

# **Public Perceptions of Private Security in Shopping Malls: A Comparison of the United Kingdom and South Korea.**

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## **Abstract**

This paper provides one of the first comparative empirical studies of private policing in equivalent shopping malls in the UK and Korea. The paper is based upon 200 interviews with customers who visited the malls, 200 hours observation and 39 interviews with security officers and other stakeholders. The paper builds upon the traditional orientations of security officers as either ‘watchmen’ or ‘parapolicing’ to offer a third ‘servicemen’ orientation. The paper also illustrates a variety of other differences in roles and shows the generally positive views of the public towards private security.

**Key words:** private security, comparative research, UK, South Korea, shopping malls

## **1. Introduction**

This study is empirical comparative research on public perceptions of private security in shopping malls in two different countries: South Korea (hereafter Korea) and the United Kingdom. The private security industry has increased in role and size in many countries in recent decades and the UK and South Korea are no exception (Wakefield, 2003; Button et al 2006; Button and Park, 2009). The reasons for the growth have been well documented in research, such as the growth of mass private property, increased crime and fear of crime, increasing terrorist risks and the inability of the state to meet all security demands, to name some (Shearing and Stenning, 1981; Sarre and Prenzler, 2011; Jones and Newburn, 1998). Private security has filled the gap in a variety of locations and one area where private security has become very prominent, is, as the principal agents of policing in shopping malls, which are usually areas of hybrid or quasi-public space (private space which is freely open to the public) (Shearing and Stenning, 1985; Jones and Newburn, 1998; Button, 2007). Empirical studies of private security in shopping malls have been relatively sparse and largely concentrated on the English speaking world (Wakefield, 2003; Joh, 2004; Button, 2007; Manzo 2004, 2006 and 2010; Sarre and Prenzler, 2011). Comparative studies of private security are even rarer, with most focusing upon regulatory systems, country profiles or surveys (de Waard, 1993, Button, 2007b; Jones and Newburn, 2006; Nalla et al, 2009). Empirical research on security officers in Korea are also rare (Nalla & Hwang, 2006; Button and Park, 2009; Nalla et al, 2009).

This paper offers a unique contribution to the very small number of studies that have conducted either comparative or empirical studies of private security, undertaking both and using both quantitative and qualitative data derived from interviews and observation. It offers an important contribution to knowledge on the orientation and culture of security officers which has been the subject of only a handful of studies, largely in English speaking countries. This paper will begin by briefly exploring the relevant literature on private security in the context of this paper. It will then set out the methods used for gathering data for this paper. The paper will then move on to explore the security officers at the two case study sites, examining their use of legal tools, their orientation and the public perceptions of them. In doing this the paper will propose an additional orientation of security specific to Korea, and possibly other Far Eastern countries termed the 'servicemen', which is distinct from the more well established orientations often used of 'watchmen' and 'parapolice'. The paper will then end with a discussion and conclusion.

## **2. Literature Review**

There have been studies of the private security in shopping malls in the UK (Wakefield, 2003; Button, 2007a), Australia (Sarre and Prenzler, 2011), Netherlands (Van Steden, 2007), Canada (Manzo, 2006; 2010), USA (Joh, 2004), but no such research in Korea. There is a wider base of research centring around perception of the public, police and private security officers of one another usually based upon survey research (Shearing and Stenning, 1983; Shearing et al 1985a and b; Nalla and Hummer, 1999; Noaks, 2000; Crawford and Lister, 2005; Nalla & Hwang, 2006; Manzo 2004, 2006 and 2010; van Steden, & Nalla, 2010; da Silva Lopes, in press). There has also been virtually no comparative research relating to private security, with the small base that has largely comparing regulatory systems or other macro issues (de Waard, 1993, Button, 2007b; Jones and Newburn, 2006). The importance of comparative research has been emphasised with the increasing interrelationship between different countries because of many benefits doing it (Pakes, 2010; Diez-Repolles, 2013). Comparative research can provide a deeper and better understanding of the differences in the private security industry between countries. This paper will start to fill that gap by offering insights on public perceptions of private security at two comparable malls.

The private security industry has expanded massively in size and role in most industrialised countries. To illustrate this, the two countries are compared below (although one must take such statistics with caution, particularly in relation to private security because of high labour turnover, part-time workers etc van Steden and Sarre, 2007):

- In the UK there are 339,440 security officers which compares to 160,566 police officers (Button and Stiernstedt, in press).
- In South Korea there are 153,767 security officers which compares to 113,077 police officers (KNPA, 2017).

Alongside the expansion of private security industry, there have been significant changes in the roles and status of the private security officers. Traditionally, security officers have been hired as static security guards in building, facilities or apartments. However, the range of functions undertaken by officers has become wider (Jones and Newburn, 1998; Wakefield 2003; Crawford and Lister 2005; Button 2007a). Research on security in shopping malls has also illustrated their positive roles in enhancing safety as well as dealing with often dangerous incidents, such as arresting shoplifters and breaking up fights (Wakefield, 2003; Button, 2007a).

The public perception of private security is also a mixed and contested issue. There is clearly a body of research which suggests the negative and poor quality image of the sector (Livingstone and Hart, 2003; Hansen Löfstrand, 2016 et al). Moreover, some consider that security officers have an image of shady ‘watchmen’ and even ‘corrupt gangsters or hired guns (Van steden and Nalla, 2010, p217). However, there is only a limited research regarding the perception of the public on private security officer and no such comparative research in shopping malls, to contrast with police studies. The few studies that have been conducted were of citizens in general and not for particular customers (Shearing et al., 1985; Nalla and Heraus, 2003; Van steden and Nalla, 2010). There is also a body of research on particular nodes or locations which demonstrates a much more positive contribution of private security (Noaks, 2000; Sharp and Wilson, 2000; Wakefield, 2003; Crawford and Lister, 2005). Therefore, this study will reveal the public perception of private security and do so using a comparative approach.

### **3. Methodology**

This paper is based upon a broader project which sought to compare private security in two comparative locations in the UK and Korea using comparative case studies. Such research is rare and poses significant challenges, with most of the research beyond policy focusing upon surveys, which aside from translation issues presents fewer challenges (Nalla et al, 2009). The design of the study therefore required innovative methods to be developed and compromises to traditional means of researching such social objects. The lessons and challenges of which, will form a future paper from this study. The comparison of two shopping malls in one country would pose challenges, across two very different countries these were to be even greater. Nevertheless as Lijphart (1971) has argued comparative research based upon case studies can generate a variety of positive contributions from hypothesis testing to theory infirming, even if generalizable findings and hypothesis testing are more difficult.

Korea and the UK are significantly different countries: the UK is an Anglo-Saxon and European country with a distinct culture and a long established democratic state based upon based on the constitutional monarchy. By contrast South Korea is a Republic with a relatively new democratic system with an Asian culture. The UK was the first country to industrialise, South Korea has largely done so in the last 50 years. However, given the dominance of the Western literature on private security and the lack of research on South Korea and the fact the

principal author is Korean it seemed natural to compare South Korea to a western country like the UK. This would enable the researcher to compare the UK findings against previous research from this country, to determine if they were representative. It would also then enable the first Korean research to be benchmarked against the UK to determine the similarities and differences.

The research is based upon two shopping malls: one in the UK (South Mall), one in Korea (Mega Mall). Table 1 identifies the main characteristics of the two malls. There were many similarities: large shopping area with similar profile of retail outlets, restaurants; the number of security officers; other entertainment such as a cinema being present to name some. There were differences, however, in that Mega Mall was around three times bigger in square feet and had double the number of stores. These size differences were not significant in terms of this study as the more important issues were the size of security force and the environment they worked in, which were broadly similar. The different use of CCTV, with many more cameras at South Mall compared to Mega Mall also indicates subtle differences in the security strategy, but does not impact upon the findings in this paper related to the orientation of security officers. There was, however, one difference that was and that related to the night-time-economy. At the UK mall there was widespread drunkenness common on some nights, whereas this was not as big an issue in South Korea. This in part reflects the different cultures of the two countries with public drunkenness more common in the UK, compared to Korea where drunkenness in such locations is rarer, although as this paper will show later the officers did have to deal with drunks occasionally too. This is clearly a limitation to this research and some might argue comparison is not possible, rendering this paper worthless. However, the authors would contend that first there are practical challenges. The authors did conduct an extensive search of possible malls, but of those that were feasible the two used for this paper were the best fit. Comparative case study research would be rendered impossible in the view of the authors if such similarities were the starting point. Second, and most importantly the drunkenness at South Mall was at night. The interviews with the public took place during the day, when drunkenness was not an issue at either mall. Third, some of the most important findings that emerge from this paper relate to Korea, where this study is more unique, and much of what was found in relation to the South Mall has secured similar findings from other empirical studies in English speaking countries (Wakefield, 2003; Manzo, 2004, 2006 and 2010; Sarre and Prenzler, 2011).

**Table 1. The components of two case study sites**

	<b>South Mall (UK)</b>	<b>Mega Mall (South Korea)</b>
<b>Size of the Mall</b>	425,000 sq ft	1,245,000 sq ft
<b>Location</b>	90 minutes from capital city	Capital city
<b>Stores</b>	90	204
<b>Restaurants and bars</b>	30	91
<b>Cinema</b>	14 screen cinema	16 screen cinema
<b>Visitors</b>	8 million per year	12 million per year

<b>Car parking places</b>	1535	3000
<b>CCTV</b>	240	79
<b>Etc</b>	26 lane bowling complexes Night club Casino	Aquarium post office
<b>Number of Security Officers<sup>1</sup></b>	25	31

The research methods used included: one hundred structured interviews for customers at each of the malls. Customers were approached during the daytime at both malls: at South Mall outside the main entrances upon leaving and entering (the manager of the mall did not want shoppers disturbed during their shopping experience) and at the mall at Mega Mall over several weeks for brief periods until the 100 target at each location was met. They were asked about the level of safety, the quality of service given by the security officers, the level of reassurance and about giving the legal authority to the security officer, such as carrying weapons, using a structured questionnaire. At Mega Mall the questionnaire was translated into Korean and then the results and data upon completion translated back into English. The researcher also carried out participant observation during both weekdays and weekends as well as day time and night time for 100 hours at each location. Through the observation, a wide range of data was collected such as service quality of the security officers, public' feeling of safety and public perception on policing agents. In addition, most of the security officers and various stakeholders in the two malls were also interviewed using both structured and semi-structured interviews. Table 2 sets out the interviews undertaken. The structured interviews are most relevant to this paper and included a total of 39: 15 at South Mall and 24 at Mega Mall. The researcher was given the details of the security officers working at the site and wrote to them, of which 39 took part out of a possible 56, a 70 per cent participation rate overall, although the rate was only 60 percent at South Mall compared to 77 percent at Mega Mall. The paper will use some of the data from the semi-structured interviews, but the bulk of the paper is based upon the structured interviews with the public, security officers and observation.

**Table 2: Interviews conducted with stakeholders at South Mall and Mega Mall**

<b>Name of job function interviewed and abbreviation with the number at South Mall</b>	<b>Name of job function interviewed and abbreviation with the number at Mega Mall</b>
Security officer (CSO) - 15 Structured interview	Security officer (SO) - 24 Structured interview
Security officer (CSO) - 7 Semi-structured	Security officer (SO) - 12 Semi-structured

<sup>1</sup> At both sites the security officers were contract officers from major security companies, but it must be noted some malls use in-house or proprietary security, which may have different orientations (see Button and George, 2005; Walby and Lippert, 2014).

interview	interview
Supervisor (SUPERVISOR) - 1 Semi-structured interview	Supervisor (KSUPERVISOR) - 1 Semi-structured interview
Manager (MANAGER) - 3 Semi structured interview	Manager (KMANAGER) - 3 Semi structured interview
Police officer (PO) - 3 Semi structured interview	Police officer (KPO) - 4 Semi structured interview

**Table 3. Abbreviations**

<b>In the UK – South Mall</b>	<b>In Korea – Mega Mall</b>
Customer Security officer – CSO	Security officer - SO
Supervisor - Supervisor	Supervisor - Ksupervisor
Manager – Manager	Manager – Kmanager
Police officer – PO	Police officer – KPO
Customer – Customer	Customer - Kcustomer

#### **4. Security Officers at the Two Sites**

Before the public views of security officers at the two sites are considered it is first very important to consider the orientation, role and culture of the security officers. This brief description will illustrate some significant differences between the two countries. There have been a number of studies of security officers, largely in Anglo-Saxon countries which have suggested a low status, low commitment, limited training and ‘watchman’ orientation of security officers (Kakalik and Wildhorn, 1971a, Button, 2007a). In more recent years some studies have suggested greater sophistication in security officer orientations, with greater professionalism and commitment to deal with difficult confrontations and exercise legal tools (Rigakos, 2002; Manzo, 2010; Wakefield, 2003 and Button, 2007a). Button has drawn out two ideal types of security officer at two ends of a continuum and building upon the work of Rigakos (2002) noted:

- *Parapolice orientation*: active enforcement and involvement in confrontation, active use of universal legal tools, pre-occupation with ‘real work’ and ‘Thin-blue line’.
- *Watchman orientation*: avoidance of danger and conflict, rare use of universal legal tools, mundane and ineffective.

Button also found a number of other traits common to both orientations and a ‘wannbe somewhere else doing something else’ was one very common with officers of both orientations seeing security work as a short-term stop gap before something better comes along, either better paid unskilled work or the police (also noted by

Manzo, 2010). Indeed, high labour turnover rates are very common amongst security officers (Button, 2007a). This research identified some significant differences between the two countries, which will now be illustrated.

First of all, there was a significant difference in the perception of their knowledge of legal tools between the two countries as illustrated in Table 4. Their knowledge to search a person, use force and arrest was rated ‘very well’ at around two thirds of officers at South Mall and to remove someone from private property scored almost 90 percent. This compared to the Koreans at Mega Mall where just under a third rated their knowledge ‘very well’ and for removing from private property only 16.7%. Significant minorities (around a quarter) at Mega Mall also did not know them or were somewhat unsure, which was not the case at South Mall.

**Table 4. How do you think you know your legal powers to?**

	Search a person		Use force against a person		To arrest and detain a person		To remove someone from private property	
	South Mall	Mega Mall	South Mall	Mega Mall	South Mall	Mega Mall	South Mall	Mega Mall
<b>Very well</b>	60.0 %	29.2 %	60.0 %	29.2 %	66.7 %	29.2 %	86.7 %	16.7 %
<b>Fairly well</b>	33.3 %	45.8 %	33.3 %	50.2 %	26.7 %	37.5 %	13.3 %	50.0 %
<b>Somewhat unsure</b>	6.7 %	12.5 %	6.7 %	4.2 %	6.7 %	12.5 %	-	16.7 %
<b>Don't know them</b>	-	12.5 %	-	16.7 %	-	20.8 %	-	16.7 %

N=39

The difference in knowledge was also illustrated by their actual use of legal tools, with those at South Mall in the UK much more likely to use their tools. For arrest nearly two thirds of Korean officers had never or rarely used this power, which compared to only 13.3 percent for the UK officers. Almost 90 percent of the UK officers were arresting/detaining a person on at least a weekly basis which compared to just under 40 percent for Korea. Over half the Korean officers rarely or had never used force, which compared to a fifth rarely in the UK and none had never used force. While removing someone from the site was undertaken by almost two thirds of the UK officers on at least once a shift, which compared to a third of Korean officers. These findings suggest a much stronger parapolice orientation in the UK, compared to Korea. However, to designate a significant number of the Korean officers as the ‘watchman’ orientation would be wrong, as will shortly be illustrated of ‘parapolice’ type work.

**Table 5. Security officer’s use of their legal tools at South Mall and Mega Mall compared**

	<b>Several times a shift</b>	<b>Once a shift</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>
Have you ever had to arrest (detain) a person as a security officer and if so roughly how many times?					
<b>South Mall</b>	-	40.0 %	46.7 %	13.3 %	-
<b>Mega Mall</b>	-	12.5 %	25.0 %	33.3 %	29.2 %
Have you ever had to use reasonable force against a person while working as a security officer and if so roughly how many times?					
<b>South Mall</b>	6.7 %	46.7 %	26.7 %	20.0 %	-
<b>Mega Mall</b>	-	16.7 %	29.2 %	37.5 %	16.7 %
Have you ever had to remove someone from private property while working as a security officer and if so roughly how many times?					
<b>South Mall</b>	13.3 %	53.3 %	26.7 %	6.7 %	-
<b>Mega Mall</b>	8.3 %	25.0 %	45.8 %	16.7 %	4.2 %

N=39

This paper offers an additional dimension to the dichotomy old ‘parapolice’ and ‘watchmen’, which the authors argue is very prevalent in South Korea and many other Asian countries, which we call the ‘servicemen’ orientation. However, before this is examined some examples are illustrated below from the interviews with the guards to illustrate some of the use of legal tools by officers. At South Mall first:

*Yes, I use it regularly [arrest], especially busy days and evening shifts like Mondays, Thursdays and payday weekend. If they become physically aggressive, and if they are a danger to themselves and others, then we may choose to detain them... But usually, once we’ve taken someone off site that way, they don’t usually come back. Sometimes they do, three or four times, usually they give up after that, and if they don’t give up, we detain them and contact the police (CSO 1).*

*Yes, we do tend to escort them out of South Mall. We do that. But it’s just sometimes when they’re being really aggressive, we detain them then wait for the police (CSO 7).*

*Like the other day we had a male inside [night club], he pushed his girlfriend across the dance floor and then he left very briskly, very quickly. So we went after him just to get him to leave site because we didn’t want anything like that to happen again, so we asked him to leave. I went up*

*to him and asked him to leave, I had one of the target door staff with me and I said to him 'Sir, you're going to have to leave... and then he started getting aggressive, getting very, very verbal to me, and as I turned to speak on my radio, he slapped me on the arm twice and then as I turned back round he tried to push me. So then me, the target door staff grabbed his arms and took him down, arrested him...detained him and then I said 'can we have alphas please' which is the code for police, and then the police were here within a minute, two minutes. And then he was, he was gone (CSO 4)*

And even at Mega Mall there were also examples of the exercise of legal tools to deal with drunks:

*Yes I use it. There are a lot of drunkards or verbally abusive people and we often restrain homeless people who are loud or have very bad odour. We sometimes find drunkards drinking within the mall and lead them out. When they drink indoors the smell of alcohol is strong and since there are a lot of children coming here as well, it is necessary restrain them from drinking (SO 3).*

*In the past, there was a time when we caught an illegal credit card usage. There was a report from the store where the illegal card was used, so the [suspect] was tracked and caught after receiving the descriptions and then they were handed over to the police (SO 7).*

*There was also an assault incident over the weekend. There was a couple with a child and a young student must have bumped into the child while passing. But the student may not have realised, but didn't apologise and the father of the child assaulted the student out of anger. So we detained him using force until the police come (SO 11).*

The additional dimension to the orientations of security officers is the 'servicemen'. The security officers at Mega Mall focused much more on 'service work' rather than security tasks. Security officers would spend a great deal of time given directions to customers – so many times the researcher who was observing found it difficult to keep count. The officers would help customers find lost property and respond to complaints about the facilities. They would carry out safety functions such as when it rained, putting out signs to warn customers they may slip and they would also pick up garbage. Some officers would help elderly customers when they used the escalator or when they could not find their destination by accompanying them. This service duty was prioritised by the Korean officers and management, rather than security work - it was their *raison d'être*. Watchmen and parapolice orientated officers also carried out these functions in the UK – but it was not their priority. As some of the officers illustrated in interviews:

*It feels like a service person. Although the role is a security personnel but we work with service being the focus (SO3).*

*Although I am a security guard I do mostly service tasks (SO 4).*

A Korean police officer commented upon the status of the guards, that they were:

*Servicemen. It seems to be focused towards service (KPO 4).*

The supervisor at Mega Mall also supported this:

*I think the servicemen is more suitable. Since this is a shopping mall, most of the tasks are to provide service or guiding the customers as the profit of the stores. It is very hard to navigate for those who visit here for the first time. Hence most tasks of security officers are guiding. But I think the safety management is the basic task as well (KSUPERVISOR 1).*

This was also emphasised by the manager in charge of security, also prioritising the need for even more training on service:

*Although the title itself is security personnel, since it is more service focused during daytime, it would be better to have more intensive training on services, if possible on how to act to certain situations (KMANAGER).*

This contrasted to the UK, where the manager noted the following:

*[on using force] If there's an opportunity that we can get in and deal with safety, quickly, that doesn't cause any fuss or anyone else surrounding, then yes, we should be getting involved. **It creates a good image** if we nip it in the bud... Let's say if you've got somebody again verbal abuse, or drinking that's getting out of hand then you've got normal shoppers here with families and kids, you don't want that around here and come here. You want a nice atmosphere. It's supposed to be a nice destination for people coming here, a premium outlet that you've got to enjoy yourself. You're always going to get people who that are going to be spoiling it probably (MANAGER).*

The different attitude was also exemplified by CSO 1 and his orientation to actively intervene and use powers.

*Obviously, having the security on the side is very good. Because when they see security, they tend to well behave. That's one good thing about that and obviously if they're not responding, we just give them options, saying that you either 'well behave or you're not coming inside South Mall', 'you're not going inside any venues'. So, they tend to well behave when they see security present. ...But, being a security present, they to calm down when they see a security approaching them, do you know what I mean?*

*Obviously, it's all about indication with the drunken people. When you speak to them, they obviously communicate properly and we tell them 'this is how it is', you know, 'if you're not well behaved, you'll be arrested for it.' I will say that's what they get, and they understand and obviously they will behave after that (CSO 1).*

It would be wrong to assume general service provision was not a role for the security officers in the UK; it clearly was. Service quality is very important in shopping malls and according to Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000), customer satisfaction can be regarded as one of the significant factors affecting business success. Therefore, the owners utilize security officers as a service provider as well as security operatives as they are often the first contact for visitors (Wakefield, 2003). Wakefield (2003) has noted the importance of service provision amongst security officers in malls and Button (2007) has also noted security officers' roles covering service functions. Manzo (2004: 248-9) has also noted on security officers working in malls in Canada, that:

... security officers (at least, those in shopping malls) are encouraged to enact a "customer service" approach that is distinctive from police officers' work and that, again, does not entail following predetermined rules of conduct. Security officers' tasks place great and even primary emphasis on understanding the layout and retail function of the mall space and in helping customers and facilitating the commercial aspect of the mall.

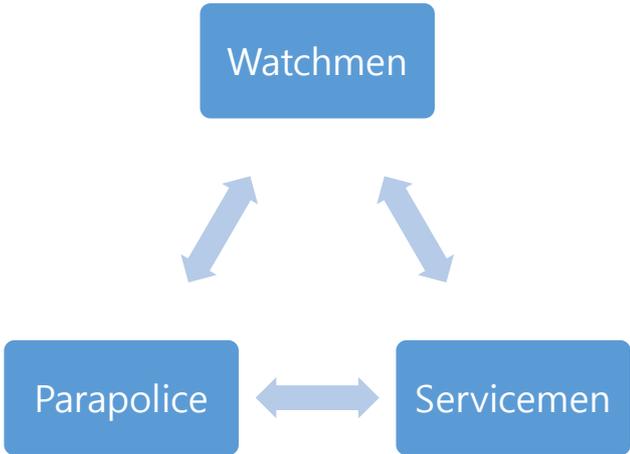
The research findings above (Table 4 and 5) in terms of knowledge, experience of arrest, use of force and ejection from private property show greater orientation amongst the South Mall officers towards Parapolice, than Watchmen. First of all in terms of knowledge of their powers to search, use force and arrest; only around 30 percent knew them very well at Mega Mall, compared to 60 percent and over at South Mall. On the right to remove from private property this rose to over 86 percent at South Mall and under 20 percent at Mega Mall. In terms of use of powers on arrest almost 90 percent of officers were undertaking such work at least weekly at South Mall, compared to around a third at Mega Mall. On use of force 80 percent of South Mall officers were using it at least weekly compared to around 45 percent at Mega Mall. Only on removal from private property was there near similarity with over 90 percent of South Mall officers doing this at least weekly compared to just over three-quarters at Mega Mall.

However, it would be wrong to label the majority of Koreans 'Watchmen' because there was clearly another trait that dominated their orientation. These differences cannot be attributed to the differences in the night-time economy between the two sites. First, some arrests relate to shoplifting which occur during the day and second, there was a strong emphasis for the security officers at South Mall to also focus upon service, but most chose to emphasise the harder security roles, perhaps in line with some of the findings of Manzo (2006), as a means of overcoming the stigma associated with security work. Part of the difference may also be explained by Korean culture where solidarity at work and compliance with organisational goals are strong traits. As Kim (2004: 724) has argued regarding Korean employees, they:

consider their organization as a big family, their boss as a father or big brother, their co-workers as brothers and sisters, and their subordinates as sons and daughters; they usually use the words “our organization” and “our department”; they emphasize interdependence and cooperation rather than competition; and they help each other to achieve “our goals.”

Given the importance of service to the managers at Mega Mall, the officers were more likely to pursue and articulate such an orientation. They were also possibly less worried about the stigma of their work as meeting and articulating organisational goals were more important in comparison to the UK. As the work of Manzo (2004) and Button (2007) has noted service culture is also important in malls in Canada and the UK too, it’s just many of the officers prefer to define themselves in a different way – and by doing it through parapolicing this gives more status to what is otherwise perceived as lower status work. The differences leads the authors to add a third dimension to the watchmen – parapolice continuum of ‘servicemen’. Service underpins and is a function alongside security work, but the priority given to it by operatives is different. Many of the UK officers were orientated towards more parapolice, but had some servicemen roles; there were also a minority of watchmen who fitted this; whereas most in Korea fitted more towards the ‘servicemen’ end with some partly orientated towards the parapolice or watchmen. This is illustrated in the figure below.

**Figure 1. The security officer three sided continuum**



A central question is does such an orientation exist in other malls, particularly in Korea? This is not a question this paper can answer definitively given the methods used. Nevertheless given the structural and cultural dimensions leading to this orientation and the experience of the authors visiting malls the authors believe this is likely. Ultimately, however, as is the purpose of any case study research, is to stimulate further enquiries which can test such hypotheses (Lijphart, 1971). Given the differences in orientation between the two malls and countries it will be now interesting to review the public perception of security operatives at the two malls.

## 5. Public Perception on Security Operatives

### 5.1 The general information of the public

The limited research on public perceptions of security tends to be via general surveys, rather than linked to a specific spatial context and therefore group of security (see Audit Commission, 1996; Nalla and Heraux, 2003; Nalla and Lim, 2003; van Steden, & Nalla, 2010). 200 structured interviews were conducted on members of the public who had visited the two sites. Table 6 presents general information about their gender, age, and the frequency of visiting the mall. The conditions of access were slightly different at the two sites. At Mega Mall the researcher was allowed to interview customers on site. By contrast at South Mall, although full access for observation, interviews with security officers and stakeholders was given – for customers there was a concern being stopped for an interview might disrupt their shopping experience – so here the interviews were conducted on streets outside the mall on those who had just been or were going to the mall (those who were entering were screened to see if they had been there before). The researchers do not believe this has significantly affected the findings. The findings are presented in the table below in simple descriptive statistics as the number and type of data did not warrant more sophisticated statistical analysis. Future papers based upon this research will draw out more sophisticated analysis based upon a variety of sub-factors.

**Table 6. The general information of the customers**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>UK (South Mall)</b>	<b>Korea (Mega Mall)</b>
Male	37.0 %	42.0 %
Female	63.0 %	58.0 %
<b>Age group</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Korea</b>
17& under	13.0 %	13.0 %
18-29	38.0 %	51.0 %
30-39	17.0 %	28.0 %
40-49	20.0 %	7.0 %
50-59	9.0 %	1.0 %
60 & above	3.0 %	-
<b>Visit Frequency</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Korea</b>

Daily	2.0 %	25.0 %
Weekly	33.0 %	21.0 %
Monthly	38.0 %	32.0 %
Yearly	8.0 %	12.0 %
Rarely	19.0 %	10.0 %

N=200

The table 6 shows that the percentage of females amongst visitors is higher than males at the mall in the UK and the mall in Korea with 63 per cent and 58 per cent respectively. Moreover, the largest age group was between 18 and 29 years old with 38 per cent at the mall in the UK, followed by the middle age group between 40 and 49 years old with 20 per cent. The smallest age group at the mall in the UK was the oldest group with 3.0 per cent, but the mall in Korea did not have anyone in that group at all. In Korea, the age group between 18 and 29 years old was the largest with 51.0 per cent, and the 30s were the second largest group with 28.0 per cent.

In addition, the next question was their frequency of visiting the shopping mall and the table illustrates somewhat different results between the two malls. There were 25 per cent of respondents who visited the mall in Korea every day; compared to the mall in the UK which only had 2.0 per cent of respondents visiting daily. This tendency could be inferred from the geographical position. The mall in Korea is placed in the city centre beside a subway station, and there is a lot of working places inside or the near the mall. Many people pass by the mall to commute which would lead to the higher number of visitors than the South Mall. The largest group at both case study sites were the monthly visitors with 38.0 per cent and 32.0 per cent for the mall in the UK and the mall in Korea respectively. At both malls, nearly 80 per cent of the respondents visited the mall at least once a month. Most people visiting both malls came for shopping as the main reason during daytime except those working in the mall. Also, a lot of customers spent their time with the family or friends at the leisure facilities such as the cinemas, bowling alley or restaurants. The next section describes customers' experience of the quality of service given by security officers.

## 5.2 Service quality of the security officers

**Table 7. Quality of help given by security officers**

	<b>Very bad</b>	<b>Bad</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>UK (South Mall)</b>	-	5.8 %	40.4 %	34.6 %	19.2 %
<b>Korea (Mega Mall)</b>	-	2.9 %	14.7 %	20.6 %	61.8 %

N=200

As was noted earlier in this paper general service is the significant role for the Korean security officers, but was also important for the UK. It is therefore important to know the opinion of the customers towards the

quality of service given by the security officers at the two malls. Broadly, the results of the interviews were positive about the service quality at both sites, although the quality was rated much higher overall in Korea where over 80 percent rated it ‘good’ or ‘very good’, compared to the UK where it was just over half. The authors are confident this is another illustration of the differences in orientation between the two sites.

### 5.3 Public feeling of safety

**Table 8. The safe level of customer when they shopping alone and with others**

<b>UK (South Mall)</b>	<b>Very unsafe</b>	<b>Unsafe</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Safe</b>	<b>Very safe</b>
Shopping alone at day time	3.0 %	3.0 %	9.0 %	21.0 %	64.0 %
Shopping alone at night time	5.0 %	18.0 %	18.0 %	30.0 %	29.0 %
Shopping with others at day time	3.0 %	2.0 %	4.0 %	13.0 %	78.0 %
Shopping with others at night time	1.0 %	7.0 %	16.0 %	29.0 %	47.0 %
<b>Korea (Mega Mall)</b>	<b>Very unsafe</b>	<b>Unsafe</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Safe</b>	<b>Very safe</b>
Shopping alone at day time	1.0 %	3.0 %	15.0 %	22.0 %	59.0 %
Shopping alone at night time	8.0 %	11.0 %	29.0 %	25.0 %	27.0 %
Shopping with others at day time	-	2.0 %	8.0 %	19.0 %	71.0 %
Shopping with others at night time	3.0 %	5.0 %	18.0 %	22.0 %	52.0 %

N=200

The authors asked customers on their perception of safety when they visited the mall alone or with a companion during both daytime and night-time (the latter was distinguished because of the NTE differences between the two malls and countries). This data is important finding of the perception of customers regarding crime in both malls. Interestingly, the figures at the two case study sites illustrated nearly similar results in regards to the safety level. Over 80 per cent of the customers at the two sites felt ‘safe’ or ‘very safe’ when they were shopping alone during the daytime. And over 90 per cent at both sites also considered it ‘safe’ or ‘very safe’ to shop with a companion during daytime.

The questions also asked about the customers' feeling regarding safety in the mall at night time and this figure was also at a fairly positive level – which was very interesting given the significant differences in the NTE at the two sites. Nearly 60 per cent of the respondents revealed that they felt safe when they did their shopping alone there at night and over 70 per cent of them felt safe visiting the mall with a companion at night. When this researcher interviewed the customers, most of them also gave an affirmative response to the question regarding the safety level. Some of them shared their opinion on the safety level at the mall:

*Personally I feel safe in the day time. Perhaps add more security guards when it gets dark (CUSTOMER 88 - UK).*

*I think the safe level is good because there was a stranger person approached me but security officers blocked him for me (KCUSTOMER 40 - South Korea)*

*Erm... compared to other places... it's a lot better here. Regarding CCTV cameras in the setup, there is a lot, it's all good (CUSTOMER 53 - UK)*

*I think this mall is good for security since there are a lot of CCTVs and security personnel are positioned at each weak areas KCUSTOMER 75 - South Korea)*

On the other hand, there were some negative responses at both sites. When customers did their shopping alone at night, they felt unsafe or very unsafe with 23 per cent and 19 per cent at the mall in the UK and the mall in Korea respectively. Some interviewees replied that the reason they felt unsafe was due to the complex structure and the dim lighting at the mall in Korea and the drunk or drugged people in the UK:

*I don't think it's safe. I have been uncomfortable when an elderly man showed too much inappropriate interest in my toddler nephew (CUSTOMER 79 - UK).*

*This mall is very dark compared to the other malls so it makes me feel anxious (KCUSTOMER 84 - South Korea)*

*It's..not safe since there is only few officers on the floor (CUSTOMER 37-UK)*

*It's hard to find out the direction, the rode is quite complex and some dark. Specially, emergency exits seem to be back alley (KCUSTOMER 25 - South Korea)*

#### 5.4 Public perceptions on the policing operatives

This section will examine not only customer perceptions regarding the visibility of security operatives and how they feel about that, but also the customers' perception on giving legal tools to the security officers.

**Table 9. How often policing operatives seen?**

<b>UK (South Mall)</b>	<b>Several times a visit</b>	<b>Once or twice a visit</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>
Police officer	4.0 %	19.0 %	48.0 %	29.0 %
Security officer	8.0 %	41.0 %	33.0 %	18.0 %

CCTV camera	35.0 %	36.0 %	19.0 %	10.0 %
<b>Korea (Mega Mall)</b>	<b>Several times a visit</b>	<b>Once or twice a visit</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>
Police officer	7.0 %	7.0 %	31.0 %	55.0 %
Security officer	27.0 %	22.0 %	30.0 %	21.0 %
CCTV camera	28.0 %	19.0 %	21.0 %	32.0 %

N=200

Table 9 shows the how often customers see the policing operatives at the shopping mall. At both malls the vast majority of shoppers never or rarely saw a police officer, although slightly more did so in the UK. For security officers their visibility was much stronger in Korea with 27 percent seeing them several times a visit, compared to 8 percent in the UK. However, at both sites just over half did not or rarely saw them. CCTV was observed more in the UK with just over 70 percent seeing it at least once or twice a visit, compared to just under a half in Korea. The higher visibility of security officers in Korea – given the site was three times bigger – may also reflect greater service orientation with the Korean officers much more orientated and structured to be present and visible to customers.

**Table 10. The perception of customers on security operatives**

<b>The level of reassurance (Mean value between minus 100 to plus 100)</b>		
	<b>UK (South Mall)</b>	<b>Korea (Mega Mall)</b>
Police officers	+ 62.42 %	+ 69.55 %
Security officers	+ 59.43 %	+ 65.70 %
CCTV cameras	+ 69.67 %	+ 58.20 %
Overall design of the mall	+ 60.73 %	+ 49.38 %
<b>The impact on crime prevention (Mean value between minus 100 to plus 100)</b>		
Police officers	+ 63.92 %	+ 82.60 %
Security officers	+ 61.50 %	+ 69.86 %
CCTV cameras	+ 64.87 %	+ 62.34 %
Overall design of the mall	+ 51.39 %	+ 48.10 %

N=200

The next questions in Table 10 focused on relative levels of reassurance and the respective impact on crime prevention of security officers, police officers and CCTV at the two shopping malls. Respondents could reply with a wide range of scores from minus 100 to plus 100. This is derived from the Audit Commission research of 1996 (Audit Commission, 1996). The Audit Commission also undertook research regarding levels of public reassurance finding that police officers ‘on foot’ received the most positive responses (at nearly plus 80 per cent), followed by ‘marked police vehicle’ (at plus 70 per cent). The interviewees gave CCTV the third highest scores of around plus 40 per cent. Security guards received a negative score of around minus 15 per cent.

In this study, the level of reassurance is affirmative on security operatives at both malls. The highest score at the mall in the UK was the CCTV cameras with plus 69.67 per cent which corresponds to the results in the previous section regarding visibility. This was followed by the police officers who received a plus 62.42 per cent score and then by the design of the mall in the UK. The response toward security officer was also positive with 59.43 %. These findings are very interesting regarding security officers given the different orientations in the two countries, where levels of reassurance were very similar. Positive findings of security operatives by members of the public were also found by van Steden and Nalla (2010) in the Netherlands and for students by Nalla and Heraux (2003). More research is required, but security officers (despite their own pessimistic view of their status – Manzo, 2006) might be generally much more positively perceived, particularly when assessed in a specific context where the public have experience of their actions, which are often positive.

The interviewees were also asked to prioritise policing which could enhance reassurance at the malls. Here there were significant differences. Just under half of the Korean customers prioritised security officers, compared to 29 percent in the UK. Some of the interviewees suggested to the researcher that they wanted to see more security officers patrolling:

*Personally I feel safe in the day time. Perhaps add more security guards when it gets dark (CUSTOMER 90 – UK).*

*I would suggest it needs more security officer with strengthening of patrol (KCUSTOMERS 58 - South Korea).*

*Yes. Definitely it needs more at night time. Day time not as necessarily. I think (CUSTOMER 90- UK).*

*Yes, this mall is too big so I don't think it can be completely managed by a current number of security officer. I think there needs to be more, but should add for night time (KCUSTOMERS 64 - South Korea).*

In the UK the priority was more police officers at 33 percent, which compared to 28 percent in Korea. More staff and more CCTV were rated around the same at both sites and accounted for around a fifth to quarter at both sites. Interestingly, only 4 per cent of them revealed that they did not need anything to improve the level of reassurance.

**Table 11. What kinds of policing are needed to reduce crimes in this mall and enhance reassurance?**

	<b>More security</b>	<b>More police officers</b>	<b>More staff</b>	<b>More CCTV</b>	<b>None</b>

	<b>officers</b>				
<b>UK (South Mall)</b>	29.0 %	33.0 %	8.0 %	18.0 %	12.0 %
<b>Korea (Mega Mall)</b>	49.0 %	28.0 %	4.0 %	15.0 %	4.0 %

N=200

**Table 12. Giving more legal tools to security officers**

	<b>Truncheon</b>		<b>Cs gas</b>		<b>Pepper sprays</b>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>UK</b>	36.0 %	64.0 %	24.0 %	76.0 %	38.0 %	62.0 %
<b>Korea</b>	47.0 %	53.0 %	32.0 %	68.0 %	42.0 %	58.0 %
	<b>Police power of arrest</b>		<b>Police power of search</b>		<b>Power to issue fixed penalties</b>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>UK</b>	37.0 %	63.0 %	28.0 %	72.0 %	62.0 %	38.0 %
<b>Korea</b>	34.0 %	66.0 %	31.0 %	69.0 %	23.0 %	77.0 %

N=200

Lastly, the researcher addressed the opinion of the customers on the authorization of additional legal tools to the security officers. Customers were asked the two questions; one related to the use and carrying of non-lethal weapons by security officers and the other to providing additional legal powers to officers. In general, the answers were negative as the table 12 shows above. In Korea just under a half favoured security officers carrying truncheons, compared to just over a third in the UK. For CS gas and pepper sprays there was overwhelming majorities against in both countries. Additional powers of arrest and search were overwhelmingly rejected at both sites. However, there was one significant difference on the power to issue fixed penalty notices. In the UK almost two thirds favoured giving such powers to security overs, which compared to less than a quarter in Korea. Taken together these findings suggest the public in general in both countries are not sympathetic to given powers and tools which would be likely to make security officers more parapolic in orientation. The only exception being fixed penalty notices, which may reflect a wider diversity of agents – other than the police - in the UK who can already issue fixed penalty notices (such as parking enforcement officers), compared to Korea where this is rare.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

This is the first major comparative study of private security officers in two comparable malls in different countries: UK and South Korea; which has used survey, interviews and observational data. Comparative research is rare in private policing and given the already extensive research in comparative police research this is an important study. As with any comparative research it is fraught with challenges. Indeed, if the researchers

had even compared to comparable malls in the same countries this would still have posed challenges. Nevertheless, it is clear that any comparative research would pose difficulties, particularly a study that uses more qualitative and ethnographic approaches. There clearly were challenges to such research, not least for the Korean researcher when observing English security officers understanding their accents and some of their colloquialisms. This, however, is not a reason to shy away from such research. The researchers were keen to answer some simple but important questions. In similar and comparable malls in two different countries: one Anglo-Saxon and one Asian, how did the role of private security compare and most importantly what was the public perception of security? It was also particularly important to learn more of the operations of the Korean mall using more qualitative techniques, given most of the prior research on private security in this country has been based upon survey based research (Nalla and Hwang, 2006; Nalla et al, 2009; Button and Park, 2009).

Any case study research by its very nature means generalisations are difficult. The nature of this study means the findings alone would support this. There is also the issue of some minor differences between the two malls. The authors, however, believe any comparative study of two such different countries would provide differences. Such differences are not a reason to say not to conducting such research. The researchers are also confident that the two malls chosen are typical of many other malls in each country. The characteristics of each mall in terms of mix of shops, restaurants and other facilities are broadly similar enabling a comparison to take place. That similar sized security forces although both designated as ‘security’ undertaking a range of similar functions had very different orientations, with the Koreans much more focused upon service, compared to the UK where security and parapolice type orientations were prioritised – something also found by Manzo (2006) in Canada. The authors believe part of reason for this different culture is based on the general orientation of Korean workers to their organisation and the specific organisational aims of Mega Mall and the greater focus upon stigma amongst the UK officers and the need to identify strategies to give greater status. However, given such culture is wider (extending to other Far Eastern Countries) and the aims of Mega Mall are not unusual in malls – even in Anglo-Saxon countries – there is a case the ‘servicemen’ orientation is much wider; clearly more research is required to investigate this. The differences between South Mall and Mega Mall were demonstrated clearly in their experience of doing ‘parapolicing work’ such as using force, detaining and removing persons from the site: with the UK officers much more confident of their knowledge and in actively using them. Despite the differences in orientation, however, the security officers were viewed similarly by the public in terms of reassurance, although Koreans were much more favourable than the British in increasing the number of security officers. The ‘warm’ view perhaps further evidence of the more positive view to private security extending (Nalla et al, 2009).

It is an interesting question to consider as how the Koreans would react to more parapolicing and the British to greater service orientation and also if there are examples of malls in Korea with a greater parapolicing orientation and in the UK with greater service provision. This leads to the final observation from this research: the need for more comparative research on private policing.

This research is one of the first studies to undertake empirical research on private policing in two comparable locations in two different countries. More of this type of research is required as well as more research on South Korean private security, which has been very sparse in comparison to the UK and other Anglo-Saxon countries. Greater research will enable stronger confidence to be attached to the findings of such studies. This small scale study does offer some interesting insights to scholars in security studies. More comparative research should be a priority for security scholars so greater understanding of the how the growing role and size of private security – which seems to be a universal phenomenon – plays out ‘on the ground’ in different countries. Also, the very small base on research on private security in Korea and other Asian countries illustrates the need for more work here, particularly as the small but significant differences uncovered here may suggest there is more to private security than what has been uncovered by largely Anglo-Saxon and European studies.

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