COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS OFFERING HOSPITALITY SERVICES IN NAIROBI IN A CHANGING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has never been submitted for examination to any other University.

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This project has been submitted with my authority as the university supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this project to my family especially my husband who encouraged me during the whole process of writing this project.

ABSTRACT

The Hospitality Industry in Kenya over the last ten years can be said to have experienced different set of competition than earlier existing in the sector. This is in line with Kenya's Vision 2030 where Kenya should be among the top 10 tourist destinations in the world offering diverse and distinctive experience with an emphasis on high quality service. This has led to many products and services development within the same period. The study sought to determine the competitive strategies employed by government institutions offering hospitality services in Nairobi in a changing business environment. To achieve this objective the study used a cross-sectional research descriptive design. The population of the study comprised of all government institutions licensed to offer hospitality services in Nairobi. All of the twelve institutions participated hence the study was a census. Primary data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire that consisted of structured questions made up of both open and closed ended questions that were designed to elicit specific responses for qualitative and quantitative analysis respectively. The study managed to collect data from all the 12 government institutions licensed to offer hospitality services in Nairobi. The study found that the most popular competitive strategies used by hospitality institutions in government were pricing strategy; differentiation and cost leadership strategies. It was revealed that most hospitality institutions charged lower prices for their services. Cost focus strategy was least implemented by the institutions in Nairobi County. The limitation for this study is that some of the managers were too busy and thus some of the questionnaires were filled by the assistant managers other than the managers who were the target respondents for this study. The study recommends that the government should continue investing in modern technologies for example information communication technologies in order to enhance efficiency and quality services to their customers. This cannot however be achieved without proper investment in technology infrastructure. The study recommends for further study on the effect of differentiation strategies on sustainable competitive advantage in five-star hotels in Kenya. More focus should be laid on the product, market, personnel and service differentiation. Then, findings can then be compared after which reliable conclusions might be drawn based on concrete facts.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the present day competitive business environment that is fast-changing, business unit will need to develop strategies to counter the challenges. These strategies involve a decentralized and responsive work organization, based on co-operative relations not only within the firm but also in its relations with customers, suppliers and competitors. Strategies which are implemented within an organization should support the culture associated with the firm. The proposed strategy should preserve, emphasize, and enhance the culture, in accordance with the culture supporting the proposed strategy (Ansoff and McDonell, 1990).

According to Pearce and Robinson (2001) strategic responses are a set of decisions and actions that result into formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve a firm's objectives. In order to effectively achieve the firm's objectives, these set of plans and actions must be strategically fit to the complexities and dynamism of a rapidly shifting environment. Firms largely are open systems where there is continuous interaction and interfaces with the external environment. Strategic responses are the strategies that firms take and largely triggered by continuous changes in the external environment.

The accelerated competitions and the ever increasing consumers demand for value has pushed the hospitality institutions to create value through efficient use of limited resources and adoptions of appropriate strategies that will make them compete effectively with the other players in the industry. More recently, the Kenya government has urged government institutions to be self reliant and not depend on the government support or subsidies only but instead generate funds internally. For the independence of these government institutions to be actualized, they should come up with effective strategies to compete with the private sector.

For example, the hotels have registered declined bookings due to the increased taxation that was raised in the 2013/2014 budget; hence the Kenyan hotels have had to adjust to reduced profits. This has necessitated these hotels to search for ways of offloading some of these activities for efficiency and competitiveness. This has forced the hotels into formulating competitive strategies that will lead to venturing into other non-traditional business lines (KHTA, 2014).

The resource based view theory emphasizes the internal resources of the organization in formulating strategy to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in its markets (Gibson *et al.*, 2010). If the organization is seen as made of resources which can be restructured to provide it with competitive advantage then its perspective does indeed become inside out. In other words its internal capabilities determine the strategic choice it makes in competing in its external environment. Resource-based theory (Barney, 1991) proposes that firm activities and performance depend on firm-specific availability of resources and capabilities to deploy these resources.

1.1.1 Competitive Strategies

Competitive strategy refers to how a company competes in a particular business. It is concerned with how a company can gain a competitive advantage through a distinctive way of competing (Aaker, 2011). Having a competitive advantage is necessary for a firm to compete in the market but what is more important is whether the competitive advantage is sustainable. Thompson and Strickland (2002) notes that competitive strategy comprises of all those moves and approaches that a firm has and is taking to attract buyers, withstand competitive pressure and improve its market position. It concerns what a firm is doing in order to gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

Porter (1980) asserts that there are three approaches to competitive strategy. One is striving to be the overall low cost producer, therefore being a cost leader, another is seeking to differentiate one's product offerings from that of one's rivals, which is a differentiation strategy while a third involves focus on a narrow portion of the market, which is focus or niche strategy. Sidorowicz (2007) views competitive strategies as more skill-based and involving strategic thinking, innovation, execution, critical thinking, positioning and the art of warfare. An effective competitive strategy takes either offensive or defensive action in order to create a defendable position against the five forces and thereby yield a superior return on investment for the firm.

Porter, (1985) notes that competitive strategies supports company's top line growth objectives by helping the company develop a differentiated and sustainable competitive position, enables organizations to achieve competitive advantage or deliver benefits that exceed those of competing products, development of a best practice process to; asses company's strengths, assess the competitive situation and formulate the appropriate response.

1.1.2 Hospitality Services

While all service enterprises focus on service as the main product, the epitome of service operation falls within the domain of Hospitality Industry. The industry include services in areas such as Hotels, Restaurants, Food service management, Tourism and Entertainment, Social events, Meetings and Conventions. (Tesome 2010).Hospitality industry is a multibillion dollar industry that depends on the availability of leisure time and disposable income. The (MICE) Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Events market is valued at thirty billion dollars with Hotels accounting to 60% of the total value. According to International Congress and Convention Association, Kenya is currently rated the second most preferred Conference and Tourism destination in Africa after South Africa. This is attributed to the desire to continue extending high levels of services and providing International standards of Conferencing services.

According to Lilicap & Cousins (2006) Hospitality industry backbone is comprised of customer service, a concept shared by all segments of the industry. The development of adverse range of food service operations has necessitated developments in the approach of Food and Beverage services. Food and Beverage reign supreme and is the largest element of the hospitality industry and it can take the form of high end restaurants, fast food eateries and catering establishments.

Accommodation and food service activities represent abroad segment of the industry and include provision of short stay accommodation for visitors and other travelers and meals and drinks fit for immediate consumption. Out lets include private and public sector establishments and range from small independently owned and operated units to large multinational corporations managing global brands.

Licensed Restaurants is a sub class that includes the provision of food and services to customers which are generally for consumption on the premises. Event catering include, catering activities for individual events for a specific period of time based on contractual arrangement with the customer at the location specified for that particular event. On the other hand Sport venue catering include catering offered in Stadia, football, cricket, private health and fitness clubs. Hospitality operations are classified for different purposes to allow for systematic comparison. Therefore it is possible to make distinctions between outlets that operate strictly on commercial basis and those that are subsidized. It also concerns the type of market served as other markets are restricted while others are open to the public at large. Other distinctions include outlets where catering is the main activity of undertaking and those where it is a secondary activity and finally between outlets that are in public ownership and those in private ownership (Davis et *al.*, 2011).

1.1.3 Structure of Kenyan Government

Kenya's central government is structured through the constitution with administrative and policy making powers being distributed to its three arms namely Executive, Legislature and Judiciary. The legislature being by far one of the most crucial arms, it consists of the president, deputy president, cabinet secretaries, attorney general and the director of public prosecutions. The Legislature is held responsible for advocating for the people's interest in law making. In addition to that, it is vested in two houses - the national assembly and the senate. The Kenyan Judicial system adheres to a hierarchical system, with The Supreme Court being the highest organ, followed by the Court of Appeal, High Court, Magistrate's Courts and other Subordinate Courts. The chief justice is the president of the

judiciary and is appointed by the president subject to the approval of the National Assembly.

There are eighteen government ministries in Kenya and each one of them is tasked with the responsibility of working towards the realization of the Kenya's current development agenda, Vision 2030 through the guidelines of the three pillars which is the government long term development strategy. The Vision program plan came after the successful implementation of the Economic recovery strategy for wealth and employment creation. The Economic pillar seeks to provide prosperity to all Kenyans through an Economic development program. The Social pillar seeks to build a just and cohesive society with social equity in clean and secure environment, while the Political pillar aims at realizing a democratic political system founded on issue based politics. Some of the ministries engaged in the hospitality business include Ministry of East African Affairs Commerce and Tourism, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Sports, Culture and Youth.

The public sector is charged with the responsibility of offering effective and efficient service to the public of any given economy or country. This sector is characterized as complex environments facing a variety of stakeholders with different, multiple and often vague objectives. Opiyo, (2006) states that in an effort to achieve the objectives and targets of economic recovery strategy and to manage performance challenges in public service, the government adopted performance contracting (PC) in public service as a strategy for improving service delivery to Kenyans. Kenyan government made it compulsory for government agencies and ministries to make periodic strategic plans (GoK, 2006) and one such activity is the development of strategic plan.

Tourism is one of Kenyas leading foreign exchange earner and the third largest contributor of the GDP. Kenya aims to be the top ten tourist destinations in the world offering high end and distinctive visitor experience.

1.1.4 Hospitality Industry in Kenya

The Hospitality Industry forms a big part of Kenya's Tourism sector. It is the second largest foreign exchange earner after Agriculture Sector. The enduring appeal of the country's scenery, wildlife, climate and tropical coastline has allowed the establishment of a large hotel industry and a sound tourism base.

The umbrella body for the Kenyan hotel industry is the Kenya Association of Hotelkeepers and Caterers (KAHC) brings together duly registered hotels, lodges and camps operating in Kenya.

Through its affiliate partner the Pubs, Entertainment and Restaurants Association of Kenya (PERAK), the association is also representative of duly registered casinos, restaurants, pubs, theme parks and entertainment establishments. The Regulation, rating and licensing of hotels in Kenya is done by the Kenya Hotels and Restaurants Authority (KHRA) established under the Hotels and Restaurants Act, Chapter 494 of the Kenyan laws.

According to the Ministry of Tourism annual report (2013), Kenya has some of the best developed hotels in sub-Saharan Africa, offering on an average of about 60,000 beds per night. There is a fairly pronounced seasonal pattern with a majority of tourists visiting during the northern hemisphere holiday period (July/August/September) and during the northern winter months (December/January/February). The rainy seasons in April/May

and in November reduce the potential for visitors at these times. However, the country has developed and marketed these destinations/ hotels for domestic tourism. There is also an increase in the workshops, conferences and seminars, both locally and internationally, generating more revenues for the sector.

The development of adverse range of food service operations has necessitated developments in the approach to Food and Beverage services. Increasing competition has also meant that the quality of the services and the perceived value of the experience of customers are the main differentiators between operators who are seeking to attract similar customers.

One of the most defining aspects of the Hospitality industry is that it focuses on customer satisfaction and relies heavily on providing excellent level of services. Brand loyalty is very important to the customers and the associated companies do their best to provide the best services. (Lilicap & Cousins 2006).

1.2 Research Problem

As the current business environment becomes more competitive due to the coming in of new players in the market, both from within and without, and introducing new brands becomes increasingly costly, companies must find new strategies to increase their capacity and competitiveness. Corporate firms worldwide have been aggressively trying to build new competencies and capabilities, to remain competitive and grow profits (Mantravadi and Reddy, 2008). As these firms seek to enhance their competitive positions in an increasingly global marketplace, they are discovering that they can cut costs, maintain quality and improve their performance by adopting different strategies which will enable an organization to position itself in market dominance and improve the firm's overall performance. Thus, a firms' strategy formulation, implementation and control processes must be adequately monitored to ensure success of the strategy and timely review to keep up with changing tides in the business environment (Johnson & Scholes, 2002).

The Hospitality Industry in Kenya over the last ten years can be said to have experienced different set of competition than earlier existing in the sector. This is in line with Kenya's Vision 2030 where Kenya should be among the top 10 tourist destinations in the world offering diverse and distinctive experience with an emphasis on high quality service. This has led to many products and services development within the same period.

The government institutions are also offering hospitality services in addition to their primary functions hence they have to come up with strategies to enable them compete at the same level with the private sector. Over the last few years customers have become increasingly informed and will always demand better services and accountability from the service providers in getting value for their money. In order for these institutions to remain competitive and relevant, it should be able to identify unique capabilities within the business-in terms of the resources it has-and configure them in such a manner that will create sustainable competitive advantage in the short and long term period.

Due to the need for business entities to relook into their operational strategies studies have been undertaken on competitive strategies. Onyoro (2011) undertook a study on competitive strategies and performance in multinational commercial banks in Kenya and established that the banks adopted low cost leadership strategy with significant variation in adoption, customer satisfaction and internal business process. Gaturo (2010) researched on competitive strategies adopted by private hospitals in Nairobi and found out that the private hospitals adopted differentiation and focus strategies that are directed towards improved and affordable medical services and quality customer service.

Mutegi (2013) researched on competitive strategies adopted by supermarkets in Nairobi and found out that the strategies adopted include cost leadership, focus and differentiation. Syed and Nadeem (2013) researched on the Relationship between competitive strategies and performance of Hotel industry in Iran. The study revealed that competition was high in the industry and the following strategies were used. Product differentiation, low cost leadership, strategic alliance and specific market focus. Petzer (2005) researched on Competitive marketing strategies of selected Hotels in South Africa and found out that positioning, outstanding customer service and operational efficiencies were used as strategies for competitive advantage.

The studies that have been undertaken have dealt with other sectors and not the government institutions offering hospitality services and therefore the need to answer the question; which competitive strategies have government institutions offering hospitality services adopted in a changing business environment?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objective of the study is to determine the competitive strategies employed by government institutions offering hospitality services in Nairobi in a changing business environment.

1.4 Value of the study

The management of government institutions offering hospitality services will be able to put in place appropriate strategies to enable the firm counter operating challenges emanating from the changing operating environment. In addition, the findings of the study will form part of the action plans that will help the government institutions to be innovative in order to gain competitive advantage over its competitors as they will be able to make informed decisions on issues that will boost their client base.

For the government, the study recommendations and findings can be used to design targeted policies and programs that will actively stimulate creativity, innovation, growth and sustainability of the institutions. Future scholars may use the results of this study as a source of reference. The findings of this study can be compared with strategic management in other sectors to draw conclusions on various ways an institution can respond to competitive forces in the environment.

It will also benefit consultants who endeavor to provide assistance to successful running of organizations in developing and sustaining a competitive edge in their environment. For academicians, this study will form the foundation upon which other related and replicated studies can be based on.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers literature review related to the study. It includes a review of the various studies conducted by researchers on theoretical foundation, competitive strategies employed by firms in a competitive environment and how such strategies is a source of competitive advantage.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

According to Kilbourn (2006), the theoretical perspective in a research reflects the researcher's theoretical orientation, which is crucial to interpreting the data in a qualitative study, irrespective of whether it is explicitly or implicitly stated. This means that the theoretical perspective of a research play an important role as a filter for focusing and bounding the data to be collected. The theory considered to form the basis of the study is the resource based view and Porters generic strategies.

2.2.1 Resource Based Theory

The resource-based view postulates that in a firm's strategic decision making, the decision makers need to acknowledge that the fundamental sources and drivers to firms' competitive advantage and superior performance are mainly associated with the attributes of their resources and capabilities which are valuable and costly-to-copy. (Peteraf & Bergen, 2007).

Based on the assumption that a firms strategic resources are heterogeneously distributed across firms and that these differences are stable overtime, it is the way these firms recognize their resources and how they utilize them to gain the necessary competitive advantage that is going to differentiate the adaptability of a firm to the environment (Porter, 1985). The resource based theory suggests that competitive advantage and performance results are a consequence of firm-specific resources and capabilities that are costly to copy by other competitors.

These resources and capabilities can be important factors of sustainable competitive advantage and superior firm performance if they possess certain special characteristics. They should be valuable, increasing efficiency and effectiveness, rare, imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable. This theory emphasizes that resources internal to the firm are the principal driver of a firm's profitability and strategic advantage (Barney, 1991). It rejects traditional economic assumptions that resources are homogeneous and perfectly mobile. Instead, it argues that resources are heterogeneously distributed across firms and are imperfectly transferred between firms.

According to Pearson and Robinson (2001) Resource based view applies a set of guidelines to determine which of those resources represent strength and weaknesses and which resources generate core competencies that are a source of sustained competitive advantages. Resources are more valuable when they are critical to being able to meet a customers need better than alternatives if few others if any possess that resource or skill to the degree you do, if it drives the key portion of the overall profit and is sustainable overtime. For example, two restaurants may offer similar menus and services at the same prices but one may have a much more convenient location. This will be an advantage as it

will fulfill the needs of the customers better resulting in greater profitability and sales volume. Four resources, the firm location, brand recognition, employee, loyalty and sophisticated in bond logistics enables firms fulfill customer needs much better and more cost effectively than competitors hence resource based view informs the theory of the study.

2.3 Competitive Strategies

A competitive strategy, from a business level perspective, is the achievement of competitive advantage by a business unit in its particular market. Campbell (2009) views competitive strategies as more skill-based and involving strategic thinking, innovation, execution, critical thinking, positioning and the art of warfare. He further asserts that competitive strategies can lead to high organizational performance, customer satisfaction, and increased competitiveness in the face of other rival businesses.

However, achieving competitive advantage and increased market share in a competitive environment is rather complex in several aspects as businesses would need to operate with distinguished principles and characteristics in order to continually adapt to change.

2.3.1 Pricing Strategy

Pricing strategy can be used to improve an organization's overall competitiveness. The key to success is to have a well-planned strategy, to establish policies and to constantly monitor prices and operating costs to ensure profits (Kotler, 1999).

Most customers still seek the highest return and lowest charges imposed when deciding which hotel to visit for their meals or accommodation. Ngonga (2011) suggested that it may be possible to examine the cost-volume-profit relationship of competitors in order to predict their pricing responses. By monitoring movement in the market share of major products, a firm can find out the strengths of their market position; the market share also indicates the strengths of different competitors.

Price is an attribute that must be given up or sacrificed to obtain certain kinds of products or services. Customers are normally price conscious in their purchasing behavior and price is also an important factor in choice situations as a consumer's choice typically relies heavily on the price of alternatives. Varki and Colgate (2001) identified that the role of price, as an attribute of performance, may have a direct effect on customers' satisfaction and behavioral intentions. The "pricing" factor includes all critical switching behaviors that involve prices, rates, fees, charges, surcharges, service charges, penalties, price deals, coupons, and/or price promotions. In the financial service industry, price has a wider implication than in several other services industries. Customers tend to focus on the fairness of price, especially on price increases and any price increases that customers perceive as unfair may result in switching actions (Campbell, 2009).

2.3.2 Differentiation Strategy

Differentiation strategy is usually developed around many characteristics such as product quality, technology and innovativeness, reliability, brand image, firm reputation, durability, and customer service, which must be difficult for rivals to imitate. A firm implementing a differentiation strategy is able to achieve a competitive advantage over its rivals because of its ability to create entry barriers to potential entrants by building customer and brand loyalty through quality offerings, advertising and marketing techniques. Thus, a firm that implements a differentiation strategy enjoys the benefit of priceinelastic demand for its product or service. This would in turn help the firm to avoid potentially severe price competition and allow it to charge premium prices leading to above-normal profits. The successful implementation of the differentiation strategy requires resources and skills such as strong marketing capabilities, product engineering skills, creative flare, corporate reputation for quality, reliable and durable products and/or technological leadership, and strong cooperation from distribution channels (Porter, 1980).

Product differentiation fulfills a customer need and involves tailoring the product or service to the customer. This allows organizations to charge a premium price to capture market share. The differentiation strategy is effectively implemented when the business provides unique or superior value to the customer through product quality, features, or after-sale support.

Firms following a differentiation strategy can charge a higher price for their products based on the product characteristics, the delivery system, the quality of service, or the distribution channels. The quality may be real or perceived based on fashion, brand name, or image. The differentiation strategy appeals to a sophisticated or knowledgeable consumer interested in a unique or quality product and willing to pay a higher price (Porter, 1985).

The key step in devising a differentiation strategy is to determine what makes a company different from a competitor's. Factors including market sector quality of work, the size of the firm, the image, graphical reach, involvement in client organizations, product, delivery system, and the marketing approach have been suggested to differentiate a firm.

(Ghemawat et al., 2011). When using differentiation, firms must be prepared to add a premium to the cost. This is not to suggest costs and prices are not considered; only it is not the main focus. However, since customers perceive the product or service as unique, they are loyal to the company and willing to pay the higher price for its products.

2.3.3 Focus Strategy

In the focus strategy, a firm targets a specific segment of the market. The firm can choose to focus on a select customer group, product range, geographical area, or service line (Gibson et al, 2010). Focus also is based on adopting a narrow competitive scope within an industry. Focus aims at growing market share through operating in a niche market or in markets either not attractive to, or overlooked by, larger competitors. These niches arise from a number of factors including geography, buyer characteristics, and product specifications or requirements.

A successful focus strategy depends upon an industry segment large enough to have good growth potential but not of key importance to other major competitors. Market penetration or market development can be an important focus strategy. Midsize and large firms use focus-based strategies but only in conjunction with differentiation or cost leadership generic strategies. But, focus strategies are most effective when consumers have distinct preferences and when the niche has not been pursued by rival firms (David, 2007).

The focus strategy has two variants. In cost focus a firm seeks a cost advantage in its target segment, while in differentiation focus a firm seeks differentiation in its target segment. Cost focus exploits differences in cost behavior in some segments, while

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differentiation focus exploits the special needs of buyers in certain segments. Such differences imply that the segments are poorly served by broadly-targeted competitors who serve them at the same time as they serve others. The focuser can thus achieve competitive advantage by dedicating itself to the segments exclusively (Oslen, 2005).

2.3.4 Cost Leadership Strategy

Cost leadership strategy is usually developed around organization-wide efficiency. In order for firms implementing the cost leadership strategy to maintain a strong competitive position and sustain their profit margins for a considerable period of time, they have to place a premium on efficiency of operations in all functional areas (Porter, 1980).

Firms that implement a cost leadership strategy are able to secure a relatively large market share by being the lowest cost producers or service providers in their industry or market. Thus, firms implementing the cost leadership strategy can obtain above-normal profits because of their ability to lower prices to match or even below those of competitors and still earn profits.

By pursuing low costs, companies not only operate efficiently, but also become an effective price leader, undermining competitors' growth in the industry through its success at price war and undercutting the profitability of competitors. If the firm's cost of sale or cost of raw material is lower than its competitors, then the firm can offer lower prices, higher quality, or both (Oslen, 2005).

Lower costs and cost advantages result from process innovations, learning curve benefits, and economies of scale, product designs reducing manufacturing time and costs, and reengineering activities. A low-cost or cost leadership strategy is effectively implemented when the business designs, produces, and markets a comparable product more efficiently than its competitors. The firm may have access to raw materials or superior proprietary technology which helps to lower costs. Firms do not have to sacrifice revenue to be the cost leader since high revenue is achieved through obtaining a large market share (Mantravadi and Reddy, 2008).

The reason for applying the strategy of cost leadership is to obtain the advantage by reducing the economic costs among its competitors (Barney, 2002). This strategy highlights efficiency. By producing high qualified and standardize products or services, at the same time, with the effects of the economic scale and experience curve, the firm strives to gain a sustainable competitive advantage among its competitors. Basically, the firm has two major ways to maintain this cost advantage, either by controlling the cost drivers, or adoption of different and more efficient way to manufacture, promote, distribute and design the product. (Porter1985).

2.3.5 Delivery and Distribution Strategy

Services that require the customer to go to the producer must be as accessible as possible. Hence, an important consideration in the distribution strategy for companies is location of their branches. Changing lifestyles and increased affluence have led to higher service expectations by the customer and this has made distribution the key marketing variable (Suri, 2008). In the hospitality industry for example, there is need for hotels to tailor their products to different market segments and the same market segments will frequent different areas to which the hotel should set itself in the vicinity. The traditional delivery channel is the brick and mortar hotel. The mass marketing era saw the hotel chains establish outlets on different locations to meet the demands of different clientele. Information technology has become a strategic asset which can help improve business processes and change the function of markets. Thus, it is necessary for business units in the hospitality industry to continue their efforts in developing and implementing the up-to-date technology. Nevertheless, many organizations still hesitate to adopt new information technology and some even believe information technology does not matter in a hotel as a strategic response because of its commoditization. Automation of business processes has led to a drastic improvement in productivity and reduction in costs while telecommunications has improved the speed with which information is transmitted thus facilitating speedy decision making (O'Brien, 2002).

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology that was used to carry out the study. The chapter describes the proposed research design, the target population, data collection instruments and how data will be analyzed.

3.2 Research Design

Research design provides the conceptual framework within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint or roadmap for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. The study adopted a cross-sectional research descriptive design. According to Cooper and Schindler (2006), a descriptive research design is concerned with finding out the; who, what, where, when and how much. Furthermore, a research design is structured, has investigative questions and part of formal studies. The design is appropriate because the main interest is to explore the viable relationship and describe how the factors support matters under investigation. A cross sectional study looks at data collected across a whole population to provide a snapshot of that population at a single point in time. This kind of study is used to evaluate the competitive strategies employed by government based hospitality institutions in Nairobi to changing business environment. Descriptive design method provides quantitative data from cross section of the chosen population. This design provided further insight into research problem by describing the variables of interest.

3.3 Target Population

Population refers to an entire group of individuals, events or objects having common characteristics that can be observed and measured. (Cooper and Schindler 2006). The population of the study comprised of all government institutions licensed to offer hospitality services in Nairobi. All of the twelve institutions participated hence the study was a census.

3.4 Data Collection

The study used primary data that was collected through a self-administered questionnaire that consisted of structured questions made up of both open and closed ended questions that were designed to elicit specific responses for qualitative and quantitative analysis respectively. The questionnaires were administered in government institutions offering hospitality services whereby the researcher targeted respondents in the managerial level specifically in General Managers, Marketing Managers, Food and Beverage Managers, Front office Managers, Accommodation and Housekeeping Managers, Training Managers, Procurement Managers, Finance Managers and Human Resource Managers. The researcher made prior arrangement, visited the target firms' offices and sought to administer the questionnaires to staff in the respective departments. The respondents were expected to give an insight into how the institutions employ strategies as a competitive advantage tool.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics (measures of central tendency and measures of variations). Once the data was collected, the questionnaires were edited for accuracy, consistency and completeness. However, before final analysis was performed, data was cleaned to eliminate discrepancies and thereafter, classified on the basis of similarity and then tabulated. The responses were coded into numerical form to facilitate statistical analysis. Data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences based on the questionnaires. In particular mean scores, standard deviations, percentages and frequency distribution were used to summarize the responses and to show the magnitude of similarities and differences. Results were presented in the tables.

CHAPTER FOUR DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The study was carried out to determine the competitive strategies employed by government institutions offering hospitality services in Nairobi in a changing business environment. A census survey was conducted in all the selected government institutions that offer hospitality services.

4.2 Response Rate

Two questionnaires were distributed in all the twelve selected hospitality institutions and all of them responded. This represents a response rate of 100% which was considered sufficient making generalization of the hospitality industry in the public sector.

4.3 General Information

The study sought general information about the respondents and the selected hospitality institutions in the public sector. This was intended to find out whether these hospitality institutions implemented competitive strategies and to what extent. Further, the study also wanted to find out whether the respondents had attained relevant experience in making strategic decisions and implementing competitive strategies. The findings presented herein.

4.3.1 Level of Education

The study sought to determine the level of education attained by the respondents to find out whether they understood the concept of competitive strategy and its implementation. Below are the results of the findings in the Table 4.1.

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Post Graduate Level	10	42%
University	12	50%
Tertiary College	2	8%
Secondary	-	
Total	24	100

Table 4.1 Level of Education

Source: Research findings (2015)

From Table 4.1, 50% of the respondents were graduates, 42% of the respondents were all postgraduates while 8% of the respondents had attained college diplomas. None of the respondents was a form four leaver. This is an indication that most of the respondents chosen for this study were qualified and thus understood the concept of competitive strategies and its implementation in hospitality in the public sector.

4.3.2 Length of Service in the Organization

The study sought to determine the length of service in the organization by the respondents in order to determine whether they had attained a relevant experience in the implementation of competitive strategies in the organization. Below are the results of the findings in Table 4.2.

Length of Service	Frequency	Percentage
Less than five years	4	17%
5-10 years	5	20%
Over 10 years	15	63%
Totals	24	100.0

Table 4.2 Length of Service in the Organization

Source: Research findings (2015)

From Table 4.2, 63% of the respondents had served for over 10 years while 20% of the respondents had served in the organization for a period between 5-10 years. Only 17% of the respondents had served in the organization for a period of less than 5 years. This implies that most of the respondents' had a relevant experience in implementation of competitive strategies in hospitality within the public sector.

4.3.3 The Kind of Hospitality Services offered in the Organization

The study sought to determine the kind of hospitality services that were offered by selected institutions in the hospitality sector in government. Below are the results of the findings in the Table 4.3.

Hospitality Services	Frequency	Percentage
Restaurant services only	1	4%
Hotel and accommodation	7	29%
Conference and Exhibitions Services	7	29%
Entertainment and Recreation	0	0
Services		
All of the above	9	38%
	24	100.0

Table 4.3 Hospitality Services offered by government institutions

Source: Research findings (2015)

From Table 4.3, 38% of the respondents indicated that most of the hospitality institutions in government offered restaurant services, hotel and accommodation, conference and exhibition services and entertainment services. 29% of the respondents indicated that a number of institutions in the hospitality industry offered hotel and accommodation services. Similarly, another 29% of the respondents indicated that some institutions offered conference and exhibitions services.

Only 4% of the respondents' indicated that hospitality institutions in the government offered restaurant services only. This was an indication that most hospitality institutions in the government offered hotel and accommodation services, conference and exhibition services, and entertainment and recreation services.

4.3.4 The number of Employees in the Hospitality Department

The study sought to determine the number of employees that worked for the hospitality department in government institutions. Below are the results of the findings presented in Table 4.4.

Number of Employees	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 100	10	42
100-499	14	58
Above 500	-	
Totals	24	100.0

Table 4.4 Number of Employees in the Hospitality Department

Source: Research findings (2015)

From Table 4.3, 58% of the respondents indicated that most hospitality institutions in government had employees between 100-499 working in the hospitality department. Only 42% of the respondents indicated that less than 100 employees worked in the hospitality department in the selected hospitality institutions in government. This is an indication that at least 100 employees worked in the hospitality departments of selected government institutions.

4.4 Competitive Strategies

The study sought to determine the extent to which hospitality institutions in government implemented competitive strategies to remain competitive in the industry. These competitive strategies have been discussed below:

4.4.1 Pricing Strategy

The study sought to determine the extent to which hospitality institutions in government implemented pricing strategy to attract new customers and retain existing ones. Below are the results of the findings presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Pricing Strategy

	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation
Charging lower prices for its services	24	3.7500	.62158
Constantly monitoring prices and operating costs to ensure profits	24	3.7500	.96531
Assessing competitor's cost structure and relate this to your prices	24	4.0000	.95346
Producing unique products/services for relatively price insensitive	24	3.4167	.51493
Adopting pricing strategy that reflect organizational goals	24	3.5000	.52223
Using pricing strategy that support product/service quality positioning	24	2.8333	.71774
Valid N (listwise)	24		

Source: Research findings (2015)

From the Table 4.5, it was revealed that most hospitality institutions charged lower prices for their services. These institutions monitored prices and operating costs to enhance their profits. Further, these hospitality institutions assessed competitors cost structure and related it to their prices.

It was found that hospitality institutions produced unique products and services for relatively price insensitive this was reflected in their goals. Finally, the findings observed that most hospitality institutions used pricing strategy that support products and service quality positioning. The mean scores are as follows: 3.7500, 3.7500, 4.0000, 3.4167, 3.5000 and 2.8333 respectively. Their standard deviations are as follows: .62158, .96531, .95346, .51493, .52223 and .71774 respectively. The findings therefore conclude that pricing strategy was popularly used by hospitality institutions to a large extent especially

on charging lower prices for services offered, monitoring prices and minimizing operating costs.

4.4.2 Differentiation Strategy

The study examined the extent to which hospitality institutions in government implemented differentiation strategy in their products and services. Below are the results of the findings presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Differentiation Strategy

	Ν	Mean	Std.
			Deviation
Major investment on technology to differentiate itself	24	4.4167	.51493
Carrying out continuous study of customers' needs	24	4.0833	.79296
Offering customers what they consider most important and valuable	24	3.7500	.62158
Offer unique products/services that differ from those of competitors	24	3.8333	.83485
The Organization has skilled and experienced staff	24	3.5000	.52223
The corporate image enables the Organization to differentiate itself	24	2.8333	.71774
The Organization has maintained strong customer relationship	24	4.1667	.83485
The Organization has good customer service	24	3.5833	.90034
The Organization offer refreshments to clients relative to competitors	24	3.5000	.79772
Valid N (listwise)	24		

Source: Research findings (2015)

From Table 4.6, most hospitality institutions made major investment in technology to differentiate themselves. These institutions carried out a continuous study of customers' needs; this was achieved through offering customers' with valuable and unique products. Most hospitality institutions had experienced staff that formed part of their corporate

image; by maintaining a strong customer relationship by providing refreshments to their clients relative to their competitors in the private sector. The mean scores are as follows: 4.4167, 4.0833, 3.7500, 3.8333, 3.5000, 2.8333, 4.1667, 3.5833 and 3.5000 respectively. Their standard deviation: .51493, .79296, .62158, .83485, .52223, .71774, .83485, .90034 and .79772 respectively. The findings conclude that hospitality institutions used differentiation strategy to a large extent. Most hospitality institutions invested largely on technology to increase value addition in their products and services and hence increase customer satisfaction.

4.4.3 Focus Strategy

The study determined the extent to which hospitality institutions in government implemented focus strategy as part of their competitive strategies to gain competitive abilities. Below are the results of the findings presented in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Focus Strategy

	Ν	Mean	Std.
			Deviation
The Organization focuses on narrow, limited range of services/products	24	2.5833	.99620
The Organization emphasizes on marketing of specialty	24	1.8333	1.02986
services/products	24	1.0000	1.02900
The Organization serve specific geographic market	24	2.5833	.66856
The Organization focus on particular customers	24	2.5000	1.38170
The Organization focuses on core business activities	24	2.2500	1.05529
The Organization has changed its target market segment	24	2.5000	1.24316
Valid N (listwise)	24		

Source: Research findings (2015)

From the above findings in Table 4.7, hospitality institutions focused on a limited range of products and services. These institutions emphasized on marketing of specialty products and services to serve a specific geographic market. Some of the hospitality institutions focused on specific customers in all their core business activities. However, only a few hospitality institutions changed their market segments. The mean scores are as follow: 2.5833, 1.8333, 2.5833, 2.5000, 2.2500 and 2.5000 respectively. Their standard deviations are as follows: .99620, 1.02986, .66856, 1.38170, 1.05529 and 1.24316 respectively. The findings conclude that most hospitality institutions implemented focused strategy to a small extent; some of the focus strategies that were highly ignored included marketing on specialty products and services.

4.4.4 Cost Leadership Strategy

The study investigated the extent to which hospitality institutions in government implemented cost leadership strategy to attract more customers by offering more affordable and competitive products. Below are the results of the findings presented in Table 4.8.:

Table 4.8 Cost Leadership Strategy

	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Organization offers its services at lower cost	24	3.6667	.77850
There is efficiency of operations in all functional areas of the	24	3.7500	.45227
Organization.	24	3.7500	.45227
The Organization designs, produces, and markets a comparable	24	4.4167	.51493
service/product more efficiently than its competitors	24	4.4107	.51493
The Organization has superior proprietary technology in its	24	4.3333	.77850
operations which helps to lower its costs	24	4.5555	.77650
The products/services offered by the Organization are of high	24	4.0000	.73855
quality which attracts its clients	24	4.0000	.73655
Valid N (listwise)	24		

Source: Research findings (2015)

From the above findings in Table 4.8, hospitality institutions offered their products and services at lower costs, the institutions maintained efficiency in their operations in all the functional areas. Most hospitality institutions designed and produced comparable products more efficiently than their competitors. The firms adopted modern technologies in producing high quality products and services. The mean scores were as follows: 3.6667, 3.7500, 4.4167, 4.3333 and 4.0000. Their standard deviations are as follows: .77850, .45227, .51493, .77850 and .73855 respectively. The findings conclude that cost leadership strategy was implemented to a very large extent. Some of the most notable practices implemented by hospitality institutions were offering competitive products and services that meet customer satisfaction.

4.5 Chapter Summary and Discussions

With regard to the extent to which hospitality institutions implemented competitive strategies the findings revealed that pricing strategy, differentiation and cost leadership were the popular strategies among government institutions offering hospitality services. Pricing strategy was implemented to a large extent especially on charging lower prices for their services, monitoring prices and operating costs as well as assessing competitor's costs structure. Differentiation strategy was used to a large extent, most hospitality institutions invested largely on technology to increase value addition and customer satisfaction. On the contrary, focused strategy was implemented to a small extent; marketing on specialty products and services was highly ignored by hospitality institutions. Further, cost leadership strategy was implemented to a large extent. Some of the cost leadership practices that were highly implemented included adoption of modern technologies to produce high quality products and services in order to attract more customers.

CHAPTER FIVE SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study was guided by a general objective which was to determine the competitive strategies employed by government institutions offering hospitality services in Nairobi in a changing business environment. The chapter consists of the summary of findings, conclusion, limitations, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The findings indicated the respondents had a relevant experience in making strategic decisions and implementing competitive strategies, they understood the concept of competitive strategies and its implementation in the hospitality industry in government. Hospitality institutions offered entertainment services, accommodation and conference exhibitions. Further, it was found that at least 100 employees were working in the hospitality departments of selected government institutions.

With regard to the extent to which hospitality institutions implemented competitive strategies the findings revealed that pricing strategy, differentiation and cost leadership were the popular strategies among hospitality institutions in government. Pricing strategy was implemented to a large extent especially on charging lower prices for their services, monitoring prices and operating costs as well as assessing competitor's costs structure. Differentiation strategy was used to a large extent, most hospitality institutions invested largely on technology to increase value addition and customer satisfaction. On the otherhand, the findings concluded that focused strategy was implemented to a small extent;

one of the focus strategies that were highly ignored was marketing on specialty products and services.

5.3 Conclusion

The study concludes that the most popular competitive strategies used by hospitality institutions in government were pricing strategy; differentiation and cost leadership strategies. It was revealed that most hospitality institutions charged lower prices for their services. Being part of the Kenya's tourism sector, the government has made great strides in making huge investments in information communication technology (ICT) as a tool to enhance effectiveness in provision of quality goods and services that meet customer satisfaction.

Further, the study concludes that cost leadership strategy was implemented at a very large extent by most hospital institutions in government. This was intended to make their services more affordable, attractive and competitive for both local and international clients in order to increase their market share by appealing to cost conscious or price sensitive customers.

Most of the institutions did not adopt focus strategy as they did not target any specific service market segment or geographic region instead they focused on all the clients in general and provided all the hospitality services needed.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations faced by the researcher is that some of the managers were too busy and thus some of the questionnaires were filled by the assistant managers other than the managers who were the target respondents for this study. Some of the assistant mangers might not have similar experiences as compared to the managers to provide more accurate and detailed information that the researcher was looking for.

The researcher faced time and cost constraints. The researcher had to make adequate preparations calling to confirm that the respondents were present before the visit, and tracing the location of some of the hospitality institutions which were unfamiliar to the researcher.

Also the researcher had to make follow-ups to ensure that all the questionnaires were filled on time. This was very challenging and a lot of time was consumed and money was spent.

Lastly, there was no control over primary data collection; some of the respondents were not willing to give information while others thought that process was non-paying and therefore a waste of time since they had to do it at the expense of their office work. A few of the respondents were still hesitant even after producing the letter from the university of Nairobi acknowledging that the information was solely for academic purposes only. The researcher took a lot of time convincing them to fill the questionnaires.

5.4 Recommendations

The study recommends that the government should continue investing in modern technologies for example information communication technologies in order to enhance efficiency in their operations and improve performance of hospitality institutions. The hospitality plays an integral role in driving tourism in Kenya. In line with the Kenya's vision 2030, Kenya seeks to be among the top 10 tourist destinations in the world

offering diverse and distinctive experience with an emphasis on high quality service. This cannot however be achieved without proper investment in technology infrastructure.

The study findings observe that focus strategy was least implemented in most hospitality institutions in the public sector. The study therefore recommends that these hospitality institutions should adopt focus strategies in order to benefit from cost advantages in their target segments, exploit differences in cost behavior in some segments this will lead these institutions towards achieving competitive advantage by concentrating on their segments.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

The study was limited to hospitality industry in the public sector, future researchers with an interest in this field should conduct further studies on the competitive strategies employed by hospitality institutions in the private sector operating within Nairobi County.

The study recommends for further study on the effect of differentiation strategies on sustainable competitive advantage in five-star hotels in Kenya. More focus should be laid on the product, market, personnel and service differentiation. Then, findings can then be compared after which reliable conclusions might be drawn based on concrete facts.

The findings revealed that focus strategy was least implemented in hospitality institutions in the government. It would be interesting to conduct a study on the impact of focus strategy on the sustainable competitive advantage of hospitality institutions in government focusing on specific variables like customer focus. The findings obtained might be useful to the hospitality institutions in the public sector. This is because they will understand the benefits of focus strategy and thus consider implementing this strategy to a large extent to reap the benefits.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I- INTRODUCTORY LETTER

University of Nairobi, School of Business, Department of Strategic Management, P. O. BOX 30197, NAIROBI.

14th September 2015.

Dear Respondent,

RE: COLLECTION OF SURVEY DATA

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Nairobi, at the School of Business. In Order to fulfill the degree requirement; I am undertaking a management research project On Competitive strategies. The study is entitled:

"Competitive Strategies Employed by Government Institutions Offering Hospitality Services in Nairobi In a changing Business Environment"

You have been selected to form part of this study. This is to kindly request you to assist me collect the data by filling out the accompanying questionnaire.

The information/data you provide will be used exclusively for academic purposes. My Supervisor and I assure you that the information you give will be treated with strict Confidence. At no time will you or your organization's name appear in my report.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Thank you in advance.

Yours faithfully,

Caroline J. Melly <u>Reg No: D61/64531/2013</u> Dr. Reginah Kitiabi <u>Supervisor</u>

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE

Please give answers in the spaces provided and tick ($\sqrt{}$) in the box that matches your response to the questions where applicable.

Section A: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

- 1. Name of the Organization/ Institution. (Optional).....
- 2. What is your highest level of education qualification?

a) Post graduate level	()	
b) University	()	
c) Tertiary College	()	
d) Secondary	()	

3. Length of continuous service with the Organization/ Institution.

a) Less than five years	()
b) 5-10 years	()
c) Over 10 years	()

4. What kind of hospitality services do you offer in your institution?

a) Restaurant services only	()
b) Hotel and accommodation services	()
c) Conference and exhibition services	()
d) Entertainment and recreation services	()
e) All of the above	()

5. How many employees are there in your hospitality section/ department?

a)	Less than 100	()
b)	100 – 499	()

c) Above 500 ()

Section B: Competitive Strategies

6. To what extent has your Organization used pricing strategy in order to be competitive in the industry? Use 1-Not at all, 2-Small extent, 3-Moderate extent, 4-Great extent and 5-Very great extent.

Pricing strategy	1	2	3	4	5
Charging lower prices for its services					
Constantly monitoring prices and operating costs to ensure profits					
Assessing competitor's cost structure and relate this to your prices					
Producing unique products/services for relatively price insensitive					
Customers					
Adopting pricing strategy that reflect organizational goals					
Using pricing strategy that support product/service quality					
positioning					

7. To what extent has your Organization used differentiation strategy in order to be competitive in the industry? Use 1-Not at all, 2-Small extent, 3-Moderate extent, 4-Great extent and 5-Very great extent.

Differentiation strategy	1	2	3	4	5
Major investment on technology to differentiate itself					
Carrying out continuous study of customers needs					
Offering customers what they consider most important and valuable					

Offer unique products/services that differ from those of competitors			
The Organization has skilled and experienced staff			
The corporate image enables the Organization to differentiate itself			
The Organization has maintained strong customer relationship			
The Organization has good customer service			
The Organization offer refreshments to clients relative to competitors			

8. To what extent has your Organization used focus strategy in order to be competitive in the industry? Use 1-Not at all, 2-Small extent, 3-Moderate extent, 4-Great extent and 5-Very great extent.

Focus strategy	1	2	3	4	5
The Organization focuses on narrow, limited range of services/products					
The Organization emphasizes on marketing of specialty services/products					
The Organization serve specific geographic market					
The Organization focus on particular customers					
The Organization focuses on core business activities					
The Organization has changed its target market segment					

9. To what extent have your Organization/ Institution used cost leadership strategy in order to be competitive in the industry? Use 1-Not at all, 2-Small extent, 3-Moderate extent, 4-Great extent and 5-Very great extent.

Cost Leadership strategy				4	5
The Organization offers its services at lower cost					
There is efficiency of operations in all functional areas of the Organization.					
The Organization designs, produces, and markets a comparable service/product more efficiently than its competitors					
The Organization has superior proprietary technology in its operations which helps to lower its costs					
The products/services offered by the Organization are of high quality which attracts its clients					

APPENDIX III: RELATED STUDIES AND GAPS

The table below summarizes the studies that have been undertaken on competitive strategies and their findings.

Author	Торіс	Main Findings	Focus/Gaps	Theoretical base
Onyoro [2011]	Competitive strategies and performance of multinational commercial banks in Kenya	Used low cost leadership strategies with significant variation in adoption	Did not use focus and differentiation strategies to enhance long term competitiveness and performance	Resource based theory
Petzer [2008]	Competitive marketing strategies of selected hotels; an exploratory study	Positioning and outstanding customer service and operational efficiency used as a strategy for competitive advantage	Did not consider focus, cost leadership and differentiation as the selected strategies for effective performance and resource characteristics	Porters five forces and marketing strategies
Keteko [2014]	Strategies employed by Imperial bank ltd to develop competitive advantages in the banking sector	Adopted diversification, good corporate governance, new products and improved customer service	Did not use cost leadership strategies and ignored the role played by resources available in success of a firm	Scientific management theory and competitive theory

Gaturu	Competitive	Adopted	Did not consider	Porter five
[2010]	strategies	differentiation and	pricing and cost	forces model
	adopted by	focus strategies that	leadership as a	
	private hospitals	are directed	strategy in relation	
	in Nairobi	towards high	to its competitors	
		quality customer		
		service		
Mutegi	Competitive	Strategies used	Did not focus on	Resource
[2013	strategies	include cost	customer	based view
	adopted by	leadership focus	satisfaction and	
	supermarkets in	and differentiation	pricing of	
	Nairobi	strategies	commodities as a	
			means to attract and	
			retain customers	

APPENDIX IV: LIST OF GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS OFFERING HOSPITALITY SERVICES IN NAIROBI.

- 1 Utalii Hotel
- 2 Kenya School Of Monetary Studies
- 3 Kenya Institute Of Curriculum Development
- 4 Kenya College Of Insurance
- 5 Kenyatta International Convention Centre
- 6 Kenya School Of Government
- 7 Kenya Education Management Institute
- 8 KCB Leadership Centre
- 9 Kenya Institute Of Special Education
- 10 Multimedia University College
- 11 Moi International Sports Centre
- 12 Nyayo National Stadium.

Sources

- 1. Kenya association of hotel keepers and caterers.
- 2. MICE Kenya portal. (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events)