Policing Tourism: Findings From an Evaluation of a Tourism-Oriented Policing Training Program in the Caribbean

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Abstract

This article evaluates a tourism-oriented policing (TOP) training program that was conducted with police officers in the Caribbean island of Tobago. It focuses on TOP and its increasing role in contemporary police practices, especially at destinations that depend on tourism for survival. The article explores previous tourism policing approaches, the need for tourist safety and the necessity for police departments to contemporise their policing by moving away from former paradigms of police officers as generalists. The study utilises a quantitative case study approach in surveying the TOP training program, with data analysed from pre- and post-test questionnaires of 25 participants. Descriptive results indicate general satisfaction with the training, a belief that tourism security is beneficial to the tourism industry in Tobago and that senior police officers should all receive TOP training.

Keywords

Police; tourists; tourism-oriented policing; safety; security; Tobago.

Introduction

Globally, many countries' economies depend on tourism for survival (United Nations [UN] World Tourism Organization [WTO] 2013). Tobago fits the UNWTO's (2013) criteria as an island that relies foremost on tourism and its by-products for almost all of its income. According to Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Tourism (2010: 7), Tobago is the most 'tourism-dependent' island in the Caribbean, with 'tourism contributing 98.1% to direct exports' (12). However, over the past two decades, the nation has witnessed increases in crimes committed against tourists (Kuhns, Spohn and Wells 2008), posing major challenges to its economic sustainability. The continuous rise in crime rates as well as extensive regional and international media coverage of crimes against tourists in Tobago have seen tourism security catapulted to the fore of local policymakers' minds (Boxill 2012). In turn, several international governments have issued travel advisories to their citizens regarding the security of tourists when visiting the island (Wolf 2008).

Recognising the need to protect tourists in Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) executive pledged to improve security on the island. To accomplish this, a policy decision was taken to create a tourism-oriented policing (TOP) unit within the Tobago Police Division (TPD) (TTPS 2015: 25), which is responsible for protecting tourists. Selected and trained specifically to deal with tourist issues, TOP units have a twofold mission—(1) protect tourists, as locals depend on their company for survival; and (2) protect the locals. Importantly, the precursor to forming a TOP was a training program conducted with TPD police officers.

TOP is viewed as a new concept in police work (Friedmann 2014) and a novel innovation in twentieth- and twenty-first-century policing (Pradeep 2017). Therefore, it is important to operationalise this approach to regulate tourists.

This study employs Hunter's (2003: 3–4) definition of TOP, to mean:

> a philosophy of policing based on the concept that specially trained police officers, working closely with business leaders, airport authorities, tourism support businesses and private citizens can help prevent or tremendously reduce the tourism problems related to crime, fear of crime, and the decay of the neighbourhoods through which tourists frequently travel.

Further, according to Payam (2016: 2):

> Tourism Police is a system that protects and saves the lives and the properties of tourists from many threats and hazards. These are special police(wo)men who work for tourists' protection, safety and security.

Instructively, TOP units aim at protecting tourists from victimisation and for quick processing of complaints by tourists whenever they are or allege victimisation. However, in some instances, they also provide protection to local residents from victimisation *by* tourists. As such, TOP units are designed to:

1. *Protect visitors to a community*
2. *Protect people working in the tourism industry*
3. *Protect the locale's tourism sites.*

Though research related to security in the tourism sector seems to be increasing globally, Yun and MacLaurin (2006) point out that safety and security issues have simply been stated as one key factor in the destination research. In addition, there is a paucity of work dealing directly with the interplay between policing and tourism (Muehsam and Tarlow 1995), especially on issues such as evaluation of TOP units and TOP training (for exceptions, see Payam 2016; Wolf 2008). In light of the limited empirical data, I submit that there exists a lacuna in the academic literature that is worthy of explication, particularly

concerning Caribbean countries. With this in mind, the current study is directed at evaluating a TOP training program that was conducted with TPD officers of the TTPS.

Literature Review

Mawby (2016) points out that tourism has long been recognised as a generator of criminal activities and that tourist areas act as honey pots for potential offenders. Mawby (2016) continues, highlighting that many tourist resorts suffer higher than average crime rates and disproportionate victimisation. In a similar vein, Pearce (2011) in his work on tourism submits that there are safety and security issues in tourism, pointing specifically to tourist scams and crimes against tourists. Many other scholars have conducted research on the tourism–crime nexus. Notably, this includes research on tourist behaviours (Walker and Page 2007), concerns about crime and safety and how this influences tourist arrivals (Alleyne and Boxill 2003), destination choice (Holcomb and Pizam 2006), tourist experiences and fear of crime (Leung, Yang and Dubin 2018), as well as the need for TOP units to police tourist destinations due to safety and security concerns (Payam 2016).

According to Mataković and Cunjak Mataković (2019), crime affects tourism at two observable levels—the micro level and the macro level. At the latter, this refers to crime disturbing society in general, the social community and/or a particular tourist destination. In micro terms, this concerns crime at an individual level, including tourists. Here, Mataković and Cunjak Mataković (2019: 1) further submit:

> the impact of crime on the micro level is evident in the influence on the behaviour and attitudes of tourists, and their decision to visit or revisit a destination where criminal incidents happen.

As a result of the negative effects associated with elevated crime at tourist destinations, both travel and security in tourism cannot be taken for granted. Therefore, it is necessary to make significant efforts to ensure a safe environment for tourists (Mataković and Cunjak Mataković 2019)—hence, the importance of TOP units and evaluations of TOP training.

Instructively, the safety and security of tourists is not unidimensional and must be viewed from a broad perspective that goes into the realm of brand image, external affairs and the economy (Pradeep 2017). In keeping with Pradeep (2017), several police agencies have realised the importance of tourism to the economic viability of national jurisdictions, and have advanced their training techniques and methods of policing based on protecting tourist wellbeing. Quite notably, Trinidad and Tobago is one such jurisdiction to have considered the security needs of visitors to the island and has sought to move away from generalist policing of travellers to specialist policing, which focuses on tourists and their safety needs. Importantly, Mawby, Boakye and Jones (2015) point to the emergence of specialist police units in tourist hubs to deter crimes committed against visitors to key travel destinations.

Over the last two decades, there has been a plethora of scholarship on the security of tourists (Tarlow 2014b). However, the majority focus on the Global North, are either published in English, Spanish and/or Portuguese, and generally exclude academic contributions from the Global South, including the Caribbean. Concomitantly, there is a multiplicity of literature on tourism security. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to mention all of the extant literature on tourism security, some of the major works in the field include Pizam and Mansfeld (1996), Pizam, Tarlow and Bloom (1997), Henninger (2001), Pearce (2011), Pizam and Mansfeld (2006), Wilks, Pendergast and Leggat (2006) and Wilks (2011). Conversely, as it relates to evaluations of TOP training, the academic literature is sparse and limited to Payam (2016) and Wolf (2008). Despite the lack of data on TOP and TOP training programs, the need to adopt tourism-based crime policies was recognised long ago in 1991 by the UN at the UNWTO conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

While the UN has recognised the need to police tourists using specially trained officers, Wilks (2011) points out that there are individuals who oppose this idea of increased policing and questioning the tourism–crime relationship (e.g., Cooper et al. 2005; Friedmann 2014). Meanwhile, a host of others advocate in favour of TOP units to deal specifically with tourist-related activities (e.g., Mawby, Boakye and Jones 2015; Tarlow 2014a). Despite resistance, it is argued that visitors to tourist destinations are in need of safety and security, and that the proliferation of crimes against tourists can be mitigated by implementing a system of specialty policing. For example, the UNWTO (2013) in researching global tourism and security surmised that it is of little surprise that specialist police units have been formed in a number of countries to address tourism-related crime and disorder, given that many economies heavily depend on travel. Importantly, while 'tourism police units are still by no means universal' (Mawby, Boakye and Jones 2015: 2), they are operational in a disparate range of tourist destinations such as Aruba, Egypt, Greece, Haiti, Hawaii, India, Jordan, Malaysia, Nepal, South Korea, Saint Lucia, Thailand, the Philippines, the United States (US) and in several Latin American countries.

General Approaches to Combatting Crime at Tourist Destinations

Internationally, many approaches have been utilised in an effort to combat crime at tourist destinations and to engender feelings of safety and security. To different degrees, some of these strategies have been successful, while others have not. For example, in some jurisdictions, there are no specialised units to equally police tourists and all persons and residents. This is referred to as 'generalist policing', in which police officers who are untrained in policing tourists (generalists) are used to handle all reports of crimes by and against tourists. However, this is an expensive failure, as these officers are trained to deal with crimes in general and not specifically the emotions of traumatised tourists post-victimisation. Often, this perpetuates further harm on the tourist victim due to insensitive questioning, approaches, techniques and investigation. Further, these officers are rotated from one police station (or precinct in some jurisdictions) to another quite frequently, and this facilitates lack of continuity and consistency in handling tourists as victims of crime.

Another concept aimed at protecting tourists is the Safe City Programme (Aris-Anuar, Bookhari and Aziz 2012). This plan was employed when urban tourism was introduced around the world and has been utilised, for example, in urban areas in Malaysia (Aris-Anuar, Bookhari and Aziz 2012). The Safe City Programme has several definitions, but it generally refers to 'crime prevention strategies through primary prevention approaches' (Aris-Anuar, Bookhari, and Aziz, 2012), some that 'are geared at ensuring the safety and security of tourists at urban centres of tourist attractions' (Aris Anuar et al. 2011). While generally satisfactory in terms of protecting visitors to urban centres, their effectiveness in deterring tourist victimisation in rural areas is somewhat pithy.

Another way to combat the criminal victimisation of tourists, used in some destinations, is the program 'Uniformed Guardians' (WTO 1996). In this, persons in heavily penetrated tourist neighbourhoods with a stake in its security are asked to voluntarily serve as the eyes and ears of the police. In doing so, local businessmen, watchmen, vendors and other individuals on the streets provide early alerts to police regarding possible tourist victimisation. However, the WTO (1996) cogitate that the voluntary (unpaid) nature of the task renders this approach unpopular and generally lacking in effectiveness. In seeking to protect visitors to India, the Jammu and Kashmir Government has a special police force called Tourist Police posted at important places frequented by tourists (Madaan and Raheja 2014). This is aimed at providing assistance to tourists to prevent them from scammers and harassment. However, not much is known about the success of the initiative, as it is relatively new and subject to evaluation.

Meanwhile, the Zimbabwe Republic Police has adopted innovative measures aimed at combatting crime against tourists. These include horse and mobile patrols, increased presence of armed police officers on foot, and use of plain-clothes officers in tourist zones. Further, the Zimbabwe Republic Police has developed and enhanced observation points at strategic locations and in high-rise buildings, and police reporting centres (satellites) have been placed strategically within walking distance of most urban hotels.

According to the WTO (1996), these two measures have proven to be successful in guaranteeing tourist security.

Mawby, Boakye and Jones (2015) submit that there are two broad genres of public policing strategies that have been adopted worldwide to deal with crimes against tourists. The first are 'tourism-specific police operations', which are usually embarked upon by police departments:

> as pre-emptive attempts to discourage the incidence of tourist victimisation [and] involve patrols being assigned to key hot spots[1] and in some cases personnel being stationed there semi-permanently (Mawby, Boakye and Jones 2015: 2).

They also occur during a specific season or event. This strategy has been used by the Dade County Police Department in Florida (Brayshaw 1995) as well as by police departments in Nairobi (D'Arcy 1995), New Orleans, Cape Town (Pizam, Tarlow and Bloom 1997) and New Zealand (Barker 2000; Barker, Page and Meyer 2002), with varying degrees of success. However, as large-scale evaluation of the approach is yet to be conducted, its level of success is based on conjecture and anecdotal evidence.

According to Mawby, Boakye and Jones (2015: 2), 'the second strategy concerns the establishment of tourism police units'. This system of policing is commonly known as TOP or 'tourism-oriented policing protective services', and consists of police officers who are specially trained in dealing with crimes by and against tourists at vacation destinations. This approach is specifically aimed at combatting crime at global tourist hubs using specialised police units with trained officers. In some instances, separate infrastructures (e.g., uniforms and police stations, etc.) are used to deal with tourist protection and victimisation. Mawby, Boakye and Jones (2015: 2) cogitate that 'this is a relatively new approach employed across many parts of the world in which dedicated police units are specifically trained for tourism-related activities'. Further, it has been noted that in recent times major tourist destinations are adopting this approach because it is effective and provides adequate attention to tourists, while ensuring that regular police work continues (Tarlow 2000). It also appears that TOP units have greater success when compared to traditional policing and other methods in proactively protecting tourists from victimisation, providing guidance and assistance, and handling their victimisation when it occurs. To this end, many popular tourist destinations have established and utilised specialised units to deal specifically with tourist protection and tourist victimisation (Boakye 2012). These are different from traditional police units, in that they are premised on the notion that 'the former paradigm of police generalists is no longer valid in an age of cerebral security and professional specification' (Tarlow 2014b: 1).

From a regulatory perspective, the generalist manner of policing tourists to Tobago has failed due to the serious criminal activities directed towards and experienced by tourists on the island. This includes, but is not limited to, the 2008 murder of Swedish couple Anna Sundsval (62) and Ake Alsoon (73), who were stabbed to death, as well as the savage 2009 attack on British couple Peter Green (65) and wife, Murium (59), who were both slashed and left for dead. There was also the 2009 murder of German national Peter Taut, whose body was found in a shallow grave in his own backyard, the 2014 murder of German nationals Hubertus Keil (74) and his wife, Birgid (71), who were hacked to death, and the 2015 murder of British nationals Richard Wheeler (73) and wife, Grace (67), who were also killed. As a result of the violence against tourists to Tobago (as well as many others), the traditional guidelines on combatting crime may not apply nationally as it does in other countries less dependent on tourism. In sum, it appears that the customary methods of preventing or reducing tourism-related crimes in Tobago have not been successful, hence, the current case study—which assists in incrementally improving the current approaches.

Gaps in the Literature

According to Muehsam and Tarlow (1995), there are gaps in the literature on TOP. However, to highlight these, three important questions arising from the study must first be discussed:

1. *What is this study examining that has not been examined before?*
2. *Why is it important?*
3. *What specially can be learned from the single case study?*

As the third question relates to the first, there is a plethora of studies conducted on a disparate range of tourism issues in local, regional and international contexts (see Baker and Stockton 2014; Johnny and Jordan 2007; Khajuria and Khanna 2014; Kokkinos and Kapardis 2014; Lewis and Jordan 2008; Mawby, Barclay and Jones 2010; Tarlow 2014a; Wallace 2009). That said, there are limited evaluations of TOP units as mechanisms of policing, particularly as little research attention has been directed to those issues (for exceptions, see Wolf 2008; Payam 2016).

The answer to the second question is premised on the limited availability of empirical data on evaluations of TOP training programs. This scarcity is highlighted by Glensor and Peak (2004: 13), who submit that 'unfortunately, there are few careful evaluations of tourist crime interventions' (such as TOP training programs) and that 'more rigorous evaluations are needed'. In answering the third prompt (what can be learned from the single case study), it should be noted that this epistemological question is the compelling reason behind the current research effort and study design—'to optimize understanding of the case rather than to generalize beyond it' (Stake 1998: 135).

Importance of the Study

Evaluation of the TOP training program was premised on the desire for true and equal dialogue, as per Habermas's 'ideal speech situation' (Webler and Tuler 2000: 568) or the desire for free and totally un-coerced discussion among parties. The 'ideal speech situation' requires that all persons have equal opportunity to participate and that every research participant must be allowed to express their ideas openly and question any assertion. The evaluation also aligns to Trochim's (2020), which submitted that such judgements should be designed to influence decision-making or policy formulation through the provision of empirically driven feedback.

It proved important to evaluate the TOP training program to garner the participants' views about the benefits of training, the effect of training, and potential areas for improvement in the context of future training programs. Evaluation is particularly key given Tobago's unique position as a tourist destination that is almost totally reliant on travel for its survival (Ministry of Tourism Trinidad and Tobago 2010). Program evaluations can also fulfil several functions (van Dusseldorp 1993) such as improved decision-making; identifying priorities and more focused activities; measuring the performance of participants, resource persons and members of the training staff; and determining both the effectiveness of various inputs and a control mechanism to know whether desired objectives, strategies or end results were attained (Acoba et al. 1997). The current research is also important because it draws attention to a key security issue in the tourism industry, highlighting, in this regard, the relationship between policing and tourism.

Materials and Methods

The research utilised a quantitative, interpretive case study approach. Seaman (1999) points out that case studies tend mostly to be based on qualitative data, as they provide richer and deeper descriptions. However, Hartley (2004), Mills, Durepos and Wiebe (2010), Robson (2002), Swanborn (2010) and Yin (2003a) all submit that the methods used to study a case can rest within a quantitative, qualitative or

mixed-method investigative paradigm. Importantly, interpretive case studies attempt to understand phenomena through the participants' interpretation of their context (Runeson and Höst 2009).

Case study research is an essential form of social sciences inquiry (Cojocaru 2010; Kohlbacher 2006; Yin, Bateman and Moore 1983; Yin 2012). It is a rigorous analytical strategy in its own right (Hartley 2004; Stake 2000) and 'an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context' (Yin 2003a: 13–14), as defined by interest in individual cases (Stake 1998). Case studies contribute uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organisational, social and political phenomena (Yin 2003b). In this sense, they go beyond the study of isolated variables that cannot be defined through research methods, but rather by theoretical orientation and/or interest in an individual case (Johansson 2003; Kohlbacher 2006; Stake 1998). As Kohlbacher (2006: 4) submits:

> case studies seem to be the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. (As is the case with this study)

It has been noted that single-case studies (such as the current research effort) that facilitates evaluation of a specific context is a very pragmatic research approach (Fishman 2005; Iwakabe and Gazzola 2009). In light of Seaman (1999), Yin (2003a), and Runeson and Höst (2009), the data for this case study were gathered using a survey instrument (a quantitative paradigm) that aimed at interpreting the research participants' context as police officers functioning within a tourist destination, and the TOP training they attended.

Measurement

The study utilised pre- and post-test questionnaires constructed by the researcher. These are particularly useful for evaluating training effectiveness compared to an established benchmark, which otherwise indicates whether knowledge and skills have been obtained from training experience, in this case (AlYahya and Mat 2013). Drawing on Kirkpatrick's (1994, 1998, 2010) evaluation models, the instrument sought to evaluate four levels of participant reactions, including (1) what they thought and felt about the training, (2) learning (increase in knowledge or capability), (3) behaviour (extent of behaviour and capability improvement, and implementation/application) and (4) results (possible effects on the environment resulting from a participant's performance).

The questionnaires were divided into three sections, which gathered demographic data on the participants, knowledge of crimes committed by and against tourists to Tobago, general thoughts on the tourism–crime nexus in Tobago, knowledge of TOP, and perspectives on the TOP training program. The questions aimed at garnering participant knowledge of tourism policing pre- and post-training, with answers measured along a five-point Likert scale (with 5 being 'strongly agree' and 1 being 'strongly disagree'). The instrument also contained several open-ended questions embedded within the questionnaire, in keeping with the case study protocol espoused in Runeson and Höst (2009).

Participants and Procedures

The study received ethical approval from the former TTPS Commissioner of Police, Stephen Williams, as well as the Criminology Unit at the University of the West Indies in Saint Augustine. The research participants were drawn from individuals attending a three-day TOP training course in the TPD.

The researcher distributed 25 pre- and post-test questionnaires, which were subsequently collected and collated for analysis. Prior to issuing the questionnaires, the nature of the study was explained to the potential participants, with issues of confidentiality and anonymity discussed and informed consent obtained before survey completion. The participants completed both questionnaires, which contained a series of open- and close-ended questions. All surveys were returned fully completed, with a 100%

response rate, but only participants who completed both the pre- and post-test instruments had their data included for analysis. The rationale for the sampling method used consults the interpretive nature of the case study, whereby the participants, as recipients of TOP training, were considered a key component.

Of the 25 course participants, eight (32%) were female and 19 (68%) were male, with an average age range of 21–50 years (SD = 5.53). Their professional ranks included six police corporals and 19 police constables (Second Division Officers). The length of active service ranged from 1–19 years, with the mean being 11.5 years' experience. It was difficult to glean the length of time that participants had spent working in the TPD, as a great majority indicated that in some instances they had worked at other police divisions within the TTPS before and after their initial posting; however, the average number of years spent working in the TPD was approximately 14.5 years. One participant held a university degree, 18 had completed secondary school and six had some college or university education. The demographics of the study participants are highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics of research participants

	Participants	
	n	%
Mean age	29.7	
SD	5.53	
Range	(21, 50)	
n	25	
Gender (*n* = 25)		
Male	17	68
Female	8	32
Rank		
Constable	19	76
Corporal	6	24

The Case Analysis

The case analysis involved a search for patterns in the data gathered from questionnaires evaluating TOP training (the event or phenomenon) with TPD police officers. The evaluation process involved (1) statistical analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (version 20) and Microsoft Excel, and (2) careful descriptions of the data and development of categories, in which behaviours were placed. The data were then organised around particular topics and central questions. This approach has support from Neuman (1997: 426) who, in reporting on case study analysis in the social sciences, points out that 'data analysis means a search for patterns in data'. The findings are presented descriptively in the results section (for support on this approach, see Runeson and Höst 2009).

Results and Discussion

Considering that this study is quantitative, a great majority of the results are presented in quantitative format. However, as a qualitative strand was embedded within the instrument (through open-ended questions), some qualitative data were gathered and will be presented. Several questions on the post-test questionnaire sought to determine the effect of TOP training on the course participants and several common areas emanated from their responses. The participants submitted, in order of importance, the most valuable products of TOP training. These were (1) increase in knowledge and skills on TOP; (2) positive attitudinal change towards understanding victimisation of, and criminal behaviours by, tourists; and (3) personal behavioural change in the context of managing and investigating criminal offences involving tourists to the island. The post-test questionnaire also contained questions that measured the extent of benefits gained from the training course. Here, 25 participants (*n* = 25) indicated that the course was extremely beneficial and that they intend to utilise their newly gained knowledge of TOP to better

police tourists to the island. The post-test questionnaire also sought to measure the ways in which the program enhanced the knowledge base of police officers attending the course. Participants submitted a wide range of responses. For example, 16 (64%) strongly agreed or agreed that the training served to improve their knowledge base on policing tourists and that this will enhance their careers. Others included understanding the trauma faced by tourists as victims of crime, appreciating the notion that some reports of criminal victimisation made by tourists may be unfounded, and that while they previously viewed tourists simply as visitors or vacationers, they now appreciate the fact that tourists can also perpetuate criminal activities. Importantly, the majority of participants (19/25) submitted that the training program enhanced their careers as police officers, as it exposed them to a different form of policing and facilitated specialist knowledge in one area. This view on professional specification in policing rather than generalist policing is not dissimilar to that espoused in Tarlow (2014b).

Evident from participants' pre-test responses, the data revealed that 20 of the police officers had no prior form of TOP training. However, participants unanimously agreed that officers who are specially trained in this area provide higher quality policing to tourists on the island. Participants also argued that in some instances, untrained officers can do more harm to tourists and the island's tourism brand due to insensitive questioning following victimisation.

In relation to tourist victimisation, all 25 participants submitted that implementation of a TOP unit within the TPD doubles in helping to minimise incidence of violence and harassment. There was unanimous belief that a TOP unit was necessary on the island, as the most compelling reason for visiting a tourist destination is safety and security; if these are compromised, tourists will be deterred from visiting Tobago. The majority of study participants (20/25) also believed that a TOP unit should be established to specifically police vacationers to Tobago, directly supporting the call for 'professional specification in policing', elucidated in Tarlow (2014b). Their rationales for doing so address (1) the vulnerability of tourists to the island, (2) the proliferation of unscrupulous and predatory locals who are willing to victimise tourists, (3) the protection of Tobago's tourism brand, (4) the protection of national image, and (5) the deterrence of tourists and residents from committing crimes.

One female police constable with seven years of police experience succinctly opined that:

> having a TOP unit will be very beneficial, as police officers will focus solely on policing tourists [and] most of the strategic crime plans for the island would revolve around tourists, making it difficult for crimes to be committed by and against tourists.

Similarly, one police corporal with 14 years of policing service argued that 'a TOP unit will be able to pay undivided attention to tourists and allocate time and resources to investigate crimes against them'. Importantly, all 25 participants agreed that crimes committed against tourists to Tobago would decrease should a TOP unit be enforced on the island.

However, not all participants (20) recognised the need for a special tourist unit. In fact, one male constable (10 years' active policing service) submitted that 'there should be no specific unit to police tourists, as citizens have the same desire for protection from crime as tourists do'. Meanwhile, another corporal (16 years' experience) believed that 'having a TOP unit may make tourists uneasy due to the fact that they are on vacation and do not wish to be unnecessarily disturbed'. Of great importance are the aforementioned views of several respondents in Wolf's (2008) evaluation of a TOP training course in Saint Lucia. Additionally, Tarlow (2014b: 7) points to a similar position in the US context:

> Prior to and for a time after 9/11, US police departments' involvement with tourism was minimal. It was not uncommon for police departments to state that they took pride in the fact that they treated tourists just like anyone else.

The participants were unanimous in declaring their training in TOP will have a positive effect on future tourism in Tobago. Another feature upon which all 25 participants agreed was that completing TOP training in small groups of police officers in the TPD had a short-term effect on their knowledge, confidence and ability to interact with tourists on the island.

Evaluation of the training program was generally positive. Participants responded well along the Likert scale to questions relating to the efficacy of TOP training, scoring the lectures an average of 4.89 (n = 25). All 25 participants agreed that the course facilitators were informative, clear and possessed immense knowledge on the topics taught. Participants also cogitated that the training was largely useful for their careers and that they benefitted from attending the course, as it expanded their knowledge bases and would positively affect tourism on the island. However, not all were fully satisfied with the program content. For example, one constable (six and half years' policing experience) explained that:

> a tour guide course is also needed so that TOP officers will have clarity about the best tourist locations on the island, as this would assist them with their policing tourism effort.

Another corporal with 20 years' experience took issue with 'the period allotted for the training program', as it 'was too short so that the training days were overwhelming due to the amount of information given by the facilitators'.

Several of the course participants also believed that the course, though beneficial, lacked in three key areas. For example, 24 out of 25 suggested that future TOP training should include a foreign language component, as many visitors to Tobago are non-English speakers or speak multiple foreign languages. In addition, the data indicated a desire for training on immigration systems, media and communication skills, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation for TOP officers as first responders.

These findings support van Dusseldorp (1993), who argued that evaluations of training can facilitate priority identification in future training programs. In this vein, participants tended to agree (4.91; n = 25) on improved knowledge and understanding on the importance of TOP in Tobago, and regarding implementation of knowledge gained in the course (4.77; n = 25). The highest score attained related to practical application of the knowledge gained during training (4.94; n = 25).

It is important to note several participant responses taken from the qualitative data, which further illuminate the range of views regarding TOP and TOP training. First, relating to the utility of the course, one corporal (13 years' active policing service) opined, 'I hope this [training] is not a showpiece with no action and implementation thereafter and a waste of taxpayers' monies'. Similarly, one constable (11 years of service) agreed that while 'this training is long overdue for police officers working in Tobago, I hope that this is just not additional training to appease the political executive'.

Another participant (senior constable with over 15 years' policing) submitted:

> senior police officers of the TPD should have attended this course of training. My reason is that when someone in the TOP unit makes a judgement call, if a senior officer was included in the training, they will have a very strong understanding as to why you made that call.

Regarding the benefits associated with implementing a TOP unit in Tobago, another constable (seven years of service) proffered:

> there are various advantages of having a TOP unit in Tobago to police tourists as well as locals who may want to prey on them [tourists]. A TOP unit in a tourist island like Tobago will foster … more secure feeling by tourists, ensure professional communication between tourists and police officers, and ensure a better and safer Tobago.

Other Key Findings

Other results taken from the pre-test questionnaires indicated that First Division Officers should have attended the training, as they would be the major drivers of TOP (see Wolf 2008 for support), and that crimes against visitors to Tobago are a major tourist deterrent. Key results from the post-test questionnaire included a belief that TOP training, though extremely beneficial, should include other tourism stakeholders such as security officers, hotel managers and providers of tourism services, and that training in TOP should be continued to ensure continuity and skills renewal. Other key findings from the post-test data also revealed a consistent view to create and expand TOP units throughout the TPD, that visitors to Tobago will feel safer and more secure with their introduction, and that criminal activities by and against tourists on the island will decrease. Participants also indicated that a TOP will improve Tobago's tourism industry brand and further improve police interaction and communication with visitors.

Participants also indicated the top-five criminal offences committed by visitors to Tobago. These include (1) making false reports, (2) drug-related offences, (3) traffic offences, (4) fraud, and (5) assaults and prostitution. Interestingly, one female participant with almost 18 years of policing experience explained:

> if you are not familiar with some of the crimes committed by tourists you can easily be misled. Many tourists will go to police stations and make false reports in order to claim insurance money when they return to their homes. They will play on your emotions and seek empathy if you are unaware of their vices.

Based on the responses, theft, housebreaking and larceny (acquisitive crimes) are the three most common offences committed against tourists to Tobago. However, this phenomenon seems to have been facilitated by the development of more portable and valuable items (for support, see Jones, Barclay and Mawby 2011). Other major, but less prevalent, crimes committed against tourists include rape, assault, fraud and murder.

The findings of this study serve to support the notion that communities dependent on tourism for their sustainability must specially train police officers to prevent and fight crime in their jurisdictions. Importantly, TOP personnel must interact with tourists in an amiable but firm manner and provide them with general information as well as details about safety and security, while ensuring that they do not breach local laws and/or become victims of crime.

Implications for Policy

This study has practical implications for policing, tourism and policymaking, and for the local citizenry in Tobago regarding the safety, security and economic sustainability of tourism on the island. In addition to these practical implications, the study also contributes to the literature in multiple ways. First, the research can be viewed as an exploratory attempt to empirically examine the factors that may affect training in TOP. Second, the findings serve to fill an existing gap in evaluating TOP training programs, as the only available work in the field is limited to Wolf's (2008) study in Saint Lucia. Third, the research provides empirical data garnered from course participants, and the results may help to predict and evaluate a particular training model as a preferred option for delivery to police officers in heavily populated tourist destinations locally, regionally and internationally. Instructively, Pradeep (2017: 32) points out that 'in Third World countries, the role of policing in shaping the brand image of destination places is yet to be realized'. It is within this framework that the current study can be used to shape Tobago's image as a safe and secure tourist destination.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As with most studies, the research was not without limitations. Foremost, the small sample size used affects the generalisability of data. However, this was a function of the methodology and, therefore, does

not diminish the importance of the findings. Despite this, the study has numerous benefits involving goal-setting for future TOP training, use of the data by policymakers and enhancement of limited knowledge on policing tourism. The current research is in no way final, as the researcher intends to conduct further study on this area of policing. In fact, these efforts should be viewed as an excellent starting point for a longitudinal study on TOP and tourist victimisation. Future studies should also attempt to engage as participants in the training program a wider cross-section of police officers, tourism professionals and tourism providers.

Conclusion

This heuristic study aimed to evaluate a TOP training program conducted with members of the TTPS division. The research sought to address the policing–tourism nexus, as crime against tourists in Tobago can have a destabilising effect on the tourism industry. The results are extremely beneficial because they shed light on TOP units, TOP training and their practical implementation, as well as the policing–tourism nexus. As such, the findings can be utilised by local as well as regional policymakers throughout the Caribbean wherever tourism is the mainstay of the economy. Stakeholders in the sector can also use this study to enhance future training on TOP with Caribbean police officers, and further utilise the results when forming tourism guidelines for visitors.

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[1] Hot spots policing refers to policing strategies that focus on small geographic areas or places, usually in urban settings, where crime is concentrated (Braga, Papachristos and Hureau 2012).

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