



The Efficacy of Tourism Oriented Policing and Protection Services in Puducherry – A Mixed Method Inquiry

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Abstract

Tourism is a global and intensively competitive industry and it entails diverse socio-environmental dynamics. It is however vulnerable to safety and security issues. A safe and peaceful ambience in the destinations is a dire necessity. Puducherry, a city in India, is a spectacular spot in the tourism map of India owing to its buoyant beaches and unique heritage manifests. This work assesses the efficacy of Tourism Oriented Policing (TOP) and other protection services incepted of late in Puducherry. The present study lays accent on the special attributes of tourism policing as distinct from the conventional mode of policing. The hallmark efforts such as capacity building programmes for the personnel responsible for tourists' safety and security are examined in the paper using a mixed-methods approach.

Keywords: Tourism Oriented Policing, Safety and Security, Destination Management, Protection Services

1. Introduction

International tourism is experiencing strong momentum in terms of tourist arrivals as the growth recorded a remarkable 7% in 2017 to reach the mark of 1,322 million according to the UNWTO World

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Tourism Barometer. In tandem, the tourism industry is also witnessing a paradigm shift. Unsung tourism havens are identified and strategic planning mechanisms are streaming in to tap the unique potential of the tourist spots. Furthermore, ICT is being employed to garner more steam for the tourism marketing efforts and also to ensure utmost delight for the tourists. The experiential strands of tourism are ushering in refreshing trends leveraging the prospects for the industry players. There is increasing recognition by most of the nations that the steady expansion of tourism can be exploited a great deal to catapult their economic growth. Innovation and creativity have become the order of the day in the realm of global tourism development. More leisure and recreation centres are being launched to cater to the ever increasing tourists' influx. The incredible growth of tourism also poses many hurdles on the safety and security fronts. Tourists are targeted by radical elements to draw attention to their aims and agenda. Numerous explosions and terrorist strikes have shaken premier tourism destinations like Bali in Indonesia, London, Paris, Mumbai, and so forth. Albeit, the tripographic trends indicate that women travellers (both solo segment and group) are turning out to be allocentric (explorative), their safety, whether in urban, suburban or rural locales is not foolproof. Assaults on women tourists is a cause of concern for many a destination promoter. The absence of safe and secure conditions at airports, railway stations, bus terminals, resorts, wellness centres, hillocks, beaches and other spots in destinations act as a deterrent extinguishing the travel enthusiasm of avid tourists. Tourism centres devoid of a safe ambience are sure to move to oblivion. Narcotics, espionage, extortion, and other anti-social activities tarnish the image of destinations. Terrorist strikes on tourist sites and tourism amenities have devastating effects on destination marketing. The security aspects linked to destinations are complex in nature and are concerned with cybersecurity, consumer protection, legal support, environment security, disaster management, data security, personal safety, and quality assurance of services. Safety and security have always been indispensable for the tourism boom. Crime and violence can negate the pull factor of the destinations. The wide media coverage of security lapses and other violations committed on tourists gives rise to a concern in the

face of the progressive trail of the places that have been identified as being important for tourism.

Tourism policing is gaining traction in several destinations and encompasses responsibilities such as providing assistance to tourists with their visitation plans, baggage security, dissemination of information, and briefing on travel, stay, and local attractions at the destinations among others. The presence of tourism police generates a feeling of reassurance for the visitors. The causalities in beach resorts are ever on the rise owing to lack of trained lifeguards. Tourist boat capsizes has become very common mainly due to the shortfalls in life jackets and other safety gadgets. Lacunae in periodical maintenance of the boats at the same time making them operational by throwing all safety directives to the wind puts the lives of tourists as well as the hosts in danger. Puducherry is the renowned destination in South India catering to diverse segments of the tourism markets. Of late, it has turned out to be a sought after place for backpackers and women tourists. Beaches constitute the vital link in the attraction inventory of Puducherry. In this backdrop, this study gauges the effectiveness, competency, and professionalism in the spheres of safety and security in Puducherry.

2. Need for the Study

Puducherry as a tourism destination is galloping in every way which is quite evident from the escalating influx of tourists, both foreign and domestic. It goes without saying that the requirements from the safety and security points of view are swelling. Puducherry Tourism brand campaign augments tourists' footfalls to the tourist spots and whether the corresponding fairness of security and safety arrangements are promulgated needs to be probed. The destinations' image shall sustain for the long term if the promise of Peaceful Puducherry – the tagline which has gained immense popularity – is assured and fulfilled. Diverse perspectives need to be analysed and discussed to derive concrete inferences to strengthen the safety and security paradigms in Puducherry. A relatively new concept in the tourists' protection arena, viz, Tourism Oriented Policing is at its formative stage in Puducherry. This landmark initiative can go miles by assessing the gap areas

and bridging it with appropriate measures, which this study attempts to fulfill.

3. Study Objectives

This paper strives to broaden the ideals of Tourism Oriented Policing which is at its nascent stage by assimilating newer dimensions of various tourism stakeholders in the capital city of Puducherry. The major objectives of this work are:

- To identify the pragmatic aspects of Tourism Oriented Policing in Puducherry as a factor which ensures smooth and hassle-free visitation
- To examine the efficacy of Tourism Oriented Policing and other protection services in Puducherry
- To analyse the measures in place as regards capacity building and other programmes to strengthen TOP and protection services for tourists at the destination

4. Scope of the Study

This study conducted in the major tourism centres in the capital city of the Union Territory (UT) of Puducherry attempts to unveil in-depth information on the functional intricacies of tourism police and other security personnel entrusted with providing assistance and safety to tourists. The stakeholders responsible for tourists' safety such as tourism police, lifeguards, tourism officials, and staff members of the Home Department were interviewed. Tourists' points of view were also gathered in the survey. This work intends to offer refreshing inputs to strengthen the security base for tourists plugging the prevailing lapses.

5. Research Design

Lucid and comprehensive research design has been adopted blending quantitative and qualitative techniques. Primary data has been collected from Indian and foreign tourists using the survey method. Schedules were employed to collect data from tourism police, tourism officials, guides, lifeguards, private sector players,

and staff of Puducherry Home Department. Media reports and other secondary data obtained from books, journals, and websites were used as additional information. While Convenience sampling method was used for gathering data from tourists, Judgemental sampling technique was adopted for collecting data from tourism police, lifeguards, guides, promoters, tourism officials, and Home Department staff.

Sample Size, Viz, Respondents (Tourists), n = 70

Schedule: 12 Interviewees

Cross Tabulation tests were applied to derive the coherence between the variables. Content analysis was employed to codify the qualitative data and to draw inferences from the output.

6. Review of Literature

In the opinion of Peltier (2015), a TOPPS unit is a hand-picked group of police officers who received specific training to make tourists better prepared to handle special and distress circumstances. Several reports on TOPPS indicate that it is highly beneficial in reducing crimes within communities. The reviews also point out that Tourism Oriented Policing (TOP) fosters intense patrolling in tourism areas whereby crime rates are significantly reduced. Many authors highlight the fact that law enforcement officers who are specifically trained in the methods of safeguarding the visitors and local tourism industry are doing a world of good to boost the morale of the tourists. Media reports and academic literature underscore that tourism police play a greater role than conventional law enforcement staff. The main reason for this is the kind of interaction expected from the tourism police with tourists and other professionals on issues as diverse as food safety and security and finding lost children to festival planning for traffic control and counterinsurgency.

The reviews portray that the major aim of TOPPS is to reduce the crime rate. The accent laid by TOPPS is on fighting crime rather than reacting to criminal actions. This is stressed upon in the narrative of Peter Tarlow (2014). Mawby et al. (2015) state that the Country Crime Alert Network (CAN) grew into an on-going

partnership after local detectives started talking to tourism industry representatives to gather information for use in solving tourism-related crimes.

A study by Jinseong Cheong et al. (2013) argues that empirical assessment of the independent effect of stress on the force must take into account the fact that individual police officers differ in the extent to which they are exposed to confrontational situation amenable to threats or force. Maurice Punch (2002) notes that community policing requires changing the organisation as well as the functioning of officers and using this process may take years to accomplish. Safety is associated mostly with the safety of women tourists, ensuring infrastructure quality and improving sanitation facilities. Tourism police is a system that protects and saves the lives and the properties of tourists from many threats and hazards. Mehmet Murat Payam (2016) states that tourism policing is different from any other forms of policing and it takes the relationship between the visitor and the locale's economy into account for capacity-building for law enforcement and security officials on issues relating to crime against tourists.

Vinay Chauhan (2007) underscores that safety and security are necessary conditions for the prosperous tourism industry. Even the international community has widely accepted that the success of the tourism industry is directly linked to its ability to offer tourists a safe and pleasant visit. Mark Sleiman et al. (2010) states that policing and security provision is characterised by information gathering and sharing.

Madaan et al. (2014) rank safety as the most important proposition to see tourism growing. A special force called tourism police is posted at important places frequented by tourists and prevent them from being cheated or harassed. Joon Tag Choa et al (2016) opines that safety is one of the most basic human desires. CCTV is effective for crime prevention. Davis (2012) highlights that modern police officers must be prepared to act in a variety of roles; from problem solvers to counsellors and providers of first aid among many others. The efficacy of police performance results in reduced crime and fear and enhances security. Wood (2014) argues that foot patrols can ensure more safety in urban destinations.

7. Sensitivity to Safety and Security in Puducherry - A Reportage

Puducherry, drenched in French architecture and the dazzling vistas of Tamil traditional cultural heritage cast a magical spell on its curious visitors. The strong whiffs of the past, the destination planners and promoters doggedly strive to retain, have pepped-up the brand image, wooing a tremendous influx of tourists. The parochial development approaches and lack of proper tourism vision have posed many a hurdle to the progressive vibes of Puducherry. The convivial social milieu of the UT spruced up the dynamics of tourism has also promulgated a conducive environment for the industry to flourish leaps and bounds. Tourism being the mainstay of the destination's economy, the fillip given to the multi-pronged promotional efforts is utmost justified. Yet, the pernicious consequences of blatant violation of the physical, economic, social and psychological carrying capacities are alarming indeed. The lack of comprehensive feasibility and viability studies further compound the problem. Neither Environmental Impact Assessment Studies (EIA) nor Social Impact Assessment (SIA) Studies have been conducted by renowned global agencies for the tourism planners to take cues and devise a pro-active blueprint for sustainable development. On the safety and security fronts, the tourism destination leaves much to be desired to deliver world-class, sophisticated, and memorable visitor experiences. Seven beaches have been identified in Puducherry for intensive development at an estimated cost of Rs.44.07 Crore. Thrust has been accorded for the development of the heritage area which would be flagged-off very soon. An amount of Rs.80 Crore has been earmarked for this project. Another major proposal in the offing is the development of Kirumampakkam Lake as a tourism spot at Rs.10 Crore. Some of the enchanting spectacles in the pipeline configure a walkway at Chunnambar Natural History Museum in Puducherry and Marine Park at Manapet. It is high time now to introspect whether the centres are safe for the visitors. The industry practitioners' view is that being a cosmopolitan town, Puducherry's key tourism spots have always been very secure and increase in solo female travellers show a good sign in that respect. Recently, a Tourist Interface

Terracotta Robocop (TITR) was launched at Promenade Beach in Puducherry.

Puducherry, over a period of time, became a haven for street food. The mushrooming of several outlets across the city with no proper monitoring and periodic checks created many repercussions of a grave character. The unhygienic ambience and poor quality food items served to tourists endangered the brand architecture of the destination. To add to the woes, spurious liquor provided as add-ons in some eateries add fuel to fire. Tourism police must advise the tourists to stay away from such illegal and unauthorized outlets. Food and health inspection staff needs to play a humongous role in pulling the shutters for these illicit eateries and fast food operatives.

The stray dog menace is haunting not only tourists but also the residents. Numerous incidents of dog bites are being reported on a daily basis from different parts of the UT. Tourists are caught unaware. The rise in the number of wayside eateries and disposal of wastes on public roads attract stray dogs. Signage with accurate indications is something found wanting in Puducherry. Even at the spots near the beach zones, where warning signage is erected, it is rusted and in bad shape. The waves are unpredictable in several areas and are highly risky even for seasonal swimmers. Not many lifeguards are deployed in these sensitive zones to warn the tourists and rescue them if the need arises. Similarly, the lackadaisical attitude of the authorities in providing accreditation and recognizing authentic and kosher wellness ventures has resulted in the proliferation of fake and dubious establishments like some massage parlours operated by quacks.

8. Analytical Output and Inferences

Cross-tabulation analyses were carried out to group variable and determine the correlation between the variables using SPSS. A questionnaire survey was conducted amongst tourists employing Convenience Sampling technique.

Table 1: More productivity of signboards and safety awareness banners in the destination * Gender

| | | | GENDER | | Total | |
|---|-------------------|------------|------------|--------|-------|--------|
| | | | Male | Female | | |
| More productivity of signboards and safety awareness banners in the destination | Strongly agree | Count | 12 | 10 | 22 | |
| | | % of Total | 17.1% | 14.3% | 31.4% | |
| | Agree | Count | 22 | 5 | 27 | |
| | | % of Total | 31.4% | 7.1% | 38.6% | |
| | Neutral | Count | 7 | 6 | 13 | |
| | | % of Total | 10.0% | 8.6% | 18.6% | |
| | Disagree | Count | 4 | 0 | 4 | |
| | | % of Total | 5.7% | 0.0% | 5.7% | |
| | Strongly disagree | Count | 4 | 0 | 4 | |
| | | % of Total | 5.7% | 0.0% | 5.7% | |
| | Total | | Count | 49 | 21 | 70 |
| | | | % of Total | 70.0% | 30.0% | 100.0% |

While a significant percentage of male respondents (31.4%) and 14.3% of female tourists confirms with the fact that there needs to be more productivity of signboards and safety awareness banners in the destination a meagre 5.7% of male respondents do not reckon that more signages need to be erected.

Table 2: Tourism Oriented Policing and Protection Services play a major role in assisting and guiding tourists * Gender

| | | | Gender | | Total | |
|---|-------------------|------------|------------|--------|-------|--------|
| | | | Male | Female | | |
| Tourism Oriented Policing and Protection Services play a major role in assisting and guiding tourists | Strongly agree | Count | 9 | 6 | 15 | |
| | | % of Total | 12.9% | 8.6% | 21.4% | |
| | Agree | Count | 17 | 11 | 28 | |
| | | % of Total | 24.3% | 15.7% | 40.0% | |
| | Neutral | Count | 16 | 3 | 19 | |
| | | % of Total | 22.9% | 4.3% | 27.1% | |
| | Disagree | Count | 3 | 1 | 4 | |
| | | % of Total | 4.3% | 1.4% | 5.7% | |
| | Strongly disagree | Count | 4 | 0 | 4 | |
| | | % of Total | 5.7% | 0.0% | 5.7% | |
| | Total | | Count | 49 | 21 | 70 |
| | | | % of Total | 70.0% | 30.0% | 100.0% |

An overwhelming number of male respondents (24.3% agree and 12.9% strongly agree) are positive about the fact that TOPPS is doing a fine job in assisting and guiding tourists. 22.9% male respondents and 27.1% female respondents maintained a neutral stance. While 40% of female respondents agree and 21.4% female respondents strongly agree that TOPPS is working in a sound manner, 5.7% of male tourists strongly disagreed and a negligible 1.4% of women tourists disagreed with the proposition.

Table 3: Tourism Oriented Police and Protection Services are well-trained and equipped to provide support to tourists* Nationality

| | | | Nationality | | Total | |
|--|-------------------|------------|-------------|-----------|-------|--------|
| | | | Indian | Foreigner | | |
| Tourism Oriented Police and Protection Services are well-trained and equipped to provide support to tourists | Strongly agree | Count | 9 | 0 | 9 | |
| | | % of Total | 12.9% | 0.0% | 12.9% | |
| | Agree | Count | 21 | 4 | 25 | |
| | | % of Total | 30.0% | 5.7% | 35.7% | |
| | Neutral | Count | 22 | 8 | 30 | |
| | | % of Total | 31.4% | 11.4% | 42.9% | |
| | Disagree | Count | 4 | 0 | 4 | |
| | | % of Total | 5.7% | 0.0% | 5.7% | |
| | Strongly disagree | Count | 0 | 2 | 2 | |
| | | % of Total | 0.0% | 2.9% | 2.9% | |
| | Total | | Count | 56 | 14 | 70 |
| | | | % of Total | 80.0% | 20.0% | 100.0% |

While a good number of Indian tourists (31.4%) opined in the neutral, 30% agreed and 12.9% respondents strongly agreed that TOPPS is a dynamic force with adequate training and capabilities. A significant number of foreign respondents (11.4%) could not comment on the aspect, 5.7% foreign respondents agreed that TOPPS can do a world of good to the safety and security of tourists. Very less number of respondents (2.9%) strongly disagreed though it sends a strong message to the destination planners and developers to strengthen the force with essentials.

Excerpts of Interview Responses

The Judgmental sampling technique was used to identify the experts competent to opine on the various trends and issues related to TOPPS in Puducherry and respond to the schedule. The

interviewees configure Tourism Police, Tourism Department Staff, Guides, Life Guards, Promoters and Home Department Staff.

The Tourism Police in Puducherry comprises a team dedicated to the mission of protecting visitors in Puducherry. It is a special force with distinct blue coloured head gears, incepted to ensure the safety of tourists. The Tourism Police wear sports blue badges bearing the police emblem, making a departure from the conventional uniform with red colour caps. The change aims at easy identification of the Tourism Police by the tourists. The Tourism Police force is mainly deployed on the beach zones such as Promenade, Paradise, etc. Seven staff members work in the Beach Police Station. Their main goal is to provide guidance and security to the tourists.

Furthermore, they assist the tourists, disseminate information pertaining to tourism centres and play a positive role in averting crime against tourists. The Tourism Police are trained to impart tourist information in an amicable manner. They are equipped with promotional literature. In-depth knowledge about the tourism places is mandatory which the Tourism Police are directed to procure. The personnel are also trained in swimming, driving, and use of ICT devices. Twenty policemen are being trained at a time. Rolling on Wheels patrolling has been arranged in the pathways adjacent to the beaches. Electric scooters are also in the pipeline to strengthen their patrolling activity. The Tourism Police have launched a 'Safe Beach' Campaign with the alarming rise in the number of drowning cases. They have identified safe swimming zones along the coastline. Signboards indicating warning are erected in several places. The personnel are instructed to provide safety equipment like life jackets, rescue tubes, and inflatable boats. They will be setting-up 'Eagle - Tower' near Kalapet and Kirumampakkam beach areas and will monitor the tourists' activities. Trained lifeguards offer their services and impart safety instructions to tourists at the beaches. Of late, several men missing cases involving tourists are cracked swiftly by the Tourism Police.

Tourist Police offer tourist book called Repos free of cost to tourists for detailed information. The training programme for Tourism Police involves soft skills development, capacity building programmes, strengthening knowledge base about destinations,

problem-solving, crises management, awareness of rules and regulations pertaining to currency exchange, VISAs, etc.

Tourism Police personnel are being fervently thanked by visitors after witnessing their involvement. Major cases are handled meticulously in a smooth and transparent manner. In the recent past, no serious cases are reported. Commendations are received from the government for the alertness and promptness of Tourism Police Staff. Tourism Police has a separate music band which speaks volumes about their cultural endowment. The band entertains visitors at the beach area. During weekends the deployment of Tourism Police in sensitive areas averts many untoward incidents. The personnel conduct marathons for NCC and NSS members. They ensure that women tourists both foreign and domestic are not harassed in any way.

Tourism Oriented Policing is creating a positive image for the destination. The intake for Tourism Police will be scaled up in due course. Programmes to expose Tourism Police to various foreign languages are in the offing.

9. Major Findings

- The safety awareness signages are in bad shape even in fragile tourism spots like beaches and lakes.
- Tourism Police coupling up as guides is doing well for the destination image.
- Tourists opine that the verbal and non-verbal communication of tourism police is astounding.
- Tourists stated that knowledge of a foreign language can increase the efficiency of the force.
- For better service delivery annual capacity building programmes for Tourism Police are being made mandatory.
- Tourism Police personnel are found to be highly educated.
- Tourists noted that the uniform of Tourism Police and the whole information around the transactions generate confidence in them to approach the staff. The tourists also

pointed out that the uniform is appealing and enable them to identify the Tourism Police.

- Tourism Police Officers are considered to possess a friendly nature and good leadership skills.
- Foreign tourists mostly commented that tourism police need to assist them in hiring cabs and other modes of local transportation.
- Tourism Oriented Policing is adding fervour to the brand campaign.
- Tourism Police are extensively engaged to ensure security for almost all the events organised in Puducherry town.
- Lifeguards are found wanting in some sensitive beach areas.
- Tourism Oriented Policing has reduced the number of crime incidents committed on tourists.
- Eagle Tower is an ideal and effective venture which can be incepted in more places.
- There are no proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to regulate wellness centres in the destination.
- Traffic is chock a block on any given day due to vehicular congestion and encroachments at the pavements and footpaths due to which accidents involving deaths is a real misery.

10. Suggestions

- Tourism Oriented Policing is a good initiative which needs consistent growth in terms of manpower.
- There is a need to increase CCTV surveillance in sensitive tourism spots.
- Experts should be invited to conduct special training sessions for Tourism Police.
- Tourism Signages could be made in a different format to make it more eye – catchy.

- ICT gadgets can provide impetus to the security measures which need to be adopted.
- Tourists, as soon as they arrive in the destination, should be facilitated with an emergency number to access 24×7 for any assistance. Zero tolerance must be the order of the day for harassment or ill-treatment of tourists.
- In prospect, tourists' entry to key spots can be recorded biometrically – generating a valuable database.

11. Conclusion

The charm and allure of Puducherry can sustain with some well – conceived and meticulously planned moves. This study posits that the key drivers that can ensure the safety and security of tourists are adoption of ICT which encompass CCTV cameras, safety apps on mobile phones and other devices, regulation of diving at the beaches and enforcing use of safety equipments, capacity building programmes for TOP and front office staff, promotion of responsible and safe nightlife, and vigorous campaign and movements against drug peddling and abuse. Further, periodic inspections and positive checks on the efficacy of both TOPPS and also the equipment and machinery involved has been felt as the need of the hour to reinforce the code of conduct for safe and responsible tourism. The present work has brought to right the intricacies of the pragmatic aspects of TOPPS. If properly equipped, the Tourism Oriented Policing and Protection Services can make Puducherry a safe and secure destination. There are several plans on the anvil by the Tourism Department to ensure a hassle-free visitation. An overwhelming number of tourists were utmost satisfied with the prevailing model of TOPPS in Puducherry though they expressed concern about the manpower shortage.

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