Understanding Crimes Against Tourists in Uttar Pradesh: An Overview

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Abstract: Tourism stands as one of the most dynamic and rapidly expanding industries across the globe, offering people the allure of exploration and the joy of discovering new areas, cultures, and lifestyles. For many, travel is not just a leisure activity but a gateway to knowledge, fostering curiosity and providing countless opportunities for personal and cultural enrichment. The undeniable potential of tourism to drive national development is evident, particularly in regions like Uttar Pradesh. In 2022, the state witnessed a remarkable surge in tourist arrivals—approximately 318 million domestic and foreign visitors—a staggering 290% increase from the previous year, reflecting strong recovery trends post-pandemic.

However, this impressive growth also brings to light critical challenges, especially concerning the safety and security of tourists. The influx of visitors has led policymakers and related departments to urgently address these concerns. Existing literature highlights the victimization of tourists in various locations, revealing that rising crime rates not only jeopardize the safety of travelers but also tarnish the reputation of the destinations they visit. This negative perception can significantly impede the overall development of the region.

This paper leverages secondary literature to delve into the various forms of crimes against tourists in Uttar Pradesh, examining the support systems available for victims and proposing actionable strategies for preventing and managing such incidents, with the ultimate goal of ensuring a safe and positive experience for all visitors.

Keywords: Crimes, Safety, Tourism, Tourists, Victimization

Introduction: Tourism is widely recognized as a significant engine of development for regions, cities, and countries. The attractiveness of a tourist destination is typically influenced by its inherent appeal, accessibility, and the extent to which it caters to tourists' needs (Rogalski, 1972). In today's context, however, security has become a crucial factor in determining travel choices. P.E. TARLOW (2011) notes that cities with high crime rates targeting tourists, like Rio de Janeiro, have experienced a drop in visitor numbers, which not only affects tourism but also impacts the local residents' quality of life. This underscores the importance of researching this issue.

Globally, tourism is recognized as a major economic driver (Selvakumar & Thangaraju, 2016). The expansion of mass tourism has led to the significant movement of goods, services, and people (Garcia & Nicholls, 1995). However, in the current era, the sense of security plays a pivotal role in travelers' decisions about where to visit.

With the fluctuations in tourist arrivals before and after the pandemic, offering high-quality services is crucial. Chiu and Lin (2011) found that tourists are drawn to destinations that leave a positive impression, with safety being a key element in this perception. Travelers are more inclined to choose familiar places and avoid destinations plagued by high crime rates or political instability. A study titled "Fatal Attraction: How Security Threats Hurt Tourism" highlighted that tourists often select destinations based on their perceived safety, comparing these conditions to those in their home countries. It also noted that tourists from stable countries are more likely to choose destinations with similar levels of stability, while those from less stable countries might be more tolerant of insecurity at their chosen destinations (Fourie, Nadal & Gallego, 2019).

In their examination of "Tourism Destination Competitiveness of India and China," Kumar, Phuong-Dung, and Duc-Thang (2016) observed that while India offers a unique cultural experience, it often struggles with its reputation as a tourist-friendly destination. Media reports of high-profile crimes can deter tourists and tarnish the destination's image. Glensor and Peak (2004), in their guide on crimes against tourists, describe various offenses targeting tourists, including those against the elderly and children, fraud, gang-related activities, casino crimes, bar robberies, terrorism, and crimes on public transportation. Additionally, Basak, Ghosh, Sarkar, and Chaudhuri (2015) highlighted that tourists in India have long been victims of severe crimes like rape and sexual harassment.

The high incidence of these crimes against tourists in India damages the destination's reputation and hampers its development. A thorough analysis of the risks faced by tourists and the implementation of effective measures to address these issues are crucial.

Objectives:

1. To identify various types of crimes committed against international tourists in India.

2. To examine the kinds of support and assistance needed by foreign tourists.

3. To propose effective measures for preventing and managing the occurrence of such crimes against tourists.

In line with the study's objectives, the paper is structured under the following sections:

a) Image of Tourist Destinations

b) Data and News Reports on Criminal Activities Targeting Foreign Tourists

c) Factors Discouraging Foreign Tourists in India

d) Causes of Crimes Against Foreign Tourists

e) Support Needed by Foreign Tourists

a) Image of Tourist Destinations:

According to the World Tourism Organization, the concept of an object's or situation's image includes:

- A synthetic representation of the object's visible form.
- Similarity or correspondence to the form (e.g., in art or design).
- Personal or shared perceptions of the destination.

In this regard, Bauerle (1983) characterizes brand image as a mental representation, while Costa (1987) describes it as a mental construct within collective memory, encompassing a stereotype or set of attributes that can affect and alter consumer behavior. Both Bauerle (1983) and Costa (1987) describe brand image as a mental representation.

Govers, Go, and Kumar (2007) argue that a tourist's personality plays a significant role in selecting a destination type (such as beach or mountain), and that personality traits impact how destinations are differentiated (Murphy, Moscardo, and Benckendorff, 2007). In this context, Stabler (1988) identifies various factors that influence the formation of a tourist destination's image.
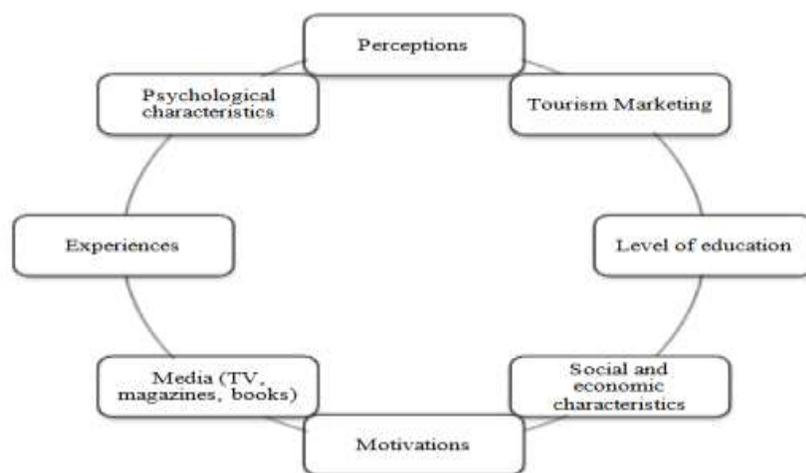

Figure. Factors influencing the formation of the image of tourism Destination. (Adapted from Stabler, 1988)

Destination image described by Tasci (2009) is a mental picture of a destination composed of how people visualize, think, and feel about the destination, ultimately determining people's attitudes, intentions, and predispositions. Brunt (2008) Tourism is particularly vulnerable to outside forces, with it being so strongly linked to advertising. It would not be wrong saying that Advertising and media play a vital role in making the destination image.

The one potentially important factor that may influence destination image is not much discussed by literature, 'safety of the destination.' It would not be wrong to mention here Maslow's theory of psychology, in which safety needs were one of the basic among the hierarchy of other needs (McLeod,2020).

b) Criminal Activities and their impacts:

Cross-border studies have shown that crimes against property and individuals have a significant and positive impact on tourist arrivals (Montolio & Struse, 2013). The nature and duration of illegal and violent activities can affect tourist demand in various ways (Pizam, 1999).

A decline in tourist numbers can lead to additional negative effects on the destination, such as the loss of essential staff due to reduced income and potentially deteriorating infrastructure quality. Additionally,

investors may be prompted to invest in other sectors or locations if they perceive their current destination as insecure (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2006).

Similarly, major crimes such as murder and theft have been found to influence tourists' destination preferences (Chhabra & Bhattacharjee, 2019). Research in Malawi indicates that criminal activities can disrupt economic success and create an undesirable image for tourists who spend considerable amounts on their trips. The study also noted that high poverty levels in developing countries are often linked to higher criminal behavior (Njoloma & Kamanga, 2019). Although these findings pertain to other countries, they can be applied to various destinations, including India. Increased criminal activity and disorder are likely to contribute to an unfavorable image, further diminishing tourist arrivals and hindering development.

c) Data and News Reports on Criminal Activities Targeting Foreign Tourists:

According to the annual 'Crime in India 2019' report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), In Uttar Pradesh crime against foreigners declined by 66.1% in 2019 as compared to 2018. In contrast, 62 crimes were committed against foreigners in 2018 which dropped to 21 in 2019.

Table:1 , Some Criminal Victimization of Foreign Tourists in Uttar Pradesh

Serial No.	News published date	Short description of the news	District/State
1.	Times of India: 2017, October 26	A couple from Switzerland was chased and attacked with stones and sticks by group of youth in Fathepur Sikri, leaving them with grievous hurt. The youth initially started abusing and passing lewd comments on them as the foreign tourists were not able to understand the language but eventually they understood the illintentions. The youth also forced them for selfies. The couple was severely injured .	Agra,UP
2.	Times of India:2019,July 24	A Canadian woman claimed to have been physically touched without her consent by unidentified persons who requested her for a selfie.	Agra,UP
3.	India Today: 2024, April 7	A US tourist visiting the Taj Mahal with her husband was allegedly molested by a guide during a photography session	Agra, UP
4.	Economictimes: 2017, November 1	The attack on Swiss couple	Fatehpur Sikri, UP
5.	Indianexpress: 2017, December 15	A Japanese tourist was allegedly drugged, looted of his cash and belongings by a man posing as a tour guide in Varanasi	Varanasi, U.P

Foreign tourist fear becoming a victim of crime. Choudhary & Rufus(2019) found that the tourist respondents did not felt safe in going alone at evening. They preferred traveling in group and during day time. The status given to the tourist is the sole thing that will define the feedback for our country and if these heinous crimes continue to prevail and increase then the progress of the nation will be badly hampered.

d) Factors Discouraging Foreign Tourists in India:

Data and media reports have highlighted severe crimes committed against foreign tourists in India, posing major challenges to both the tourism industry and the country as a whole. According to Chockalingam & Murugesan (2009), the fear of becoming a crime victim is influenced by multiple factors, including age, gender, race, income, neighborhood characteristics, and previous victimization.

In addition to terrorism and conflict, criminal activities at tourist destinations represent a significant risk for visitors (Altindag, 2013; Parida, Bhardwaj & Roy Chowdhury, 2017). Literature on the interplay between tourism, crime, and disorder suggests that factors which deter tourists also pose a broader threat to the tourism industry and economy (Mawby, 2014). Issues such as scams, begging, poor hygiene, and lack of safety tarnish the image of India and dampen tourist enthusiasm (Chaudhary, 2000).

Unfavorable incidents at one tourist location can have a ripple effect, negatively impacting other destinations. Thus, implementing effective safety measures is crucial (Radovic & Arabska, 2016). Media coverage of unsafe or unusual incidents at tourist spots also affects the growth of the tourism industry (Basak & Ghosh, 2015). Safety and security are essential for the success of tourism, particularly in areas like religious sites, shopping malls, hotels, restrooms, zoos, parks, and restaurants (Shaikh, 2018).

An unpublished study by Choudhary & Rufus (2019) in Jodhpur identifies several deterrents for foreign tourists, including language barriers, fear of being cheated or misled, traveling alone, and exposure to physical harassment in crowded areas. The study found that female tourists were particularly vulnerable to victimization, raising serious safety concerns. The increasing incidents of sexual violence against female tourists are a major deterrent (Advani, 2013; Jha & Sarangi, 2014).

Research on pilgrimage destinations, which attract large numbers of tourists, indicates that the crowds can increase the risk of criminal activities. Pilgrims, who often spend considerable time and money, can become targets for crime (Khajuria & Khanna, 2014).

The formation of a negative image of a destination significantly impacts tourism. Crime affects both macro-level social communities and micro-level individual behaviors and attitudes, influencing their decisions to visit certain destinations (Matakovic & Matakovic, 2019). Various studies highlight that the fear of crime is a major factor contributing to the negative perception of India among foreign tourists.

e) Causes of Crimes Against Foreign Tourists:

According to Jaswal (2014), a lack of respect and understanding for each other's cultures and lifestyles can foster tension, suspicion, and hostility between tourists and local communities. This strained relationship can escalate into violence and other criminal activities targeting tourists. Additionally, an unpublished study by Choudhary & Rufus (2019) identified several factors contributing to crimes against tourists, including placing trust in unfamiliar individuals, engaging with strangers for personal gain, and insufficient knowledge about the destination.

f) Support Needed by Foreign Tourists:

Foreign tourists arriving in various destinations within the country have specific expectations and requirements. India, with its thriving tourism industry, has a responsibility to address these needs. Huete-Alcocer and Lopez-Ruiz (2019) emphasize that all actions and strategies should be designed to ensure tourist satisfaction.

Key areas of support include:

- **Skilled and Trained Personnel:** Subash (2015) highlights the importance of having knowledgeable and well-trained staff to assist and guide tourists effectively. This includes providing a safe and secure environment, enhancing healthcare facilities, and ensuring reliable transportation options. Similarly, Raghavendra, Shilpa, and Reddy (2016) stress the need for skilled guides, effective communication, and improved transport facilities to enhance tourism quality.
- **Human Resource Development:** Venkatesh and Raj (2016) note that sustaining growth in the tourism sector requires trained human resources at various levels, including managerial, supervisory, and skilled or semi-skilled roles. Improving amenities, access, connectivity, and tourist safety are also crucial factors.
- **Food and Water Concerns:** According to an unpublished study by Choudhary and Rufus (2019), tourists often face challenges related to food and water quality. The study recommends addressing culinary demands by ensuring food taste, quality, nutrition, and cleanliness. Additionally, it suggests implementing surprise inspections by officials at popular tourist spots and conducting more research on crimes against foreign tourists.
- **Safety and Security:** Travelers expect continuous vigilance from local police and security officers at roads and tourist sites (Tan, C.-H, 2017). Special programs and awareness campaigns aim to educate Indian citizens on treating foreign tourists with respect and good conduct (Costea, M., 2017).
- **Emergency Assistance:** In case of emergencies, 24/7 help desks and toll-free numbers are available for both domestic and foreign tourists (Kővári, I., & Zimányi, K., 2010). Tourist grievance cells are also established across destinations to address complaints (Chauhan, A. et al., 2018).
- **Guidelines and Information:** Local authorities ensure that guidelines on dos and don'ts are prominently displayed at tourist locations (Susmayadi, I. M., 2014). These efforts help reinforce the concept of "Atithi Devo Bhava" (Chauhan, A., Shukla, A., & Negi, P., 2018)

Suggestions:

- **Enhanced Surveillance:** Implementing effective surveillance can help make tourist destinations safer and reduce crime.
- **Regular Inspections:** Frequent and unannounced checks at popular tourist spots can help maintain security.
- **Increase Law Enforcement Presence:** Deploying more law enforcement officials to frequently visited tourist sites across states and Union Territories in India can enhance safety.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging local communities to support law enforcement can provide valuable grassroots information about local conditions and tourists.
- **Special Support for Female Tourists:** Given the higher incidence of crimes against female tourists, establishing dedicated task forces to assist them can provide targeted support.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Conducting campaigns and awareness programs led by students, community members, and NGOs can promote the importance of foreign tourism for national development.
- **Research and Studies:** Conducting empirical research and studies by criminologists and researchers can help understand tourists' specific concerns and fears, aiding in the improvement of safety measures.

Conclusion:

Crime's impact on tourism is complex, affecting both tourist destinations and individual travelers. On a broader scale, crime can tarnish a destination's reputation, leading to decreased tourist arrivals and revenue. On a more personal level, tourists' behavior and decisions are shaped by their perceptions of risk and safety. While some may continue to visit destinations despite experiencing crime, others may be discouraged from traveling altogether.

Addressing the impact of crime on tourism requires a dual approach of preventive measures and effective crisis management. Collaboration among the tourism industry, law enforcement, and government authorities is crucial for ensuring tourist safety and sustaining industry growth. By comprehending the relationship between crime and tourism, stakeholders can work together to foster a safer and more secure environment for travelers globally.

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