

Safety and Security in Tourism Destinations: Its moderating role in the Destination Competitiveness Determinants and Destination Competitiveness Nexus in Western Kenya Circuit

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Abstract

Kenya's western tourist circuit is undoubtedly the Country's best kept secret. However, in spite of this, the circuit is least competitive as most tourists prefer the coastal circuit and selected protected areas. This paper sought to establish whether safety and security had a moderating role on the relationship between destination competitiveness determinants: (destination attractors, support resources, destination management) and destination competitiveness. Explanatory research design was adopted. Convenience sampling technique was used to arrive at a sample size of 102 tourists. From the research findings, safety and security had a positive moderation effect on the relationship between destination attractors and destination management. However, safety and security had no significant effect on the relationship between support resources and destination competitiveness.

Keywords

Safety and Security, Destination competitiveness, Tourist Circuit

I. Introduction

The success or failure of a tourism destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for visitors (Ahmed, Azam & Bose, 2010). Aguilo *et al.* (2003) defined safety as the effects of accidents or hazardous forces of nature such as hurricanes, maladies, and earthquakes, while security involves anthropogenic factors, such as political instability, economic insecurity, terrorist attacks etc. Ritchie and Crouch (2000) on the other hand identified the amplifying factors as being: location, interdependencies, safety, awareness/image/ brand, cost/value. According to Ryglova *et al.*, (2015), sense of security is the most significant quality destination factors for a destination. The sense of security contains security issues of the destination, which include not only local security situation but also security in form of health risk, safe natural conditions, crime rate among other factors. Zhou *et al.* (2015), concluded that safety and security represent a significant element in the evaluation of the competitiveness of the tourism destination.

II. Safety and Security in Tourist Destinations

The performance of the tourism industry depends on the industry's overall structure and the environment in which it is situated. Crime is a growing concern among tourism stakeholders who fear the potential damage that it may inflict on the perception of safety and, by extension, the industry (Volker & Sore'e, 2002). Of even greater concern than crime is the issue of visitor harassment, which impacts on the tourist's sense of safety. It may be claimed that, although varying in severity, it is a widespread phenomenon. Wilde and Cox (2008) are also in agreement that among the destination deterrents are security and safety. Such factors are barriers to visiting a particular destination and consequently tourism growth. A study by Lazana *et al.*, (2007) assessed leisure tourists' considerations and attitudes regarding destinations that have experienced safety and/or security issues in the recent past and the changes in people's travel and recreation behaviors when it comes to destination and activity choices. The research established that, when choosing a destination, security factors are prevalent in travelers' minds as compared to safety factors. The research also found out that, factors which most influence the choice of a destination are the

absence of fanatic or terrorist groups, absence of terrorist attacks and political stability.

Political instability is important in determining the desirability of a tourist destination (Phakdisoth and Kim, 2007). Teo, Chang and Ho (2001) explored the effects of political instability on tourism development. Results showed man-made disasters such as war, political instability, civil disturbances, insurgency, industrial accidents and terrorist acts can present the same problems seen with a natural disaster, plus additional threats: physical threats, social and political instability and possibly a residual or continued threat from crime and hostile groups. Khanou, Pawson and Ivanovich (2009) agree that man-made threats may also shift from area to area, constantly changing the dynamics of the risk environment and requiring flexible and real time responses. Loureiro and Ferreira (2015), findings revealed qualifying determinants as being peace and safety among other key determinants. According to WEF (2015), terrorism has been on the rise, while countries such as Middle East, Ukraine and South East Asia have faced geo-political tensions. Negative environmental changes have also led to changes in tourism activities such as decline in tourist travel (Zivkovich, 2014), with numerous research pointing out several insecurity factors such as: civil riots and war, ethnic conflicts, trafficking, smuggling of narcotics and weapons as being reasons for declining tourism travel.

Popesku, (2008) and Becken, (2010) identified altitude, temperature, humidity and bites from exotic animals and insects as being causes of decline in in-bound tourism. The world has changed over the attacks in London, Madrid and New York Planned targeting of tourists and tourist facilities by terrorists represents a gradual alarming trend that results in several factors. Knowledge and disruption of tourist flows is one of such factors that can have severe economic and socio-political repercussions on the countries GNP (Kordic *et al.*, 2015). According to Du Plessis *et al.* (2017), safety and security as well as uncertainty of political stability of the country remain the primary factor that threatens South Africa's tourism industry like many other tourist destinations competitiveness. In Porter's (1990) diamond of competitive advantage, safety and security forms part of the demand conditions which constitute the standards of demand. Therefore, safety and

security is a standard that tourists expect from an experience just as they expect quality experiences, and it should be a priority to the government to ensure safety and security for all. South Africa won the rights to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup (Briedenhann & Wickens 2004) which not only established that South Africa was capable of hosting successful mega events and hosting millions of tourists, but it also demolished the perceived inadequate safety and security measures regarding tourists that had been present since the political instability in the early 1990s (George & Swart 2012).

According to Donaldson *et al.* (2009), the intention of tourists to visit urban destinations is influenced by their perceptions or their knowledge of the specific destination. Risk perceptions, have an impact on travel behavior. In their study, Re-creating urban destination image: Opinions of foreign visitors to South Africa on safety and Security, findings revealed that more than a third of the respondents were worried about their safety before travelling to South Africa and that the central business districts of Cape Town and Johannesburg were the most feared places they visited, 6% of the respondents admitted to be victims of crime. However, with the hosting of mega events like the 2010 World Cup, perceptions of the visitors changed for the better.

Kozak *et al.* (2007), conducted a research on the impact of the perception of risk on international travellers. The primary focus was to investigate the impact of perceived risk on the tendency to travel internationally and to explore whether there would be any difference in the perception of risky places among the three Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance index. From the results, majority of travellers were more likely to change their travel plans to a destination that has elevated risk. Findings further suggest that international travellers appear to be sensitive towards occurrence of any type of risks in their suggested destination. According to Sonmez and Graefe, (1998) and Brunt *et al.*, (2000), it is important to understand the basic human need for safety and security in order to make potential visitors feel secure prior to, or during their vacations. Unfortunately, safety and security problems are often destination specific. Risk and safety concerns have appeared to be a central issue of visitors' decision-making evaluations. Results suggest that such incidents may have a devastating effect not only on where they have appeared, but also on the decision-making of visitors who would be interested in touring these places.

George and Booyens (2014), study aimed to investigate tourists' perceptions of safety and security whilst on a township tour. Findings showed, majority (73 %) of respondents felt safe whilst on a township tour. Eighty-three percent of those surveyed were satisfied with the township tour that they went on, whilst 82 % of respondents said that they would recommend a township tour. A study by Salman and Hasim (2012), aimed to trace the factors for visiting Malaysia, image of Malaysia as a tourism destination and competitiveness of Malaysia as a tourism destination among outbound Middle East tourists to Malaysia. From the results, most of the Middle East tourists, safety and security is extremely important for choosing Malaysia as a foreign country for long-haul travel. A study by Lee and King (2008), on determination of destination competitiveness for Taiwan's hot springs tourism sector using the Delphi technique, revealed importance of each of the factors as per the determinant groupings (a total of 76 items): tourism destination resources and attractors (27 items), tourism destination strategies (33 items), and tourism destination environments (16 items). The results highlight prospective priority areas for bringing about improvements in the hot springs tourism

domain. It was found that there should be an emphasis on measures to ensure the safety and security of hot springs bathing, on the application of sustainability principles to hot springs related enterprises, and on the development of policies and plans.

III. Western Tourist Circuit

Western tourist circuit is an area of great geographic, cultural and natural diversity, offering tourists just as much, if not more, than many of Kenya's better known tourist areas (Onyango & Kaseje, 2015). The circuit is located in the western region of Kenya and is home to historical and archeological sites such as Thim-lich Ohinga; caves, freshwater bodies including Lake Victoria; inland beaches, tropical rain forest, indigenous forest ecosystems, wetland ecosystems, hills and mountains, islands, waterfalls, national parks and game reserves, nature conservancies, museums and diverse cultures. However, in spite of the abundance of treasures, the destination is one of the least competitive in tourism as most tourists to Kenya prefer coastal beaches and selected protected areas (Nyamweno *et al.*, 2016).

IV. Data and Methodology

The study employed explanatory research design. Convenience sampling was used to select 102 tourists drawn from Thim-Lich Ohinga, Kakamega Tropical Rain Forest Reserve, Ruma National Park and Impala Sanctuary to gather information which covered a wide range of topics related to the thematic areas of the study. Content validity was achieved by ensuring questions cover all the research objectives. Construct validity was also achieved by associating the current study with empirical studies and theories on destination competitiveness (Kothari, 2004). Reliability of the instrument was determined by Cronbach coefficient alpha of more than 0.7 for all items. Eviews was used as a tool to aid analysis. Inferential analysis was used to analyze the data, specifically, multiple regression analysis was used to deduce a model that explained the moderating effect of safety and security in tourism destinations. Z-statistic was used to determine whether to or not to reject the null hypothesis while the Likelihood ratio test (LR test) was used to test for the existence of a regression relationships between the variables. A GLM regression model was used because of its usefulness in relaxing the classical regression assumptions (McCullagh and Nelder, 1982).

V. Results and Discussion

To test the hypotheses, the independent variables and products of independent and moderator were regressed against the dependent variable. As presented in table (I), LR statistics was significant at (20.546; p-value=0.005 < 0.05) an indication that there was a regression relationship between the variables in the model.

On its own, safety and security did not significantly affect destination competitiveness ($\beta=2.497$, p-value=0.069 > 0.05). This finding contradicts Ahmed *et al.* (2010) study. They found out that the success or failure of a tourism destination depended on the destination ability to provide a safe and secure environment for its visitors. It also contradicts findings by Beirman (2010), who stressed on the need for destinations to communicate destination's risk in order to maintain visitation and cooperation between governments and tourism operators.

The hypothesis that safety and security does not moderate the relationship between destination attractors and destination competitiveness was rejected ($\beta=1.231$; p-value=0.001 < 0.05). The regression results indicate that safety and security, positively

and significantly moderated the relationship between destination attractors and destination competitiveness. This confirmed findings by Cizmar and Weber (2000) that safety and security forms part of key decisions by potential tourists to visit certain destinations. On its own still destination attractors had a positive significant relationship with destination competitiveness an indication that with or without safety and security as the moderating variable, destination attractors determined the competitiveness of a destination. As Azam and Bose, (2010) pointed out that attractions are competitive factors determining the success of tourist destinations.

The hypothesis that safety and security does not moderate the relationship between support resources and destination competitiveness was not rejected. The regression results ($\beta = -0.628$; $p\text{-value} = 0.056 > 0.05$) reveal that safety and security, negatively but insignificantly moderated the relationship between support resources and destination competitiveness. This disapproves a study by Azzopardi and Nash (2015) that tourism support industries should rely on safety. The hypothesis that safety and security does not moderate the relationship between destination management and destination competitiveness was rejected. The regression results ($\beta = -1.155$; $p = 0.002 < 0.05$) reveal that safety and security, negatively and significantly moderated the relationship between destination management and destination competitiveness. This confirms the findings by Beirman, (2010) on the need to focus on risk and crisis management in a destination as it helps communicate destination's risk management strategies. It also helps maintain visitation and cooperation between governments and tourism operators.

Table 1: Regression Model

Dependent Variable: Destination Competitiveness			
Method: Generalized Linear Model (Quadratic Hill Climbing)			
Variable	Coefficient	z-Statistic	Prob.
Destination Attractors	-4.133	-2.552	0.011
Destination Management	4.074	2.636	0.008
Support Resources	2.276	1.602	0.109
Safety & Security	2.497	1.816	0.069
Safety & Security*	-1.155	-3.165	0.002
Destination Management	Safety & Security* -0.628	-1.910	0.056
Support Resources	Safety & Security* 1.231	3.195	0.001
Constant	-6.063	5.948	0.308
Mean dependent Variable	3.892	S.D. dependent variable	1.107
Deviance statistic	1.081	Restr. Deviance	123.814
LR statistic	20.546	Prob (LR statistic)	0.005

VI. Conclusion

The performance of the tourism industry depends on the industry's overall structure and the positive environment in which it is situated. It is important to understand the basic human need for safety and security in order to make potential visitors feel secure prior to, or during their vacations. Unfortunately, safety and security problems are often destination specific. Therefore, risk

and safety concerns have appeared to be a central issue of visitors' decision-making evaluations.

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