



Influence of Market Development Strategies on Sustainable Conservation of Heritage Sites in Nyeri County, Kenya

 Kinyua Wairimu Beatrice,  Kipkosgei Bitok and  Munyiri Esther

Department of Hospitality and Tourism, School of Business, Economics and Tourism,
Kenyatta University, Kenya

Email Address: bettymimms22@gmail.com

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Abstract

In the recent years, heritage sites have faced numerous challenges, including cultural commercialization, organic dilapidation, development pressure, inadequate marketing and improper use and maintenance. Kenya has begun to embrace sustainable heritage tourism development goals that are aligned with Kenya's Vision 2030. This paper examines the influence of market development strategies on the sustainable conservation of selected heritage sites in Nyeri County. Ansoff's marketing and sustainable development theories underpinned the study's theoretical foundation. A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was adopted. The target population included local community, tourists, and key informants from the County government of Nyeri, the National Museums of Kenya, and site supervisors. The sample size was 762 respondents, consisting of 384 locals, 367 tourists, and 11 key informants. Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data analyzed using the SPSS through descriptive and inferential analysis. Qualitative data followed a content analysis, with responses grouped as themes. The response rate for questionnaires was 66.2%, while that of interviews was 100%. The results of correlation analysis revealed that market development strategies ($r=0.551$, $p=0.000$) statistically exhibited a positive significant relationship with the sustainable conservation of heritage sites in Nyeri County. The study concluded market development strategies a catalyst for attaining sustainable conservation initiatives by promoting tourism activities using aggressive marketing techniques, utilize market segmentation to increase customer bases, and having a management department that orchestrates viable marketing ideas resulting to increased market bases, translating into sustainable initiatives of heritage sites to meet the demand and uphold sustainability. The study recommends a market development strategy to be anchored on the County's economic policies and plans to ensure that heritage sites are allocated the required funds to develop their marketing goals, with a structured management team for accountability on matters of heritage sites and active involvement of the locals.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a rapidly growing economic sector that involves interactions among the host community, tourists, the environment, and suppliers. The industry employed 272 million people globally in 2020 but experienced an 18.5% decline in employment due to coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Also in 2020, tourism contributed \$4671 billion to the world's GDP but experienced a drop from \$9170 billion in 2019 (World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 2021). In Africa, tourism provided 17.5 million jobs and contributed \$86 billion to the region's GDP in 2020. However, Europe outperformed Africa with 34.9 million jobs and contributed \$1,065 billion to Europe's GDP (WTTC, 2021). The industry has been ranked third in Kenya in Sub-Saharan Africa (Nyasuguta, 2019), just behind Nigeria and South Africa. The Kenyan government has aggressively supported the industry through policy formulations and positive publications (Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife, and Heritage (MTWH), 2020). In 2019 the sector recorded 2.03 international visitors, with a considerable drop to slightly over half a million in 2020, due to COVID-19 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 2019, 2020, 2021). Despite these efforts, the sector has been dismally performing, especially after the 2007 post-election violence that resulted in negative travel advisories and insecurities. The above performance statistics only depict a small percentage of the Kenyan tourism sector's full potential, even as the Kenyan government, through the MTWH, continuously formulates tourism policies to revive the industry. Some policy documents, like the National Tourism Blueprint (NTPB 2030), recommend vigorous product and service diversification to move away from safari and beach tourism. Further, the document recommends reviving, conserving, and marketing heritage (natural and cultural) sites (Government of Kenya (GoK), 2017). Heritage tourism, making the focus of the current study, has a vast potential to support tourism development through its sustainable conservation frameworks. In recent years, tourism's rapid changes have caused discussions on conserving heritage sites. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) has expressed concerns over the potential extinction of heritage sites due to tourism, lack of maintenance and use, natural disasters, development pressures, and conflicts (Machat & Ziesemer, 2019). To preserve and develop natural and cultural heritage sites, conservation is viewed as a three-dimensional approach to sustainability, encompassing socio-cultural continuity, environmental protection, and economic prosperity. Therefore, heritage conservation now includes technical aspects such as repair, restoration, authenticity, historical value preservation, and aesthetic value maintenance for architects. These sites serve as a memory resource for ancient cultures and market identity, providing tangible and intangible records of history. Marketing is increasingly used to revive these heritage sites and remain competitive in the volatile tourism market. Understanding the market and its buying behavior is crucial to satisfy customers and ensure profitability. Despite challenges in considering heritage sites as viable tourism products, a marketing approach can link cultural assets to local economies and social development. Whether dealing with low visitation or overcrowding, "marketing management and planning actions are needed to control the visitor experience and minimize impacts" (Vinodan & Meera, 2022).

Problem Statement

Globally, the challenge of preserving cultural heritage sites is evident as countries grapple with the impacts of tourism, urbanization, and climate change on these valuable assets. Internationally, UNESCO and ICOMOS have emphasized the need for sustainable conservation practices that balance tourism growth with heritage preservation, highlighting successful European and Asian models where heritage tourism is integrated into broader economic and environmental strategies (Martínez Yáñez, 2022). Regionally, African nations face similar challenges, with studies indicating a lack of resources, expertise, and coordinated marketing efforts to promote heritage tourism. Countries like Egypt and South Africa have made strides in incorporating technological innovations and community involvement in conservation efforts. However, the region struggles with consistent implementation and sustainable funding (Puplampu et al., 2020; Telecom Review, 2022).

Kenya focuses on its natural attractions, such as safaris and coastal tourism, while cultural heritage sites have remained underdeveloped and under promoted. This is despite their potential to diversify tourism products and contribute to economic and cultural sustainability. The Kenyan government aims to expand and promote its tourism offerings through the National Tourism Blueprint 2030 (GoK, 2017, 2020). However, the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) report for 2017-2019 reveals that cultural heritage sites are not adequately marketed to support conservation. This is due to an overemphasis on safari and beach tourism, while heritage tourism has received less attention and faced challenges such as inappropriate use, lack of maintenance, over-development, and natural impacts (Alhefnawi, 2017; Machat & Ziesemer, 2019; NMK, 2020). Further, the NTBP 2030 identifies core weaknesses, such as inadequate marketing budgets and overlapping roles of national and County governments resulting from devolution since 2010, that contribute to the collapse of potential in this niche sector (GoK, 2017).

However, a few studies have examined sustainable conservation from technological, strategic innovations, and community role-based approaches (Alhefnawi et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021), yet little shows the connection to marketing strategies. For example, Guerrero and Soria (2018) reaffirm the need to re-engineer the traditional heritage-architectural models in Mexico towards sustainable conservation. Chinyele and Lwoga (2019) used Arnstein's participation model in Tanzania and identified that tokenism drives locals' attitudes to participate in conservation. Lastly, Vandesande et al. (2018) identified planned and preventative conservation-based programmes that promote the development of heritage conservation.

The above studies are limited to a case study nature, qualitative approaches, and a narrow urban or in-built heritage scope in developed states. Therefore, the current study sought to close these gaps by examining the influence of marketing strategies on the sustainable conservation of heritage sites in Nyeri County.

LITERATURE REVIEW**Concept of Sustainable Heritage Conservation**

Sustainable conservation requires maintaining quality systems and responsible practices to protect heritage relics (Pirok et al., 2019). This aligns with the clarion call from UNESCO's World Heritage Convention and the sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 12 and SDG14, which emphasize responsible production, consumption,

and integration of sustainable management (Vinodan & Meera, 2022). Following the economic developments, heritage sites' conservation is still incomplete despite being threatened by industrialization and natural decay (Mrđa & Carić, 2019). Therefore, heritage site conservation should be incorporated to preserve, conserve, reconstruct, and continue the restoration of heritage structures and activities (Odeku, 2018). This will preserve the society's social-economic and political values (El et al., 2022).

Market Development and Sustainable Conservation

Nyi (2018) studied the market development strategies adopted by Asia World Company in Myanmar. Following a descriptive approach, 113 questionnaires were administered among the company's employees. The study affirmed that capacity utilization through market development in a company is shaped by its marketing dynamics, whether accessing untapped market niches. These findings are inclined towards multinational companies and cannot be generalized to heritage sites dealing with different offerings or the local companies in Kenya.

Eniola and Olorunleke (2020) identified that product packaging, pricing, and promotion are vital to ensure a company's success. Their study examined the applicability of marketing strategies on the performance of Nigerian SMEs. Further, they found that when a company is in a position to produce quality products/services while using a pricing strategy with effective after-sales services, such a company will have an added advantage in both the markets and the products/services offered (Mwangi, 2015). The authors avert that the findings could not operate as a stand-alone. Therefore, the same strategies can be replicated in other economic sectors like heritage tourism and supporting elements.

Gichina and Kahuthia (2021) examined how market development strategies influenced tea companies' performance. A cross-sectional survey was conducted to question 70 managers and supervisors of tea firms. Descriptive analysis revealed that marketing development strategies significantly influence performance with a proper marketing policy framework. These findings contradict Mbithi et al.'s (2016) findings that developing new markets did not improve total turnover or sales volume. Although the two studies were conducted in Kenya, they focus on the agricultural sector, hence the need to replicate them in the tourism industry.

Theoretical Framework

Igor Ansoff introduced the marketing theory in 1957, which helps marketing managers identify opportunities for their strategies in a firm. The theory suggests that a firm can gain a competitive advantage by adopting one or a combination of four strategies: product development, diversification, market development, and market penetration. Market penetration focuses on increasing sales in existing markets, while product development introduces new products/services to the existing market. Market development involves entering new markets with existing products, and diversification explores new markets with new offerings. These strategies differ in risk levels and require different marketing approaches (Ansoff, 1957). Applying this theory to sustainable conservation marketing benefitted cultural heritage sites in Nyeri County, enabling them to adapt to existing markets and explore new ones. The other theoretical foundation was based on sustainable development discussions, which go beyond mere development to encompass conservation (Gebrehiwot & Gebre, 2015). Sustainable conservation emphasizes the prudent

use and preservation of tourism resources for current and future generations. It considers economic, environmental, social-cultural, and even socialpolitical aspects. The World Bank report supports adopting quality development that addresses poverty alleviation (Connelly & Sam, 2018). Sustainable conservation involves interrelated disciplines and techniques, with the tourism industry benefiting from marketing policies and stakeholder engagement. This theory provided a foundation for understanding sustainable conservation in heritage sites.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area and Research Design

Nyeri County formed the study area. The County covers 3,356 km² (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Nyeri County, situated in the heart of Kenya's central region, is a treasure trove of historical and cultural heritage sites that offer a captivating glimpse into the nation's past. Nyeri County has eight sub-counties: Kieni East, Kieni West, Mathira East, Mathira West, Nyeri Central, Nyeri South, Mukurwe-ini, and Tetu (Appendix A). Over the years, there has been less focus on heritage sites in the county. This study shift the focus from the major tourist attraction and most visited by both domestic and international tourists in Nyeri County is the Aberdare National Park to the tapped and untapped cultural heritage sites in Nyeri County. The County's choice was based on its potential for heritage tourism. Although Nyeri County has over 30 heritage sites, only 22 have been documented (Appendix B). The study concentrated on four selected heritage sites based on their demand (number of visitors) (County Government of Nyeri, 2020). The heritage sites ranged from the renowned Mau Mau caves, which served as critical hideouts during Kenya's struggle for independence, to the Baden-Powell Grave and Cottage-Paxtu, dedicated to the visionary founder of the global Scouting Movement. Nyeri County offers a diverse array of heritage sites to explore. Additionally, the Nyeri Museum serves as evidence of the cultural development of the county and its significance in the history of Kenya. Meanwhile, the scenic location of Chinga Dam holds a historical value, constructed during the colonial period in the late 1950s through colonial forced labour, bridging heritage with the conservation of the environment.

This study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey research design (Kothari & Gaurav, 2014). A cross-sectional research design is a widely used method in social science research to gather data from a specific population at a particular time. Although the predominant nature of a cross-sectional design is quantitative, it can also incorporate qualitative or mixed methods. The research gathered and examined data of both quantitative and qualitative nature, thereby necessitating the adoption of a mixed methods approach. Therefore, the design was applied to inform insights and detail relationships between marketing development strategies and sustainable conservation of heritage sites in Nyeri County.

Target and Study Population

The visiting tourist numbers were determined during the sites' familiarization tours and pretesting period. According to the official data collected from the site supervisors, Mau Mau caves had a daily average of 15 (off-peak seasons) and 50 (peak seasons) tourists. Further, Baden Powell Grave and Cottage-Paxtu had a daily average of 20 (off-peak seasons) and 55 (peak seasons) tourists. The third site, Chinga Dam, had a daily average of

15 (off-peak season) and 65 (peak seasons) tourists, while Nyeri Museum had a daily average of 30 (off-peak season) and 100 (peak season) tourists. Considering that the study was conducted during the peak season, all the peak values were used to calculate the target population for 27 days, and that data was collected in May 2023. The locals' target population was calculated based on KNBS's 2019 census data. Therefore, the study targeted 7690 tourists, 314896 locals, and 11 key informants.

In this study, a mixed-sampling technique was used. Firstly, purposive sampling was used to pick the study sites based on their level of intractability, indicated by the number of visitors. Secondly, a combination of stratified random sampling and proportionate sampling methods was utilized to select participants from the local population. Conversely, a simple random sampling technique selected tourists visiting the heritage sites. The choice of these sampling techniques was motivated by their capability to ensure that every respondent had an equal opportunity to be chosen. Furthermore, the study purposively targeted and included all 11 key informants, employing a census approach (Saunders et al., 2016).

Table 1: Targeted Population Categorization

Group	Targeted numbers	
Local community members		
Location (Mau Mau caves)	85,421	
Location (Biden Powel and Nyeri Museums)	140,338	
Location (Chinga Dam)	89,137	
<i>Total</i>	314,896	
Tourists		
	Average	Total
Mau Mau caves	50*27	1350
Baden Powell Grave and Cottage-Paxtu	55*27	1585
Chinga dam	65*27	1755
Nyeri Museum	100*27	2700
<i>Total</i>		7390
Key informants		
Official National Museums of Kenya	2	
Official- Nyeri County Government	1	
Site supervisors	8	
<i>Total</i>	11	

To get the sample size for each heritage site and locals in the surrounding area, proportionate sampling was used using the formula shown below:

*The sample size for tourists in a site= (targeted population in a site/total population for all sites) *367[calculated sample]*

*The sample size for locals surrounding the site= (targeted population in a site/total population for all sites) *384[calculated sample]*

The sample size for the local community members and the tourists drawn from the four heritage sites was calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula. Therefore,

Therefore $s = \frac{3.841^2 + 7390 \cdot 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2(7390-1) + 3.841^2 + 0.5(1-0.5)} = 367$ tourists

$$s = \frac{3.841^2 + 314896 + 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2(314896-1) + 3.841^2 + 0.5(1-0.5)} = 384 \text{ locals}$$

Each heritage site gets its sample share based on the proportion values. Further, the study used all the key informants in the sampling, making the total sample size 751, comprising 367 tourists, 384 locals, and 11 key informants.

Pretesting, Validity and Reliability

The Italian Memorial Church was selected as the location for conducting a pretest between the 4th and 11th of May, 2023. A total of 20 participants were randomly chosen for pretesting. These participants were not included in the main study population of the selected heritage site. Their role was to assist the researcher in reviewing the questionnaire for grammatical errors, question tone, and difficulty level. This collaborative effort aimed to make necessary adjustments to ensure clarity of the questions before the actual study took place. The study supervisors provided valuable input during the pretesting of the interview guide. Additionally, two site managers and one official from NMK were involved in the pretesting process. Later, they became part of the actual study sample during the field study. The pretesting was conducted in person to observe the respondents' reactions and attitudes while providing their responses. The validity of the study instruments was assessed through content and internal validity tests. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research, participatory research methods were employed, involving continuous engagement with supervisors who provided valuable insights (Zohrabi, 2013). Moreover, the Likert scales utilized in the study were adapted from established and validated measures used in previously published research (Ghalia, 2016; Kibiro, 2018). A reliability test was conducted to validate the appropriateness of the study's findings. This study adopted internal consistency reliability, employing Cronbach's alpha to assess the study's constructs. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), a minimum alpha value of 0.7 is recommended to establish a reliable level of consistency. It was determined that all the study constructs exhibited alpha values greater than 0.7, thus concluding their reliability. Additionally, to enhance the reliability of the interview schedule, the tone, grammatical errors of the questions, and the purpose of obtaining the necessary information were shaped through the incorporation of inputs from two supervisors and feedback received from respondents during the pretesting phase.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process commenced with the approval and authorization of the study proposal by the Graduate School of Kenyatta University. Subsequently, a research license was obtained from NACOSTI to conduct a field study within 12 months. Following these approvals, two research assistants were recruited and trained in ethical data collection procedures. Before administering questionnaires, the researcher gave the respondents consent to ensure they agreed with the survey. The data collection period took place from 15th May to 12th June 2023. To gather additional insights, interviews were conducted with key informants from the NMK-Nyeri branch, a Nyeri County tourism official, and site supervisors/managers. These interviews were conducted through a combination of face-to-

face interactions and Zoom calls. Utilizing these two approaches allowed for increased flexibility for the researcher and interviewees, as they had busy schedules, ultimately enhancing the response rates. Notes were taken during these interviews to capture qualitative data, which were subsequently organized thematically and integrated into the quantitative findings. This study used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to clean and code quantitative data from tourists and local community members. The purpose of this process was to facilitate easy analysis. After ensuring the absence of missing data, descriptive analyses were conducted using frequencies, standard deviations, means, and percentages. Inferential analyses examined the strength of relationships and correlations between variables, including correlation and simple and multiple regression. Qualitative data gathered from interviews with key informants from the NMK-Nyeri branch, a Nyeri County tourism official, and site supervisors/managers were meticulously recorded and transcribed for subsequent analysis. Before reporting the findings, a content analysis was performed to identify and integrate thematic elements with the quantitative results.

To summarize the regression model used in this study:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1\chi_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where, Y= Sustainable conservation, β_0 denotes the Constant term, β_1 signifies the Coefficients, χ_1 refers to market development strategies, and ε represents the error term.

Assumption tests

Normality Test

After cleaning and coding the data, diagnostic tests were conducted as a prerequisite for regression analysis. The first test focused on data normality, which is crucial for parametric analyses like linear regressions. In our investigation, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was generated using the "explore" command in SPSS. The normality of the data can be confirmed if the significance value is more significant than 0.05. According to the findings in Table 3.2 all variables examined in the study exhibited significant values exceeding 0.05.

Table 2: Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Market development strategies	0.041	497	0.183	0.982	497	0.000
Sustainable conservation	0.651	497	0.512	0.857	497	0.621

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The second test examined multicollinearity tests which assess the degree of correlation among independent variables. If a high correlation is detected, it can adversely impact the accuracy of regression results by augmenting the error term, consequently diminishing the reliability of the findings. Tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values are commonly employed indicators for identifying collinearity. In this study, values exceeding 0.1 (for tolerance) and 10 (for VIF) suggest the presence of multicollinearity

among the independent variables. Based on the data presented in Table 3.3, it was observed market development strategies exhibited tolerance values greater than 0.1 and VIF values greater than one (1), indicating an absence of multicollinearity.

Table 3: Collinearity Statistics

Independent Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Market development strategies	.639	1.566

Linearity Test

The data's linearity was evaluated by comparing the means of the dependent and independent variables using the "Compare means" command in SPSS. The results of the analysis, presented in Table 3.4 indicated a significant deviation (.567>0.05) between market development strategies and the sustainable conservation of heritage sites, suggesting a linear relationship between these variables.

Table 4: Linearity Test

ANOVA Table			Sig.
Market development strategies	Between	(Combined)	.000
* sustainable conservation	Groups	Linearity	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	.567

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study objective was to examine the influence of market development strategies on the sustainable conservation of heritage sites in Nyeri County. The analysis of this objective and hypothesis (H0) are described in the subsequent sections.

Questionnaires and Interviews Response Rates

The study conducted in Nyeri County involved a sample size of 762 individuals, consisting of 751 tourists and locals from the four heritage sites and 11 key informants. Out of the total sample, 751 questionnaires were distributed to the tourists and locals, and 497 questionnaires were completed and returned. This indicates a response rate of 66.2%, with a corresponding non-response rate of 33.8%. Additionally, all 11 key informants initially targeted for interviews participated in the study, resulting in a 100% response rate. The findings are shown in Table 5.

There is no universally agreed-upon consensus regarding the optimal response rate for analyzing questionnaire data. Various researchers have proposed different percentages as guidelines. For instance, Allen (2019) suggests a response rate of 54%, Wu et al. (2022) recommend 44.1%, and Holtom et al. (2022) state that a response rate of 68% is deemed sufficient for analysis and publication in descriptive studies, as of 2020. Conversely, Babbie (2004) and Kothari and Gaura (2014) recommend a response rate exceeding 60% as adequate for analysis purposes. Therefore, following the recommendation of Kothari and Gaura (2014), the response rate of 66.2% obtained in this study was considered appropriate and facilitated the generalization of the study findings.

Table 5: Response Rate for Questionnaires and Interviews

Instrument	Population category	Sample Size	Respondents	
			Response	%
Questionnaires	Tourists	367	239	65.1
	Locals	384	258	67.2
	Total	751	497	66.2
Interviews	Officials-National Museums of Kenya	2	2	100
	Official- Nyeri County Government	1	1	
	Site supervisors	8	8	

Source: Survey Data 2023

Demographic Information

This sub-section presents findings from the tourists, local community members, site supervisors/managers, county tourism officials, and NMK officials. The demographic information included reasons for visiting heritage sites, education levels, gender, favourite tourism type, visitor type, and age. The question of visitor type was only directed to the visiting tourist.

Gender Orientation

The first background data gathered from the respondents pertained to their gender orientations. From the findings in Figure 1, more than half (308) of the respondents (61.24%) were female, 181 (36.4%) were males, five individuals were intersex, and seven individuals, accounting for 1.4% preferred not to indicate their gender. This showed that, compared to their counterparts, females are hugely involved in touring heritage sites and in sustainable conservation issues. This resonates with the findings of Desrochers et al. (2019), who identified that women exhibit a more substantial positive attitude towards protecting the environment than men, and they “are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviours.”

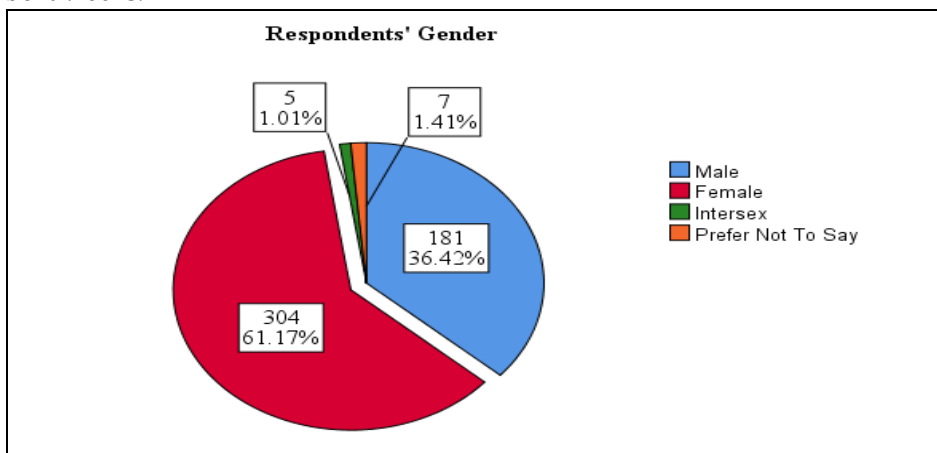


Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents

Source: Survey Data 2023

Respondents' Age

On the age of respondents, the study findings (see Figure 2) showed that many of the respondents (172) were aged 31-40 years (34.6%), while only 37 respondents (7.4%) were above 50 years. Further, the results show that 31.6% of the respondents were between 21 and 30 (157 respondents). From the findings, only 91 respondents were below 20, and 40(8%) were 41-50. These findings signify that most of the tourists who visited the four heritage sites and the local community members surrounding the sites (74.6%) were below the age of 40 years. Although previous studies have indicated the unwillingness of youths and young adults to tourism and conservation initiatives (Cini & Passafaro, 2019), this paradigm is changing, and many of them now demand unique experiences that involve environmental protection and preservation (Stanciu et al., 2022).

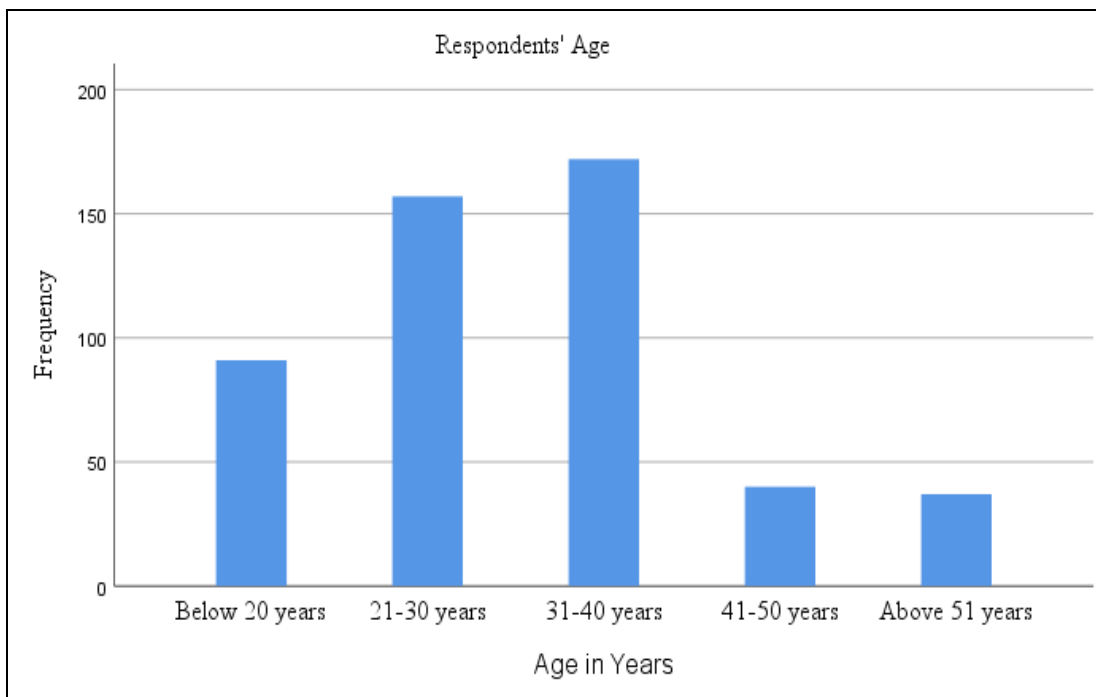


Figure 2: Respondents' Age

Source: Survey Data 2023

Education Level

The third demographic data was aimed at understanding the respondents' educational levels. From the findings in Table 6, 59.1% of the respondents had attained either a diploma or first degree, with 28.6% having only a certificate education level. Further, 6.4% and 1.4% had a master's and doctorate education level, respectively. Only 4.4% of the respondents had just a high school education. This confirms that the participants were well-educated and had relevant information regarding sustainable conservation. Education in preserving heritage sites is crucial as it enables fair use of heritage resources and mainstreaming conservation (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2022).

Table 6: Education level of the Respondents

		Frequency	Per cent
Valid	High school level	22	4.4
	Certificate level	142	28.6
	Diploma level	183	36.8
	Degree level	111	22.3
	Masters level	32	6.4
	PhD	7	1.4
	Total	497	100.0

Source: Survey Data 2023

Tourist Type

The fourth demographic characteristic was directed to the visiting tourists to the heritage sites, where they were asked to indicate the type of tourist (domestic or international). Figure 3 shows that 27% (65 individuals) of the 239 tourists were international tourists, and 73% were domestic tourists (174 individuals).

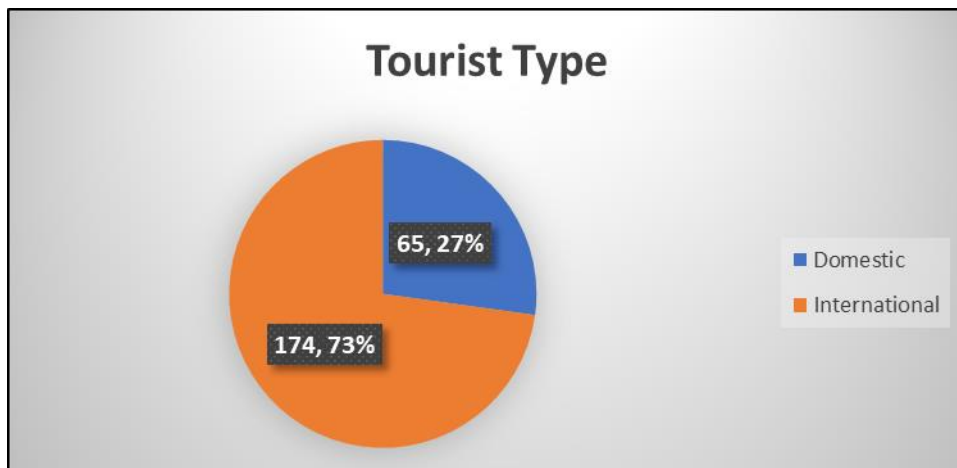


Figure 3: Tourist type

Source: Survey Data 2023

The findings showcase the need to promote domestic tourism to cushion the industry from seasonality. Although Kenya still relies heavily on international tourists, the government should attract more domestic tourists through initiatives like Magical Kenya and Tembea Kenya through discounted/group rates for domestic tourist numbers to compete with international tourists.

Type of Tourism Enjoyed

The respondents were asked to indicate, among the three choices given, the type of tourism they enjoyed most. It was necessary to understand if heritage tourism is liked and whether something needs to be done to market it. From the findings (see Table 7), the majority enjoyed safari and beach tourism, with 54.1% (269 respondents). Natural and cultural-related tourism was the least enjoyed, with 19.5% (97 respondents). Cultural and

heritage-related tourism reported a 26.4% enjoyment from 121 respondents. This shows that the conventional thinking of enjoying safari and beach tourism among tourists (both local and international) still hangs in the Kenyan tourism sector. Diversifying the Kenyan tourism portfolio is necessary by rejuvenating and marketing heritage tourism products.

Table 7: Tourism Type

Tourism type	Frequency	Per cent
Natural and cultural tourism	97	19.5
Safari and beach tourism	269	54.1
Cultural heritage tourism	131	26.4
Total	497	100.0

Source: Survey Data 2023

Descriptive Statistics for Market Development Strategies

The study respondents were presented with six statements on market development strategies. They were required to use a 5-Likert scale to determine the extent to which they agreed. The descriptive findings contained in Table 8 show that 79.7% (59.2%+20.5%) of the site management supports and facilitates market extension and promotional activities, 77.3% (48.1%+29.2%) of them reported that the site's employees aggressively market products and services. In comparison, more than 83.7% (54.7%+29%) believed the site has sales and marketing department (s).

Table 8: Objective one's Descriptive Statistics

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	$\bar{\chi}$	σ
The site promotes its attractions to new areas and audiences.	59.2%	20.5%	12.1%	6.4%	1.8%	1.026	1.026
Employees actively inform visitors about the site's features and activities.	48.1%	29.2%	10.5%	11.1%	1.2%	1.88	1.061
There are dedicated teams, or people focused on promoting the site.	54.7%	29%	9.1%	6.2%	1%	1.70	0.943
The management often looks for new ways to attract visitors.	56.3%	29.6%	8.7%	3.8%	1.6%	1.65	0.908
The site aims to attract visitors from different regions.	57.1%	35.8%	3.8%	1.8%	1.4%	1.55	0.777
More people have visited the site in the last three years.	53.7%	27.6%	6.2%	6.2%	6.2%	1.84	1.178
Average						1.7203	0.643

Key: SA-Strongly Agree, A-Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree, $\bar{\chi}$ - Mean, and σ -Standard Deviation

Source: Survey Data 2023

Moreover, 85.9 (56.3%+29.6%) of the respondents agreed that the management and supervisors of the site seek new market ideas, whereas 92.9% (57.1%+35.8%) agreed that the sites focus, identify, and serve new market segments in new geographical areas. Lastly, 91.3% (53.7%+27.6%) of the respondents acknowledged that the pool of customers visiting the cultural site has increased over the past three years. The overall computed mean for all the statements on a 5-point Likert scale was 1.7203, implying that respondents agreed with the various aspects of the statements relating to market development strategies. Further, the standard deviation of 0.643 is a sharp pointer to the fact that there were variations in responses.

Content Analysis for Market Development Strategies

Content analysis was compared and analyzed thematically using texts from responses of the 11 key informants. Name coding was used: Interviewee Number One (IN01) to IN11. The respondents provided significant insights into the specific marketing development techniques essential for the sustainable conservation of heritage sites in Nyeri County. It was noted during the interviews that having an aggressive marketing/sales department/team could accelerate new marketing ideas, thus stimulating an increased customer base. Unfortunately, most of the heritage sites in this study, except the Nyeri Museums, were considered to lack a structured management portfolio, thus not having proper marketing departments. They have been getting their customers through referral and word-of-mouth techniques.

Two respondents noted that:

"The insufficiency of funding to heritage sites alters their capabilities to do thorough marketing" (IN04).

"Heritage sites need to be integrated into County and National governments' economic programs to ensure they not only have structured management and funds but also get the exposure to attract more market bases/segments (IN08)

Another professional noted that the marketing frameworks for tourism do not give much attention to heritage sites in Kenya.

"We should ensure our marketing development plans cover heritage sites...For long, they have focused on safari and beach products" (IVN10)

Inferential Statistics: Market Development Strategies and Sustainable Conservation

A regression model was fitted to the data on market development strategies (predictor/independent variable) and sustainable conservation of heritage sites (dependent variable) to determine the relationship between these variables of the study. The model fit statistics in Table 9 show that market development strategies positively correlate with the sustainable conservation of heritage sites ($R=0.551$). Further market development strategies were found to cause 26.1% ($R^2=0.261$) variation in heritage sites' sustainable conservation, while market development strategies could not explain 73.9% of the variation.

Table 9: Model Summary

Model Summary ^b										
Model	R	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
				R Square	Change	Change				
1	.551 ^a	.261	.259	.49920	.261	174.517	1	495	.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), Market development strategy

b. Dependent Variable: Sustainable conservation

Source: Analysis from survey Data 2023

Consequently, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistics in Table 10 reveals that the model used to establish the relationship between market development strategies (predictor/independent variable) and sustainable conservation of heritage sites (dependent variable) was statistically significant, as shown by the F-statistic of 174.517 and the corresponding probability value of 0.00 ($p < 0.05$). The significant model rejected the null hypothesis (H_0) that market development strategies do not significantly influence the sustainable conservation of heritage sites in Nyeri County.

Table 10: ANOVA Results

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.491	1	43.491	174.517	.000 ^b
	Residual	123.356	495	.249		
	Total	166.847	496			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Market development strategies

b. Dependent Variable: Sustainable conservation

Source: Analysis from survey Data 2023

Further, Table 11 provides the regression coefficients of the model. Based on the analysis, market development strategies, and sustainable conservation of heritage sites in Nyeri County, they exhibited a positive and significant relationship ($\beta = 0.511$, $P = 0.000$). The results from the regression coefficients imply that a unit change in market development strategies will cause a 0.460-unit increase in the sustainable conservation of heritage sites in Nyeri County. Therefore, the specific model for market development strategies regressed against sustainable conservation is illustrated as follows: $Y = 1.173 + 0.460X_1 + \epsilon_i$ Where Y = sustainable conservation, X_1 = market development strategies, ϵ_i = error

Table 11: Regression Coefficients

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.173	.064		18.333	.000
	Market development strategies	.460	.035	.511	13.211	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable conservation

Source: Analysis from survey Data 2023

Test of Hypothesis (H₀1)

The study hypothesis (H₀1) stated that market development strategies do not significantly influence the sustainable conservation of heritage sites in Nyeri County. A simple linear regression analysis was employed to test the hypothesis, and the prescribed criterion for “rejecting the null hypothesis was based on the comparison between the calculated t-value and the critical value of 1.96”. The decision to reject the null hypothesis was determined based on the results presented in Table 4.7. The findings indicated that the calculated t-value of 13.211 exceeded the critical value of 1.96, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Consequently, the study embraced the alternative hypothesis, affirming the existence of a significant association between market development strategies and sustainable conservation of heritage sites in Nyeri County.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The overall results from hypothesis one revealed that market development strategies had a positive and statistically significant relationship with the sustainable conservation of heritage sites in Nyeri County. From the proxy measurements of market development strategies, having an aggressive marketing team in a department stimulates news marketing ideals, which results in accessing a huge market base and increasing tourists visiting heritage sites. This implies that the tourism heritage sites should strive to seek funding (qualitative finding [IN08] “*Heritage sites need to be integrated into County and National governments’ economic programs to ensure they not only have structured management and funds but also get the exposure to attract more market bases/segments*) to structure their marketing teams, covering broader markets and offering their heritage products. The positive correlation between market development and sustainable conservation is similar to the findings of other previous works (Cerquetti & Ferrara, 2018; Ng et al., 2023; Prados-Peña et al., 2019). For example, according to Cerquetti and Ferrara (2018), market development strategies through aggressive marketing may attract climate change or environmental-conscious tourists who may be intrigued to campaign (through their postings) to preserve certain aspects of heritage sites. However, the authors highlight “difficulties in understanding heritage values” among tourists. In this case, collaborating with the local communities (Ng et al., 2023) to create this ‘heritage value’ may be prudent in having a subjective attitude from the tourists, which can result in place attachment and a positive site image.

However, authors such as Bİnbasıođlu (2020) and Chhabra (2015) do not agree with these findings. For example, Chhabra (2015), in his submissions, contests that market development strategies may not directly promote sustainable conservation. His thesis is that such marketing strategies are crucial to enhancing heritage brand identity, as he recommends using a ‘smart, sustainable agenda’ if sustainability through market development is to be achieved. To address this challenge, the current study propagates that having stakeholder engagements and coordination, market development strategies can achieve twofold: one, maintain the marketing value intended, and two, catalyze the implementation of sustainability dimensions (economic, environmental, and social-cultural) (Bİnbasıođlu, 2020). From the interview discussions, the issue of insufficient funding in marketing heritage sites has been documented (de Fauconberg et al., 2018; Jelinčić & Šveb, 2021), in which the authors argue that insufficient budgets majorly constrain the marketing development efforts of heritage sites. Therefore, Jelinčić and Šveb (2021) propose using

crowdfunding, which should take a participatory approach with other stakeholders, depending on the nature of the campaign and management policies of the heritage site. Further, the interview sentiments highlight the integration of heritage sites into economic plans. According to Gisselman et al. (2017), heritage sites should be treated as ingredients of economic stimulants, and any efforts geared to market them through integrated management should ultimately foster sustainability for the locals and the environment (UNESCO, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study descriptive findings indicated that heritage sites need to promote tourism activities around them using aggressive marketing techniques, utilize market segmentation to increase customer bases, and have a management department that gives marketing ideas. Further, the content analysis supported the findings and added that heritage sites need to outsource funds from donors and governments (local and National) in order to integrate all necessary marketing development projects into their frameworks. The correlation analysis findings showed a positive relationship between market development strategies and the sustainable conservation of heritage sites ($r=0.551$). The simple linear regression mode indicated that market development strategies (predictor) explain 26.1% ($R^2=0.264$) variation in sustainable conservation. Further, the β coefficients of market development strategies were statistically significant ($\beta_1 = 0.511$, $t=13.211$, $P=0.000<0.05$), and the null hypothesis (H_0) that market development strategies have no significant influence on the sustainable conservation of heritage tourism sites in Nyeri County was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis accepted. Hence, it concluded that there was a significant relationship between market development strategies and sustainable conservation of heritage tourism sites in Nyeri County. Market development strategies significantly and statistically influence the sustainable conservation of heritage tourism sites in Nyeri County. Therefore, for such to occur, the heritage sites must be ready to promote tourism activities using aggressive marketing techniques, utilize market segmentation to increase customer bases, and have a management department that orchestrates viable marketing ideas. Such mechanisms will ultimately increase market bases, translating into sustainable initiatives of heritage sites to meet the demand and uphold sustainability.

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