

Historical Heritage tourism in the Kenya Coast Region: perceptions and visit behaviour of Domestic tourists

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Abstract

Heritage tourist attractions are important in the diversification of tourism product offer for any competitive tourist destination. The current status of domestic heritage tourism in Kenya remains under-researched leaving many critical areas of interest in need of more research attention and redress. Consumer behaviour research shows that perceptions of domestic tourists determine their visit intentions and their visit behaviour to destinations. This needs to be examined in the Kenyan domestic heritage tourism context too with the view of creating and satisfying higher demand of the tourists. This study was carried out in the Kenya coast tourism circuit, within the counties of Mombasa, Kilifi, and Lamu, with the aim of evaluating the perceptual factors that influence behavioural intention with regard to touring heritage attractions in the region. To achieve this, quantitative data was collected from a sample of 693 domestic tourists who visited the sampled heritage sites, using semi-structured questionnaires. Data was analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 23.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, N.Y., USA) software to determine descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive analyses involved determination of frequencies, percentages and means, while inferential analyses involved determination of the t-statistics. These analyses summarized the data collected, thereby permitting and supporting conclusions applicable to the area of study. Results indicate that the attitude of domestic tourists towards heritage attractions was very positive. Their normative belief, perceived behavioural control, motivation, and perceived safety and security were all “strong”. Intention to visit historical heritage sites was very strong, while the actual visit behaviour to these attractions was at moderate level. The implications of these on theory, policy and practice in marketing and management of historic heritage tourism include: the need for tourism stakeholder to enhance the appeal of historical heritage attractions, to improve accessibility and visibility of HHS; Employers to create more off-time for employees, and enhance arranging incentive tours to HHS; Tour operators to normalize packaging of HHS; and Kenyans to develop a holiday culture especially visiting HHS.

Key words: Domestic tourism, historical heritage tourism, Kenya coast, visit intention, visit behaviour.