EFFECTIVENESS OF DOMESTIC TOURISM MARKETING STRATEGIES IN CENTRAL KENYA REGION: A PRODUCT-PROMOTION DISCONNECT

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ABSTRACT
This study addresses the claim that Kenyan tourism is failing to properly develop a differentiated tourism product and is over-dependent upon developing independent promotion initiatives. It examines the comparative effectiveness of applying promotion over product development strategies. The study represents a sample of 200 respondents drawn from tourism establishments in Central Kenya surveyed between June 2007 and December 2013. Regression results indicated that many stakeholders perceive promotion as more important than product development (P <0.05). It implies that promotion disconnection from other strategies curtails attainment of competitive advantage. The findings report a marketing paradigm that integrates product differentiation with promotion.
Keywords: Competitive advantage, Differentiation, Marketing mix, Promotion, Domestic tourism

INTRODUCTION
Tourism industry in Kenya is a key economic pillar which contributed approximately 56.18 Billion U.S. dollars (USD) to the country's GDP in 2014 (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2015). The total contribution of tourism industry to direct and indirect employment in 2014 was approximately 543,500 jobs. This accounted for 9.2% of total employment in Kenya (WTTC, 2015). Kenya receives approximately 1.26 million tourists annually including 1.2 million domestic tourists (United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2016). The current number of tourists is approximately 30% of the existing Kenyan supply capacity (Ministry of East African Community, Trade and Tourism [MEACTT], 2016). Although Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) has devised promotional strategies to increase tourist numbers, visitation to popular destinations is still minimal (Oketch and Nedelea, 2008). This gap between the actual tourists flow and available capacity is a function of inadequate product differentiation.

It has become common for many tourism businesses to rely on promotion as their central marketing strategy. Previous studies indicate that promotion has immensely contributed to the growth of international mass tourism (Palmer, 1998; Doyle, 2000; Fyall and Garrod, 2005). A key reason for undertaking promotion is the belief that using this strategy an organisation could achieve higher profits in the short run. Promotion efforts rise proportionally with interests by companies to expand their current market share through influencing customer choices (Laws and Scott, 2001).

Although Kenya is undertaking domestic tourism marketing, promotional strategies are not properly linked to new product development efforts (Oketch and Nedelea, 2008). Previous reports on Kenyan domestic tourists' perceptions indicate that tourism practitioners have not fully satisfied tourists' products expectations. This potentially reduces the demand for local tourism (Kieti, 2007). Many reports however document that tourism companies can apply competitive marketing strategies to achieve long-term business productivity (Crotts *et al.*, 2000; Middleton, 1998; Leask *et al.*, 2002; Herfert *et al.*, 2002).

Recent reports indicate that product differentiation functions to achieve a higher competitive advantage that using promotion alone. Inscribing sought features in products creates better destination brand experiences and tourists' loyalty (Barnes, *et al.*, 2014; Jeuring, 2016). This enhances broader market share while sustaining profits (Yang, *et al.*, 2013). The present study was set with an aim of determining the marketing mix tools applied by tourism companies in Central Kenya while evaluating their effectiveness in enhancing tourist numbers and profits.

The Need for Marketing Domestic Tourism
Competitive advantage is achievable when a destination incorporates varied tourism marketing tools (Yang *et al.*, 2013). Combining promotion with product development strategies is an avenue for enhancing visitor demand due to the advantages of applying the overall marketing mix (Evans *et al.*, 2003). The annual demand of international tourism in Kenya has decreased from 1,810,000 in 2011 up to 1,261,000 tourists due to terrorism scares and travel sanctions (WTTC, 2015) (See figure 1). The

UNWTO (2016) further reveals that Kenya faces high competition from South Africa, Egypt, Morocco and Tanzania which has further caused declined international visitor flows.

Domestic tourism attracts approximately 1,200,000 million tourists annually which represent 50% of the total tourists visiting Kenya (MEACTT, 2016). Repeat visitation is much less than 10% these figures. Embarking on domestic tourism is thus an attempt to reduce overdependence on international tourism while creating business reliability. Kenya is globally perceived to be an 'exotic destination' due to her previous promotion of wildlife and beach packages (Akama and Kieti, 2003). Due to the high demand for wildlife based tourism local tour operators pay more attention to the international tourists rather than to domestic tourists. These operators often rush Kenyan tourists through attractions while prioritizing to serve profitable international tourists who reward them through the tipping system (Akama *et al.,* 2011).

Undesirable past experiences by Kenyan tourists arguably contribute to the declining domestic tourists' average stays (Oketch and Nedelea, 2008). The above externalities influence effectiveness of tourism marketing in presence of intense promotion by KTB. The extent to which such external factors influence marketing effectiveness remains unclear. For countries like Kenya where tourism is a key GDP driver, marketing research is paramount not only to evaluate the effectiveness of domestic tourism marketing strategies but also to drive economic development policies.

South Africa and Egypt receive approximately 12 million and 10 million tourists per annum respectively (WTTC, 2015) although these countries spend lesser budgets in promoting international tourism. Domestic tourists represent approximately 66% of the total South African visitors and approximately 30% of the total Egyptian travellers. South Africa effectively links her tourism products to visitor's facilities while Egypt diversifies her products towards cultural tourism experiences (Government of South Africa- Ministry of Tourism, 2016). Egypt has also developed amiable tourists' relations while retaining loyalty in the current travel market. In contrast Kenya still depends on conventional tourism forms without supporting her products with suitable destination facilities and services (Akama and Kieti, 2003). Although Kenyan tourism focuses on promotion in order to achieve higher sales her tourism investments and outputs such as visitor exports are disconnected (Table 1).

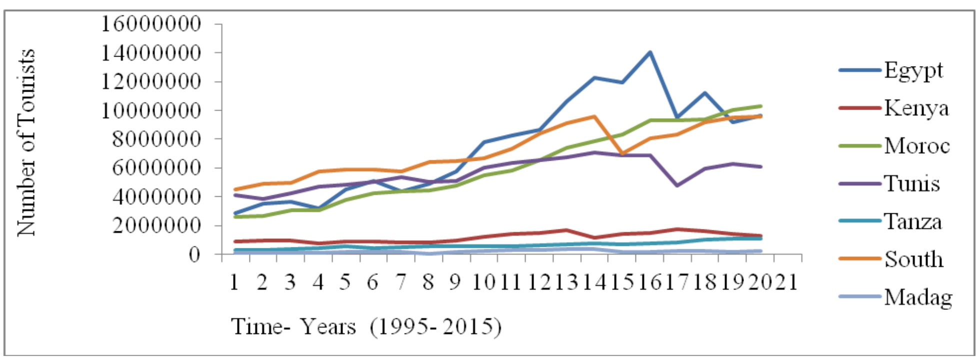

Figure 1: International Demand of Tourism (Top 7 Countries in Africa)

The government of Kenya allocated tourism, trade and industry 2% of the total budget in 2011/2012 financial year (Republic of Kenya, 2011). To meet the 2008-2012 tourism strategic plan, the Ministry of Tourism spent approximately 51.65 million USD to promote tourism but only 4.71 million USD to augment the tourism product (MOT, 2011). The earnings realised from this expenditure was only 47,058,824 million USD hence considered a loss. In 2014/2015 the government spent 220 million USD on tourism while in 2016/2017 it has allocated 450 million USD on tourism recovery, sports, culture and arts (Republic of Kenya, 2016).

Tourism Fund, a state corporation, will spend 280 million USD in financing tourism programmes. It spent 4.07 million USD in 2014, 4.21 million USD in 2015 and will spend 4.45 USD in 2016 in promotion initiatives. It spent 2.49 million USD in 2014, 2.36 million USD in 2015 and will spend 2.79 million USD in 2016 in developing products (Tourism Fund, 2016). This reveals that the government invests more on promotion than product development. Influencing policy directions on investing in various tourism products requires a clear evaluation of potential economic contribution of such investments.

Table 1: Travel and Tourism Investments in 2014

World Rank	Country	(US $ bn)	World Rank	Country	(US $ bn
28	South Africa	5.60	33	South Africa	10.40
	World average	4.50	37	Egypt	8.40
34	Egypt	4.30	38	Morocco	8.10
37	Morroco	3.80		World average	7.50
62	Tanzania	1.10	62	Tunisia	3.00
70	Tunisia	0.80	75	Tanzania	2.10
71	**Kenya**	**0.80**	84	**Kenya**	**1.80**
95	Namibia	0.40	99	Madagascar	1.30
108	Madagascar	0.30	120	Namibia	0.70
138	Senegal	0.10	124	Senegal	0.60
171	Gambia	0.00	171	Gambia	0.00

Source; WTTC, 2015, modified by authors

Nexus between Promotion and Differentiation

Differentiation is a competitive strategy which enables companies to achieve superior performance in an important customer benefit area (Porter, 1980). Superiority for Companies is achieved through high quality product performance, augmentation and better product perception by consumers (Fyall and Garrod, 2005; Doyle, 2000). Augmentation attempts to enhance product features while properly linking products with post-consumption support services. Differentiation is applied by companies in order to concentrate on variables that guarantee a competitive advantage (Fyall and Garrod, 2005). Companies often integrate differentiation with reducing production costs while focusing on niche market needs better than competitors (Fyall and Garrod, 2005; Kotler and Armstrong, 2004).

Promotion attempts to increase company's market share by attracting potential customers while differentiation aims at retaining current customers (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004). A well-developed promotion strategy increases sales for companies but differentiation increases client loyalty (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004). Promotion is an externally driven communication strategy while differentiation is an internally focused strategy for improving products features (Fyall and Garrod, 2005). However both concepts agree in their objective of creating competitive advantages through sustained or increased sales (Middleton, 1998). For the purpose of this paper, differentiated products refer to assembly of wider product features; value added pricing and commitment to use competent personnel in distributing products. It also refers to adoption of efficient technology in distributing products (Zeithaml *et al*, 2006).

Theoretical Background

This study was built on the strategy clock model developed by Evans *et al.* (2003) for strategic marketing and planning. Evans *et al* (2003) explains three elements that determine a strategic choice; formulating organisation's competitive strategy, evaluating the available options and selecting the most effective option. The organisation can either choose; being segment specific, charging low prices, choosing a hybrid, differentiation and focused differentiation (Evans *et al.*, 2003). Differentiation is applied to add product's value while strategising to increase sales volume. Organisations can further increase their prices while altering the product's value positively or negatively. This idea could be advanced to explain changes of product strategies across destination's life cycle stages. At exploratory stage the clock points at being segment specific. Consolidation stage involves charging low prices; development stage involves developing hybrids while stagnation stage involves developing a differentiation strategy. The product's value is maintained in the first three stages, while higher prices are charged at the stagnation stage (Fyall and Garrod, 2005). The strategy clock therefore has to operate in a clockwise direction in order to attain a strong destination's brand and image (Figure 2).

The current study concentrated on the Central Kenya circuit. This circuit receives approximately 50,000 visitors annually with tourism in contributing about 768 million USD. Central Kenya circuit receives short stay visitors due to its relative proximity to Nairobi which makes transport related costs lower than other Kenyan circuits (MOT, 2011). Projections reveal that Central Kenya might receive more than 200,000 tourists annually if it develops special interest and mountain tourism products. This circuit is at the exploratory stage of the destination life cycle. At this stage the government partially participates in developing tourism, few tourism operations exist while the profit margins are usually low. Explorers and pioneering adventure tourists form the main product market. Tourism contributes minimal social-economic effects (Butler, 1980; Laws and Scott, 2001; Godfrey and Clarke, 2000; Gunn, 1994). Attractions in Central Kenya region include: Mt. Kenya volcanic cone, Aberdare ranges, Mt. Kenya forest, and culture of indigenous Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru communities, including their traditional agriculture. Tourism infrastructure and destination services exist but this destination lacks adequate tour operators and agencies to integrate the previously mentioned components.

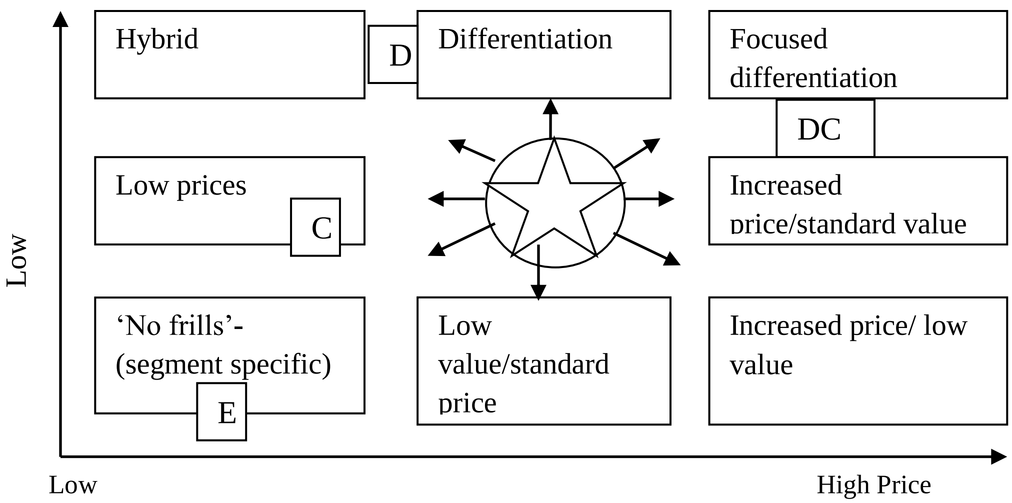

Figure 2: The Strategy Clock (Evans *et al*, 2003) and Destination Life Cycle; E = Exploration, C = Consolidation, D = Development, S = Stagnation, DC = Decline)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Population

This study used cross sectional design based on structured interviews. Structured interviews permit the use of questionnaires to objectively guide data collection process as opposed to open-ended interviews (Veal, 2006). In this case the interviewer fills the questionnaire rather than a checklist (Bordens and Abbot, 2008). Veal (2006) explains that completion by the interviewer ensures much accurate and complete response. This study targeted a population of 8,000 respondents who comprised 800 museum officers, 2,400 park officers, 800 tour operators' employees and 4,000 hoteliers.

Sampling Procedures and Sample Characteristics

Cluster Random Sampling was used to derive a sample of 200 respondents. This comprised 20 museum officers, 60 park officers, 20 tour operators and 100 hotel employees in the entire Central Kenya circuit. This circuit was sub-divided into 5 Counties (Kirinyaga, Nyeri, Laikipia, Meru, and Embu) which represented sub-clusters. 4 museum officers, 12 park officers, 4 tour operators and 20 hotel employees were therefore selected from each County (sub-cluster). Regional Ministry of Tourism, regional museums and conservation areas officials represented the public sector while tour operators and hoteliers represented the private sector. The public sector therefore accounted for 40 % respondents while the private sector accounted for 60% respondents. The sample was randomly drawn from a pre-established list of public and the private sector organisations. This list was derived from registered tourism and hospitality organisations available in the Ministry of Tourism- Kenya website. The targeted employees were traced from each organisation's marketing/ customer relations department.

Data Collection Instruments

Two questionnaires were formulated targeting employees from the public and the private sectors respectively. Likert scale questions were designed to facilitate analysis (Veal, 2006). They evaluated the effectiveness of marketing mix strategies (Product development, Pricing, Distribution, Promotion, Human Resources, Technology and Physical evidence) in enhancing productivity and visitor numbers. Kotler *et al.,* (2003) explain that these 7 mix strategies determine tourism marketing success. The researchers interviewed the targeted employees while filling in the questionnaires.

A pilot study was carried out in order to enhance data reliability. This facilitated pre-testing of questionnaires to minimise errors (Bordens, and Abbot, 2008). Split-half test was used to test data reliability (r between forms = 0.86, Spearman-Brown coefficient, *r* = 0.92, Guttmann Split-Half Coefficient, *r* = 0.91). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test questionnaires' validity. This test scrutinised normality in data distribution (see table 2). SPSS version 17 was used to carry out data analysis. t- Test was applied to investigate the mean differences among marketing strategies. Regression tests using enter method were applied to estimate the relationship between application of tourism marketing mix strategies and their effectiveness in enhancing visitor flows and profitability. The resultant F, R^2, *beta*, and P-values were reported and represented on tables.

RESULTS

Forty four percent respondents represented males and 56% represented females who had varying education levels. A proportion of 2.8% respondents held secondary level education, 55% respondents held middle level college education, 33% held University level education while 9.2% respondents constituted the missing values. In Central Kenya, the study evaluated the importance of seven key factors (Product development, Pricing, Distribution, Promotion, Human Resources, Technology and Physical evidence) on the overall marketing strategy. Respondents were asked to cite the major strategies applied in their establishments to ensure competitive advantage. The t-Test scores indicated significant differences among the applicable marketing strategies Scores were as follows: Pricing strategy (yes, 3.72, vs. no, 0.28, t = 17.73, df = 198, P < 0 .01); Promotion strategy (yes, 3.64, vs. no, 0.22, t = 20. 00, df = 198, P < 0.01) and Product development (yes, 2.15, vs. no, 0.13, t = 12.10, df = 198, P < 0.01). Distribution strategy scored (yes, 1.99, vs. no, 0.19, t = 11.33, df = 198, P < 0.01); Human Resource (yes, 1.82, vs. no, 0.06, t = 10.19, df = 198, P < 0.01); Technology (yes, 2.08, vs. no, 0.09, t = 11.35, df = 198, P < 0.01) and Physical evidence (yes, 2.05, vs. no, 0.06, t = 7.84, df = 198, P < 0.01) (see table 3). These results strongly suggested that all tourism mix strategies are required when undertaking marketing initiatives. The mean differences among variables were placed in their order of importance as follows: Pricing = 3.44, Promotion = 3.42, Product development = 2.02, Technology = 1.99, Physical evidence = 1.99, Distribution = 1.89 and Human Resource = 1.76. This means that many Central Kenyan tourism firms highly rely more on Pricing and Promotion than other marketing strategies. Affordable prices can arguably increase the number of off-beat tourists and enhance trial purchases, sales and profits in the short run. Promotion enhances this by boosting purchases by potential customers using desirable messages.

Linear Regression was used to examine the significance of each applied marketing strategy in Central Kenya. The parameters for model fit were positive and significant (F = 69.83, P < 0.01, R^2 = 0.70). It means that this model explained about 70% variance in the scores of applied marketing strategies implying that the model was robust. The overall significance of the model was P < 0.01. Promotion emerged a significant predictor among other determinant variables in this model. The scores of predictor variables were as indicated on Table 4.

Table 4: Effect of variables on marketing process

Predictor Variable	Beta	*P*
Product development	- 0. 13	0. 07
Pricing	- 0. 06	0. 55
Distribution	0. 03	0. 76
Promotion	- 0. 58	< 0. 01**
Human Resource	- 0. 11	0. 07
Technology	- 0.13	0. 08
Physical evidence	0.09	0. 11

(Product development, pricing, distribution, Human Resource, Technology, and Physical Evidence were not significant predictors in this model.)

Promotion and physical evidence showed significant marketing strategies in Central Kenya. Physical evidence creates positive destination images by developing ideal communication tactics for products and companies in Central Kenya. It points out the important association that exists between promotion and imagery when utilized in tourism marketing. Physical evidence enhances visualization of tourism services, supports comparison of product alternatives and influences tourists' expectations. Pearson correlation was also used to test the relationship between the most significant variable (Promotion) and its effectiveness in increasing tourists' visitation and profitability. Results indicated a significant correlation between 0.63 and 1.00 (P < 0.01).

It means that although promotion creates immediate profits and increased tourists' numbers, keeping these new tourists without applying the correct Physical evidence tactics is often challenging. Failure to incorporate the right physical evidence tactics can result to a slow loss of previously attracted tourists (Zeithaml, *et al*, 2006). Sustaining a market attracted by promotion strategy is therefore challenging.

Table 2: Kolmogorov-Smirvov validity test scores

		Undertake	Product develop	Pricing	Distribution	Promotion	Human Res.	Technology	Physical
N		200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Normal	Mean	1.16	1.83	3.17	1.69	3.10	1.54	1.77	1.73
Parameters a, b	Std. Dev.	0.37	1.14	1.61	1.11	1.54	1.10	1.16	1.50
Most extreme	Absolute	0.51	0.21	0.38	0.27	0.29	0.23	0.28	0.37
differences	Positive	0.51	0.19	0.20	0.27	0.19	0.23	0.28	0.37
	Negative	-0.33	-0.19	-0.37	-0.20	-0.28	-0.15	-0.20	-0.15
Kolmogorov-smirnov z		7.19	2.91	5.40	3.79	4.13	3.23	3.96	5.19
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

a. Test distribution is Normal
b. Calculated from data

Table 3: t- Test mean values for strategies applied in undertaking marketing in Central Kenya

	Undertake	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error of Mean**	***P***
Product development	Yes	168	2.15	0.91	0.07	<0.01
	No	32	0.13	0.55	0.10	
Pricing	Yes	168	3.72	0.98	0.08	<0.01
	No	32	0.28	1.11	0.20	
Distribution	Yes	168	1.99	0.93	0.07	<0.01
	No	32	0.09	0.39	0.07	
Promotion	Yes	168	3.64	0.89	0.07	<0.01
	No	32	0.22	0.87	0.15	
Human resource	Yes	168	1.82	0.97	0.07	<0.01
	No	32	0.06	0.25	0.04	
Technology	Yes	168	2.08	0.98	0.08	<0.01
	No	32	0.09	0.39	0.07	
Physical evidence	Yes	168	2.05	1.43	0.11	<0.01
	No	32	0.06	0.25	0.04	

The effectiveness of predictor variables in marketing was also tested in attempt to examine each variable's strength in providing competitive advantages for tourism companies. A significant model fit was observed for the overall marketing goals (F= 20.20, $P < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.40$) (see table 5).

Table 5: Effectiveness of the extended marketing mix in achieving marketing goals

Predictor variable	**Beta**	***P***
Product development	0. 15	0. 19
Pricing	0. 05	0. 77
Distribution	- 0. 05	0. 67
Promotion	0. 53	< 0. 01**
Human Resource	- 0. 03	0. 72
Technology	0. 19	0. 08
Physical evidence	- 0. 16	< 0. 05*

(Product development, Pricing, Distribution, Human resource and Technology were not significant predictors in this model)

This study further explained how Promotion interactions with other variables contribute to marketing effectiveness. Kruskal-Wallis test was used to rank promotion performance among other independent predictors with effectiveness being the dependent variable. The ranking illustrated non-significant observable differences ($P = 0.39$)

DISCUSSION

It is often hypothesised that marketing process begins with formulation of new products and ends with promotion. The current study reveals that promotion is applied across the entire product and destination development cycles. Drawing from these results, marketing process is more centred on promotion. In this case promotion could inform, persuade and retain customers, hence justifying its importance in Central Kenya. The strategy clock magnifies the need for differentiating products along the destination life cycle. This possibly enhances the benefits accrued from products through inscribing additional features. However results did not point to significant product development efforts in specific companies. This

suggests that the currently promoted products in Central Kenya are usually undifferentiated.
The study demonstrates that tourism establishments in Central Kenya utilise promotion strategy but the relationship between promotion and other variables was not significant. This disagrees with previous studies that consider integration of strategies to importantly determine marketing success. The integrative marketing strategies which shape a destination's competitive advantage function in harmony. Although promotion is an important strategy in Central Kenya it needs to be anchored on developing market oriented products, pricing, technology, people, and ideal physical evidences. A disconnect therefore exists in the way the predictor variables are interlinked. These findings reveal that marketing strategies must integrate when companies anticipate achieving competitive advantage.

Although promotion informs consumers about destination products it is incapable of inscribing value in such products. Lack of product value in Central Kenya is a major cause of declining visitor flows and low repeat visitations. The study affirms that reduced visitor demand in light of intense promotional tactics is a consequence of previous customer dissatisfaction by existing products. Promotion is therefore a communication strategy for successfully developed products that extends external product features to the market. In this case promotion is only a product support service.

The Extent of Domestic Tourism Marketing in Central Kenya Region

Results indicated non- significant scores in applying market mix strategies on destination marketing. Being a newly established circuit, Central Kenya lacks a strong brand and destination image. Seemingly, promotion is expected to enhance mountain tourism growth on this highland region but the current visitation trends remain minimal. Individual firms possibly commit their resources in promotion in order to introduce pioneer products (Oketch and Nedelea, 2008). Such companies spend many resources inversely proportionate of demand and profits. This is partly because these companies lack a substantial collaborative power. As a consequence, Central Kenyan tourism establishments have depended on promotion which is affordable at the expense of other marketing strategies (Kieti, 2007). However, it is inevitable for companies interested in competitive advantage to develop highly differentiated products elements. This alternative approach would justify increase in products' prices while enhancing sales.

Domestic Tourism Marketing Strategies in Central Kenya

Over-reliance on promotion strategy is attributed to its benefits in reducing marketing costs by companies in Central Kenya. Differentiation is considered a costly initiative by companies that anticipate undesirably low profits since it demands addition of product features. Upcoming tourism companies need not to regard product differentiation as a costly strategy based on its anticipated profit benefits. Arguably, differentiated products justify higher prices which would later boost profits. Evans *et al.* (1995) explain that differentiation can justify price increment at the development stage of product life cycle. This is in tandem with Fyall and Garrod (2005) who explain that differentiation influences higher prices; is less affected by elastic demand and limits new entrants. This way, product differentiation provides competitive advantage for upcoming tourism companies through enhancing profitability.

Differentiation justifies development of a successful promotion strategy. Current customers in Central Kenya have high knowledge on product features than what the destination promotion messages suggest. Such consumers compare value in current products with expectations created by previous promotional messages. Their current satisfaction by products influences their perceptions and repeat visits. Repeat visitation is considered a reliable indicator of tourists' satisfaction which reveals the effectiveness of a previously applied product differentiation effort.

The practical capability of promotion in developing a new market for companies cannot be underestimated. Product differentiation is an ideal strategy of achieving competitive advantage but promotion is also required for building a pioneer market. This is relevant at the exploratory stage of the destination life cycle. Future differentiated products might fail to be consumed in absence of a typical market. The domestic tourism markets in Central Kenya include the employed class and the retired class, who have prioritised investing in agricultural related businesses rather than spending in tourism activities. Although many employed Kenyan citizens earn high incomes, their motivation for leisure is still minimal. This is caused by the existing stereotype that tourism involves immorally deviant activities. Additionally Central Kenya lacks adequate Regional Tourism Offices, travel operations and agencies that disseminate useful travel information. This largely minimises the awareness required for tourists to create informed purchase decisions. Promotion is thus when utilized for communication. However it is effective in influencing visitor numbers if multiple tactics and synergetic relations among firms exist in such a newly established destination (Oketch and Nedelea, 2008).

The paper demonstrates that integrated marketing strategies function to achieve marketing success more effectively than independent strategies that. This brings closer the current debate on collaborative marketing in tourism. The fact that promotion involves external communication with tourists and support networks suggests levels of collaboration. However collaboration is not only evident when companies integrate horizontally but is also evident when marketing strategies integrate vertically. Current marketing strategies need to integrate internally before organisations attempt to collaborate externally (Fyall and Garrod, 2005). Further, Jeuring (2016) observes that integrated marketing communication creates synergies between promotion and other marketing strategies. Integrated marketing strategies can therefore enhance demand, profits and retain tourists hence triggering marketing success.

Although differentiation is being discussed as a solution for ineffective promotion, demand for tourism in Central Kenya could still remain stagnated following intense product differentiation efforts. The current growth of 'wilderness consumerism' in Kenya makes many tourists prefer engaging in wildlife safaris better than the discussed mountain tours. Convincing a new highland niche market would be a costly and time consuming initiative for companies that do not collaborate externally. Newly established companies commit more resources in acquiring new tourism packages than they commit resources in differentiating existing tourism products. New companies are more interested in developing products at the marketing planning stage but are less interested in product development initiatives at the strategy implementation stage. However the continuous improvement of products features in such upcoming companies is inherent since current products get outdated with customers exposure to competitor's substitute products. Additionally new entrant companies need to collaborate with support networks in order to minimise marketing costs through economies of scale. Reduction of costs is achieved through resource sharing efforts assured in joint marketing strategies.

Policy Gaps and Implications

Product development and collaborative promotion strategies trigger competitive advantage in destinations when properly linked to the existing tourism policy framework. The Kenyan tourism policy extensively discusses the need of matching tourism products' experiences with consumer demands (Republic of Kenya, 2011). The policy identifies product diversification, standardisation and development of quality services to be effective drivers of sustainable tourism (MOT, 2011). However tactics and responsibility channels of achieving the above strategies are disconnected.

The Kenyan tourism policy emphasises the potential of domestic and regional tourism to develop a strong sub sector capable of increasing profit margins significantly (MOT, 2011). Regional tourism is also considered a critical market which can be harnessed through cooperative marketing and regional partnerships (MOT, 2011). The policy suggests the need of creating positive relationships without addressing important linkage mechanisms with products' value, technology, people and destination's image. The clear policy gap is that the prevailing differential and independent regional plans hamper joint marketing efforts yet all these initiatives could complement each other. This could lead to significant boost in net returns. The Ministry of Tourism recommends the need of developing budget priced tourism facilities yet the products' prices and value within such facilities is not mentioned. Further the policy proposes to develop regional tourism promotion strategies but detaches such efforts from regional product development initiatives. This research therefore contributes to identifying possible bridges between product development, promotion and integrated marketing.

The Kenyan tourism Strategic Plan of 2008-2012 focused on the need to increase the tourism revenue, improve service standards, enhance security and develop competency in service delivery. Strategic issue 2 of this document discusses the need to diversify products and markets through prioritising alternative tourism forms. In order to link product differentiation with the current policy, additional features have to be incorporated in existing products before diversifying to new products. Introducing new tourism forms is not a passport of achieving tourist satisfaction. The core value in the suggested new tourism forms is an issue to consider in the draft 2013-17 Strategic Plan. Drawing from Central Kenya's findings where the existing products such as mountain tourism are considered alternative to wildlife products, one can suggest that diversification has not yet persuaded tourists due to the observable low visitation levels.

The Kenyan 2008-2012 tourism strategic plan issue 3 discusses the need for developing marketing campaigns in order to promote Kenyan products through Kenya Tourist Board (MOT, 2011). This contends that Kenya has taken a competitive marketing approach rather than a relational/ collaborative approach. There is need to develop integrated tourism marketing planning efforts beyond reasonable doubts. Individual and collaborative destination's marketing efforts at the regional level would then be anchored on an integrated national marketing plan. Kenyan tourism industry is the second most important foreign exchange earner with a great potential to achieve the Kenya Vision 2030. However the industry misses an important policy led marketing policy to guide tourism product development initiatives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Promotion is a paramount strategy of launching new product concepts or introducing modified concepts in Central Kenya. However its benefits are better expressed when it is assessed interactively with other marketing strategies. The study revealed that inadequate product differentiation and failure to integrate multiple marketing strategies is the primary cause of declining visitor flows and reduced tourism profitability in Central Kenya region. Central Kenya tourism enterprises have adopted promotion strategy at the first stage of the strategy clock because promotion is specific to segments but not individuals. This largely supports existing tourism product concepts rather than new tourism products. Using the strategy clock, promotion needs to be applied after focused differentiation, which would support new concepts and justify increase in prices.

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