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**EFFECT OF DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ON TOURISM DESTINATION
COMPETITIVENESS IN DEVOLVED GOVERNANCE AFTER COVID-19: A CASE
OF KAKAMEGA COUNTY**

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MPPM/ 100095



**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER IN PUBLIC POLICY AND MANAGEMENT OF
STRATHMORE UNIVERSITY**

STRATHMORE UNIVERSITY, NAIROBI, KENYA

MARCH, 2023

DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not been previously submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the research thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in this work.

Stephen Malunga Musee

Signature:.....


Date: 5/3/2023



The proposal of Stephen Malunga Musee was reviewed and approved for submission by the following:

Dr. David Chiawo (Supervisor)

Senior Lecturer, Strathmore University

Signature:..... Date: 7/3/2023.....

ABSTRACT

Kakamega County is one of Kenya's devolved units. It is an emerging destination in one of the lowly ranked tourism competitive regions of the Western Tourism Circuit. Similar to other destinations, Kakamega was adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The study's main objective was to determine the effect of destination management on the tourism destination competitiveness of Kakamega County in Kenya's devolved governance in the aftermath of Covid-19. Specific objectives were to determine the effect of tourism policy in enhancing the tourism destination competitiveness of Kakamega County after COVID-19; establish the influence of destination marketing in promoting tourism destination competitiveness of Kakamega County after COVID-19; and, evaluate the effect of environmental sustainability management in fostering tourism destination competitiveness in Kakamega County after COVID-19. Porter's theory of competitive advantage of nations and sequential theory of decentralisation provided a theoretical foundation for the study. On the other hand, Dwyer and Kim's model of competitiveness enhanced the conceptualisation of the link between destination management and competitiveness. An interpretivism philosophy informed the adoption of a descriptive survey research design. Stratified purposive sampling targeted a sample size of 50 tourism and hospitality practitioners in the public and private sectors in Kakamega County. Data was collected using a close-ended questionnaire. Multi-linear regression analysis was used to establish that the construct of destination management, that is, tourism policy, destination marketing and environmental sustainability all had a moderate and positive effect on tourism destination competitiveness. Overall, destination management had a moderate and positive effect on the competitiveness of Kakamega County as a tourism destination. The study recommends community inclusion in tourism ventures in Kakamega county; adequate resource allocation to tourism and travel sector development; regular market intelligence to understand current tourism trends in competitor destinations to integrate destination marketing in all tourism product development phases; and, entrenched sustainable tourism through better environmental management and conservation of unique natural and cultural heritage tourism attractions. The study proposed a need for further research on tourism destination competitiveness in devolved units based on other indicators and determinants like decentralised governance policy.

Keywords: Tourism Destination Competitiveness; Destination Management; Devolved Governance

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife Cynthia Mmbono for her unrelenting support during my studies. The sacrifices she made in her career and life are the reason for our common success.



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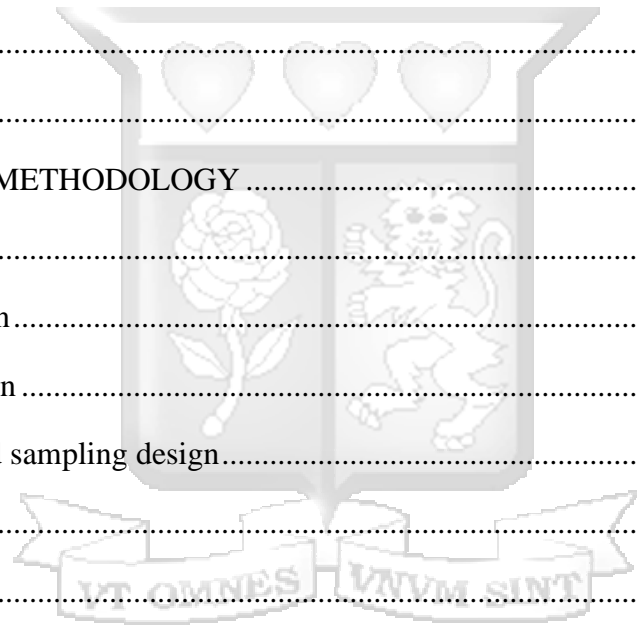
I am grateful for the favour of God. During this work, I acknowledge the professional guidance from Dr David Chiawo, Senior Lecturer at Strathmore University. I am much indebted to my wife Cynthia and children who have ensured I get the serene opportunity to fulfil my dream. Strathmore University Business School programmes on public policy and management provided me with insights into policy and governance and which was fundamental to the delivery of this research thesis.



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ABBREVIATIONS

CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
DM	Destination Management
DMO	Destination of Management Organisation
EM	Environment Management
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions
TDC	Tourism Destination Competitiveness
WEF	World Economic Forum
UNWTO	United Nations (World Tourism Organisation)
WHO	World Health Organisation



DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Devolved Governance.

Devolved governance is a form of decentralisation administration where there is the transfer of power and resources to lower or sub-national levels of government (Hope, 2014).

2. Destination management

Destination management is the coordination and integration of all elements of the destination mix in a particular geographic area based on a defined tourism strategy and plan (Morrison, 2018).

3. Tourism destination

Tourism destination is a complex system consisting of a variety of organisations that offer tourist products and services (accommodation, food, transport, attractions, etc.), natural and anthropic resources as well as other units providing tourists support services (Morrison, 2018).

4. Tourism Destination Competitiveness

The ability of the place to optimise its attractiveness for residents and non-residents, to deliver quality, innovative, and attractive tourism services to consumers and to gain market shares on the domestic and global marketplaces, while ensuring that the available resources supporting tourism are used efficiently and sustainably (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents research background information, problem statement, general objective, specific objectives, research questions, rationale and significance of the study, scope, limitations and assumptions.

1.2 Background Information

The background information considered the link between the concept of destination management and the competitiveness of tourism destinations in the light of devolved governance within the context of covid-19 pandemic.

1.2.1 Destination Management

Studies have linked the concept of destination management to tourism destination competitiveness (Ammirato, Galla and Felicetti, 2014; Goffi, 2013; Hieu & Rašovská, 2018). This is due to globalisation which has heightened the growth of the tourism sector (Hieu & Rašovská, 2018). The consequent outcome is that visitors have a wider spectrum of destinations to choose from subjecting most destinations to liabilities of replaceability (Hieu & Rašovská, 2018). This elicits competitiveness tendencies as destinations are attracted by tourism benefits and a growing number of destinations seeking a greater portion of these benefits (Hieu & Rašovská, 2018). There is, therefore, a shift in focus from the comparative advantages of natural and socio-cultural endowed resources that a destination offers (Armenski, Dwyer and Pavluković, 2017) to the competitive advantage enhanced through private as well as public sector management.

The tourism destination is conceptualized to encompass attraction aspects such as natural endowments and monuments, social aspects such as local communities and their friendliness operating in a set up where service providers interact or relate between themselves and the environment in the defined boundaries of a territory (Ammirato, Galla and Felicetti, 2014). Studies vindicate the fact that effective interactions of private and public entities guarantee a tourism destination the vigour to attend to situations in a dynamic and stormy market. This provides the capabilities of a destination to meet the personal experience of an ever-growing and demanding visitor and realize the destination's sustainable development with greater competitiveness (Ammirato, Galla and Felicetti, 2014). Destination management is known to strengthen these interactions (Ammirato, Galla and Felicetti, 2014).

Studies define destination management, thus, as the coordination and integration of all elements of the destination mix in a particular geographic area based on a defined tourism strategy and plan (Morrison, 2018). The required coordination and integration strategies are linked to a given aspect unique to a tourism sector at a certain time and phase of development (Armenski, Dwyer and Pavluković, 2017). Strong effective institutions and coalitions are built through destination management for improved performance (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2019). Enhanced destination management accords conditioned factors such as local tourism policies and strategic visioning which address environment, health and tourism; availability of infrastructure supporting tourism; vibrant domestic tourism; provision of financial incentives to sector players; investment in inclusive, eco-friendly and community-based ventures; taking advantage of technology; and, expansion of the tourism and travel market (Cronjé & Plessis, 2020; Fernandez et al, 2022; Goffi, 2013; Khan et al., 2021).

According to (Hieu & Rašovská, 2018) destination management is the catalyst that nurtures core and supportive tourism resources to attain competitiveness. It is linked to the regulation, promotion and commercialization of tourism activities in a destination (Hieu & Rašovská, 2018). The aim (Hsu, Inbakaran & George, 2013) is to attain optimal tourist numbers and revenues; secure stakeholder needs; and, ensure harmony and sustainability of socio-economic, cultural and environmental activities. Studies evaluate destination management through its constructs and which include tourism policy; destination marketing; and adaptive environmental sustainability (Armenski, Dwyer and Pavluković, 2017).

It is usually not easy for the competitiveness of a destination to be realized in the short term with the role influence of the private sector alone (Hieu & Rašovská, 2018). This calls for long-term interventions of public sector policies. The public sector critically influences tourism destination management and competitiveness through public policies that establish national and local institutions and tourism development strategies that foster destination marketing (Hieu & Rašovská, 2018). One important policy relates to centralisation vis-à-vis decentralisation of public sector mandate and which impact on destination management and competitiveness (Hsu, Inbakaran & George, 2013; Ndivo & Oketch, 2019).

1.2.2 Tourism destination competitiveness

There has been a surge in interest in competitiveness as a concept globally by tourism destinations due to Covid-19 (Cronjé & Plessis, 2020; Dupeyras, & MacCallum, 2013). Indeed, competitiveness strategies have become vital decisions for tourism destinations

during recovery from shocks (Esen & Uyar, 2012). There are various definitions of the concept of tourism destination competitiveness (Cronjé & Plessis, 2020; Dupeyras, & MacCallum, 2013). In their definition (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999) as cited in (Dupeyras, & MacCallum, 2013) consider tourism destination competitiveness as “the ability of a destination to increasingly and profitably attract visitors as it ensures they secure memorable experiences while guaranteeing greater welfare, high standard of living and satisfaction to its citizens”. This study adopts the proposition that destination competitiveness is the ability of a place to boost its appeal for residents and visitors; to provide superior, innovative, and attractive tourism services to visitors; and to gain market shares on the domestic and global marketplaces while ensuring the available tourism support endowment is efficiently and sustainably used (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013). Competitiveness in tourism is synonymous with sustainability; guaranteeing long-term prosperity to the destination and its citizens (Khan et al., 2021). The concept of destination competitiveness is also relative or comparative (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013).

The tourism sector has moved from times it was thought that the availability of destination attractions, tourists and an enabling environment such as low visa costs and exchange rates was sufficient to ensure a destination is competitive (Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). The drive for a paradigm shift in competitiveness studies is informed by the understanding that it is a relative concept (Ammirato, Galla and Felicetti, 2014; Goffi, 2013) and strategies to be pursued should be cognisant of competitor destinations. The evaluation of destination is complex with a wider spectrum of determinants and indicators (Vengesayi, Mavondo & Reisinger, 2013). These include tourism resources (attractions), tourism experience, quality of attractions, visitor’s duration of stay domestic and international tourism performance, safety and secureness of destination, environmental concerns and sustainability (Ammirato, Galla and Felicetti, 2014; Goffi, 2013; Vengesayi, Mavondo & Reisinger, 2013).

Competitiveness is a deliberate approach that is built on informed decisions (Armenski, Dwyer and Pavluković, 2017). The deliberate decision to retain the competitive tourism advantage of destinations in the wake of shocks from the Covid-19 pandemic is one such case (Fernandez, Martinez and Martin, 2022; World Bank, 2020). The pandemic essentially retrogressed and slowed down the socio-economic gains accruing from tourism and travel globally and in Africa (Government of Kenya, 2020). In the first ten months of 2020, the tide drastically changed as Africa recorded a decline of 69 % in international tourism arrivals (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2020). The intense global competition has

conspired to deny Kenya capabilities to optimise tourism gains even during the period before the Covid-19 pandemic (Government of Kenya, 2019, 2020). This is so since, firstly, conventional and emerging economies have increasingly become aware of tourism benefits (Government of Kenya, 2019). Secondly, the comparative advantages that Kenya and many other destinations enjoyed can now be innovatively guaranteed (Cîrstea, 2014). For Kenya to sustain tourism success it needs to persistently embrace competitive strategies (Cîrstea, 2014; Nyamweno, Okotto & Tonui, 2016). Kenya has prized the contribution of tourism and travel to her economy but is recording erratic performance (Government of Kenya, 2019). Kenya's international tourism arrivals fell due to travel restrictions preferred by major source markets, that is, Italy and the rest of Europe (World Bank, 2020) during the Covid-19 pandemic. With the containment measures, the pandemic did affect Kakamega County's tourism performance and initiatives in the growing travel and tourism sector (Government of Kenya, 2020).

Among the lessons learned from covid-19 pandemic is that the tourism and travel sector has a competitive advantage over other economic sectors since, though highly sensitive, it is notably resilient (Fernandez, Martinez and Martin, 2022). It is on this basis, that United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has urged member states to carry the sector along in their post-covid economic recovery strategies (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2020). Destination management (DM) is known to build the resilience of the sector and positively impacts the improvement of the tourism competitiveness of a destination with other destinations (Fernandez, Martinez and Martin, 2022; Goffi, 2013).

The models to evaluate competitiveness, such as the Tourism and Travel Competitiveness Index (TTCI) inexplicably consider equal significance of the variables (Shariffuddin, et al., (2022)). These models have been unable to address disparities existing concerning the destinations' size of the market, state of the economy or extent of dependency in the tourism and travel sector (Shariffuddin, et al., (2022)). The other issue of concern is that destination competitiveness studies have suggested multiple and widespread determinants, but there has not been consensus on this front (Shariffuddin, et al., (2022)). The determinants cannot be universally applied (Shariffuddin, et al., (2022)) due to a lack of available indicators and existing databases across all destinations. The determinants of destination competitiveness are, therefore, not suitable for all destinations (Shariffuddin, et al., (2022)). In an evaluation of competitiveness, there is a need to be cognisant of the varying lifecycle phases, market segments and the different buying contexts in which travel decisions are made (Shariffuddin, et al., (2022)). Since destinations vary based on availability and types of data and objectives,

studies advocate for destination-specific or context-based evaluation of competitiveness (Vengesai, Mavondo & Reisinger, 2013).

1.2.3 Kakamega County

Kakamega County is one of the 47 devolved units in Kenya (Government of Kakamega, 2018). The county is within the western tourism circuit; it is denoted as the “best-kept secret” (Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). Kakamega is richly endowed with unique and diverse tourism resources (County Government of Kakamega, 2018). These include four tropical rain forests of Kakamega, Malava, Bunyala and Kisere. These are largely under the Kakamega Forest ecosystem (County Government of Kakamega, 2018). There are two gazetted national forest reserves under the jurisdiction of Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), that is, Kakamega National Forest Reserve and Kisere National Forest Reserve (County Government of Kakamega, 2018). The Kakamega forest ecosystem is endowed with unique and endemic flora and fauna and is currently the prime tourist attraction (County Government of Kakamega, 2018). The county is also promoting heritage tourism and has five sites gazetted as county heritage properties that include the Nabongo shrines of the Abawanga Kingdom. There is one gazetted national monument, that is, (County Government of Kakamega, 2018) Ikhongo Murwi (Crying Stone). Kakamega County prides itself on other cultural tourism activities that include the Isukuti dance (inscribed by UNESCO as a world intangible heritage), bull sport and pottery at Ilesi. However, this tourism destination resource endowment is largely untapped and in the infancy phase of development (Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016).

The county records low performance in both domestic and international tourism (County Government of Kakamega, 2018). It, therefore, ranks as a tourism destination within a region that is least competitive in Kenya (Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). One constraining indicator for low performance is the lack of adequate high-end accommodation facilities. Kakamega County has only two classified accommodation and hospitality facilities, that is, the Golf Hotel and Rondo Retreat Centre (County Government of Kakamega, 2018). The other hotels, guest houses and restaurants in the county are unclassified but licenced or registered by the government (County Government of Kakamega, 2018). Kakamega County had put in place several strategies to grow the tourism sector and make it competitive before covid-19 (County Government of Kakamega, 2018). These included product mapping and development, sustained marketing strategies and adoption of policies for regulation and standards that included personnel training and inspection of facilities (County Government of

Kakamega, 2018). However, the emergency of Covid-19 affected Kakamega County's tourism performance with visitor numbers, revenue and employment declining by approximately 50 per cent (Government of Kakamega, 2021; Government of Kenya, 2020).

Kakamega County has taken advantage of Kenya's devolved governance policy to grow its tourism (Ndivo & Oketch, 2019). Devolved governance aims to improve public sector management and economic performance (Government of Kenya, 2019; Ndivo & Oketch, 2019; Ong'olo & Awino, 2013). Counties have become new frontiers in tourism development (Ndivo & Oketch, 2019; Ong'olo & Awino, 2013). The county's strengths are premised on abilities to adapt to local needs; foster inclusivity and participatory approaches; perpetuate efficiency through minimising costs while improving outputs; effectively utilise human capital; guarantee subnational autonomy and flexibility; and promote an accessible government (Ndivo & Oketch, 2019). These are hallmarks and determinants of a competitive destination (Cronjé & Plessis, 2020). The aim is for the country to build resilience to shocks such as covid-19 pandemic through diversification and platforms for thriving domestic tourism (Government of Kenya, 2020). Kenya, similar to other nations which have embraced devolved governance, to a larger extent has encountered several implementation bottlenecks (Ndivo & Oketch, 2019). In the transition period, devolved governance is likely to encounter resistance from the central government and its bureaucracies unwilling to share authority (Ndivo & Oketch, 2019). There are incidences of a lack of commensurate transfer of fiscal resources to accompany the transfer of authority or inadequate skills, training or remuneration by bureaucracies at the sub-national which result in inefficiencies (Ndivo & Oketch, 2019). Overall, this is likely to complicate the implementation of devolution and, hence, limited or negative outcomes at a greater cost (Ndivo & Oketch, 2019). These limitations do not negate the benefits likely to accrue to enhanced destination management and competitiveness of tourism destinations (Ndivo & Oketch, 2019). The evaluation of destination management of competitiveness of Kakamega County needs to be destination-specific and cognisant of its cycle as an emerging destination, unique tourism objectives, database availability and state of the economy.

1.3 Problem statement

There is an increasing realisation among tourism destinations to overcome shortfalls of comparative advantages through competitive advantages (Hieu & Rašovská, 2018). This is because interest in tourism has heightened competition towards optimisation and greater tourism benefits (Fernandez, Martinez and Martin, 2022). Destinations are also seeking

(Fernandez, Martinez and Martin, 2022) to enhance their resilience and recovery from shocks that adversely impact tourism. African countries have for a long time lagged in accessing a larger tourism market (Vengesayi, Mavondo & Reisinger, 2013). Kenya is not exceptional and has lately lost ground on the global tourism market share to emerging destinations such as Mauritius and Seychelles (Government of Kenya, 2019). The poor ranking as a competitive destination in the western tourism circuit in Kenya has for a long time raised concerns in various studies (Ndivo & Oketch, 2019; Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). It is in this region of Kenya that Kakamega County lies.

Kakamega County is an emerging and lowly-ranked destination (Government of Kakamega, 2018; Ndivo & Oketch, 2019; Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). This is due to two major reasons, that is, her being in the largely untapped tourism region and her recent establishment as a devolved unit (Government of Kakamega, 2018; Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). In this regard, the county is not optimising benefits from the tourism and travel sector (Ndivo & Oketch, 2019; Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). The competitiveness indicators alluding to this are under-utilised and undeveloped tourism potential; poor domestic and international visitor numbers; below optimal community participation, inclusion and benefit from tourism; poor publicity on both domestic and international tourism fronts; and minimal tourism earnings (Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). Similar to many destinations, tourism in Kakamega County was adversely affected in the wake of covid-19 pandemic (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2020).

Destination management aims at a deliberate and informed approach to the attainment of tourism destination competitiveness (Khan et al., 2021; Ndivo & Oketch, 2019). This is through the adoption of policies, institutions and strategies upon which optimisation of tourism gains is sustainably attained (Khan et al., 2021; Ndivo & Oketch, 2019). The devolved governance in Kenya was intended to bolster destination management of units such as Kakamega County (Ndivo & Oketch, 2019). However, there has been a noticeable shortcoming in Kenya's devolved governance and with adverse effects on destination management (Government of Kenya, 2019). These are weak and incoherent institutional management of public sector entities at the national level; between national and sub-national; and even among counties (Government of Kenya, 2019). These constraints affect Kakamega County making her unable to take advantage of the autonomy and flexibility that devolved governance accords to improve on her poor ranking and performance as a competitive tourism destination (Government of Kakamega, 2018; Government of Kenya, 2019; Ndivo &

Oketch, 2019). Kenya's National Tourism Blueprint 2030 notes that the challenge at hand is how counties, including Kakamega, can counter tourism gaps in destination management linked to establishing tourism institutions and entrenching effective governance, coherent policies and sustainable development planning in the sector (Khan et al., 2021; Government of Kenya, 2019; Ong'olo & Awino, 2013). This is the reason the county has inadequately comprehended its mandate to align tourism growth strategies to the national tourism sector policies; sustain a collaborative approach; and foster innovative tourism development as hallmarks for competitive advantages premised on autonomy and flexibility of devolved governance (Government of Kakamega, 2018; Government of Kenya, 2019; Khan et al., 2021).

1.4 General Objective

The overall objective is to determine the effect of destination management on tourism destination competitiveness in Kakamega County after Covid-19.

1.5 Specific Objectives

- i. To determine the effect of tourism policy in enhancing tourism destination competitiveness of Kakamega County after COVID-19.
- ii. To establish the influence of destination marketing in promoting tourism destination competitiveness of Kakamega county after COVID-19.
- iii. To evaluate the effect of environmental sustainability management in fostering tourism destination competitiveness in Kakamega County after COVID-19.

1.6 Research questions

- i. What is the effect of tourism policy on enhanced tourism destination competitiveness of Kakamega County after COVID-19.?
- ii. To what level has destination marketing influenced the promotion of tourism destination competitiveness in Kakamega County after COVID-19?
- iii. What is the effect of environmental sustainability on tourism destination competitiveness in Kakamega County after COVID-19.?

1.7 Significance of the Research

This research is significant to the County Government of Kakamega in informing of appropriate destination management strategies. The goal is to propel this emerging tourism destination to superior competitiveness while recovering from the covid-19 pandemic. The National Government will find the study significant in preferring strategies for effective inter-governmental relations to improve travel and tourism sector governance, destination management and competitiveness in the devolved units and the country as a whole. The tourism and hospitality practitioners will find the study significant in strengthening their competitive strategies in line with government destination management approaches for optimal benefits from tourism and travel. Policy and governance professionals will gain insights into the study to lobby and influence the formulation of appropriate policies affecting the tourism sector. The study adds to the body of knowledge and research on tourism destination competitiveness in general and, specifically, destination management in devolved governance. The research proposal is in fulfilment of the academic requirements of the Master in Public Policy and Management at Strathmore University Business School.

1.8 Research Scope

This destination-specific and issue-specific research will consider destination management as a determinant of tourism destination competitiveness in Kakamega County (Cronjé & Plessis, 2020). The selected factors for destination management adopted in this study are tourism policy; destination marketing; and environmental sustainability (Guo, Jiang and Shengchao, 2019). This destination-specific research will be in the context of tourism destination competitiveness in devolved governance and, particularly, Kakamega County. The study will be focused on the tourism practitioners' perspectives.

1.9 Summary

This section has considered the background of the study, problem statement, general objective, specific objectives, research questions, the significance of the research and research scope. This is in line with the study's aims. The discussion has laid ground on understanding the concept of destination management and its relationship to competitiveness in tourism in the context of devolved governance and the effects of covid-19.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses theoretical review, empirical review, conceptual framework and research gaps relevant to this study.

2.2 Theoretical review

This section presents Porter's diamond theory (competitive advantage of nations), sequential theory of decentralisation and Dwyer and Kim's model of destination competitiveness.

2.2.1 Porter's diamond theory (competitive advantage of nations)

Porter's diamond theory (competitive advantage of nations) was advanced by Michael Porter (Cronjé & Plessis, 2020). The theory suggests that regardless of the industry under which competitiveness is being considered for the study, (Cronjé & Plessis, 2020) there exists intense competition. Porter's diamond theory considered competitiveness at the firm level (Cronjé & Plessis, 2020) as emanating from "superior productivity, either in terms of lower costs than rivals or the ability to offer products with superior values that justify premium price." The theory responds to the reason behind the success of firms or sectors and the determining factors (Esen & Uyar, 2012). Porter's theory and model suggest that competitiveness is not hereditary but acquired through innovation and strategic development (Esen & Uyar, 2012). Therefore, success is dictated more by the efficacy of resource use than mere resource abundance (Esen & Uyar, 2012). Porter considered four factors in his theory and model as contributing to the success of a nation (Esen & Uyar, 2012). These are factor conditions, demand conditions, related and supporting industries and firm strategy, structure and rivalry (Esen & Uyar, 2012). In addition to the four factors, Porter highlights that government and chance as the other two factors influencing competitiveness of firms, sectors and countries (Esen & Uyar, 2012).

In the light of the tourism sector, the factor conditions are the natural, geographical heritage and recreational resources that attract visitors to a given region or destination (Esen & Uyar, 2012). The theory provides that the presence of firms, their structure, strategy and rivalry is considered to be the reason for competition (Esen & Uyar, 2012). Firms compete against each other through innovative designs of structure, strategy and rival approaches (Esen & Uyar, 2012). The firms' competition is linked to prevailing societal attitudes of citizens, education, religion and family structures (Esen & Uyar, 2012). The demand condition in tourism relates

to design and quality of attractions and services at the domestic level and which is likely to elicit international demand. Demand spurs innovativeness from destinations and hence competitiveness (Esen & Uyar, 2012). According to Porter's theory, (Cronjé & Plessis, 2020) presence of related and supporting industries in tourism that promote marketing, distribution and interactions with the sector fosters destination competitiveness. A destination can effectively compete in the context of available support initiatives such as tour and travel agencies. The theory also postulates that government policies influence conditions in an economy and which conditions conversely impact these policies, hence, the thriving of firms or sectors (Estevão et al., 2018).

The theory is pertinent to this study because it considers (Mekic & Mekic, 2014) values and prevailing destination management roles firms and enabling policy environment of government as interventions which foster superior destination competitiveness (Mekic & Mekic, 2014; Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). In the aftermath of covid-19, Kakamega County needs to guarantee innovative strategies for a unique appeal and superior experience over competitors in the tourism and travel sector (Lesmana et al, 2022). In addition, destinations with limited factor endowment, such as Kakamega County, can secure a better performance through adoption of innovative destination management policies and efficient use of factor resources in comparison to the richly endowed destinations (Esen & Uyar, 2012).

The theory has been applied to develop a model of tourism destination competitiveness for Indonesia (Lesmana et al, 2022). The firms and government converge to prefer cultural, structural, institutional, historical and economic values to create a successful competitive advantage (Lesmana et al, 2022). Porter's theory is theoretically relevant to all firms and sectors in an economy and applies to the tourism sector. The theory can explain factors that influence the competitive power of national and sub-national tourism firms. The theory and model, however, cannot fully explain tourism sector competitiveness. The limitation of the theory of competitive advantage of nations is also related to its applicability in temporary rather than long-term (Mekic & Mekic, 2014). The global dynamism that includes aspects of digitisation and globalisation has transformed the landscape. This is so drastic that competitiveness must be constantly reviewed (Mekic & Mekic, 2014).

2.2.2 Sequential Theory of Decentralization

The sequential theory of decentralization was advanced by (Falleti, 2002) as cited in (Shin, 2016). This theory conceptualizes decentralization as a process and not a state of being (Shin,

2016). The state undergoes reformation through a sequence of policies that lead to a national transfer of mandate, resources and authority to the sub-national. In sequential theory, (Shin, 2016) there are three principal forms of decentralisation, that is, administrative decentralisation, fiscal and political. The success of the decentralisation process is premised on aptness in the sequencing of each form of decentralisation (Shin, 2016).

The theory is relevant to the evaluation of destination management as a determinant of destination competitiveness in the context of devolved governance. Indeed, studies advance a need for destination-specific or context-based evaluation of competitiveness (Vengesai, Mavondo & Reisinger, 2013). A tourism destination covers attractions such as natural endowments and monuments, social aspects that operate in a set up where service providers interact or relate between themselves and the environment in the defined boundaries of a territory (Ammirato, Galla and Felicetti, 2014). Destination management, on the other hand, is the coordination and integration of requisite features of the destination mix, that is, attractions and events, facilities (such as hotels and restaurants), transportation, infrastructure and hospitality resources in a specific physical area which is guided by distinct tourism policy, strategy and objectives (Ammirato, Galla and Felicetti, 2014; Hieu & Rašovská, 2018). Destination management is the activities that both government and industry undertake to make a destination competitive by developing resilience to external shocks and adaptability to dynamic tourism trends (Ammirato, Galla and Felicetti, 2014; Hieu & Rašovská, 2018). The decentralized (devolved) governance units are destinations which aspire to ensure tourism competitiveness through improved management. The sequential theory of decentralization, thus, supports the comprehension of the process of decentralization and its implications on tourism. The theory, secondly, informs on territorial interests, disparities and autonomy of the sub-national that influence destination management and competitiveness (Shin, 2016).

The major limitation of the sequential theory of decentralisation is the inability to consider the role of ideas (Shin, 2016). It has been recently acknowledged that ideological orientations inform the decision by a state to embrace decentralised governance based on either political motivations or institutional incentives (Shin, 2016).

2.2.3 Dwyer and Kim Model of Destination Competitiveness

There are several models developed regarding the concept of tourism destination competitiveness (Cronjé & Plessis, 2020; Dupeyras, & MacCallum, 2013; Esen & Uyar, 2012), These models aim at enabling the comprehension and identification of determinants

and indicators and the measure of tourism destination competitiveness (Cronjé & Plessis, 2020; Dupeyras, & MacCallum, 2013). This study considers the Dwyer and Kim model (Dupeyras, & MacCallum, 2013; Dwyer and Kim, 2003). Dwyer and Kim (2003) conceptualised destination competitiveness as encompassing both objective and subjective indicators for the measure of destination competitiveness. The model integrated the elements of national and firm competitiveness with the main elements of destination competitiveness presented in other literature. Based on the model, resources form the basis of the determinants of competitiveness and can further be divided into two categories, that is, endowed (inherited) and created. The second determinant, situational conditions are factors in the external environment such as economic and cultural and which impact competitiveness. Destination management is a determinant which enhances the appeal of resources and improves on capabilities of supporting factors and resources to overcome impediments emanating from situational conditions. This determinant considers the role of destination management organisation, destination marketing management, destination policy, planning and development, human resource development and environmental management (Dupeyras, & MacCallum, 2013). This model provides a distinction between the destination management activities and roles of the public sector from that of the private sector. The public sector engages in roles such as adoption of public sector policies and strategies, marketing, national and local human resource development and environment regulation and management. On the other hand, the private sector undertakes funding of marketing initiatives, industry capacity building and promotion of the green environment and its sustainability. The model also considers demand as a determinant which encompasses demand-awareness, perception and preference. These determinants contribute to establishing a competitive environment that ultimately realises socio-economic prosperity and quality of life. This model aids in comprehending the inter-linked nature of destination management as one of the determinants that contribute towards attaining superior tourism destination competitiveness.

2.3 Empirical review

The study reviewed the empirical literature on the effect of tourism policy, destination marketing and environmental sustainability on destination competitiveness.

2.3.1 Tourism policy and destination competitiveness

Tourism policy is an integral element of destination management (Guo, Jiang and Shengchao, 2019; Hsu, Inbakaran & George, 2013). In this study, tourism policy is defined as a set of strategies, directives, rules, guidelines, regulations and declarations that gives the basis for

institutional and individual decisions and actions to attain tourism development and desired changes in society (Bryant, 2015; Cloete, Wissink and Coning, 2011; Goffi, 2013; Guo, Jiang and Shengchao, 2019). Tourism policy facilitates anticipated tourism planning and development (Goffi, 2013; Sen, 1999). Indeed, (Sen, 1999) presents the development concept clearly as an outcome obtained from governmental interventions in society.

The role of tourism policy is to delineate a long-term vision for a destination based on societal values and immensely contribute to the attainment of tourism competitiveness (Hsu, Inbakaran & George, 2013; Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016). Tourism policy plays this role through prescribing rules and laws for sector operators; detailing acceptable conducts and activities; ensuring a common approach for all destination stakeholders; building consensus on destination vision, objectives and strategy; offering a platform for public and private sector engagement and participation; and securing linkages with other sectors in an economy (Guo, Jiang and Shengchao, 2019; Hsu, Inbakaran & George, 2013).

An effective tourism policy guarantees destination competitiveness and is evaluated on its clarity of principles (Goffi, 2013; Guo, Jiang and Shengchao, 2019). These include a focus on policies at the macro-level, that is, the perspective and values of society concerning tourism development direction at local, national and beyond national boundaries. More so, the policy should consider long-term vision or sustainability dictates of tourism and deploy scarce resources to attend to unlimited opportunities in a very dynamic environment; pursue the professional dictates, that is, research, knowledge and experience on policy formulation and implementation; encourage policies premised on innovativeness and adaptability; remove barriers while strengthening linkages among diverse sectors; and ensure coherency between subnational and national policies.

A competitive model should evaluate diverse policy issues, their relationships, and support in enhancing the appeal of tourism products (Goffi, 2013). Destination policy (Goffi, 2013) can be examined at the site, regional, national or international levels. Policy evaluation should also consider the degree of community awareness regarding the tourism sector and its impacts; available opportunities for participatory policy formulation and implementation; community support and capacity building; ability to meet stakeholder needs and expectations; and integration in the larger territorial industry (Goffi, 2013; Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016). In their empirical study (Hudson, Hunter & Penckham, 2019) observe that policies do not fail merely on their account; their success is guided by capabilities in implementation. It is imperative, therefore, to understand the complexity of policies within the context of their

formulation and implementation to guarantee the expected policy interventions. To evade policy failure, one should be cognisant of policy context which is usually not predictable and linear and requires considerable adaptability.

Goffi (2013) argues that destinations should nurture access to information and establish institutional linkages with both tourism product suppliers and tourists as stakeholders. The extent of stakeholder engagement determines the legitimacy and efficacy of institutions, policies, strategies and plans. These institutions and policies aid deliver a competitive destination (Goffi, 2013; Ndivo and Oketch, 2019; Velasco, 2016). Tourism policy, as a factor of destination management, is assessed using its indicators. These indicators developed from past empirical studies are destination values, vision, institutions and governance systems, participation strategy and competitive strategy (Cloete, Wissink and Coning, 2011; Goffi, 2013; Ndivo and Oketch, 2019; Velasco, 2016).

2.3.2 Destination marketing and destination competitiveness

In destination marketing, the aim is (Goffi, 2013) strategic promotion and marketing that integrates government leadership, adequate funding and collaboration through destination marketing organisations (DMOs). According to (Goffi, 2013) destination marketing is an integral variable in destination management and enables attainment of tourism policy objectives. Destination Marketing is understood to mean (Goffi, 2013) the segmentation, branding or image creation, positioning and awareness creation through the adoption of communication strategies that ensure the sustained special appeal of the destination to the target tourist market.

According to (Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016; World Bank, 2020), an effective destination marketing strategy is premised on the knowledge of competitors, the price and quality of products and services they offer, effective communication of significant distinctions and destination brands (segmentation) and technological advantages (such as the use of digital platforms, print and electronic media). Destination managers can exert control over marketing aspects (World Bank, 2020).

Destination marketing serves to increase visitor interest and their respective expenditure (World Bank, 2020). Goffi (2013) in his study notes that distinguishing the values of a destination concerning other similar destinations through positioning aims to leverage its comparative advantages to secure competitive advantages. Marketing activities (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2014) contribute to the efficacy of tourism services, competitiveness and

sustainability, firstly, integrating all aspects of product development, pricing and promotion. Secondly, it determines destination positioning, that is, the identification of available attractions and how they differ from other destinations (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2014). Thirdly, evaluate tourist demands and perceptions. And, fourthly, create awareness concerning the destination (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2014).

Goffi (2013) observes that destination marketing has formally or informally established destination marketing organisations (DMOs) as one of its effective instruments. These DMOs (Hieu & Rašovská, 2018) foster shared values, culture and infrastructures to deliver an overall strategic vision and plan. The efficacy of destination marketing is also determined by destination branding. Studies observe that a distinct and recognisable brand endears a destination's competitiveness (Kladou, Giannopoulos & Mavragani, 2015). To measure the efficacy of destination branding, one needs to consider awareness creation, brand loyalty, association or image and positioning as variables (Kladou, Giannopoulos & Mavragani, 2015). More so, success is evaluated based on the design and adoption of a national brand being in accord with established regional brands (Kladou, Giannopoulos & Mavragani, 2015).

Globally competitive destinations are sustained by innovativeness (Armenski, Dwyer and Pavluković, 2017). This is a creative business thinking that proactively secures new products and services in a destination to meet trends in visitor demand dynamism (Armenski, Dwyer and Pavluković, 2017; Cîrstea, 2014; Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012; Langos, 2014). The objective is to guarantee authentic and differentiated experiences in a destination relative to competitors with a customer orientation (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). The incentives for innovativeness (Armenski, Dwyer and Pavluković, 2017; Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012; Langos, 2014) are appropriate policies, investment, entrepreneurial risk-oriented culture, knowledge management, efficient sharing of information, adoption of appropriate technology and collaboration (engagement of stakeholders in adoption of common destination vision and objectives).

Destinations that promote distinct events (Getz & Page, 2016; Zlatanov, 2015) secure a strategic tourism competitiveness status. Event tourism refers to the (Getz & Page, 2016) planned and strategic promotion of special events to foster a destination's tourism agenda. The portfolio approach is where a destination's tourism strategic management, policy and planning identify its catalogue of events and potential objectives and benefits they derive; this relates to type, season, related appeal, values, costs, market share and profitability (Zlatanov,

2015). The portfolio approach delivers on two key objectives, that is, inform strategy to attract new visitors and enable the measure of impact or value of the events and how they contribute as a variable to effective destination management and tourism competitiveness (Getz & Page, 2016; Zlatanov, 2015).

Digital destination marketing sustains competitiveness by enhancing the capabilities of suppliers and destinations to pursue efficiency, collaboration and flexibility (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). Digital destination marketing benefits competitive advantages through processing data to information for decision-making; enhanced interactions and communication; and transformed organizational structures, processes and business models (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). There is a need for an effective policy and strategy to counter bottlenecks in destinations that adopt digital marketing and which include the inability to institutionalise regulatory roles on tourism product or service quality, control, security, fair competition and handling of consumer rights (Pitanatri & Pitana, 2016).

2.3.3 Environmental sustainability and destination competitiveness

The commitment and sensitivity to environmental quality and sustainability are one of the reasons for securing superior destination competitiveness (Fernandez, Martinez and Martin, 2022; Goffi, 2013). Indeed, empirical studies indicate that the interest tourism development has stimulated is overstressing sustainability of environmental resources and there is a need for sound resource stewardship (Khan et al., 2021). In recent times, destination managers are preoccupied with the interests of responsible visitors who seek quality rather than value and are more sensitive to what an authentic environment guarantees (Morrison, 2018).

The variables to consider under environmental sustainability are often varied and complex to measure (Goffi, 2013). Effective environmental management requires an elaborate policy and regulatory framework that attends to tourism practices to foster the environmental sustainability of a destination (Guo, Jiang and Shengchao, 2019). In this regard, empirical studies have sought to evaluate the policy on environmental sustainability as a factor and variable for consideration for destinations (Cîrstea, 2014; Khan et al., 2021; Guo, Jiang and Shengchao, 2019). Such policies, (Guo, Jiang and Shengchao, 2019) should integrate an inter-generational perspective or futuristic realisation of the linkage between economic and environmental concerns (Guo, Jiang and Shengchao, 2019).

Models of competitiveness (Cîrstea, 2014; Khan et al., 2021) observe that indicators for appraisal of environmental sustainability and management include the capacity for the public

and private sectors to have regard for the significance of a sustainable environment; availability of laws and regulations safeguarding environment and heritage; and research and monitoring of impacts of tourism on the environment. The tools of regulation in environmental management include (Khan et al., 2021; Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016) voluntary Codes of Conduct and Zonal Area Plans. The voluntary and other related environmental codes consist of the variables to evaluate environmental sustainability and destination competitiveness (Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016). The environmental code of conduct for sustainable tourism (Faure & Arsika, 2015) is one of the indicators of effective environmental sustainability and, hence, tourism destination competitiveness. A viable code of conduct is determined by whether prior information is shared with the target stakeholders, that is, host communities, tourists, governments, and other authorities to eliminate ambiguity and protect consumer rights. The code of conduct fosters sustainable tourism (Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016). A study by (Khan et al., 2021) indicates that the code of conduct is an initial step towards the respect and protection of the environment. The accreditation schemes, that is, certifications, awards, labels and seals are considered to have immense benefits to the environmental competitiveness of destinations (Benard & Nicolau, 2022). The scheme (Benard & Nicolau, 2022) ensures certain principles and minimum standards of environmental adherence. It also obligates destinations and managers to adhere to the standards (Benard & Nicolau, 2022). The accreditation schemes (Benard & Nicolau, 2022) are considered based on enhancing green destination brands.

Designation of heritage sites and their consequent protection strategies safeguards specific opportunities and risks in a destination; appropriate conservation policies and strategies guiding the designation guarantee competitiveness and sustainability (Khan et al., 2021). In their study, (Khan et al., 2021) observe that the designation of heritage sites is an incentive to destination management institutions and is measured based on eliciting interest in the allocation of funds, adoption of relevant policies and implementation of management strategies to enhance their protection and development. Sites designation and registration is also a destination branding and marketing tool; respective governments support tourism development (Khan et al., 2021) on the strength of monuments recognised by global bodies such as the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

In their study, (Cîrstea, 2014; Khan et al., 2021) demonstrate that a clean, safe and high-quality environment optimally satisfies tourists' expectations at a destination benefitting from the adoption of regulations based on sound principles of sustainable tourism development.

The quality of an environment is considered in aspects such as the existence of clean cities and urban areas (Cîrstea, 2014). Competitive destinations strive to guarantee to appeal to visitors through urban area management policies that foster a quality environment ((Cîrstea, 2014).

In cases where transparency is enhanced by engaging independent entities with no other interest, the reliability of effective management of the environment is notably secured (Benard & Nicolau, 2022). The principles of participation endear inclusivity and ownership of environmentally sustainable drives. This ensures eco-friendly tourism activities, for instance, to tour operators or hoteliers and significantly community eco-tourism activities (Benard & Nicolau, 2022). Tourism (Cîrstea, 2014; Khan et al., 2021) has been reputed for its role in sustainable development, conservation of nature and perpetuation of indigenous culture.

A destination's environment is an important forecaster of its quality; a commitment to oversight the sustainable utilisation of tourism resources is an indicator and measure of competitiveness (Cîrstea, 2014; Khan et al., 2021). The emphasis on environmental management (EM) is realised through policies and strategies that enhance resource allocations, research and monitoring and the supply of experts to guide environmental management (Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016). Studies (Khan et al., 2021) amplify a need to place environmental issues high on the destination's business or firm agenda and related culture; the basis is the greater benefits that tourism stakeholders derive from environmental conservation. The measure of commitment includes policies to ensure the quality and safety of the environment and destination appeal based on the sustainable use of natural environmental resources for tourism (Cîrstea, 2014; Khan et al., 2021).

Environmental regulation (Khan et al., 2021) guides activities at a destination, service providers and tourists. It links visitor expectations to the quality of a destination (Khan et al., 2021). Regulation determines inclusion and exclusion through environmental codes (Khan et al., 2021) to guide environmental use and deter destruction by limiting tour operators and tourists to the extent of the use of natural resources. Regulations are evaluated based on fair application, legitimacy to all stakeholders and delivery either at the local destination or incorporated in concession contracts (Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016). The effective implementation of regulation which fosters environmental management (Cîrstea, 2014) is evaluated on the extent of stakeholder participation, adherence to destination values and destination-specific policy issues.

2.6 Conceptual framework

This section conceptualises a framework of destination management as a determinant of tourism destination competitiveness. The variables for destination management (see Figure. 2.1) are tourism policy, destination management and environmental sustainability.

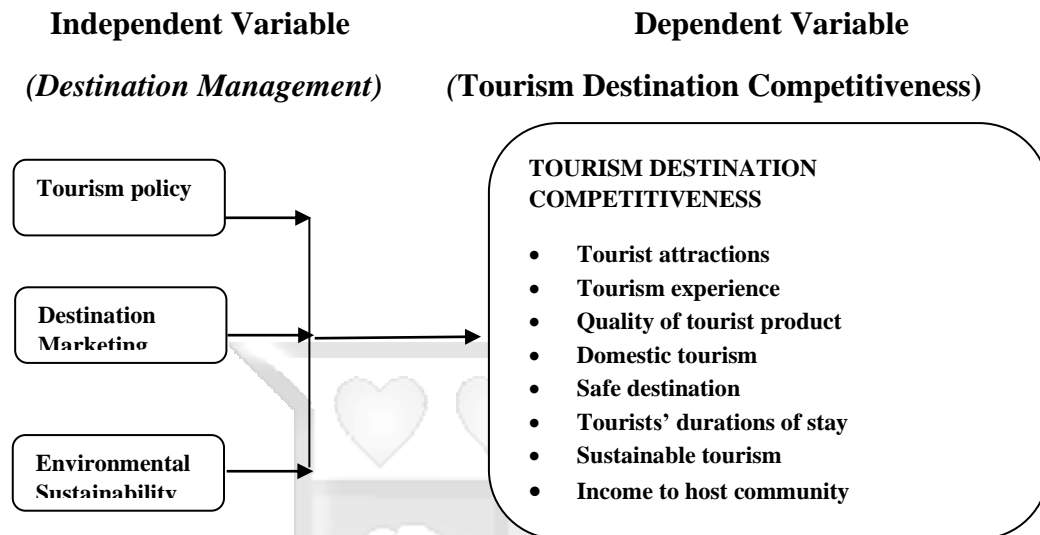


Figure 2. 1 A Conceptual Model of tourism destination competitiveness

2.7 Operationalization of the conceptual framework

The relationship is presented indicating (see Table 2.1) dependent and independent variables

Table 2. 1 Dependent and independent variables

Destination Management Independent Variable (IV)	Tourism Destination Competitiveness Dependent Variable (DV)
Tourism policy	Tourist attractions
Destination marketing	Tourism experience
Environmental sustainability	Quality of tourist product
	Domestic tourism
	Safe destination
	Durations of stay for tourists
	Sustainable tourism
	Income to host community

2.8 Research Gaps

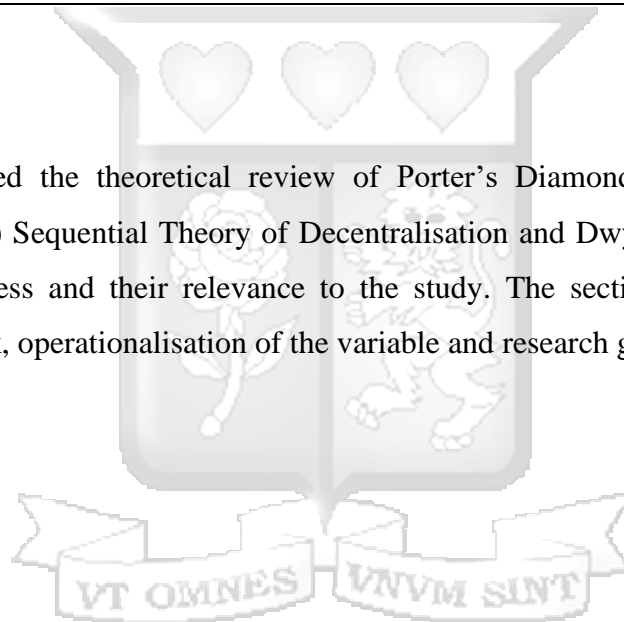
The research gaps are summarised in the table below

Table 2. 2 Research gaps

S/NO.	GAPS IN RESEARCH
1.	Evaluation of competitiveness within the devolved governance context
2.	Determination of variables to assess the competitiveness of counties
3.	Consideration of the effect of shocks on destination competitiveness

2.9 Summary

This chapter discussed the theoretical review of Porter's Diamond theory (Competitive advantage of Nations) Sequential Theory of Decentralisation and Dwyer and Kim Model of tourism competitiveness and their relevance to the study. The section also presented the conceptual framework, operationalisation of the variable and research gaps



CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of the research design, study location, sample population, sampling techniques, data collection, data analysis, research quality and ethical issues.

3.2 Research Design

The researcher was guided by the interpretivism philosophical approach (Ryan, 2018). Based on this philosophy, the researcher considered that knowledge of destination management and competitiveness is subjective and there is a need to comprehend perspectives from tourism practitioners (Ryan, 2018; Vengesayi, Mavondo & Reisinger, 2013). This philosophy informed the adoption of a descriptive survey research design strategy (Kolil, Ondiek & Manyasi, 2019; Kirongo and Odoyo, 2020; Radwan & Elwakil, 2015). In the survey approach, the researcher was able to generate the idea, define the problem, adopt a procedure, make observations, analyse, interpret and finally communicate the finding (Kirongo and Odoyo, 2020). The study preferred this survey design for appropriates of considering a larger number of variables (Kirongo and Odoyo, 2020).

3.3 Study Population

The study population consisted of tourism and hospitality practitioners from both public and private entities based in Kakamega County. As an emerging destination, similar to cases in many destinations, data on tourism and hospitality practitioners could not be determined for the case of Kakamega County (Vengesayi, Mavondo & Reisinger, 2013). The researcher, therefore, identified 44 private sector practitioners from hotels based on facilities identified in the statistics and data collection report from the county Directorate of Tourism of 2019. The other private sector entities that formed the target population were 5 respondents from the association of community tour guides at Kakamega Forest National Reserve, 3 from the leadership of the association of hoteliers and 3 from the management of the Ikhongo Murwi heritage site. The public sector entities targeted respondents were county directorates of tourism (2), environment (2), and culture (2). Public sector entity practitioners from National Government were 3 respondents from Kenya wildlife Service (KWS), 3 from the tourism and hospitality training institution at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) and 3 from the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA).

3.4 Sample size and sampling design

The stratified purposive sample size of 50 respondents was considered. The stratified purposive sampling as target respondents were those considered to have known about the study area (Amaya-Molinar, Sosa Ferreira, Ochoa-Llamas, & Moncada Jiménez, 2017; Cronjé & Plessis; Neuman, 2005; Palinkas, et al., 2015; Saunders et al, 2016; Vengesayi, Mavondo & Reisinger, 2013). The researcher adopted stratified purposive sampling to enhance wider perspectives from practitioners on the subject of study (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Palinkas, et al., 2015). The stratified purposive sampling also effectively attended to the researcher's constraining resources of time and finances (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Palinkas, et al., 2015).

3.5 Data Collection

The study collected qualitative primary data by the use of a structured survey questionnaire. The questionnaire had two parts, that is, the first part was close-ended and structured on a 5-point Likert-Scale (Goffi, 2013; Vengesayi, Mavondo & Reisinger, 2013). The questionnaire was administered directly to the respondents to enable provide clarification to the respondent.

3.6 Data analysis

The study applied descriptive statistics to identify key destination management factors and inferential statistics to determine the significance of the relationship between destination management and tourism destination competitiveness (Kirongo and Odoyo, 2020).

3.6.1 Descriptive statistics

The study analysed data from the questionnaires using descriptive analysis. This considered the percentage score indicating the demographic of the sample population. The aspects addressed were gender, education level, type of business entity engaged in and work experience in the tourism and hospitality sector (Kirongo and Odoyo, 2020; Sullivan & Artino, 2013; Lovelace and Brickman, 2013). The study performed Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to determine multi-collinearity and its impact on the predictive strength of the model (Shrestha, 2020).

3.6.2 Inferential statistics

The study performed a correlation analysis to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the destination management (independent) and destination competitive (dependent) variables (Obilor and Amadi, 2018). While the study performed multi-linear

regression to determine the effect or influence of destination management and its related factors on tourism destination competitiveness (Radwan & Elwakil, 2015; Santiesteban and Gamboa, 2019). This is a quantitative statistical test used to examine models which seem to, quantitatively, describe the effect of a variable referred to as dependent or endogenous based on information derived from a set of variables usually referred to as independent or exogenous (Radwan & Elwakil, 2015; Santiesteban and Gamboa, 2019). The dependent variable is designated as Y , while the set of independent variables are denoted, X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k . The multi-linear regression model is given by equation (i) below;

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_kX_k + u \dots \dots \dots \text{i}$$

In the equation b_1, b_2, \dots, b_k are referred to as coefficients of regression and denote the magnitude with which the independent variables explain the dependent variable, Y . The coefficient b_0 is referred to as the independent or constant term of the model while u is the error term in the model. In the case of the presence in the model of an independent variable, this can be denoted as the presence of the first variable X_0 , valued always at 1.

Given a set of K observations for each of the dependent and independent variables, the model can be written as in equation (ii) below:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_kX_k + u \quad n: 1, 2, 3, \dots, N \dots \dots \dots \text{ii}$$

In a case where the relationship of the independent variable, Y and a set of independent variables, X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k for a set of N observations each exogenous and endogenous variables are as in the model in equation (ii) above, there is a need to assign numerical values to $b_0, b_1, b_2, \dots, b_k$. These values are known as parameter estimates for the model and, once they have been ascertained, enable the determination of future predictions on the conduct of the dependent variable, Y (Santiesteban and Gamboa, 2019).

The model is fulfilled (Santiesteban and Gamboa, 2019) based on the assumptions that (i) variables X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k are deterministic, that is, they are not random variables, since the sample taken gives constant value; (ii) the error term, u is a random variable with zero expectation and a constant diagonal covariance matrix (scalar matrix); (iii) since the dependent variable, Y depends on the random variable, u it is considered a random variable; (iv) there are no specification errors given the inclusion in the definition of the linear model all the X variables that are relevant for explaining variable Y ; and (v) there is no multicollinearity for set of independent variables X_1, X_2, \dots, X_k .

The significance of the estimated relationships between the dependent variable, that is, tourism destination competitiveness and the independent variable, that is, destination management is ordinarily evaluated to give the degree of confidence that the true relationship approaches the estimated relationship (Radwan & Elwakil, 2015). The fitness of the model is determined by the correlation Coefficient-R and R-squared (Santiesteban and Gamboa, 2019).

3.6.3 Regression model

The regression was used to determine whether destination management factors, that is, tourism policy, destination marketing and environmental sustainability influenced or had the predictive effect of destination management on competitiveness.

About the conceptual framework, the research model can be written as in equation (iii) below: -

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + u \quad n: 1, 2, 3, \dots, N \dots \dots \dots iii$$

Where

Y, is the dependent variable, Tourism destination competitiveness,

X₁, is the independent variable, tourism policy

X₂, is the independent variable, destination marketing

X₃, is the independent variable, environmental sustainability

b₁, b₂ and b₃ are coefficients of regression for the variables X₁, X₂ and X₃

b₀, is the constant

u, is the error term

n, is 50 observations

3.7 Research Reliability and Validity

The study sought to guarantee that the study could be replicated with similar results, that is, reliability and attended to the objective intended to evaluate, that is, validity.

3.7.1 Reliability

Reliability implies that consistent results with equal values are obtainable in every application for the survey questionnaire as an instrument of measure (Mohajan, 2017; Taber, 2017). The

study applied Cronbach’s alpha test statistic for internal consistency as the measure to determine reliability (Mohajan, 2017; Taber, 2017). At least a value of 0.7 for Cronbach’s alpha test statistic is advisable (Mohajan, 2017; Taber, 2017). The values range from 0.7546 to 0.8885 as indicated in (Table 3.1) implying internal reliability.

Table 3. 1 Reliability test statistic

Variable	Cronbach’s Alpha
Destination Policy	0.7546
Destination marketing	0.8885
Environmental management	0.798
Tourism Destination Competitiveness	0.7546

3.7.2 Validity

Validity refers to a case where a survey questionnaire measured the intended objective and not something else (Taber, 2017). The study embraced content validity by aligning the items of measure to the conceptual framework under evaluation (Mohajan, 2017). Further, the study guaranteed construct validity, in which variables and related constructs were derived from theories of existing instruments to collect and measure data (Mohajan, 2017; Taber, 2017). In this study, therefore, the emphasis was on adherence to the dictates of scientific research methods while processing findings (Taber, 2017).

3.8 Ethical Issues

This study observed guiding principles on ethical issues to enhance professionalism (Vanclay, Baines and Taylor, 2013). The researcher sought clearance from the Strathmore University Office of Graduate Studies after the omission to apply for ethical clearance from the Strathmore University Institute of Ethics and Research (IREC) before data collection and analysis. In addition, authority was also obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the County Government of Kakamega before data collection. The researcher secured respondents’ voluntary consent in volunteering their perceptions on the study survey questionnaire (Vanclay, Baines and Taylor, 2013). The confidentiality, anonymity and data protection guidelines were guaranteed to respondents and observed in the study (Vanclay, Baines and Taylor, 2013). The study findings shall be used solely for the objective of academics at Strathmore University Business School upon pertinent authorisation.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has an in-depth presentation of research methodology guided by interpretivism philosophy and descriptive research design. The characteristic of the study population was provided and guided the adoption of purposive sampling and sample size. The primary data collection by use of a structured and closed-ended survey questionnaire that was analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics (multi-linear regression) has been presented in this chapter. The sections on Cronbach's reliability analysis, validity and ethical issues were also discussed in this chapter.



CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study questionnaire. This section attends to the descriptive approach to demographic profile and competitiveness indicators as well as inferential statistics from the multi-linear regression. The overall purpose of the chapter is to inform finding on the specific and overall objective which is to determine the significance of destination management on tourism destination competitiveness in Kakamega County.

4.2 Response rate

In the study, survey questionnaires were administered to a purposive sample of 70 respondents. A total of 64 questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 91.42 %. This high response was attributable to a personalised administration and tracking of questionnaires that increased the participants' motivation (Holtom, Baruch and Aguinis, 2022). Analysis and interpretation of data used 50 of the returned questionnaires. This is because 14 questionnaires were considered non-responsive, that is, had missing items or were incorrectly filled.

4.3 Descriptive statistics

The section considered demographic profiles under gender, educational attainment, position in the respective tourism business, nature of tourism business and duration of experience in the hospitality and tourism sector. The sample population, (Figure 4.1), had 34% women and a majority of respondents, that is, 66% being men. The tourism and gender policy in Kakamega County is yet to foster the participation of the female gender in tourism as a source of livelihood.

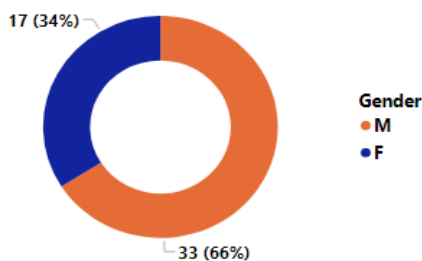


Figure 4. 1 Respondent's gender

Concerning the education level of respondents, (**Figure 4.2**), 4% had secondary education, 50 % had tertiary education in tourism and hospitality and 46 % had tertiary training in other fields other than tourism and hospitality. This indicates that a large proportion of the respondents, fifty per cent, had tertiary training in tourism and hospitality. This served to enhance the validity of inferences from the study based on the degree of knowledge concerning the sector (Holtom, Baruch and Aguinis, 2022). The respondents overall had a tertiary level of education at 96%. However, those who had derived education directly related to tourism were almost equal to those with education in other fields other than related to tourism.

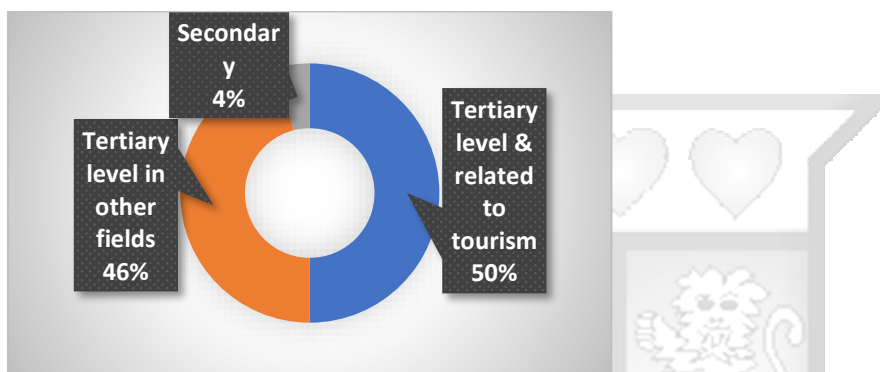


Figure 4. 2 Respondents' education level

The study interviewed respondents in tourism, hospitality and related sectors from both public and private entities. Figure 4.3 indicates that 74% of respondents were from hotels, 10% were tour guides, 6% were public servants 6%, were from tourism hospitality training institutions and 4% were in destination management organisations (DMOs). The larger proportion of respondents in the tourism and hospitality sector was derived from hotels. This is based on the fact that it is the most well-established unit in tourism and hospitality in Kakamega County.

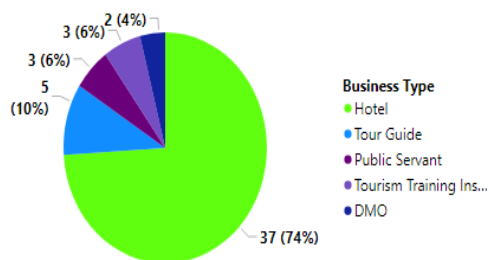


Figure 4. 3 Type of tourism business

In the study, (Figure 4.4), categories of respondents' duration in tourism and hospitality sector service were 40% between 6-15 years, 28% between 3-5 years, 20% between 16-25 years, 8% between 26-35 years and 4% had over 36 years of experience. The majority of the practitioners had a working experience of

between 6 and 15 years. The opinions of respondents with long working experience in tourism and hospitality were considered informative (Vengesayi, Mavondo & Reisinger, 2013).

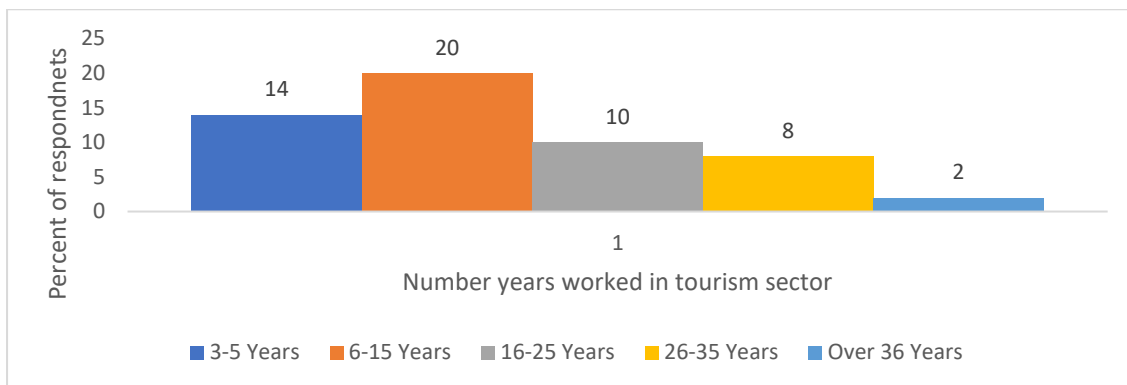


Figure 4. 4 Number of years respondents have worked in the tourism sector

4.4 Evaluation of Destination Competitiveness in the Western tourism circuit

This sought to compare the competitiveness performance of Kakamega county vis-à-vis other counties in the western tourism circuit. Respondents identified the counties of Kisumu, Bungoma and Busia as destinations in the western tourism circuit which posed the most competition to Kakamega County with a total weighted score of 25.80%, 13.40% and 9.00% respectively (see table 4.1). Kisii, Bomet and Homa Bay provided the least competition with all having a total weighted score of less than 2%. The findings were significant as it was the basis upon which respondents relied to evaluate destination management constructs and indicators of competitiveness for Kakamega County. It was informed by one of the ideals of destination competitiveness which postulate that it is a relative concept.

Table 4. 1 Competitiveness Ranking in the Western Tourism Circuit

Rank	Destination	% Weighted Scores	% Total weighted Scores
	Kisumu	39.81	25.80
	Bungoma	20.68	13.40
	Busia	13.89	9.00
	Trans Nzoia	5.86	3.80
	Vihiga	4.63	3.00
	Siaya	4.32	2.80
	Homa Bay	2.47	1.60
	Bomet	1.85	1.20
	Kisii	1.54	1.00

4.5 Tourism Destination Competitiveness Indicators for Kakamega County

Respondents ranked Kakamega County (see table 4.2) favourably as an affordable domestic tourism destination ($\bar{x} = 3.961$, $s = 0.776$); Safe and secure destination ($\bar{x} = 3.938$, $s = 0.7943$); guarantee unique tourism experience ($\bar{x} = 3.719$, $s = 0.8814$); diverse tourism attractions and activities ($\bar{x} = 3.656$, $s = 0.8948$); and quality tourism products ($\bar{x} = 3.531$, $s = 0.8351$).

Table 4. 2 Destination competitiveness indicators for Kakamega County

<i>CODE</i>	<i>How Kakamega County rates on Tourism Destination Competitiveness aspects in comparison to competitors</i>	<i>Mean</i> (\bar{x})	<i>Standard Deviation</i> (s)
<i>TC1</i>	Tourism experience	3.719	0.8814
<i>TC2</i>	Diversity of tourist attractions	3.656	0.8948
<i>TC3</i>	Quality tourism product	3.531	0.8351
<i>TC4</i>	Domestic tourism	3.961	0.7760
<i>TC5</i>	Safety of tourism destination	3.938	0.7943
<i>TC6</i>	Tourists 'Duration of Stay	3.25	0.9428
<i>TC7</i>	Sustainable tourism development	3.375	0.7664
<i>TC8</i>	Incomes of host communities	3.203	1.0568

4.6 Inferential statistics

The researcher performed Correlation and regression analysis under this section.

4.6.1 Correlation of destination management factors and destination competitiveness

The study undertook a correlation analysis to establish the strength and direction of the relationships between destination management factors and destination competitiveness. The analysis indicated a moderate and positive correlation for the variable (see Table 4.3 below) except for tourism policy (TP) and destination management (DM). The correlation between tourism Policy and destination management was strong and positive as it was above 0.7, that is $r(48) = .7619$. The further analysis of the significance of this correlation was determined through regression analysis.

Table 4. 3 Correlation analysis

	<i>TC</i>	<i>TP</i>	<i>DM</i>	<i>ES</i>
TC	1			
TP	0.514808	1		
DM	0.526627	0.761921	1	
ES	0.499372	0.634399	0.642393	1

4.6.1 Tourism Policy and destination competitiveness

In the table below, the multiple R is the multiple correlation coefficient. It is equivalent to Pearson’s correlation coefficient, r , and is the measure of the strength and direction of a relationship between variables. In this case correlation coefficient, $r(48) = .5148$, $p < .05$. This implies that there is a moderate and positive correlation between destination competitiveness and tourism policy and this is statistically significant since $p < .05$. The study further observed that the simple regression model is a good fit, that is, tourism policy (independent variable) statistically predicts the dependent or outcome variable (tourist destination competitiveness) significantly well given that $P < .05$ (Table. 4.4). The coefficient of regression for tourism policy is 0.5054 is positive and the intercept is 2.1016. The value $R^2 = 0.2650$ (26.5%) represents the total variation in tourism competitiveness (dependent variable) explained by tourism policy (independent variables). The standard error (error term) of 0.4695 (46.95%) represents the totality of other factors that influence destination competitiveness.

The regression model is, thus, given below.

$$Y = 2.1016 + 0.5054 X_1 \dots\dots\dots(i)$$

Table 4. 4 Tourism Policy and tourism competitiveness

SUMMARY OUTPUT

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.514808367
R Square	0.265027655
Adjusted R Square	0.249715731
Standard Error	0.46954506
Observations	50

<i>ANOVA</i>					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	3.8160669	3.8160669	17.30858	0.000130741
Residual	48	10.582683	0.2204726		
Total	49	14.39875			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	2.101589958	0.3615075	5.8134068	4.827E-07	1.374730479	2.8284494	1.374730479	2.8284494
TP	0.505439331	0.1214894	4.1603581	0.0001307	0.26116856	0.7497101	0.26116856	0.7497101

4.6.2 Destination Marketing and tourism destination competitiveness

There is a statistically significant moderate and positive correlation between destination competitiveness and destination marketing. The correlation coefficient, $r(48) = .5266$, $p < .05$. The study observed that the simple regression model is a good fit, that is, destination marketing (independent variable) statistically predicts the dependent or outcome variable (tourist destination competitiveness) significantly well, $P < 0.05$ (see table 4.5). The coefficient of regression, which is equal to 0.3885, denotes the positive effect of destination marketing (independent variable) on tourism destination competitiveness (dependent variable). The value $R^2 = 0.2773$ (27.73%) represents the total variation in tourism competitiveness (dependent variable) explained by destination marketing (independent variables). The standard error (error term) is 0.4656 (46.56%) refers represents the totality of other factors that influence destination competitiveness.

The regression model is given below.

$$Y = 2.371763678 + 0.3885X_2 \dots\dots\dots(ii)$$

Table 4. 5 Destination Marketing and tourism competitiveness

**SUMMARY
OUTPUT**

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.526627465
R Square	0.277336487
Adjusted R Square	0.262280997
Standard Error	0.465596644
Observations	50

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	3.9932987	3.9932987	18.42095408	8.54465E-05
Residual	48	10.405451	0.2167802		
Total	49	14.39875			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	2.371763678	0.2891093	8.2036907	1.08594E-10	1.790470374	2.953057	1.7904704	2.953057
DM	0.388500425	0.0905181	4.2919639	8.54465E-05	0.206501583	0.5704993	0.2065016	0.5704993

4.6.3 Environmental Sustainability and destination competitiveness

The correlation between destination competitiveness and environmental sustainability is statistically significant, moderate and positive. The correlation coefficient, $r(48) = .4994$, $p < .05$. In this case, the simple regression model is a good fit and destination marketing (independent variable) predicts the dependent or outcome variable (tourist destination competitiveness) significantly well, $P < .05$ (see table 4.6). The coefficient of regression, which is equal to 0.4741, denotes the positive effect of environmental sustainability (independent variable) on tourism destination competitiveness (dependent variable). The value $R^2 = 0.2494$ (24.94%) represents the total variation in tourism competitiveness (dependent variable) explained by environmental sustainability (independent variables). The standard error (error term) of 0.4745 (47.45%) represents the totality of other factors that influence destination competitiveness.

The regression model is provided below: -

$$Y = 1.947942 + 0.4741X_3 \dots \dots \dots (iii)$$

Table 4. 6 Environmental Sustainability and tourism competitiveness

SUMMARY OUTPUT								
<i>Regression Statistics</i>								
Multiple R	0.499372							
R Square	0.249372							
Adjusted R Square	0.233734							
Standard Error	0.47452							
Observations	50							
ANOVA								
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>			
Regression	1	3.590646	3.590646	15.94646	0.000223			
Residual	48	10.8081	0.225169					
Total	49	14.39875						
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	1.947942	0.414172	4.703225	2.2E-05	1.115194	2.78069	1.115194	2.78069
ES	0.474091	0.118722	3.993302	0.000223	0.235385	0.712797	0.235385	0.712797

4.6.4 Destination Management and tourism destination competitiveness

The correlation between destination competitiveness and destination management is statistically significant, moderate and positive. The correlation coefficient, $r(48) = 0.5794$, $p < .05$. The multi-linear regression model is a good fit and destination marketing (independent variable) predicts the dependent or outcome variable (tourist destination competitiveness) significantly well, $P < .05$ (Table 4.7). The coefficients of regression, which are $X_1 = 0.1889$, $X_2 = 0.1729$ and $X_3 = 0.2153$, denote the positive effect of the constructs of destination management (independent variable), that is, tourism policy (X_1) destination marketing (X_2) and environmental sustainability (X_3) and tourism destination competitiveness (independent variables) on tourism destination competitiveness (dependent variable). The value $R^2 = 0.3357$ (33.57%) represents the total variation in tourism competitiveness (dependent variable) explained by environmental sustainability (independent variables). The standard error (error term) of 0.456 (45.6%) represents the totality of other factors that influence destination competitiveness. The Multi-Linear Regression (MLR) model is given below. The p- values for the three constructs of destination management (X_1 , X_2 and X_3), $P > 0.05$. However, the $VIF < 3$, and the cut-off implies a lack of multicollinearity problem and satisfies the model's predictive capabilities.

The multiple linear regression model is provided below:-

$$Y = 1.7487 + 0.1889 X_1 + 0.1729 X_2 + 0.2153 X_3 \dots \dots \dots (iv)$$

Table 4. 7 Destination Management and tourism competitiveness

SUMMARY OUTPUT

<i>Regression Statistics</i>	
Multiple R	0.579402
R Square	0.335706
Adjusted R Square	0.292383
Standard Error	0.455999
Observations	50

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	3	4.833753	1.611251	7.748831	0.000272
Residual	46	9.564997	0.207935		
Total	49	14.39875			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>	<i>VIF</i>
Intercept	1.748699	0.420463	4.158982	0.000138	0.90235	2.595047	0.90235	2.595047	
TP	0.18886	0.190469	0.99155	0.326604	-0.19454	0.572255	0.19454	0.572255	2.606162
DM	0.172913	0.144355	1.197831	0.237119	-0.11766	0.463484	0.11766	0.463484	2.651454
ES	0.215288	0.155651	1.383142	0.173298	-0.09802	0.528597	0.09802	0.528597	1.861344

4.7 Summary

The chapter presented research findings and included response rate, descriptive statistics for the demographic profile and evaluation of destination competitiveness of counties in the western tourism circuit. The correlation analysis generally exhibited a positive relationship that varied from moderate to strong and was statistically significant. These informed the basis for the relative evaluation of tourism policy, destination marketing and environmental sustainability as factors influencing destination competitiveness of Kakamega County using multi-linear regression. The chapter concludes with findings on the overall objective of the study, that is, the evaluation of the effect of destination management on competitiveness.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section provides discussions of the research findings giving an interpretation concerning the specific objectives. The conclusions and recommendations provide a summary of findings about interpretations and suggestions on destination management approaches to enhance the competitiveness of Kakamega County as a tourism destination.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

The reasons for the tourism performance of Kakamega County on select competitiveness indicators are provided in this section. Also considered are the effects of destination management on tourism destination competitiveness.

5.2.1 Destination Competitiveness in the Western tourism circuit

The counties that present the most competition to Kakamega County from the western tourism circuit are Kisumu, Bungoma and Busia. This is due to their strategic positioning and better hotel accommodation infrastructure (Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). Kisumu has city status and is located adjacent to Lake Victoria which is the largest and most prominent freshwater body in Africa. Bungoma (Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016) on the other hand is situated on the Kenya-Uganda highway and has thriving business tourism. Busia County benefits from business tourism as a border county and recreation tourism derived from Lake Victoria (Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). Destination competitiveness is a relative concept (Ammirato, Galla and Felicetti, 2014; Goffi, 2013). To improve its competitiveness, knowledge of strategies of the three main competitor destinations, that is, Kisumu, Bungoma and Busia, is invaluable. This will aid destination managers to consider specific areas of concern and build competitive advantages (Ammirato, Galla and Felicetti, 2014; Goffi, 2013) for appropriate branding and position strategy. A destination such as Kakamega County can attain superior competitiveness by integration of cooperation with competitor destinations and benefit from their comparative advantages while competing in her unique niche tourism endowment.

5.2.2 Tourism Destination Competitiveness Indicators for Kakamega County

Kakamega County seems to be well rated regarding being an affordable destination, safe and secure and guarantees a unique tourism experience based on its diverse and quality tourism attractions and activities. Kakamega County has natural and cultural heritage attractions, that

is, Kakamega tropical rain forest, Ikhongo Murwi (Crying Stone), Isukuti dance, bull sport and Wanga Kingdom. These are unique in Kenya and exist only in Kakamega County. The products are largely in their pristine nature and have not been overexploited, hence, their affordability, diversity and high quality ensure a unique visitor experience (Government of Kakamega, 2018; Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016). The low performance on the duration of stay, sustainable tourism and incomes to host communities infer the shortfall in destination management strategy as a catalyst for destination resources and supporting conditions as envisaged in the (Dwyer and Kim, 2003) model. There is a need for an appropriate tourism policy, marketing strategy and environmental sustainability approaches for enhanced competitiveness.

5.2.2 Tourism Policy and destination competitiveness

The study observed that the simple regression model is a good fit, that is, tourism policy (independent variable) statistically predicts the dependent or outcome variable (tourist destination competitiveness). This finding was corroborated by the correlation analysis which showed a moderate and positive relationship between tourism policy and destination competitiveness. This finding was in line with the vast literature that tourism policy can contribute to greater competitiveness for a tourism destination (Dwyer and Kim, 2003; Bryant, 2015; Goffi, 2013; Hsu, Inbakaran and George, 2013). Tourism policy presents a set of interventions intended to bring the desired change, tourism development and, ultimately, tourism destination competitiveness (Bryant, 2015; Goffi, 2013; Hsu, Inbakaran and George, 2013). The appraisal of diverse policy issues and how these relate to and support the enhanced appeal of tourism products and activities (Hsu, Inbakaran and George, 2013) significantly influence and contribute to tourism destination competitiveness. In their study, (Hsu, Inbakaran and George, 2013) observed that tourism policy can also be applied to curtail incidences of imperfect competition in the sector. However, in the study (Kubickova, 2017) interesting findings were observed. The policy to curtail corruption (Kubickova, 2017) presented a significant and negative effect on destination competitiveness contrary to the general expectation. It is argued that this allowed firms in tourism flexibility and the ability to circumvent the shortfalls of government in developing countries of Central America where the study was carried out (Kubickova, 2017). In their study, (Hudson, Hunter & Penckham, 2019) underscore the significance of institutions in influencing tourism policy design and implementation. This determines whether a policy decision will have a positive or negative effect on destination competitiveness. In destination management, there is a need, therefore,

to critically analyse tourism policy decisions and prevailing institutional framework before their adoption and implementation.

5.2.3 Destination Marketing and tourism destination competitiveness

The study observed that the simple regression model is a good fit, that is, destination marketing (independent variable) statistically predicts the dependent or outcome variable (tourist destination competitiveness) significantly well given that $p < 0.05$ (95% significance level) see (Table 4.7). The correlation analysis demonstrated that destination marketing had a moderate and positive relationship with destination competitiveness. Based on these findings, destination marketing has a positive determining behaviour on the competitiveness of Kakamega County as a tourism destination. This is supported by (Goffi (2013; Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2014) that destination marketing desires competitive advantages on a destination. The empirical literature reinforces the fact that, as an emerging tourism destination, (Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016; Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016) Kakamega County needs to enhance destination marketing strategies as a member of the western tourism circuit. The strategy supported by empirical literature necessitates tourism market intelligence on competitors such as the counties of Kisumu, Bungoma and Busia, Kakamega, destination positioning, events tourism, effective use of e-tourism in digital destination marketing and a participatory approach through Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) Goffi (2013; Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016; Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2014; World Bank, 2020). This will facilitate (Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016) attraction of the much-needed visitor numbers and investment in the tourism sector. Destination marketing aimed at improved performance and competitiveness, (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2014) studies indicate serves to integrate all requisite aspects in product development, evaluate destination position, assess demands and perceptions and create destination awareness. This leads to securing a better rank in tourism performance and competitiveness. Their study (Malachovsky & Királ'ová, 2015) found that Austria was well-ranked as a competitive tourism destination as compared to Slovakia. This alluded to the fact that Austria's integration of market entry strategies and product development (Malachovsky & Királ'ová, 2015). The low ranking of Nigeria as a competitive tourism destination (Okocha, Agina, and Ojiula, 2021) study has linked it to the lack of commitment to destination marketing initiatives that would attract international tourism arrivals.

5.2.4 Environmental Sustainability and destination competitiveness

The study observed that a simple regression model is a good fit, that is, tourism policy (independent variable) statistically predicts the dependent or outcome variable (tourist destination competitiveness) significantly well for this given data. Environmental sustainability was found to have a moderate and positive relationship with destination competitiveness based on the correlation analysis findings. This is evidence that environmental sustainability plays a positive role in the determination of the competitiveness of a tourism destination. Kakamega County remains a competitive tourism destination as (Nyamweno, Okotto and Tonui, 2016) most of its natural and cultural attractions are not largely ruined by long-standing tourism exploits. The findings agree with empirical literature that sensitivity to environmental quality and sustainability are at the core of the competitiveness concept (Fernandez, Martinez and Martin, 2022; Goffi, 2013). Indeed, (Streimikiene et al, 2020) in their study observed that there is a positive effect of fostering sustainable tourism development on destination competitiveness in the tourism sector. This study notes that, though a costly venture in the short run, environmental sustainability strategies guarantee returns and competitiveness in the long run. The available literature echoes these elements of environmental management and biodiversity conservation to include (Benard & Nicolau, 2022; Ismet & Abuhjeeleh, 2016); Khan et al., 2021) a regulatory framework, resource allocation, designation and protection of vulnerable sites, codes of conduct, zonal area plans, inclusivity and participation, There is therefore, need to bring to the fore emphasis on attending to various social and environmental issues of sustainable tourism development to foster the competitiveness of tourism destinations.

5.2.5 Destination Management and tourism destination competitiveness

The Multi-Linear Regression model is a good fit for this data. The independent variable, destination management statistically predicts the dependent or outcome variable, tourism destination competitiveness. The findings are in tandem with the literature (Armenski, Dwyer and Pavluković, 2017) that destination management accords competitive advantages to a destination through integrating three preferred strategies, that is, low cost, differentiation and focus. This implies that destination management, overall, has a positive determining effect on the tourism destination competitiveness of Kakamega County. Their study (Mulec & Wise, 2013) observed that the low competitiveness ranking of Serbia, which is an emerging destination like Kakamega County, is associated with destination management constraints. Serbia's policy, planning, established tourism associations and environmental

management have inadequately fostered a tourism competitiveness approach (Mulec & Wise, 2013). Similarly, (Loureiro & Ferreira, 2015) study found that São Tomé and Príncipe lacked sound tourism policies, destination marketing strategies and a clean environment contributing to their poor competitive performance. The study, therefore, serves to support the concept that a noticeable performance and competitiveness strategy is at the centre of effective destination management. There is a need to undertake studies of competitiveness for Kakamega County given that the three factors selected explain 33.57% of the model in this case. The value of 45.6%) for the standard error relates to other factors with an influence on the model.

5.3 Conclusions

In line with the discussions of the findings, it is important to note several issues for consideration in destination management to foster tourism destination competitiveness. These are: -

- i. Tourism policy has a moderate and positive effect on destination competitiveness. The devolved units, desiring to emerge as competitive tourism destinations, need to pursue deliberate public policy decisions regarding tourism development and promotion. The tourism sector policy decisions include adequate allocation of resources, participation and inclusivity in tourism business investment.
- ii. Destination marketing has a moderate and positive effect on the competitiveness of tourism destinations. There is a need for devolved units to consider the integration of destination marketing through their entire product development cycle beginning with conceptualisation. This guarantees better evaluation of a destination's position, demands and perceptions to create destination awareness.
- iii. Environmental sustainability has a moderate and positive effect on tourism destination competitiveness. The improvement of environmental sustainability through enhanced management, protection and conservation of biodiversity will contribute to a destination being sustainable and attaining a better ranking in tourism competitiveness
- iv. Destination management, overall, has a moderate and positive effect on the competitiveness of a tourism destination. In this regard, devolved units need not only bank on their tourism destination comparative advantages but foster appropriate destination management strategies if they are to secure competitive advantages and effectively contend for a greater share of the tourism and travel market.

5.4 Recommendations

The attaining of better tourism destination ranking, besides comparative advantages, is dependent on the need for devolved governance units to secure competitive advantages through: -

- i. Strengthening destination management in devolved governance units through county policies of community inclusion in tourism ventures and adequate resource allocation to the tourism and travel sector
- ii. Undertake regular market intelligence to understand competitor destinations and current tourism trends to integrate destination marketing in all tourism product development phases.
- iii. Entrenched sustainable tourism through better environmental management and biodiversity conservation of unique natural and cultural heritage tourism attractions.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

This study builds on existing concepts, theories and empirical studies on destination management as an indicator of tourism destination competitiveness within the context of devolved governance. It is recommended that further studies can be undertaken to: -

- i. Evaluate the tourism destination competitiveness of decentralised units based on the other indicators and determinants
- ii. Assess the role of decentralised governance policy in fostering tourism destination competitiveness
- iii. Develop a framework to evaluate and rank the tourism destination competitiveness of decentralised units

5.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed the research findings in line with the objectives and provided conclusions, policy recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

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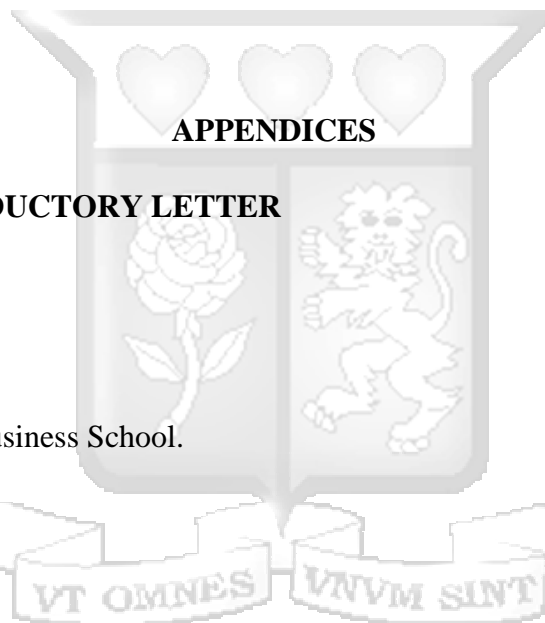
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APPENDIX I: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Stephen Malunga Musee,

Strathmore University Business School.

P.O. Box 59857-00200

NAIROBI, KENYA.

Dear Sir/Madam,

SUBJECT: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

I am currently studying for a postgraduate degree in Public Policy and Public Management at Strathmore University Business School. My research seeks to evaluate the effect of destination management on the competitiveness of Kakamega County as a tourism destination among its competing counties in Kenya. Tourism policymakers and stakeholders will find this research instrumental in the promotion of destination competitiveness within the context of destination management in devolved governance.

As a key stakeholder, I request that you kindly contribute your valuable knowledge and insights by honestly completing this questionnaire which will be hand delivered and picked later as it will be necessarily agreeable to you and the researcher.

Ethically, the research has been approved by Strathmore University Business School. Findings will be reported in the postgraduate thesis and may be published in journals or presented at conferences. There will be, however, no reference either directly or indirectly to you or your firm. Respondent's right to anonymity and confidentiality shall be guaranteed.

Any queries may be directed to Stephen Musee at stevmusee@gmail.com.

Thank you for the time taken to respond to this questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,

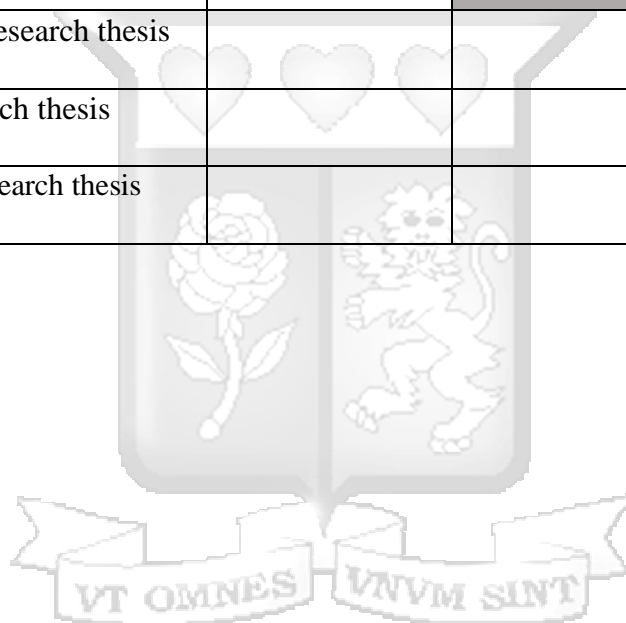
Stephen M. Musee.

Mobile No. +254 720999904



APPENDIX II: WORK PLAN

DUTY	PERIOD		
	July-August 2021	October-December 2021	April-May 2023
Proposal Writing			
Presentation of research proposal and adoption			
Data Collection, Analysis and Report Writing			
Presentation of draft research thesis			
Review of draft research thesis			
Submission of final research thesis			



APPENDIX III: BUDGET

No.	Activity	Description	Quantity	Unit Cost (Kes)	Total Cost (Kes)
	Proposal writing	Typing, printing and photocopying	6	750	4,500
		Binding	5	100	500
	Data Collection	Print questionnaires	125	40	5,000
		Subsistence support	30	500	15,000
		Transport	6	2,500	15,000
		Data Analysis	1	5,000	5,000
	Report writing	Typing, printing and photocopying	6	750	4,500
		Binding	5	100	500
		Miscellaneous	1	5000	5,000
TOTAL					55,000

APPENDIX IV: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TOURISM PRACTITIONERS

EFFECT OF DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ON TOURISM DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS: A CASE OF KAKAMEGA COUNTY

*I am a postgraduate student in public policy and management at Strathmore University. This research seeks a tourism stakeholders' perspective on key destination management factors that enhance the tourism competitiveness of Kakamega County. Kindly **answer all** questions. Confidentiality is guaranteed and your participation is highly appreciated.*

Section I Tourism destination competitiveness ranking of Kakamega County

1. Which **THREE** Counties in *the western tourism circuit* present the greatest competition to Kakamega County?

- i. _____
 ii. _____
 iii. _____

2. In consideration of competitors in one (1) above, please rank the competitiveness of Kakamega County on the aspects indicated below. Please tick (√) as appropriate.

1 2 3 4 5

Much Worse Worse Neutral Better Much Better

CODE	<i>How Kakamega County rates on Tourism Destination Competitiveness aspects in comparison to competitors</i>	Much Worse	Worse	Neutral	Much Better	Much Better
TC1	Unique tourism experience					
TC2	Diversity of tourism attractions and activities					
TC3	Quality of tourism product					
TC4	Affordable destination for domestic tourism					
TC5	Safe and secure tourism destination					
TC6	Longer durations of stay for tourists					
TC7	Sustainable tourism development					
TC8	Tourism improves incomes of host communities					

Section II Key destination management factors

3. Kindly indicate the performance of Kakamega County on tourism policy on issues in the table below. Please tick (√) as appropriate.

1 2 3 4 5
Much Worse Worse Neutral Better Much Better

CODE	<i>How Kakamega County rates on Tourism policy issues in comparison to competitors</i>	Much Worse	Worse	Neutral	Much Better	Much Better
DP1	Inclusive of stakeholder values					
DP2	Has a clear long-term vision					
DP3	Formulation has stakeholder participation					
DP4	Promotes Integrated development planning					
DP5	Enhance tourism sustainability					
DP6	Ensures sufficient budget allocation to tourism					
DP7	Linked to the larger economic sector					
DP8	Ensure effective tourism department's coordination					

4. Kindly indicate the performance of Kakamega County on Destination Marketing issues in the table below. Please tick (√) as appropriate.

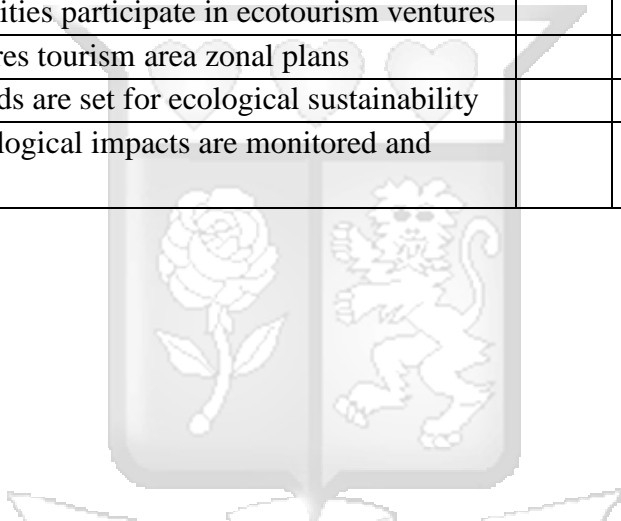
1 2 3 4 5
Much Worse Worse Neutral Better Much Better

CODE	<i>How Kakamega County rates on Destination Marketing issues in comparison to competitors</i>	Much Worse	Worse	Neutral	Much Better	Much Better
DM1	Tourism products are innovatively promoted					
DM2	Branding ensures a unique tourism destination					
DM3	Tourism promotion events are sponsored					
DM4	Creation of county tourism marketing association					
DM5	The marketing associations are vibrant					
DM6	Adopted internet technology in tourism marketing					
DM7	Aware of regional competing tourism destinations					
DM8	Considers mix of quality, price and promotion					

5. Kindly indicate the performance of Kakamega County on Environmental Sustainability issues in the table below. Please tick (√) as appropriate.

1 2 3 4 5
Much Worse Worse Neutral Better Much Better

CODE	<i>Environmental Sustainability (ES)</i>	1		2		3		4		5	
		Much Worse	Worse	Worse	Neutral	Much Better	Much Better				
ES1	Policy ensures environmental sustainability										
ES2	Tourism stakeholders adhere to environmental code										
ES3	Cultural heritage tourism sites are protected										
ES4	County ensures clean urban areas										
ES5	Host communities participate in ecotourism ventures										
ES6	County prepares tourism area zonal plans										
ES7	Sufficient funds are set for ecological sustainability										
ES8	Tourism ecological impacts are monitored and reported										



Section III

- A. **Gender:** Male Female
- B. **Highest Level of Education:** Secondary Tertiary training related to tourism/hospitality Tertiary training in other fields
- C. **Job Title/Position**.....
- D. **Type of Business/Work:** Hotel DMO Tour Guide Public Servant
 Tourism/hospitality training institution
- E. **Years working in tourism** 3-5 6-15 16-25 26-35 over 36

APPENDIX VI: RECOMMENDATION LETTER FROM UNIVERSITY

Ole Sangale Rd, Madaraka Estate,
P.O Box 59857 00200, Nairobi, Kenya.
Cell: +254 703 414/6/7, Twitter: @SBSKenya
Email: info@sbs.ac.ke or visit www.sbs.strathmore.edu



Strathmore
UNIVERSITY
BUSINESS SCHOOL

Monday, 30 August 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

RE: FACILITATION OF RESEARCH – STEPHEN MALUNGA MUSEE

This is to introduce Stephen Musee who is a **Master's in Public Policy and Management** (MPPM) student at Strathmore University Business School, admission number MPPM 100095. As part of our MPPM Program, Stephen is expected to do applied research and undertake a project. This is in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the MPPM course. To this effect, he would like to request for appropriate data from your organization.

Stephen is undertaking a research paper on "**Effect of destination management on tourism destination competitiveness: A case of Kakamega county.**" The information obtained from your organization shall be treated confidentially and shall be used for academic purposes only.

Our MPPM Program seeks to establish links with industry, and one of these ways is by directing our research to areas that would be of direct use to industry. We would be glad to share our findings with you after the research, and we trust that you will find them of great interest and of practical value to your organization.

We appreciate your support and shall be willing to provide any further information if required.

Yours Faithfully,

Caroline Tiara.
Manager – Graduate Programs.
Strathmore University Business School

Association of African
Business Schools



Strathmore Business School is a Proud member of



APPENDIX VII: ETHICAL CLEARANCE RELEASE LETTER



3rd April, 2023

Stephen Musee

MPPM/ 100095

stephen.musee@strathmore.edu

Dear Stephen,

**RE: Effect of Destination Management on Tourism Destination
Competitiveness in Devolved Governance after Covid-19: A Case of
Kakamega County**

This is to inform you that the Office of Graduate Studies on 3rd April 2023 received your acknowledgement of breach in ethical processes given that you have already collected data and written the Thesis prior to obtaining Ethical clearance. The ethics approval process is ONLY done before any collection of primary or secondary data.

This is a letter for you to proceed with the next steps of your academic requirements.

Please be advised, that in future, all research proposals should be submitted to the SU-ISERC through the RHInnO Ethics platform: <https://strathmoreuniversity.rhinno.net/login>


Disclaimer: This is not in any way an ethical approval letter.


Yours sincerely,


Dr. Bernard Shibwabo

Director of Graduate Studies


APPENDIX VIII: NACOSTI APPROVAL


REPUBLIC OF KENYA


**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Ref No: **597825** Date of Issue: **08/September/2021**


RESEARCH LICENSE




This is to Certify that Mr. Stephen Malunga Musee of Strathmore University, has been licensed to conduct research in Kakamega on the topic: Effect of destination management on tourism destination competitiveness in devolved governance: A case of Kakamega county. for the period ending: 08/September/2022.

License **NACOSTI/P/21/12764**

597825
Applicant Identification Number


Director General
**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &
INNOVATION**

Verification QR Code



**NOTE: This is a computer-generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document,
Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.**

APPENDIX IX: COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KAKAMEGA AUTHORISATION

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KAKAMEGA



**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COUNTY SECRETARY AND HEAD OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

Telephone: 056-31850/31852/31853

Website: www.kakamega.go.ke

E-mail: countysecretary@kakamega.go.ke

When replying please Quote

REF NO. CGK/OCS/GEN CRR/12 (02)

County Government of

Kakamega

P.O. Box 36-50100

KAKAMEGA

Date: 8th December, 2021

Mr. Stephen Malunga Musee
P.O Box 59857-00200
Nairobi

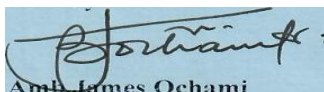
RE: AUTHORITY TO COLLECT RESEARCH DATA

The above subject matter refers,

This is to inform you that, you have been granted permission to collect data on *“Effects of destination management on tourism destination competitiveness in devolved governance; A case of Kakamega County”* for your Masters degree from Strathmore University.

You are therefore required to adhere to Ethical standards and the County Government regulations on confidentiality.

Thank you



Amb. James Ochami

County Secretary and Head of Public Service

Copy to: **H.E. the Governor**

I hereby commit to share the findings with the County Government of Kakamega through the undersigned.

Sign:.....



Date: 1/2/2022