

**THE INFLUENCE OF A CUSTOMER-CENTRIC APPROACH ON TOUR
OPERATORS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE TOURIST PURCHASING
DECISION-MAKING PROCESS IN ARUSHA, TANZANIA**

BY

BLANDINA DUNSTAN SHEMWETTA

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF TOURISM, HOSPITALITY
AND EVENTS MANAGEMENT IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF MASTER OF
SCIENCE IN TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE MANAGEMENT**

MOI UNIVERSITY

2022

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University. No part of this research thesis may be produced without the prior permission of the author and/or Moi University.

Signed: 

Date: 28/11/2022

Blandina Dunstan Shemwetta

STHE/PTT/001/18

Declaration by Supervisors:

This research thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

Signed:

Date:

Dr. Judy P.W. Kibe

Moi University

School of Tourism Hospitality &Event Management

Department of Tourism &Tour Operation Management

Signed:

Date:

Dr. Rotich K. Dominic

Moi University

School of Tourism Hospitality &Event Management

Department of Tourism &Tour Operation Management

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my lovely husband Julius Paul Nkanileka and my sons, Brian and Duncan for their constant support, encouragement, love and patience during my study period. The pursuit for my goals would not be possible without them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Almighty God who protected and provided me with strong health throughout my life and particularly during my studies at Moi University in Eldoret, Kenya. He has made this study possible. I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to my parents, Prof. and Mrs. D. Shemwetta, for a strong academic foundation that firmly anchored my studies, financial and material support, encouragement, and endless prayers for me throughout my study period. Sincere appreciation to my supervisors, Dr. Dominic Rotich and Dr. Judy Kibe, for their constant and determined supervision and encouragement in every step during the preparation of this document. I have learned a lot and their efforts are appreciated. Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge the immeasurable and relevant support from my colleagues, Joel Mukabana and Lazaro Mangewa, with whom I shared opinions throughout the whole process. Their vital assistance will always be remembered.

My profound appreciation goes to the tour operating companies in Morogoro and Arusha who accepted to provide the data which was useful in making this study a success. I am also grateful to many other stakeholders for their significant contributions in making this product realized.

May the Almighty God bless you all.

ABSTRACT

Every tour operator strives to increase the positive tourist experience as a key factor for business success. Despite advances in technology, tourists still rely on tour operators to turn their dream vacation into an unforgettable one. The best way is to have a thorough understanding of how tourists behave when making decisions about purchasing or using tourism products. A customer-centric is forecasted on the successful understanding and management of customer preference before, during, and after consumption. However, there is no credible information on the effectiveness of this approach, especially in the East African tourism market. This study examined the influence of this approach on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process. The specific objectives were to determine the influence of customer preference management, internal customer-business alignment and external customer-business alignment on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania. The study was anchored on the theory of market orientation and the Engel-Blackwell-Minard (EBM) model of consumer purchase decision-making where both descriptive and explanatory research designs were utilized. The study target population was 446 licensed tour operators in Arusha from which a sample size of 210 companies, was examined through simple random selection. The primary data collection tool used was a questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics such as percentages, means and standard deviations. Inferential statistics such as Spearman rank correlation and ordinal logistic regression analyses were used to test the relationship between the study variables whereby the Generalized Ordered Logistic Regression model was estimated. The regression findings indicated that a customer preference management and the understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process were positively and significantly related ($\beta=0.568$, $p=0.048$). In addition, internal customer-business alignment and the understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process were positively and significantly related ($\beta=1.232$, $p=0.000$). The findings further indicated that external customer-business alignment and the understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process were positively and significantly related ($\beta=0.548$, $p=0.024$). The study concluded that customer-centric approach including customer preference management as well as internal and external customer-business alignment had a positive and significant influence on understanding the tourist purchasing decision-making process. The study recommended the application of this approach including customer preference management, internal customer-business alignment and external customer-business alignment to tour operators to enhance a constant and thorough understanding of tourists' purchasing decision-making process, leading to positive tourist experiences. The study makes significant contribution to the field of travel and tour operations, academics conducting research related to this study, as well as policymakers developing policies on price controls, subsidies and consumer protection.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS	xii
ABBREVIATIONS OF ACRONYMS.....	xv
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.0 Chapter Overview	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.3 Objective of the Study	5
1.3.1 General Objective.....	5
1.3.2 Specific Objectives.....	5
1.4 Research Hypotheses	6
1.5 Significance of the Study	6
1.6 Scope of the Study	8
1.7 Limitation of the Study	9
CHAPTER TWO	10
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.0 Introduction.....	10
2.1 Review of Study Concepts.....	10
2.1.1 Customer-centric approach	10
2.1.2 Tourist purchasing decision-making process	15
2.2 Empirical Review.....	21
2.2.1 Customer preference management and understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process	21
2.2.2 Internal customer-business alignment and understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process.....	22

2.2.3 External customer-business alignment and understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process.....	22
2.3 Theoretical Review	23
2.3.1 Market Oriented Theory.....	23
2.3.2 Engel-Blackwell-Minard (EBM) Model	25
2.4 Research Gaps.....	27
2.5 Conceptual Framework.....	28
CHAPTER THREE	30
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	30
3.0 Introduction.....	30
3.1 Research Design.....	30
3.2 Study Area	31
3.2.1 Location.....	31
3.2.2 Climate	32
3.2.3 Topography	34
3.2.4 Access.....	34
3.2.5 Culture and cuisine.....	35
3.2.6 Economic activities	36
3.3 Target Population.....	36
3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique.....	36
3.5 Data Collection Instrument.....	37
3.6 Data Collection Procedure	38
3.7 Reliability and validity of the research instrument	38
3.7.1 Reliability test of the research instrument.....	38
3.7.2 Validity test of the Research instrument	38
3.8 Measurement of Variables	39
3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation	40
3.9.1 Regression Assumptions	41
3.10 Ethical Considerations	42
CHAPTER FOUR.....	44
RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	44
4.1 Introduction.....	44
4.2 Response Rate.....	44
4.3 Reliability Results.....	44

4.4 Demographic results	45
4.5 Descriptive Statistics.....	46
4.5.1 Customer preference management.....	46
4.5.2 Internal Customer-business alignment.....	48
4.5.3 External customer-business alignment.....	49
4.5.4 Understanding the tourist purchasing decision-making process.....	51
4.6 Diagnostic Tests.....	53
4.6.1 Normality Test.....	53
4.6.2 Multi-collinearity Test.....	53
4.6.3 Parallel lines/Proportional odds Test.....	54
4.7 Correlation Results.....	55
4.8 Regression Results	57
4.9 Hypothesis Testing.....	62
4.9.1 Test of Hypothesis One	62
4.9.2 Test of Hypothesis Two	63
4.9.3 Test of Hypothesis Three	63
CHAPTER FIVE	65
SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	65
5.1 Introduction.....	65
5.2 Summary of the Study Findings	65
5.2.1 Influence of Customer Preference Management on tour operators’ understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process.....	65
5.2.2 Influence of Internal Customer-business Alignment on tour operators’ understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process.....	66
5.2.3 Influence of External Customer-business Alignment on tour operators’ understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process.....	67
5.3 Conclusion	68
5.4 Recommendations.....	70
5.5 Recommendations for Theory, Policy and Practice.....	71
5.6 Recommendation for Further Studies	72
REFERENCES	73
APPENDICES	85
Appendix I: Questionnaire for a Study on the Influence of Customer-Centric Approach on Tourist Purchasing Decision-Making Process.....	85

Appendix II: Plagiarism Awareness certificate.....88
Appendix III: Research Letters89

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Information gathering procedures in Tour operations	13
Table 2.2: Tour operator's Products and Main Suppliers	15
Table 3.1: Climate data for Arusha.....	33
Table 3.2: Measurement of Variables	39
Table 4.1: Response Rate.....	44
Table 4.2: Reliability Test.....	45
Table 4.3: Demographic profile of the respondent	45
Table 4.4: Descriptive Results for Customer Preference Management	47
Table 4.5: Descriptive Results for Internal customer-business alignment	48
Table 4.6: Descriptive Results for External customer-business alignment	50
Table 4.7: Descriptive Results for Understanding the Tourist purchasing decision- making process	52
Table 4.8: Tests of Normality	53
Table 4.9: Collinearity diagnostics	54
Table 4.10: Test of Parallel Lines ^a	54
Table 4.11: Correlation Matrix	55
Table 4.12: Case processing summary.....	57
Table 4.13: Model fitting Information	58
Table 4.14: Goodness of Fit.....	58
Table 4.15: Pseudo R-Square.....	59
Table 4.16: Parameter Coefficients.....	61
Table 4.17: Summary of Hypothesis Test.....	64

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Tourist purchasing decision-making process	20
Figure 2.2: Market Oriented Theory	24
Figure 2.3: The Engel-Blackwell-Minard (EBM) model of consumer purchase decision-making	26
Figure 2.4: Conceptual Framework depicting influence of customer-centric approach on understanding the tourist purchasing decision-making process.....	29

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The terms are defined based on their use in this study.

Customer-centric Approach: It is a marketing strategy that puts the customer at the centre of all a company's operations, built on a deep understanding of how tourists behave when making their decisions to purchase or use tourism products before, during, and after consumption. Firstly, this is done through the collection and arrangement of information and data on individual tourists' insight items (known as "*Customer preferences management*"). Then, effectively working on the information collected to customize service, targeting existing customers enabling them to adapt and match their own needs and expectations (known as "*customer-business alignment*"). The customer-centric approach seeks to respond to ever-changing tourists' needs and priorities while ensuring a mutually profitable relationship and enhancing positive tourist experiences (Schober *et al.*, 2003; Niininen *et al.*, 2006; Lamberti, 2013).

Customer preference management: It is the first of the two fundamental parts of the customer-centric approach (Niininen *et al.*, 2006; Lamberti, 2013), which involves collecting and organizing information and data on individual tourists: tourist profile, travel patterns, leisure/recreation interests, Spending habits and priorities, and sources of information aimed at gaining a deep understanding of how tourists behave when making their decisions to purchase or use tourism products before, during and after consumption in order to improve the positive tourism experience improve (Jain, 2005; Sun, Li & Zhou, 2006).

Customer-Business Alignment: This is the second of the two fundamental parts of the customer-centric approach (Niininen *et al.*, 2006; Lamberti, 2013), which involves

using collected information about customer preferences to target and enable the customer to existing customers to adapt and personalize the Service to their own needs and preferences. It does this by integrating the company's business strategy, internal resource management decisions and all activities related to tourist satisfaction, which are then supported with the integrated information system (Shrage, 1990; Lamberti 2013), as well as by collaborating and coordinating with a key external actors (Transport , accommodation and activities) from companies to the requirements, goals and measurements of tourist satisfaction and to achieve tourist satisfaction together (Yeung *et al.*, 2009; Flynn *et al.*, 2010). The customer-business alignment aims to gain a deep understanding of how tourists behave when making their purchasing or usage decisions of tourism products before, during and after consumption in order to enhance the positive tourism experience.

Tour Operator: A tour operator is a key factor in the success of the tourism industry. He/she arranges and books trips, then combines various components of a tour such as hotel, transport, meals, guides, optional tours and sometimes flights and sells a package either directly to a client or indirectly through a travel agent at a flat rate (Holland & Leslie, 2017). Tourists count on tour operators to turn their dream vacations into unforgettable experiences. The best way is to understand how tourists behave when making their decisions to buy or use tourism products that meet their needs and expectations. A customer-centric approach that puts the customer first requires a successful understanding of the touristic purchasing decision process before, during and after consumption

Tour Operator: A tour operator is a key factor in the success of the tourism industry. He/she arranges and books trips, then combines various components of a tour such as hotel, transport, meals, guides, optional tours and sometimes flights and sells a package either directly to a client or indirectly

through a travel agent at a flat rate (Holland & Leslie, 2017). Tourists count on tour operators to turn their dream vacations into unforgettable experiences. The best way is to understand how tourists behave when making their decisions to buy or use tourism products that meet their needs and expectations. A customer-centric approach that puts the customer first requires a successful understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process before, during and after consumption

Tourist purchase decision-making process: The tourist purchasing decision-making process is the state in which a tourist finds a product or service, evaluates it and decides whether or not to buy it, driven by their needs and desires and influenced by the tour operators' marketing strategies. This falls under Engel-Blackwell-Minard (EBM) model of consumer purchase decision-making well described by Engel *et al.*(1995) which consists of five (5) phases: problem identification (needs identification) phase; information search phase; evaluation of the alternative phase; purchase decision and action phase; and post-purchase evaluation phase (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001; Karimi, 2013). The customer-centric approach that puts the customer first ensures tour operators constantly understand how tourists behave when making their decisions to purchase or use tourism products before, during and after consumption, thereby providing a positive tourism experience is improved

ABBREVIATIONS OF ACRONYMS

BCG	-	Boston Consulting Group
CNA	-	Capacity Need Assessment
CCM	-	Customer Centric Marketing
EBM	-	Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model of consumer decision-making process
EPS	-	Extended Problem solving
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	-	Human Development Index
IBM	-	International Business Machine
LPS	-	Limited Problem solving
MNRT	-	Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism
NCAA	-	Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority
SPSS	-	Statistical package for social sciences
SWOC	-	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges
TANAPA	-	Tanzania National Parks
TATO	-	Tanzania Association of Tour Operator
TZS	-	Tanzanian Shillings
TTB	-	Tanzania Tourist Board
USD	-	United Stated Dollars
VAT	-	Value Added Tax
VIF	-	Variance Inflation Factor
WD	-	Wildlife Division
WTTS	-	World Travel & Tourism Council

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides background information on this topic on a global scale from the African continent to our country, Tanzania, and the northern tourism circuit, especially in Arusha City. It describes the problem statement, purpose, goals, hypotheses and significance of the study. In addition, it covers the scope and limitations of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The tourism sector, which includes the main components of travel and tourism, contributes significantly to global economic growth. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) 2019 report, the tourism sector accounted for 10.3 percent of global GDP and supported the livelihoods of 330 million people, outpacing global economic growth for the ninth consecutive year. The sector contributed \$168.5 billion of GDP, or 7.1 percent of total GDP; \$61.3 billion or 10.4 percent of total exports; and 24.6 million jobs, or 6.8 percent of total African employment, while the sector contributed TZS 141.1 billion (US\$6,577.3 million) to the Tanzanian economy, or 10.7 percent of total GDP. In addition, the sector produced 6,138.6 billion TZS (\$2,666.6 million, 32.7 percent of total exports) in 2019. Due to various challenges faced by the sector including the recent ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the world has seen a sharp drop in travel and tourism activities in many destinations including Tanzania. The contribution of the travel and tourism sector has fallen from 10.4 percent of global GDP in 2019 to 5.5 percent in 2020. Consequently, it was expected that 62 million jobs would be lost by 2020, a drop of 18.5 percent and only 272

million people would be working worldwide from 334 million in 2019 and 1,550.1 million jobs (000) or 11, 1 percent of total employment (WTTC, 2020).

Improving the positive tourist experience has been one of the most important factors in the success of a tour company (Batra, 2019), since tourists depend on tour operators to turn their dream vacations into unforgettable vacations (Wang *et al.*, 2017; Spielmann *et al.*, 2018; Buzova *et al.*, 2020; Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022). The well-known Engel-Blackwell-Minard (EBM) model of consumer purchase decision-making (Engel *et al.*, 1995) leads tour operators to a thorough understanding of how tourist behave when making decisions to purchase or use tourism products if they want to achieve more memorable experiences (Karimi, 2013). Knowing how tourists make their purchasing decisions and their expectations at each stage of decision-making process helps marketers decide what type of tourists to target, when, and with what type of tourism product. More importantly, tour operators understand how to get tourists to select goods tailored to their unique needs and preferences (Punnasuparom & Choibamroong, 2020). A customer-centric approach is the best tool to manage and understand consumer preferences before, during and after consumption (Niininen *et al.*, 2006; Lamberti 2013).

A customer-centric approach is a marketing strategy that puts the customer at the center of business plans and operations, keeping them in mind when making business-related decisions and actions, actively listening to them and making efforts to address their needs, address their problems, meet their expectations and provide them with positive experiences (Parniangtong, 2017). A Customer centricity is a new direction for the expansion of marketing from the 1990s to the present, based on a deep understanding of how tourists behave when making their purchase or use decisions of

tourism products before, during and after consumption. The focus is on identifying and meeting tourist expectations, rather than what was done previously, where the focus was on establishing selling points for existing goods (product-centricity) (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). The customer-centric approach is a more advanced marketing philosophy than the product-centric approach in the sense that it really puts the customer first as it allows the organization to gather very detailed information about their customers and thus gain a very deep understanding of the served customers. It also allows for customer involvement in the actual product design, thereby achieving greater customization (Daniel *et al.*, 2003; OLeary *et al.*, 2004; Ballantyne & Vary, 2006). Networks, databases and data warehousing enable this and determine applications (Wang *et al.*, 2000).

The approach consists of two basic parts: the first is the collection and arrangement of information and data about individual customers, known as *customer preference management*. The second is the effective use of the information gathered to target existing customers and allow them to tailor the service to their own needs and preferences, known as *customer-business alignment*. The customer-centric approach aims to respond to the ever-changing needs and priorities of tourists while ensuring a mutually beneficial relationship (Niininen *et al.*, 2006, Lamberti 2013). In the last 20 years, several studies on the customer-centric approach have been conducted from different perspectives: customer-centric approach practices (Wagner and Majchrzak 2007), contextual factors facilitating the implementation of the customer-centric approach (Sheth *et al.*, 2000; Wind and Rangaswamy, 2001), Levers required to achieve a customer-centric approach in a (Galbraith, 2002:2011) and on the antecedents of customer-centricity in organizations or the characteristics of organizations that favor customer-centricity (Lamberti 2013).

In addition, with this approach, organizational design takes a significant effort for a company to constantly track and understand tourism dynamics, thereby enabling them to properly develop valuable and relevant solutions and products, thus promoting a positive tourism experience (Hemel and Rademakers, 2016). A clear understanding of tourist purchasing decision patterns helps operators to deepen their understanding of tourist choices of products and services, as well as the benefits they seek, including their unique selling proposition. It improves tourism demand forecasting, leading to efficiency gains; Targeting specific market segments, correct product positioning, designing effective marketing mixes and reflection (Kock *et al.*, 2018). The approach is therefore crucial for marketing teams in tour operators. However, there are gaps in its influence on the tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process. Hashem's (2020) study only highlights the impact of customer preference management on a customer's purchase decision-making process. There is a lack of information in the literature to assess this famous approach in the East African environment blessed with a thriving tourism business

Customer-centric approach has given companies like Amazon, Southwest Airlines, IBM, JetBlue Airways, and Best Buy a competitive advantage (Lamberti, 2013; Weinstein, 2018). Multinational consulting firms such as Forrester, Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and McKinsey have emphasized the need for companies to adopt a customer-centric strategy in response to global competition (Lamberti, 2013). Various marketing scholars (Arora *et al.*, 2008; Juan, Shih & Peng, 2006); organization (Galbraith, 2002; Kim, 2007); and information technology management (Stefanou *et al.*, 2003; Wagner & Majchrzak, 2007), have examined the customer-centric approach.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Every tour operator strives to improve the positive tourist experience as a key factor in business success (Batra, 2019). This is because despite advances in technology, tourists still rely on tour operators to turn their dream vacations into unforgettable vacations (Wang *et al.*, 2017; Spielmann *et al.*, 2018; Buzova *et al.*, 2020; Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022).

The best way for a tour operator to create more memorable experiences is to have a thorough understanding of how tourists behave when making decisions about purchasing or using tourism products to meet their needs and expectations (Karimi, 2013). A customer-centric approach is based on the successful understanding and management of customer preferences before, during and after consumption. However, there is no credible information on the effectiveness of this approach, especially in the East African tourism market. (Mihajlovi & Koncul, 2016; Ihucha, 2018).

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The main aim of this study was to investigate the influence of a customer-centric approach on tour operators' understanding of tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Specific objectives of the study were:

- i) To investigate the influence of customer preference management on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania;

- ii) To determine the influence of internal customer-business alignment on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania
- iii) To determine the influence of external customer-business alignment on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania

1.4 Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** Customer preference management has no influence on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process
- H₀₂:** Internal customer-business alignment has no influence on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process
- H₀₃:** External customer-business alignment has no influence on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process

1.5 Significance of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine the influence of a customer-centric approach through its two fundamental parts: customer preference management and customer-business alignment on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process as the best way to improve positive tourism experiences in the midst of technological advances.

The findings show that understanding the tourist purchasing decision-making process regardless of technological advancements starts with the collection and arrangement of information and data on individual tourists' insight items (known as "customer preferences management"). Then, by effectively working on the information collected

to customize service, targeting existing customers, enabling them to adapt and match their own needs and expectations (known as "customer-business alignment") to respond to ever-changing tourists' needs and expectations, while ensuring a mutually profitable relationship and enhancing positive tourist experiences before, during, and after consumption. This implies that, for tour operators and other tourism service providers, such as accommodation facility managers, to create more memorable experiences, they need to implement a customer-centric approach by putting tourists at the centre of all aspects of business operations so as to have a thorough understanding of how tourists behave when making decisions to buy or utilize tourism products before, during, and after consumption.

The results tend to advance a market-oriented theory of Kohli & Jaworski (1990), which focuses on the three important ways of responding to market demands: broad generation of market information related to current and future customer needs (intelligence generation), dissemination of the cross-departmental intelligence (intelligence dissemination); and company-wide responsiveness to it (Intelligence Responsiveness). The customer-centric approach goes beyond that; it introduces external integration, which is largely absent from early definitions of market orientation theory.

This implies that for a customer-centric company, the integration of both internal and external customer-related key attributes as part of the approach is crucial. That said, Tour Operators should work with key external actors to process the information collected in the Customer Preferences Management part in order to customize the service, target existing customers and allow them to adapt to and meet their own needs and expectations. This also includes IT, data specialists and human behavior

specialists to effectively transform consumer data into knowledge that can be used to provide customer-centric rewards and improve positive tourism experiences. The results also serve as a point of reference for other academics conducting research related to this study, as well as a framework for policymakers developing policies on price controls, subsidies and consumer protection.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in Arusha, Tanzania and included the selection of 210 out of 446 tour operators licensed in 2018; one respondent from each company participated in the survey, for a total of 210 respondents. Selection of tour operators was considered due to the fact that the study aimed to assess the influence of a customer-centric approach on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process as the best way to improve a positive tourism experience. Only 185 (88%) of 210 questionnaires were returned. The list of tour operators was obtained from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism of Tanzania in March 2018. The key informant was a sales/marketing director from each company.

Data collection was carried out from April to June 2019 by A questionnaire was used for data collection. The collected data was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, whereby descriptive statistics such as percentages, means and standard deviations to explain the characteristics of the study variables. Since the study variables were measured on a five-point likert scale, inferential statistics such as Spearman rank correlation and ordinal logistic regression analyses were used to test the relationship between the study variables using a Generalized Ordered Logistic Regression model estimations aided by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25. Ordinal logistic regression was used to

determine the relationship between an ordinal dependent variable (tourist purchasing decision-making process) and an ordinal independent variable (customer-centric approach). The results were presented on tables and figures.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

The study touched on the inner points of the operation of tour companies. As a result, respondents provided limited information to protect the company's reputation. Therefore, the researcher used a triangulation approach for five tourism regulators; Headquarters of Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), Tanzania Tourist Board (TTB), Tanzania Association of Tour Operators (TATO), Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA) and Wildlife Division (WD) - Tourism Department Office) to ensure valid and reliable information is obtained. Additionally, as the data collection took place during the high/peak tourism season when most of the potential respondents were out of the office, the process took a long time to ensure the key respondents were engaged to the data collection process.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines an overview of previous research on the subject of the study. In this chapter, an overview of the concept of the customer-centric approach is provided, followed by a general introduction to the tourist purchasing decision-making process, before examining how the customer-centric approach can influence the tourist purchasing decision-making process. The chapter also establishes the study's theoretical review, empirical review, research gaps, and conceptual framework. The empirical literature reviews other related studies to identify what those studies have not addressed, and therefore justifies the need for the current research.

2.1 Review of Study Concepts

This section provides an overview of the research concept. The concepts include a customer-centric approach and a tourist purchasing decision-making process

2.1.1 Customer-centric approach

A customer-centric approach is a marketing strategy that puts the customer at the center of business plans and operations. This means keeping people in mind when making business-related decisions and actions, actively listening to them and making efforts to address their needs, address their problems, meet their expectations and provide them with positive experiences (Parniangtong, 2017). A company that values the needs and wants of its customers and works hard to meet them is said to be customer-centric. She knows her customers well beyond the surface. Likewise, companies that move in this way are aware of the most important problems and pain

areas for their customers and act to address these problems (Clark & Myers, 2018; Adrodegari *et al.*, 2017). Customers are now such an influence that they demand that their ideas, needs, wants and concerns be heard, considered and addressed in a logical way by companies (Ahuja, 2022; Gimnez, 2018).

It is a corporate strategy and culture that focuses on providing customers with the best possible experience both at the point of sale and beyond, resulting in increased profits and a competitive advantage (Batra, 2019; Fader, 2020; Vidili, 2021). Putting the customer at the heart of business strategy and decision-making, and focusing on what customers need and how they want to interact with the business, makes it a significant effort for a business to constantly track and understand the dynamics of tourism. to develop products, services and promotions for the Company's top customers; and to segment customers based on top spend. By designing the company from the customer perspective, it will be able to create value for customers by tailoring products to their needs and providing a positive experience (Reilly, 2018).

It is a strategy that ensures tourist satisfaction, loyalty and retention (Robson, 2012; Al Sayed *et al.*, 2022). By putting a customer at the center of business strategy and decision-making, the company can gather very detailed information about its customers and thus accumulate a very deep understanding of the customers served. It also allows for customer involvement in actual product design, achieving greater customization (Daniel *et al.*, 2003; OLeary *et al.*, 2004; Ballantyne & Varey, 2006), enabled by networks, databases, data warehousing, and governing applications (Wang *et al.*, 2000). This improves visitor convenience, expands potential value and strengthens customer loyalty. When customers encounter a quality customer interface,

it improves their loyalty to the business and consumer repeat purchase and repurchase rates.

Niininen *et al.* (2006) and Lamberti (2013) offer a more operational view of the constituent elements of the customer-centric approach: the collection and arrangement of information and data about individual customers, known as customer preference management; and effectively using the information collected to tailor the Service to existing customers and allow them to customize and customize their own needs and preferences, known as customer-business alignment. The aim of this study was to examine the influence of the individual components on the purchasing decision-making process of tourists in tour operators in Arusha, Tanzania.

Customer preference management is the collection and assessment of customer needs and preferences and the forces that influence the creation and refinement of those needs. It is known as customer preference management (Kohli *et al.*, 1993). According to all respondents, customer orientation requires a deep understanding of the customer; Understanding its market is a critical element of any company's business, requiring proactive data collection and analysis from corporate documents, information systems, and employees (Day, 1994). In travel operations, information gathering strategies may be implemented through surveys and questionnaires (completed in person, online, by telephone, direct mail or direct email), travel journals, field tests, observations, comment cards, guest books, visitor profile tracking, web analytics, interviews (by telephone or in person) and focus groups (Table 2.1). Government agencies, tourism industry associations, academic institutions, national and local press industry magazines and newspapers, informal contacts and collaborators, business directories, business and academic libraries,

professional institutes and organizations, previously collected market research, public records and private consultants sources of information (TBE, 2015).

Table 2.1: Information gathering procedures in Tour operations

Collection Method	Description
Surveys and questionnaires (completed in-person, online, by telephone, direct mail, or direct email)	A survey is the process of describing some aspect(s) of a population or group of people based on a sample of the total. Visitor surveys (questionnaires) are the most common type of tourism research.
Trip diaries	Visitor recordings of trip details, such as expenditures, travel routes, sightseeing, highlights and other activities.
Field tests	Assessing a situation under the conditions it is actually being used, such as distributing questionnaires while people are using the product/experience.
Observations	Watching or observing a situation to record relevant facts, actions and behaviours (e.g. watching which exhibits guests choose first after entering an attraction, or observing audience members during a performance).
Comment cards	An informal way of soliciting feedback and information from visitors/customers.
Guest books	Informal recording of guest details on a voluntary basis; often designed like a tally sheet to record basic visitor profile information such as origin and party size.
Visitor profile tracking	A structured approach to provide a description of visitors based on demo- graphic and behavioural characteristics (e.g. origin, party size, length of stay, frequency of visit).
Web-analytics	The measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of Internet data for the purpose of understanding and optimizing web usage.
Interviews (completed by telephone or face-to-face)	A way to capture in-depth and insightful information; interviews enable the interviewer to be flexible to “probe” the interviewee for additional information, as needed.
Focus groups	Through a discussion led by a moderator a sample gathering of respondents to get their direct feedback such as perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes on an issue(s).

Source: TBE – Research guide for tour operators, 2015

Customer-Business Alignment is the section for managing customer preferences; It involves the use of customer preference management information to target current customers more efficiently and to allow customers to tailor and personalize the service to their own needs and desires through customer-centric business alignment, internal customer-business alignment and external customer-business alignment

Internal customer-business alignment refers to the collaboration, interaction, and communication between new product development functional departments in organizations (such as marketing, manufacturing, and research and development) and the new product development team (Alghisi *et al.*, 2015). Lamberti (2013) emphasizes the relevance of internal integration and coordination as key to developing a customer-centric approach. In customer-facing organizations, the focus is on fully integrating all customer-facing activities by better aligning all business activities with value-added customer activities. Internal customer business alignment includes customer-centric business strategy and customer-centric internal resource management decisions.

External customer-business alignment is the collaboration, interaction, and communication between external groups related to new product development (customers and suppliers) and the new product development team. It refers to the integration of organizations with formal boundaries; external integration upstream with suppliers and downstream with customers. It is the degree to which companies can work with their key suppliers to develop strategies, practices, procedures, and behaviors that are both collaborative and easy to use to meet customer needs (Yeung *et al.*, 2009; Flynn *et al.*, 2010). It involves exchanging information on tourist satisfaction requirements, tourist satisfaction goals, tourist satisfaction measurement,

and joint tourist satisfaction achievement and product development (Lau *et al.*, 2010). Integration with suppliers includes activities such as product design with suppliers and involving suppliers in the company's internal processes. Benefits of this integration include time-to-market for new products; product quality; development costs; product cost; fast delivery; (Wagner, 2003). If a company's supplier or distributor does not commit to a long-term partnership, it will be difficult for the company to achieve the responsiveness required to meet the customer's needs. Table 2.2 below shows the products and main suppliers of tour operators.

Table 2.2: Tour operator's Products and Main Suppliers

Elements of Tourism Products	Suppliers
Accommodation	Hotels, bed & breakfasts, self-catering, (serviced) apartments, campsites, cruise ships
Transport to and from destinations	Public transport (e.g., trains), airports, scheduled air carriers, air charters, scheduled sea passages, chartered sea passages, coaches, cruises
Catering and food and beverage	Restaurants and bars, grocery stores, farmers, fishermen, local commerce/markets, bakers, butchers, food wholesalers
Ground transport	Car rentals, boat rentals, fuel providers, gas stations, taxis
Ground services	Agents, handlers, or inbound operators in the destination
Cultural and social events	Excursion and tour providers, sports and recreation facilities, shops and factories
Environmental, cultural and heritage resources of destinations	Public authorities, protected site managers, private concessionaires and owners

Source: Three Steps toward Sustainability (2004)

2.1.2 Tourist purchasing decision-making process

According to Karimi (2013), the tourist purchasing decision process is the state in which a tourist finds a product or service, evaluates it and decides whether to buy it or

not; it falls under the consumer buying process, which is well described by the complete Engel-Blackwell-Minard (EBM) model of consumer purchase decision-making (Engel *et al.*, 1995). The decision-making process varies depending on the customer, their purchasing power and the context in which they find themselves. The process is divided into five stages, starting with problem identification, followed by information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and action, and finally post-purchase evaluation.

Problem or need recognition in the consumer's decision-making process is the first stage of the model. Arnould *et al.* (2002) define need as the difference between an actual state and a desired state. According to Agwaral (2006), a need can be identified based on internal or external stimuli. Problem recognition arises in a situation in which an individual recognizes the difference between the current and desired states depending on different situations and circumstances, such as the emergence of a purchase idea (Neal *et al.*, 2004). Solomon *et al.* (2014) classify human needs into two distinct categories based on their nature: psychological and functional or physical needs. Psychological needs are the result of consumers' emotional feelings, while functional or physical needs are usually the result of necessities. Identification of needs at different levels often occurs during the process of encountering the product under different circumstances. In other words, a person may not be aware of the need for a particular product until he or she comes across the product as a result of media advertising (Tyagi, 2004). Human needs know no boundaries. Therefore, problem detection is repetitive in nature. When one need of an individual is satisfied, another will arise, and this trend continues repeatedly.

The next stage of the model is information search. Once the need is identified, the consumer is likely to seek additional product-related information before making a direct purchasing decision. However, different people are involved in the search process differently depending on their knowledge of the product, their previous experiences or purchases, or some external information such as feedback from others. Majumdar (2010) divides information sources into four categories: personal, commercial, public, and experiential sources. Personal sources of information can be family members, friends, colleagues, and others. The degree of influence of the source of personal information is greater compared to other sources. Commercial information sources refer to marketing communication messages in various formats. Consumers are usually exposed to sources of commercial information through media advertising, direct marketing, viral marketing, commercial events, etc. Public information sources refer to the mass media in print, television, radio, and digital formats. Another important public source, according to Batra and Kazmi (2012), is consumer rating groups. Experience-based sources of information about products and services refer to the opportunities to examine and use products and services for a specific period of time. According to Furnols *et al.* (2011), the search for information process itself can be divided into two parts: the internal search and the external search. When searching internally, consumers compare the alternatives with their own experiences and memories, depending on their own past experiences and knowledge. On the other hand, the external search ends with larger purchases such as household appliances or gadgets. Winer (2009) argues that as the role of the internet has increased in people's professional and personal lives, more and more people are turning to various resources on the internet when looking for information about product categories or specific brands. In particular, the author highlights the role of online user reviews and

forums in terms of their significant impact on the information-seeking phase in the consumer decision-making process among Internet users. Kahle and Close (2006) highlight colleagues, peers, friends, and family members as other important sources of information. In general, their influence depends on a number of factors, such as the type of relationships, the level of personal influence, and the extent of opinion leadership associated with certain individuals.

The evaluation of alternatives in the consumer decision-making process is the third stage of the model. After the consumer has gathered enough information in the first phase, he begins to compare and evaluate this information in order to make the right choice. In this phase, the consumer analyzes all the information obtained through the search and considers different alternative products and services and compares them according to their needs and desires. Alternatives are typically evaluated against a set of criteria that depend on consumer value preferences. Specifically, consumer value preferences can be based on price, quality, or additional features and capabilities of products and services (Blythe, 1997). Neal et al., (2004) discuss this issue with greater clarity, specifying quality, price, and features as product attributes and indicating the level of importance of each attribute as the most important factor influencing the outcome of the evaluation of alternatives. Furthermore, according to Ha *et al.* (2010), the process of evaluating alternatives can sometimes be difficult, time-consuming, and stressful for a consumer. This is because it is quite difficult to find an ideal product or service that satisfies the needs of the customer as there are numerous factors that hamper the consumer's purchasing decision-making process. Factors such as age, culture, taste, and budget all have an impact on the consumer evaluation process.

The purchase decision and action in the consumer decision-making process is the fourth stage of the model. After completing the information search and evaluation process, the consumer makes the purchase decision, and this stage is considered to be the most important stage of the whole process. At this stage, the consumer makes the decision to make a final purchase as he or she has already considered all the alternatives and has come to a final decision point. There are two components that can intervene between purchase intention and purchase decision, the state of mind of others and unforeseen situational factors. Munthiu (2009) also mentioned that consumers are undoubtedly influenced by blogs and diaries that disseminate their feedback, such as Amazon.com customer reviews, web journals, and publication sheets). For example, a shocking purchase might come that is more urgent than the purchase the buyer was originally authorized to make. Therefore, purchasing propensities and purchase expectations cannot be filled out as absolutely reliable indicators for purchasing behavior.

The final phase in the consumer's decision-making process is the post-purchase evaluation phase. This stage reflects the consumer's experience of purchasing a product or service. This view is further supported by Ofir (2005) who mentions that the consumer's decision-making process is a repetitive action and a good experience is crucial to reduce uncertainty when making the decision to buy the same product or products service will be considered next time. According to Martin and Webb (2009), the perceived performance of products from the customer's perspective can lead to customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction, with a direct and immense impact on the level of customer loyalty. The opinions of colleagues, friends, and family members about product reviews and comparing their own expectations, regardless of their objectivity, tend to affect customer satisfaction (Perrey and Spillecke, 2011; Trehan

and Trehan, 2011). The result is the customer's experience, and this experience is believed to have a direct impact on the consumer's next decision to buy the same product from the same seller. If the consumer is satisfied with the purchase, it is likely that the purchase will be repeated, while the consumer is unlikely to make the decision to buy the same product from the same seller, or not if they have a negative experience with the purchase makes buy the product at all (figure 2.1).

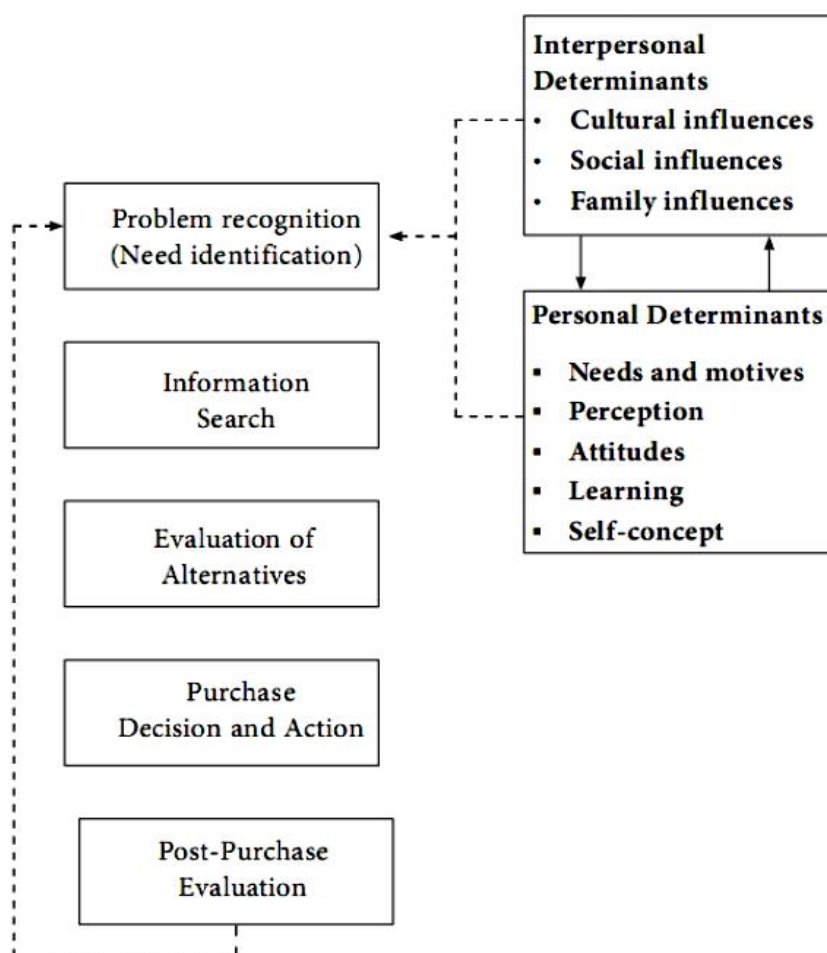


Figure 2.1: Tourist purchasing decision-making process

Source: Blackwell et al., (2001); Karimi, (2013)

2.2 Empirical Review

This section provides an overview of previous studies on research variables to identify existing research gaps.

2.2.1 Customer preference management and understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process

Kütük (2016) examined the role of customer preference management through social media platforms in understanding tourist purchasing decisions. The results show that social media networking sites are very important in understanding the consumer decision-making process, as consumers can make a decision about their travel preferences or change their choice after reading the entire comments on social media platforms. With efficient tools for managing customer preferences, the company is constantly informed about customer needs. The company can understand the internal as well as social determinants that influence tourist expectations, such as personality, attitude, readiness, cultural climate, basic needs and requirements, and values. Effective customer preference management allows the employee to be aware of the changes and factors influencing tourist purchasing decisions, such as technological advances, rising standards of living, changing values and norms, and geographic diversity.

From the perspectives of Kaushik & Xu (2016) and Hashem (2020), when managing customer preferences, the company essentially tries to collect as much data as possible about the customer. It seems that the company creates its own customer database based on its customers' interests and knowledge through data collection, so it can be considered as a kind of data and information collection for a target audience. As a result, a tour operator can use customer preference management tools to search

through any data they want about their customers' insights, rate them, and understand their purchasing decision-making process.

2.2.2 Internal customer-business alignment and understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process

Shah *et al.* (2006) examined the potential of a customer-centric organizational culture for customer loyalty. The results show that internal customer-business alignment improves visitor convenience, creates more potential value, and increases customer loyalty as well as consumer repurchase and repeat purchase rates, all of which impact understanding of the tourism purchasing decision-making process at all organizational levels. According to Smith & Bolton (1998) and Gallouj (2002), internal integration helps a company achieve better communication and information integration and the development of new products and services. Internal integration largely ensures effective use of customer knowledge created to target current customers and allows customers to tailor and personalize the service to their own needs and preferences through customer-centric business collaboration on business strategy and internal resource management. customer loyalty According to Griffin (1997) and Chang & Chen (2009), customer loyalty is linked to the customer's purchasing decision, and when consumers experience a quality customer interface, it helps improve their loyalty to the company and their consumer buyback and recurring purchase rates.

2.2.3 External customer-business alignment and understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process

The studies by Berger *et al.* (2005) and Rinder & Moorman (2003) examined the impact of business external integration on customer satisfaction. Findings show that external integration emphasizes the importance of supply chain alignment and

collaboration (including co-design) in ensuring customer satisfaction. Lau *et al.* (2010) rather verify that external integration ensures that customer knowledge is used effectively to achieve current goals and allows customers to tailor and personalize the service to their own needs and preferences by providing information about tourist satisfaction requirements, sharing tourist satisfaction objectives and tourist satisfaction measurement. The joint development of strategies, practices, procedures, and behaviors between companies and their main suppliers ensures easy management to meet customer expectations. According to Gupta and Stewart (1996), customer satisfaction is related to the customer's purchasing decision. The level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is based on past experiences, perceptions, and attitudes that influence the customer's purchasing decision. Understanding customer purchasing decisions, service, and technology are three key factors that impact customer satisfaction. Therefore, it is possible for a business to provide positive, consistent customer experiences and build genuine customer loyalty by leveraging these factors.

2.3 Theoretical Review

This research was guided by Kohli & Jaworskis' (1990) market-oriented theory on the concept of the customer-centric approach, as well as the Engel-Blackwell-Minard (EBM) model of consumer purchase decision-making (Engel *et al.*, 1995) on the concept of the tourist purchasing decision process

2.3.1 Market Oriented Theory

The concept of marketing, the philosophical basis of a market orientation introduced by Kohli and Jaworski (1993), is a new direction to extend marketing from the 1990s to the present day to focus on identifying and meeting customer needs or desires. According to Kohli & Jaworski (1990), it is the company-wide generation of market

information related to current and future customer needs, the dissemination of the information across departments, and the company-wide response to it (Figure 2.2)



Figure 2.1: Market Oriented Theory

Source: Kohli and Jaworski (1990)

The theory, through its three important ways of responding to market demands: starting with a wide generation of market intelligence related to current and future customer needs (intelligence generation), then disseminating the information across departments (intelligence dissemination), and finally to the organization-wide responsiveness to it (Intelligence Responsiveness), provides a theoretical basis for the customer-centric approach and its components as a viable solution for tour operators to thoroughly understand the tourist purchasing decision-making process in order to create more memorable experiences (Sheth *et al.*, 2000).

However, the customer-centric approach goes beyond market orientation (Gummesson, 2008; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000). The approach focuses more on the management of individual customer preferences and the nature of dialogic contact

(Ramani & Kumar, 2008; Shah *et al.*, 2006), while the market orientation focuses more on information exchange within functions (Narver & Slater, 1990). Additionally, the approach introduces an external integration that is largely absent from early definitions of market orientation. While market orientation emphasizes the importance of companies that respond to market demands (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990), the customer-centric approach emphasizes the importance of developing customer intimacy (Antikainen *et al.*, 2011; Dekel *et al.*, 2007; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000), that is, a collaborative dialogue to jointly create customer experiences that are valuable for both the company and the customer. The customer-centric approach thus goes beyond market orientation; it applies the principles of customer centricity and interfunctional coordination (Narver & Slater, 1990) in a more customer-centric and personalized way, and introduces co-creation and supply chain integration as innovative constituent elements.

2.3.2 Engel-Blackwell-Minard (EBM) Model

Engel-Blackwell-Minard (EBM) model of consumer purchase decision-making (Engel *et al.*, 1995) was originally referred to Engel-Blackwell-Kollat (EKB) model and put forth by Engel, Blackwell and Kollat (1968). The model went through certain revisions and later was renamed as Engel-Blackwell-Miniard (EBM) to recognize the influence of another colleague Miniard. The elements of the model share a close proximity with the Howard-Sheth model of buyer behavior. However, EBM differs from the Howard-Sheth model in terms of structure of presentation and the relative association between various elements. The model is considered to be one of the most popular models, depicting the consumer's decision-making process in five steps: problem identification stage (need identification); information search phase;

evaluation of the alternative phase; purchase decision and action phase; and post-purchase evaluation phase.

These decisions are influenced by two main factors. On the one hand, stimuli in connection with memories of previous experiences are received and processed by the consumer, on the other hand external variables in the form of environmental influences or individual differences. Identified environmental influences include: culture; social class; personal influence; family and situation. While the individual influences include: consumer resource; motivation and commitment; Knowledge; Settings; Personality; Values and lifestyle (Blackwell *et al.* 2001). The EBM model depicts the consumer as a logical decision maker moving through a linear process (Figure 2.3).

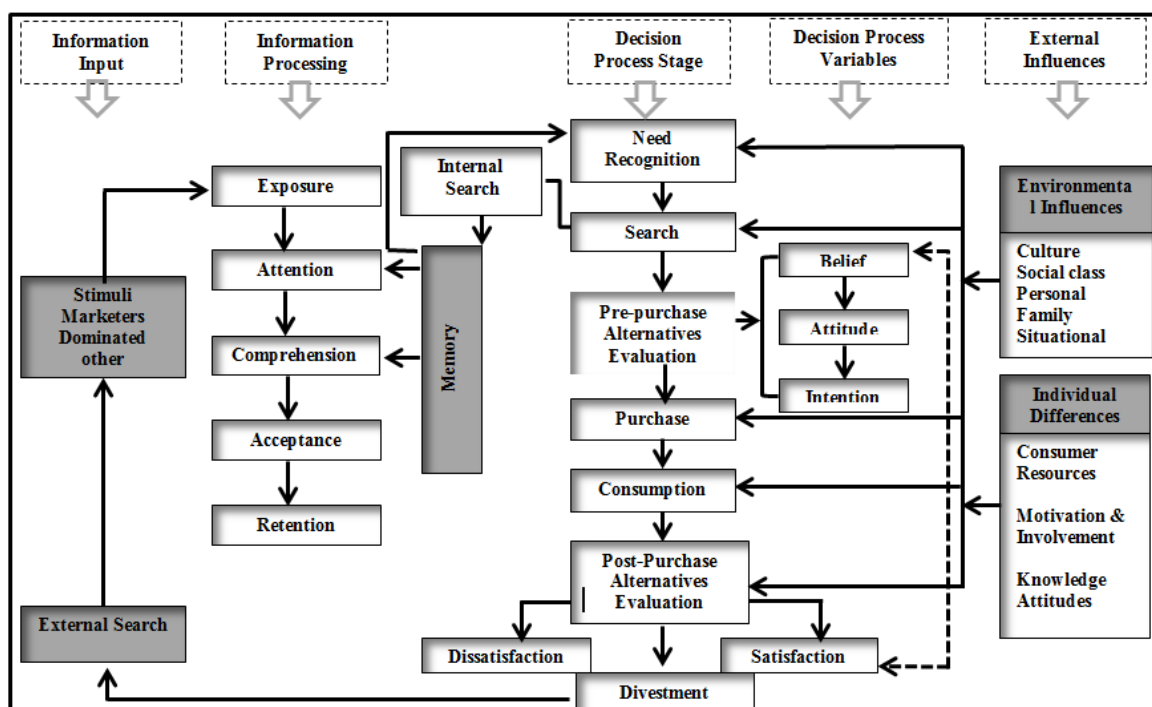


Figure 2.2: The Engel-Blackwell-Minard (EBM) model of consumer purchase decision-making

Source: (Engel et al.,1995)

In this study, the model through the five decision-making stages contributes significantly to an understanding of how tourists behave when making their decisions to purchase or use tourism products before, during, and after consumption. This includes various components and interactions between variables, including information processing, inputs, and external influences on the decision process. Furthermore, Blackwell *et al.* (2006) highlight the argument why this model is more precise and clear compared to the other similar models, because this model's core focus is on motivational factors, which helps the user to understand the reasons behind the purchasing decision easily.

2.4 Research Gaps

Improving the positive tourist experience has been one of the most important factors in the success of a tour operator. The best way is to have a thorough understanding of how tourists behave when making decisions about purchasing or using tourism products to meet their needs and expectations. A review of the empirical literature on the customer-centric approach describes it as the best business strategy for successfully understanding and managing customer preferences before, during, and after consumption. Nevertheless, there are some research gaps in the existing studies that make it necessary to carry out this study.

The studies on the customer-centric approach from different perspectives: customer-centric approach practices (Wagner and Majchrzak 2007), contextual factors facilitating the implementation of the customer-centric approach (Sheth *et al.* 2000; Wind and Rangaswamy 2001), required levers to achieve the customer-centric approach in an organization (Galbraith 2002, 2011), and the forerunners of customer-centricity in companies or the characteristics of companies preferring customer-

centricity (Lamberti 2013) reveal gaps in terms of its impact on tour operators' understanding of tourism decision-making processes. Hashem's (2020) study only highlights the impact of customer preference management on customers' purchasing decision-making process.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The aim of the study was to examine the influence of the customer-centric approach on tour operators' understanding of tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania. Particularly, (i) to assess the influence of customer preference management on tour operators' understanding of tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania; (ii) to assess the influence of internal customer-business alignment on tour operators' understanding of tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania; and (iii) to assess the influence of external customer-business alignment on tour operators' understanding of tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania.

The relationship between the customer-centric approach and the tourist purchasing decision-making process is explained using a conceptual framework (Figure 2.4). The independent variable (IV) for this study was the customer-centric approach, while the dependent variable (DV) was the tourist purchasing decision-making process. The framework was based on some of the researchers' ideas on customer centricity (Niininen, 2006; Lamberti, 2013); the purchase decision process (Karimi, 2013; Engel *et al.*, 1995); and related literature. This was therefore an extension of the already existing body of knowledge, which puts the focus on the approach as a viable solution to understand the tourism purchasing decision process in order to create a positive tourism experience.

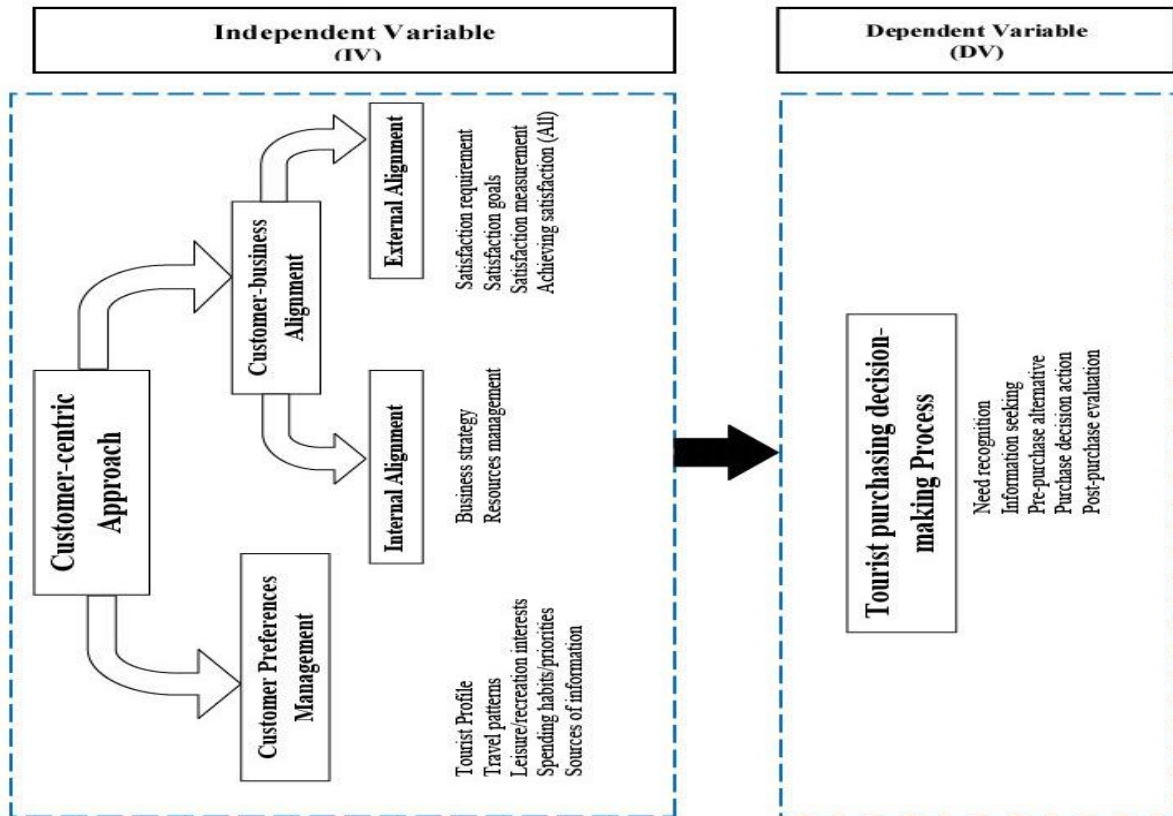


Figure 2.4: Conceptual Framework depicting influence of customer-centric approach on understanding the tourist purchasing decision-making process

Source: Research Data (2022)

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter outlines the study area and introduces the methodology used in the study. Research design, demographics, sample size and methodology, data collection tools and methodology, reliability and validity, data analysis and presentation, and ethical considerations are covered.

3.1 Research Design

A research design can be defined as the scheme, sketch, or plan used to generate answers to research problems (Orodho, 2005). The choice of a research design was determined by the research purpose, the categories of data needed the data sources, and the cost Mohan (2004). The study employed a descriptive and explanatory research design. The design helped the researcher to examine the relationship between the variables studied: customer-centric approach (independent variable) and the tourist purchasing decision-making process (dependent variable). The descriptive research design, according to Kothari & Garg (2014), guides the study on which elements to measure in order to discover causes for the current situation of the phenomenon under study.

The research philosophy applied was positivist as the study attempted to predict the influence of the customer-centric approach on tour operators 'understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process through quantifiable observations and reasons leading to statistical analysis. Positivism holds that only factual knowledge gained through observation, including measurement, can be trusted (Ryan, 2018). A

cross-sectional design was also used as the data were all collected at one point in time, the design allowed the researcher to analyze, compare and assess the samples.

3.2 Study Area

3.2.1 Location

Arusha is one of Tanzania's 31 administrative regions and is located in the north of the country. The capital is the largest city, Arusha, which is located at 3 23 12.9300 S and 36 40 58.7820 E. The region is bordered by Kajiado and Narok counties in Kenya to the north; the Kilimanjaro region to the east; the Manyara and Singida regions to the south; and the Mara and Simiyu regions to the west. Major cities that play a large role in tourism include Monduli, Namanga, Longido, and Loliondo to the north; Mto wa Mbu and Karatu to the west; and Usa River to the east. (Figure 3.1)

The choice for the study was made due to the fact that the city of Arusha is a global tourist destination and serves as a hub for the safari circuit in northern Tanzania. The Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Arusha National Park, the Loliondo Game Controlled Area and part of Lake Manyara National Park are among the most important protected areas in the northern tourism circuit. The remains of a 600-year-old stone structure lie just off the gravel road between Mto wa Mbu and Lake Natron. Arusha is one of the most developed areas in Tanzania with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.721 (Chacha *et al.*, 2018).

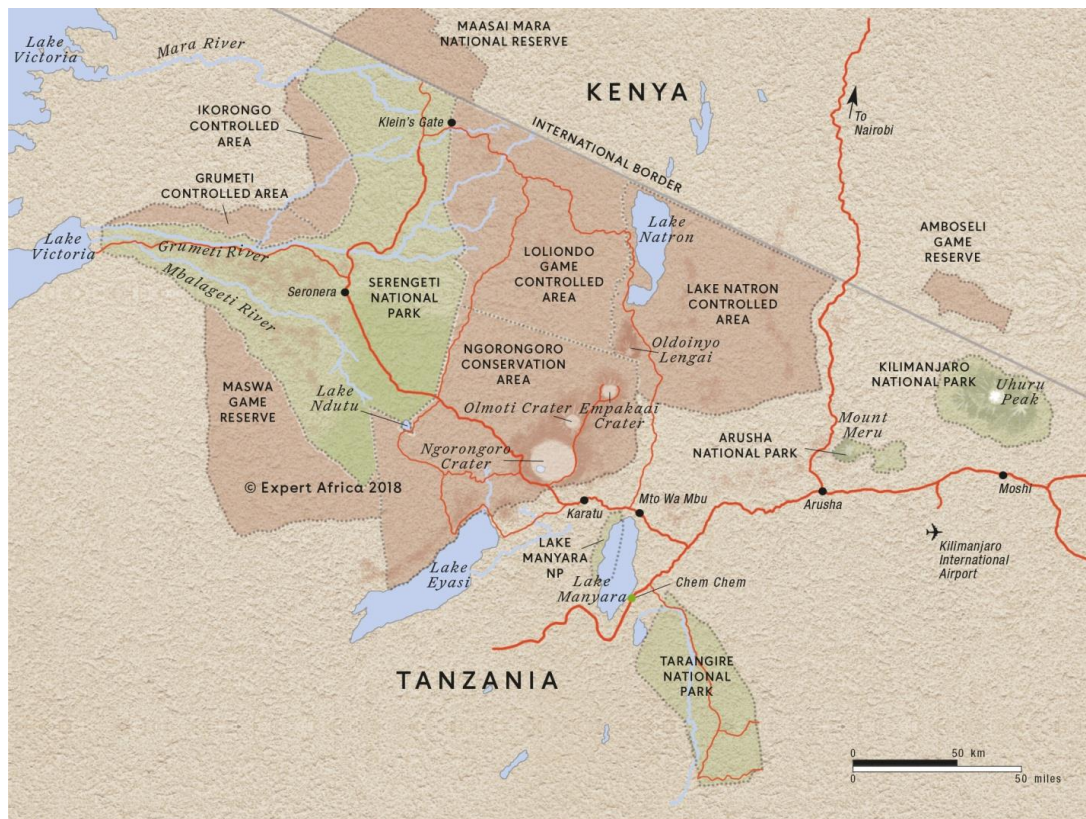


Plate 3.1: A map showing Arusha as a tourist hub on Tanzania's Northern Circuit

Source: Chacha *et al.*, 2018

3.2.2 Climate

Arusha's elevation of 1,400 meters (4,600 feet) on Mount Meru's southern slopes keeps temperatures low and humidity in check despite its proximity to the equator. Cool, dry air prevails for most of the year. The average annual high temperature is around 25 °C or 77 °F, with a temperature range of 10 to 30 °C (50 to 86 °F). It has distinct wet and dry seasons and is bounded on the east by the Indian Ocean, which is only a few hundred miles away. It has a subtropical highland climate according to the Kppen climate classification system (Cwb). The climate in the areas south and west of Arusha is known as tropical savannah (Aw) see Table 3.1

Table 3.1: Climate data for Arusha

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Average high	28	28	27	25	22	21	20	22	24	26	27	27	25
°C (°F)	(82)	(82)	(81)	(77)	(72)	(70)	(68)	(72)	(75)	(79)	(81)	(81)	(77)
Daily mean °C	19	19	19	19	16	14	14	15	16	18	18	18	17
(°F)	(66)	(66)	(66)	(66)	(61)	(57)	(57)	(59)	(61)	(64)	(64)	(64)	(63)
Average low	10	10	11	13	11	8	9	8	8	10	10	10	10
°C (°F)	(50)	(50)	(52)	(55)	(52)	(46)	(48)	(46)	(46)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Average rainfall mm	50	80	170	360	210	30	10	10	20	30	110	100	1,180
(inches)	(2.0)	(3.1)	(6.7)	(14.2)	(8.3)	(1.2)	(0.4)	(0.4)	(0.8)	(1.2)	(4.3)	(3.9)	(46.5)

Source: Rowhan et al; 2011

Since records began in 2000, the highest temperature has been 39 degrees Celsius (102.2 degrees Fahrenheit). The lowest temperature ever recorded was 7 degrees Celsius (44.6 degrees Fahrenheit). Between November and March, Arusha has an average of 29.8 days a year with temperatures above 32 C (89.6 F). The average annual rainfall in Arusha is 1,180 millimeters (46.46 in), with most of the rain falling between March and May. Due to the influence of Mt. Meru, whose rain shadow extends to the southeast side of the mountain, areas immediately north and northeast of Arusha may experience more rain and cooler temperatures.

3.2.3 Topography

The Arusha region has the most craters and extinct volcanoes. The Monduli Mountains, Loolmalasin Mountain, Longido Mountain, and Olduvai Gorge are among the other geographical features. The Great Rift Valley runs north-south through the heart of the area. North of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area is the active volcano Oldonyo Lengai (Maasai Mountain of God). The region's elevation varies widely, but most is between 900 and 1,600 meters (3,000 and 5,200 ft). The country's capital, Arusha, lies at the southern foot of Mount Meru. Mount Meru is the second highest mountain in Tanzania after Kilimanjaro, reaching a height of 4,655 meters (15,272 ft) (Laramee & Davis, 2013).

The rainfall pattern in Arusha and the northern highlands of Tanzania is bimodal with two rainy seasons. Many plants are sown twice a year. Due to the influence of Mt. Meru, the long March-May Masika rains are more reliable in Arusha than in the surrounding areas. The short Vuli rains, which typically occur in November and December, are less consistent. From June to October is the dry Kiangazi season. Farmers grow bananas, coffee, cabbage, potatoes, carrots, leafy greens, and other vegetables at higher elevations north and northeast of the city. Corn, beans, and wheat are the main crops grown in the Northwest, West, Southwest, South, and Southeast. The region has a thriving horticultural industry, with many companies growing flowers for export to Europe. (Rowhan *et al.*, 2011).

3.2.4 Access

Roads: The town of Arusha can be reached by a paved road (82 km) running east-west via the A23 from the town of Moshi, near Kilimanjaro International Airport. This trail ends in the heart of Arusha where it joins the A-104 road. From Arusha, the

A-104 travels north, west of Mount Meru, to Longido and Namanga on the Kenyan border before continuing on to Nairobi. The A-104 runs west past Monduli until it meets the B-144 road at Makuyuni, which leads to Mto wa Mbu and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. The A-104 then turns south-east of Lake Manyara before heading to Babati and Dodoma. Most overland trips are made by bus from Arusha. Privately owned and privately operated dala-dalas (minibuses) are used around the city and smaller towns. (Gakusi *et al.*, 2015).

Waterways: There are no navigable rivers in the area, and it is landlocked. The larger lakes of the Rift Valley are not used for transportation. Lake Eyasi, Lake Natron, Lake Duluti, Lake Empakaai, and the Momella Lakes are all in this area.

Airports: Kilimanjaro International Airport, located in Hai District of Kilimanjaro Region, serves the Arusha Region. Airkenya Express, Air Uganda, Condor, Edelweiss Air, Ethiopian Airlines, Kenya Airways, KLM, Precision Air, Qatar Airways, RwandAir, Safarilink Aviation, and Turkish Airlines are the country's twelve international carriers. Small, medium, and personal planes fly from Arusha Airport (Kisongo Airport) to famous tourist destinations such as Serengeti National Park, Seronera, Ndutu, and even Zanzibar. AMREF, Auric Air, Coastal Air, Flying Doctors, Grumeti Air, Other Personal Aircraft, Precision Air, and TFC are among the planes that use Kisongo Airport, (Gakusi *et al.*, 2015).

3.2.5 Culture and cuisine

Nyama choma, a northern Tanzanian barbecue, is a common dish among some communities in the Arusha region, particularly among the Maasai. (Macha, 2011) Nyama Choma is best enjoyed with a side of fries, pili pili sauce and a cold local beer or soda.

3.2.6 Economic activities

The economy of the Arusha region is mainly based on agriculture and livestock. Both commercial and smallholder agriculture are practiced in the region. Other industries include manufacturing, tourism, and mining (which are all growing rapidly). The Arusha region has robust hospitality attractions, international conference facilities, financial institutions, and better communication and transportation networks.

3.3 Target Population

Population refers to a whole group of people or elements that have at least one thing in common. It also relates to the larger group from which the sample is drawn (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The target group of this study included 446 licensed tour operating companies in Arusha, Tanzania (MNRT, 2018). The selection of tour operating companies as the target population based on the fact that tour operators work closely with tourists and visitors, they are the managers of tourist preference databases and are therefore well-informed about the tourist purchasing decision-making process.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

According to Kothari & Garg (2014) a sample is a subset of a population used to represent the entire group. When researching, it is difficult to interview every member of a particular group because the number of people being researched is too large. A sample is a collection of entities chosen from the universe to represent it. The sample frame for this study was 210 selected tour operators based in Arusha. The sample size was determined using the Yamane's formula (1967) as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad (1)$$

Where;

n = sample size,

N = population size,

e = level of precision at 0.05 for CI at 95%

The arrival to the sample size was as follows:

$$\frac{446}{1 + 446(0.05 * 0.05)^2} \quad (2)$$

$$n = 210$$

As a result, the sample size of the study was 210 tour operators, one sales/marketing person from each company, totaling 210 respondents. The sample size was selected from the population using a simple random sampling technique. The choice of sampling method was taken into account as each company had an equal chance of being selected.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

Questionnaires were used to obtain primary data for this study. According to Orodho (2005), the questionnaire is an instrument for collecting data that allows measurement for or against a specific position. The survey questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section one of the survey asked questions about the demographics of the respondents. The research variables were the subject of the second part of the questionnaire. Closed-ended questions were included in the surveys, which were organized using a five-point Likert scale. The use of questionnaires is justified because they are easy to

understand and take less time to complete, allowing the researcher to ask multiple survey questions and collect data from a pool of tour operators and analyze the data to get numerical results.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher received university clearance followed by the study area permit to collect data for the study. The survey was conducted with 210 tour operators in Arusha from April to June 2019 between 10am and 4pm. Participants had 15 minutes to complete the survey. To increase the response rate, the drop-and-pick-later strategy was mostly used.

3.7 Reliability and validity of the research instrument

3.7.1 Reliability test of the research instrument

Reliability is a measure of the extent to which research produces consistent results or data after repeated attempts (Orodho, 2005). The reliability of an instrument depends on its ability to achieve the same score over repeated use. Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was employed in this study where the recommended reliability cut-off value of 0.7 was adopted. For a research instrument to be dependable, its Cronbach alpha value must be at least 0.7 or greater.

3.7.2 Validity test of the Research instrument

A pre-test study was conducted with two (2) tour operating companies in Morogoro (Tamiwai Adventure Tours and Chilunga Cultural Tourism Company) in Morogoro Municipality to verify the validity of the data collection tool. Questions found to be ambiguous or irrelevant were modified. To test the validity of the information provided by destination participants, a triangulation was conducted with 5 tourism regulators; Headquarters of Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), Tanzania Tourist

Board (TTB), Tanzania Association of Tour Operators (TATO), Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA), and Wildlife Division (WD)-Office of Tourism Department).

3.8 Measurement of Variables

Table 3.2 below summarizes the study variables and their measurements.

Table 3.2: Measurement of Variables

Variable	Type of Variable	Indicators	Source	Measurement scale
Tourist purchasing decision-making process	Predicted	Need recognition Information search Pre-purchase evaluation of alternative Purchase decision action Post-purchase evaluation	Engel <i>et al.</i> (1995) Karimi (2013) Blackwell <i>et al.</i> (2001)	Ordinal
Customer Preference Management	Predictor	Tourist profile Travel patterns Leisure/recreation interests Spending habits/priorities Sources of information	Kütük (2016) Sarlak and Fard (2009) Kaushik and Xu (2016) Hashem (2020)	Ordinal
Internal Customer-business Alignment	Predictor	Business strategy Resources management	Smith & Bolton (1998) Griffin (1997) Gallouj (2002) Shah <i>et al.</i> (2006) Chang & Chen (2009).	Ordinal
External Customer-business Alignment	Predictor	Satisfaction requirement Satisfaction goals Satisfaction measurement Achieving satisfaction (All)	Berger <i>et al.</i> (2005) Rinder and Moorman (2003) Lau <i>et al.</i> 2010	Ordinal

Source: Research Data (2022)

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

The study examined the impact of the customer-centric approach on understanding the tourist purchasing decision-making process at selected tour operators in Arusha. The study specifically aimed to examine the components of the approach: customer preference management and customer business alignment and their impact on understanding the tourism purchasing decision-making process.

Data from the questionnaires were checked for completeness before being coded, tabulated, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. To get a clear understanding of the population, descriptive statistics such as percentage, frequency, mean, and standard deviation are developed.

Because study variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale, inferential statistics such as Spearman rank correlation and ordinal logistic regression analyzes were used to test the relationship between study variables, to determine the relationship between an ordinal dependent variable (tourism purchasing decision-making process) and an ordinal independent variable (customer-centric approach) using a Generalized Ordered Logit Regression model (gologit2) estimates as follows:.

$$P(Y_i > j) = g(X\beta_j) = \frac{\exp(\alpha_j + X_i\beta_j)}{1 + \{\exp(\alpha_j + X_i\beta_j)\}}, \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, M - 1$$

Where:

α_j - The intercepts or cut-points

$\beta_{1j}, \beta_{2j}, \dots, \beta_{pj}$ - Logit coefficients.

Y - Dependent variable (tourist purchasing decision-making process)

X_1 - Customer preference management

X_2 - Internal customer-business alignment

X₃ – External customer-business alignment

M - The number of categories of the ordinal dependent variable

The significance test of the relationship between the customer-centric approach (independent variable) and the tourist purchase decision-making process (dependent variable) was based on the interpretation of the significant p-value output. The interpretation was that if the p-value was less than the critical value of 0.05, the null hypothesis was concluded to be significant.

3.9.1 Regression Assumptions

The following assumptions were evaluated before to running the regression analysis to guarantee that the results were correct and free of bias.

Type of measurement of variables: the dependent variable should be ordered while; one or more of the independent variables should be continuous, categorical, or ordinal. All study variables were ordinal, measured on a five-point Likert scale:

1. Strongly Disagree (SD)
2. Disagree (D)
3. Neutral (N)
4. Agree (A)
5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Test of Normality: The model fits the variables with data that violate the assumption of normality. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to determine whether the data were normal or not. The test is preferred when the number of observations is less than 2000. The results showed that the data variables were statistically significant but not normally distributed

Test of Multi-collinearity: there should be no multicollinearity. Multicollinearity occurs when the independent variables have a strong correlation that affects the importance of each variable. In this study, the variance inflation factor was used to check for multicollinearity (VIF). None of the VIF values were greater than 5, the values ranged from 1.175 to 1.365. Following the general rule of thumb for interpreting VIFs, a value of 1 indicates that there is no correlation between a particular predictor variable and other predictor variables in the model. Therefore, multicollinearity is not a problem in the regression model

Test of Parallel lines/Proportional odds: The model relaxes the proportional odds assumption by allowing the effect of each explanatory variable to vary across different intersections of the ordinal outcome variables without restructuring the data. Basically, this assumption means that the relationship between each pair of result sets need not necessarily be the same. Parallel line test results violated proportional odds assumptions ($p=0.000$)

3.10 Ethical Considerations

After receiving a data collection permit from Moi University, Kenya, the researcher release letter was obtained by the Sokoine University Office of Agriculture on behalf of the Government of Tanzania and the Tanzania Science and Technology Commission and submitted to the Arusha Regional Administrative Secretary for data collection from the tour operators. The following ethical considerations were taken into account when collecting the data:

Informed Consent

All the respondents were fully informed about the procedures involved in research to allow them to understand the implications of participation and to reach a fully informed, considered and freely given decision about whether or not to do so, without the exercise of any pressure or coercion.

Voluntary Participation

All respondents voluntarily participated in the study; nobody was forced to take part in the research. Participants were free to withdraw their participation at any time without adversely affecting their participation in future services.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All participants were protected from harm, both physically and psychologically, by maintaining their confidentiality and anonymity, i.e., the information given will not be made available to anyone not directly involved in the study, and the participant will remain so throughout the study and any publication of results from this study anonymously.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

The data analysis, conclusions and interpretation are all covered in this chapter. Tables and graphs are used to present the results. The data examined were organized into themes that corresponded to the study objectives

4.2 Response Rate

Out of 210 questionnaires, 185 were returned. The response rate results are as shown on the table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Returned	185	88%
Unreturned	25	12%
Total	210	100%

Source: Research Data (2022)

A total of 185 forms were filled out and returned. As shown in Table 4.1, the success rate was 88% since a 60% response rate is acceptable in survey studies (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Based on this statement, this response rate was very good and qualifies the analyzed data as reliable and valid.

4.3 Reliability Results

A reliability test was performed using Cronbach's alpha with a target reliability alpha of 0.7 to assess the internal consistency of the variables as measured using the five Likert scale. The reliability coefficients for each Likert-scaled item were calculated. The result showed a value of 0.873 as reliability for all items; for each scale it

appeared to range from 0.8 to 0.83 as shown in Table 4.2 below. This indicates that the questionnaire items were reliable.

Table 4.2: Reliability Test

Scale	Reliability
Customer preference management	0.826
Internal customer-business alignment	0.803
External customer-business alignment	0.826

Source: Research Data (2022)

4.4 Demographic results

The data in Table 4.3 show that males, with a frequency of 114, made up more than half of the respondents (62%; n=185), compared to females, who made up 38% of the sample, with a frequency of 71. The highest percentage appears to be 47%, with companies having an operating life of 7 to 12 years, while the lowest percentage is 9%, with companies operating for less than 3 years. Finally, Tanzanian-owned companies appeared to be the most common, accounting for 60% of the total sample, followed by foreign-owned companies at 28%, and international joint-venture companies at the remaining 12%.

Table 4.3: Demographic profile of the respondent

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	114
	Female	71
	Total	185
Duration of company operations	<3 years	16
	4 - 6 years	46
	7 - 12 years	88
	13+	35
	Total	185
Ownership of the company	Tanzania	111
	Foreign	52
	International Joint venture	22
	Total	185

Source: Research Data (2022)

4.5 Descriptive Statistics

In this section, the descriptive analysis is presented for both the independent (customer-centric approach) and the dependent (tourism purchase decision-making process) variables. A Likert scale was used with the following options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Percentages, mean values and standard deviations were used to present the results

4.5.1 Customer preference management

The results presented in Table 4.4 below show that 44.3% of respondents agreed that collecting and managing insights into tourist profiles helps uncover tourist needs and expectations. Additionally, 67.6% of respondents agreed that collecting and managing tourist insights about travel patterns helps uncover tourist needs and expectations. 80.5% of respondents agreed that collecting and managing tourist insights about leisure and recreation interests helps uncover tourist needs and expectations, while 64.8% of respondents agreed that collecting and managing tourist insights about spending habits and priorities reflect the needs and expectations of tourists. In addition, the results showed that 68.6% of respondents agreed with the claim that collecting and managing tourist insights about how they receive information helps uncover tourist needs and expectations.

Collection and managing tourism insights about leisure and recreational interests scored the highest mean ($M = 4.11$; $SD = 0.702$) in identifying tourist needs and expectations, followed by managing customer preferences related to spending habits and priorities ($M = 3.86$; $SD = 0.743$) and then in relation to travel patterns ($M = 3.7$; $SD = 0.506$), how they obtain their information ($M = 3.7$; $SD = 0.493$) and finally to tourist profile insights ($M = 3.54$; $SD = 0.667$).

Table 4.4: Descriptive Results for Customer Preference Management

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std Dev
Collecting and managing tourist profile insights uncovers tourist needs and expectations	-	-	55.7%	34.6%	9.7%	3.54	0.667
Collecting and managing tourist insights on travel patterns uncovers tourist needs and expectations	-	-	32.4%	65.4%	2.2%	3.70	0.506
Collecting and managing tourist insights on leisure/recreation interests uncovers tourist needs and expectations	-	-	19.5%	49.7%	30.8%	4.11	0.702
Collecting and managing tourist insights on spending habits and priorities uncovers tourist needs and expectations	-	-	35.1%	43.2%	21.6%	3.86	0.743
Collecting and managing tourists insights on how they obtain their information uncovers tourist needs and expectations	-	-	31.4%	67.0%	1.6%	3.70	.493

Source: Research Data (2022)

These results confirmed those of Kütük (2016); Naidu & Mashanda (2017) and Fader (2020) who reasoned that when a company uses a customer preference management approach it is simply trying to collect as much information as possible about the consumer and builds its own customer database based on the interests and the Build

knowledge about its consumers. With efficient tools for managing customer preferences, the company is constantly informed about customer needs.

4.5.2 Internal Customer-business alignment

The results presented in Table 4.5 below show that 87% of respondents agreed that their company's business strategy is focused on tourist satisfaction. In addition, 87.5% of respondents agreed that their company's internal resource management is focused on tourist satisfaction.

The mean score results show that the travel companies' business strategy ($M = 4.51$; $SD = 0.716$) and internal resource management decisions ($M = 4.43$; $SD = 0.704$) are effectively structured around tourist satisfaction, as table 4.5 shows.

Table 4.5: Descriptive Results for Internal customer-business alignment

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std Dev
Company's business strategy is structured around tourist satisfaction	-	-	13%	23.2%	63.8%	4.51	0.716
Company's internal resource management decisions is designed around tourist satisfaction	-	-	12.4%	32.4%	55.1%	4.43	0.704

Source: Research Data (2022)

These findings corroborated those of Middleton *et al.* (2009) that the travel and tourism industry has always been more customer-centric than any other business sector, as it is the most important feature in developing a truly "digital-native" brand, quite in line with However, it was noted that putting a customer-centric marketing

plan in place is challenging, especially for businesses that have already established a marketing culture.

4.5.3 External customer-business alignment

The results presented in Table 4.6 below show that only 7.6% of respondents agreed that their companies work with key external actors on tourist satisfaction requirements. In addition, 55.1% of respondents agreed that their companies work with key external stakeholders in relation to tourist satisfaction goals. Furthermore, 64.3% of respondents agreed that their companies partner with key external players to measure tourist satisfaction, while 72.5% of respondents agreed that their companies work with key external players to jointly measure tourist satisfaction reach.

The mean score results showed that working with external key stakeholders to achieve overall tourist satisfaction occupied the highest attribute ($M=4.04$; $SD=0.769$), followed by measuring tourist satisfaction ($M=3.83$; $SD = 0.717$) and sharing information about tourist satisfaction goals ($M = 3.73$; $SD = 0.746$) and tourist satisfaction requirements ($M = 2.55$; $SD = 0.633$)

Table 4.6: Descriptive Results for External customer-business alignment

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std Dev
Company integrates with key external players on tourist satisfaction requirement	-	52.4%	40%	7.6%	-	2.55	0.633
Company integrates with key external players on tourist satisfaction goals	-	-	44.9%	37.3%	17.8%	3.73	0.746
Company integrates with key external players on tourist satisfaction measurement	-	-	35.7%	45.9%	18.4%	3.83	0.717
Company integrates with key external players on achieving tourist satisfaction collectively	-	-	27.6%	41.1%	31.4%	4.04	0.769

Source: Research Data (2022)

These results confirmed those of Gupta and Stewart (1996). Lau *et al.* (2010) and Wagner (2003); Through external integration around customer satisfaction, it is possible for a company to create pleasant, consistent customer experiences and build genuine customer loyalty, thereby influencing customer purchase intentions. However, the results show that transparency and access to information related to tourism satisfaction requirements guaranteed by external integration are insufficient. This is because the tour operator business is highly competitive and its strength lies in the confidentiality of internal business operations in terms of tourist satisfaction.

Key external actors in Tanzania with significant influence on tour operators include: Tourism Regulators, Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), Tanzania Tourist Board

(TTB), Tanzania Association of Tour Operators (TATO), Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA), Wildlife Division (WD), Tourism Division Office, Hotel Association of Tanzania (HAT), Tanzania Air Operators Association (TAOA), Tanzania Forest Services Agency, and Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA).

4.5.4 Understanding the tourist purchasing decision-making process

The results presented in Table 4.7 below show that 78.9% of the respondents seemed to have a general understanding of the tourist need recognition stage. In addition, 74.6% of respondents seemed to have a general understanding of the tourist information search phase. In addition, 46.4% of respondents seemed to have a general understanding of how tourists evaluate alternatives before making a purchase. In addition, only 29.2% of respondents had a general understanding of tourists' purchase decision and action stages, while 20% of respondents appeared to have a general understanding of tourists' post-purchase evaluation stages.

The mean score results showed that the majority appeared to have a general understanding of the tourist's need recognition stage ($M = 4.17$; $SD = 0.753$), followed by the tourist's information search stage ($M = 3.92$; $SD = 0.65$), the tourist's pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives stage ($M = 3.55$; $SD = 0.65$), the tourist's purchase decision stage ($M = 3.34$; $SD = 0.569$) and the tourist's post purchase evaluation stage ($M = 2.86$; $SD = 0.721$).

Table 4.7: Descriptive Results for Understanding the Tourist purchasing decision-making process

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std Dev
General understanding of tourist's need recognition stage	-	-	21.1%	40.5%	38.4%	4.17	0.753
General understanding of tourist's information search stage	-	-	25.4%	57.3%	17.3%	3.92	0.650
General understanding of tourist's pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives stage	-	-	53.5%	37.8%	8.6%	3.55	0.650
General understanding of tourist's purchasing decision and action stage	-	-	70.8%	24.3%	4.9%	3.34	0.569
General understanding of tourist's post-purchase evaluation stage	-	33.5%	46.5%	20%	-	2.86	0.721

Source: Research Data (2022)

These results confirmed those of Kaushik & Xu (2016) and Hashem (2020). By effectively collecting and managing tourism insights at an enterprise-wide level through customer preference management technologies, it enables the employee to understand and appreciate changes and elements that influence the tourist purchasing decision-making process, such as attitudes and conventions as well as geographic diversity. The company can capture both the internal and social elements that influence tourist expectations, such as personality, attitude, readiness, cultural climate, basic needs and requirements, and values.

4.6 Diagnostic Tests

This section contains the results of the diagnostic tests.

4.6.1 Normality Test

Normality of data was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test as the test is preferred when the number of observations is fewer than 2000. Results are shown in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Tests of Normality

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Customer Preference Management	.924	185	.000
Internal Customer-Business Alignment	.736	185	.000
External Customer-Business Alignment	.933	185	.000
Tourist Purchasing decision-making Process	.950	185	.000

Source: Research Data (2022)

The results show that all three variables are less than 5% ($p = 0.000$), so the null hypothesis of normality was rejected based on the facts stated above. This indicates that the data variables were statistically significant but not normally distributed. The condition for normally distributed data according to Saunders *et al.* (2012) is that the probability value must be greater than 0.05. This is because the dependent variable categories were ordinal (ranked). Ordinal data is frequently skewed or multimodal, so violates the assumption of normal distribution (Ghosh *et al.*, 2018). The dependent variable was measured on a five-point Likert scale.

4.6.2 Multi-collinearity Test

The Variance Inflation Factor was utilized to check for multi-collinearity (VIF). Results are shown in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9: Collinearity diagnostics

Model		Tolerance	VIF
1	CprM	.795	1.259
	ICBA	.733	1.365
	ECBA	.851	1.175

a. Dependent Variable: TPP

Source: Research Data (2022)

The results show that none of the VIF values were greater than 5, the values ranged from 1.175 to 1.365. Following the general rule of thumb for interpreting VIFs, a value of 1 indicates that there is no correlation between a particular predictor variable and other predictor variables in the model. Therefore, multicollinearity is not a problem in the regression model

4.6.3 Parallel lines/Proportional odds Test

The data were checked for proportional odds assumptions. Results are shown in Table 4.10 below

Table 4.10: Test of Parallel Lines^a

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	649.385			
General	382.380 ^b	267.006 ^c	27	.000

The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.

Source: Research Data (2022)

Results of the test of Parallel lines (Proportional odds) indicate statistical significance ($p=0.000$), which indicates that the assumption is not satisfied. The generalized ordered logistic regression model relaxes the Proportional Odds assumption by

allowing the effect of each explanatory variable to vary across different cut points of the ordinal outcome variable without data restructuring (Williams, 2006). This assumption basically means that the relationship between each pair of outcome groups does not have to be necessarily the same.

4.7 Correlation Results

The result in Table 4.11 shows the correlation between the study variables.

Table 4.11: Correlation Matrix

			TPP	CprM	ICBA	ECB A
Spearman's rho	Tourist purchasing decision-making process (TPP)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.298**	.413**	.313**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	185	185	185	185
	Customer preference management (CprM)	Correlation Coefficient	.298**	1.000	.284**	.225**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.002
		N	185	185	185	185
	Internal customer-business alignment (ICBA)	Correlation Coefficient	.413**	.284**	1.000	.295**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	185	185	185	185
	External Customer-business alignment (ECBA)	Correlation Coefficient	.313**	.225**	.295**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.002	.000	.
		N	185	185	185	185

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

Source: Research Data (2022)

The correlation results in Table 4.11 above show that customer preference management had a statistically significant positive correlation with the tourist purchasing decision process ($r = 0.298$, $p = 0.000$). This is the least strong relationship (Cohen, 1988), but it does not alter the interpretation of the significant relationships in

a regression model. These results confirmed those of Kütük (2016), Kaushik & Xu (2016), and Hashem (2020), who discovered that with efficient customer preference management tools, the company can understand the internal and social determinants that influence tourist expectations, such as B. the personality, attitude, willingness, cultural climate, basic needs and requirements, values, and other factors that influence tourist purchasing decisions.

Furthermore, there was a moderate correlation ($r = 0.413$, $p = 0.000$) between internal customer-business alignment and tourist purchase decision-making process, but this does not alter the interpretation of the significant relationships in a regression model (Cohen, 1988). These results confirmed those reported by Shah *et al.* (2006), Smith & Bolton (1998), and Gallouj (2002) who found that internal customer business alignment improves visitor experience, creates more potential value, and increases customer retention and repurchase and repeat purchase rates by consumers, all associated with the purchase of the Customers communicate decision.

Furthermore, there was a low correlation between the external customer-business alignment and the tourist purchasing decision-making process ($r = 0.313$, $p = 0.000$). This does not change the interpretation of the significant relationships in a regression model (Cohen, 1988). The studies by Berger *et al.* (2005) and Rinder & Moorman (2003) show that external integration emphasizes the importance of supply chain alignment and collaboration (including co-design) in ensuring customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is related to the customer's purchasing decision, as is the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction based on past experiences, perceptions, and attitudes that influence the customer's purchasing decision-making process

4.8 Regression Results

Ordinal regression analysis was used to investigate whether the customer-centric approach through its components: customer preference management and internal and external customer business alignment can be used to explain understanding of the tourism purchasing decision process in tour operators. The summary of case processing, as shown in Table 4.12 below, clearly indicates the proportion of cases that fall into each level of the dependent variable (tourist purchase decision-making process).

Table 4.12: Case processing summary

		N	Marginal Percentage
TPP	2.80	21	11.4%
	3.00	18	9.7%
	3.20	22	11.9%
	3.40	32	17.3%
	3.60	21	11.4%
	3.80	20	10.8%
	4.00	16	8.6%
	4.20	13	7.0%
	4.40	16	8.6%
	4.60	5	2.7%
	4.80	1	0.5%
Gender of the respondents	Male	114	61.6%
	Female	71	38.4%
Duration of company operations	<3 years	16	8.6%
	4 - 6 years	46	24.9%
	7 - 12 yers	88	47.6%
	13+	35	18.9%
ownership of the company	Tanzania	111	60.0%
	Foreign	52	28.1%
	International Joint venture	22	11.9%
Valid		185	100.0%
Missing		0	
Total		185	

Source: Research Data (2022)

A customer-centric approach proved to be a good predictor for understanding the tourist purchasing decision-making process [$\chi^2(3) = 64.289$, $p < 0.001$]. The p-value of 0.000 in the model fit information table 4.13 below was less than the threshold p-value of 0.05, indicating that the overall model was statistically significant.

Table 4.13: Model fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	713.674			
Final	649.385	64.289	3	.000

Link function: Logit.

Source: Research Data (2022)

Table 4.14 on the Pearson and Deviance Chi-Square test results below confirms more about how well the model fits the data set. The table shows that both the Pearson chi-square test [$\chi^2(1027) = 1061.107$, $p = 0.547$] and the deviance test [$\chi^2(1027) = 561.486$, $p = 1.033$] according to Field (2018) both were non-significant. and Petrucci (2009) non-significant test results are indicators that the model fits the data well

Table 4.14: Goodness of Fit

	Value	Df	Value/df
Deviance	561.486	1027	.547
Scaled Deviance	561.486	1027	
Pearson Chi-Square	1061.107	1027	1.033
Scaled Pearson Chi-Square	1061.107	1027	
Log Likelihood ^b	-324.693		
Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC)	675.385		
Finite Sample Corrected AIC (AICC)	677.514		
Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC)	717.250		
Consistent AIC (CAIC)	730.250		

Dependent Variable: TPP

Model: (Threshold), CprM, ICBA, ECBA

Source: Research Data (2022)

The Nagelkerke value of 0.297 in Table 4.15 below, confirmed more about how effective the approach was as a good predictor for understanding tourists' purchasing decision-making process. This implies that the 29% change in understanding of the tourism purchasing decision process is the result of customer-centric approach, with the following components: customer preference management and internal and external customer business alignment.

Table 4.15: Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	.294
Nagelkerke	.297
McFadden	.077

Source: Research Data (2022)

The regression coefficients in Table 4.16 below indicated that customer preference management and understanding the tourist purchasing decision process were positively and significantly associated ($\beta=0.568$, $p=0.048$). This implies that for every one unit increase in customer preference management on tourist insights, there is a predicted increase in understanding of the tourist purchasing decision process by 0.568 units. The results were consistent with those of Naidu and Mashanda (2017) and Fader (2020), who found that understanding the tourist purchasing decision-making process, begins with the firm's ability to identify tourists' needs and interests. Customer preference management on tourist insights all have a major impact on understanding the process, with the needs recognition phase being the most affected.

Furthermore, internal customer-business alignment and tourist purchasing decision-making process were positively and significantly related ($\beta=1.232$, $p=0.000$). This implied that a 1-unit increase in internal customer business alignment would result in a 1,232-unit improved understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making

process. These results confirmed those reported by Shah *et al.* (2006), Smith & Bolton (1998), and Griffin (1995) who found that internal customer-business alignment improves visitor experience, creates more potential value, and increases customer retention. Therefore, internal cross-departmental convergence would have an impact on understanding the tourist purchasing decision process as a result of customer loyalty and service inventiveness.

The results also showed that external customer-business alignment and the purchasing decision-making process for tourists were positively and significantly related ($\beta=0.548$, $p=0.024$). This implies that for every one unit increase in external customer-business alignment, there is a projected increase in understanding of the tourist purchasing decision process by 0.548 units. These results confirmed those of Berger *et al.* (2005) and Rinder & Moorman (2003) who found that the external integration of requirements, goals, and measures of tourist satisfaction has an impact on understanding the customer's purchasing decision-making process. Customer satisfaction is related to the customer's purchasing decision as a degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction based on past experiences, perceptions and attitudes.

Table 4.16: Parameter Coefficients

Parameter	B	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval		Hypothesis Test			Exp(B)	95% Wald Confidence Interval for Exp(B)		
			Lower	Upper	Wald Chi- Square	df	Sig.		Lower	Upper	
Threshold	[TPP=2.80]	6.881	1.267	4.398	9.363	29.515	1	.000	973.290	86.210	10988.166
	[TPP=3.00]	7.956	1.309	5.389	10.522	36.915	1	.000	2852.106	227.021	35831.483
	[TPP=3.20]	8.850	1.346	6.213	11.488	43.252	1	.000	6976.715	508.733	95678.023
	[TPP=3.40]	9.754	1.375	7.059	12.449	50.336	1	.000	17224.617	1188.213	249692.158
	[TPP=3.60]	10.282	1.388	7.560	13.003	54.837	1	.000	29189.598	1969.426	432629.838
	[TPP=3.80]	10.829	1.401	8.084	13.575	59.766	1	.000	50467.662	3331.135	764599.647
	[TPP=4.00]	11.367	1.412	8.600	14.134	64.830	1	.000	86449.055	5586.954	1337658.905
	[TPP=4.20]	11.953	1.424	9.162	14.744	70.474	1	.000	155264.311	9810.581	2457245.564
	[TPP=4.40]	13.381	1.472	10.496	16.266	82.637	1	.000	647493.580	37266.254	11250069.087
	[TPP=4.60]	15.207	1.725	11.826	18.588	77.721	1	.000	4020473.002	138085.188	117059645.546
CprM	.568	.288	.004	1.131	3.895	1	.048	1.764	.986	3.155	
ICBA	1.232	.236	.769	1.695	27.203	1	.000	3.428	2.155	5.453	
ECBA	.548	.243	.072	1.024	5.095	1	.024	1.730	1.073	2.790	
(Scale)	1 ^a										

Dependent Variable: TPP

Model: (Threshold), CprM, ICBA, ECBA

a. Fixed at the displayed value.

Column $\exp(B)$ in Table 4.16 above contains the odds ratio reflecting the multiplicative change in the probability of being in a higher category of the dependent variable for each unit increase in the independent variable, with the remaining independent variables held constant. The odds ratio indicates that the likelihood of being at a higher level in understanding the tourist purchasing decision process increases by a factor of 1.764 for each unit increased in customer preference management. According to Williams (2006) an odds ratio > 1 , an increasing probability indicates that the dependent variable is at a higher level as the values of an independent variable increase

Furthermore, the odds ratio shows that the likelihood of being at a higher level in understanding the tourist purchasing decision-making process increases by a factor of 3.428 for each unit increased in internal customer-business alignment. Furthermore, the odds ratio indicates that the likelihood of being at a higher level in understanding the tourist purchasing decision process increases by a factor of 1.730 for each unit increased in external customer-business alignment.

4.9 Hypothesis Testing

4.9.1 Test of Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Customer preference management has no influence on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process.

The regression results for the customer preference management and tourist purchasing decision process in Table 4.16 above showed that the p -value = 0.048. The decision rule for the hypothesis test was to reject H_{01} if p -value < 0.05 . This hypothesis was rejected because the p -value was less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). These results are consistent with Naidu and Mashanda (2017) and Fader (2020), who found a significant positive

statistical association between customer preference management and tourists' purchasing decision-making process

4.9.2 Test of Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Internal customer-business alignment has no influence on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process

The regression results for internal customer-business alignment and tourist purchasing decision making process on Table 4.16 above revealed that the p value =0.000. The decision rule for hypothesis testing was to reject H₀₂ if p value<0.05. This hypothesis was rejected since the p value was less than 0.05 (p<0.05). These findings agreed with Shah *et al.* (2006), Bolton (1997) and Griffin (1995) who found a substantial positive statistical link between internal customer-business alignment and tourist purchasing decision-making process.

4.9.3 Test of Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: External customer-business alignment has no influence on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process.

The regression results for external customer-business alignment and tourist purchasing decision making process on Table 4.16 above revealed that the p value = 0.024. The decision rule for hypothesis testing was to reject H₀₃ if p value<0.05. This hypothesis was rejected since the p value was less than 0.05 (p<0.05). These findings agreed with Berger *et al.* (2005) and Rinder & Moorman (2003) who found a substantial positive statistical link between external customer-business alignment and tourist purchasing decision-making process. Table 4.17 below shows the summary of the hypothesis tests results.

Table 4.17: Summary of Hypothesis Test

S/N	Hypothesis	Accept/Reject
<i>H₀₁</i>	Customer preference management has no influence on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process	Reject
<i>H₀₂</i>	Internal customer-business alignment has no influence on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process	Reject
<i>H₀₃</i>	External customer-business alignment has no influence on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process	Reject

Source: Data Survey, 2022

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide, integrate, and discuss the results and relate them to previous research. A summary of the results of each of the variables related to the topic is also presented here. Concluding statements on the goals and corresponding hypotheses are made. Relevant recommendations for further studies are also made to fill observed knowledge gaps that are beyond the scope of this study in terms of text coverage and resources, including time. Further recommendations for raising awareness and capacity building for potential users of the customer-centric approach, mainly tour operators, are given in this chapter.

5.2 Summary of the Study Findings

5.2.1 Influence of Customer Preference Management on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process

Tourists have recently become active contributors to the items and services they buy and use. In order to better serve the market than the competition, tour operators need access to a wealth of data about customers' existing and latent needs and desires, and the factors influencing their fulfillment. Understanding its market is now a crucial part of any company's business, which requires proactive data collection and analysis. The results, which are confirmed by studies by Naidu & Mashanda (2017) and Fader (2020), showed that a customer-centric approach through the management of customer preferences had a positive influence on understanding the purchasing decision-making process of tourists, need recognition stage being the most affected. This illustrates the influence of customer preference management on the process of determining customer needs. The premise behind this notion is that when a company

uses a customer preference management approach, they are simply trying to gather as much information about the consumer as possible. It appears that the company is building its own customer database based on the interests and knowledge of its customers that it has gathered through data collection.

By using technology to manage customer preferences to collect tourist insights information on an enterprise-wide level, it allows the employee to understand changes and elements influencing the decision-making process for tourist purchases in the market, such as attitudes and conventions as well as geographic diversity. The company can capture both the internal and social elements that influence tourist expectations, such as personality, attitude, readiness, cultural climate, basic needs and requirements, and values. Since there are few research studies on customer intelligence strategies in tour operators, these results will be helpful to most tour operators who have found them difficult to apply.

5.2.2 Influence of Internal Customer-business Alignment on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process

The results showed that the customer-centric approach through internal integration had a significant influence on understanding the tourism purchasing decision-making process. Internal integration largely ensures that customer preferences are managed effectively to more effectively target current customers, and that consumers can customize and personalize the service to meet their own needs and preferences through customer-business alignment with corporate strategy and internal resource management. This improves visitor convenience, expands potential value and strengthens customer loyalty.

According to Griffin (1995), exposing customers to a high-quality customer interface improves their loyalty to the company and the repurchase and repurchase rate of consumers (Chang & Chen, 2009). Therefore, as a result of customer loyalty and service inventiveness, internal cross-departmental convergence would affect the tourist purchasing decision-making process.

The customer-centric notion is not new; most tour operators are familiar with it, and it's perhaps the most hotly debated marketing term. The problem lies in the implementation. The study identified some of the problems, including the existence of data silos, a business culture that is not aligned with customer expectations, a lack of proper customer data management systems, and insufficient competence in data analysis; On-site data specialists who can translate consumer data into knowledge that can be used for customer-centric incentives; and data experts who can transform consumer data into knowledge that can be leveraged for customer-centric rewards. If the company is able to overcome these obstacles, it will gain a competitive advantage.

5.2.3 Influence of External Customer-business Alignment on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process

The external integration ensures that customer preferences are effectively managed to target current customers, allowing customers to tailor and personalize the service to their own needs and preferences by providing information on tourist satisfaction requirements, the goals of the tourist satisfaction and the measurement of tourist satisfaction (Lau *et al.*, 2010). External integration is all about collaboration, engagement and communication between external groups (customers and suppliers) and the new product development team.

The level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, based on previous experiences and attitudes, strongly influences customers' purchase intentions (Gupta and Stewart, 1996). With a customer-centric approach through external integration around customer satisfaction, it is possible to create pleasant, consistent customer experiences and build genuine customer loyalty, all of which require a thorough understanding of the tourism purchasing decision-making process.

The study results showed that the targeting of external companies had a significant impact on understanding the tourist purchasing decision-making process, however, the transparency and access to information related to tourism information management provided by the external integration are insufficient, which is a significant constitutes an obstacle to integration. Most tour operators fail to provide transparency and access to external key players in tourism information management as the tour operator business is extremely competitive; Its success is based on the secrecy of internal business processes related to tourist satisfaction.

5.3 Conclusion

According to the results, customer preference management has a favorable and significant influence on tour operators' understanding of the purchasing decision-making process of tourists in Arusha, Tanzania. In addition, managing customer preferences in terms of tourist profile insights, tourist insights into travel patterns, leisure and recreation preferences, spending habits, and destinations, and the way they source information, improves tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process. The null hypothesis that there is no significant impact of customer preference management on tour operators' understanding of the purchasing decision-making process of tourists in Arusha, Tanzania, was rejected based on the

regression results. Therefore, it is likely that tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process will increase as a result of the effectiveness of customer preference management based on tourism insights.

The study found that internal alignment between customers and companies has a favorable and significant influence on tour operators' understanding of the purchasing decision-making process of tourists in Arusha, Tanzania. In addition, aligning business strategy and internal resource management with tourist satisfaction improves tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process. The null hypothesis that there is no significant impact of internal customer business orientation on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania, was rejected based on the regression results. Therefore, there is a likelihood that tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process will increase as a result of the effectiveness of internal business alignment with tourists' satisfaction.

The study found that external alignment between customers and companies has a favorable and significant influence on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania. In addition, the company's alignment with external key stakeholders on tourist satisfaction requirements, tourist satisfaction goals, and tourist satisfaction measurement, and achieving tourist satisfaction together, improves tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process. The null hypothesis that there is no significant impact of external customer business orientation on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania, was rejected based on the regression results. Therefore, tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing

decision-making process is likely to increase as a result of effective external business targeting tourists' satisfaction.

5.4 Recommendations

From the study findings, customer preference management has a positive and significant association with tour operators' understanding of tourist purchasing decision-making process in Arusha, Tanzania. Therefore, customer preference management on tourist insights should be efficient. Tour operators should invest in customer preference management tools so as to be able to collect tourist insight information on an enterprise-wide level. This will allow the employee to understand changes and elements influencing the decision-making process for tourist purchases in the market, such as attitudes and conventions as well as geographic diversity. The company should capture both the internal and social elements that influence tourist expectations, such as personality, attitude, readiness, cultural climate, basic needs and requirements, and values. This will enhance a thorough tour operator's understanding of tourist purchasing decision-making process.

The study results indicate that in Arusha, Tanzania, internal customer business alignment has a positive and significant association with tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process. Therefore, the business culture of tour operators should be aligned with the satisfaction of tourists. In addition, tour operators should invest in proper customer data management and analysis systems. They should employ on-site data specialists who can translate consumer data into knowledge that can be used for customer-facing incentives and data experts who can transform consumer data into knowledge that can be leveraged for customer-focused

rewards. This will improve tour operators' thorough understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process.

The study results indicate that the external customer-business alignment in Arusha, Tanzania, has a positive and significant association with tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process. Therefore, targeting external companies has a significant impact on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process. Tour operators and key external players should be transparent; all should have access to information on tourism insights to enable smooth integration into tourist satisfaction.

5.5 Recommendations for Theory, Policy and Practice

The results of this study recommend the implementation of a customer-centric approach in tourism companies, where the first step is to learn tourist preferences and special and important dates based on customer information from previous visits or stays. This includes entering into tourism partnerships and aligning the organizational culture with individualization. Each customer must be treated individually, with careful attention paid to the selection of the relevant information to be provided and collected for each of them, as well as the communication methods used. Although financial incentives seem to be the most common method of customer retention, it is crucial that retention strategies are based on the emotional and satisfied connection of customers.

The study results show that the integration of both internal and external customer-related key attributes as part of the approach is crucial for a customer-centric company. However, tour operators should work with key external actors to process the information collected in the area of customer preferences in order to customize the

service, target existing customers, and give them the opportunity to adapt to and meet their own needs and expectations. It also includes IT, data specialists, and human behavior specialists to effectively transform consumer data into knowledge that can be used to deliver customer-centric rewards and enhance positive tourism experiences. The results also serve as a point of reference for other academics conducting research related to this study as well as a framework for policymakers developing strategies on price controls, subsidies, and consumer protection.

5.6 Recommendation for Further Studies

Although the results of the study indicate that the customer-centric approach has a significant influence on tour operators' understanding of the tourist purchasing decision-making process through the management of customer preferences and the internal and external alignment between customers and companies, various gaps regarding its adoption and implementation remain. Therefore, further studies should be conducted to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC analysis) inside and outside of travel companies in order to effectively implement the approach in the tourism industry in Tanzania. The study can further examine the capacity needs analysis (CNA) among the tour operators in Tanzania. The CNA report to be produced will be used for capacity building for some companies, followed by short- and long-term follow-ups that will form the basis for expansion for many other companies, both domestically and internationally.

REFERENCES

- Abbott L. (1955). *Quality and competition*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Adrodegari, F., & Saccani, N. (2017). Business models for the service transformation of industrial firms. *The Service Industries Journal*, 37(1), 57-83.
- Ahuja, M. (2022). Voice of the Customer—What the Digital Customers Wants?. In *ISUW 2020* (pp. 213-215). Springer, Singapore.
- Alghisi, A., & Nicola, S. (2015). "Internal and external alignment in the servitization journey—overcoming the challenges." *Production Planning & Control* 26, no. 14-15 1219-1232.
- Al Sayed, F., Hejase, H. J., Hamdar, B., Hatoum, A., & Hejase, A. J. (2022). An Assessment of Customer-Centricity Success Factors: Context of the Lebanese Market. *Global Journal of Management And Business Research*.
- Alt, R., Ehmke, J.F., Haux, R., Henke, T., Mattfeld, D.C., Oberweis, A. & Winter, A. (2019). Towards customer-induced service orchestration-requirements for the next step of customer orientation. *Journal of Electronic Markets* 29(1): 79-91.
- Antikainen, M. (2011). *Facilitating customer involvement in collaborative online innovation communities*. VTT.
- Arora, N., Dreze, X., Ghose, A., Hess, J. D., Iyengar, R., Jing, B., & Sajeesh, S. (2008). Putting one-to-one marketing to work: Personalization, customization, and choice. *Marketing Letters*, 19(3-4), 305.
- Arnould, E., Zinkhan, G. & Price, L. (2002). "Consumers" McGraw-Hill International
- Ballantyne, D., & Varey, R. J. (2006). Creating value-in-use through marketing interaction: the exchange logic of relating, communicating and knowing. *Marketing theory*, 6(3), 335-348.
- Batra, M. M. (2019, July). Strengthening customer experience through artificial intelligence: An upcoming trend. In *Competition forum* (Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 223-231). American Society for Competitiveness.
- Beatty, S. E., & Smith, S. M. (1987). External search effort: An investigation across several product categories. *Journal of consumer research*, 14(1), 83-95.
- Bedarkar, M., Pandita, D., Agarwal, R., & Saini, R. (2016). Examining the impact of organizational culture on Customer-centric approach in organizations: An analysis. *Prabandhan: Indian Journal of Management*, 9(2), 19-28.
- Ben & Company, (2018, April 2). Management Tools - Customer Relationship Management. Retrieved 17th February, 2019 from www.bain.com.

- Berger, C., Möslein, K., Piller, F., & Reichwald, R. (2005). Co-designing modes of cooperation at the customer interface: learning from exploratory research. *European Management Review*, 2(1), 70-87.
- Berner, A., & Van Tonder, C. L. (2003). The postmodern consumer: Implications of changing customer expectations for organization development in service organizations. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 29(3), 1-10.
- Blackwell, R. D., Miniard, P. W., & Engel, J. F. (2001). Consumer behaviour 9th. *South-Western Thomas Learning. Mason, OH.*
- Blackwell, R., DSouza, C., Taghian, M., Miniard, P., & Engel, J. (2006). *Consumer behaviour: an Asia Pacific approach.* Thomson.
- Bland, J.M., Altman, D.G. 1997. Statistics notes: Cronbach's alpha. *Journal of Bmj* 314 (7080): 572 p.
- Blythe, J. (1997). *The essence of consumer behaviour.* Pearson PTR.
- Bogers, M., Afuah, A., & Bastian, B. (2010). Users as innovators: a review, critique, and future research directions. *Journal of management*, 36(4), 857-875.
- Brucks, M. (1985). The effects of product class knowledge on information search behaviour. *Journal of consumer research*, 1-16.
- Burritt, K., & Kilara, T. (2016). Learning from Customer-centric approach in Other Industries: A Primer. *Washington, DC, CGAP.*
- Buzova, D., Cervera-Taulet, A., & Sanz-Blas, S. (2020). Exploring multisensory place experiences through cruise blog analysis. *Psychology & Marketing*, 37(1), 131-140.
- Caldito, L. A., Dimanche, F., Mazina, A., Fedulin, A., Vetitnev, A., Apukhtin, A., & Sharafanova, E. (2015). Nature-based tourism in Russia/TEMPUS Project «NETOUR: Network for Excellence in Tourism through Organization and Universities in Russia». Project Co-funded by the European Union.
- Campbell, J., & Sankaran, J. (2005). An inductive framework for enhancing supply chain integration. *International Journal of Production Research*, 43(16), 3321-3351.
- Chacha, N., Njau, K.N., Lugomela, G.V. & Muzuka, A.N. 2018. Hydrogeochemical characteristics and spatial distribution of groundwater quality in Arusha well fields, Northern Tanzania. *Journal of Applied Water Science* 8(4): 1-23.
- Chang, H. H., & Chen, S. W. (2009). Consumer perception of interface quality, security, and loyalty in electronic commerce. *Information & management*, 46(7), 411-417.
- Chirakranont, R., & Sakdiyakorn, M. (2022). Conceptualizing meaningful tourism experiences: Case study of a small craft beer brewery in Thailand. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 23, 100691.

- Chiu, Chao-Min, Chen-Chi Chang, Hsiang-Lan Cheng, and Yu-Hui Fang. "Determinants of customer repurchase intention in online shopping." *Online information review* (2009).
- Clark, M., & Myers, A. (2018). How customer-centric are you?.
- Creswell, J. W., Plano Clark, V. L., Gutmann, M. L., & Hanson, W. E. (2003). Advanced mixed methods research designs. *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research*, 209, 240.
- Creswell, J.W. & Clark, V.L.P. 2011. Designing and conducting mixed methods research. 472 p.
- Daniel, E. (2003). An exploration of the inside-out model: e-commerce integration in UK SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*.
- Day, G. S. (1994). The capabilities of market-driven organizations. *The Journal of Marketing*, 37-52.
- Dekel, O., Prince, C., & Beaver, G. (2007). The changing orientation of marketing: an emerging post-modern perspective. *Strategic Change*, 16(6), 245-255.
- Decker, R. & Höppner, M. 2006. Information services: customer preferences and strategic planning. Emerald Group Publishing Limited 24(4): 504-514.
- Dholakia, R. R., Johnson, J. L., Della Bitta, A. J., & Dholakia, N. (1993). Decision-making time in organizational buying behaviour: an investigation of its antecedents. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 21(4), 281-292.
- Dibb, S., & Simkin, L. (2001). Market segmentation: diagnosing and treating the barriers. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 30(8), 609-625.
- Drucker, P. F. 1954. *The practice of management*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Giménez, J. F. V. (2018). *Customer-centricity: The new path to product innovation and profitability*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Fader, P. (2020). Customer centricity: Focus on the right customers for strategic advantage. 150 p.
- Engel JF, Kollat DT, Blackwell RD (1968). *Consumer Behavior*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Engel JF, Blackwell RD, Miniard PW (1995). *Consumer Behavior*. Texas: Dryden Press.
- Fan, Z., & Cohen, F.S. (1988). Textured image segmentation as a multiple hypothesis test. *Transactions on circuits and systems* 35(6): 691-702.
- Field, A. (2018). *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics*. 5th Edition, SAGE Publications Ltd., London.

- Flynn, B.B., Huo, B. & Zhao, X. 2010. The impact of supply chain integration on performance: a contingency and configuration approach. *Journal of operations management* 28(1): 58-71.
- Gakusi, A. E., Sartori, D., & Maliti, E. (2015). Fostering Regional Integration in Africa: The Case of Arusha-Namanga-Athi River Road Development Project. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(12), 212.
- Galbraith, J.R. 2002. Organizing to deliver solutions. *Organizational dynamics* 31(2): 194
- Galbraith, J.R. 2011. *Designing the customer-centric organization: A guide to strategy, structure, and process*. John Wiley & Sons. 204 p.
- Gallouj, F. (2002). Services innovation: assimilation, differentiation, inversion and integration.
- Gaurav, R., & Shainesh, G. (2017). The changing face of customer centricity. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Managing Continuous Business Transformation* (pp. 175-187). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Ghosh, S. K., Burns, C. B., Prager, D. L., Zhang, L., & Hui, G. (2018). On nonparametric estimation of the latent distribution for ordinal data. *Computational Statistics & Data Analysis*, 119, 86-98.
- Griffin, J. (1997). *Customer loyalty: how to earn it, how to keep it*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Griffin, J. 1995. Customer Loyalty: How to earn it. How to Keep It. Simmon and Schuster Inc. pp 26-29.
- Grönroos, C. (2011). Value co-creation in service logic: A critical analysis. *Marketing theory*, 11(3), 279-301.
- Gummesson, E. (2008). Customer-centric approach: reality or a wild goose chase?. *European Business Review*, 20(4), 315-330.
- Gupta, Kamal, and David W. Stewart. "Customer satisfaction and customer behaviour: the differential role of brand and category expectations." *Marketing Letters* 7, no. 3 (1996): 249-263.
- Ha, H., Janda. S. and Muthaly, S., (2010). "Development of brand equity: evaluation of four alternative models", *Service Industries Journal*, 30(6), pp. 911-928
- Haro, M. A. G., Ruiz, M. P. M., & Cañas, R. M. (2014). The effects of the value co-creation process on the consumer and the company. *Expert Journal of Marketing*, 2(2), 68-81.
- Hashem, T., Freihat, S. & Homsy, D. 2020. Customer-focused service management as an approach of enhancing service culture among fast-food chains. *Management Science Letters* 10(9): 2001-2010.

- Heinonen, K., Strandvik, T., Mickelsson, K. J., Edvardsson, B., Sundström, E., & Andersson, P. (2010). A customer-dominant logic of service. *Journal of Service management*, 21(4), 531-548.
- Hemel, C. V. D., & Rademakers, M. F. (2016). Building customer-centric organizations: Shaping factors and barriers. *Journal of Creating Value*, 2(2), 211-230
- Holland, J., & Leslie, D. (2017). *Tour Operators and Operations: Development, Management and Responsibility*. CABI.
- Horner, S., & John, S. (2020). *Consumer behaviour in tourism*. Routledge.
- Howard, J. A., & Sheth, J. N. (1969). *The theory of buyer behaviour* (No. 658.834 H6)
- Huang, L., & Tsai, H. T. (2003). The study of senior traveler behaviour in Taiwan. *Tourism management*, 24(5), 561-574.
- Hudson, S. 2008. *Tourism and hospitality marketing: A global perspective*. SAGE publications. 490 p.
- i Furnols, M. F., Realini, C., Montossi, F., Sañudo, C., Campo, M. M., Oliver, M. A., ... & Guerrero, L. (2011). Consumer's purchasing intention for lamb meat affected by country of origin, feeding system and meat price: A conjoint study in Spain, France and United Kingdom. *Food Quality and Preference*, 22(5), 443-451.
- Ihucha, A. (2018, October 3) *Tanzania Tour Operators Demand new Tourism Policy*. Retrieved 16th February, 2019 from www.eturbonews.com
- Jain, S. C. (2005). CRM shifts the paradigm. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 13(4), 275-291.
- Jaworski, B. J., & Kohli, A. K. (1993). Market orientation: antecedents and consequences. *Journal of marketing*, 57(3), 53-70.
- Juan, Y. K., Shih, S. G., & Perng, Y. H. (2006). Decision support for housing customization: A hybrid approach using case-based reasoning and genetic algorithm. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 31(1), 83-93.
- Kahle L.R. and Close, A. (2006) "Consumer Behaviour Knowledge for Effective Sports and Event Marketing", Taylor & Francis, New York, USA
- Karimi, S. (2013). *A purchase decision-making process model of online consumers and its influential factors cross sector analysis*. The University of Manchester, United Kingdom. 326 p.
- Kaushik, A. and Xu, S., (2016). Derivation of Customer Intelligence From Customer Knowledge Management. *Intelligence (CI)*, 27, p.28

- Kazmi, S. Q. (2012). Consumer perception and buying decisions (The pasta study). *International Journal of Advancements in Research & Technology*, 1(6), 1-10.
- Khatib, F. S., & Zia, A. (2016). Impact of service quality on customer satisfaction—an imperial study of mobility in Saudi Arabia. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 51(4), 451-460.
- Kim, E., & Lee, B. (2007). An economic analysis of customer selection and leveraging strategies in a market where network externalities exist. *Decision Support Systems*, 44(1), 124-134.
- Kock, F., Josiassen, A., & Assaf, A. G. (2018). On the origin of tourist purchasing decision-making process . *Annals of Tourism Research*, 73(C), 180-183.
- Kohli, A. K., Jaworski B.J. & Kumar, A. (1993). MARKOR: A Measure of Market Orientation. *Journal of Market Research*, 30(4), 467 – 477
- Kombo, D. K., & Tromp, D. (2006). *The Methodology of Research in Social Sciences*.
- Kothari, C., & Garg, G. (2014). *Research Methodology: Methods and Strategy*. New age international.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. (2012). Lane. *Marketing management*.
- Kütük, A. (2016). Social media marketing in tourism industry and role of the social media on consumer preferences: A survey on the effects of social media sites on the buying decision making process.
- Lamberti, L. 2013. Customer-centric approach: the construct and the operational antecedents. *Journal of Strategic marketing* 21(7): 588-612.
- Laramee, J., & Davis, J. (2013). Economic and environmental impacts of domestic bio-digesters: Evidence from Arusha, Tanzania. *Energy for Sustainable Development*, 17(3), 296-304.
- Lau, A.K., Tang, E. & Yam, R.C. 2010. Effects of supplier and Customer engagement on product innovation and performance: empirical evidence in Hong Kong manufacturers. *Journal of product innovation management* 27(5): 761-777.
- Leather, D. (2013). *Customer-centric Blueprint: Building and Leading the 21st Century Organisation*. Reap Publishing
- Lysonski, S., Durvasula, S., & Zotos, Y. (1996). Consumer decision-making styles: a multi-country investigation. *European journal of Marketing*
- Macha, E. G. (2011). *Socio-cultural factors influencing Maasai participation in income generating activities: women case of Arusha Chini and Maboghini wards, Moshi Rural* (Doctoral dissertation, Sokoine University of Agriculture).

- Martin, S., & Webb, A. (2009). 'Citizen-centred' public services: contestability without consumer-driven competition?. *Public Money & Management*, 29(2), 123-130.
- Maçik, R. (2016). Changes in Consumer Decision-Making Process Influenced by ICT Usage. *IMPACT*, 331.
- Majumdar, R. (2010). *Consumer behaviour: Insights from Indian market*. PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd.
- Majchrzak, A., Wagner, C., Riehle, D., Thoeny, P., Shah, S., & Cunningham, W. (2007). The role of shapers in knowledge-sharing. In *Virtuality and virtualization* (pp. 383-386). Springer, Boston, MA.
- Maney, R., Flink, C., & Lietz, C. (2002). Consumer-centric marketing. Retrieved February, 28, 2018
- Middleton, V. T., Fyall, A., Morgan, M., & Ranchhod, A. (2009). *Marketing in travel and tourism*. Routledge.
- Mihajlović, I., & Koncul, N. (2016). Changes in consumer behaviour—the challenges for providers of tourist services in the destination. *Economic research-Ekonomska istraživanja*, 29(1), 914-937.
- Mohammadi, A. M., & Mohamed, B. (2011). Applying consumer behaviour theory and grand models to attendees behaviour in coference industry. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 151-159.
- Mohan Chandran, P., & Gupta, V. (2004). Dow Chemicals' customer centric e-business strategy, ICFAI center for Management Research (ICMR).
- Moital, M. L., (2007). An Evaluation of the factors influencing the adoption of ecommerce in the purchasing of leisure travel by the residents of Cascais, Portugal. In: Bournemouth University.
- Moore, W. L., & Lehmann, D. R. (1980). Individual differences in search behaviour for a nondurable. *Journal of consumer research*, 7(3), 296-307
- Moutinho, L., Ballantyne, R., & Rate, S. (2011). Consumer behaviour in tourism. *Strategic management in tourism*, 2(2), p83-126.
- Munthiu, M. C. (2009). The buying decision process and types of buying decision behaviour. *Sibiu Alma Mater University Journals. Series A. Economic Sciences*, 2(4), 27-33.
- Naidu, V. & Mashanda, A. (2017). Customer Centricity Understanding the Customer Within the Culture and Understanding This Fit into Strategy. Understanding the Customer Base. 12 p.
- Narver, J., Jacobsen, R. & Slater, S. (1993). *Market Orientation and Business Performance: An analysis of Panel Data*. Marketing Science Institute, Working Papers Series Report, No. 93.

- Neal, C., Quester, P. and Hawkins, D. (2004). *Consumer Behaviour Implications for Marketing Strategy*, McGraw-Hill, Australia.
- Ngungat, S. S. (2019, April). Challenges Faced Tour Operators in Promotions of Their Products and Services in Tanzania: A Case Study of Tour Operators in Arusha City. In *International Conference on the Future of Tourism (ICFT)* (pp. 1-16). OUT.
- Nici, E., & von Creutlein, A. (2017). Investigating the Pre-Purchase Phase of the Customer Journey—An Exploratory Study in the Home Furnishing Retail Industry.
- Niininen, O., March, R., & Buhalis, D. (2006). Consumer centric tourism marketing. In *Tourism Management Dynamics* (pp. 199-210). Routledge.
- Niininen, O., Buhalis, C. & March, R. (2007). Customer empowerment in tourism through Consumer Centric Marketing (CCM), *Qualitative Market Research* 10(3): 265-282.
- Noone, B., & Griffin, P. (1997). Enhancing yield management with customer profitability analysis. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.
- Ofir, C. and Simonson, I. (2005) “The Effect of Stating Expectations on Customer Satisfaction and Shopping Experience”, Stanford Graduate School of Business 44p
- O'Hern, M. S., & Rindfleisch, A. (2010). Customer co-creation. In *Review of marketing research* (pp. 84-106). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Oladittir, Margreth H. (2017, August 3) Five challenges facing Tour operators in 2017. Retrieved 15th February, 2019 from www.kaptio.com
- O'Leary, C., Rao, S., & Perry, C. (2004). Improving customer relationship management through database/internet marketing: a theory-building action research project. *European journal of marketing*, 38(3/4), 338-354.
- Orodho, A. J. (2005). *Essentials of educational and social science research methods*. Nairobi: Masola Publishers.
- Parasuraman, A., & Grewal, D. (2000). Serving customers and consumers effectively in the twenty-first century: A conceptual framework and overview. *Journal of the academy of marketing science*, 28(1), 9-16.
- Park, C. W., & Lessig, V. P. (1981). Familiarity and its impact on consumer decision biases and heuristics. *Journal of consumer research*, 8(2), 223-230.
- Parniangtong, S. (2017). *Competitive advantage of customer centricity*. Springer Singapore.
- Payne, A. F., Storbacka, K., & Frow, P. (2008). Managing the co-creation of value. *Journal of the academy of marketing science*, 36(1), 83-96.

- Perrey, J & Spillecke, D. (2011) "Retail Marketing and Branding: A Definitive Guide to Maximising ROI" John Wiley & Sons
- Petrucci, C. J. (2009). A primer for social worker researchers on how to conduct a multinomial logistic regression. *Journal of social service research*, 35(2), 193-205.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of interactive marketing*, 18(3), 5-14.
- Prekumar, G., Ramamurthy, K. & Sauders, C. S. (2005). Information Processing View of Organization: *An exploratory examination of fit in the context of inter-organizational relationships*. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 22 (1), 257 -294.
- Punnasuparom, P., & Choibamroong, T. (2020). Hotel website quality factors influencing high-quality tourists' online purchasing intentions: A luxury, boutique hotel in Bangkok. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity, and Change*, 13(6), 426-441.
- Raju, P. S., Lonial, S. C., & Glynn Mangold, W. (1995). Differential effects of subjective knowledge, objective knowledge, and usage experience on decision making: An exploratory investigation. *Journal of consumer psychology*, 4(2), 153-180.
- Ramani, G., & Kumar, V. (2008). Interaction orientation and firm performance. *Journal of marketing*, 72(1), 27-45.
- Reilly, P. (2018). Building customer centricity in the hospitality sector: the role of talent management. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*.
- Rindfleisch, A., & Moorman, C. (2003). Interfirm cooperation and customer orientation. *Journal of marketing research*, 40(4), 421-436.
- Robson, K. (2012). *Service-ability: Create a customer centric culture and achieve competitive advantage*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Ruekert, R. W. (1992). Developing a market orientation: an organizational strategy perspective. *International journal of research in marketing*, 9(3), 225-245.
- Rust, R. T., Moorman, C., & Bhalla, G. (2010). Rethinking marketing. *Harvard business review*, 88(1/2), 94-101.
- Ryan, G. (2018). Introduction to positivism, interpretivism and critical theory. *Nurse researcher*, 25(4), 41-49.
- Sarlak, M.A. & Fard, R.S. 2009. The impact of CRM on the customer satisfaction in agricultural bank. *American Journal of Economics and Business Administration* 1(2): 167 p.

- Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill. (2012). Chapter 12 Analysing quantitative data. In L. a. Saunders, *Research Methods For Business Students Sixth Edition* (pp. 472-529). Pearson Education Limited.
- Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill. (2012). *Research Methods for Business Students* sixth edition. Pearson Education Limited
- Scharge, M. (1990). The healing power of high tech. *Los Angeles Times*, 109.
- Schiffman, L. G., & Kanuk, L. L. (2007). Consumer Behaviour. Its Origins and Strategic Applications. *Consumer Behaviour. 9th Edition. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education Inc*, 2-4.
- Schmitt, B., Brakus, J. J., & Zarantonello, L. (2015). From experiential psychology to consumer experience. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 25(1), 166-171.
- Schober, A., Knarren, S., Lietz, M., Lin, E. A., & Weber, C. (2003). Crucial role of stromal cell-derived factor-1 α in neointima formation after vascular injury in apolipoprotein E-deficient mice. *Circulation*, 108(20), 2491-2497.
- Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R. (2016). *Research methods for business: A skill building approach*. John Wiley & Sons. 448 p.
- Shah, D., Rust, R. T., Parasuraman, A., Staelin, R., & Day, G. S. (2006). The path to customer centricity. *Journal of service research*, 9(2), 113-124.
- Sheth, J.N., Solomon, M.R., (2014). Extending the extended self in a digital world. *J.Mark. Theory Pract.* 22, 123–132.
- Shrage, H. M. (1990). A Business Law Simulation: Principles, Process and Basic Skills. *J. Legal Stud. Educ.*, 9, 413.
- Smith, A. K., & Bolton, R. N. (1998). An experimental investigation of customer reactions to service failure and recovery encounters: paradox or peril?. *Journal of service research*, 1(1), 65-81.
- Solomon, M. R., White, K. & Dahl, D. W. (2014). *Consumer Behaviour: Buying, Having, and Being*, 6th Canadian ed. 731 p.
- Sorina-Raula, G., Liviu, C., & Georgeta-Mădălina, M. (2012). The role of advertising in the purchase decision process. *Analele Universitatii Din Oradea*, 17(4), 897-1574.
- Spielmann, N., & Rossi, P. (2018, May). A Glass Wide Open: How Glass Shape Influences Extraversion and Happiness: An Abstract. In *Academy of Marketing Science Annual Conference* (pp. 497-498). Springer, Cham.
- Stefanou, C. J., Sarmaniotis, C., & Stafyla, A. (2003). CRM and customer-centric knowledge management: an empirical research. *Business Process Management Journal*, 9(5), 617-634.

- Sun, B., Li, S., & Zhou, C. (2006). "Adaptive" learning and "proactive" customer relationship management. *Journal of interactive Marketing*, 20(3-4), 82-96.
- TBE (2015), *Research guide for tour operators*
- Trehan, M. & Trehan, R. (2011) "Advertising and Sales Management" FK Publications
- Tyagi, C. L., & Kumar, A. (2004). *Consumer behaviour*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist.
- Van Vuuren, C., & Slabbert, E. (2011). Travel behaviour of tourists to a South African holiday resort. *African Journal for Physical Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 17(Special issue 1), 694-707.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). The four service marketing myths: remnants of a goods-based, manufacturing model. *Journal of service research*, 6(4), 324-335.
- Vázquez-Bustelo, D., Avella, L., & Fernández, E. (2007). Agility drivers, enablers and outcomes: empirical test of an integrated agile manufacturing model. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 27(12), 1303-1332.
- Veale, R., & Quester, P. (2007). Consumer expertise: Measuring consumer objective knowledge. In *ANZMAC Conference, Otago University, New Zealand*.
- Vidili, I. (2021). Customer experience: the new competitive advantage for companies that want their customer at the center of their business. In *Handbook of Research on User Experience in Web 2.0 Technologies and its Impact on Universities and Businesses* (pp. 183-209). IGI Global.
- Vlašić, G., & Tutek, E. (2017). Drivers of Customer-centric approach: Role of Environmental-level, Organization-level and Department-level Variables. *Zagreb International Review of Economics and Business*, 20(2), 1-10.
- Wagner, C. & Majchrzak, A. (2006). Enabling customer-centricity using wikis and the wiki way. *Journal of management information systems* 23(3): 17-43.
- Wang, T., & Lee, F. Y. (2020). Examining customer engagement and brand intimacy in social media context. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 54, 102035.
- Wang, S., Kirillova, K., & Lehto, X. (2017). Reconciling unsatisfying tourism experiences: Message type effectiveness and the role of counterfactual thinking. *Tourism Management*, 60, 233-243.
- Webb, D. A., Sweet, D., & Pretty, I. A. (2002). The emotional and psychological impact of mass casualty incidents on forensic odontologists. *Journal of Forensic Science*, 47(3), 539-541.

- Weiblen, T. (2015). *Opening up the business model: Business model innovation through collaboration* (Doctoral dissertation, University of St. Gallen).
- Weinberg, B. D., & Berger, P. D. (2011). Connected customer lifetime value: The impact of social media. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 12(4), 328-344.
- Weinstein, A. (2018). Be Customer-centric. In *Superior Customer Value* (pp. 21-42). Routledge.
- Williams, R. (2006). Generalized ordered logit/partial proportional odds models for ordinal dependent variables. *The Stata Journal*, 6(1), 58-82.
- Wind, J. & Rangaswamy, A. (2001). Customerization: The next revolution in mass customization. *Journal of interactive marketing* 15(1): 13-32.
- Winer, R. S. (2009). New communications approaches in marketing: Issues and research directions. *Journal of interactive marketing*, 23(2), 108-117.
- WTTC, C. (2019). Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2018 Tanzania. *WTTC Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2018*
- WTTC, C. (2020). Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2019 Tanzania. *WTTC Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2019*.
- Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An Introductory Analysis*, 2nd Edition, New York. 919 p.
- Yates, D., Wagner, C., & Majchrzak, A. (2010). Factors affecting shapers of organizational wikis. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 61(3), 543-554.
- Yeung, J.H.Y., Selen, W., Zhang, M. & Huo, B. (2009). The effects of trust and coercive power on supplier integration. *International Journal of Production Economics* 120(1): 66-78.
- Yoder, M., De Ley, I. T., King, I. W., Mundo-Ocampo, M., Mann, J., Blaxter, M., & De Ley, P. (2006). DESS: a versatile solution for preserving morphology and extractable DNA of nematodes. *Nematology*, 8(3), 367

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Questionnaire for a Study on the Influence of Customer-Centric Approach on Tourist Purchasing Decision-Making Process

Dear Respondent;

Request for research data

I am Blandina Shemwetta, a postgraduate student of Moi University Kenya, School of Tourism, Hospitality and Events management with a registration number STHE/PTT/001/18. I am carrying out a Master thesis research on the influence of Customer-centric approach on understanding tourist purchasing decision-making process. I hereby request for overall support from the respondents participating in the data collection process. The responses provided will be handled confidentially and will be used for academic purpose only.

Questionnaire No.:

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF A RESPONDENT

Please tick in the appropriate box

1. Gender: (1)Male (2) Female
2. For how long has your firm being operating? (1) < 2 years 2) 2 –5 years
 (3) 6 – 10 (4) 11 – 15 (5) 16 – 20 (6) > 20 years
3. Type of ownership of the company: (1) State owned 2) Privately owned
(3) Collectively owned (4) International joint venture (5) other

SECTION B: CUSTOMER PREFERENCE MANAGEMENT

4. For each of the statements below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by placing a tick in the appropriate column.

KEY: 1. Strongly Disagree (SD), 2. Disagree (D), 3. Neutral (N), 4. Agree (A) and 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Statement::	1	2	3	4	5
i)Collecting and managing tourist profile insights uncovers tourist needs and expectations					
ii)Collecting and managing tourist insights on travel patterns uncovers tourist needs and expectations					
iii)Collecting and managing tourist insights on leisure/recreation interests uncovers tourist needs and expectations					
iv)Collecting and managing tourist insights on spending habits and priorities uncovers tourist needs and expectations					
v)Collecting and managing tourists insights on how they obtain their information uncovers tourist needs and expectations					

SECTION C: INTERNAL CUSTOMER-BUSINESS ALIGNMENT

5. For each of the statements below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by placing a tick in the appropriate column.

KEY:1. Strongly Disagree (SD), 2. Disagree (D), 3. Neutral (N) 4. Agree (A) and 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
i)Company's business strategy is structured around tourist satisfaction					
ii)Company's internal resource management decisions is designed around tourist satisfaction					

SECTION D: EXTERNAL CUSTOMER-BUSINESS ALIGNMENT

6. For each of the statements below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by placing a tick in the appropriate column.

KEY:1. Strongly Disagree (SD), 2. Disagree (D), 3. Neutral (N) 4. Agree (A) and 5. Strongly Agree (SA)

Statement:	1	2	3	4	5
i) Company integrates with key external players on tourist satisfaction requirement					
ii)Company integrates with key external players on tourist satisfaction goals					
ii)Company integrates with key external players on tourist satisfaction measurement					
iii)Company integrates with key external players on achieving tourist satisfaction collectively					

SECTION E: TOURIST PURCHASING DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

7. For each of the statements below, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by placing a tick in the appropriate column.


KEY: **1.** Strongly Disagree (SD), **2.** Disagree (D), **3.** Neutral (N), **4.** Agree (A) and **5.** Strongly Agree (SA)

Statement: :	1	2	3	4	5
i)General understanding of tourist's need recognition stage					
ii)General understanding of tourist's information search stage					
ii)General understanding of tourist's pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives stage					
iii)General understanding of tourist's purchasing decision and action stage					
v)General understanding of tourist's post-purchase evaluation stage					

Thank you for participating on this survey

Appendix II: Plagiarism Awareness certificate

SR106



THESES WRITING COURSE

PLAGIARISM AWARENESS CERTIFICATE

This certificate is awarded to

BLANDINA DUNSTAN SHEMMETTA

STHE/PTT/001/18

In recognition for passing the University's plagiarism
Awareness test with a similarity index of 08% and
Striving to maintain academic integrity.

Awarded by:



Prof. John Changach, CERM-ESA Project Leader

25th /08/2022

Appendix III: Research Letters



MOI UNIVERSITY
 ISO 9001:2015 Certified Institution
SCHOOL OF TOURISM, HOSPITALITY & EVENTS MANAGEMENT

Telephone: 0771-296270/0790850990
 Fax: (053) 43047
 E-mail: deansthe@mu.ac.ke

Box 3900
ELDORET
 Kenya

Ref: MU/STHE/SGS/23

3rd April, 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RECOMMENDATION LETTER FOR BLANDINA DUNSTAN SHEMWETTA -STHE/PTT/001/18

The above named is a bonafide student of Moi University, School of Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management. She is pursuing a Master of Science in Travel and Transport Service Management degree in the Department of Travel and Tour Operations Management.

She has successfully completed her course work and has defended her proposal titled **“The influence of Customer –Centric Approach on Tourist Buying Behavior in Tour Operating Companies in Arusha, Tanzania”**. Ms. Shemwetta has been allowed to proceed to the field for data collection.

Any assistance accorded to her will be appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

SCHOOL OF TOURISM, HOSPITALITY & EVENTS MANAGEMENT
MOI UNIVERSITY
PROF. DAMIANAH KIETI
DEAN, SCHOOL OF TOURISM, HOSPITALITY & EVENTS MANAGEMENT



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.
SOKOINE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR**

P.O Box 3000, CHUO KIKUU, MOROGORO, TANZANIA.
Phone: +255 (023) 2640006/7/8/9, Direct Line: +255
(022640023, Fax: +255 (023) 2640016, E-mail: vc@sua.ac.tz
Website: <https://www.sua.ac.tz>



Please refer to:

Our Ref. SUA/DPRTC/R/8/10

Date: 28th March, 2019

The Regional Administrative Secretary,
P. O. Box 650,
ARUSHA.

Re: UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS CLEARANCE

The Sokoine University of Agriculture was established by Universities Act No.7 of 2005 and SUA Charter of 2007 which became operational on 1st January 2007 repealing Act No.6 of 1984. One of the mission objectives of the University is to generate and apply knowledge through research. For this reason the staff, students and researchers undertake research activities from time to time.

To facilitate the research function, the Vice Chancellor of the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) is empowered to issue research clearance to staff, students, research associate and researchers of SUA on behalf of the Government of Tanzania and the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology.

The purpose of this letter is to introduce to you Ms. **Blandina Dunstan Shemwetta** a bonafide MSc. student in Travel and Transport Service Management at Moi University, Kenya and Academic Staff of Sokoine University of Agriculture. By this letter Ms. **Blandina Dunstan Shemwetta** has been granted clearance to conduct research in the country. The title of the research in question is "**The influence of customer-centric approach on tourist buying behaviour in tour operating companies in Arusha, Tanzania**".

The period for which this permission has been granted is from **April, 2019 to June, 2019**. The research will be conducted in **Arusha Region**.

Should some of these areas/institutions/offices be restricted, you are requested to kindly advise the researcher(s) on alternative areas/institutions/offices which could be visited. In case you may require further information on the researcher please contact me.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation and facilitation of this research activity.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Raphael T. Chibunda
VICE CHANCELLOR

Copy to: Student – **Blandina Dunstan Shemwetta** - **Researcher**