

CULTURAL SITES IMPRESSIONS: A MARKET NICHE FOR ECOTOURISM DESTINATIONS IN KISUMU COUNTY, KENYA

¹DAVID OMONDI ACHIENG, ²PATRICK O. HAYOMBE, ³STEPHEN G. AGONG

¹ PhD student, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Kenya

² Supervisor (PhD) and Dean of School; Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Kenya

³ Vice Chancellor (Professor) – Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Kenya

E-mail: ¹achiengomo@hotmail.com, ²rapospat@yahoo.com, ³sgagong@jooust.ac.ke

Supported by **Mistra Urban Futures** (www.mistraurbanfutures.org)

ABSTRACT

Cultural sites as ecotourism destinations and village settlements are a source of pleasure and delight for the local community and visitors to the destinations. Understanding the core attributes perspective of the cultural sites impressions is crucial to branding the sites as ecotourism destinations for sustainable and diversification of sources of livelihood of the communities living around the cultural sites in Kisumu county. This paper sought to examine cultural sites impressions and branding of ecotourism destinations for sustainable livelihood in Kisumu County and its environs. This study was premised on Expectancy-Theory and Place Branding Theory. The study adopted descriptive embedded case design and cross-sectional survey in the three selected units of analysis methodology with both quantitative and qualitative approaches to source and analyze data. The finding established that positive cultural sites impressions are key to branding of ecotourism destinations and sustainability of livelihood of the local community in Kisumu County and its environs.

Keywords: *Cultural Sites, Attributes, Impressions, Ecotourism, Branding Destinations, Kisumu County*

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism was one of the six key sectors identified to drive the economic growth rate envisaged in the (World Trade Organization, 2008). By focusing on the tourism sector, Kenya aspires to be a top ten long haul tourist destinations offering a high-end, diverse and distinctive visitor experience which encompasses development of niche tourism products as among the key flagship project. This is in line with economic pillar of vision 2030 of ensuring prosperity of all citizens by achieving and sustaining a high economic growth rate of 10 percent per annum as stipulated in Kenya's economic recovery strategy paper. Cultural sites have different attributes and dominant characteristics that make them unique and distinctive from others.

A study by Trotter, (2001) opines that cultural tourism is historical tourism which maintains historical accurate places and objects as evidence of culture social and historical characteristics of a place or its people, such as historic sites. Cultural sites are becoming increasingly popular as tourists destinations, these places have become products that can be marketed, sold and recreated, and they are seen as assets, readily transformed into products that are sold to consumers seeking an experience (Naoui, Airey, Lijima & Niininen, 2006). According to Cai

(2002) "Impression is an active self presentation of a person or destination aiming at enhancing image in the eyes of others". A symbolic interaction theorist coined the term impression where sociologists and theorists have been adding insight and importance to the concept. According to Dinnie (2008) "Impression is the act of presenting a favourable public image so that others will form a positive judgment". But as asserted by Okungu, Hayombe and Agong, (2014), local people who engage in leisure activities are not aware that they are actually local ecotourists; hence first impressions ought to be made by the locals in order to attract potential visitors. When it comes to making first impressions, destinations should ensure that they get it right in the first time. When investing on how to make the first impression a lasting impression, then destinations should definitely be willing to invest in something that creates a long lasting image of the destinations determining a potential tourists staying or leaving.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Core Attributes of Cultural Sites as Ecotourism Destinations

Travels Activities and Motivations Survey (TAMS) (2006) reported that with cultural tourism, tourism

and culture together meet the particular needs and interest of travellers whose main motivation for travel are experiences in the performing arts, visual arts and crafts; museums and cultural centres; historic sites and interpretive centres; cultural industries and cultural events. Cultural heritage and its tangible and intangible representation are also of interest for tourists' key destination asset (Garcia, Mar & Aturo 2012). Cultural heritage contains a commitment to preserve and restore historic sites, buildings and artefacts to enlarge the stock of visitor's attractions. Culture, entertainment and arts are product category of the performing arts, museums, art galleries, handcraft and heritage trails. Cultural festival and food are acclaimed as other selling points.

Tourism is thereby a means of conserving heritage and contemporary cultural depth, diversity and detail and enhancing their appreciation at home and overseas, with culture come together to meet the particular needs and interests of travellers whose main motivation for travel are experiences in the performing arts; visual arts and crafts; museums and cultural centres; historic sites and interpretive centres; cultural industries and events (e.g as depicted in Figure 1).

There is an opportunity to enrich core characteristics in cultural sites by creativity of more traditional offerings in cultural sites as ecotourism destinations. A study by Odede, Hayombe, Agong & Mossberg (2013) reported that cultural heritage sites are the only source of community treasured natural products and potentially high value cultural heritage assets.

2.2 Ecotourism Destinations

The label "ecotourism" in the travel industry is akin to a shell game. When researching on ecotourism, follow the International Ecotourism Society guidelines to certify that the organization or agency fosters awareness for the environment and cultural practices in the local community. You must distinguish sustainable practices from "green washing," a marketing scheme correlating a convincing association with environmental concerns for an unsustainable service or practice.

According to Scheyvens (2002), Ecotourism involves all types of tourism that focuses on appreciation of nature with environmentally responsible, enlightening travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy, study and appreciate nature and any accompanying cultural features both past and present that promotes conservation with low visitor

impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations.

In theory, one of the core concepts of ecotourism is economic benefits to the local communities at the local communities at the destinations sites, but often than not in practice the local community involvement has been reported low with less benefit (Achieng, Hayombe & Agong, 2014). Furthermore, Honey (2002) points out that real ecotourism is- if properly understood and implemented, a set of principles and practices which can transfer the way people travel with financial benefits for conservation efforts and local people but must also support human rights and democratic movements.

A study by Egan (2001) pointed out that ecotourism destinations requires water as natural resource contributor in enhancing the principle of ecotourism benefits to the local communities which is a unique selling propositions of cultural sites impressions in Kisumu county. Ecotourism as a venture of giving economic benefits and showing cultural sensitivities to local communities cannot be separated from understanding their political circumstances. In many developing countries, rural populations living around national parks and other ecotourism attractions are locked in contests with the national government and multinational corporations for control of the assets and their benefits. Eco-tourists therefore need to be sensitive to the host country's political environment and social climate that need to consider the merits of international boycotts called for by those supporting democratic reforms, majority rule, and human rights. For example the campaign by the African National Congress (ANC) to isolate South Africa through a boycott of investment, trade, sports and tourism helped bring down apartheid. National Parks and other conservation areas will only survive if there are "happy people" around their perimeters. The local community must be involved with and receive income and other tangible benefits (potable water, roads, health clinics, etc.) from the conservation area and its tourist facilities. Campsites, lodges, guide services, restaurants and other concessions should be run by or in partnership with communities surrounding a park or other tourist destination.(Garcia, Mar & Aturo 2012)

A study by Achieng², Okungu, Hayombe & Agong² (2015) suggested that for ecotourism to be viewed as a tool for rural development, it must also help shift economic and political control to the local community, village, cooperative, or entrepreneur. This is the most difficult and time-consuming principle in the economic equation and the one that

foreign operators and "partners" most often let fall through the cracks or that they follow only partially or formally. Ecotourism is not only 'greener' but also less culturally intrusive and exploitative than conventional tourism. Blain, Staurt & Ritchie (2005) argues that prostitution, black markets and drugs often are by-products of mass tourism, ecotourism strives to be culturally respectful and have a minimal effect on both the natural environment and the human population of a host country. This is not easy, especially since ecotourism often involves travel to remote areas where small and isolated communities have had little experience interacting with foreigners. Ecotourism involves an unequal relationship of power between the visitor and the host and a modification of the relationship through exchange of money. Part of being a responsible ecotourist is learning about the local customs, respecting dress codes and other social norms and not over bear on the community unless either invited or as part of a well organized tour. (George & Rilla, 2008)

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was premised on the Expectancy-Disconfirmation theory which holds that consumers first form expectations of products or services performance prior to purchase or use. Consumers' expectations: confirmed when the product or service matches prior expectation, negatively disconfirmed when a product or service fails to match expectation. It will be jointly guided with Place Branding Theory which is a theory that seeks to improve the reputation of ecotourism destination with potential of economic growth. The theory advanced by Anholt (2007) is applied to places for variety of purposes that include increase of exports, attraction of new investments and diversifications of revenue generation streams of ecotourism destinations. The Place Branding Theory is relevant to the study because it focuses on the promotion of the destination's values which places seek to position in minds of potential target market segment

4. OBJECTIVE

To examine core attributes of cultural sites impressions as ecotourism destinations in Kisumu County.

5. RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the core attributes of cultural sites impressions as ecotourism destinations in Kisumu County?

6. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

In an attempt to achieve the objective, the research was guided by the null hypothesis that:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between attributes of cultural sites impressions and visitations to the sites in Kisumu County. Chi-square was used to test Hypothesis in order to predetermine alpha level of significance (0.05) and a degree of freedom ($df = 2$).

7. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by the conceptual framework in Figure 2. This conceptual framework relates brand image of ecotourism destinations to visitations of the cultural sites; however these relationships may be influenced by government policies, globalization dynamics, economic factors, political factors and environmental factors.

8. METHODOLOGY

8.1 Research Design

The study employed descriptive embedded case design and a cross - sectional survey to carry out the research in the three selected units of analysis in Kisumu County. An embedded case study is a case with more than one sub-unit of analysis (Yin, 2003). Creswell (2003) submit that a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitude or opinion about a population by studying a sample for generalization with ease to apply in relatively a short period. The study area comprised of Kitmikayi, Abindu and Luanda Magere as indicated in the extract of Kenya map in *Figure 3*. Figures 4, 5 and 6 further illustrate the cultural sites.

8.2 Target Population

The study was carried out among the households in the three selected cultural sites as the target population with a sample size selected through stratified random sampling drawn from the target population of study areas.

8.3 Sample Size and Sample Selection

A purposive sampling technique was used to settle on the three sites of study. The study targeted 4792 households in the three sub-locations with sample size of 356 respondents determined by the formula in Fisher et al., (1998) for determining a population that is less than 10,000. The three sites are: Kitmikayi in Seme district, Abindu Caves in Kisumu west district and Luanda Magere in

Wang'aya -1 Muhoroni district. Table 1 illustrate distribution of the respondents in the sample.

8.4 Sampling Techniques

The study used stratified random sampling procedures to divide the population into geographical subgroups. The samples were stratified according to the numbers of villages in every sub location to ensure representation. By the use of simple random sampling method in each stratum, a sample of 356 consisting of Households 134 in Kitmikayi, Household 109 in Bar 'B', Households 114 in Wangaya' 1' 114, were selected.

8.5 Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

A combination of structured and unstructured methodologies was used. Gurthie and Thyne (2004) suggested that unstructured methods be incorporated into the research design at inception stage to elicit information from respondents, data was collected through the use of focus group discussion (FGD) which led to the construction of questionnaires. Quantitative data were analyzed by the use of descriptive statistical with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 Principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on factors to group the various variables of the construct. Hypothesis testing used chi-square test (X^2) of independence to test if there is significant relationship between attributes of cultural sites impressions and Visitations of sites.

Then by comparing the p – value with 0.05 significant levels, we may either accept H_0 or reject it. If the calculated p-value is less than 0.05 the null hypothesis is rejected or otherwise null hypothesis we fail to reject it. Qualitative data were transcribed, organized into various relevant themes and reported as they arrive. (Kothari, 2008).

9. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As ecotourism seeks diverse products, cultural sites need to match and offer range of ecotourism attractions along with the current sacred places, history, culture, nature, education and adventure. Diverse attraction mix which is popular in cultural sites elsewhere needs to be explored, developed and promoted to increase visitations in Kisumu County and its environs.

Descriptive statistics for the sample were as follows:

In chart 1, the scale represents average opinion of respondents. 0-2 representing disagreement while 2 and above represents agreement. This implies that there is a need to work on the disagreements

especially lack of characteristics that attract tourists and short falls in branding (Achieng 'et al., 2014). Figure 7 illustrates the analyzed cultural Site Impressions

9.1 Principal Component Analysis.

There are several correlations below 0.4 and the rest above from an eight variable matrix formed. This justifies the use of PCA to reduce the number of variables. A scree plot showed how many components curved out of the 8 variables. This was read by the number of points along the dropping slope before the start of the horizontal set of points. These are two. Next we have the component matrix. table 2 provides an expression of Principal Component Analysis showing Component Matrix^a

Variables A1, A2, A3, A6, and A8 load heavily on component 1 while the rest (A4, A5, and A7) load heavily on component 2. Looking at the component 1 variables, one notices that they are all about the site characteristics that make it suitable for tourism. We called the components "Viable site characteristics that promote visitation". The remaining three have to do with government support and involvement of the locals. A7 is interesting because strictly speaking, it loads on both components. However it has a heavier loading on component two than 1. The respondents have varied opinion that does not place the variable clearly on either agreeing or disagreeing. We called component two "interventions that promote visitation". These two new variables can be used for further analysis rather than the 8.

Communality is the total influence on a single observed variable from all the factors associated with it. It is equal to the sum of all the squared factor loadings for all the factors related to the observed variable and this value is the same as R^2 in multiple regressions. The value ranges from 0 to 1 where 1 indicates that the variable can be fully defined by the factors and has no uniqueness. In contrast a value of 0 indicates that the variable cannot be predicted at all from any of the factors. Our result shows that we do not need to worry about the new components' explanatory power of all the 8 variables. In each case the components carry over 90% explanations of the variables

9.2 Visitation.

The researcher extracted visitation records kept at the cultural sites. Some of the sources were visitors' register and ledger books kept by station attendants. Table 3 summarizes the inflow per year per site.

9.3 Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypothesis, the researcher computed the following statistics: Site characteristics index was computed from the weighted responses. Further, average visitation per year was computed from yearly visitation data for the years 2013 and 2014 (See Table 4).

The null hypothesis was: Ho: There is no significant relationship between attributes of cultural sites impressions and visitations to the sites in Kisumu County.

A chi-square test of independence was carried out at 5% significance level using the observed and expected data. The p-value was 5.836 E-8 which is much lesser than 0.05. the null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that there is significant relationship between visitation and cultural site impressions. This implies that an impression of the cultural sites in the minds of potential tourists enhances visitations. It is now upon the county government to improve the impressions of the cultural sites.

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There was a general disagreement and weak agreement on cultural site characteristics by respondents implying that a lot need to be done to create better impressions that in turn attract more visitations since it has been proved that there is a significant relationship between the two. More urgently the need to enrich characteristics that can create value chain for sustainable sites and issues of specific characteristics of outstanding impressions that attracts visitations.

REFERENCES

- Achieng, D.O, Hayombe, P.O & Agong, S.G (2014): *Positioning ecotourism destinations in Kisumu County: Cultural Diversity Perspective, (IOSR Journal of Computer Engineering)*, e- ISSN: 2278-8727, Vol. 16, issue 6, ver11 Nov-Dec 2014
- Achieng, D.O, Okungu J.O, Hayombe, P.O & Agong, S.G (2015): *Conjunctive use of surface and Groundwater as Agri-tourism Resource Facilitator: Discourse Analysis for Planning in Developing Nations, (IOSR Journal of Business and Management)*
- Anholt, S. (2007). *Competitive Identity: the new brand management for nations,*
- Baker, M. & Cameron, E. (2008). *Critical success factors in destination marketing.*
- Blain, C, Staurt, E.L & Ritchie J.R (2005): *Destinations Branding Insights and Practices from Destinations Management Organizations- Journal of Travels Research*, 43, 328-338
- Cai, L (2002). "Cooperative Branding for rural destinations" *annals of Tourism Research*, 29(3): 720-742
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research Design. Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Method Approaches.* London: Sage Publication Thousand Oaks.
- Differentiate Regional Tourism destinations" Journal of travel research*, 46, 5-14
- Dinnie, K (2008). *Nation branding: concepts, Issues, Practice.* Oxford, UK. Butterworth-
- EC (2003): *Sustainability tourism based on natural and cultural heritage. Chapt.3* pg. 11
- Egan, T., (2001). "Uneasy Being Green: Tourism runs wild" *The New York Times.*
- Fisher, S. Marlow, Weeks D. & Monaco A (1999) *A quantitative- trait locus on chromosome 6 p influence different aspects of developmental dyslexia. AM JHUM Genet 64:146-156*
- Garcia, J. A. Mar G. & Arturo M., (2012) "A Destination- Branding Model: An empirical analysis based on stakeholder tourism management, 33, 646-661
- George H & Rilla, E (2008) *Agri-tourism Enterprises on Farm or Ranch: Where to start.* UC -ARN Pub 8334. Oakland, CA 4p
- Honey, M (2002). *Ecotourism and Certification: setting standards in practice.* Washington DC: Island Press
- Kothari, C.R (2008): *Research Methodology, new age international (P) Limited, publishers 4835/24, Ansai Road, New Delhi India-110002*
- Naoui, T., Airey, D., Lijima, S. & Niininen O. (2006). *Visitors' evaluation of an historical district: Repertory grid analysis*

- and laddening analysis with photographs. *Tourism Management*, 27, 420-436.
18. Odede, F.Z, Hayombe, P.O, Agong, S.G & Mossberg, L (2013). *Sustainable Utilization of Cultural Heritage Sites for Posterity in Kisumu County, Kenya*. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, VOL.3 No.20 2013
19. Okungu J. O., Hayombe, P. O., and Agong', S. g., (2014): *Assessing Water-Based Recreational Activities to Project Beach Ecotourism Potentials in Kisumu County*. *IOSR Journal of Computer Engineering (IOSR-JCE)* Volume 16, Issue 6, Ver. II (Nov – Dec. 2014).
20. Scheyvens, R (2002). *Tourism for development: Empowering communities*-England: Pearson Education Limited
21. *Travels Activities and Motivations Survey (TAMS)* (2006)
22. Trotter, (2001) *Heritage tourism*. In N. Douglas & R. Derret (Eds) special interest tourism: context and cases. Milton, Qld: John Wiley & sons
23. WTO (2008) *Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations: A Good book*, Madrid: WTO.
24. Yin,R.K (2003). *Case study research, design and methods*, 3rd ed. Newbury park: sage Publications.ISBN O- 7619-2553-8.



Figure 1: A cultural event at Kit-Mikayi traditional site in Kisumu County, Kenya.

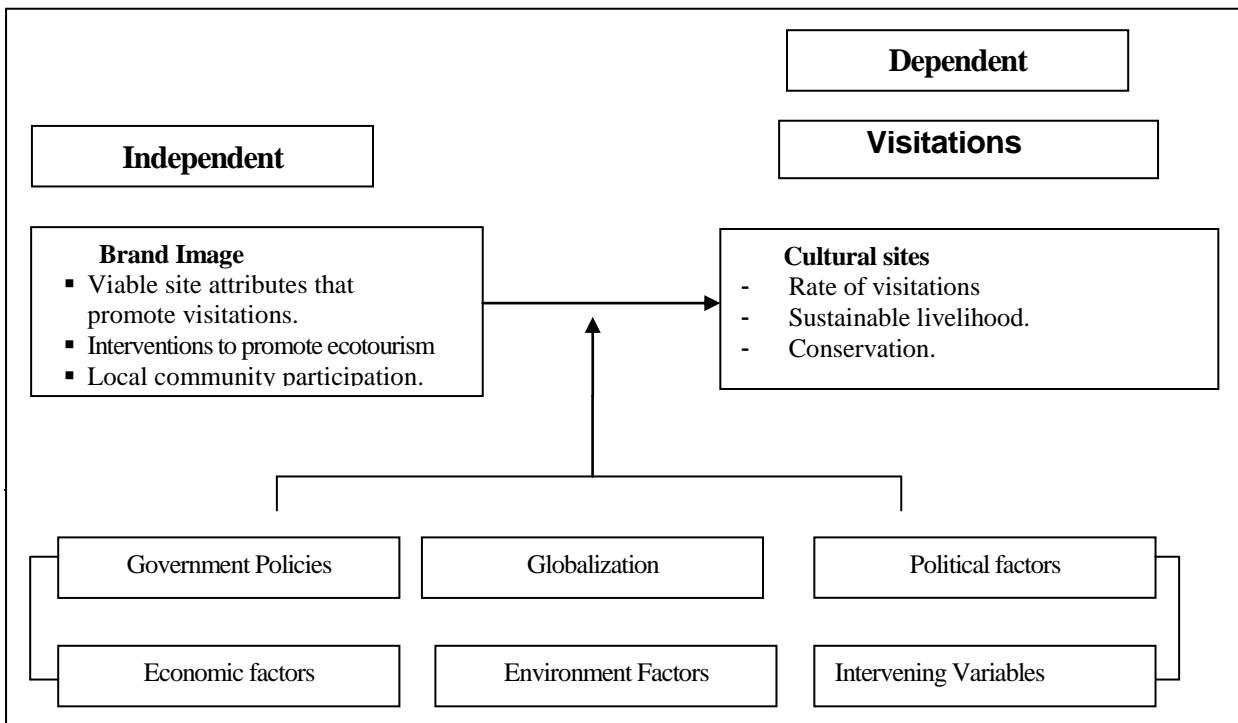


Figure 2: Conceptual framework as conceived by the researcher

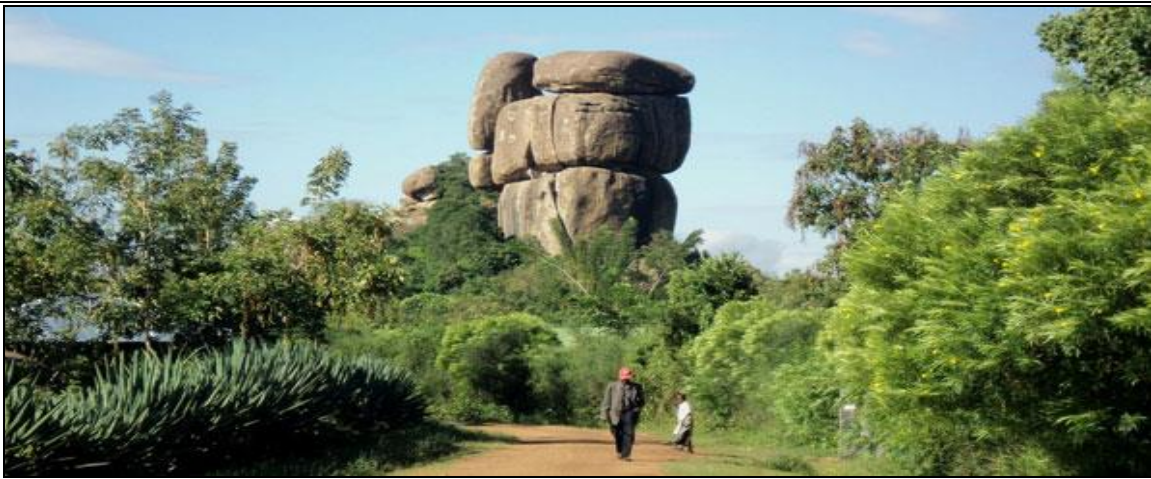


Figure 4: A view of Kit-Mikayi attraction site in Kisumu County

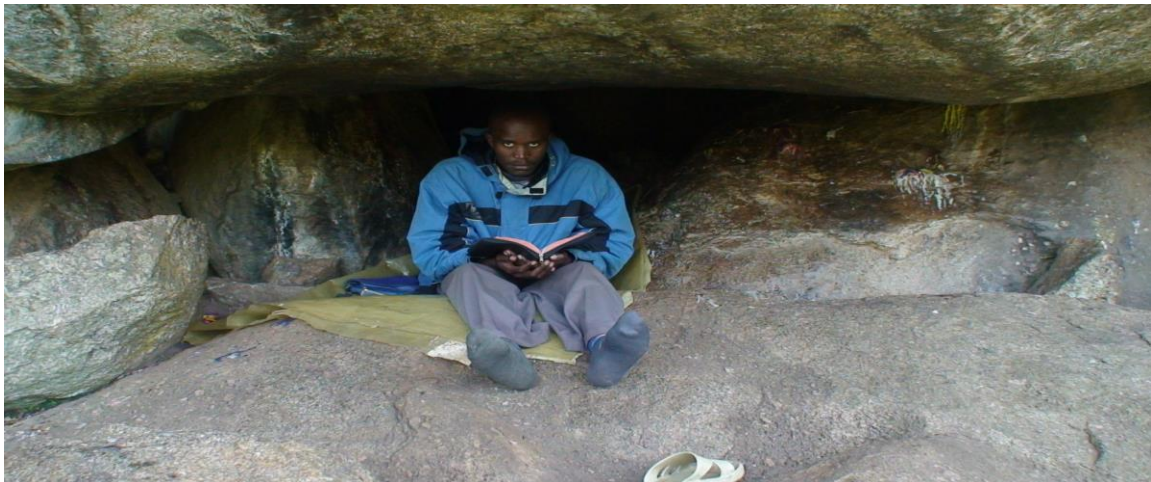


Figure 5: An outlook of Abindu cave in Kisumu County



Figure 6: A portrait of Lwanda Magere and cultural performance a village in Kisumu County

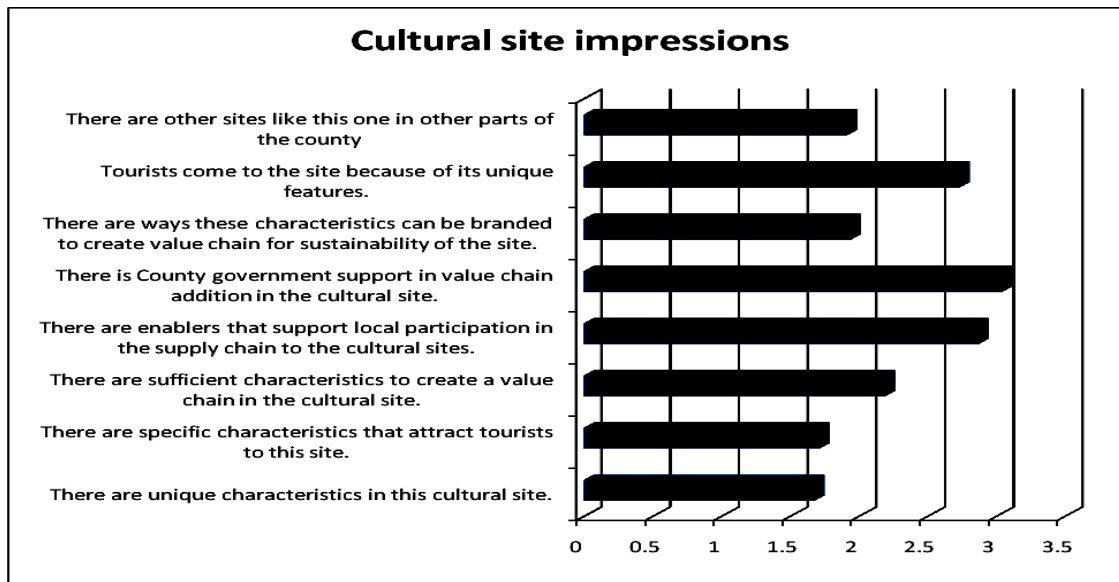


Figure 7: An illustration of analyzed cultural Site impressions

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents in the Sample

Sites	Sub-Locations	Population	% Population	Sample Size
Kitmikayi	Kitmikayi	1802	37.6	134
Abindu Caves	“Bar B”	1460	30.5	109
Luanda Magere	Wangaya 1	1530	31.9	114
TOTAL		4792	100.0	356

Table 2. An expression of Principal Component Analysis showing Component Matrix^a

	Component		Communalities
	1	2	Extraction
A1	.908	-.378	.968
A2	.956	-.292	.999
A3	.936	.344	.995
A4	.017	.989	.978
A5	-.281	.946	.973
A6	.981	.010	.963
A7	.575	.756	.903
A8	.989	-.030	.980

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 2 components extracted.

Table 3: Inflow of visitors per year per site

Site	2013	2014	Average per year
KIT MIKAYI	734	821	777.5
ABINDU	223	241	232
LWANDA MAGERE	112	121	116.5
TOTAL	1069	1183	1126