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ROLE OF CONVENTIONS IN INFLUENCING TOURISM PERFORMANCE.

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Abstract

**Purpose:** Adapting the brand to new markets is less important than giving consumers new and worthy experiences. The general objective of the study was to evaluate role of conventions in influencing tourism performance in Africa.

**Methodology:** The paper used a desk study review methodology where relevant empirical literature was reviewed to identify main themes and to extract knowledge gaps.

**Findings:** The study concludes that tourism performance in Africa is significantly affected by convention tour activities, marketing of convention facilities, visitor stay and spending and consumer preference. The study found that convention tour activities had a positive and statistically significant relationship with tourism performance in Africa. The study therefore concludes that an increase in convention tour activities in Africa would lead to a unit increase in tourism performance in Africa.

**Recommendations:** There is need for destination values to be preserved through plan development to maintain the destination's sense of place by outlining processes to monitor change, evaluate threats and opportunities, and permitting public and private leaders to respond. Regional and sub regional approaches should be promoted by the governments and all stakeholders to promote conventions. Convention Visitor Bureau should be brought back to assist in marketing of the convention facilities in order to increase delegates who attend the conventions

**Keywords:** *role, conventions, influencing tourism, performance, Africa.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

According to Lau (2009), a tourism convention is an event that takes place yearly to unite individuals with a common goal to share ideas, network and find solutions. Lau (2009) adds that tourism is a very profitable kind of tourism and is becoming one of the sectors with a continuous growth in the tourism industry. Meeting serves as the primary purpose for travel during conventions. Conventions are a multifaceted event with a fixed time mostly involving speakers who have expertise in various topics addressed at seminars, workshops or classes (Rogers, 2013). The convention sector brings peace in the world, share developing information in the sector and attracts technological development in the sector. Hanly (2012) adds that hosting conventions enables destinations to establish new business links, get access to new technologies and strengthen existing commercial ties.

According to Egon and Douglas (2010), there are many types of conventions including corporate conventions and consumer events. They include workshops, seminars, social events and trade shows. Over the last 20 years, there has been an increase of more than 70 percent of the national supply of convention exhibit space, but the past decade has been bad (UNWTO, 2014). Franklin and Blyton (2013) adds that there has been fluctuation of convention and exhibition industry in response to the challenge of global meetings facilitation. Conventions contribute to the economy in most developing nations and research has shown that conventions are a high value-added industry (Bureau, 2003). Positive effects of conventions can be quantified in terms of income generated from convention facilities and promotion (Kim & Boo, 2010). For example, between the years 2008 to 2009, the number of tourists coming in the country increased from 1200 to 1500 thousand.

Positive development was attained although there was a decline in the contextual negative economic effects associated with uncertainties brought about by the outbreak of influenza A (H1N1) and the downturn of global economic. The hotels sub-sector in the tourism industry recorded remarkable business where the number of bed-nights occupied increased substantially by 69% from 3,700 in 2008 to 6,300 in 2009. There was an overall increase of bed rate up from 26% to 37% in 2008 and 2009 respectively. Similarly, there was a notable improvement for occupancy bed rate in 2008 from 32% to 39% in 2009. The main source of foreign exchange is tourism earning which increased by 18% to Ksh.73.7 billion from Ksh.62.5 billion in 2010 and 2009 respectively (KNBS, Economic Survey, 2011).

Convention tour activities are the leisure activities that the convention attendees look for before and after their business trip. Convention attendee becomes a leisure tourist once a working day is over (Kumar & Narendra, 2014). Business travelers, delegates and visitors should find themselves spare time to visit after spending time conferencing, negotiating and generally getting the job done (Cope & Davidson, 2003). According to Kumar and Narendra (2014), attendees may consider the tour activities if their employers have sponsored them to attend the conventions. It is reasonable for these attendees to cater for pre and post tour activities with their own money, since they have not paid for the convention from their own pockets. Attending a convention may be a one-time trip for long distance visitors in particular, which gives an opportunity to have fun and enjoy the attractions that the destination has to offer (Khunou, Reynish, Pawson, Tseane, & Ivanovic, 2012). It is important to know how much money the convention brings since it attracts funding from local

and national government and to obtain permission to expand or build convention facilities. Convention visitors are concentrated in urban areas and the economic benefits collected from the high spenders do not trickle down to all areas in the country. Little research has been carried out examining how such dispersal can be encouraged, regardless of the importance of this issue to the tourism industry and the government (ICCA, Statistics Report, 2017). Research by Mair (2013) found that less than 80% of attendees were adding tour activities to their convention trip.

Economic variables of a person such as the level of income or the price of the holiday can be interpreted as constraint to take a trip or a particular choice of destination. These economic variables enables the traveler to be able to make definite decision on the length of a holiday (Rogers, 2013). The average daily convention expenditures and length of stay for convention delegates is supplemented by the spending of convention exhibitors and companies associated with an event (National Crime Prevention Council (U.S.), 2013).

According to KNBS (2007), there was an increase in tourism earnings by 15% from Ksh.49 billion to Ksh. 56.2 billion between 2005 and 2006. Conventions led to an increase in international arrivals by 8.2 %from 1.5 million in 2005 to 1.6 million in 2006. A growth of 32.3% was recorded by the number of hotel bed-nights occupied from 4,500 bed-nights in 2005 to 5,922 in 2006. The number of inbound and outbound conventions rose by 37% and 12% respectively in 2006 (KNBS, Economic Survey, 2007). Consequently, there was a sharp decline in international arrivals by 34% from 1,817 to 1,203 in 2007 and 2008. There was a drop in tourism earnings due to the decline in the number of tourist arrivals between 2007 and 2008 from Ksh.65 billion to Ksh.52 billion. There was a significant decrease in the number of bed-nights occupied by 47% from 6,940 in 2007 to 3,699 in 2008. Throughout the year under review, the number of local and international conventions held declined by 17% and 19% respectively, in the convention sub-sector (KNBS, Economic Survey, 2009). According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2010), uncertainties related 15 to the post-election violence led to a 58% decline in business tourists' length of stay. For the past five years, visit of tourists to more than one attraction in one trip is a factor that has been upheld in line with the deteriorating average length of stay. The outcome was in the average length of stay being smaller by 13% in 2008 when compared to 2007.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Although Kim and Boo (2010) suggest that positive effects of conventions can be quantified in terms of income generated from convention facilities and promotion, Mair (2013) argues that there is uneven distribution of revenue generated by conventions hence a challenge and an area that needs further research. Mair (2013) suggests further research needs to be done to understand the tourism potential of convention delegates. Areas such as the effect of the quantity of function space on income management and performance evaluation, have relatively been neglected despite the growing interest in the expansion of convention centers. Lack of effective marketing and promotion and inadequate convention facilities makes Africa lose potential tourists to destinations such as Dubai, and China. This prompted this study to find out the role of conventions in influencing tourism performance.

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study was to evaluate role of conventions in influencing tourism performance in Africa.

#### **1.4 Justification and Significance of the Study**

The findings shall also help the Government in policy making which will be helpful in advanced tourism and by providing recommendation for further research. The findings shall prove substantial to Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife by providing satisfactory policies regarding conventions to be put in place. In addition Tourism Board [TB] in Africa shall also use the study findings in its measures for convention classification. The tourism institutions shall benefit from the knowledge gained in this area of study so that provision can be made for teaching conventions management in colleges.

### **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Theoretical review**

Two model that were found to be relevant to expound role of conventions in influencing tourism performance in Africa.. The theory that were found to best inform the research are the intrusion-reaction model (Hiller, 2005 and Core Periphery Model (Britton, 1981).

##### **2.2.1 The intrusion-reaction model**

According to Hiller (2005) an intrusion-reaction model best describes a convention as megaevent when it occurs in a host city. It is usually considered a prize when a large convention in which mobilization of all energies for preparation is attained (Spain & Butler, 2011). If one explanation of this process is 'planning to cope', the other description is the expectation of economic benefits as measured by bed nights and per capita multipliers of delegate spending (Kim & Boo, 2010). A convention is an exceptional opportunity for host city and delegates interaction as visualized by this model. All the deeper meanings of hospitality must be attached to transform a client to a guest, from the point of view of the host city (Bureau, 2003). According to convention organizers and delegates, temporary space in a foreign country should not just be colonized by a convention but understand the community as a partner in the total convention experience (Hiller, 2005). According to Cope (2003), specified essentials that are accessible to delegates like a reduced registration fee should be shown and included in conventions. Local distinctive such as traditions, history and economic strengths should also be incorporated by program organizers into their activities in creative ways that contribute to tourism. The aim of this approach is to show that not only does convention-host city offer provision of facilities and services but also moves into a closer relationship. The convention and the host community are strengthened in substantial ways when economic benefits are supplemented by collaboration benefits (Bhargava R. Kotur, 2014).

##### **2.2.2 Core Periphery Model**

This model explains the role of tourism in economic development and how developing nations are influenced socially in terms of tourism. It was developed by Britton (1981) to show flow of tourists into the periphery which is developing countries, from developed countries which is known as the core (Kauppila, 2011).The core holds the airlines, tour operators and hotel owners hence the tourism industry is controlled by developed countries. There is little experience of the reality of the local residents due to the minimal contact between the tourists and the local residents. The study used this model to show how flow of international tourists influences convention tourism (Spain & Butler, 2011). According to Pike (2014), the perspective of regional growth at a local level can interpret core–periphery models. Core–periphery association in a periphery is created or strengthened by the development of tourism since the movement of tourists accumulate in enclave

areas. Along with tourist flows, areas with acceleration of enterprises concentration are focused on investments, jobs and population. It has been argued that uneven distribution of capital in a geographical intellect has been affected by tourism and its development thus it contributes to increasing tourism development through conventions (Harrison & Anderson, 2010).

## 2.2 Empirical Review

Mburu ,(2019) conducted a study on community interpretation of heritage, examining the role of stakeholders' participation, identifying stakeholders' collaborations and the impacts on sustainable community based heritage tourism. The study area covered Mt. Kenya region counties targeting the local communities and the park management. The targeted Mount Kenya region counties include Kirinyaga, Nyeri, Meru, Tharaka Nithi, and Embu. The research applied descriptive survey research design to allow comparison of findings of different respondents in different counties. Research questions and interview were used to collect the data which resulted to 85% questionnaire and 100% interview response rate of the total targeted 384 sample size. Demographics such as gender, age, marital status, and level of education were evident as key determining factors that influence local community roles in enhancing sustainability of community based heritage tourism in Mt. Kenya region. Male gender dominate in participating in sustainability of community based heritage tourism while age and marital status influence people availability based on commitments to family chores, roles and educational engagement of the young people. Similarly, level of education is a significant factor that determines knowledge of promoting sustainable practices in the region. The respondents indicated to have knowledge on heritage, value Mt. Kenya as a natural heritage site and can interpret heritage based on the availability of community forums and CBO in the region. The respondents indicated to be moderately involve in participating in CBT but highly indicated the desire to be included in Mt. Kenya heritage decision making and the need to have more stakeholders. The respondents indicated availability of local and international stakeholders' collaborations that promote sustainable tourism. Collaboration are importance in the region as a key factor in promoting sustainable inclusion of various stakeholders to promote sustainable community based heritage tourism in Mt. Kenya region. In recommendation, communities should be appropriately engaged without undermining their roles to enhance local people interpretation, create awareness, make informed decisions, and sustainability promote heritage. Moreover, policy makers should develop stakeholders' partnerships and collaborations policies for engagement.

Mbatha, (2019) conducted a study to understand the information seeking behavior of agricultural researchers and extension officers within Nairobi County, Kenya. The research objectives were understanding of agricultural researchers' and extension workers' information seeking behavior, establishing their opinion on the quality of information resources in their information centers, extent to which they use agricultural information in their information centers, and identifying challenges they faced in the retrieval of agricultural information from their information centers. Two of the major agricultural research agencies in Kenya, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) and Horticultural Crops Development Authority (HCDA), were sampled as representative locations for the study. Additionally, four research objectives were proposed together with their corresponding questions in order to guide the entire research process. Suitable theoretical and conceptual frameworks were also developed from an extensive review of various literatures to help guide the researcher as well as widen his understanding of the research topic. A descriptive research design was selected as a suitable method through which the objectives of the

research would be achieved. This methodology involved development and administration of semi-structured questionnaires to 97 sampled respondents. The collected data was analyzed quantitatively. The research used tables to present research findings in line with the pre-established research objectives. The study findings revealed impressive trends in the search and use of agricultural information resources among extension workers and agricultural researchers in the two sampled agencies. The two categories of agricultural information users were found to prefer agricultural information from electronic journals and organizations' websites compared to print materials from public libraries and information centers.

Mugambi, (2017) conducted a study to assess the information literacy competency skills of practicing nurses at KNH with the objective of establishing, the information needs of practicing nurses, awareness of potential sources of information in nursing profession, ability to evaluate the retrieved information and establish their knowledge of ethical, legal and social-economic issues surrounding information use. The research adopted a case study focusing on single case of KNH, with a target population of 1723 registered nurses and a sample size of 347 respondents was selected. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data. Data was analyzed by use of likert scale and SPSS and presented through tables, charts, figure, graphs and percentage. The study established that information literacy program is taught at nursing schools in Kenya, four professional information needs were cited by practicing nurses at KNH; patient care, in-house presentation, presentation at a professional meeting/seminar and scholarship application/career development.

Langat, (2016) conducted a study to assess information seeking behaviour among health professionals in public health facilities in Garissa County. The specific objectives included: to establish the socio-demographic characteristics influencing information seeking behaviour of health professionals in Garissa County; to determine facility factors influencing information seeking behaviour of health professionals in Garissa County; to establish technological factors influencing information seeking behaviour of health professionals in Garissa County; to determine information needs of health professionals in Garissa County. The study used a cross-sectional study design employing mixed methods of data collection. Stratified sampling was used to select a study sample of 222 health professionals to participate in the study while purposive sampling was used to select participants for Key Informant Interviews and Focus group discussions. Descriptive and multinomial logistical regression was used to analyze quantitative data using SPSS version 20 while thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data from Key Informant Interviews and Focus group discussions. Results showed that mority of health professionals (86%) sought information only when and work experience ( $P=0.013$ ) had a statistically significant relationship with information seeking behaviour. Among the facility factors, workload ( $P=0.000$ ), and information sharing ( $P=0.0000$ ) had a statistically significant relationship with information seeking behaviour. Among technological factors, computer proficiency ( $P=0.000$ ), ability to search information from internet ( $P=0.000$ , ability to analyze and interpret digital data ( $P=0.000$ ) and internet connectivity ( $P=0.001$ ) had a statistically significant relationship with information seeking behaviour. In conclusion, there is insufficient effort made to understand information behaviour and address information needs of health professionals in Garissa County.

Gichiri,(2012) conducted a study to assess the quality (accuracy, adequacy and relevance) of the available information on HIV/AIDS, to discuss the inhibiting factors to its accessibility, assess the convenience of using this information and to establish the existing gaps in the current HIV/AIDS

information service. This study established that indeed quality was lacking in the available information on HIV/AIDS, this was mainly due to lack of adequate information to address varied needs, irrelevance and inaccuracy was prevalent in the available sources. A number of inhibiting factors to accessibility of this information were also identified including: language barriers cost of information, and attitude of information providers among others. Convenience of using the available information was also lacking according to this study, this was mainly due to unfriendly information formats and also the language of presentation. This study also established that the current information service on HIV/AIDS does not address all the requirements of individuals living with HIV/AIDS and therefore there exist information gaps in the current HIV/AIDS information service in Kenya.

### **2.3 Research gaps**

Methodological gap is the gap that is presented as a result in limitations in the methods and techniques used in the research (explains the situation as it is, avoids bias, positivism, etc.). Mugambi, (2017) conducted a study to assess the information literacy competency skills of practicing nurses at KNH with the objective of establishing, the information needs of practicing nurses, awareness of potential sources of information in nursing profession, ability to evaluate the retrieved information and establish their knowledge of ethical, legal and social-economic issues surrounding information use. The research adopted a case study focusing on single case of KNH, with a target population of 1723 registered nurses and a sample size of 347 respondents was selected. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data. Data was analyzed by use of likert scale and SPSS and presented through tables, charts, figure, graphs and percentage. The study established that information literacy program is taught at nursing schools in Kenya, four professional information needs were cited by practicing nurses at KNH; patient care, in-house presentation, presentation at a professional meeting/seminar and scholarship application/career development.. The studies presented a methodological gap as it used a case study approach while our current study adopted a desktop literature review method

Conceptual gap arises because of some difference between the user's mental model of the application and how the application actually works. Langat, (2016) conducted a study to assess information seeking behaviour among health professionals in public health facilities in Garissa County. Langat, (2016) conducted a study to assess information seeking behaviour among health professionals in public health facilities in Garissa County. The study used a cross-sectional study design employing mixed methods of data collection. Stratified sampling was used to select a study sample of 222 health professionals to participate in the study while purposive sampling was used to select participants for Key Informant Interviews and Focus group discussion. Results showed that majority of health professionals (86%) sought information only when and work experience ( $P=0.013$ ) had a statistically significant relationship with information seeking behaviour .The study presented a conceptual gap as it assessed information seeking behaviour among health professionals in public health facilities in Garissa County a, while the current study is evaluate role of conventions in influencing tourism performance in Africa.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a desktop literature review method (desk study). This involved an in-depth review of studies related to evaluating role of conventions in influencing tourism performance in



Africa. Three sorting stages were implemented on the subject under study in order to determine the viability of the subject for research. This is the first stage that comprised the initial identification of all articles that were based on the role of conventions in influencing tourism performance in Africa from various data bases. The search was done generally by searching the articles in the article title, abstract, keywords. A second search involved fully available publications on the subject on role of conventions in influencing tourism performance in Africa. The third step involved the selection of fully accessible publications. Reduction of the literature to only fully accessible publications yielded specificity and allowed the researcher to focus on influence of source of data, information flows and exchange platforms on level of HIS feedback in public health facilities which was split into top key words. After an in-depth search into the top key words (role , conventions, influencing tourism ,performance , Africa), the researcher arrived at 5 articles that were suitable for analysis. The 5 articles were findings from Mburu, (2019) conducted a study on community interpretation of heritage, examining the role of stakeholders' participation, identifying stakeholders' collaborations and the impacts on sustainable community based heritage tourism. The research applied descriptive survey research design to allow comparison of findings of different respondents in different counties. The research found out that male gender dominate in participating in sustainability of community based heritage tourism while age and marital status influence people availability based on commitments to family chores, roles and educational engagement of the young people.

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## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION FOR FURTHER STUDY**

### **4.1 Summary**

The launch of the tourism recovery programme has enabled the government to support the tourism sector. This is due to the recognition of the serious role tourism plays in employment and earnings. Tourism recovery programme is a 10-point strategy that puts emphasis on marketing, infrastructure improvement and private sector investment.

### **4.2 Conclusion**

The study concludes that tourism performance in Africa is significantly affected by convention tour activities, marketing of convention facilities, visitor stay and spending and consumer preference. The study found that convention tour activities had a positive and statistically significant relationship with tourism performance in Africa. The study therefore concludes that an increase in convention tour activities in Africa would lead to a unit increase in tourism performance in Africa.

### **4.3 Recommendations**

There is need for destination values to be preserved through plan development to maintain the destination's sense of place by outlining processes to monitor change, evaluate threats and opportunities, and permitting public and private leaders to respond. Regional and subregional approaches should be promoted by the governments and all stakeholders to promote conventions. Convention Visitor Bureau should be brought back to assist in marketing of the convention facilities in order to increase delegates who attend the conventions.

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