

# The Effects of the Marketing Mix on Choice of Tourist Accommodation by Domestic Tourists in Kenya

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**Abstract:** A proper marketing mix is crucial for the success of any tourist destination. This study examines the effects of the marketing mix on choice of tourist accommodation by domestic tourists in Kenya. This study was conducted in selected tourist destinations within Nairobi city and Nakuru town with a sample size of 384 respondents: 254 respondents from Nairobi city and 130 respondents from Nakuru town surveyed using multistage sampling procedure. Primary data was collected through questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS 16.0. This study revealed that the price, products/service, location, people, processes, physical evidence and promotions were all important attributes in determining choice of accommodation by local tourists in Kenya. This study encourages the tourism and hotel industry players to have a thorough understanding of the Kenyan domestic tourist so that they can have focused marketing strategies and marketing mixes targeted and packaged towards satisfying the needs of different market segments.

**Keywords:** Domestic tourist, Marketing mix, Tourist accommodation, Domestic tourism, Kenya

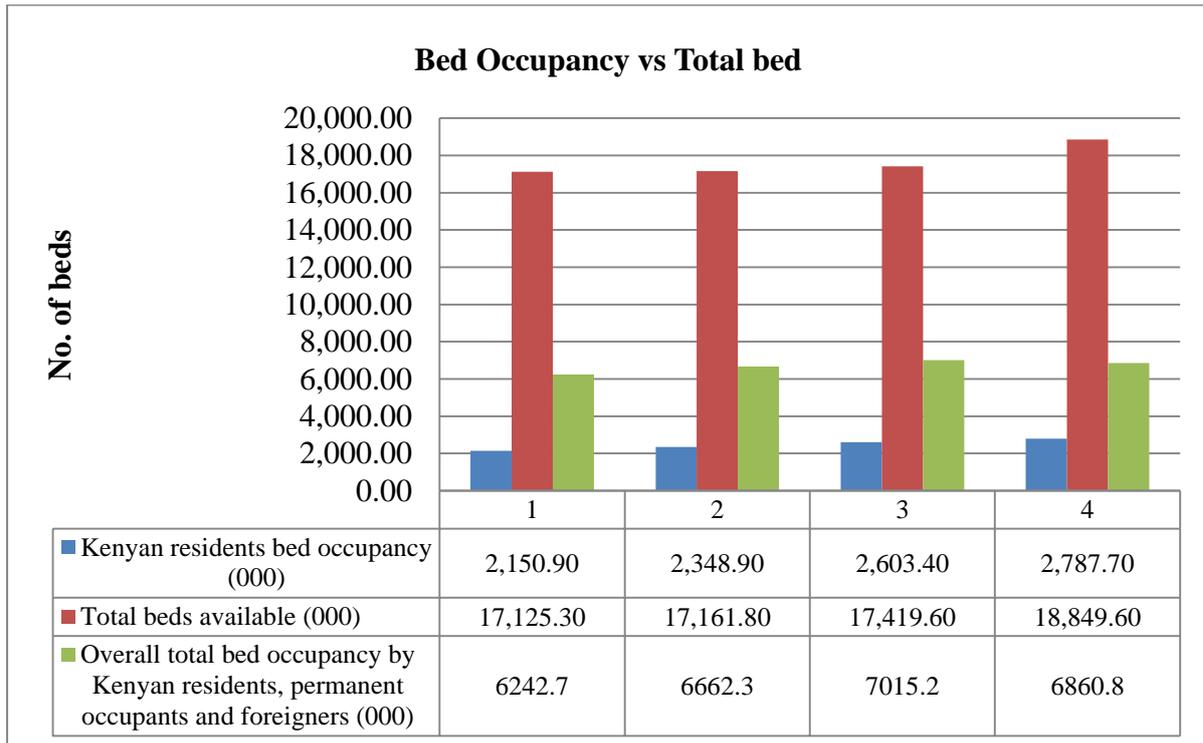
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Kenya has a diverse cultural heritage and a distinctive combination of tourist attractions spread all over the country that bring millions of visitors from all over the world, however, much attention has been given to international tourism as compared to domestic tourism because of the high percentage of tourism earnings that come from it. The presentation, pricing and packaging of tourism products in Kenya has long been oriented towards international markets (Mayaka and Prasad, 2012). This has proved detrimental because of the unpredictable political, social and economic global effects such as economic declines, terrorism, local conflicts, travel bans, and pandemic disease outbreaks; as well as seasonality and competitive factors that result to fluctuations in international tourists (Kenya Economic Report, 2009; Ndivo *et al.*, 2012; Magableh and Kharabsheh, 2013).

Despite the initiatives that have been undertaken by the Ministry to encourage domestic tourism such as reduction of entry fees for residents especially to the parks, or at times free entry to parks during Kenyan Independence Day, and hotel concessions for domestic tourists, domestic tourism in Kenya has not improved as expected. Studies have been done but there is no sufficient information to explain low performance (Manono and Rotich, 2013). The Domestic tourism Strategy Taskforce commissioned by the Ministry of Tourism in January 2010 to look into domestic tourism presented a report citing the local population's lack of awareness of the diverse tourism products and the mentality by locals that engaging in tourism was very expensive and meant for foreign tourists (Euromonitor, 2011). RnR Market Research (2013), suggested that demand for local tourism could be enhanced by the increase in the middle class group, which would then call for less reliance on inbound tourists by government. They however noted that despite a consistent increase in the number of middle class residents, domestic tourism was yet to massively thrive because of the high transportation and accommodation costs which are specifically focused towards international tourists.

Research shows that despite an increase in hotel bed night capacity of 18.8 million in 2012 from 17.4 million in 2011, the overall bed occupancy level for Kenyan residents alone stood at 2.79 million in 2012 from 2.6 million in 2011; while the overall bed occupancy by Kenyan residents, permanent occupants and foreigners stood at approximately 7 million in 2012 from 6.86 million in 2011 which is lower than the optimal level (KIPPRA, 2013; KNBS, 2013). This clearly shows that Kenya is not enjoying the full benefits associated with not only international tourism but specifically domestic tourism because the tourism sector's productive capacity is not being fully utilized by local tourists who would help cushion the tourism industry when tourist arrivals are minimal.



**Figure 1: Bed night capacity and bed occupancy**

**Source:** Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2013)

Therefore, the Ministry of Tourism in Kenya needs to look for ways of improving domestic tourism because only a few Kenyans go for holidays locally. Moreover, for the players in the tourism and hospitality industry to achieve success they need to have a proper marketing mix that suits the local market. This study therefore, sought to examine the marketing mix and its influence in determining choice of tourist accommodation by domestic tourists.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A proper marketing mix is crucial in helping destination marketers accomplish their objectives, create demand for their product offerings and present a fair image of their destinations. Tourist destinations that have appealing attractions and a clear market position are able to place themselves top in the consumers' minds. Tourism market is determined predominantly by tourism offers and tourism demand; in this case marketing plays a major role in competitively positioning a destination's product in the market (Cirikovic, 2014). The different types of accommodation and the methods used to market them have a major effect on visitor behaviour, choices, and the type of tourism product they purchase (Seyed, 2011). Marketers look to the marketing mix concept to help them create product offerings that are then presented to target markets (Pomeroy *et al.*, 2010). The unique combination of product, price, place (distribution) and promotion strategies designed to create mutually satisfying exchanges between a firm and its target market is what is referred to as the marketing mix which must be carefully devised to satisfy target markets (Lamb *et al.*, 2012).

The place, price, and promotion strategies cannot be designed without first having an idea of the product to be sold (Lamb *et al.*, 2012). The product, price, place, and promotion are commonly known as the four Ps which managers have to continuously make decisions regarding them in their efforts to deal with consumer demand. However, due to the uniqueness and nature of services, which the four Ps fail to fully describe the marketing activities that occur in services marketing, the traditional four Ps by Booms and Bitner (1981) were extended to include people, processes and physical evidence (Middleton and Clarke, 2001, Fyall and Garrod, 2005). Goeldner *et al.*, (2000) recommended an eighth 'P' partnership to be included in the marketing mix.

The product consist of the attractions of destinations and its environment, destination's services and facilities, destination accessibility, and its imagery perception (Fyall and Garrod, 2005). The tourism product is composed of both tangible and intangible aspects (Rodriguez, 2014) that have benefits and features (Markgraf, 2015). Middleton (2001), argues that product decisions not only influences the marketing mix, but also have an impact on an organization's long-term growth strategy, human resources, and investment policies. Moreover, service quality has been known to significantly affect tourist satisfaction (Mukhles, 2013). Therefore, the type of tourism products and services offered would influence a customer's choice of tourist destination.

Price pertains to the amount of money that is charged for acquiring and using a product or service (Fyall and Garrod, 2005). Markgraf (2015) argues that the price charged should match the product. Price determines the competition of a destination with other destinations and include transportation costs to and from a destination, accommodation, food, attractions and tour service costs (UNWTO, 2007). The pricing mix is composed of the actual price that the firm charges and includes volume discounts and discounted price for a multiple bundle of products (Reid and Bojanic, 2010) as well as pricing strategies such as sale of package plans (combination of meals, room and recreational facilities), non- peak period/off-season sales, group business and longer stays (Devashish, 2011).

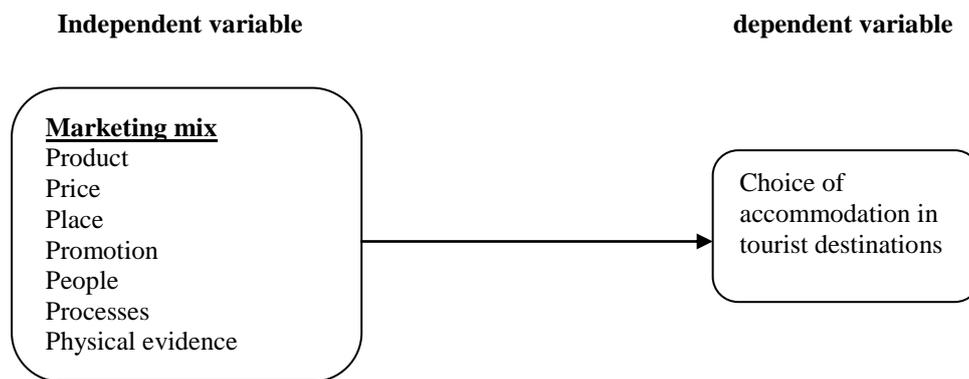
Place refers to the routes of exchange via which a tourist is able to access of a tourism product, reserve, confirm and pay for it (Middleton, 2001; and Rodriguez, 2013). It can also be the physical location, or it can be seen in terms of availability and accessibility (Ohio Library Council, 2008). Rodriguez (2013), points out that distribution of tourism products and services is more associated with where information about the products and services is distributed such as in trade shows, web pages, resellers, direct mail, tourist destination etc. to the tourists and it involves travel by clients to access the product because of the nature of tourism services. Godfrey and Clarke (2000), emphasize the use of tour operators and travel agents as two most well-known intermediaries in the tourism industry that help distribute information about tourist destination.

The communication mix involves all communication that occurs between the company and its customers (Reid and Bojanic, 2010). Communication is more associated with where information about the products and services are distributed such as in trade shows, web pages, resellers, direct mail, and tourist destination (Reid and Bojanic, 2010; and Rodriguez, 2013).

People include all human actors who play a part in the delivery of services and thus affect the perception of buyers. Given the inseparability nature of tourism products, many stakeholders are involved in the buying and selling: namely the customer, other customers and the firm's personnel in the service environment (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2006). People generally cannot be separated from the total service. So the appearance, skills, and attitude of all the persons involved in the tourist's experience requires a first class service since this impacts on the overall satisfaction of the customer (Rodriguez, 2013) and enhances the tangibility of the product-service combination (Reid and Bojanic, 2010). Additionally, tourism is labour intensive and the tourism experience is dependent on a tourist's interaction with local communities and well trained personnel working in those destinations (UNWTO, 2007).

Process refers to the actual mechanisms, flow of activities, and procedures of service delivery and systems of operations (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2006). Processes make life easier for tourism businesses and also help customers access services in the simplest way possible (Rodriguez, 2013). Physical evidence comprises the environment in which the organization and customer interact, and any tangible elements that enhance communication or performance of the service during service delivery (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2006). Physical evidence is important because it is the surroundings where the consumption of the product and sales takes place (Bachelor of Management Studies Team, 2014). Since customers cannot experience a service before it is offered, it is important for destination marketers to provide testimonials from other visitors who have visited the tourist destination and also display photographs showing all the aspects of the tourist destination (Rodriguez, 2013). This enhances the potential customers confidence in a product-which in most cases exhibits intangibility qualities.

Therefore, the marketing mix of a tourist destination is largely composed of a complex group of a number of factors intervening to accomplish the final product, which should be as a result of increased demand output effectiveness relative to supply and investment in marketing by tourist enterprises. The role played by the marketing mix is crucial as it helps players in the tourist industry to understand which areas they can initiate marketing action to increase the uptake of tourism products and simultaneously stimulate the demand (Bhatia, 2002). Therefore, success in marketing requires assessing and understanding wholly the elements of the marketing mix which must be managed and blended into well-conceptualized marketing programs.



Source: Researcher, (2014)

### 3. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

#### 3.1 Sample and Data Collection:

This survey was conducted from the local residents visiting tourist destinations in Nairobi and Nakuru town specifically Nairobi National park, Bomas of Kenya, National Museums, Uhuru Park, Lake Nakuru National park, and Nyayo gardens. The sample consisted of 384 randomly selected respondents. Data obtained from 384 questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS 16.0. Marketing mix with a 7-item scale was measured using Likert type scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree to assess the marketing mix factors that influence choice of tourist accommodation by domestic tourists in Kenya. The marketing mix factors under study were products/services, price, place, promotion, people, processes and physical evidence.

#### 3.2 Findings:

Demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Characteristics**

Variable		Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Male	218	56.8
	Female	166	43.2
<b>Age group</b>	Less than 25	103	26.8
	25 to 34	179	46.6
	35 to 44	72	18.8
	45 to 54	15	3.9
	55 or older	15	3.9
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	159	41.4
	Single with child/children	18	4.7
	Married	125	32.6
	Married with child/children	73	19.0
	Divorced	6	1.6
	Widowed	3	0.8

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<b>House Monthly Income (Kshs)</b>	Less than 20,000	190	49.5
	20,000 – 49,999	96	25.0
	50,000 - 79,999	47	12.2
	80,000 – 109,999	23	6.0
	110,000 and over	28	7.3
<b>Level of Education</b>	Primary or less	10	2.6
	Secondary	47	12.2
	College	131	34.1
	University	160	41.7
	Post University	36	9.4
<b>Members in Household</b>	1 - 2 people	63	16.4
	3 -4 people	164	42.7
	5 - 6 people	105	27.3
	7 or more people	52	13.5

Source: Primary data (2014)

### 3.3 Holiday forms:

In this study (see table 2), about 9.4% of the respondents travelled alone to the tourist destination, 17.2% travelled with spouse or partner (couple), 22.7% travelled with spouse and children, 10.9% travelled with relatives, 17.7% travelled with a friend(s), 8.1% travelled with children, 8.3% travelled with business colleagues, 0.5% travelled with classmates, 3.9% travelled with school, 0.5% travelled with other tourists whereas 0.8% travelled with church group. Therefore, majority of the respondents travel either with their spouse and children, friends, spouse or partner. This is important to destination marketers so that they can offer family packages and other tour packages that suit the different travelling groups. Other growing segments that present opportunities for destination marketers are those who travel with relatives, children, alone, business colleagues and other groups. The destination marketers can segment and tailor their products to target different groups.

**Table 2: Members travelled with**

Members travelled with	Frequency	Percent
Alone	36	9.4
Spouse or Partner	66	17.2
Spouse and Children	87	22.7
Relatives	42	10.9
Friend(s)	68	17.7
Children	31	8.1
Business Colleagues	32	8.3
Classmates	2	0.5
School	15	3.9
Tourists	2	0.5
Church group	3	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary data (2014)

With regards to accommodation arrangements (Table 3), about 16.1% of the respondents arranged their accommodation with a travel agency, 24.0% with relative or friend, 43.8% on their own, 1.0% the company did the bookings, 2.3% was done by the school, 0.3% by the race organizers, while 12.5% did not sleep in a tourist accommodation as it was a day visit to the tourist destination and back to their place of residence. Therefore, data shows that majority of the respondents prefer making their own accommodation arrangements. This presents opportunities for the players in the tourism industry to identify marketing channels that they can use create demand and awareness of the different tourist destinations within Kenya.

**Table 3: Arrangement of Accommodation**

Arrangement of accommodation	Frequency	Percent
Travel agency	62	16.1
Relative or Friend	92	24.0
Myself	168	43.8
Company	4	1.0
School	9	2.3
Race organizers	1	0.3
Day visit	48	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary data (2014)

The respondents who slept in a campground (Table 4) were 5.7% whereas 7.8% slept in a cottage, cabin or vacation home. The respondents who slept at a guest house and KWS self catering bandas were 0.3% respectively, 10.9% at a home of a friend or relative, 33.3% at a hotel, 11.5% at a lodge, 3.1% at a motel, 10.4% at a resort and 16.7% did not spend a night at a tourist destination (they went back home). This study shows that majority of respondents prefer sleeping in hotels, lodges and resorts while the least preferred was the guest house and KWS self catering bandas. The increase in domestic tourists spending in hotels, lodges and resorts as compared to home of a friend or relative could be attributed to extra disposable income, different tourism packages offered by tourist destinations and marketed by tour and travel firms, and the need to make new friends, and enjoy the facilities and services offered by tourist destinations. Therefore, tourist destinations that offer accommodation should find ways to position and reposition themselves and attract domestic tourists to their destinations.

**Table 4: Type of accommodation**

Type of accommodation	Frequency	Percent
Campground	22	5.7
Cottage, cabin or vacation home	30	7.8
Guest house	1	0.3
Home of friend or relative	42	10.9
Hotel	128	33.3
KWS Self catering bandas	1	0.3
Lodge	44	11.5
Motel	12	3.1
Resort	40	10.4
Slept at home	64	16.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary data (2014)

Apart from the type of accommodation, this study further enquired about the respondents' purpose of visit to the tourist destination. This is presented in Table 5 below. 60.7% respondents purpose was to spend a holiday (vacation/recreation), 6.8% of the respondents purpose for travel was because of business (government, company or personal), 9.4% was to see cultural attractions (art, festivals), 3.9% of the respondents were just passing through on their way to other destinations, 0.5% happened to travel while they had gone for medical treatment, 10.9% happened to travel while they were studying (in school – academic field trip), and 7.0% had gone to visit friends and family. The respondents who visited the tourist destination as a result of the lewa marathon, private function, and taking clients/tourists to tourist destinations were 0.3% respectively. This indicates that majority of respondents purpose of visiting the tourist destination is to go on vacation and relax. Therefore, destination marketers should find ways of making the customer experience memorable and comfortable.

**Table 5: Purpose of visit to the tourist destination**

Purpose of visit to tourist destination	Frequency	Percent
Spend a holiday (vacation/recreation)	233	60.7
Business	26	6.8
Culture	36	9.4
Just passing through	15	3.9
Lewa Marathon	1	0.3
Medical treatment	2	0.5
Private function	1	0.3
Study	42	10.9
Take clients/tourists to tourist destinations	1	0.3
Visit friends and family	27	7.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary data (2014)

### 3.4 Marketing mix variables:

Regarding the marketing mix attributes (see table 6 below), most respondents strongly agreed that their choice of tourist accommodation facility was highly determined by price (4.63). Therefore, any tourist destination offering accommodation should consider its prices so as to attract domestic tourists to their facilities. They should competitively price and tailor their products to attract local tourists. Similarly, products/services offered by tourist destinations (4.50) and location of the destination (4.35) were of great concern to domestic tourists. Destination marketers should consider the various activities that domestic tourists can engage in while staying at the tourist destination. Other significant factors that determined choice of accommodation facility were people (customer service) (4.33), processes (4.14) and physical evidence (4.08). Promotions (3.81) were considered the least. To summarize, the most significant factor influencing domestic tourists to spend a night in a tourist destination were the prices of accommodation while promotions had a moderate influence.

**Table 6: Marketing Mix variables**

Marketing Mix Variables	Mean	Std. Dev
Price	4.63	.665
Products/services offered	4.50	.708
Location	4.35	.817
People	4.33	.841
Processes	4.14	.923
Physical evidence	4.08	.966
Promotions	3.81	1.007

Source: Primary data (2014)

## 4. DISCUSSION

The role that the marketing mix plays is important and from the findings it is significant in influencing choice of tourist accommodation by local tourists. This is because the marketing mix must be carefully devised to satisfy target markets, and the price, place and promotion cannot be designed without having an idea of the product to be sold (Lamb *et al.*, 2012). The product, price, place, and promotion are commonly known as the four Ps which destination managers have to continuously consider in their efforts to deal with consumer demand. However, the uniqueness and nature of services (such as in the tourism and hospitality industry), which the four Ps fail to fully describe the marketing activities that occur in services marketing, were therefore, extended to include people, processes and physical evidence (Middleton and Clarke, 2001; and Fyall and Garrod, 2005).

The results from this study revealed that price was the most important element of the marketing mix, followed by the product/services offered, then location, people, processes, physical evidence and promotions was the least significant in creating demand for urban domestic tourism. Price is a crucial aspect of the tourism mix. Interestingly, these findings are consistent to Dwyer and Kim (2003), and Forsyth and Dwyer (2009), that price is one of the most crucial factors determining whether, and where, to undertake trips. In effect, when prices of tour destinations increase, there is a negative influence on demand for tour products and services leading to lower demand (Blake and Jimenez, 2007). Furthermore, price becomes a significant aspect that tourist buyers consider when is associated with a tourism product or certain destination and their corresponding quality and services (Zhou, 2005). Therefore, destination marketers should strive to understand the ability of the domestic tourist to pay for accommodation so that pricing strategies used should be in line with the domestic tourists purchase ability.

The product/services offered are equally important because product decisions have a major impact on an organization's long-term growth strategy, human resources, and investment policies as well as the marketing mix (Middleton, 2001). Additionally, when customers buy products they usually look for a product that can satisfy their needs and wants (Devashish, 2011).

Distribution of tourism products and services is essential and is more associated with means through which information about the products and services is distributed (trade shows, web pages, resellers, direct mail, tourist destination) to the tourists and it involves travel by clients to access the product because of the nature of tourism services (Rodriguez, 2013). It is important for destination marketers to ensure that local tourists have access to information about their destinations and where they can purchase the service. For tourist destinations to attract the right clients, they also need to be located in the right place.

It is worth noting that due to the uniqueness and nature of services, the importance of people, processes and physical evidence are significant. This is consistent with the findings of UNWTO (2007), that support the argument that tourism is labour intensive and the tourism experience is dependent on a tourist's interaction with local communities and well trained personnel working in those destinations. People element in the marketing mix is also significant. This is in agreement with Rodriguez (2013), who argues that people generally cannot be separated from the total service and so the appearance, skills, and attitude of all the persons involved contribute to the delivery of a satisfactory tourist's experience.

Processes are also important. Research shows that efficient processes are beneficial to the business as it offers them a distinctive advantage over their competitors because customers are able to efficiently access their services with no hassles and customers benefit by getting what they want easily (Rodriguez, 2013). Physical evidence is also vital because it is the surroundings where the consumption of the product and sales takes place (Bachelor of Management Studies Team, 2014) and because of the intangibility nature of services, it is important for destination marketers to find ways to tangibilize the product in ways such as providing testimonials from other visitors who have previously visited the tourist destination and also display of photographs showing all the aspects of the tourist destination (Rodriguez, 2013).

Promotion in the marketing mix even though being the least, is important because it gives information to domestic tourists about a tourist destination and what it has to offer. Bhatia (2002), points out that the marketing mix of a tourist destination comprises a number of factors intervening to accomplish the final product and is crucial as it helps players in the tourist industry to understand areas in which they can initiate marketing action to increase the uptake of tourism products and simultaneously stimulate the demand. In order for a tourist destination to increase its revenue, it needs to successfully market and promote its destination by creating awareness of its offerings. Mutinda and Mayaka (2012), noted that the lack of awareness by Kenyans on tourist destinations hinders locals from engaging in tourism. Therefore, for a company to succeed in marketing it must closely assess and understand wholly the elements of the marketing mix which must be blended and managed into well-conceptualized marketing programs (Reid and Bojanic, 2010).

## 5. CONCLUSION

The above responses highlight the importance of the marketing mix in determining choice of tourist destination. For a tourist destination to achieve success, it must understand its target markets so that it is able to tailor its marketing mix to suit different target market needs and wants. Price particularly plays a significant role in the uptake of tourist accommodation by local tourists in Kenya. If domestic tourism is to improve and help cushion the tourism industry in Kenya, then it essential that the domestic tourists have the ability to purchase tourism products and services offered. All the marketing mix elements are important and must be well managed and implemented to ensure success. Results from this study show that the most respondents travelled with family, relatives and friends. Therefore, these are important market segments that tourism players can target by offering affordable tour and travel packages.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study encourages the tourism and hotel industry players to have a thorough understanding of the Kenyan domestic tourist so that they can have focused marketing strategies and marketing mixes targeted and packaged towards satisfying the needs of different market segments. A tourist destination requires it to be in a distinctive and accessible location so as to attract the right visitors and increase demand. Pricing strategies used should be in line with the domestic market's ability to pay for tourism products and services. Destination marketers should manage their current product portfolio by continuously making decisions about their individual products (product attributes, branding, packaging, labeling, and product-support services), product lines and product mix so as to find new ways of satisfying domestic visitors and distinguish their offers from competitors.

Due to the intangibility nature of services, destination marketers also need to find ways of tangibilizing the service experience for domestic tourists. The Ministry of Tourism should have marketing partnerships and associations with organizations that offer tours, travel and hospitality services. This will help in reduction of advertising costs for all the tourism organizations involved as well as enhance brand exposure of the different tourist destinations within Kenya thus creating widespread awareness among the locals on the different tourist destinations available. The employees should be well trained to deliver superior customer service to customers, the processes of booking should be efficient and easy for the customer and the physical evidence needs to be appealing so as to draw local tourists to the tourist destination.

## 7. FUTURE RESEARCH

This study examined the marketing mix elements and their importance in determining choice of tourist accommodation. Choice of tourist accommodation can be as a result of many other factors apart from the marketing mix therefore, further research can be carried out on other determinants. Future research studies could be carried out to determine the variables under each marketing mix element and their influencing on demand and choice of accommodation in tourist destinations. Furthermore, this study was conducted on domestic tourists visiting tourist destinations in Kenya's urban centers, therefore a similar survey undertaken in tourist destinations within rural areas may present interesting findings.

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