

Seasonality Effects on Trends of Domestic and International Tourism: A Case of Nairobi National Park, Kenya

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Abstract

Tourism is a very important source for foreign revenue for Kenya, as well as the main supporter and rationale for wildlife conservation in the country. But most of this revenue is from international tourists, which the government and stakeholders seem to invest and focus on more rather than domestic tourism. However, international tourists cannot always support the tourism industry, especially in years of economic, political and social turmoil. A vibrant domestic tourism can cushion the industry from fluctuations in international tourists and bring stability and predictability in the industry. This study sought to address reasons why domestic tourism is still low despite its importance, and suggest ways of improving it in Kenya. The data for this study was gathered through the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) tourism records, interviews with key stakeholders and players in the industry and interviews with local communities surrounding Nairobi National Park. About 64% of all tourists for Nairobi National Park for the last twenty years was domestic tourism, while only 35% were international tourists. The level of education influenced the likelihood of the community to visit the park and appreciate its conservation contribution. Extra disposable income, lack of free time and low education were the hindrances towards local Kenyans visiting the park. Therefore new marketing strategies, special holiday hotel rates for Kenyans and a more friendly hospitality industry for Kenyans would increase domestic tourism, especially for protected areas in urban vicinity.

Key words: Domestic tourism, international tourism, Kenya, Nairobi National Park,

1. Introduction

The World Trade Organization (WTO) defines domestic tourism as “the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment but within the country of residence for not more than one year for leisure, business and other purposes,” (Mena 2004), whereas international tourism consider the same activities but occurring in places outside a travelers’ country of residence. Although the WTO estimates that there are almost three times as many domestic tourists as international ones, a statistical analysis released by the Kenyan Ministry for Tourism and Wildlife shows that the total number of nights spent in hotel beds in the country in the year 2005 was 25% for resident Kenyans and 75% for non-residents (Republic of Kenya, 2006). Arguably, the foreign occupied the large capacity of hotel beds from 1997 to 2005, which would imply that most Kenyans do not participate in domestic tourism (Republic of Kenya, 2006) or that if they do, they do not get accommodated in the local hospitality providers.

The tourism industry as a whole provides many benefits for Kenya, most of which are economic. Tourism is the leading source of foreign exchange capital in Kenya, accounting for 20% of the total foreign exchange earnings and 12% of the total GDP in 2004 (Republic of Kenya 2006). The industry also generates jobs in both formal (hotels, restaurants, transport and tour guides), and informal sectors of the economy, which are estimated at 130,000 jobs in the formal sector and 360,000 in the informal sector (Republic of Kenya, 2006). At the same time, tourism indirectly stimulates other areas of economy such as agriculture, construction, banking as well as the arts, crafts and music industries (Sindiga, 1995). Additional benefits of tourism include government revenues collected from various sources, such as gate entry fees to protected areas, rental fees paid by game lodges, as well as airport, sales, customs and accommodation taxes (Sindiga, 1995). Tourism revenue is also the main rationale for wildlife and environmental conservation in Kenya (Okello, Wishitemi and Lagat 2005), as all tourism in Kenya is wildlife – based (Sindiga 1995, Okello *et al.* 2008).

Domestic tourism specifically has importance in the promotion of cultural understanding, cohesion and goodwill within the country. Promotion of domestic tourism among citizens will encourage them to see attractions within their own country and enhance the formation and maintenance of a national identity through the viewing of national heritage sites (Mena, 2004). Domestic tourism also assists in establishing a united sense of national pride in the country's unique endowment of natural resources, thereby bridging conflicts among tribes and other neighbors. Further, income from domestic tourists as well as international ones is needed to increase the revenue base of conservation agencies these agencies and plays a vital role in Kenya's overall economy, contributing an estimated 10% of its total GDP from 2000 through 2005 (Republic of Kenya, 2006).

However, generally domestic tourism numbers in Kenya are significantly lower than international ones in most tourist destinations in Kenya. Even though the World Trade Organization estimates that there are almost three times as many domestic tourists as international ones worldwide (Mena, 2004), this does not seem to be true for poor countries especially in Africa. Therefore most tourism investment in Kenya have always, even now, targeted the affluent foreign tourists from the western and eastern countries. No attention is paid on domestic tourism, especially if nothing is threatening the international tourism sources. Passing concern is only expressed when numbers in international tourism declines such as during low seasons, and when international tourists cannot come due to threats such as terrorism, economic declines, pandemic disease outbreaks, local conflicts, and political differences with source countries that affect citizens free travel. When there is persistent lack of international tourists, initiatives in Kenya to spur domestic tourism have included reduced entry fees for residents in parks, hotel concessions for local tourists, free entrance on Kenyan Independence Day.

Despite these past initiatives, domestic tourism has not accelerated in Kenya, either because there is no clear study on why domestic tourism is low, or initiatives are addressing the wrong causal factors. In general little comprehensive research has been done on domestic tourism and what contributes to its presence in a country. In order to understand why domestic tourism has not picked up, it is critical to understand what factors hinder domestic tourism and why most Kenyans do not visit national parks close to them. This study used Nairobi National Park, the only protected area within the precinct of a country capital, to investigate these issues, establish implications for domestic tourism in Kenya, and suggest way forward

1.1 OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this study is to evaluate domestic tourism in Kenya, the constraints and progress by using Nairobi National Park. The findings are expected to influence policy for urban and rural protected areas as far as domestic tourism is concerned. The specific objectives were to:

- i. Examine tourism records and establish the numbers, averages and proportions of domestic and international tourists for Nairobi National Park for the past 20 years
- ii. Using open and closed interviews, obtain information from a selected key informants to give their views on factors hindering the growth of domestic tourism in Kenya
- iii. Synthesize this information and provide insights into ways of making tourism growth sustainable in Kenya

2. Methodology

This study was conducted between November and December 2012 within and around Nairobi. The research involved perusing tourism data from the records of the Kenya Wildlife Service between 1989 and 2008. Then there were interviews and discussions conducted with government officials related to tourism industry, researchers, managers, investors and non – governmental organizations involved in tourism industry and lastly the local people in towns and clusters surrounding Nairobi National Park.

Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) has a mandate to conserve Kenya's protected areas, and also to encourage Kenyans' active enjoyment and support of these conservation areas. Interviews with key individuals at KWS included park managers charged with overseeing policy, institutional researchers and other of the KWS.

Tourism data was analyzed using SPSS for Windows 2009 to provide means and trends. T-tests and ANOVA, (Ingule&Gatumu, 1996) were used to test variances between the average number of park visits for citizens, residents, and international tourists throughout the 20 year period from 1989 to 2008. SPSS Statistical Software (version 7.0 for windows) was for statistical analysis.

3. Discussion and Conclusions

According to all KWS officials, including park, research and business officials, the KTB, DTCK, and ECOSOK domestic tourism is important. The domestic tourism is important for two main reasons. One reason is because international tourism is not reliable. International tourism has shown to be very unstable. In years where there were high amounts of violence the number of international visitors decreased. Tourists do not want to spend a great deal of money to travel to a country that is going through 'post-election violence'. Even more evident is that a tourist from America would not want to go to a country where the American embassy was bombed. In many instances a foreign countries government will not allow its citizens to travel to an unstable country. For example during 1998 there was a drop of in international tourism when the American Embassy was attacked in Nairobi, Kenya. International tourism took ten years to return to previous amounts. When these numbers decrease a large amount of Kenya's income is lost.

Domestic tourism does not fluctuate nearly as much as international tourism, providing nearly two-thirds of a year's total tourism. Due to this lack of fluctuation domestic tourism has the potential to create a strong economic base for Kenya. KWS park officials and researchers share this idea.

There are several reasons why domestic tourism is not doing as well as it could be doing. One of these reasons is because domestic tourists may have negative experiences associated with the park. As was seen in the community questionnaire, Kenyans who found the park visitation 'less than enjoyable' or 'not worth the money' were less likely to frequent the park. Also, as pointed out by KTB many Kenyans feel that they are treated like second-class citizens when compared with the international visitors.

Domestic tourism is also hindered because of social norms in Kenya. The holiday season in Kenya includes the months of April, August and December. During these months there is an increase in the average amount of citizen entrance to NNP, this is especially true for December. In Kenya December is a month with the most celebration, do to holidays like Christmas. While Kenyans can travel around their native land more during Christmas, international tourism is low during the Christmas month, because many of these tourists will stay in their native countries for Christmas. International tourism increases during the summer months when, in many countries like the United States of America schools are on break. While there is a slight increase in the citizen tourist levels during the holiday months, there is still much room for improvement. KATO points out that most Kenyans view holiday time as a chance to get caught up on work, this means they are less likely to go vacationing.

These results concerning international and domestic tourism are fairly expected. It was expected that the KWS, government organizations and non-government organizations all believe that domestic tourism is important. When it was brought to light that many domestic tourists are treated less well than the international tourists, it was surprising to find out that many Kenyans did not feel that the wildlife areas are only for tourists. It was surprising to find that two-thirds of all tourism is from domestic tourism. This can be explained when the area of this study is observed. Nairobi National Park is located just outside of the capitol city of Kenya, Nairobi. This area has more middle class and educated citizens. Kenyans who were interviewed generally showed, as the education level increase so did the likely hood that they would visit NNP. In an area with more education there will be more park visitation, and other holidays taken.

There is a need to expand domestic tourism. When domestic tourism is increase more Kenyans will be able to see animals that are considered theirs, and part of their heritage. Due to the highly fluctuating nature of international tourism it should not be considered a reliable source of income. Domestic tourism, while it does show some peaks with the holiday months, does not fluctuate as much as international tourism, making it much more reliable for income, when it is built up to properly bring in more money. Kenyans do not feel that their parks are open just for tourists showing a hope that there can be a way to encourage them to attend the park more often. The government and non-government's indication that domestic tourism is important shows their willingness to help increase domestic tourism.

The next step seems to be to find ways to encourage Kenyans to travel or vacation more. This could be done through increased marketing in forms that all Kenyans can encounter, such as signs and radios. The KWS currently opens NNP on government holidays for reduced prices; this could be expanded with more programs on those days. It would also be useful to put one government agency completely in charge of domestic tourism and one completely in charge of international tourism. KTB seems the best fit for international tourism while the DTCK should take over all the domestic tourism issues.

There are several factors that influence park visitation, these include income, education, how a Kenyan spends their free time, and the enjoyment of previous park visits. Entering NNP is not free; currently the citizen rate to enter the park is 500 Ksh. This makes it not surprising that local visitation to the park was dependent on income. Kenyans, whose incomes were over 20,000 Ksh a year, were significantly more likely to visit the park. On the other hand, a citizen without a job was less likely to have been to NNP.

Due to Nairobi National Park's location near Nairobi city, many schools use the park as a field trip destination. In fact, over half of the surveyed people said they had been to the park. This educational trip is the first experience many children have with the park. Putting a distinctly educational idea on the park, it was found that as a Kenyan's level of education increased so did the chance that they had been to the park. Kenyans who did not reach secondary school were less likely to visit the park. Students, who continue school longer, generally enjoy school more, and because the park offers a distinctly educational opportunity they are going to be more likely to want to go to the park.

When visiting the park, a person is using their free time. It is no surprise that someone who enjoys spending their free time by participating in nature activities would choose to go to the park. When a person enjoys their experience they are more likely to return to the park. People who found the park 'less than enjoyable' or 'not worth their money' were less likely to return to the park. These less than enjoyable feelings may be, as KTB has pointed out, that many Kenyans feel less important than the international tourists. It was unexpected to learn that Kenyans who spend their free time doing recreational activities were more likely to have visited the park. This would make sense when one considers that a person is more likely to go to a park when they are not staying at home.

Many of these findings are consistent with the stakeholder's ideas. For example the KWS lists financial hardships as one of the challenges for domestic tourism. KWS has also talked about targeting school and increasing the number of educational centers in parks, both of these ideas would increase the amounts of educated people attending the park. Negative park experiences could also be felt because as DTCK points out many tour packages are out of the average citizen's price range.

There was a larger population of Kenyans that considered the conservation of land and wildlife in Kenya 'very important' than who said they went to NNP. This shows that there is a group of people who can be reached to go to the park who care about the environment and thusly, are more likely to want to go to the park. There are also opportunities to create travel packages or day events that are focused for Kenyans who prefer recreational and nature activities. There is also the awareness to create more programs for low-income individuals.

Education has shown to play a vital role in the concerns about conservation, and in the visitation of Nairobi National Park. Higher levels of education increase park visitation. The more educated an individual is the more likely they are to have visited the park. Many school children in and around Nairobi visit NNP during school, so it makes sense that a Kenyan who stays in school longer will have more opportunities to visit the park. This is also reflected when it was found that people who did not reach education levels of secondary or higher were less likely to visit the park. Also with more opportunities to visit the park there is a greater chance in creating lasting memories in the park, with happy memories a person is likely to want to return to the park at a later date.

A person with more education is more likely to value conservation. Meaning the higher a subject's education level the more likely they were to respond that conservation was 'very important'. Conservation is a topic discussed in great lengths at school. A person who has had less schooling may simply see conservation as taking care of animals when people need help, but a student who has studied conservation sees animals that when removed from the system will create openings for the gross expanding of invasive species and non-predatory animals. This could in turn hurt crops and domestic cattle herding. Also connected to these levels of education are increased chances that they would urge other Kenyans to visit NNP. People are likely to recommend that others attend places they feel are important, or

help causes, like conservation they support. As the KWS pointed out lack of awareness, or lower levels of education are a key factor in the hindrance of domestic tourism.

Domestic tourism should be focusing at keeping school groups coming to the park. These students will have the chance to find the importance of conservation and then take steps to further conservation. Along these lines parks would do well to host activities, such as conferences where educated people would be drawn to travel to the park. It would also be helpful to encourage the general education of Kenyan citizens. Keeping a student in school will give them more chances to go to the park and learn about conservation.

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Table 1: Domestic Tourism Percentages for Nairobi National Park, Kenya

| Year | Target segment | Average tourist numbers (mean±SE) | Proportion among tourists (%) | Total average domestic numbers | Rank of year |
|------|----------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| 1989 | Resident | 4655.92 ±516.03 | 4.32 | 4,655.92 ±516.03 | 4 |
| | Citizen | — | — | | |
| 1990 | Resident | 4462.25 ±433.79 | 4.06 | 4,462.25 ±433.79 | 5 |
| | Citizen | — | — | | |
| 1991 | Resident | 6106.33 ±365.28 | 4.65 | 6,106.33 ±365.28 | 3 |
| | Citizen | — | — | | |
| 1992 | Resident | 6781.08 ±655.20 | 4.99 | 6,781.08 ±655.20 | 2 |
| | Citizen | — | — | | |
| 1993 | Resident | 7597.25 ±586.43 | 5.28 | 7,597.25 ±586.43 | 1 |
| | Citizen | — | — | | |
| 1994 | Resident | 6539.17 ±318.99 | 5.09 | 3,339.5 ±675.65 | 7 |
| | Citizen | 139.83 ±133.88 | 0.11 | | |
| 1995 | Resident | 5279.17 ±439.80 | 5.15 | 2,639.58 ±581.95 | 16 |
| | Citizen | 0 ±0 | 0.00 | | |
| 1996 | Resident | 4964.5 ±520.46 | 4.80 | 2,482.25 ±569.61 | 18 |
| | Citizen | 0 ±0 | 0.00 | | |
| 1997 | Resident | 1982.33 ±813.19 | 4.77 | 992.08 ±454.07 | 19 |
| | Citizen | 0.92 ±0.46 | 0.00 | | |
| 1998 | Resident | 2799.08 ±126.51 | 2.92 | 2,909.21 ±164.48 | 13 |
| | Citizen | 3019.33 ±300.32 | 3.15 | | |
| 1999 | Resident | 2912.75 ±147.45 | 2.34 | 3,948.75 ±338.35 | 6 |
| | Citizen | 4984.75 ±507.25 | 4.01 | | |
| 2000 | Resident | 2542.17 ±219.09 | 2.27 | 3,312.04 ±210.88 | 8 |
| | Citizen | 4081.92 ±176.32 | 3.64 | | |
| 2001 | Resident | 2076.25 ±128.17 | 2.07 | 3,028.58 ±285.63 | 11 |
| | Citizen | 3977 ±400.02 | 3.96 | | |
| 2002 | Resident | 1859.25 ±64.04 | 2.06 | 2,788.17 ±227.32 | 14 |
| | Citizen | 3717.08 ±242.44 | 4.11 | | |
| 2003 | Resident | 1230.08 ±89.69 | 1.54 | 2,567.58 ±314.68 | 17 |
| | Citizen | 3905.08 ±299.82 | 4.88 | | |
| 2004 | Resident | 1075.08 ±71.01 | 1.16 | 2,948.96 ±484.18 | 12 |
| | Citizen | 4822.83 ±589.46 | 5.21 | | |
| 2005 | Resident | 970.08 ±74.56 | 0.97 | 3,124.08 ±647.55 | 9 |
| | Citizen | 5278.08 ±947.85 | 5.28 | | |
| 2006 | Resident | 1012.33 ±93.96 | 1.00 | 3,118.5 ±459.29 | 10 |
| | Citizen | 5224.67 ±309.24 | 5.14 | | |
| 2007 | Resident | 780.42 ±225.29 | 0.84 | 2,683.54 ±403.83 | 15 |
| | Citizen | 4586.67 ±213.37 | 4.95 | | |
| 2008 | Resident | 797.33 ±75.41 | 2.80 | 797.33 ±75.41 | 20 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---------|---|---|--|--|
| | Citizen | — | — | | |
|--|---------|---|---|--|--|

Table 2: Number of tourists for domestic (resident and citizens) and international tourists over the years in Nairobi National Park, Kenya

| Year | Domestic (resident and citizen) tourists | | International tourists | | Total tourists (overall) |
|------|--|--|------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| | (mean ±SE) | Proportion of all tourist (Year %) | (mean ±SE) | Proportion of all tourist (Year %) | (mean ±SE) |
| 1989 | 4655.92 ±516.03 | 51.8 | 4332.33 ±461.12 | 48.20 | 4494.13 ±347.59 |
| 1990 | 4462.25 ±433.79 | 48.67 | 4708.58 ±289.27 | 51.34 | 4585.24 ±261.90 |
| 1991 | 6106.33 ±365.28 | 55.83 | 4831.5 ±355.66 | 44.17 | 5468.92 ±286.20 |
| 1992 | 6781.08 ±655.20 | 59.93 | 4534.75 ±567.62 | 40.07 | 5657.92 ±490.34 |
| 1993 | 7597.25 ±586.43 | 63.38 | 4389.68 ±232.27 | 36.62 | 5997.63 ±454.57 |
| 1994 | 3339.5 ±675.65 | 62.43 | 4019.5 ±215.24 | 37.57 | 3568.94 ±459.23 |
| 1995 | 2639.58 ±581.95 | 61.82 | 3261 ±221.29 | 38.18 | 2849.5 ±262.08 |
| 1996 | 2482.25 ±569.61 | 57.59 | 3655.67 ±465.20 | 42.41 | 2876.17 ±420.41 |
| 1997 | 992.08 ±454.07 | 57.22 | 1483.58 ±617.68 | 42.78 | 1155.92 ±368.13 |
| 1998 | 2909.21 ±164.48 | 72.88 | 2164.5 ±128.14 | 27.11 | 2660.97±131.42 |
| 1999 | 3948.75 ±338.35 | 76.25 | 2460.08 ±114.30 | 23.75 | 3452.53 ±256.93 |
| 2000 | 3312.04 ±210.88 | 70.83 | 2728.17 ±124.47 | 29.17 | 3117.42 ±153.59 |
| 2001 | 3028.58 ±285.63 | 72.30 | 2319.33 ±159.95 | 27.83 | 2790.86 ±205.57 |
| 2002 | 2788.17 ±227.32 | 73.98 | 1960.92 ±85.13 | 26.02 | 2512.42 ±167.32 |
| 2003 | 2567.58 ±314.68 | 76.99 | 1535 ±79.93 | 23.01 | 2223.39 ±226.50 |
| 2004 | 2948.96 ±484.18 | 76.48 | 1814.08 ±89.74 | 23.52 | 2570.67 ±336.21 |
| 2005 | 3124.08 ±647.55 | 75.03 | 2079.08 ±92.21 | 24.97 | 2775.75 ±440.51 |
| 2006 | 3118.5 ±459.29 | 73.55 | 2242.25 ±70.36 | 26.44 | 2826.42±314.71 |
| 2007 | 2683.54 ±403.83 | 69.47 | 2358.58 ±168.64 | 30.53 | 2575.22±276.21 |
| 2008 | 797.33 ±75.41 | 33.6 | 1575.75 ±123.44 | 66.4 | 1186.54±103.89 |

Table 3: Key events that influenced tourism and the proportion of domestic (residents and citizens) and international tourist for Nairobi National Park, Kenya.

| Year | Key national or world event | Citizens | | Residents | | International | |
|--|--|-----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | (mean ±SE) | Proportion of all tourist (Year %) | (mean ±SE) | Proportion of all tourist (Year %) | (mean ±SE) | Proportion of all tourist (Year %) |
| 1992 | American invasion of Iraq | — | — | 6781.08 ±655.20 | 59.90 | 4534.75 ±567.62 | 40.07 |
| 1997 | Violence due to Kenyan party elections & El-Nino rain destructions | 0.92 ±0.46 | 0.05 | 1982.33 ±813.19 | 57.17 | 1483.583 ±428.27 | 42.78 |
| 1998 | Terrorist attack on American embassy in Nairobi City | 3019.33 ±300.32 | 37.82 | 2799.08 ±126.51 | 35.06 | 2164.5 ±128.14 | 27.11 |
| 2001 | September 11th attack: New York City, USA | 3977 ±400.02 | 47.49 | 2076.25 ±128.17 | 24.83 | 2319.33 ±159.96 | 27.69 |
| 2002 | American invasion of Iraq | 3717.08 ±242.44 | 49.30 | 1859.25 ±64.04 | 24.66 | 1960.917 ±85.13 | 26.01 |
| 2008 | Political violence due to Kenyan party elections | — | — | 797.33 ±75.41 | 33.60 | 1575.75 ±123.44 | 66.40 |
| All other years where no tourism – impacting events occurred | | 3302.38 ±239.05 | 52.3 | 3580 ±197.52 | 39.30 | 3173.536 ±107.8 | 34.80 |

Table 4: Domestic Tourism, Holiday vs. Non-Holiday Days

| Months Category | Month | Tourist Segment | Average Tourist Number | Proportion |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------------|------------------------|------------|
| Holiday months in Kenya | April August December | Citizen | 3870.69 ±484.422 | 11.9 |
| | | Resident | 3672.4 ±391.008 | 10.89 |
| Non-Holiday months in Kenya | January February March May June July September October November | Citizen | 2875.31 ±193.729 | 26.519 |
| | | Resident | 3204.317 ±176.017 | 28.505 |
| Overall | January through December | Citizen | 3124.155 ±192.444 | 38.419 |
| | | Resident | 3321.338 ±164.785 | 39.395 |

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