Tourism Crime, Safety and Security Issues: The case of a Local South African Municipality

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the criminal activities which have been identified as hindering and crippling the tourism industry at uMhlathuze Local Municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. The main aim of the study was to establish if any mechanisms are in place to curb crime and enhance the safety of tourists within the study area. A structured questionnaire survey and face-to-face interviews were used to collect data. The study used a convenience sampling method to select 124 participants, from different parts of the study area. The results indicate that even though there are some mechanisms in place criminal activities continue occurring in and around uMhlathuze Local Municipality. Some of these criminal activities are not reported to the local authorities and are not known by the community members and thus downplayed. This study recommends that organizations such as Tourism KwaZulu-Natal that are responsible for marketing and promoting tourism, together with uMhlathuze Local Municipality tourism support officers should bring some safety measures and crime tourism awareness by organizing workshops and seminars related to tourist's safety and security at different towns and villages of the local municipality, targeting youths.

Keywords: Tourism crime, tourists, criminal activities, safety and security

Introduction

Crime remains one of the key challenges that have a negative effect on the tourism sector in South Africa. Studies have revealed that crime leads to immediate costs to residents, tourists and the host country, and may also imperil the destination's image with a potential to deter future first time and return visits (Recher & Rubil 2020). Tarlow (2011) states that crime is making tourists cautious about visiting unsafe destinations and negative word-of-mouth is easily spread when tourists leave the country. KwaZulu-Natal is one of SA's provinces known for its beautiful, scenic and natural landscape that attracts both domestic and international tourists South African Tourism (SAT, 2015). Crime is one of the biggest threats to tourism growth as it discourages people from visiting the province (Lisowska, 2017; Nkosi, 2010). According to Tarlow (2011), the high crime rate which in some cities, is identified as targeting tourists (e.g. Rio de Janeiro), contributes to a reduced number of tourists visiting the city. Tourists with positive or satisfactory experiences are likely to revisit whilst it is highly probable

that tourists who are not satisfied with their experience will not visit a destination again in future (Campo-Martinez, Garau-Vadell & Martinez-Ruiz, 2010).

The South African Police service (SAPS) recently released 2017-2018 crime statistics for all major crimes which indicated that violent crimes remain an ever-present threat in South Africa; however, criminals do not single out citizens for criminal activity, as most crimes are opportunistic in nature. This means if the area has a high crime rate, both local citizens and tourists are affected. This paper focuses on tourism crime, safety and security using uMhlathuze Local Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa as a case study. From the global, sub-Saharan Africa and local literature reviewed, it has become clear that there is a dearth of literature that relates to the mechanisms that are used by local municipalities to combat crime to enhance the safety and security of tourists which is the focus of this study.

Literature review

The South African government has earmarked tourism as a key sector with excellent potential for growth and aims to increase tourism's contribution (both directly and indirectly), to the economy from the 2009 baseline of R189.4-billion, or 7.9% of Growth Domestic Product (GDP), to R499-billion by 2020 (Department of Tourism, 2012). Tourism contributed as much as R189 billion to the economy of the country in 2014 and it is also considered as one of the country's largest employers. Tourism is one of the five priority economic sectors that the South African government has chosen to focus on in its effort to support investment and facilitate growth (Department of Tourism, 2012; African Development Bank, 2016). Interestingly, tourism has been seen as an industry that is growing faster than any other sector globally. Tourism is a revenue-generating industry that creates job opportunities, attracts investment, foreign exchange and diversifies the economy (Henama, 2014).

Like other parts of the country, Umhlathuze Local municipality is trying to increase its tourism market share. Tourism has emerged as an important part of economic growth in South Africa and the world and it is one of the leading sectors of the service industry and a major constituent of the world economy (Hermann, Du Plessis, Coetzee & Geldenhuys, 2012; George, 2017). World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2017), states that the tourism industry in South Africa accounted for 2.8% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Extensive research has shown that tourism is regarded as the industry with the highest growth rate and the greatest potential for job creation (UNWTO, 2015; South African Tourism, 2016; Ferreira & Perks, 2017; Phori, 2017). In addition, George (2017) argues that in 2015, 8.9 million international tourists visited South Africa. The Stats SA (2019), report shows the overall number of visitors to South Africa in the last financial quarter of the year, which is normally one of the most popular times to visit the country, fell by 3%. The existing body of research on tourism suggests that the decline is due to violent crimes and political instability (Perry & Potgieter, 2013; Ferreira & Perks, 2017). Ngxiza, (2012) postulates that attacks on foreigners are a major setback to the tourism sector in South Africa, especially in KwaZulu-Natal.

The most concerning decrease was that of the number of tourists from Europe, a traditional stronghold of South African tourism, which also dropped by 8.5%, (Stats SA, 2019). From the aforementioned scholars, it is now well established that a variety of pull factors, such as excellent value for money (against all major currencies), heritage and culture, wine farms, Edu-tourism, health tourism, community-based tourism and eco-tourism continue to make South Africa an attractive holiday destination. However, the threat of negative perceptions discourages potential tourists from visiting South Africa. These perceptions include the risk of safety due to crime and political instability, as well as less obvious factors such as health issues (i.e. malaria, typhoid and yellow fever) (Phori, 2017). As from 2015, South Africa has

experienced an increase in violent crimes, political instability, xenophobic attacks and repetitive social and labour unrest (Cele, 2015, Manda, 2015 & Nkama, 2015).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the 2018 contribution of the tourism sector in South Africa, directly accounted for 2.8 % of real gross domestic product (GDP), which amounts to R138 billion and this was projected to grow to R145.3 billion for 2019. This paper suggests that in developing countries like SA, crime is a contributing factor to youth unemployment because it brings economic imbalance. In support, Assaf and Josiassen (2012) advocate that many of countries characterized by high levels of crime and corruption are not able to develop the tourist sector despite their potential cultural and environmental attractiveness. Farrall and Jennings (2012) have established that rising unemployment and inequality correspond to long-term patterns of change in the national rate of property crime, suggesting that poverty and inequality contribute to criminal behaviour. According to Phori (2017), there are three main types of crime experienced by tourists: (1) property crimes and sexual abuse, (2) economic (arbitrary price increases and fraud), or (3) psychological (harassment and instilling fear). According to Lisowska (2017), police authorities do not register some offences committed against tourists. The topic of corruption and crime is well documented by research. Although the literature on crime, safety and security is expanding and embraces a number of different issues and approaches, little congruent knowledge has been developed, especially on tourism, safety and security issues in sub-Saharan Africa. This paper addresses the gap by exploring the tourism, crime, safety and security issues in South Africa, using uMhlathuze Local Municipality KwaZulu-Natal.

Few researchers such as Perry and Potgieter, (2013) in KwaZulu-Natal Province, Mudzanani, (2017) in Pretoria, and Chilli (2018) in KwaZulu-Natal Province have addressed the same topic in some parts of South Africa. Similar topics have been researched variously (Hall & Timothy, 2003; Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006; Steyn, De Beer & Fouche, 2009; George, 2010; Seabra, Dolnicar, Abrantes & Kastenholz, 2013; Yap & Saha, 2013; George & Booyens, 2014).From the literature reviewed, it is clear that much effort has been put on the tourism, safety and security issues but there is still a lack of literature from local municipalities of the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. In the next section, the paper will present the aims of the study and outline how the researcher designed, generated and analysed collected data to reach the conclusions of the study.

Research methodology

A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was used in this study as it was considered to be appropriate for reaching the conclusions. A survey design was adopted for this study. According to Dlomo and Ezeuduji (2020), the survey entails a researcher selecting a sample of respondents and administering a standardised questionnaire to each person in the sample. A questionnaire with both open-ended and close-ended questions was used to collect primary data. Close-ended questions were in the form of a matrix in order to save time for respondents and to increase the comparability of responses (Chawla & Sondhi, 2011). A sequential exploratory research design was applied in order to follow a strategy whereby qualitative interviews were conducted followed by a quantitative survey (Creswell, 2009).

After collecting data through face-to-face interviews, a quantitative approach allowed the researcher to generate statistical data that was presented in frequencies, percentages and tables. Data analyses were done using SPSS version 25 software for statistical purposes. After data collection, there were (N=139) samples who participated in the study. Qualitative data were subjected to content analysis. This study used a convenience sampling method of the non-probability sampling design in selecting 124 respondents. A convenience sampling was used in selecting participants that were readily and easily accessible in different areas of the study

area. This study employed a simple random sampling of the probability sampling design in selecting 15 participants. Open-ended questions were used. Taherdoost (2016) advocates that convenience sampling often helps to overcome many of the limitations associated with the research. The respondents were therefore chosen based on convenience and availability. The respondents that participated in the study were local residents, municipality officials, tourism service providers, tourists and law enforcers (South African Police Services).

The respondents that were interviewed between Mondays and Thursdays during business hours (between 08h00-16h00). For qualitative questions, notes were taken during the interviews and transcripts written immediately to facilitate the data analysis process. The results of the study and the discussion are presented below.

Results and discussion

The results of the study as presented in Table 1 below, show the demographic details of respondents**.**

Table 1: The demographic information of the respondents [N=124]

Variable	Sub-variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	66	53
	Female	58	47
	Total	**124**	**100**
Age	18-21	23	19
	22-35	54	44
	36-55	30	24
	56-75	17	13
	Total	**124**	**100**
Level of education	Primary	07	06
	Secondary	41	33
	Post-matric	32	25
	Post-matric Dip	26	21
	University	18	15
	Total	**124**	**100**
Occupation	Unskilled	18	15
	Semi-skilled	17	14
	Skilled	33	27
	Professional	48	39
	Unemployed	08	05
	Total	**124**	**100**
Monthly income	R500.00- R2000.00	20	16
	R2001.00- R5000.00	27	22
	R5001.00- R8000.00	43	35
	R8001.00-R10 000.00	16	13
	R10 001.00- R20 000.00	14	11
	R20 001.00 or more	04	03
	Total	**124**	**100**
Employees in different sectors	Teachers	30	24
	Travel sector	15	12
	Industrial sector	18	15
	Accommodation sector	18	15
	Protection units	14	11
	Unemployed	10	8
	Retail business	4	3
	Tourism students	9	7
	Others…	6	5
	Total	**124**	**100**

Employment sectors	Government (national or local)	63	51
	Transport and accommodation sector	39	31
	Non-governmental	22	18
	Total	**124**	**100**

Male respondents were in the majority (53%), compared to females (47%). The reason to have more male respondents is that they were accessible and willing to discuss issues that relate to the topic of the study. The majority of the respondents ranged between 22 and 35 because they formed the bulk of municipal officials and service providers therefore they were available to provide the required information. About 44% of respondents ranged between 22 and 25 years of age. According to Creswell (2009) and Taherdoost (2016), age is an important factor when one is conducting research because when the sample is relatively matured or older, the possibility of getting relevant responses is higher compared to those who are young (less than 18 years old).

The findings indicate that 25% of the respondents had completed Matric while 36% had gone beyond Matric and completed diplomas and degrees. It can, therefore, be said that the majority of the respondents were educated and would, therefore, have access to information that is related to tourism crime, safety and security. The findings also indicate that the majority of respondents had specific skills and were professionals. About 27% of the respondents were "skilled" and about 39% classified themselves as "professional" which included law enforcers (members of the South African Police) and teachers. About 16% of the respondents receive a "monthly income" ranging from "R500.00-R2 000.00" and 22% of them receive "R2 001.00-R5 000.00" on a monthly basis. However, respondents receiving a monthly income of "R5001.00-R8 000.00" were somewhat in the majority. Most of the respondents are the employees in different sectors, about 12% of them are "Teachers", 24% "Travel sector", 12% "Industrial sector", 15% "Accommodation sector", 15% and 11% "Protection units". As much as most of the respondents were working, there are those who indicated that they were unemployed. This is an indication that the unemployment in South Africa is still a problem (Dlomo & Ezeuduji, 2020), and the unemployment rate is assumed to be the main source of crime and corruption, especially in the sub-Saharan region. Furthermore, about 3% of the respondents were in the "retail business" and about 7% were "Tourism students".

Various questions were asked in order to achieve the aim and objectives of the study. The first objective of the study was: To identify criminal activities that can be linked to the decline of tourism in the study area. As shown in Table 2 the respondents revealed their understanding of tourism-related crime, safety and security activities that could be linked to the decline in tourism within the study area. Some of the responses are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Activities related to tourism crime, safety and security

	Yes	No	Not sure
(a) It is crime committed at tourist attractions	69	18	13
(b) It is when tourists become victims of crime.	82	11	07
(c) It is the absence of safety and security measures to protect tourists.	58	27	15
(d) It is any type of crime committed against any person.	13	68	19
(e) It is the provision of surveillance cameras at any public place.	31	54	15

These responses suggest that respondents are fully aware and understand the importance of tourism crime, safety and security matters. The majority of respondents (82%) linked the crime that is perpetrated to tourists and crime that is committed at the tourist attractions (69%) as some of the activities that would lead to the decline of tourism in the study. Interestingly some

respondents responded negatively to statements such as: "It is any type of crime committed against any person" [68%] and "It is the provision of surveillance cameras in any public place" [54%], indicating that respondents fully understand the types of activities that would have a negative effect on the number of tourists that visit the tourist attractions in the study area. The second objective of the study was: To find out if there are mechanisms in place to curb criminal activities within the study area. A number of questions were asked in order to achieve this objective. The results are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Mechanisms to curb criminal activities within the study area

Statements on safety and security	Yes	No	Not sure
Visibility of police and security guards	56	36	08
Ensuring a relatively crime free environment	68	25	07
Teaching people about the importance of tourism	36	29	35
Patrolling most of the tourist attractions	70	28	02
High standards or levels of security at tourist attractions and other public spaces	75	17	08
Notifying tourists about criminal activities in different areas	52	37	14
Absence of robbery at the tourist attractions	59	27	17
Job opportunities in the study area	59	30	11

The respondents provided statements that described what they considered to be some of the mechanisms that can be put in place to curb criminal activities that have led to the decline in tourism in the study area. Most of the responses seem to indicate "High standards or levels of security at tourist attractions and other public spaces" (75%); "Patrolling most of the tourist attractions" (70%); "ensuring a relatively crime free environment" (68%) as the most important mechanisms that can be used to curb criminal activities in the study area. Also pointed out as significant is "visibility of police and security guards and "the absence of robbery at the tourist attractions. Interestingly other respondent indicated that "job opportunities in the study area" (59%) may also contribute to the reduction of criminal activities in the study area. The respondents also indicated that people should be taught about the importance of tourism, benefits thereof and how the tourism sectors are affected by crime, safety and security of tourists. The responses also indicated that some local people do not understand the contribution of tourists to the local area economy and others do not even understand the significance of the tourism industry in the study area. They only view tourists as people who have disposable income to spend at tourist attractions. Such responses point to the significance of conducting training that will create awareness of criminal activities and mechanisms of protecting the tourists.

The majority of the responses support the research findings by Mudzanani, (2017), indicating that people in various tourist destinations are aware and understand what tourism safety and security in the tourism environment should contain. The possible explanation for these responses is that the statements are directly referring to safety and security necessary in any tourism environment. From the analysis above it can be concluded that the overwhelming number of responses suggest that the respondents do understand what a safe and secure environment for tourists and the general public entails. The third objective was: To establish the extent to which tourists feel safe and secure while visiting the study area. The responses are presented in Table 4 below. "The statement of "the visibility of safety precautions in the study area" was supported by the majority of the respondents (82%). Respondents also supported that the presence of safety and security measures to the tourists" (58%) would make tourists feel safe and secure. These responses suggest that respondents are fully aware and understand the importance of safety and security of tourists. The respondents also indicated

that it is important to provide information that relates to " the awareness of no go areas" [68%] and "It is the provision of surveillance cameras in any public place" [54%], also, indicating that respondents fully understand the importance of establishing tourist safety and security matters for the study area.

Table 4: **Establishing tourist safety and security**

Statement on safety and security related to the study area	Responses 100%		
	Yes	No	Not sure
(a) The visibility of safety precautions and measures	82	11	07
(b) It is the presence of safety and security measures to tourists.	58	27	15
(c) Awareness of no go areas.	68	13	19
(d) It is the provision of surveillance cameras in any public place.	54	31	15

The respondents were also provided with open-ended questions which required them to express themselves regarding the issues that relate to tourism crime, safety and security. Notes were taken during the interviews and transcripts written immediately thereafter to ensure the accuracy of data and facilitate the analysis process. All interviews were guided by an interview guide/checklist of topics. The summary of responses to the open-ended question is presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Summary of responses to qualitative questions

Checklist of topics	Responses	Supporting sources
Crime and tourism in South Africa	South Africa is a crime-ridden society Crime impact on the major economic sectors like tourism Crime remains the key challenge facing South Africa in the post-apartheid era Tourists areas in SA are crime areas; Tourists tend to be the victims South Africa is perceived as a crime hotspot	Perry and Potgieter (2013)
Tourism, crime versus safety and security	A major problem for the tourism industry is the safety and security sector South African government needs ways of tackling safety and security to protect tourists and tourism	
Tourism on crime perception	Tourists may be easier targets for criminals than local residents	Lisowska (2017)
	Tourists sense of danger results from the experience of being a victim	Assaf and Josiassen (2012)

Conclusions and recommendations

The study aimed to establish if any mechanisms were in place to curb crime and enhance the safety of tourists with the study area. Conclusions were guided by the aims, objectives and findings of the study. Although extensive research has been carried out on tourism issues in uMhlathuze Local Municipality to prove that tourism crimes do take place. There are limited research and literature about examining tourism, crime, safety and security issues in the uMhlathuze Local Municipality. Data about the efficacy and safety of the tourism industry and tourists is limited. A qualitative is conducted to identify and to scratch the surface on tourism, crime, safety and security issues. The theoretical framework that underpinned this study is a

hot-spot theory because characteristics are seen to influence the likelihood of a crime being committed and the likelihood that particular places will become crime hot-spots.

Based on the findings of this study it can be concluded that there is an understanding of the criminal activities that have the potential of driving tourists away leading to the decline of tourism in the study area. Through a better understanding of the motivations of criminal activities to tourists, better strategies can be designed to neutralize these motives or frustrate their attempts by having better security mechanisms. Findings also indicated that there is also a broad understanding of the nature of the mechanisms that are necessary to provide a safe and secured environment for tourists particularly at the vicinity of the tourist attractions and also at the public spaces.

It can, therefore, be recommended that there is a need for the tourism service providers and municipality officials to work together in devising the strategies that can promote safety and security in the study area to ensure that the criminal activities are minimised. What also became clear from the findings of the study is the significance of awareness campaigns and workshops that would promote the importance of tourism to the local economy and that if tourists feel safe the number of visitors to the study area will increase. An increase in in the number of tourists would address the issue of job creation which was mentioned by respondents as one of the mechanisms to curb tourism crime, safety and security. The training and workshops will also help in creating professional networks and establishing a shared understanding of the link between tourism and crime, safety and security among the members of the local community. By creating these information-sharing platforms, community members with limited understanding of the impact of tourism on the country's economy can learn from the others.

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