

Influence of Critical Success Factors on Competitive Position of Hell's Gate National Park as a Tourist Destination

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Abstract: *In an increasing saturated global tourism market the fundamental task for the tourist destination management, is the understanding how tourism destination competitiveness can be enhanced and sustained. Therefore tourism managers have to identify and explore competitive advantages and analyze the actual competitive positioning. The constantly, growing number of travel destination in both Kenya and the rest of the world has put a lot of pressure on the management of Hell's Gate National Park to competitively position the park in the tourist market place and to do so in sustainable manner. Hell's Gate National Park tourist competitiveness on the global market is on the decline, besides insecurity, factors responsible for the decline of Kenya's once vibrant tourism industry has not so far been established. The specific objective of the study was to determine the influence of infrastructure on competitive positioning of Hell's Gate national park as a tourist destination, find the tourists perceptions of this factor. The study adopted a survey research design. The target population comprised of tourists visiting Hell's gate national park, from 15th February and 15th March, 2016. A sample of 97 tourists was used in this study.*

Keywords: *Critical success factor, Competitive position, supporting resources, Quality experience*

I. Introduction

Tourism however, has become a fiercely competitive business for tourism destination the world over. Competitive advantages are no longer natural, but increasingly man-made driven by science, technology, information and innovation. As such it is not simply the stock of natural resources of Kenya that will determine her share in the international tourism market, but rather how these resources are managed and integrated with other competences to create a competitive advantage (Ritchie, 2006). Competitiveness is increasingly being seen as a crucial influence on the performance of tourism destinations in competitive world markets. At a general level, industry competitiveness has become an established topic for researchers, policy makers, and practitioners, having expanded considerably since the publication of Michael Porter's (2009) well known work. Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao (2006, p.10) states that, it is useful for the industry and government to understand where a country's and destination competitive position is weakest and strongest, and hence, it is important to know how and why competitiveness is changing.

Kenya is one of the most popular tourism destinations in Africa and tourism is a key foreign exchange earner for the country. Tourism revenues contribute significantly to Kenya's economy. It contributes 12% of total GDP, while 6% of employment is directly or indirectly linked to tourism. Kenya's tourism is founded on the country's rich wildlife resources. In 2013 the competitiveness of Kenya's Tourism Sector ranked 8th regionally and 96th globally. However drawbacks were observed on the state of security that remained a threat to the industry. Kenya provides a good example of an African country which has embraced tourism as an important tool for socio-economic development. It is an important contributor to employment and wealth, with a huge flow through effect that touches all sectors of the economy. It has enormous potential as a catalyst for the future economic and social development throughout the East Africa region. Kenya's resource base for tourism is phenomenal, the country's tourism attractiveness lie in its diversity. Source of the features which make Kenya an attractive tourist proposition include: accessible wildlife, valued and impressive scenery, unspoiled area, durable culture and generally sunny, hot climate, no "jet lag" from Europe, a well developed infrastructure and virtually unlimited opportunities for special interest activities (Kenya Tourism Board, 2011). According to Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya has twenty two terrestrial national parks, four marine national parks, twenty eight terrestrial national reserves, six marine national reserves and five national sanctuaries, (Kenya Wildlife Service, 2012).

Hell's Gate National Park is one of the Kenyan national parks and it lies south of Lake Naivasha in Kenya, North West of Nairobi. Hell's Gate National Park is named after narrow break in the cliffs, once a tributary of a prehistoric lake that fed human beings in the Rift Valley. It was established in 1984. A small national park, it is known for its wide variety of wildlife and its scenery. This includes the Fischer's tower and central tower columns and Hells Gate gorge. The national park is also home to three geothermal power stations

at Olkaria. The park is equipped with three basic composites and includes a Maasai cultural center, providing education about the Maasaitribal's culture and traditions. The national park is one of ideal tourist destinations in Kenya. Reports cite that the level of infrastructure, uniqueness and attractiveness of natural sites, ease of access following government restrictions and the level of marketing as key in determining the number of tourists visiting (Blanke, and Chiesa, 2013; Kareithi 2013). Critical success factors are essential areas of activity that must be performed well if the business is to achieve its mission, objectives or goals. It is against this backdrop that the study assessed the influence of infrastructure on competitive positioning of Hell's Gate National Park as tourist destination in Kenya.

Research Objective

To assess the degree to which infrastructure influences the competitive position of Hell's gate national park as a tourist destination.

II. Literature Review

Poon (2013) was among the first to acknowledge the role of service infrastructure in creating a product experience. He argued that "service infrastructure is housed within the larger macro-environment or physical plant of the destination" (Poon, 2013). He stressed the fact that the level, use, or lack of infrastructure and technology in a destination (for example transportation, water and power supply, use of computer technology and communications among others) are also visible and determining features that can enhance the visitors' trip experience. Other authors subsequently supported his views (Chow 2008; Buharis 2000; Crouch and Ritchie 2006). They posited that tourists' overall impression develops their image of a destination after their visitation and that infrastructure may play an important role in that respect. WTO (2006) also recognizes the importance of infrastructure, more specifically transport as an essential component of successful tourism development in that it induces the creation of new attractions and the growth of existing ones. The Tourism Task Force (2003) of Australia asserts that infrastructure is a big part of the tourist equation. For instance it is posited that the transport system is responsible for connecting tourism-generating regions to tourism-destination regions as well as providing transport within the tourism destination. It should be easy to get to and around in tourism destinations. (McKercher, 2008). The tourism phenomenon relies heavily on public utilities and infrastructural support. Tourism planning and development would not be possible without roads, airports, harbors, electricity, sewage, and potable water. The infrastructural dimension is thus a necessary element for tourism development and the above factors are all basic elements for attracting visitors to a destination. Generally, infrastructure has not been included in empirical works because it is expected to be available at a destination and has not been promoted as an attraction factor. Poon (2013), and Crouch and Ritchie (2005) provide a good theoretical treatment of the role of service infrastructure in creating a tourism product experience

Laws et al (2015) study the case of Turkey as a tourist destination and find that infrastructure (comprising roads, water, electricity, safety services, health services, communications and public transportation) is a key determinant explaining tourist arrivals. Mangion, Durberry and Sinclair (2005) conclude that infrastructure is an important element in promoting Thailand as a tourist destination country. More recently, Kim et al (2014) in discussing the case of Sun Lost City, South Africa, and Martin and Witt (2007) in discussing small islands highlight the importance of infrastructure, particularly government financed infrastructure, in the success of a destination.

III. Data Analysis/ Findings

The study sought to establish the influence of infrastructure on competitive position of Hell's Gate National Park as a tourist destination. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with positive stated items regarding the infrastructural competitive position of Hell's gate national park as a tourist destination. The responses are presented in the table 1.2. Descriptive statistics on the influence of infrastructure on competitive position of Hell's Gate National Park as a tourist destination showed that the respondents were positive about the infrastructural competitive position of Hell's Gate National Park as a tourist destination. For example in all the statements listed, none of the respondents disagreed. On the item that the park has tracks and paths that are accessible and adequate all the respondents agreed as indicated by 23 (23.7%) who agreed and 74 (76.3%) who strongly agreed. While 71 (73.2%) agreed that the park has sufficient and adequate facilities for the people with disabilities, 26 (26.8%) agreed to the statement. It was also observed that majority 65 (67%) strongly agreed that the park has reliable and efficient public transport network. A good number of respondents 32 (33%) agreed that the park has reliable and efficient public transport network while 65 (67%) strongly agreed with the statement. Concerning security systems, 71 (73.2%) of the respondents agreed that the park has well established security systems in place for ensuring visitors safety. Majority 82 (84.5%) strongly agreed that the park has emergency response mechanism in place. All the respondents also agreed that the park has or is near medical facilities, the park is connected to power supply and that the park has internet services.

The data shows that infrastructure is important in attracting tourists. Tourists are more likely to visit places that are well connected with infrastructure such as tracks and paths that are accessible and adequate, sufficient and adequate facilities for the people with disabilities, reliable and efficient public transport network, well established security systems, emergency response mechanism, near medical facilities and parks that are well connected to power supply. The data shows that infrastructure is an important factor in ensuring that the park has competitively positioned itself. To establish the correlation between infrastructure and competitive position, Pearson's correlation coefficient was carried out. The data is presented in Table 1.3. A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine whether there is a relationship between infrastructures with their competitive position at Hells Gate national park. The results revealed that there was a significant and positive relationship between infrastructure and competitive position ($r = .774$, $N = 97$). The high level of competitive position was associated with high level of infrastructure positioning. Smith (1994) was among the first to acknowledge the role of service infrastructure in creating a product experience. He argued that "service infrastructure is housed within the larger macro-environment or physical plant of the destination" (Smith, 1994). He stressed the fact that the level, use, or lack of infrastructure and technology in a destination (for example transportation, water and power supply, use of computer technology and communications among others) are also visible and determining features that can enhance the visitors' trip experience.

IV. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of critical success factors on competitive position of Hell's Gate National Park as tourist destination. The study was guided by one research objective. The objective sought to examine the degree to which infrastructure influences the competitive position of Hell's gate national park as a tourist destination. The study was carried out at Hell's gate national park in Naivasha, Nakuru County. This study targeted tourist visiting the park. The study focused on the influence of critical success factors on competitive positioning of hell's Gate National Park as a tourist destination and was carried out, from February 15th to March 15th 2016. The study adopted a descriptive survey research. The study targeted tourists visiting Hells gate national park during the study period. The tourist were interviewed as they exit from the park as they had an experience in the park and thus were in a better position to provide information needed for this study. The sample size was 97 respondents who were sampled by use of non probability sampling. The researcher instrument employed in conducting the study was a structured questionnaire. Data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Pearson product moment correlation was used to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The study concluded that there was a significant and positive relationship between infrastructure and competitive position ($r = .774$, $N = 97$). The high level of competitive position was associated with high level of infrastructure positioning.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1.1 Infrastructure on competitive position of Hell's gate national park

Statement	U		A		SA	
The park has tracks and paths that are accessible and adequate.	0	00	23	23.7	74	76.3
The park has sufficient and adequate facilities for the people with disabilities.	0	00	71	73.2	26	26.8
The park has reliable and efficient public transport network	0	00	32	33.0	65	67.0
The park has well established security systems in place for ensuring visitors	0	00	71	73.2	26	26.8
The park has emergency response mechanism in place.	9	9.3	6	6.2	82	84.5
The park has or is near medical facilities.	0	00	71	73.2	26	26.8
The park is connected to power supply	18	18.6	6	6.2	73	75.3
The park has internet services.	0	00	71	73.2	26	26.8

Table 1.2 Mean and standard deviations of infrastructure on competitive position

Descriptive Statistics	Mean	Std. Deviation
The park has tracks and paths that are accessible and adequate.	4.76	.428
The park has sufficient and adequate facilities for the people with disabilities.	4.27	.445
The park has reliable and efficient public transport network.	4.67	.473
The park has well established security systems in place for ensuring visitors safety.	4.27	.445
The park has emergency response mechanism in place.	4.75	.613
The park has or is near medical facilities.	4.27	.445
The park is connected to power supply.	4.57	.789
The park has internet services.	4.27	.445
Valid N (list wise)		

Table 1.3 Pearson's correlation between infrastructure and competitive position

Variables relationship		Infrastructure	competitive position
Infrastructure	Pearson Correlation	1	.774 **
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	97	97
Competitive position	Pearson Correlation	.774 **	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	97	97

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).