

- a. Why did Christine believe the guest in the lobby was suspicious?
- b. Why was it difficult for Christine to gather the information related to the guest's suspicious behavior?
- c. What did Christine do to respond to the situation?
- d. What are the suggested responses in this situation?

### ***Small group discussion and class discussion (25 minutes)***

Small groups within the audience will be formed to discuss the case study discussion questions. Depending on the class size, 3-5 students per group would be adequate. Each group will share their

thoughts on the discussion questions for 15 minutes, and the answers will be shared with the entire class (10 minutes). Students are highly encouraged to find resources online to respond to each question: <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/hospitalityindustry>

The discussion questions are as follows.

- a. Why does the hotel industry care about combatting human trafficking? Why is it important that employees and managers in a hotel learn the signals of human trafficking and how to respond to the situations?
- b. What are the indicators signaling human trafficking in the case study?
- c. What are the ways to increase awareness of human trafficking among hotel employees and managers?
- d. What types of components should be included in the employee training sessions?
- e. Should hotels limit the use of the digital keys for guests to limit the possibility of human trafficking?
- f. What are the ways of creating a safe environment for employees and guests while maintaining customer privacy?

To explore the ideas of how hotels create action plans, the instructor can open up the discussion among students by following the suggested action plan provided by the American Hotel and Lodging Association. Each group of students can fill out the table based on their discussions and compare them with other groups during the class. Students are allowed to bring and use their electric devices to search the resources or current practices implemented by hotels.

### ***Check for understanding (15 minutes)***

Instructors can assess students' understanding of the topic as well as the case study by conducting short quizzes at the end of the discussion. To engage the students, it is recommended to use engagement technology such as Kahoot (<https://kahoot.com/>). Students will answer the questions through their mobile devices and will be able to master the information by participating in the game. Instructors may

Action plan	Implementation strategies	Resources needed
Training staff on what to look for and how to respond		
Displaying human trafficking indicator signage		
Establishing a company-wide policy		
Ongoing coordination with law enforcement		
Sharing success stories and best practices		

The instructor may want to share the resource guide or day-of-action tool kit provided by AHLA (<https://www.ahla.com/issues/human-trafficking>) with students.

want to provide a small incentive for winners.

Questions can be true/false or multiple choice and are related to myths and facts of human trafficking or information about responding to situations. This section can be used as a warm-up activity to assess students' pre-knowledge about human trafficking. The example questions are as follows.

- a) It's always or usually a violent crime.

Answer: False.

- b) Human trafficking only happens in illegal or underground industries.

Answer: False

- c) Human trafficking involves moving, traveling, or transporting a person across a state or national border.

Answer: False

Please find more resources for generating questions and explanations for each answer from this link: <https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking-myths-and-facts>.

### **Conclusion (5 minutes)**

Instructors should revisit the learning objectives and summarize the discussion under each learning objective. If time allows, instructors may want to add the following video to give some ideas on how businesses strive to stop human trafficking in society.

TED Talk: Three ways business can fight sex trafficking

[https://www.ted.com/talks/nikki\\_clifton\\_3\\_ways\\_businesses\\_can\\_fight\\_sex\\_trafficking](https://www.ted.com/talks/nikki_clifton_3_ways_businesses_can_fight_sex_trafficking)

*After the class:* The instructor may consider implementing the Blue Campaign as a class project or as a service-learning component of the course. Blue Campaign is for the purpose of raising awareness of human trafficking both on college campuses or in local communities and is led by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in collaboration with law enforcement, government, and public/private organizations. Instructors can request Blue Campaign materials online: <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/request-materials>.

If the instructors are looking for specific resources for the hospitality industry, please follow the link to download the Hospitality Toolkit: <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/hospitalityindustry>.

### **References**

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American Hotel and Lodging Association (n.d.). No room for trafficking day of action toolkit. Retrieved from [https://www.ahla.com/sites/default/files/NRFT%20DAY%20OF%20ACTION%20TOOLKIT\\_1.pdf](https://www.ahla.com/sites/default/files/NRFT%20DAY%20OF%20ACTION%20TOOLKIT_1.pdf)

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Polaris (n.d.). What human trafficking is... and isn't. Retrieved from <https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking>

### **Recommended Readings**

Paraskevas, A., & Brookes, M. (2018). Human trafficking in hotels: An "invisible" threat for a vulnerable industry. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 30(3), 1996-2014.

Paraskevas, A., & Brookes, M. (2018). Nodes, guardians and signs: Raising barriers to human trafficking in the tourism industry. Tourism Management, 67, 147-156.

*For legal information related to human trafficking, please follow the links below.*

Polaris (n.d.). Current federal laws: <https://polarisproject.org/current-federal-laws>

The United States Department of Justice: <https://www.justice.gov/human-trafficking>

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs.: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/our-work/child-forced-labor-trafficking>

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy. Trafficking in persons: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasp/resources/trafficking>

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Human Trafficking: <https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/interagency/trafficking.cfm>

International labor organization. Forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking: <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/lang-en/index.htm>