THE MARKETING OF KENYA'S TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted between March and June 1985. Its main aim was to investigate into the marketing of Kenya's tourist attractions in the local and overseas markets as done by both individual private firms in the industry and the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife. The study sought to find out the nature and extent of such marketing and to evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing of the tourist product as done by the organizations identified (Hotel and Travel Operators, and the Ministry).

The study was considered timely as it was conducted at a time when the importance of tourism as an economic undertaking of great benefits to the nation had been acknowledged. A lot of efforts were being directed at improving on what is offered to the tourists, and attracting more (1,000,000 tourists by 1988) of them into the country. It was felt that the provision of the product without effectively and efficiently taking it to the consumer was not enough. Thus, the need for the study to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the marketing of the product.

For the sample, eight hotel chains with their head offices in Nairobi (with a total of 50 hotels under them), and a single independent hotel also located in Nairobi (making a total of 51 hotels) were interviewed. Fifteen firms in the travel trade (Tour Operators, Travel Agents, Car Hirers, and those in Camping Business) were interviewed. Also interviewed were ten tourists and an official in the marketing department of the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife. The respondents
were reached through three different types of questionnaires, one for the private firms, the other for the ministry, and the third for tourists. Apart from those questionnaires to the tourists which were distributed through the firms in the trade, the one to the ministry and those to the private firms were distributed personally and personal interviews conducted where thought necessary. The data collected was analysed using simple statistical tools such as the percentage, proportions, and tables as it did not call for use of more complicated tools.

The study found that a framework for a marketing mix for Kenya's tourist attractions exists. Some consideration was being given the various areas of marketing decisions; product to be offered, where to offer it, who to offer to, what prices to charge for it, and other related matters in marketing like market segmentation, market research, and cooperative marketing in tourism. The findings of the study on these issues was as follows:

There are differing aims between the firms in the industry and the ministry as to why each marketed both locally and abroad. The firms were profit motivated while the ministry had a wider scope touching on both social and economic benefits to the whole country.

The marketing efforts of the firms were not well coordinated with those of the ministry. There was also no meaningful cooperation between the firms and the ministry and amongst the firms themselves. This led to duplication of efforts.
The advertising media used by firms was not always the most effective. The most effective media was found to include the T.V., cinema and special magazines and publications. The firms were found to stress in their advertisements those attractions not always of great interest to tourists. The tourists were found mainly attracted by wildlife, tribes and cultures, and the scenic beauty of the country.

The market segments identified by those in the industry (ministry and firms) were found to be too narrow to be of any great importance while marketing the tourist product.

Marketing for local tourism was found to be less developed with those in the industry currently associating local tourism with the low season. This low season (February to July) means no business for most firms and is thus viewed as a problem.

The ministry was found to engage in more meaningful market research than the private firms even though it was said to be insufficient for the needs of all those in the industry.

In providing goods and services to their customers, the firms were found to be both product and consumer oriented, combining elements of both philosophies.

Kenya's main competitors for tourists were not clearly identified. Responses from the firms and ministry and those of the tourists themselves lead to different conclusions as to who the competitors are. It is not even clear whether there are any.
The major problems facing local marketing of tourism were found to include lack of money among the local people, and lack of awareness as to the importance (benefits) of touring one's country. It was suggested that prices should be reduced and more publicity and other forms of persuasion be done to solve these two problems.

Foreign marketing of tourism was found to be hampered by lack of enough research into these markets to determine what to provide and when, and also lack of enough publicity and educative advertising to make the prospective tourists (customers) aware of Kenya as a destination and create his interest to visit the country for a holiday or other business. The government (ministry) was said to be responsible for these two activities and failure in their execution can be attributed wholely on the ministry's failings.

The tourist product was said to be highly priced. This high pricing was identified as a problem not only presently, but it is also likely to present a major weakness in the country's competitive position for tourists with other destinations in the future.

The study was limited to some extent by the short time within which it was conducted, the non-cooperation of some firms in travel operations, the period of study falling within the low season, and the inability to verify whether what respondents said was true or false.