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The Influence of Inbound Tour Operators (ITOS) in Positioning Kenya as an Attractive Destination for American Leisure and Travel Market

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Abstract- Kenya is a popular tourism destination in Africa with abundant tourism resources and activities. However, to the Americans who are among the world's top spenders in outbound travel, Kenya is not a popular destination. The study explored ways that Inbound Tour Operators (ITOs) can use to position Kenya as an attractive destination for American leisure and travel market. The study targeted 40 respondents from selected ITOs based in Nairobi using questionnaire survey mainly on 5-point likert scale. Abundant wildlife, safari experience and unique accommodation were the most popular tourism products, and technology was the main source of information and trip planning (score 5). More than 50% of the tourists were accompanied by family members and would recommend Kenya to others. Insecurity, and travel time between the two countries were main constraints to American travelers to Kenya (score 5). ITOs have a vital role to make destination Kenya attractive to American travelers, and in enhancing visitor experiences at various destinations.

Keywords: inbound tour operators, american tourists, tourism resources and activities, positioning, attractiveness.

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However, to the Americans who are among the world's top spenders in outbound travel, Kenya is not a popular destination. The study explored ways that Inbound Tour Operators (ITOs) can use to position Kenya as an attractive destination for American leisure and travel market. The study targeted 40 respondents from selected ITOs based in Nairobi using questionnaire survey mainly on 5-point likert scale. Abundant wildlife, safari experience and unique accommodation were the most popular tourism products, and technology was the main source of information and trip planning (score 5). More than 50% of the tourists were accompanied by family members and would recommend Kenya to others. Insecurity, and travel time between the two countries were main constraints to American travelers to Kenya (score 5). ITOs have a vital role to make destination Kenya attractive to American travelers, and in enhancing visitor experiences at various destinations. It is suggested that ITOs work closely with the government to address security and safety issues, reduce travel time, create incentives for Kenyan Diaspora to consume and market destination Kenya, and invest in ICT and skills training, in order to increase American travelers' consumption of destination Kenya.

Keywords: inbound tour operators, american tourists, tourism resources and activities, positioning, attractiveness.

I. Introduction

Tourism is big business globally which destinations cannot afford to ignore. Destinations worldwide received 369 million International tourists in the first quarter of 2017, representing 6% growth over the same period 2016 (UNWTO, 2017). Various UNWTO reports indicate that tourism is an important global service industry and that international arrivals are expected to be more than double by 2020, reaching 1.6 billion arrivals while tourism expenditure is expected to reach US$ 2 trillion. From the perspective of this global industry, tourism to and in developing countries is of major significance. For example, 42% of international travel takes place to today's developing countries. The direct contribution of Tourism to Kenya's GDP was Kes 220.6b (4.1% of total GDP) in 2014, and was forecast to rise by 5.1% p.a. in the period 2015-2025 generating Kes 376.5b (4.0% of total GDP) in 2025. In 2014 Tourism directly supported 206,500 jobs (3.5% of total employment) and is expected to rise by 2.9% pa to 277,000 jobs (3.4% of total employment) in 2025. Tourism investment in 2014 was Kes 69.3b, which was 6.4% of total investment and is expected to rise by 5.2% pa up to 2025 and earn the country Kes 121.0b (WTTC, 2015).

Tourism has the capacity to promote regional development, create new commercial and industrial enterprises, create/stimulate SMEs, stimulate demand for locally produced goods and services, and provide a market for agricultural products. KNBS (2001-2011), indicate that tourism development in Kenya led to economic growth and poverty eradication in a number of ways: Generation of foreign exchange earnings, taxation, license fees, park entry fees; employment both in the formal sector (200,000 jobs) and in-formal sector (600,000 jobs), and stimulated growth in other economic sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, construction, transport and handicrafts. Thus, tourism is one of the 5 key pillars in the realization of vision 2030 which is meant to make Kenya a middle income economy by 2030 (GoK, 2011). With these apparent benefits of tourism, it is essential that inbound tour operators (ITOs) play its part positioning Kenya as a destination of choice for specific targeted tourism markets.

The aim of this paper was to identify ways that ITOs can use to position Kenya as an attractive destination for American leisure and travel market. ITOs are a central link between demand and supply and hence have power to influence both according to their needs. Maru and Kieti (2013) state that ITOs are 'middlemen' who are normally located in key urban centers and entry areas to the main attractions. They range from multinationals to briefcase firms and are usually contracted by tour wholesalers in tourists generating countries to provide services to clients and thus, they are an important component in ensuring tourist satisfaction (Honey and Krantz, 2007).

In 2007, the total number of American outbound travelers was 31,288,000 and about 938,640 (3%) of them choose Africa as a destination. Of those who chose Africa, Kenya attracted 100,516 (10.7%) while SA attracted 219,000 (22.3%) travelers double that to Kenya (UNWTO, 2008). This is rather disturbing knowing well that Kenya offers the best attractions in Africa, has a

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large Kenyan Diaspora in America led by the most famous "Kenyan son", President Obama, etc. Statistics from the first 10 months of 2015 and (2016) show the following of number of tourists into Kenya from selected counties: UK 84,423 (80,821); US 70,734 (82,363); India 41,257 (54,983); Uganda 24,420 (45,116); China 25,299 (41,459); Germany 30,806 (36,066); SA 25,819 (28,720); Italy 24,830 (27,933). This data indicate that tourists from all markets increased except from UK. In the first 10 months of 2016, the USA was ranked no. 1(82,363). However, comparing 2007 (100,516) and 2016 (102,640), this was really a very small increase which must be a concern of Kenyan tourism stakeholders. Western countries are still leading in tourist numbers because tour wholesalers understand their consumer behavior; some of them have investments in Kenya and a section of ITOs have some partnerships with tour wholesalers in those countries. Further, there is a fairly large Kenyan Diaspora in the west. However, the 'emerging' markets India, China and Africa, are showing great potential and growth, and are forecast to grow (UNWTO, 2016). This "emerging market" growth is changing tourism and therefore, the ITOs need to gain knowledge about these emerging markets for marketing strategy planning, targeted consumer recognition and positioning.

Kenya is regarded as the "jewel of East Africa" (GoK, 2009). Kenya offers both natural and cultural experiences to visitors hardly found elsewhere ranging from world famous wildlife parks/reserves, natural landscapes, beautiful Indian Ocean beaches to diverse cultures and historical sites. In fact, one of the wonders of the world is here in Kenya; the great migration of over a million wildlife animals across the border of Kenya and Tanzania yearly. Generally, Kenya is endured with both natural and cultural heritage attractions, fairly good accessibility and connectivity to both local and international markets which gives the country and service providers immerse opportunities to position Kenya as an attractive destination. Tourism activities associate with tourists while in Kenya include; seeing diversity of wildlife, undertaking a safari, game drive, adventure, festivals, visiting historical sites, philanthropy, etc, and there is potential for further innovation in products development, for example, golf courses, scuba - diving, jungle - trekking, river cruises, etc (IATA, 2005). However, insecurity and terrorism, erratic politic environment, environmental degradation, etc are some of the challenges impacting negatively on Kenyan tourism.

To provide quality services, service providers must be well trained and motivated, and equipped with right skills and tools. Service employees play a key role in both creating customer satisfaction and working toward service recovery when services offered to not conform to the expectations of customers. The managers must therefore have the right people and design jobs and responsibilities very well in order to enhance service delivery and minimize cases of unproductive behavior and stress (Buhalis, 2000; Ries & Trout, 1986). In the region, Kenya has a competitive advantage inherent in well trained professionals with very good skills, dedication to service provision, highly motivated and innovative who contribute directly and indirectly to customer satisfaction. High customer satisfaction leads to continuity in relations with customers and therefore customer loyalty and retention, and destination attractiveness. The innovative abilities of the Kenya people for example, can be experienced in technology money transfer (m-pesa, and m-shwari).

The UNWTO statistics show that American tourists to Kenya is not steady, calling for concerted efforts to steady and grow this market for the prosperity of the Kenyan people. Understanding the concept of positioning is key to developing an effective competitive posture (Lovelock, 2000; Trout, 1997). It is important for ITOs in Kenya to know which product features are of specific interest to customers in order to develop a competitive strategy for destination Kenya, and evaluate the products' subsequent performance in the tourism market place. Therefore, this study sought to: understand the needs of the USA travel market; determine the tourism products and activities that appeal to them; find out how they access information about destination Kenya; establish the challenges the American tourists encounter; and determine opportunities that ITOs can further use to influence American travelers to visit destination Kenya.

II. Positioning

It is well established that every product generates images among the target customers. This image is known as position of a particular product. The position enjoyed by the same product may be different for different customer groups. In the competitive marketplace, a position reflects how consumers perceive the product/organization's performance on specific attributes relative to that of one or more competitors. Customers' brand choices reflect which brands they know and remember as well as how each of these brands are positioned within each customer's mind. These positions are, of course, simply perceptual, but people make decisions based on their individual perceptions of reality rather than on an expert's definition of reality (Lovelock, 2000; Ries & Trout, 1986).

Positioning is the process of establishing and maintaining a distinctive place in the market for an organization and/or its individual product offering (Lovelock, 2000). It is the way a company, tourism offering, destination or country is viewed in relation to other companies, destinations, and by customer segments. Positioning is in the eyes of the customer, it is how the market perceives the company, country, destination, etc. It has also been defined in terms of the

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way a company positions itself in the marketplace thru its service offering and communication of this to various market segments (Lumsdon, 1997). Trout (1997), distils the essence of positioning into four principles, namely:

1. A company must establish a position in the minds of its targeted customers,
2. The position should be singular, providing one simple and consistent message,
3. The position must set the company apart from its competitors,
4. A company cannot be all things to all people; it must focus its efforts.

These principles apply to any type of organization that competes for customers. Understanding the concept of positioning is key to developing an effective posture for it offers valuable insights by forcing managers to analyze their firm's existing offerings and to provide specific answers to various questions:

1. What does our firm currently stand for in the minds of current and potential customers?
2. What customers to we currently serve and which ones may we target in future?
3. What are the characteristics of our current service offerings and who is its target?
4. How do our service offering differ from those of competitors?
5. How are the offerings perceived by chosen targets as meeting their needs?
6. What changes are needed in our offerings to strengthen our competitive position?

Thus, positioning plays a pivotal role in marketing strategy because it links market analysis and competitive analysis to internal corporate analysis. It is positioning analysis that provides inputs to decisions relating to product development, service delivery, pricing, and communication strategy (Dibb & Simkin, 1993; Lovelock, 2000). For a destination, good positioning may reduce the risk element of prospects that are visiting destination for the first time (Karma, 1997). Morgan (1996) in his study cited three prolonged strategy for positioning. First, the key benefits sought by the tourists were derived; second, the product was designed as per customer preferences; and third, the product features were communicated to the target market thru promotional campaigns.

III. Destination Attractiveness

The popularity of tourism destinations can be enhanced by combining factors of competitiveness and attractiveness. Supply side drives competitiveness, and demand side drives attractiveness elements. The input of both tourists and operators of tourism facilities are necessary for any destination to manage and enhance its competitive advantage. Tourist friendly destinations are created from a combination aspect of space, activities, and products within the tourism system approach. Space which is equipped with infrastructure, facilities, accommodation, attraction and others, is essential to ensure a tourist friendly destination that fulfills the supply and demand of tourist (Anuar et al., 2012). For tourism to be a profitable industry now and in the long term, its development and management should be according to a new competitiveness paradigm (Ritchie and Crouch, 1993). Competitiveness is now widely accepted as the most important factor determining the long term success of organizations, and countries (Kozak and Rimmington, 1999). Ritchie and Crouch (2003), state what makes a tourism destination truly competitive is its ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, and memorable experiences.

A destination is said to be competitive if its market share measured by visitor numbers and financial returns are increasing (Hassan, 2000). This approach supports the widely held view that competitiveness should be linked to high numbers and increasing destination income. The attractiveness of a destination reflects the feelings and opinions of its visitors about the destination's perceived ability to satisfy their needs. The more a destination is able to meet the needs of its tourists, the more it is perceived to be attractive and the more the destination is likely to be chosen. Mayo and Jarvis (1980), define attractiveness as "the perceived ability of the destination to deliver individual benefits". This ability is enhanced by attributes of a destination, i.e. those components that makeup a destination which forms the demand side perspective of the destination. The importance of these attributes help people to evaluate the attractiveness of a destination and make relevant choices. The attractiveness of a tourist destination encourages people to visit and spend time at the destination. Therefore, the major value of destination attractiveness is the pulling effect it has on the tourists. Without attractiveness, tourism does not exist and there could be little or no need for tourist facilities and services. It is when people are attracted to a destination that facilities and services follow (Ferrario, 1979b).

IV. Tour Operators (TOS)

Tour operator brings together the essential elements of a holiday such as transport, ground handling, accommodation, information provision, and visits to attractions. A tour operator will organize, put together different elements of the tourism experience and offer them for sale to the public by means of advertising (Page, 2006). Tour operation or tour wholesaling is the linchpin of distribution of tourism development. Tour wholesaler acts as a catalyst of demand; he/she interprets the market needs of his clients and packages these needs into destinations. His influence on the direction of demand is particularly

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significant to long haul, and relatively expensive destinations (Jenkins, 1991). A tour operator/tour wholesaler is often described as an intermediary and they are in contact with travelers before, during and after their vacation and hence they can influence behavior (Cooper & Jackson, 1989). TOs have control over tourists' itinerary, choice of destination, accommodation, excursions, air and ground transportation, etc. They therefore, play an important role in the service marketing mix: product, promotion, price, place, people, physical evidence, packaging and process. Positioning is associated with the communication elements of this marketing mix especially promotion. Their effort can significantly influence the tourism industry, especially in a country like Kenya with significantly less familiarity and accessibility to USA visitors (Kozak, & Baloglu, 2010; Bennett, 1993). As an intermediary, they bring buyers and sellers together, either to create markets where they previously did not exist, or to make existing markets work more efficiently and thereby expand the market size.

There are two types of TOs namely; Outbound Tour Operators (OTOs) and Inbound Tour Operators (ITOs). OTOs promote tours, and design multi-national tours especially long haul travelers seeking a specific experience in a foreign destination. They work in partnership with local operators in the destination, or alternatively they can choose tours already designed by inbound operators and re-sell them to clients. They have in-depth knowledge of their customers' needs; design travel products that meet those needs i.e. travel documents, transportation, accommodation, sightseeing, activities, etc. On the other hand ITOs also known as 'ground operators', are the local experts in a destination's tourism products. They pick out 'export ready' products that they promote overseas thru distributors. They formulate tour packages individually or in collaboration with foreign tour operators who understand their clients' needs i.e. transportation, sightseeing, entertainment, meals, currency exchange, insurance services, etc. Tourists at home in their country generally do not have in depth knowledge of a destination or the service providers in that destination hence they end up seeking the services of ITOs. Therefore, ITOs must have an established product, be in demand in the target market, offer good value for money, have a product that is consistently delivered with high level of quality and service, have a product that provide a unique experience and availability, and must respond to customers' inquiry and complaints in real-time (Buhalis, 1994; Barras, 1986).

The dynamic changes in tourism continue to evolve and are characterized by more experienced travelers who know what they want, are sensitive to the ecosystem, and are sensitive to the plight and role of the local community in tourism development. They want to create, feel, and participate, and thereby exist with memorable experience rather than a repetition of the usual. Thus, ITOs face a number of challenges such as; product quality and diversity, knowledgeable consumers, relations between countries, exchange rates, language constraint/barriers, regulatory laws, competition, lack of financial resources, insecurity, ever evolving technology, and lack of coherent tourism policy. These challenges are really and affect operations of ITOs and at the same time, they also provide opportunities to position Kenya as a destination of choice.

V. Research Methodology

The study targeted ITOs who were members of Kenya Association of Tour Operators (KATO) and had participated in USA trade shows as per Kenya Tourist Board (KTB) data for the last ten years. Using census sampling, data was sort from 40 ITOs and targeted product development managers, operations managers, marketing executives and tour consultants, who had served the American travelers into Kenya in 2016. The questionnaire was distributed either thru email or in person to 40 targeted tour operators but 29 ITOs answered and returned the questionnaire, representing 72.5% rate of the sample. The information sort included; demographic and travel characteristics; travelers' needs/preferences; appeal and challenges; and ITOs' operations and opportunities. Descriptive statistics formed the main tool of analysis and result presentations.

VI. Finding and Discussion

Table 1: Summary of Demographic Information (N=29)

Age

Age Bracket	Frequency
Up to 25	4 (13.8%)
26 - 35	6 (20.7%)
36 - 45	12 (41.4%)
46 - 55	5 (17.2%)
Above 55	2 (6.9%)
Total	29

Marital Status

Single	Frequency
Single	7 (24.1%)
Married	15 (51.7%)
Widowed	2 (6.9%)
Divorced	5 (17.2%)
Total	29

Gender

Male	15 (51.7%)
Female	12 (41.4%)
Other	2 (6.9%)
Total	29

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Education

Elementary	2 (6.9%)
Secondary	4 (13.8%)
College/University	22 (75.9%)
Other	1 (3.4%)
Total	29

Level of Income (US$)/Month

Below 4,000	3 (10.3%)
4,000 - 8,000	23 (79.3%)
Above 8,000	3 (10.3%)
Total	29 (100%)

Table 2: Travel Behavior Characteristics (N=29)

Table 2.1: Who accompanied them?

	Frequency	Percent
i) Alone	4	13.8
ii) Family	15	51.7
iii) Friends	7	24.1
iv) Business Group	3	10.3
Total	29	100

Table 2.2: How do American travelers source for information on destination Kenya?

(Respond using the following options in a scale of 1 to 5; 1 = not at all important, 3= neutral, 5 = very important)

						Average Score
i) Advertisement on mass media	1	2	3	4	5	0
ii) Brochures and travel magazines	1	2	3	4	5	2.5
iii) Company website	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
iv) Word-of-mouth	1	2	3	4	5	3.6
v) Social media	1	2	3	4	5	4.6
vi) Trade shows	1	2	3	4	5	1.2

Table 2.3: How do they book their trip?

(Respond using the following options in a scale of 1 to 5; 1 = not at all important, 3= neutral, 5 = very important)

						Average Score
i) On-line	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
ii) Travel consultants	1	2	3	4	5	3.8
iii) On-site	1	2	3	4	5	3.2
iv) Other channels	1	2	3	4	5	2.1

Table 2.4: How many times had they visited Kenya before?

i) First time: 10 (34.4%) ii) Once: 8 (27.6%)
iii) Twice: 7 (24.2%) iv) More than Twice: 4 (13.7%)

Table 2.5: Had they visited other destinations similar to Kenya before?

i) Yes = 22 (75.9%) ii) No = 7 (24.1%)

Table 2.6: Will they recommend destination Kenya to other people?

i) Yes 23 (79.3%) ii) No 6 (20.7%)

From the frequency analysis more than half of the respondents were male, married, aged between 26 and 45, travelled with family, had college education, earned middle income wages (table 1), had visited Kenya at least once (table 2). These characteristics fit well with typical tourists who visit Kenya i.e. professionals, middle aged, and tend to be male dominated. The results suggest that the target market for ITOs is likely to be families, aged between 26 and 45 years of age with college education and middle class income. This supports other findings elsewhere (KTB, 2011). ITOs must therefore, have conversation with OTOs to target and generate this type of tourists, and make them stay longer, spend more, and provide them with memorable experiences for word-of-mouth marketing.

American travelers sourced for information about destination Kenya and its tourism products online (score 5), social media (score 4.6), and word-of-mouth (score 3.6). American tourists made travel arrangements and consumption on-line thru company website (score 5), travel consultants (score 3.8) and on-site (3.2). On-site booking was preferred by return visitors who knew what they wanted. The brochures and travel magazines (score 2.5) which formed the main source of destination information and its products in the past is fast giving way to modern technology calling for major investments and training in technology. More than three quarters had visited other destinations with similar tourism products, and indicated that they will recommend Kenya to other potential travelers. There was large pool of return travelers and these calls for the ITOs to be dynamic, creative and innovative in terms of product quality and diversity; provide employee with update skills and training; online and social media promotion/advertising; and high quality service provision in order to create memorable experiences (Wall, 2010).

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Table 3: Tourists Preferences

The following questions required responses on 5-point likert scale options 1 to 5; 1-not at all important, 3-neutral, 5-very important

Table 3.1: What attracts (Appeals) American tourists to destination Kenya?

						Average Score
i) Abundant tourism resources	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
ii) National parks/reserves	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
iii) Safari experience/game drive	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
iv) Natural wonders (Mts, lakes, rift valley, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	2.2
v) Various cultures	1	2	3	4	5	3.6
vi) Engage in philanthropy (orphanage, slums, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	3.4
vii) Diversity and unique accommodation	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
viii) Coast beaches	1	2	3	4	5	1.2

Table 3.2: What are your potential strengths that help you serve American leisure and travel market better?

						Average Score
i) Well trained human capital	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
ii) Quality service delivery	1	2	3	4	5	3.4
iii) Distribution ability/capability	1	2	3	4	5	4.2
iv) Language and cultural diversity	1	2	3	4	5	3.1
v) Tourism products knowledge and diversity	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
vi) Knowledge of tourists preferences	1	2	3	4	5	3.1
vii) Partnership with tour wholesalers (OTOs)	1	2	3	4	5	3.1
viii) Adaptation/availability of technology	1	2	3	4	5	3.7
ix) Large slums/orphanages	1	2	3	4	5	3.7
x) Diversity and uniqueness of accommodation	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
xi) Kenyan Diaspora	1	2	3	4	5	3.1

Table 3.3: What issues do American leisure and travel market consider as main obstacles to visiting Kenya?

						Average Score
i) Insecurity	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
ii) Travel time between US and Kenya	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
iii) Tourism infrastructure	1	2	3	4	5	1.4
iv) Environmental degradation	1	2	3	4	5	3.3
v) Political instability	1	2	3	4	5	3.2
vi) Expensive destination	1	2	3	4	5	1.4
vii) Corruption	1	2	3	4	5	3.5

Table 3.4: What operational marketing strategies have you put in place to reach the American leisure and travel market much better?

						Average Score
i) Partnerships with tourists supplies (OTOs)	1	2	3	4	5	3.4
ii) Company website	1	2	3	4	5	5.0
iii) Trade shows and fairs	1	2	3	4	5	1.5
iv) Mass media advertisement	1	2	3	4	5	0.0
v) Source-country travel consultants	1	2	3	4	5	2.6
vi) Social media/blogs	1	2	3	4	5	4.6
vii) partnerships with Kenyan diaspora	1	2	3	4	5	3.2

Americans are attracted to Kenya by abundant tourism resource activities, experience safari, and availability of diversity and unique accommodation (score 5) while consuming various cultures and engaging in philanthropy activities scored 3.6 and 3.4 respectively, an indication that philanthropy activities are gaining momentum as tourists are increasingly interested to know how their resources are used and the place of local communities in tourism. Participation in tourism by local communities is an important

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component of sustainability. The Maasai culture (food, language, manyattas, initiation into manhood) was the most popular cultural product to the American consumers (score 5). Natural wonders (Mt. Kenya, Lake Victoria, lakes in the rift valley, etc) appealed to only small group of tourists (score 2.2). The Kenyan coast beaches were insignificant probably because of other better beaches like the Caribbean which is closer to mainland America and much better. Thus, investment and conservation of both natural and cultural heritage, will give destination Kenya a competitive advantage.

Destination Kenya's major strengths were well trained and knowledgeable human capital; diversity of tourism resources and activities, and accommodation (score 5). The ability to distribute tourists from airports and hotels to various attractions; knowledge of tourism products; and interpretation of tourism products scored an average of 4.2. Availability and application of technology; partnership with American tour wholesalers (OTOs), and availability of large and well distributed slums/orphanages scored 3.7. Finally, knowledge of tourists' preferences, engaging with Kenyan Diaspora, and knowledge of English language scored 3.1 each. The ITOs have significant internal and external strengths and if utilized well would position Kenya as an attractive destination to American leisure and travel market.

American tourists highlighted various obstacles that hinder them from visiting Kenya; the distance between the USA and Kenya, and insecurity (score 5), corruption (score 3.5), environmental degradation (score 3.3) and erratic political environment (score 3.2). Tourism infrastructure, and expensive destination, were not considered as significant obstacles (score 1.4). These challenges have major policy implications in terms of planning, tourism development, and marketing, and therefore, must be addressed by tourism stakeholders to position Kenya as an attractive destination.

American travelers accessed information about destination Kenya and its tourism products on ITOs websites (score 5), closely followed by social media (score 4.6), partnership with tourists suppliers (3.4), and engaging with the large/growing Kenyan Diaspora (3.2). Participation in trade shows/fairs organized by KTB was considered expensive (1.5) and advertisement on mass media was too expensive and was not used at all. It is the attractiveness of a destination that encourages people to visit and spend time at the destination (Kozak & Rimmington, 1999; Chung & Buhalis, 2008). More resources must be availed to understand the needs of the USA travel market in order to prepare and serve this market much better although the country's image sometimes is affected by international terrorism (UNWTO, 2007). The ITOs must strive to invest more in technology and training in order to deliver individual or group benefits by providing those attributes that make destination Kenya truly attractive.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendation

American tourists can access and consume a variety of tourism resources and activities in Kenya that can hardly be found anywhere in the world. The American tourists who include Kenya in their holiday plans are driven by variety of wildlife, safari experience, and the unique accommodation options which give tourists space and time to interact with wildlife (KTB, 2011). ITOs abilities to distribute tourists, social media and blogs, Kenyan Diaspora, and slums/orphanages are some of the opportunities which can position, promote and sell Kenya to the American leisure and travel market. Technology is now a key source of travel information before, during and after tourism consumption, and helps companies generate more sales, and manage customer relationships. For example, social media increase brand engagement because people value perceived authenticity and reliability and thus, it must be harnessed to be part of positioning Kenya as an attractive destination and destination of choice (Chung & Buhalis, 2008).

There was significant number of repeat visitations which meant that, those who had visited Kenya before may have had memorable experiences in the country and therefore, there is need for dynamism in products creativity and innovation to expand product diversification, and further enhance positive use of word-of-mouth as a marketing tool. It is important for ITOs to use current and repeat customers as ambassadors of destination Kenya by encouraging them to share their experiences, photos, and videos thru social media for wide reach and real-time. The study also highlighted a number of opportunities that ITOs can use to position Kenya as an attractive destination for American tourists: well trained and knowledgeable human resources who can deliver seamless services, knows and interprets tourism products, and ability to engage the Kenyan diaspora. Further, knowledge of English language, friendly local people and famous sportsmen if harnessed are opportunities that can position Kenya as an attractive destination. However, insecurity, long distance between the USA and Kenya, and lack of strong and well planned tourism product education in the American travel and leisure market remain major hindrances to realization of this goal. The attractiveness of a destination reflects the feelings and opinions of its visitors about the destination's perceived ability to satisfy their needs. The more a destination is able to meet the needs of its tourists, the more it is perceived to be attractive and the more the destination is likely to be chosen. A number of suggestions were made to further enhance service provision and minimize challenges, and to position Kenya as an attractive destination and choice for American leisure and travel market. That ITOs should:

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i) Actively engage the Kenyan diaspora, be active on social media, and ensure that the content on their websites is relevant and up-to-date based on research findings on products and consumer behavior in order to maintain a competitive edge;
ii) Actively engage the government to continuously improve the tourism infrastructure to respond to the needs and wants of contemporary tourists;
iii) Continuously improve on products/services offerings, tourism activities, and invest in human capital in terms of training, development and skills provision to enable them offer the best services;
iv) Continuously provide accurate information to American tourists on diversity and availability of Kenyan tourism products, and philanthropy programs, to enable them make wide choices for consumption, spend and length of stay and as well as improved livelihoods;
v) Integrate sustainability practices into their products, and websites, and indicate their concerns for sustainability in their marketing activities; and
vi) Engage the government to address issues national security and safety, corruption, erratic political environment, and environmental degradation to assure and reassure American tourists before, during and after the trip.
vii) Engage the government to ensure that transportation infrastructures (airports) correspond to international standards to ensure and lead to direct flights between Kenya and United state of American.

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