

The Daily Dispatch's Construction of Criminal Attacks on Tourists in Eastern Cape, South Africa

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Abstract

The Eastern Cape ranks among South Africa's top tourism destinations. The province offers attractive landscapes, untamed Wild Coast beaches and pristine surfing spots. Millions of domestic and international tourists visit Eastern Cape annually. Tourism is Eastern Cape's nerve centre generating revenue for its economy and thousands of jobs for locals. However, Eastern Cape has witnessed a surge in criminal attacks against tourists. This threatens its destination image with disastrous ramifications for its economy and a society reliant on tourism for survival. Extant scholarship examines how foreign media have reported on crime in South Africa, especially towards the 2010 FIFA World Cup, which the country hosted. Literature examining how the domestic press has mediated crime in tourism is scarce. Through this qualitative case study, we attend this lacuna by examining how Daily Dispatch constructed attacks on tourists in Eastern Cape and the implications on destination image. Data gathered through digital archival research were subjected to a framing analysis. Findings reveal that whereas Daily Dispatch depicted the attacks as a threat to Eastern Cape's provincial economy and flagged poor policing, it primed grassroots anti-crime mechanisms inclusive of community neighbourhood watch as among a cocktail of measures guaranteeing safety for tourists. Such contextualised editorialization enabled Daily Dispatch to deftly mediate a sensitive subject intersecting tourism, crime and journalism.

Keywords: *South Africa, Crime, Tourism, Economy, Image, Media.*

Introduction

This is a qualitative inquiry into how *Daily Dispatch* framed criminal attacks on tourists in Eastern Cape province, South Africa. The *Daily Dispatch* is Eastern Cape's premier newspaper. The province is a popular tourism destination. It offers attractive landscapes, untamed Wild Coast beaches, pristine surfing spots and rich cultural heritage reflecting South Africa's colonial history. Millions of tourists visit Eastern Cape annually generating revenue for the province. The tourism sector employs millions of South Africans and contributes nearly nine percent to its Gross Domestic Product. Unfortunately, Eastern Cape is plagued by crimes targeting tourists. Extant scholarship suggests that South Africa's high crime rate tarnishes its destination image. Dubbed the "crime capital of the world", South Africa successfully hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup – the first time the tournament was held in Africa – allaying concerns about its safety as a tourism destination. In 2025, South Africa hosted another global event, the G20 Summit. It was the first time the summit was held in Africa. Crime scares away tourists to safer destinations. This harms the economy as foreign currency receipts dwindle, and foreign investors shillyshally. Foreign media are implicated in framing South Africa as a crime scene. This study examines how the local press reported on crimes against tourists in South Africa using *Daily Dispatch* and Eastern Cape as its case studies. It responds to the following questions: How did the *Daily Dispatch* report on attacks on tourists in Eastern Cape province? What are the implications of such reportage on destination image and tourist visitations? Data gathered through digital archival research is subjected to framing analysis. Findings show that the *Daily Dispatch* gave salience to the socio-economic

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implications of crime on Eastern Cape province. It flagged police's lackadaisical approach to fighting crime in tourism but hyped efforts by other stakeholders at ensuring security and safety in tourism.

Contextualising Crime and Tourism in South Africa

Research into the implications of crime on South African tourism is not new but the subject remains gravely under researched (Moyo and Ziramba, 2013). The prevalence of crime in South Africa threatens the growth of its tourism sector and hinders the country's socio-economic development. Although not much has been researched on crime and tourism in South Africa, we note the paucity of scholarship at the intersection of tourism, journalism and criminology. The few studies that were conducted on the ramifications of crime on tourism are confined to KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape and Gauteng provinces. Little to nothing has been researched on how the South African press mediated criminal attacks on tourists in Eastern Cape and other parts of South Africa. This is even though the media shape and structure narratives about people and places. It is within this context that we interrogate how *Daily Dispatch* mediated criminal attacks on tourists in Eastern Cape. We are cognisant of the implications of negative publicity on destination image. A search on google scholar only generated two academic articles (Swart et al., 2010; Hammett, 2014) related to how foreign media reported on crime in South Africa ahead of its hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

South Africa is regarded as the "crime capital of the world" due to the prevalence of crime (George, 2003:14) and ranks third as the world's most dangerous tourist destination (Blodgett, 2016). This inhibits tourism development (Weaver, 2001). Crime hurts destination image (Demombynes and Ozler, 2005; Nkosi, 2010). Ferreira (1999:313) contends that sustainable tourism growth is reliant on tourists' perception of safety at destination. This infers that a tourist's perception of personal safety or lack thereof at a destination influences their decision on whether to visit. Ferreira (1999:320) notes that "if personal safety and security of tourists are not addressed in a concerned and coordinated manner, tourism in South Africa will be adversely affected". The prevalence of crime in South Africa is linked to its socio-economic decline (Alleyne et al., 1994; Alleyne and Boxill, 2003). Whereas South Africa is an attractive tourism destination, Bloom (1996:92), argues that high crime rate "threatens a major socio-economic lifeline for years to come". Thus, "peace, safety, and security are the primary conditions for successful tourism development" (Pizam and Mansfeld (1996:16). Moyo and Ziramba (2013:7) posit that only serious crimes inclusive of murder, kidnapping and sexual assault threaten visitor inflows. In a study of international tourists' perceptions of Cape Town as a safe destination, Chaturuka et al., (2020:175) established that a high number of visitors witnessed and experienced crime but "seemed to have accepted that it was equally the same in all other destinations". This is indicative of an inelastic relationship between crime and tourism, contradicting assertions that tourists are allergic to crime. South Africa remains an attractive destination despite the prevalence of crime (Kealing, 2016). This accounts for the surge in tourist arrivals in 2025. Between January and December 2025, a record 10.5 million international tourists visited South Africa (see the presidency.gov.za). President Cyril Ramaphosa celebrated the development as an expression of "vote of confidence" in South Africa. The surge in tourist arrivals despite the prevalence of crime is ascribed to increased advertising and promotional activities (Alleyne and Boxill, 2003:389). Besides crime scaring tourists away, Ajagunna (2006:257) submits that "adverse publicity about the various types of crimes" harms tourism. Alleyne and Boxill (2003:383) note that "if crime affects the ability of a society to generate income from tourism, then this creates a vicious cycle, one that creates the environment for crime, which in turn destroys the very activity that would change the environment".

Media, Crime and Tourism: the Nexus

How the media report on crime has a bearing on tourism (Ferreira, 1999; George, 2003; Pizam and Mansfeld, 2006; Swart et al., 2010; Perry and Potgieter, 2013; Hammett, 2014). Media attention on crime adversely affects tourist visitations (George, 2003:15) while reports implying poor policing at the affected destination worsen the situation. The media influence perceptions by selectively focusing on violent crime (Perry and Potgieter, 2013:105). Violent crimes are intrinsically newsworthy. Negative media narratives on crime and tourism "can deter potential tourists from visiting an area while positive experiences and media coverage in relation to safety and security can change perceptions and promote tourism" (Perry and Potgieter, 2013:105-106). The media influences the image of the destination by at times magnifying the danger posed to tourists by crime (Swart et al., 2010). Although the prevalence of crime attracts media attention, Swart et al (2010:227) suggest that "many journalists talk about crime and violence in society in simplistic and misleading ways". This implies that at times journalists fail to contextualise crime and end up publishing half-truths. Swart et al. (2010:227) insist that, "attitudes and perceptions relating to crime and violence are influenced by the form and content of media coverage of

crime". The media rank among top influencers of tourists' perceptions about crime. Although crime is a legitimate subject of news coverage, Swart et al (2010:234) argue that "the amount and nature of media coverage given to crime has come into question". This argument is central to our study, which largely seeks to establish how the *Daily Dispatch* reported on attacks on tourists in Eastern Cape.

Studies examining how the media have reported on crime in South Africa are scarce with a search on google scholar only yielding Swart et al (2010) and Hammett (2014). They examine how the media reported on crime in the context of South Africa's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Hammett (2014) specifically analyses how the British daily press – *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Star* – reported on the prevalence of crime in South Africa in the run up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Hammett (2014) notes that while the British daily broadsheet newspapers were balanced in their reports, the tabloids were highly sensational, promoted fear and insecurity. The media function "as powerful organic or autonomous vector in the subjective social construction of place out with the control of destination marketers" (Hammett, 2014: 224). He insists that how the media report on crime in tourism is influenced by their "editorial and ideological approaches" and disagrees with the notion that advertising and promotion counter the negative effects of crime on tourist visits. Tourists especially from western world largely rely on pre-existing perceptions about a destination before deciding on whether to visit or stay away (Cornelissen, 2005). The pre-existing perceptions are still traceable to the media with Santos (2004:123-124) arguing that the media occupy a powerful position in "pre-determining viewers or tourists' perception of people and places". Thus, scholars concur on the centrality of the media in building or destroying tourism depending on how they frame crime in affected areas (Crystal, 1993; Guttaman, 1995; Ferreira, 1999; Steyn et al., 2009; Brown, 2015). It is on this scholarly foundation that we examine how the *Daily Dispatch* mediated criminal attacks on tourists in Eastern Cape.

Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by the framing theory owing to its primary focus on how the *Daily Dispatch* presented news on criminal attacks on tourists in Eastern Cape to its audiences. Proponents of the framing theory (Bateson, 1972; McComb and Shaw, 1972; Goffman, 1974; Tuchman, 1978; Entman, 1991, 1993) suggest that the media generate news in a way designed to influence audience's perception about the subject in the news. This implies that the media are not reliable reality mirrors but manipulate events through framing. They give salience to specific views and agendas and black others out. Thus, the media select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient than others (Entman, 1993:52). By encouraging targeted audiences to interpret news in a specific way (Fordjour and Sikanku, 1993), the media "organise everyday reality" (Chong & Druckman, 2007:106). Framing suggests more intentionality on the part of the media (Reese, 2007:248). This implies the bracketing out of certain happenings through what Fordjour and Sikanku (2022:148) term "routinised, legitimised and institutionalised structures that favour certain ways of seeing". Media framing is analysable through language use – word choice, phrases, terminologies, among other characteristics. It is, however, critical to note that frames are sponsored (D' Angelo, 2002). They are not totally influenced by journalists (Reese, 2007; Boesman et al, 2016). This infers the existence of outside newsroom forces, which also influence how the media report on issues. Guided by the framing theory, we examine words, terminologies, phrases, and the language used by the *Daily Dispatch* when reporting attacks on tourists. The framing theory also informs analysis of the *Daily Dispatch*'s news sourcing cultures and how these influence perceptions about Eastern Cape as a tourism destination.

Brief notes on Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research paradigm as it deploys descriptive analytical tools (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Patton, 2002). It is a case study confined to *Daily Dispatch* and the Eastern Cape province. Published by Arena Holdings and based in East London, *Daily Dispatch* is regarded as Eastern Cape's widely read newspaper. Its sister paper, *The Herald*, is based in Port Elizabeth. Arena Holdings ranks as one of Africa's largest publishers of English language newspapers. Running under the vision, "Connecting people of all cultures, enabling economies to thrive", Arena Holdings' other titles include *Sunday Times*, *Business Day*, *Sowetan* and *Business Day*. We deliberately settled for *Daily Dispatch* as it serves the broader Eastern Cape province unlike *The Herald*, which is largely confined to Port Elizabeth. The study covers the period 2024 when criminal attacks on tourists in Eastern Cape were prevalent and attracted significant coverage from *Daily Dispatch*. Data was gathered through digital archival research. We logged into *Daily Dispatch* online and searched for the words, crime, tourism, Eastern Cape province, Wild Coast, and Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency. We purposively sieved out stories that had nothing to do with crimes against tourists and remained with 17 articles. Through purposive sampling, we selected stories that responded to the study's objectives.

Purposive sampling enables identification of information rich cases (Patton, 2002; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). The 17 articles, which constitute the study population, were subjected to a framing analysis to identify patterns dominant in the news reports. Whereas 17 articles may seem too few, they speak to our research objectives. Scholars (Padgett, 2008; Morse and Niehaus, 2009) note that the number of participants or size of population in any study is determined by its aims and thrust. We were guided by Alozie's (2005) three phase framing model. The first phase saw us reading the selected stories several times and writing notes, a process we repeated during the second phase. This allowed researchers to pick recurring frames, which we categorised into technical and rhetorical devices (Gamson and Lasch, 1983:399). Rhetorical devices manifest in word choice, exemplars, metaphors and key words. News sources also fall under rhetorical devices. On technical devices, we focused on the elements of news writing (Linstrom and Marais, 2012) such as the sources used by the *Daily Dispatch*, headlines, quote selection and how the leads were crafted. Pan and Kosicki (1993: 59-60) note that news sources and the nature of headlines expose the frames adopted by news media when reporting matters of public interest. The next section presents the findings of the study.

Findings

The study sought to establish how *Daily Dispatch* reported on criminal attacks on tourists in Eastern Cape and the implications of such messaging on destination image. The findings are presented thematically.

Attacks on tourists, a threat to Eastern Cape Economy

Daily Dispatch framed the attacks as a threat to Eastern Cape's economy and welfare of its residents. For example, an article headlined, *Popular Wild Coast couple brutally beaten and robbed*, quoted the Eastern Cape Chamber of Business secretary-general Dr Andile Nontso revealing how the tourism industry loses R10 million annually "due to crime and cancellations of bookings". His remarks followed the attack of Dave Martin and his wife Rejane Woodroffe at their sanctuary in the Wild Coast by what *Daily Dispatch* termed "gun-wielding thugs". Martin and Woodroffe are founders of Bulungula Incubator NGO, Bulungula Community Lodge and Bulungula College. According to *Daily Dispatch*, Martin and Woodroffe "were pistol-whipped and beaten with beer bottles". Martin suffered "three broken ribs and injuries to his head" while Woodroffe sustained head injuries, it reported. *Daily Dispatch* displayed pictures of Martin and Woodroffe badly injured, depicting the savagery nature of the attacks. It quoted Dr Nontso condemning the attack, saying:

Attacks on tourism product owners in the Wild Coast area scare tourists away and that affects job creation in the district...we request communities to protect tourists. We ask the SAPS to protect tourists in this district where youth unemployment is up to 50%.

Daily Dispatch cited traditional leader Nkosi Vuyani Gwebindlala warning that such crimes threaten investors and the livelihood of people "who put bread on the table because of the couple". This narrative is sustained when *Daily Dispatch* quoted Mbhashe council speaker Babalwa Majavu lamenting how crime was "chasing away our investors, threatening the community". The storyline is maintained in another story titled; *Wild Coast holiday businesses send SOS to (Patricia) De Lille*. De Lille was the minister of tourism. *Daily Dispatch* reported that the Wild Coast Holiday Association had engaged De Lille and "appealed for urgent intention" over attacks on tourists which had brought the tourism sector "on its knees". It also cited the association's chair, Russel Kruger, indicating that the situation had reached "a crisis point" negatively impacting on the tourism-dependent economy. Kruger argued the negative publicity the province attracted endangered the tourism sector. He was quoted remarking:

This is quite sad. We had a potential American investor who wanted to upskill local farmers with a project that would initially give them a R12, 500 monthly stipends to boost their business. They just pulled out of this.

Daily Dispatch also cited the Eastern Cape environmental public interest group, Green Ripple and Wild Coast Development Forum chair Dr Div de Villiers, bemoaning the prevalence of crime and its negative impact on the Eastern Cape's economy. It reinforced this narrative by quoting the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency chief executive Vuyani Dayimani cautioning that "criminality against tourists undermines the provincial economy", "jeopardises the livelihoods of thousands dependant on tourism" and tarnishes the province reputation deterring investment and growth of the tourism sector. *Daily Dispatch* emphasised this narrative in an article headlined, *Gunmen open fire on Wild Coast holidaymakers*. The story's lead, read:

A dream gateway to the Wild Coast in the former Transkei turned into a nightmare for a group of East London friends and their children after they came under attack by balaclava-clad gunmen who fired at their car. However, they managed to escape...One of the two vehicles they were driving was riddled with bullet holes.

The story is accompanied by two close-up pictures of the bullet riddled vehicles. One of the victims told *Daily Dispatch* that “the vehicle was hit four times” while another remarked, “a lifetime of wonderful memories of Transkei holidays are in tatters for many of us...so sad for the locals who desperately need the tourists. It is just not safe”. *Daily Dispatch* referenced Nyandeni mayor Viwe Ndamase saying, “we made a commitment to assist our tourism SMMEs because we know the contribution of tourism to the economy”. It quoted the Eastern Cape Chamber of Business president Vuyisile Ntlabati noting that the prevalence of crime scared tourists away – “they watch what is happening in these spaces. If they feel safe, they are likely to come back again”. Ntlabati urged the police to patrol the affected areas as “these are people (tourists) who come here and spend a lot of money”. Businessman and founder of Mdumbi Backpackers Johann Stadler is also mentioned referencing an attack on a group of holidaymakers near Mthatha River Mouth as having a “devastating impact on our revenue and, more on point, on the livelihoods of over 100 people who make a living selling locally made trinkets”. Stadler observed that tourism was benefitting everyone “from Mama Nowethu’s bread to Mama Nosekile’s laundry service”.

Police Projected as Unable to Ensure Tourist Safety

Daily Dispatch depicted the South African Police Services (SAPS) as largely ineffective and incapable of ending crimes against tourists. This created perceptions of a crime-ridden and poorly policed tourism destination. Of the 17 articles accessed for this study, 10 projected the police as ineffective and reactionary. Following the kidnapping of a Cape Town tourist Alize van der Merwe in Eastern Cape, *Daily Dispatch* quoted Kruger condemning police’s lackadaisical approach to serious crimes saying:

Despite these serious incidents, we have seen little to no progress in resolving these issues. The lack of effective action from safety and security bodies has left us feeling vulnerable and abandoned. Tourism, which is vital to our region, is currently on its knees.

The same article cited the Eastern Cape Hawks spokesperson Ndiphiwe Mhlakuvana claiming that police “were working around the clock to rescue the victim”. The framing of police as ineffective is maintained in the article, *Fight to protect Wild Coast from criminals*. It quoted Gwebindlala criticising police for failing to account for criminals, who attacked Martin and Woodroffe. Gwebindlala alleged:

The evidence in this case is solid enough to find leads and make arrests. There is video footage, and the names of suspects have already been provided to the police, but no arrests have followed.

The same story also quoted Gwebindlala criticising the police for allegedly failing to arrest criminals who attacked and kidnapped an employee and her son at Bulungula Incubator in a separate incident. *Daily Dispatch* cited Gwebindlala as saying the police “only arrived the following day” and “no arrests were ever made”. The emphasis on police inaction is repeated when *Daily Dispatch* quoted Martin praising the community for “doing its best to ensure the area is safe” (not the police). It also cited Dr Nontso as saying police were “overwhelmed by the crime ravaging our communities”. He proposed “permanent police patrols around the coast...since tourism is the best sector to create jobs in this province”. The article also cited a villager Ntsikelelo Mbangasini remarking that “the community was embarking on a manhunt” for Martin and Woodroffe’s assailants and robbers. This implied police failure. In, *Police bear final responsibility for fighting growing crime*, the *Daily Dispatch*, claimed that frustration was building in communities “over perceived lack of action from police”. It augmented the argument by referencing a survey by Stas SA on governance, public safety and justice, which showed that “while 59.3% of people surveyed were satisfied with the police service, the remaining 40.7% were not”. The article demanded the police to adopt a “more proactive approach to crime” and “not simply responding when the situation reaches crisis levels”. This position is maintained in the article titled, *Search continues for abducted Alize van der Merwe*, with *Daily Dispatch* revealing how a specialist private investigator, Mike Bolhuis, had joined the search for the tourist. Bolhuis runs a private firm Specialised Security Services (SSS). Bolhuis’s involvement is suggestive of policing loopholes. The framing of police as ineffective is sustained in a story headlined, *Fight to protect Wild Coast from criminals*, which quoted people in communities affected by crimes against tourists saying, “We will fight back and defend ourselves...if we don’t protect our communities nobody else will”. This sounded a vote of no confidence on the police. Only the article headlined, *Parks and tourism body in drive to ensure greater safety*,

projected the police as at times effective when it reported the arrest of three men “within hours of a German couple being robbed” at Addo.

Daily Dispatch Emphasises Crime Containment Mechanisms at Destination

Of the 17 articles *Daily Dispatch* published, seven gave salience to efforts by stakeholders at ending crime in tourism. A story titled, *Wild Coast rallies to protect tourists*, emphasises measures taken by various stakeholders in Eastern Cape to fight crime and guarantee safety for tourists. It sought to assure tourists ahead of the Easter holiday that Wild Coast communities were “rallying to protect visitors to the area” and “offer them a safe and beautiful break from city life”. The story quotes the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA) chief executive officer Vuyani Dayimani emphasizing the “wellbeing of tourists” and underscoring how the integrity of the area’s tourism destinations “were of paramount importance” and references security measures in place to ensure the safety of tourists. Dayimani is cited as saying:

There are a number of other joint initiatives with police, local municipalities and other stakeholders to improve the safety of tourists, including a Tourism Buddies programme to keep visitors informed about attractions available, assist with tourism queries and provide up- to-the-minute information about areas to avoid.

He revealed that municipalities in Eastern Cape had “employed trained lifeguards on their beaches to watch over the safety of tourists engaging in coastal activities”. The article quoted King Sabata Dalindyebo municipal spokesperson Sonwabo Mampozo challenging communities to “take care of tourists who bring in money that helps change our lives” and emphasizing how tourism was “the lifeblood of areas like Coffee Bay and Hole-in-the-Wall”.

This narrative is maintained in an opinion piece titled; *Police bear final responsibility for fighting crime*. It urges police to double efforts at preventing crime and salutes communities in resort areas for striving to safeguard visitors. Thus, *Daily Dispatch* flags poor policing by SAPS but guarantees tourists’ safety through a narrative that assures visitors that communities were proactively combating crime in affected destinations. This has the effect of guaranteeing security for would be visitors. For example, the newspaper gave salience on how the Xhorha Mouth community on the coastline of Elliotdale had set up a network of neighbourhood watch groups reporting that “each group comprises about 20 men from local villages tasked with patrolling the area day and night.” Although this appeared designed to allay fears of crime, *Daily Dispatch* underscores the need for the police to adopt a “more proactive approach to crime; not simply responding when the situation reaches crisis levels and residents are forced to the streets to have their voices heard”. The newspaper reinforced narratives on how communities were fighting crime in an article headlined, *Crime threatening Wild Coast tourism and development, says premier*. It noted how the Eastern Cape premier Oscar Mabuyane had spoken “strongly against the attacks on tourists” and rallied traditional leaders in the province “to stand up and be vigilant” and ensure that “those investing in and touring the Wild Coast are protected”. *Daily Dispatch* reiterated that “community along the pristine coastline has since set up a network of neighbourhood watch groups each comprising about 20 men from local villages tasked with patrolling the area during the day and at night”. The words “network of security” imply guaranteed safety for tourists. It reported that the neighbourhood watch groups were established a day after Martin and Woodroffe were attacked by armed robbers. This infers community’s proactive response to crime and signals the depth of security at grassroot level.

The narrative is sustained in a story titled, *Mthatha stakeholders call for safer tourism environment*. The lead reads:

Politicians, officials, business owners and ordinary citizens spoke with a unified voice and embarked on a walk through the streets of Mthatha on Thursday, calling for more protection of tourists who flock to tourism destinations in the Eastern Cape, particularly along the Wild coast.

The article creates an impression of a united front against criminals targeting tourists in Eastern Cape while encouraging government and police to rid the province of crime. *Daily Dispatch* warned that “many tour operators are now threatening to take their businesses to other provinces” if no urgent action was taken. For emphasises it quoted the ECPTA tourism development manager Fezeka Mlungu noting that crime was “killing our economy and unemployment is huge in our province” and warning that, “if tourism businesses have to close down, it means whoever is employed in this sector will lose their jobs”. Thus, it rallied everyone to proactively fight crime and ensure Eastern Cape was a safe tourism nucleus. *Daily Dispatch* maintained this narrative when it referenced a municipal official outlining how “a single

tourist visiting the region created about seven job opportunities for locals". Such remarks rallied the community against crime. *Daily Dispatch's* emphasis on crime prevention mechanisms in place is sustained in the article, *Fight to protect Wild Coast from criminals*, with the newspaper reporting that communities were "banding together to fight criminals" in affected tourist resorts. It insisted that criminals were "driving away tourists and investors" and "terrifying locals along the picturesque but poverty-stricken region". Use of words "banding together" implies that communities were protecting tourism destinations as they benefitted from the industry through employment. There is also emphasis on the Wild coast as an attractive tourist destination through deployment of words "picturesque" region, but which remained "poverty-stricken" owing to the disruptive nature of crime. *Daily Dispatch* attempted to allay fears of a crime ridden Eastern Cape when it reported that visits to the province reached 6.9 million in 2023. The statistics derived from the provincial department of economic development. In the article headlined, *Eastern Cape visitor numbers soaring, state insists*, the *Daily Dispatch* noted that the province had recorded only 1.9 million pre-Covid-19 pandemic visits. This represented a surge in tourist visit of 5 million. The increase was attributed to targeted marketing campaign with an official quoted as saying, "we have worked tirelessly to showcase our province as a destination of choice". *Daily Dispatch* observed that Eastern Cape had "recorded a huge decline" in visits by international tourists from the 412 000 pre-Covid-19 trips to 318 000 during the same period. This created an impression that domestic tourists had reacted positively to the marketing campaigns while international visitors were sceptical. Interestingly, the newspaper's tone sounded doubtful of statistics issued by government implying a surge in visits. It engaged sources who disputed the figure. These included opposition parties, and players in the tourism industry. For example, the Democratic Alliance's Yusuf Cassim is quoted saying the statistics "were outdated and not reflective of the current depressed state of our tourism industry during this festive season". Cassim claimed that "bookings have taken a dip due to the inability of our local and provincial governments to provide the assurance that visitors will be safe". The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)'s provincial chair Zilindile Vena bemoaned the underutilisation of Eastern Cape as a tourism destination and accused the police in the province of failing to efficiently execute their duties like those in KwaZulu-Natal who "were actively taking on criminals and winning". In referencing KwaZulu-Natal, the *Daily Dispatch* makes use of exemplars as rhetorical devices. KwaZulu-Natal police become a model for good policing which their peers in Eastern Cape must emulate in fighting crime in tourism. This pessimistic tone persisted when *Daily Dispatch* quoted the Eastern Cape Chamber of Business president Vuyisile Ntlabati also dismissive of government's 6.9 million domestic visitors claim saying "the statistics on domestic travel were shocking because people involved in tourism business were saying something totally contrary to the government".

Discussion and Conclusion

Daily Dispatch strived to strike a balance between sensationalism and the need to safeguard the interests of the tourism industry cognisant of its contribution to the Eastern Cape's economy. Although some of its articles bordered on sensationalism, such an editorial stance seemed informed by a desire to push responsible authorities to act against crime. It achieved this through tactical deployment of rhetorical and technical devices. For example, in the article *Popular Wild Coast couple brutally beaten and robbed*, the *Daily Dispatch* deployed both rhetorical and technical devices to structure a narrative of Eastern Cape as crime ridden. The headline emphasises the savagery nature of crime through use of words, "brutally beaten and robbed". Referencing the victims as "popular Wild Coast couple" has the effect of implying that if local celebrities suffer gruesome harm at the hands of criminals, the worst awaited foreign tourists. The story's lead exposes the extent *Daily Dispatch* deployed technical devices and depicted Eastern Cape as an unattractive destination from a security and safety perspective. It reads, "A popular couple from the Wild Coast, who spent decades helping develop the Xhorha Mouth community near Elliotdale, was brutally attacked by gun-wielding thugs at their sanctuary". Saliency is placed not only on the victims' good heartedness, but the savagery nature of the attacks, which were committed at the couple's "sanctuary". The Merriam-Webster defines a sanctuary as "a place of refuge and protection" or place where birds and animals can live and be protected, especially from being hunted or dangerous conditions". Thus, sanctuary infers peace, safety and security yet in this case it meant violence and crime. *Daily Dispatch's* news sourcing culture and quote selection habits also confirm its deployment of technical devices as framing resources. It relied heavily on stakeholders in tourism business, victims, and traditional leaders in affected areas as its sources. This enabled the newspaper to enact narratives that urged urgent action against crime in the province. For example, Gwebindlala is quoted referencing the victims' (Martin and Woodroffe) "contribution to the community for 21 years" as "massive and unmeasurable". He is also quoted vowing to "do everything within the ambit of the law to protect Dave and his wife" and to "track down these criminals". Thus, while the article

flagged crime as a danger to tourism, it at the same time emphasized how communities acted as shields against crime. Inasmuch as *Daily Dispatch* framed Eastern Cape as crime ridden, it equally gave salience to grassroots initiatives at ending the affliction.

Such editorial dexterity is used in other stories. An opinion piece, *Police bear final responsibility for fighting crime*, characterise Eastern Cape's resort centres as vulnerable to crime and blames the situation on poor policing. The same article places emphasis on how communities affected were proactively combating crime. The story's headline sounds a remainder to the police to fulfil their mandate by fighting crimes against tourists as the buck stops with them. By framing police as ineffective, *Daily Dispatch* reinforces negative stereotypes of South Africa as an unsafe destination but cures the problem by emphasizing how affected communities had devised mechanisms to fight crime and ensure safety for tourists. For example, this article's lead underscored how "hundreds of Eastern Cape residents took part in two marches against crime" noting that "one group marched on the Elliotdale police station". It is indicative that such narratives aimed at pushing the police to act on crime. Further, it demonstrated how communities in resort areas were fighting crime. This positive framing is emphasized when *Daily Dispatch* reported that the Xhorha Mouth community on the coastline of Elliotdale had "set up a network of neighbourhood watch groups" consisting of 20 men charged with "patrolling the area day and night". The newspaper claimed such community efforts were replicated across Eastern Cape making the affected areas "safer". The framing of villagers as proactive anti-crime agents is sustained in a story headlined, *Fight to protect Wild Coast from criminals*, with *Daily Dispatch* deploying both rhetorical and technical devices to structure favourable narratives on tourist safety. The article's lead read, "Wild Coast communities are banding together to fight criminals who are driving away tourists and investors...". The newspaper relied on news sources directly affected by crime in tourism whose voices influenced its narratives. Thus, *Daily Dispatch* constructed a narrative of Eastern Cape as a society afflicted by crime, which negatively impacted on its image as tourism destination with ramifications for the province's socio-economic well-being. Nevertheless, *Daily Dispatch* attempted to counter the negative implications of crime on tourism in Eastern Cape by giving salience to grassroots anti-crime initiatives that sought to ensure tourist security and safety. This enabled the newspaper to deftly mediate a sensitive subject intersecting tourism, crime and journalism.

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