Resources and Attractions for Sports Tourism in North Rift Region in Kenya

Winnie Tubey (corresponding author) Masai Mara University, Department of Business Management, P.O. Box 861-20500, Narok, Kenya Email: tubeyw@gmail.com

Ruth Jelagat Tubey Moi University, School of Human Resource Development, P. O. Box 6898- 30100, Eldoret, Kenya E-mail: tubeyruth@gmail.com

Abstract

The priority segment for the North Rift region in Kenya is the sport- related type, and therefore, it is necessary to develop the existing athletics events in the region as well as develop others. Destinations with a wealth of resources may sometimes not be as competitive as a destination with lack of resources. The most important is the ability of the tourism sector to add value to its products. This study sought to establish the core resources and attractions available for sports tourism in the North Rift region. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and was guided by the integrated model for destination competitiveness by Dwyer et al. (2004). The target population included all the athletics camps as well as the tourism facilities in Uasin Gishu and Nandi districts. Simple random sampling was used to select 25 athletics camps from which 50 athletics officials were selected using simple random sampling techniques. Simple random sampling was also used to select one manager from each of the tourism firms selected for the study, making a total of 35 tourism firm managers. Primary data was collected by use of structured questionnaires, while secondary data was collected through critical examination of public or private recorded documents that are related to the study. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques which included frequencies, means, modes, standard deviation and percentages and multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the relationship between the independent variables used in this study and the dependent variable and also test the hypotheses. The study found out that the North Rift was endowed with a good climate, natural wonders, flora and fauna, unspoiled nature as well as some national parks and reserves.

Keywords: Resources, Attractions, Sports Tourism, North Rift, Kenya

Introduction

Tourist Destination Competitiveness and Attractiveness (TDCA) is defined by Vengesayi (2005), as the ability of a destination to provide social, physical and economic benefits to the destination population as well as a satisfying experience to the tourist. Studies of destination attractiveness have centered on the needs of the tourists and what attracts them to various destinations, (Formica, 2001), while those on destination competitiveness have focused on the ability of organizations to produce products that are accepted internationally (Kozak and Rimmington, 1999; Newall, 1992).

Core/Endowed Resources

Included under this category are various characteristics of a destination that make it attractive to visit. Crouch and Ritchie (1999) regard core resources and attractors as the primary motivation for destination appeal. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) regard the primary elements of destination appeal as the key elements that motivate visitation to the destination. They posit that different resources have different appeal to different tourists and that tourist motivations can be classified in several ways, and core resources are only a 'pull factor' for some types of tourism. Resources can be divided into two types: endowed (inherited) resources and created resources (Dwyer *et al*, 2004).

Natural Resources

The natural resources of a destination define the environmental framework within which the visitor enjoys the destination. They include physiography, climate, flora and fauna, scenery and other physical assets. While Porter and others have emphasized 'factor creation' as a source of competitive advantage, a destination's endowment of natural resources is crucial for many forms of tourism and visitor satisfaction (Buckley, 1994; Dunn & Iso-Ahola, 1991).

While in the context of manufacturing competitiveness emphasized by management theorists resource disadvantages can be overcome by adding value to the goods and services produced, in the tourism context natural resources have a substantial capacity to attract visitors, regardless of any 'value added' by human providers (Dwyer & Kim 2003).

Heritage and Culture

The heritage and culture of a destination, its history, institutions, customs, architectural features, cuisine, traditions, artwork, music, handicrafts, dance and others, provides a basic and powerful attracting force for the prospective visitor (Cohen, 1988; Murphy *et al*, 2000; Prentice, 1993). Past research has examined the great number of dimensions of culture that enhance the attractiveness of a tourism destination (Ritchie & Zins, 1978). Similarly, there may be differences between the ways in which industry views the 'richness' of culture as opposed to how consumers perceive it. As Ritchie, Crouch and Hudson (2000) point out in an example, merely counting of museums and historic sites, may help in measuring a destination's heritage endowment, this may well mask the quality of these attractions.

Created Resources

Porter (1990) and others note that strengths in other parts of the diamond can overcome factor disadvantages. The literature search undertaken in the present study reveals the importance of 'created resources' in determining firm or national competitiveness. There would seem to be at least five types of 'created 'or 'built' resources that influence destination competitiveness: tourism infrastructure, special events, range of available activities, entertainment and shopping.

Of course, many cultural/heritage attractions of a destination may be 'created' or 'built' (examples include, the Great Wall of China, the Taj Mahal), but these historic sites are more appropriately regarded as comprising elements of destination (inherited) culture and heritage, (Dwyer and Kim, 2003).

Tourism Infrastructure

Dwyer et al (2004) cite tourism infrastructure to include features such as accommodation facilities, food services, transportation facilities, themed attractions, fast food outlets, taverns/bars and receptive tourism plant, tour wholesalers, tour operators, travel agents, car rental firms, local convention and visitor bureaus. Tourism also relies on the provision of numerous ancillary services. Related services infrastructure includes retail facilities, food stores, garages (car maintenance, petrol stations), shopping pharmacies, bookstores/newsagents/kiosks, laundries, hairdressers, administration offices (police, courts and so on). In the eyes of many tourists, and certainly for so-called 'mass tourism', destinations function more effectively when these services are abundant. Mo et al. (1993) have argued that destination service infrastructure is, after destination environment, the most important factor in an international tourist's experience of the destination product. Murphy et al. (2000) found that the level or lack of infrastructure affects tourist experiences and that tourism infrastructure is an important predictor of both destination 'quality' and perceived trip 'value'. This does not, of course, deny the existence of those forms of tourism (nature-based, cultural/heritage and adventure tourism), in which the tourism experience is enhanced by the lack of created tourism infrastructure.

Special Events

This category is intended to capture those happenings where the visitor tends to be highly involved as a participant (for instance, the Olympics, the World cup, Wimbledon tennis and so forth) or those events where simply 'being there' is significant (royal weddings, papal coronations, the investiture of a world leader,). The capacity of special events to generate tourism expenditure is well documented although the economic impacts and net benefits are often exaggerated (Dwyer, Forsyth, Spurr & Ho, 2003). Festivals and events are recognized internationally as making a valuable economic contribution to tourism destinations, and also as having significant growth potential.

Economic impacts include the contribution to employment and income, nationally and regionally. Events tourism is also regarded as associated with arrange of other benefits (and costs) of a more 'intangible' nature that impact on local communities as well as entire regions. These include associated social and cultural benefits to a destination, the exchange of ideas, fostering business contacts, providing forum for continuing education and training, facilitating technology transfer and so on (Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis & Mules, 2000).

Range of Available Activities

The mix of possible activities within a destination is important tourism attractors. These can include recreation and sports facilities, summer facilities (golf, tennis among others); winter facilities (skiing) water sports (swimming, boating, and fishing); night clubs/night life; facilities for special interest visitors such as adventure tourists, ecotourism, cultural/heritage tourism and biking trails.

The more diversified a destination's portfolio of tourism products, services and experiences the greater is its ability to attract different tourist market segments. A climate of competition stimulates improvement and discourages stagnation. For example, the continuing development and expansion of Las Vegas casinos and more recent diversification beyond gambling to encompass a broader range of entertainment and family-oriented activities has enabled Las Vegas to continue to evolve and develop as a tourist destination. Moreover, a destination's seasonal constraints may be partly overcome when tourism enterprises expand the range of seasonal experiences available.

Entertainment

This category primarily encompasses behaviors where the visitor assumes a rather passive 'spectator' role such as the theatre and film festivals (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Entertainment can be found in many forms. From a consumer perspective, the amount of entertainment available at a destination is probably less important than its perceived quality or uniqueness. Even more important for destination competitiveness is the degree to which the entertainment offerings are 'appropriate' to the destination. Ritchie, Crouch and Hudson (2000) cite the Oberammergau Passion play as uniquely associated in the consumer's mind with the destination, even though it could be staged practically anywhere. They thus claim that the competitiveness value of this event exceeds its entertainment value as a mere 'religious' event.

Shopping

Shopping can be regarded as a form of entertainment or, possibly, a necessary chore for many tourists. For some cultures, such as the Japanese and Koreans, gift giving upon returning home is an important element of the entire travel experience (Hobson, 1996). In various parts of the world, the opportunity to shop for duty-free items has provided, in itself, a major motive for travel. For many tourists, the opportunity to shop in an exotic location, or 'duty free', is an important 'pull factor' of outbound travel. Destinations such as Hong Kong and Singapore have at times marketed themselves as 'shopover' destinations. Over 50% of visitor expenditure in Singapore is on shopping items (Singapore Tourism Board, 2000). Given the importance of shopping in tourist expenditure generally and in the purchasing behaviour of Asian tourists in particular, this category is identified separately in Ritchie and Crouch's destination competitiveness model.

Materials and Methods

This study utilized survey research design, which according to Mugenda (2008) is a process of collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects in the study.

The target population included all the athletics camps as well as the tourism facilities in Uasin Gishu and Nandi districts. As per the statistics from the regional sports office in (Uasin Gishu, 2009), there were 57 registered athletics camps within the two districts. There were 285 athletics officials in all the registered athletics camps in the two districts. As per the North Rift Tourism Guide (2009), there were 35 tourism firms in the two districts. The tourism firms targeted included hotels, tour firms and game parks.

The target population for this study was categorized into subgroups using the stratified simple random sampling method that is; officials in the athletics training camps and personnel in the tourism facilities.

The collection of primary data was done by use of structured and semi-structured questionnaires.

Secondary data was collected through critical examination of public or private recorded documents that are related to the study.

Findings

Core Attractions and Resources

These were represented by natural resources, culture and heritage resources and created resources. To gauge respondents' views about them, they were asked to rate them on a 5 point likert scale. Results are given in subsequent sections.

Natural Resources

The study sought to assess the competitiveness of natural resources as tourism attractions. The results using a 5 point rating scale are given in Table 1.

	Tuble 1. Mulurul Resources in the Sludy Area						
	Comfortable climate for sports tourism			Flora and fauna	Unspoiled nature	National parks/reserves	
Mean	4.67	3.97	4.83	4.67	4.53	3.83	
Std. Deviation	.479	.765	.379	.479	.507	.648	
Minimum	4	3	4	4	4	3	
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5	5	

Table 1: Natural Resources in the Study Area

As shown in Table 1, natural resources were measured using climate for tourism, sanitation of the area, natural scenery, flora and fauna, spoiled nature and natural parks. From Table 1, it is evident that there is comfortable climate for sports tourism as indicated by a mean of 4.67 with standard deviation of 0.479. This

implies that majority of the respondents rated the climate for sports tourism as being 'good'. Further, cleanliness/ sanitation of the area was good as shown by a mean of 3.97 with standard deviation of 0.765. Results in Table 1 also indicate that natural wonders/scenery were very good as indicated by a mean of 4.83 and a standard deviation of 0.379. Flora and Fauna was rated as 'good' with a mean of 4.67 and standard deviation of 0.479 while other natural resources such as National parks and nature reserves were rated as being 'good'. As shown by a mean of 3.83 and standard deviation of 0.648. Majority of the respondents also stated that there was unspoiled nature in the study area that was meant to boost sports tourism in the area of study.

From the results, it can be inferred that due to the presence of natural resources like climate, sanitation, natural scenery, flora and fauna, unspoiled nature and national parks, the region boasts of a positive attribute that contributes to the development of sports tourism in the area of study as indicated by a group mean of 4.42.

Culture and Heritage

Culture and heritage was considered as one of the resources that would promote the development of sports tourism in North Rift region. The aspects covered under culture and heritage were heritage sites and museums, architectural features, traditional arts, variety of cuisine and cultural precincts and villages. The opinions of the respondents on this item are shown in Table 2.

Tuble 2. Cuture una Hertuge								
	Historical/Heritage sites and museums	Architectural features	Traditional arts	Variety of cuisine	Cultural precincts			
Mean	3.00	2.60	3.00	2.87	2.83			
Std. Deviation	.947	.932	.947	1.008	1.053			
Minimum	2	1	2	2	1			
Maximum	4	4	4	4	4			

Table 2: Culture and Heritage

It is instructive to note that heritage sites and museums were rated as being 'fair' with a mean of 3 and standard deviation of 0.947, while architectural features were rated as 'fair' with a mean of 2.60 and standard deviation of 0.932. Further, majority of the respondents were of the opinion that competitiveness of traditional arts was fair as shown by a mean of 3 whereas the variety of cuisine was rated as 'fair' with a mean of 2.87. Cultural precincts and (folk) villages were reported to be good with a mean of 2.83, although the standard deviation is wide (1.053). The result implies that culture and heritage was rated as fair as shown by an overall mean of 2.86. Therefore heritage sites and museums, architectural, feature, traditional arts, variety of cuisine and cultural precincts and villages were considered as being fair. There is therefore need to improve these resources since they are important in the development of the tourism and sports industries.

Created Resources

This was represented by tourism infrastructure, range of tourism activities as well as entertainment.

Tourism Infrastructure

Table 3 shows the responses of respondents concerning the state of tourism infrastructure in the area of study.

Table.	3:	Tourism	Infrastructure

			1 1010 01 10				
						Convention/	
					Visitor	Exhibition	
		Airport	Tourist		accessibility	facilities	
	Accommodation	efficiency/	guidance/	Local transport	to natural	(capacity/	Food services
	quality/variety	quality	information	efficiency/quality	areas	quality)	quality/variety
Mean	3.43	2.97	3.10	2.80	3.00	2.13	2.27
Std.	.504	.556	.662	.664	.000	.629	.450
Deviation							
Minimum	3	2	2	2	3	1	2
Maximum	4	4	4	4	3	3	3

As indicated in Table 3, the quality and variety of accommodation available in the tourism facilities was fair as shown by a mean of 3.43 and standard deviation of 0.504. The quality and efficiency of airport facilities was considered as fair by the respondents who participated in this study as indicated by a mean of 2.97.

Further, Table 3 reveals that there was good guidance and release of relevant information to tourists. This is expected to boost the sports tourism in the area of study. The mean for this item was 3.10 with standard

deviation of 0.662. Efficiency and quality of local transport and visitor's accessibility to places of interest were considered as being fair as indicated by means of 2.80 and 3.00 respectively. However, the respondents were of the opinion that the capacity and quality of exhibitions and food services were poor. This is shown by means of 2.13 and 2.27 respectively. This might affect negatively the development of sports tourism in the North Rift region. In general, the tourism infrastructure was rated as good with a mean of 2.81.

Range of Tourism Activities

The study sought to determine the opinion of the respondents on the range of tourism activities in North Rift Region. Their responses are as shown in Table 4.

Tuble 11 Hunge of Tourish Heuvilles						
					· * · · · ·	Shopping experience
Mean	2.13	2.83	3.23	3.27	3.13	1.60
Std. Deviation	.629	1.177	.728	.450	.860	.932
Minimum	1	1	2	3	2	1
Maximum	3	4	4	4	4	3

Table 4: Range of Tourism Activities

From the results in Table 4, majority of the respondents rated water based activities as poor as indicated by a mean of 1.13 and standard deviation of 0.629. Nature based activities were rated as good with a mean of 2.83 and standard deviation of 1.177. This indicates that there was a wide disparity in the responses given by the respondents. As for the adventure activities, recreation activities and sports facilities, the respondents rated them as good as shown by means of 3.23, 3.27 and 3.13 respectively. However the findings indicate that diversity of shopping experiences was rated as poor. This is an indication that there was no variety of shopping experience in the North Rift Region. In overall, the range of tourism activities was rate as being fair with a mean of 2.7.

Entertainment

Entertainment was one of the items that were investigated in this study. The respondents who participated in this study gave the following responses.

	Amusement/theme parks	Entertainment quality/variety	Night life				
Mean	1.83	1.57	2.27				
Std. Deviation	.834	.504	.907				
Minimum	1	1	1				
Maximum	3	2	3				

Table 5: Entertainment Facilities

The components of entertainment were amusement/theme parks, quality and variety of entertainment and night life which includes discos, clubs and bars. Results indicate that theme parks, quality and variety of entertainment and night life were poor. This is indicated by means of 1.83, 1.57 and 2.27 respectively with standard deviation of 0.834, 0.504 and 0.907 respectively. The overall mean was 1.89. As established from the findings of the study, the entertainment facilities were not adequate. This is likely to impact negatively on the development of sports tourism in the North Rift Region.

Discussion

Core Resources and Attractions

The importance of natural attractions and activities for a tourism destination are obvious. The natural resources of a destination signify the environmental framework within which the visitor enjoys the destination (Dwyer and Kim 2003). Mentioned in other destination competitiveness studies with different terminologies, they represent the 'core' of the destination. Some of them are just inherited by the country; these are the natural resources including culture and heritage, whereas others can be created. The variety and quality of nature a country possess have a direct influence on determining its competitiveness of a sports tourism destination.

This study sought to determine the existence, performance, range, level and contribution of natural resources to sports tourism in the North Rift region of Kenya. Natural resources were measured using climate for tourism, sanitation of the area, natural scenery, flora and fauna, unspoiled nature and natural parks and reserves. The findings revealed that there was comfortable climate for sports tourism; this is shown by the majority of the respondents who rated the climate for tourism as being good. Further, cleanliness and sanitation, natural wonders

and scenery, flora and fauna as well as national parks and natural reserves within the area were rated good. Majority of the respondents also stated that there was unspoiled nature in the area of study that was meant to boost sports tourism in the area of study.

Attractions are the primary elements of destination appeal. They are the key motivators for visitation to a destination, Crouch and Ritchie (1999). They are the fundamental reasons why prospective visitors choose one destination over another. The range of activities within a destination is an important pull factor and represents some of the most critical aspects of destination appeal. It is therefore important that the North Rift maintains and improves the natural resources the area is endowed with if it desires to attract more visitors to the region.

Culture and heritage was considered as one of the resources that would promote the development of sports tourism in North Rift region. The aspects covered under culture and heritage were heritage sites and museums, architectural features, traditional arts, variety of cuisine and cultural precincts and villages. The opinion of the respondents on the range and performance of culture and heritage sites, museums, architectural, features, traditional arts, variety of cuisine and villages were considered as being fair and may need further improvement.

In relation to the state of tourism infrastructure in the area of study, the quality and variety of accommodation available in the tourism facilities was fair. The quality and efficiency of airport facilities was also considered as fair by the respondents who participated in this study.

The study sought to determine the opinion of the respondents on the range of tourism activities in North Rift Region. Generally, the range of tourism activities within the region was found to be wanting as there was no diversity. The study determined the lack of shopping facilities as well as water based activities despite the region boasting of several water bodies. There were some disparities of opinion concerning the existence, performance and range of tourism activities indicating the need to diversify these activities so as to improve the competitiveness of the North Rift as a sports tourism destination.

An efficient service is expected for check-in and check-out procedures at the destination airport along with accommodation facilities, food and beverage facilities. Since time is limited, tourists intend to have more experience in a shorter time rather than wasting time in queuing or complaining. A destination's competitiveness is sensitive to these components. The implementation of factor-creating mechanisms such as education, research and development and investment programmes are some of the most significant tools for creating a sustainable competitive advantage for international tourist destinations. Eliminating bureaucratic barriers could further improve tourist services and quality, and reinforce the competitiveness of a destination (Keller and Smeral 1997).

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to determine the range of core attractions and resources available for sports tourism in the region. The core attractions and resources were divided into natural and created resources. The study found out that the North Rift was endowed with a good climate, natural wonders, flora and fauna, unspoiled nature as well as some national parks and reserves. These are natural resources that play a key role in attracting tourists to the region and the high altitude climate is conducive for training of athletes. Culture and heritage was considered as one of the resources that would promote the development of sports tourism in North Rift region. The aspects covered under culture and heritage were heritage sites and museums, architectural features, traditional arts, variety of cuisine and cultural precincts and villages. It was however noted that, this variable received a low rating compared to other natural resources and therefore important to preserve the heritage and cultural artifacts within the region. Of concern would be the poor rating exhibited by the created resources. Effort should be put in setting up more standard amenities and improvements made in service delivery as well as diversify the range of tourism activities in the region.

Recommendation

An efficient service is expected for check-in and check-out procedures at the destination airport along with accommodation facilities, food and beverage facilities. Since time is limited, tourists intend to have more experience in a shorter time rather than wasting time in queuing or complaining.

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