



Tourist Safety and Law Enforcement: Insights from Local Businesses in Thamel, Kathmandu

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Abstract

Safety and security law enforcement practices are essential for the sustainability of tourism. This study explored effect of police visibility on tourist safety and security in Thamel from tourism entrepreneurs' perception. The study used quantitative approach and cross-sectional survey design. Required data were collected from 229 randomly selected tourism entrepreneur through self-administered questionnaires (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.81$). Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques such as correlation and regression model were used for analyzing data. The results indicate that majorities of the respondents considered the presence of law enforcement as a key priority. There was a strong positive correlation between visible policing and tourist satisfaction and moderate positive correlation between intention to revisit and visible policing. The results of regression analysis showed that the law enforcement visibility was significant for tourists' satisfaction. The study finds that visible policing has a direct effect on business confidence and destination competitiveness as a crime deterrent, and also as a symbolic reassurance mechanism. Policy implications are the need for specific deployment of uniformed personnel in areas where tourist numbers are high, training of the hospitality and cultural sensitivity of the police, investment in multilingual tourist police booths and strengthening inter-sectoral coordination of the government and private sector.

Keywords: Law enforcement, Tourist safety, Perceived risk, Tourism policing, Thamel-Nepal

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Introduction

Nepal is becoming popular touristic destination in global tourism market. It has diversified natural, spiritual and cultural attractions. Tourism generates multiplier effects in national economy of the country. It has also created multiple benefits to the community level, particularly economic, social, cultural, environmental, educational, and health benefits (Pasa & Shrestha, 2024). However, beauty of a destination is not just about scenery or history: it's about how safe visitors feel. Safety is key for any place to grow as a tourist spot (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2006). With even a small threat of danger, even if it is the rarest of occasions, fear may keep people at inlet and take a fee on the entire reputation. There is also huge potentiality in Nepal for adventure and spiritual trips, though sometimes it's rather simple in remote regions. Trekking routes or pilgrimage routs are not necessarily well supported. The government began to install tourist police in the cities like Kathmandu, Pokhara and Lumbini, which is helpful from tourists' perspective. Seeing police with their uniforms and patrolling activities around touristic destination make difference in safety and security issues (Liu et al., 2023). Thus, it is inevitable to explore, how patrols security shape safety experiences of the tourism entrepreneurs (Yuksel & Yuksel, 2022; Alananzeh ety al., 2022). George (2010) emphasizes the psychological boost that security provides and how visitors and the host community feel more secure when traveling to unfamiliar locations. This visibility may be a factor in the confidence of business owners in Nepalese context. There is not any empirical evidence on entrepreneurs' perspective on safety and security. Thus, this study aimed to explore effect of police visibility on tourist safety and security in Thamel from tourism entrepreneurs' perspective.

Literature review

Most of the studies argue that safety and security issues are very important in tourism development. In places where people feel safe it tends to do better in attracting visitors and retaining visitors. There are mainly couple of arguments. First, psychological aspect of how safe people feel, known as perceived safety and the other is structural aspect, the actual safety measures implemented in the destination. Safety-Tourism is a two-way relationship, one reinforcing the other.

Hall (2007) exposes the critical role that the perceptions of safety play in a destinations image. If the destination has any kind of unrest or plenty of crime, then the money of the tourists goes down immediately. The other way round, when a country has a good safety establishment, it can develop tourism gradually. The perception may be that international tourists consider that risks are greater in developing countries, perhaps because they lack an awareness of such countries, or from negative media coverage (Lepp & Gibson, 2003). But even if the actual crime rates are not equal, those misconceptions can keep people from making the decision to visit. In this way, tourism personnel should take care of both the actual safety and the appearance to visitors.

Reisinger and Mavondo (2005) sign or lights, rather than real crime statistics. If a spot doesn't have high crime numbers but it doesn't have proper lighting or police on the scene. It can feel unsafe even when compared to the same location in a neighborhood that has higher crime rates and visible security measures (George, 2010). If it is a single person traveling alone or his or her first time, he or she will feel better emotionally just looking at the security people. That is a bit of a confused part, for perceptions don't always match facts. The focus of policing in tourist areas should be on tourists, not just on the traditional crime fighting role of police (Pizam & Mansfeld, 2006). It must involve close proximity, social interaction and hospitality; and it must involve knowledge of culture.

Tarlow (2014) developed the idea of tourism-oriented policing, a combination of safety and like public relations stuff. They have tourist police in certain countries like Spain, Switzerland, Thailand and Japan and its effective implementation. These units teach about law enforcement, foreign languages, cultural differences and how to be polite, as well as basic first aid. Brunt et al. (2000) also noticed that the more tourists that tourist police are involved in, the less tourists who are victimized. It may be important to tackle the perception of safety rather than the actual safety concerns, even though the actual safety risks are low.

Theoretical Insights on Risk and Safety

Butler tourism area life cycle (1980) also addresses the role of safety in the various phases of a place's life cycle, from initial exploration into perhaps renewed or potential decline. But if safety isn't working well, it can simply stall out and drop off, even if it has great natural stuff, cultural attractions, even that's pretty important. Roehl and Fesenmaiers (1992) categorize tourists into three groups: risk averse, risk neutral and risk seeking. There is a different reaction to safety signals for each type, and understanding that is important in planning a tourist coping strategy. The risk averse group are also everyday travelers, particularly ones who travel to destinations they have not been to. They will opt out of a position if it does not feel safe for them despite all the statistics showing what may be happening.

This whole theoretical insights (Figure 1) provides a means to observe the perception of safety before and during a visit. The risk



Figure 1. Theoretical Insights (AI Generated)

averse individuals steer clear of trouble quickly. They make their decisions based on what they see, uniformed police, watching them, clean streets, clear and organized signs orderly. For many of them, what they feel seems to be more important than what the real numbers on safety are. A change from reacting only to laws, to making visitors feel welcome is what it does, as if the police were more like helpful guides. Officers are also trained to be easy to talk to and they are taught several languages as well, and they learn how to deal with different cultures, without getting into trouble. They can assist with things such as directions and emergency related matters. This makes tourist's feel safe, and they also probably add to the overall ambiance of the location. In Nepalese context, international visitors can frequently encounter language difficulties in public places. This theoretical insights can be referent for studying about safety and security.

Empirical Studies Linking Law Enforcement

Empirical studies demonstrate the link between law enforcement visibility and tourist confidence. Brunt et al. (2000) noted that the tourists were much safer around an easy-to-spot bilingual police and patrolling officers in Barcelona. Hollinshead (2004) noticed that multilingual security was contributing to the overall satisfaction with travel in Thailand's coasts. International policing supports the visible policing, but in South Asia this is quite limited, particularly when it involves numbers. Recent studies continue to reveal how safety influences tourists' decision making and memories. For example, Yuksei and Yuksei (2022) conducted research in Turkey and they discovered that feeling safe relates directly to the desire to visit again to the coasts of Turkey. When tourists notice patrols, or officers, around, it creates more loyalty for that place. In line with previously mentioned results in Jordan (Alanzeh et al., 2020) and China (Liu et al., 2023). Once locations feel protected, fulfillment rises and folks suggest excellent word. There's a new consensus that visible actions make an impact on experience.

Nepal offers a wide range of attractions, including religious destinations, and adventure activities. However, the law enforcement side appears to be rather reactive, rather than proactive. Tourist policemen are available in areas such as Thamel but the people working there are not always present and do not interact a great deal with tourists. The work on tourism and lawful policing is just in its initial stage. Assessments of the safety and security status were carried out by national policies in the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil (2022). This study proposes to be quantitative research by collecting opinions from local business owners. It gives a real time sense of safety as practiced by folks involved daily.

Methods and Materials

The study used quantitative approach and cross sectional survey design. Required data were collected from tourism entrepreneurs operating their business in Thamel Bazar, Kathmandu. A preliminary field survey was carried out to create the sampling frame

and an estimated population of 520 enterprises was determined. Total of 229 business owners or respondents (44.04% of estimated population) were selected randomly (Yamane, 1967). Stratified random sampling was used to assure proportionality within categories of businesses such as hotels, retail and restaurants. The data were gathered by a structured questionnaire which was initially designed in English and then translated into Nepali to suit the preferences of the participants. The tool included two parts; demographic characteristics and perception metrics, which were assessed using closed-ended statements that were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all a priority, 7 = extremely high priority). The perception scale included three items for perceived importance of law enforcement visibility, perceived adequacy of law enforcement security measures and satisfaction with incident handling. The internal consistency of the instrument was acceptable (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81$). The responses were summarized using descriptive statistics such as means, medians, modes, standard deviations and frequency distributions. To examine relationships between business characteristics (such as type, number of years in operation) and the perception of safety and tourist satisfaction were analyzed using inferential analyses, such as correlation and linear regression.

Results: Tourist Safety and Business Confidence

This section presents descriptive statistics for the composite measure of the entrepreneurs' perceptions of tourist safety and business operations. The respondents indicated their level of agreement on a scale of 1 to 7, with the higher numbers signifying higher levels of safety perception and increased business confidence. The central tendency, dispersion and distributional properties of the resultant scores are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Perceived Tourist Safety and Business Confidence

Measure	Value
Sample Size (N)	229
Minimum Score	3
Maximum Score	7
Mean	5.72
Standard Deviation	0.94
Median	6.00
Mode	6.00

Table 1 shows that mean rating on that 7-point Lickert scale was 5.72, so it's just slightly more than somewhat high priority. For many of these business people, it is not only convenient to have police around but pretty much essential. Responses were not that divergent; the standard deviation was just 0.94, indicating some moderate level of agreement on the importance of this issue. The median and mode were both 6.00, and high priority was the answer that most people chose. That reinforces the idea that much

of what makes the place safe and welcoming for visitors is that they are able to see the law enforcement. No one gave a score in the low or not a priority range, and the lowest was just 3. Even the skeptics felt that policing had at least some importance. All entrepreneurs here concur those good police work is an important part of the tourist experience, and not just in the background.

Perception of the Priority of Police Presence

This section shows the information need for law enforcement to be visible and present in order to ensure safety for tourists.

Table 2. Perceived Perceptions of the Entrepreneurs

Likert Points	Category	Frequency	Percentage
7	Extremely High Priority	64	27.9
6	High Priority	82	35.8
5	Somewhat High Priority	39	17.0
4	Neutral	30	13.1
3	Somewhat Low Priority	14	6.1
2	Low Priority	0	0.0
1	Not at All a Priority	0	0.0

Table 2 shows that of the 229 respondents, an overwhelming 146 individuals or about 64 percent rated the presence of law enforcement as either a “High Priority” or “Extremely High Priority”. Around 80 percent respondents felt moderately important. Just 14 (6%) chose somewhat low priority. None of the respondents rated zero for low or no priority. The neutral ones were not very numerous, about 13 percent. There's no real negative takes here, so it indicates that there's a positive lean here. The businessmen appear to be very fond of law enforcement. They believe it is essential to make tourists feel safe and welcome, particularly in a tourist-hotspot area such as one of the main tourist regions of Nepal. This could be a gross over-simplification, but it points to law enforcement being a key factor in building visitor confidence as well.

Normality of Perceived Importance of Law Enforcement

This section shows the information about perception of Thamel entrepreneurs with regard to the importance of law enforcement for tourist safety.

Table 3. Normality of Perceived Importance of Law Enforcement

Statistical Measure	Value
Sample Size (N)	229
Minimum Score	3
Maximum Score	7
Mean	5.61

Statistical Measure	Value
Median	6.00
Mode	6.00
Standard Deviation	1.02
Skewness	-0.83
Kurtosis	-0.18
Distribution Shape	Negatively Skewed

Table 3 shows that there was a relatively high mean score of 5.61, with median and mode scores also equal to 6.00, which suggests that most respondents put a high level of emphasis on visible policing, which is generally rated as a high priority. 1.02 SD suggesting that there is some moderate spread in people's responses. Most people seemed to choose bigger numbers on the scale, but it wasn't a universal preference. Then, the skewness of -0.83 suggests a negative skew, which is consistent with the fact that more people voted for the top ratings (6 or 7) and fewer for the lower ones (4 or 5), confirming the general sentiment that it is evident that law enforcement is well-appreciated overall. Kurtosis is -0.18, which is slightly flatter than usual, with responses spread out with a few on either extreme. All of these indicate that police presence is actually welcome, and contributes to safety for visitors and commerce. It appears important, but some may not consider it to be so for them in particular. There are some differences of opinion that are reflected in the variability.

Relationships between Tourist Satisfaction and Intention to Revisit

This section measures association between definitive and compelling evidence of the impact of law enforcement visibility on tourists' experiences.

Table 4. Correlation between Study Variables

Variables	Tourist Satisfaction	Intention to Revisit
Law Enforcement Visibility	0.64	0.52

Table 4 showed that there is high positive correlation between visible law enforcement and tourist satisfaction during the visit. The moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.52$, $p < .05$) between the visibility of law enforcement and tourists desire to return to the place. Tourists feel safer and happier about their trip when there is more police or security around that they can see. This sense of relief from knowing someone is looking out for them is echoed by the psychological aspect of visible policing work finding (George, 2010; Tarlow, 2014). The safety part not only assists immediately, but also remains in the future when next time they will be needed, this is logical. This other correlation ($r = 0.60$, $p < .01$) is what tourism enthusiasts like Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992) have been saying for a long time.

As long as things are great and safe, individuals are far more prone to return, however it could rely on a lot more. As important as visible policing is, though, it is not the only

reason for staying safe, increasing satisfaction and returning visitors these are the links that demonstrate that.

Association between Law Enforcement Visibility and Tourist Satisfaction

The results of the linear regression indicate that visible law enforcement is an important influence on tourists' perceptions of their experience. The standardized beta values indicated that law enforcement visibility was statistically significant with a value of 0.59 (Table 5) for tourists' satisfaction. That is, if they see a more visible police presence, they're less likely to be disappointed with their trip as a whole.

Table 5. Model Summary

Predictor	Unstandardized β	Standardized β	t	p-value	VIF
Law Enforcement Visibility	0.58	0.59	8.72	<.001	1.42

The model summary indicates that 41 percent of the variance in tourist satisfaction is explained by this factor ($R^2 = 0.41$). Well, that's a pretty good amount, particularly when it's only one thing influencing it. Its t value is 8.72 and is strong and reliable. This is consistent with Tarlow (2014) who argued that if tourists see a well-trained police officer that is visible, easy to approach, it gives tourists a sense of safety and comfort. Visible policing is not just about tackling crime. It creates a positive impression and leaves an impression with the visitor.

Discussions of Findings

This study looked at the presence of police on tourists' sense of safety, focusing on the tourists' perspective of the business owners in Thamel. It gives a feeling to those whose livelihoods are linked with tourism. The results are evident and show that police officers having visible presence is important in ensuring safety and welcoming environment. Over 63 percent said that the presence of police officers is a high or very high priority. This strengthens the feeling of safety of tourists, not only because they are safe, but also because they can see it, for example, officers who are wearing uniforms, officers who are in patrolling vehicles, police booths which are marked. While symbolic, these indications will affect people's sense of safety in a significant way (George, 2010; Tarlow, 2014).

There is a strong relationship between tourist satisfaction and police visibility, with the value of $r = 0.64$. A medium individual who wanted to come back: $r = 0.52$. Safe also goes together with the other elements of enjoying the area and desire to return. The 41 percent of the satisfaction scores which can be explained by the regression of the scores on the value of the variable, visibility is significant at the 0.59 level of beta and $p < 0.001$. It's not just symbolic, it really has an effect on experiences. This is consistent

with what Pizam and Mansfeld (2006) claim that perceptions of safety are more important than crime statistics for decision making. Reisinger and Mavondo (2005) also commented that tourists trust cues that they can see, not the data.

Security presence deters crime and fosters trust in a non-obtrusive way, akin to a branding. Emphasis should be placed on entrepreneurs, rather than the tourists themselves. Owners of the business are in the middle of it all. They watch visitors' reactions and listen to their comments and concerns, and record their behaviors. That brings in new perspectives. During strikes, festivals or large gatherings of people, when the police appear, it helps alleviate small crimes and visitor fears, a lot said. It aligns with the data, as safety is divided amongst businesses and government.

It can also be found in other locations. In Spain (Brunt et al., 2000) and Thailand (Hollinshead, 2004) the deployment of special police in different languages in the country has enhanced tourists' confidence and reduced crime. Despite the country's many tourist cities and challenging infrastructure, they would fit in the Nepal. The study however reveals problems in that aspect as a lack of resources, lack of cultural/linguistic understanding on the part of the officers and inadequate infrastructure in certain areas like the Mustang, Rara Lake, and Lumbini etc. These attract a lot of people every year and forgo urban level policing.

Nepal is a hilly country and hence one single security is not enough. Look for flexible options community involvement required. Additional police presence during busy periods, multiple language help centers, QR codes for emergencies, etc., and Apps for alerts. Having locals such as guides, hotel people and porters involved in planning may make it more realistic. The findings indicates that visible police measures increase safety perceptions, satisfaction, returns, word of mouth all of which are critical indicators of tourism. It takes businesses into the planning process, too. Enhance the visibility and training of tourist police officers is not just about the crime, it's about Nepal being a safe and welcoming place to invest. There may be those who wish to disagree, but it appears essential. Whether businesses are successful or not is linked with the satisfaction of the tourists.

Conclusions and policy implications

The research concludes that the visibility of law enforcement is not only a part of the peripheral tourism management in the urban areas but it is a crucial component of tourist's perceptions of safety, satisfaction and the viability of the business in the tourism destination like Thamel, Kathmandu. Strong positive associations were seen between law enforcement presence and satisfaction with (situational) services provided to tourists, and the intention to return to the tourist area, thus underscoring the instrumental crime deterrence and symbolic reassurance of order and care from the presence of uniformed individuals. The perceived safety is directly connected to the

customer's confidence and economic sustainability of entrepreneurs whose activities are dependent on customer visits. At a national level in Nepal, in an economy largely fueled by tourism, this research underscores the economic importance of strategic investments in the areas of visibility, accessibility and hospitality in policing, not just as a security measure, but as a key factor in supporting competitiveness and sustainability.

The study has some implications related to different action steps to be taken by the Government, tourism organisations and local authorities. It is recommended to deploy the uniformed personnel in targeted areas in high density of tourism areas such as Thamel, Pokhara and Lumbini, particularly in peak seasons and festivals. Second, there is a need to invest in safety infrastructure (e.g. multilingual tourist police booths, clear signage, and mobile patrols) to increase the actual and perceived security. Thirdly, the need for the capacity building of law enforcement personnel is essential; training should be comprehensive, with emphasis on the application of hospitality skill, language ability and culture knowledge in relation to the tourists. Fourth, coordination is needed between and within the various sectors: Ministry of Home Affairs, the Nepal Tourism Board, the municipal governments and the private tourism associations in order to ensure that the safety strategy is linked to the destination management goal. Finally, establishing digital feedback systems, such as satisfaction questionnaires via QR codes at appropriate points, can help add real-time data to help shape responsive policy decisions. Incorporating safety performance indicators into the country's tourism development strategy would bolster Nepal's credibility as a safe and tourism friendly country.

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