



## FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DECISION OF THE PEOPLE OF KISII TOWN TO CONSUME DOMESTIC TOURISM PRODUCTS

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### ABSTRACT

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Kenya is naturally gifted with a variety of wildlife, spectacular scenery, renowned beaches and famous sporting activities that rely on the natural environment, in addition to a world class hospitality industry. These have contributed a lot to making tourism a major economic activity. Socio-culturally, tourism gives economic meaning to traditional wear, carvings and traditional regalia. Local entertainment is also showcased to visitors. This study aimed to determine if the promotion strategies employed by the tourism industry to encourage Kenyan citizens to visit tourist attraction sites have had an impact on local residents living far from tourist attraction sites. The specific objective was to determine the factors influencing the decisions of the people of Kisii Town to consume domestic tourism products. The target population consisted of all the 37,531 residents of Kisii Town. Five-point Likert scale questionnaires were distributed among the residents to collect primary data which was then analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study found that distance, transportation costs, and affordability, were factors that influenced the consumption of tourism products in Kisii. The study concludes that distance is one of the factors highly influencing the residents' decision to consume domestic tourism products; therefore, the relationship between the distance from Kisii town and visits to the site was noted to be significant. The tourism industry thus needs to strike alliances with transport companies to ferry people to the sites since they may not be able to relocate the sites themselves.

**Contribution/Originality:** The study will help the Ministry of Tourism in Kenya understand consumer behavior towards tourism products in Kisii town and other towns in Kenya since it can be generalized to account for other parts of Kenya. This will help them come up with suitable strategies to sell their products. In addition, the study adds to the models, literature and theory on domestic tourism products in Kenya, since this is an area that has not so far not generated much research.

### 1. INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the factors influencing the decisions of the people of Kisii town in consuming domestic tourism products. The Abstract gives a summary of the entire paper while the contributions section highlights what is to be gained from the study. The background describes the context and situation for the study. The paper then establishes the research gap. The objectives of the study are also stated. The methodology used is then outlined and the findings that were realized after data was analyzed are discussed. Lastly, the researcher states the conclusion and recommendations.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH GAP

Tourism is a major industry in Kenya, and its natural resources, culture and landscapes help make it a tourist destination (Murphy, 2012). Kenya's culture that has remained intact for long and its history are another attraction that foreigners cannot resist (Horrobin, 2012). The spectacular Great Rift Valley splits Kenya into two all the way from Lake Turkana in the north to Lake Natron in south at the Tanzanian border. This is a massive area of breathtaking landscapes. The equator also cuts across Kenya horizontally, near the snow-capped Mount Kenya (Horrobin, 2012). There are national parks and reserves, savannas in the Maasai Mara full of game and the popular Big Five in addition to the spectacular wildebeest migration (Kaminsky, 2017) not to mention the friendly climate all year through. One cannot fail to mention the alluring flora and fauna (Kihima, 2014). The Ewaso Ngiro River is known for elephant herds and leopards (Munjoma, 2012) while the Tsavo with its vastness has the Big Five rolling plains and plateaus on a clear view on the historic Kenya/Uganda railway (Kihima, 2014).

Kenya experienced a steep decline of tourism activities between 1995-1998 and 2013-2018. This can be attributed to poor infrastructure management and maintenance, and the anticipated violence arising from successive general elections. Additionally, terrorist attacks in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in August 1998 (Fletcher and Morakabati, 2008) and successive Al Shabaab attacks have kept tourists away. Kenya has had a negative image in terms of human rights, and corruption which has also made some tourists shy away. Poor services in the hospitality industry characterized by a failure to revamping tourist facilities also add to the list (Doole and Lowe, 2008) of issues. Minimal funding for the Ministry of Tourism over the years and inadequate marketing and promotion have also contributed to the decline. Still on the list of contributing reasons to the decline is bureaucratic inefficiency leading to entry impediments in the form of discriminatory visa requirements (Doole and Lowe, 2008). Air tickets are also very costly due to government taxes thus minimizing the number of tourists planning to visit. Additionally, environmental degradation has made some tourism products less appealing, for example a steep reduction of the game. Tourists are also reported to be harassed by beach boys. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be any future legislation planned to deal with any of these challenges affecting the tourism industry (Ikiara, 2001).

Tourism products are complex due to diverse human experiences. They consist of the physical aspect and the service (Yuksel, 2001; Anuar *et al.*, 2012). The tourist himself is instrumental in the completeness of the product since the tourist must move up to the point of the product for the product to be consumed (Christie and Crompton, 2001; Cracolici and Nijkamp, 2009). This is realized by transforming the physical and the service into an experience (Ikiara, 2001). In order to enhance the consumption of tourism products, Chinese organisations have been sensitized to encourage their workers to take part in domestic tourism (Wen and Tisdell, 2001).

Similarly, most of the African countries experiencing dwindling numbers of foreign tourists have also taken the initiative to enhance their domestic tourism. South Africa has introduced an array of packages to attract locals to visit tourist sites including reduced rates for locals and bonus schemes that can be accumulated over time (King *et al.*, 2007). Tanzania has also used price reduction strategies to attract domestic tourists.

Kenya has gone beyond the foreign tourist and looked inwards to the local tourist to bridge the gap left by the reduced numbers of inbound tourists. This has been achieved by providing locals with attractive packages that largely involve reduced prices (Tosun, 2000; Omare, 2016). This has been a strategy of mostly the private sector tourism businesses like hotels and tour operators.

Similarly, the government has also played its role in trying to boost domestic tourism through the Kenya Tourism Board. It has been promoting Kenya as a tourism destination both locally and abroad. This has been through the Magical Kenya campaigns. The promotion seeks to enable Kenyans to visit at least one of its many tourist attractions per year (Omare, 2016).

Despite these efforts to boost local tourism in Kenya, studies show that not much has been achieved in this regard, and this can be attributed to the fact that a lot of the emphasis on marketing targets the coastal tourism and game safaris, which are better for foreign tourists (Makawiti, 2000). In addition, the less heavily advertised

destinations like Naivasha and Elementaita were receiving a good number of local tourists unlike the more advertised Maasai Mara (Sharpley and Telfer, 2015) which is indicative of the promotional strategies' wrong focus.

### 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The study sought to determine the factors influencing the Kisii Town residents' choices in consuming domestic tourism products.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey design. This was in a bid to investigate the factors influencing Kisii town residents' choices in consuming domestic tourism products. It is worth noting that descriptive survey designs are effective. They are used in preliminary and exploratory studies (Kumar and Phrommathed, 2005; Creswell and Clark, 2007). This is appropriate as it enables researchers to collect and summarize information, then present and interpret it so as to make it well understood (Orodho and Kombo, 2002).

The survey focused mainly on local tourists. The population consisted of all the 37,531 residents of Kisii Town (1999 census, Central Bureau of Statistics) from which a sample of 200 residents was selected through a purposive sampling technique that was stratified as follows: secondary school students, employees, businessmen/self-employed and unemployed people selected through convenience sampling. The choice of Kisii Town was largely because it is located far from most tourism attraction sites, so the effect of any promotion strategies can be clearly felt. In addition, it was convenient to the researcher.

The study used both primary and secondary data. The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics. where frequency distribution tables were prepared and the totals for each item calculated. A five-point Likert scale was used to show the descriptive attitudes of respondents towards factors affecting their choices in consuming domestic tourism products.

### 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to find out which factors influenced the decision of Kisii town residents to consume domestic tourism products. Figure 1 shows how the residents of Kisii Town have consumed domestic tourism products. One hundred and twenty-seven residents out of the 158 respondents have visited tourist attraction site. This is around 80.4% while 19.6% of the residents have never visited any tourist attraction site in Kenya. The tourism industry should concentrate on those who have consumed the product once since their number is quite significant in order to encourage repeat visits from them.

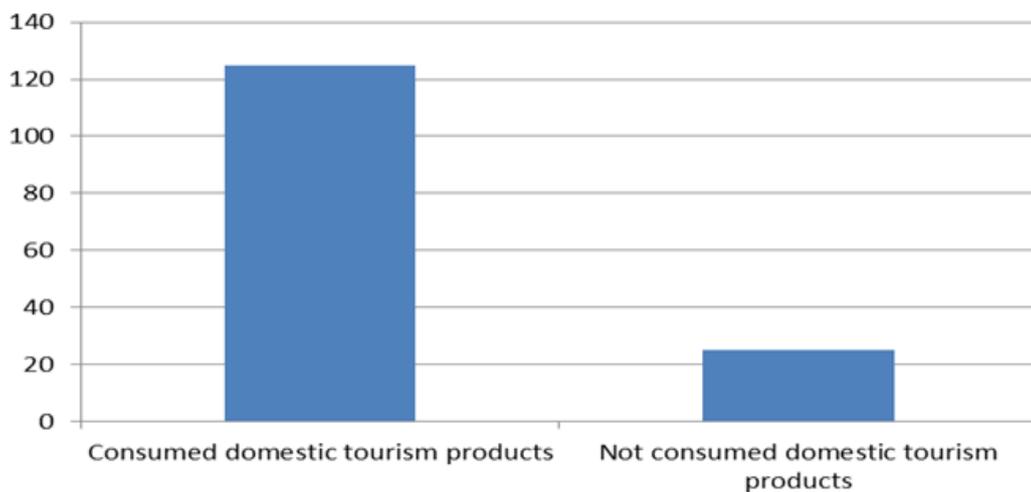


Figure-1. Consumption of Domestic Tourism Products in Kisii Town.

Table 1 is a Likert scale analysis of factors influencing Kisii Town residents' choices in consuming domestic tourism products. The analysis finds the weighted average of each item in the Likert scale and those items with a higher weighted average value relate to the factors that influence the residents' decisions most. These factors are arranged in order of their weighted averages from the highest to the lowest in Table 1.

Table-1. Factors influencing consumption of domestic tourism in Kisii Town.

Factors influencing consumption of domestic tourism	WEIGHTS (W)				$\Sigma f$	$\Sigma Wf$	$\Sigma Wf/f$
	External influential	Influential	Slightly influential	Not Influential			
	3	3	2	1			
FREQUENCIES (F)							
Expensiveness	85	30	19	19	153	640	4.18
Marketing	78	40	23	15	156	649	4.16
Lack of affordable Accommodation	68	56	6	22	152	626	4.12
Lack of affordable Transport	59	51	26	18	154	613	3.98
Distance of site from Home	69	36	20	28	153	605	3.95
Security	68	29	31	25	153	599	3.92
Attractions present at Site	59	32	37	21	149	576	3.87
Poor roads	42	57	27	32	158	583	3.69
Better treatment of international tourists	33	49	31	27	140	508	3.63
Lack of electricity	11	34	36	71	152	441	2.9
Lack of water	7	30	44	69	150	425	2.8

These results show that marketers in the tourism industry need to focus on the factors influencing the residents' decision to consume domestic tourism products by providing subsidies and discounts to domestic tourists to make domestic tourism more affordable, providing good and affordable accommodation for families, making available transport to and from attraction sites to ease the transport problem and eliminate the attitude of the residents towards distance from attraction sites.

Additionally, it is important that they work on ensuring the security of tourists within and outside the sites, making the attraction sites easily accessible by improving the road network, and improving the customer care department to provide satisfactory treatment to both local and international tourists.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that distance is one of the factors highly influencing the residents' decisions to consume domestic tourism products. The tourism industry thus needs to strike alliances with transport companies to ferry people to the sites since they may not be able to relocate the sites.

Currently, the KWS uses its own buses to transport tourists to attraction sites but the service is available only to people living within the attraction sites.

The study highlighted the factors influencing the decision of the people of Kisii town to consume domestic tourism products. The price of domestic tourism products, the marketing, a lack of affordable accommodation, a lack of affordable transport, the distance of site from Kisii Town, security concerns, the attractions present at tourism site, poor roads and the preferential treatment of international tourists are important factors to the residents. Marketers must pay attention to these factors by effectively packaging the marketing mix to attract the residents. Considering that domestic tourism is not an essential product, the following strategies may be employed to attract domestic tourism:

1. Discounts could be offered.
2. Payments terms could be made flexible e.g. credit facilities.
3. Joint ventures with banks could be set up to provide loan facilities.
4. Corporate bodies could give special offers.

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