

Positioning ecotourism destinations in Kisumu County: Cultural Diversity Perspective

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Abstract: *Positioning of ecotourism destination is crucial to survival and success of business value chain of the cultural sites as alternative source of livelihood of the local communities in Kisumu County. This paper sought to establish significant factors to consider in branding cultural sites as ecotourism destinations for sustainable livelihood in Kisumu County and its environs. This study was anchored on Place Branding Theory and Social Exchange Theory. The study adopted descriptive embedded case design and cross-sectional survey in the three selected units of analysis methodology with both quantitative and qualitative approaches to source and analyze data. The finding established that positioning of ecotourism destinations will increase visitations in Kisumu County and create business value chain opportunities for sustainable source of livelihood.*

Keywords: *Positioning, Ecotourism Destinations, Kisumu county, Cultural diversity*

I. Introduction

Tourism is one of the biggest and fastest growing industries in the world. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), in 2008 international tourist arrivals reached 924 million. By the year 2010, international arrivals worldwide were expected to reach 1 billion. The most rapidly expanding segment of the tourism market is ecotourism, which in the year 1999 had a gross of US dollar 335 billion per year. Ecotourism in all its forms is often proposed as being able to ensure environmental conservation while enabling economic benefits to accrue to local communities. The most common denominator with respect to ecotourism is that it is nature based. Tourism now makes up such a large part of the world's gross national product; it is no longer possible to ignore the effects that tourism has upon local environments and peoples.

In recognition of this reality, on February 26, 1996, representatives from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) signed an accord pledging to cooperate, in the areas of environmental sites. Whereas most people may think that tourism is simply a leisure activity, the tourism industry in United States of America is actually an important business sector to the economy. It generates us dollars 1.8 trillion in economic impact to the American economy (US travel Association protection, nature-based tourism, promoting cultural tourism and the protection of historical).

In some countries tourism is the largest industry that provides billions of dollars as well as millions of jobs. Buyers of ecotourism products include leisure travelers, tour operators and travel agents, meeting and convention planners along with destination marketing organizations (DMOs) (Garcia, 2012). Research shows that consumers these days perceive the world to be small place with international travel more accessible than ever (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggot 2002). This makes conducting effective marketing extremely important especially if you are not one of the lucky 10 countries who are graced with a large number of ecotourism year after year. Thus creating customer loyalty is a key function of destination marketers.

The economic impact of ecotourism coupled with increasing competition makes effective destination marketing essential. The phenomena of branding a place as if were a consumer product has taken off in the recent years (Murphy, 2007).

A study by Boo, Soyoung, Busser & Baloglu (2009) reckons that ecotourism perceive destination as if it was a product and they evaluate its attributes on both cognitive and an effective basis, however marketing a destination is quite different than marketing a consumer product. First, ecotourism destination is much more multi-dimensional than consumer good; it is actually composite of many different products (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggot 2002). As a traveller you stay at a hotel, eat at different restaurants, visit certain attractions and participate in certain activities. You will interact with local people and observe the appearance, geography and cleanliness of the area around you. All these components together make a destination product and will contribute to ecotourism experience with destination. Ecotourism product is highly experiential in nature, and the experience will most likely different for each customer because of all the variables in play. It can be challenging for a tourism marketer to deliver on a destination brand's promise and achieve consistency from

customer to customer or visit to visit, since each of the destination's product elements are separate entities outside the direct control that have their own goals and motivations (Gartner, William & Konecnik 2011).

Destinations have many stakeholders groups which include destination's residents, entrepreneurs and of course the visitors (Garcia, Mar & Arturo 2012) these groups have various needs and getting them to work together can be a challenge to destination marketers. It is important to gain the cooperation of the two groups, locals and entrepreneurs in order to present a unified brand message to visitors. The government is also a stakeholder in ecotourism because of the economic impact the industry brings as well as the tax revenue it brings. The government's stake in tourism affects the destinations in form of regulations, policies regarding visas, border controls, taxes and funding (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggot 2002). Destination branding is about how consumer perceives the destination in their minds. Branding a destination is not just about creating a logo or slogan. It is about capturing the distinct element of the destination in the brand and communicating these elements through the brand's components: identity, essence, personality, image, character and culture. Managing these components in order to create a unique position of the destination brand in the consumer's mind is called brand positioning. A destination brand can be leveraged by creating a new "product" by increasing the consumer base and by co-branding (Baker & Cameron, 2008).

Destination branding is about combining all the attributes associated with the place (that is, its products, and services from various industries such as agriculture, tourism, sports, arts, investment, technology, education etc) manage the reputation of the brand based on four elements- brand identity, brand image, brand purpose and brand equity (Anholt, 2007).

Nandan, (2005) reports that brand identity relates to how destination identifies itself and conveys its individuality and distinctiveness to all its relevant publics. It is the consumer's perception of the brand. Brand purpose and brand equity refer to the goals and value of the brand. Anholt, (2007), Baker & Cameron (2008) argues that the goal of branding is to create an "emotional connection with consumers through the development of a unique personality or image for a product or service and that it is a "two way process that is developed with rather than to the consumer to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition". Baker & Cameron (2008) reckons that a brand as product but one that adds other dimensions that differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need. Brands are clusters of functional emotional values that promise a unique and welcome experience between a buyer and seller (Dinnie, 2008).

The process of branding involves designing, planning and communicating the value and the identity in an attempt to build on. A strong brand provides added value, brings a powerful identity, benefits, drives consumer behaviour, influences perceptions of reality, open doors, creates trust and respect and raises expectations of quality and integrity. In short we are talking about strong place representations. A strong destination brand must deliver distinctive, compelling, memorable and rewarding experiences to target audience (A.M.A, 2011).

Destination branding creates the unique destination proposition. It is a process used to develop a unique identity and personality that is different from all competitive destinations. It involves selection of a consistent brand element mix to identify and distinguish a destination through positive image building (Cai, 2000). It is a continuing process to create unique tourist experiences and build a sustainable image that emotionally bonds with the host community stakeholders and resonates with its targeted markets it is about more than simply making a destination more competitive. It is about packaging and marketing a set of images to promote a particular destination. Brand vision can become an instrument for transforming the place and social engineering of local cultures. Branding process requires mobilizing support and cultivating consensus in realising the brand as a place identity. On the same brand personality brings the destination image alive. Yoon, EKinci & Oppewal (2002) argued that brands would be perceived as personalities when they displayed their essential personality features.

Brands can be updated to keep up with changing times and customer tastes. The result of successful marketing means that a brand differentiates itself from other (competing) brands or destinations, just like a human being distinguishes him or herself from other people. Purpose of Branding Destinations; is to market destinations to potential visitors, both individual and groups, to provide economic benefit to the community and its members (including Destination Management Organizations, D.M.O.'s). D.M.O. members may include hospitality-related entries such as hotels, restaurants, tour operators, government bodies; individual firms that directly or indirectly support tourism for example, attractions, gas stations, retail outlets, city officials, transportation companies, incentive planners, airlines and Universities are all potential DMO members.

Cultural tourism represents one of the major future growth activities of global tourism demand of this millennium. In fact, in 1990s, cultural ecotourism was identified as one of the major future growth areas in Europe. The WTO (2006) report estimated that 37% of all international trips would have a culture element and this figure would be increased annually by 15% yearly. Richards (2001) suggest that it is inevitable that culture tourism appears to be growing because more tourists are now defined as 'cultural' and as tourism grows

internationally there are bound to be more visits to cultural attractions. According to European Union (2003) tourism and especially culture tourism in broader sense deserve priority attention as a policy area. Cultural tourism has become recognized as an important agent of economic and social change in Europe. The cultural and tourism industries appear to be advancing in all European nations and regions, occupying the spaces vacated by manufacturing industry and claiming a city centre locations. Garcia, Mar & Arturo (2012) estimated that the industry of culture and leisure represent 4.5% of the GDP in Spain. Whereas successfully implemented, community based ecotourism provides communities with additional income-generating opportunities while also protecting the local environment and conserving biodiversity.

The initial focus of CBE should be to define and create linkages between community conservation, ecotourism, and improved community well-being. Furthermore, a new niche market for ethno tourism is opening up whereby communities (and most particularly indigenous communities) are discovering that they can market their own knowledge, particularly ethnobotany, traditional medical knowledge, indigenous philosophy, nature awareness and survival, and their oral culture (including story-telling). In this niche market, indigenous peoples include their traditional knowledge and their perceived symbiotic relationship with nature as part of the CBE experience offered to the tourist. This type of CBE can be difficult to find even though it is increasingly popular. Care must be taken, however, that the community be in control of this process, rather than one or two community members or someone from outside the community, such as an inbound tour operator. Marketing indigenous knowledge can help to preserve a community's culture by revitalizing that culture. Cultural revitalization is a process whereby people preserve their cultural knowledge, history, and language. On the other hand, marketing indigenous knowledge also can be a degrading process of selling of knowledge and can weaken and even destroy a community's culture. To be successful, communities engaged in marketing their knowledge and culture must educate visitors about their lives, rather than merely sell their dances, crafts, and other cultural customs. Furthermore, tourists are more sophisticated now and want to learn from communities and feel that they are contributing to cultural revitalization, rather than cultural dissolution.

According to the Kenya Government Ministry of Tourism, Strategic Plan 2008-2012, tourism currently accounts for about 10 per cent of Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), making it the third largest contributor to the GDP after agriculture and manufacturing. It is also Kenya's leading foreign exchange earner generating about Ksh. 65.4 billion in 2007 up from 21.7 in 2002. Further, the sector is a major source of government revenue in the form of taxes, duties, license fees, entry fees among others. Due to tourism's linkage with other sectors, it has a very high multiplier effect on the economy, and as a result the capacity to stimulate demand for locally-produced goods and services, provide a wide market for agricultural products, promote regional development, and even create new commercial and industrial enterprises. In order for the sector to realize full potential and contribute effectively to the country's development goals as envisaged in Vision 2030. These include insecurity, untapped regional and domestic tourism, narrow product diversity, inadequate hotel/bed capacity, inadequate skilled human resource research and development, inadequate infrastructure support and environmental issues, among others must be addressed. As the business capital of western Kenya, the majority of visitors to

Kisumu are business travelers from other areas in Kenya or employees of international NGOs. In addition, many travelers from Nairobi come to Kisumu to visit their relatives, preferring to stay in the city rather than in their rural hometown. The city is considered to be relatively safe for tourists, and is within close proximity to a variety of tourist sites such as Ruma National Park to the south (four hours from Kisumu), Ndero Island (one hour from Kisumu) to the north and Kakamega forest (one and a half hrs from Kisumu) to the East. More than 300 visitors arrive to Kisumu daily and tourist growth is evident in the increased number of flights to the city. Previously, there was one daily flight to Kisumu and today there are four. In interviews with business owners, NGOs and government officials, tourism was continually cited as one of the top three industries with growth potential in Kisumu. Locals argue that the proximity of Kisumu to national parks and ecotourism destinations, as well as Lake Victoria, make it an excellent tourist location. However, the city's lack of tourist hotels and restaurants, poor roads leading to tourist sites, and the lake's high pollution levels which make it unsuitable for swimming and other lake activities, may make Kisumu undesirable for international leisure tourists hence a need for proper planning and private public partnerships as a measure to open up the locked up potentials for tourism in Kisumu, Kenya.

Catering for ecotourism involves building infrastructure to accommodate tourists. These include transportation, lodging, food, and activities for travelers. Tourists are less concerned than "mass tourist" about large, fancy hotels and paved roads, but a clean and healthy atmosphere, low impact housing such as small lodges, bed and breakfast inns, or rooms in village homes is usually preferred by tourists. Plans for ecotourism development including community involvement from a frequently inappropriately "Western mindset" not necessarily from the traditional cultural framework and cognition of the local residents. Tourism is not only one of the largest but also one of the fastest growing industry which is important with entry of many new destinations into the market that forces all to emulate and compete in the battle at a global level to win many

tourists market. This intense global competition in tourism industry forces destinations to develop strong, unique and competitive destinations brands. A brand identifies a firm and its products or service by the use of name distinctive symbol which differentiate it from other competing firms or service in a given market.

Branding refers to all the processes and activities involved in creating a brand. Kotler & Keller (2009) reckons that branding is endowing products and services with the power of brand, according to them a brand is perceptual entity that is rooted in reality, but reflects the perception and perhaps even the idiosyncrasies of consumers. Branding is characterized by different approaches some of the common activities involved in branding process are determining a brand personality, brand identifiers (brand drivers). Brand personality refers to the specific mix of human traits that are attributed to a particular service or product. Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2004) identifies four brand personalities and these are - (down to earth, honest, wholesome and cheerful); excitement (daring, spirited, imaginative and up to date); competence (reliable, intelligent, and successful); ruggedness (tough). Kotler & Keller (2009) suggest that brand personality can be built on product feature service and or image or a combination of any of these two associations. Branding positioning refers to how the brand is placed in the minds of the consumer. Positioning take the images and show how the brand personality compares to other compete product or service.

Garcia, Mar & Aturo (2012) suggest that cultural tourism embraces the full range of experiences visitors can undertake to learn what makes destinations distinctive – its lifestyle, its heritage, its arts, its people and the business of providing and interpreting the culture to visitors. The goal of branding is to attract tourism and create or promote image of the product/ service that would entice the target audience to not only visit but keep visiting the destination. Branding then is not just about awareness level raised of product/service but trigger the action to visit (and revisit). In the end, at the heart of successful branding is the desire to be and remain in the top-line of choices for the target consumers. In view of these it needs to be said that the development community has not adequately addressed how tourism can work with local communities and that there has been inadequate funding to address this issue in the past. Most foreign (non-locals) plans for ecotourism development including community involvement from a frequently inappropriately “Western mindset” not necessarily from the traditional cultural framework and cognition of the local residents.

Hayombe, Agong, Nystrome, Mossbarg, Malbert & Odede, (2013) illustrate that ecotourism is emerging as an alternative source of eco-social development that enhance environmental conservation, promote preservation of cultural heritage and alternative source of sustainable livelihood Tourism earnings and arrivals posted with steady growth in the past three years with arrivals of 1.7 million earning Kenya Shillings 1.7 billion with a current target of 3 million arrivals by the year 2017 which will double earnings to about Kenya Shillings 193 billion by 2017. Community values and specific cultural beliefs are rarely integrated into development plans. Community involvement is discussed only in terms of achieving a kind of secondary benefit for local residents; the primary goal is either the conservation of natural resources, or for developers to make profit (Sofield, 2003). The poor rural communities must be assured an improved standard of living from ecotourism, if they are to support the preservation of nature and therefore the ecotourism industry.

Kisumu County is endowed with diverse cultural sites as ecotourism destinations that can be alternative source of livelihood; it is still associated with exacerbated poverty with 50% of the local people living below poverty line (Africa Environmental Outlook, 2005). Lake Basin has been characterized with entrenched poverty, recurrent draught, crop failures and fish decline (Abila, 2002), yet if the rich and diverse ecotourism destinations attractions are harnessed they would transform the livelihood and create employment opportunities to optimize economic benefit to the local people. The application of branding to destinations is a new concept that is why the study sought to determine significant factors considered and community participation in branding cultural sites as ecotourism destinations

II. Literature Review

2.1 Branding cultural sites as Ecotourism destinations

Branding equity is so valuable and it appears on major marketers balance sheets. Brands have become much more than the products they sell, it is a personality that triggers on the mind of consumers and other stakeholders. The purpose of branding is to achieve consumer perception that will deliver a sustainable competitive advantage to a product or a destination. A study by Kay (2006) suggests that branding of cultural attractions is perceived to be more complex because of peculiarities of cultural attractions compared to conventional services such as banking, education and health. Therefore destination as town, city or a place has one or more attractions for tourists. This may be in the form of scenic sites culture, leisure activities, shopping, rebates, food, and excursion. It is believed that the benefits tourists enjoy from an event are transferred to the host destination (Cai, 2002). When an event is properly branded it has potentials of contributing to the host destination as a future attraction to make the destination unique and even popular to respective visitors.

A brand is an identifier; it identifies a firm, product or services by the use of name distinctive symbol which differentiate it from other competing firms, products or services in a given market. Kotler & Keller (2009)

reckons that branding is an endowing products and services with the power of a brand that is a perceptual entity that is rooted in reality, but reflects the perception and perhaps even idiosyncrasies of consumers which is characterised by different approaches some of the common activities involved in branding processes are determining a brand personality brand positioning and brand identifiers (brand drivers). Brand personality refers to the specific mix of human traits that are attributed to a particular product or service. There is a general agreement that a brand is endowed with personalities and that consumers have the tendency of choosing brands whose personality fit their own.

A study by Aaker & Joachimsthaler (2004) suggest four brand personality, this includes sincerity (Down to earth, honest, wholesome and cheerful); excitement (daring) spirited, imaginative and up to date; competence (Reliable, intelligent and successful); ruggedness (outdoorsy and tough). Kottler & Keller (2009) suggest that brand personality can be built on product features, service and image or a combination of any of these. They identified seven common personality traits which include self confidence dominance, autonomy, defence, sociability and adoptability. Brand positioning refers to how the brand is placed in the minds of consumers, positioning takes the images and shows how the brand personality compares to other competing products or service. Brand identifiers or elements are drivers that serve to identify and differentiate the brand. Brand identifiers are categorised into three: Brand (Brand name, logos, symbols, character, spokes people, slogans, jingles, pages, and signage); the product (service and all accompanying activities and supporting marketing programmes); and other associations indirectly transferred to the brand (a person, place or thing).

Hankinson (2004) underscores that brands were once assigned to consumer goods but are now applicable to place and attractions, cultural heritages are destination attractions and inadvertently share some attributes that influence visitors' decisions to visit such destinations. A study by Blain, Levy & Ritchie (2005) reports that destination branding as "a set of marketing activities that support the creation of name, symbol, logo, word, mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination. Consistently conveys the expectations of a memorable travelling experience that is uniquely associated with destinations. Serves to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination. Branding serves to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice. Cultural heritage are tourist attractions which takes place in tourist destinations.

A study by Thompson, Devis & Mullen (2013) in climate change communications studies of brand (Neuro-markets) gives a brand manager a new evidence of the power of brands that when consumers who are aware of a brand during consumption experience the brain scans revealed significant neurological responses. Brain imaging reveals substantial response to neurological responses between products that were branded in comparison to similar consumption experience in which the consumers were unaware of the brand. Brand in knowledge affects product preference or product choice.

A study by Nowak, Sahli & Sgrro (2006) observes that positive emotions, product quality, fair pricing, service quality and customer commitment are predictors of brand equity. It is found that all the five attributed to customer commitment with the highest predictor power in "branding of Singapore" used the following attributes for analysis- product (lots to do, cultural diversity, cosmopolitan, world class infrastructure); delivery(accessibility, efficient, friendly and safe); experience(at ease, stress free, welcome) and end benefit (fulfilling, satisfying, enjoyable, rewarding and enriching). This explains why tourist destinations have put increasing emphasis on promotional and developing a cultural strategy to attract tourists with high appreciation for art, culture and heritage, in other words tourists with a strong accumulation of cultural capital. This perspective attracting and catering for tourists with a high cultural capital will contribute towards the competitiveness and sustainable development of the destination (Throsby, Girard & Nijkap 2007). Cultural sites do not have sufficient brand recognition to compete with other cultural sites as ecotourism destination.

2.2 Determining brand image factors in the cultural sites

According to American Marketing association a brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (Keller, 2008). Brand helps consumers to identify and differentiate goods and services. Brand also plays an important role in building relationships between consumers and products. Obviously a destination is a product under the definition of brand, but place branding is quite complex as there are many facets to places as a location for branding purposes given the economic, social, cultural, political and technological issues related with places as products (Anholt, 2004; Kerr,2006; Koenig,2011). In order to address the various facets of a brand associated with destination, the process for image building will require a long term horizon and cohesion in terms of city policies and marketing efforts to build credibility due to variety of constituencies involved with no clear ownership and transient(Freire,2005; Dinnie,2011).

Destination branding consist of marketing activities which create and reinforce positive images associated with the destination with view to influence prospective ecotourists to prefer destination to another (Blain, et al.,2005). Image is at the core of destination branding and a strong destination brand can only be

created through a powerful and distinct brand image (Cai, 2002). Studies by Tasci et al., (2007) suggest that positive image is intended to change the perceptions that tourist hold about ecotourism destination.

Study by Hadrikurnia, (2011) reckons that three main elements that are necessary to consider in branding of a city as ecotourism destination. The first element involves the physical components of the destination (i.e. Buildings, infrastructures, etc). The second element is individual components (i.e. people, citizens and tourists who are affected by cultural factors- which creates different values, beliefs and characteristics as social factors, personal factors, such as objectives, personal preferences and so on and psychological factors. The third element involves organizational element (i.e., the group that consist of individuals who share the same objectives, beliefs etc). What is more nebulous in the branding process is the creation of trust in various constituencies of the city regarding what is being done to protect and enhance the living conditions for all its residents and visitors (Kavaratzis,2008; underwood & Fray; Konig, 2011).

Theoretical Framework

This study was premised on Place Branding Theory which is a theory that seeks to improve the reputation of ecotourism destination with potential of economic growth. The theory advanced by Anholt (2007) is applied to places for variety of purposes that include increase of exports, attraction of new investments and diversifications of revenue generation streams of ecotourism destinations. The Place Branding Theory is relevant to the study because it focuses on the promotion of the destination's values which places seek to position in minds of potential target market segment. It will be jointly guided with the Social Exchange Theory (SET) as reviewed by Schiele, Holger, Jasper & Huttinger (2010) as a concept of comparison level used to explain how parties in an exchange weigh their benefits and costs of social exchange relationship to determine their relationship commitment and satisfaction level. They propose that people engage in social exchange to achieve their goals. Nammir (2012) reported that Social Exchange Theory (SET) as a frame for expounding exchanges of resources in market condition which are imperfect between parties or a network via a social process. Whether they are tangible or intangible resources the goal is improving and sustainability interactions or relationships in-order to satisfy each other's expectations.

Objective

To establish significant factors considered in branding cultural sites as ecotourism destinations in Kisumu County.

Research Question

What are the significant factors in branding cultural sites as ecotourism destinations in Kisumu County?

Research Hypothesis

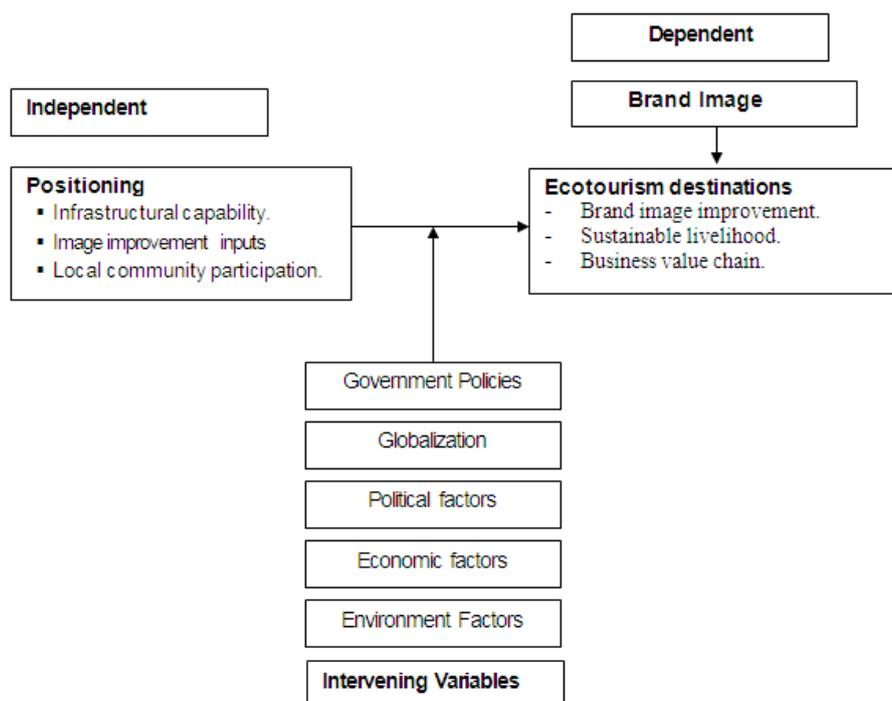
In an attempt to achieve the objective, the research was guided by the null hypothesis that:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between branding and local community participation in promoting the cultural sites as ecotourism destinations in Kisumu County.

Chi-square was used to test Hypothesis in order to predetermine alpha level of significance (0.05) and a degree of freedom (df = 3).

Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by the following conceptual framework:



This conceptual framework indicates the nexus of branding cultural sites and community participation in ecotourism destinations; however these relationships may be influenced by government policies, globalization dynamics, economic factors, political factors and environmental factors.

III. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study used descriptive embedded case design and a cross - sectional survey to carry out the research in the three selected units of analysis in Kisumu County. An embedded case study is a case with more than one sub-unit of analysis (Yin, 2003). It is a methodology that provides a means of integrating quantitative and qualitative methods into a single research study (Scolz & Tietje, 2002; Yin, 2003). However, the identification of sub-units allows for more detailed level of enquiries where the goal is to describe the feature, context and the process of phenomenon. The study design will be appropriate because it relies on multiple sources of evidence to add breadth and depth to data collection to assist in bringing richness of data together in the apex of understanding through triangulation and contribute to the validity of the research (Yin, 2003).

3.2 Target Population

The study was conducted among the households and key informants around the three selected ecotourism destinations sites as the target population with a sample size of population selected through stratified random sampling drawn from the target population of study destinations.

3.3 Sample Size and Sample Selection

A purposive sampling technique was used to settle on the three sites of study. The three sites were selected by virtue of being rich in cultural history and are located in varied areas of Kisumu County. The three sites are: Kitmikayi in Seme district, Abindu Caves in Kisumu west district and Luanda Magere in Wang’aya -1 Muhoroni district. Stratified random sampling was used to select respondents from the target population. The positioning of the cultural sites is in villages. Each village represented a stratum for the study. A simple random sample was selected from each stratum. The study targeted 4792 households in the three sub-locations with sample size of 356 respondents determined by the formula in Fisher et al., (1998) for determining a population that is less than 10,000. For equitable distribution of the sample size, Proportional allocation of samples per stratum was used.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents in the Sample

Sites	Sub-Locations	Population	Total Population %	Sample Size
Kitmikayi	Kitmikayi	1802	37.6	134
Abindu Caves	“Bar B”	1460	30.5	109
Luanda Magere	Wangaya 1	1530	31.9	114
TOTAL		4792	100.0	356

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The study used stratified random sampling procedures to divide the population into geographical subgroups. The samples were stratified according to the numbers of villages in every sub location to ensure representation. By the use of simple random sampling method in each stratum, a sample of 356 consisting of Households 134 in Kitmikayi, Household 109 in Bar 'B', Households 114 in Wangaya 1 32, were selected.

3.5 Data collection and Analysis Techniques

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the research design consisted of two phases. That in order to capture all the components of destination image a combination of structured and unstructured methodologies was used. Gurthie and Thyne (2004) also recommended that unstructured methods be incorporated into the research design at an early stage to elicit information from respondents that were later analyzed using quantitative methods. Initially, data was collected through the use of focus group discussion (FGD) which led to the construction of questionnaires. Quantitative data were analyzed by the use of Pearson's (r) product moment correlation coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 to look at the relationships of variables interrelatedness as indicated in the conceptual framework. Principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the branding and local community participation factors to group the various variables of the construct. Hypothesis testing used chi-square test (X^2) of independence to test if there is significant relationship between branding cultural sites and community participation.

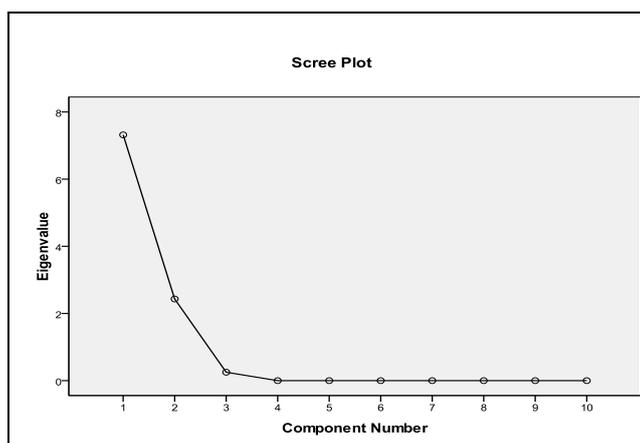
Then by comparing the p – value with 0.05 significant levels, we may either accept H_0 or reject it. If the calculated p-value is less than 0.05 the null hypothesis is rejected or otherwise null hypothesis we fail to reject it. Qualitative data were transcribed, organized into various relevant themes and reported as they arrive. (Kothari, 2008).

IV. Results And Discussions

4.1 Correlation Matrix

A correlation matrix was formed for the ten variables under local community participation and it was noted that some correlation coefficients were above 0.7 and others below 0.3. Thus there were some strongly related variables that could be grouped together while others could not. This justifies the PCA approach.

A scree plot was run and two major components identified. Notice the first two points of the plot along the slope. These have eigen-values greater than 1. The rest of the points are more or less along the horizontal hence which has little weight to add to the two components.



4.2 Principal Component Analysis

The results of Principal component analysis as in table 2 below. Major components were singled out. The first eight variables loaded heavily on component one. These can be nicknamed “infrastructural capabilities of the sites”. That is the existing structures, man power and systematic organization aimed at attracting visitation. The last two load heavily on component two and are “image improvement inputs” That is branding resources and local supply chain items. The communalities are all above 0.9 which implies a strong explanatory power of the two components on the several grouped variables under them.

The deviations are computed by subtracting the expected value (2.5) from the observed values (scores) as reported in Perujondi et al (2012). Variables 1, 2, 3 and 5 have positive deviations which imply agreement to the stated factors. However the deviations are minimal. The significant factors were those with negative deviations. These need to be addressed as more urgent in an effort to improve the brand image. They include factor 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

The standard deviations column gives the levels of variability of responses among the sites. The large standard deviations (> 0.5) imply a sharp variance on the responses between the sites. This is normal since each site is at a different level of brand image development.

Factors considered in branding cultural sites.		COMPONENTS					
		Component 1	Component 2	Commonalities	Score	Deviation	standard deviation
infrastructural capability of sites	1. There is a management team responsible for the cultural site.	.994	.059	.995	2.50	0.002	0.678
	2. There are processes of tour guidance in the cultural site.	.963	-.143	.951	2.60	0.106	0.543
	3. There are catch points/preferences that tourists value most.	.946	-.236	.947	2.74	0.241	0.261
	4. There are specific areas of interest that tourists prefer included in the package.	.923	.376	.697	2.32	-0.179	0.281
	5. There are enablers that need to be put in place to improve visitations in ecotourism destinations.	.921	-.351	.972	2.75	0.253	0.180
	6. There are adequate blend of characteristics for tourist to consume in the cultural site?	.773	.604	.998	2.33	-0.164	0.293
	7. There are proper infrastructures leading to the cultural site.	.757	.650	.998	2.18	-0.310	0.521
	8. There are structures at the cultural site where visitors can reside in such as tent, hostels and hotels.	-.660	.512	.963	1.26	-1.236	0.156
image improvement inputs	9. There are local supply chain items that can make the visitation memorable.	-.149	.988	.994	1.66	-0.835	0.068
	10. There are sufficient branding resources for image identity of the ecotourism destinations.	-.200	.979	.992	1.62	-0.878	0.289

4.3 Chi-Square Test for Independence

The test is applied when you have two categorical variables from a single population. It is used to determine whether there is a significant association between the two variables.

The hypothesis was stated as follows:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between branding and local community participation in promoting the cultural sites as ecotourism destinations in Kisumu County.

H₁: There is significant relationship between branding and local community participation in promoting the cultural sites as ecotourism destinations in Kisumu County.

A Significance level of 0.05 was adopted. The test was carried out in four phases. Test on each site and another for a combination of all sites. For site 1, a p-value of 4.26E-7 was achieved. 5.17E-18 for site 2 and 8.86E-21 for site three. In all cases, the p- value was much less than 0.05 prompting us to reject the null hypothesis. This implies that there is significant relationship between local community participation and branding of cultural sites as ecotourism destinations in Kisumu County.

Further, a test for all sites combined yielded a p – value of 0, hence the same implications.

ALL SITES	OBSERVED FREQUENCY				Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
B	268	1784	1320	198	1090
C	296	1620	1146	508	1090
Total	564	3404	2466	706	2180

Test significant at 0.05 levels.

ALL SITES	EXPECTED FREQUENCY				Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
B	124.5	504.5	312.5	148.5	1090
C	124.5	504.5	312.5	148.5	1090
Total	249	1009	625	297	2180

The correlation coefficient between the two factors was 0.980 implying a strong positive relationship between them. The coefficient of determination was 0.96 suggesting a 96% explanation of local community participation on branding.

V. Conclusion And Recommendation

The study established that local community participation is a significant factor to consider in branding cultural sites as ecotourism destinations in Kisumu County. Improvement of community participation will enhance the brand image of the cultural sites as ecotourism destinations which will give a competitive edge to these destinations in comparison to others. The finding was confirmed by Chi-square test of hypothesis where correlation coefficient between the factors was 0.980 implying a strong positive relationship. It is essential for destination managers to effectively handle its combination of attributes to consolidate the tourism appeal of the destinations and to maintain its desired positioning in the target markets. The study has reported negative characteristics, which if not rectified will severely impinge on the image, and positioning of the destination. These brand image factors represent the Unique Selling Proposition of the brand Kisumu County and it is upon destination managers to carry out a careful identification of their destination attributes in order to develop a Unique Selling Proposition for their respective destinations (Perunjodi, N., Prabha, R & Ramesh D, 2012). It is recommended that a study analyzing political and economic factors that could be affecting the branding of destinations with emergence of the county government with homogenous population be carried out. The challenge will be how to improve ecotourism destinations image in a devolve system of government.

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