

Community Perception of Cultural Identity of Heritage Sites for Determining Local Participation in their Management and Conservation: The Case of Thimlich Ohinga and Seme-Kaila in Kenya

Fredrick Z.A. Odede, Dr. Patrick O. Hayombe, Dr. Isaya O. Onjala and Prof. Stephen G. Agong'

Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology P.O 210-40601, BONDO, KENYA

Abstract

The study investigated the significance of cultural identity of prehistoric settlements in establishing community participation in their conservation and management for ecotourism promotion. This was accomplished using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, as well as, content analysis. The research employed value theory to interpret the data and provide clarity of the research findings. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between community perception of cultural identity of the sites and community participation in their conservation and management for ecotourism promotion. High level of community perception of cultural identity of Thimlich Ohinga indicates high community participation in the conservation and management of the site. Low level of community perception of cultural identity of Seme-Kaila shows low community participation in the conservation and management of the site.

KEY WORDS: Cultural identity, community perception, community participation, management, conservation, heritage site.

1.0. Research Context

Conflicting information from various scholars concerning the origin and settlement of different cultural groups into Western Kenya, Lake Victoria Basin, has made it impossible to understand the history and identity of the prehistoric settlement sites. The oral traditions of the Abakuria, Abagusii and Abaluyia provide conflicting information regarding the occupation of the region by different ancestors of the present societies (Ogot, 1967; Ochieng, 1994; Ayot, 1979; Wandibba, 1986; Onjala, 1994, 1990). These oral traditions are in conflict with the Luo traditions which claim occupation and settlement of the region in more or less the same period. Conflicting information from these oral traditions may render the conservation, management, and branding of heritage sites impossible when members of the older generation eventually passes on with this vital information hence the need to carry out systematic and controlled collection of cultural identity of the sites as proposed in this study. The question is: What is the community's understanding of cultural identities of the sites?

1.1 Research Objective

To identify the cultural identity of the sites from community's perspective and its influence on ecotourism promotion.

1.2. Literature Review: Cultural Identity

For many years, countries used the word 'culture' as an inclusive term intending to identify anything and everything that humans made, gathered, or recognized, and in most instances the concern was for tangible heritage only. That viewpoint caused culture to be defined as 'the way of life of a group of people (Barnouw, 1973). This perspective is being revised to consider both cultural and natural heritage as separate but conjoined aspects of human existence, and to give equal attention to intangible elements such as song, dance, languages, and culinary practices to name the most obvious. Heritage, in most communal situations, is something that is partly material, partly human, and partly spiritual on which humans often rely to cope with circumstances, specifically, challenges that face them. It is more than customs, ideas, and tradition (Malinowski, 1944). It often includes belief that is not necessarily limited to sacred considerations. Therefore, heritage is most often a set of conditions adopted by a cultural grouping to meet the basic requirements of that group of people (Edson, 2004:336).

Heritage may refer to the human-made, natural, and historical character of the material and symbolic elements of life, as well as, the intrinsic productivity of social action. Heritage, viewed from this perspective, is a means by which human beings orient themselves to the past, and many of the elements of the past, both real and imagined, cultural and natural, tangible and intangible, are organized chronologically. They are also identified as happening before or after a particular occurrence, and where actual time/space markers do not exist, reference points are created (Holm and Bowker, 1994). Since the 16th century, the objects of cultural and natural heritage have found their way into museums. They are objects (artefacts) of pride, prestige, and common wealth. The artefacts are considered not only for their assigned cultural, scientific or historic values but also for what they signify such as personal, philosophical, or associational (Edson, 2004). Objects, places, and other physical and ideological manifestations reinforce identity, but may not in themselves constitute a true element of cultural or social validation. Every social group develops its own heritage, beliefs, customs, values and usage, which the incumbent population continually re-creates. The projected heritage of the group is a mix of pride, unity, ethnic loyalty, and nostalgia (Edson, 2004). Although the term culture is clearly defined, its usefulness as a tool for motivation to transform a community's livelihood as anticipated in this study has not been addressed in the above studies, hence, the relevance of this research.

Cultural identity is often described as being what expresses the singularity of 'groups', people and societies, what forbids conflating them in a uniformity of thought and practice or purely and simply erasing the 'borders' that separate them and that translate the least tangential correlation between linguistic facts, facts of kinship, aesthetic facts in the broad sense (for there are styles of life just as there are musical and literary styles) and political facts (Rajchman, 1995). The heritage presents itself as a unity of discrete and functional meanings. The underlying fact about heritage (and identity) is that it is always unaltered through circumstantial change unless it is maintained in a non-contextual environment, much as an artefact in a museum. There was probably never a time in the history of humankind when heritage was not subject to invention, restoration, or adaptation to meet the social, political, spiritual, or financial requirements of the subject community. People having common ancestry may share a sympathetic association with past events or objects even though the current generation had no direct connection with the heritage resource. Nevertheless, the association is firmly embedded in the collective memory, and it is possible to recall in detail, activities, events, or objects that are described, identified, or defined by others. This study critically looks at cultural identity as ever evolving but does not indicate how that change can up-scale the local livelihood nor does it show whether it is useful for eco-tourism purposes such as enhancing the level of community participation in heritage places. This study, however, investigated the level of community' perception of cultural identity useful in assessing the level of community participation in the conservation and management of the sites for ecotourism promotion.

Cultural identities are marked by a number of factors which include race, ethnicity, gender and class to name just a few, however, the very real locus of these factors, is the notion of difference. The question of difference is emotive because it creates labels like 'us' and 'them', friend and foe, belonging and not belonging, in-groups and out-groups, which define 'us' in relation to others or the Other (Clarke, 2008: 510). The ideas about communities, even imagined communities (Anderson, 1983) and ethno-national boundaries are derived from the notion of difference. A central question is: who ascribes a cultural identity, to whom and for what reason? The notion of cultural identity becomes much stronger and firmer when defining our 'selves' in relation to a cultural Other. People then begin to see ideas around 'ways of life', 'us' and 'them', which is at the heart of racism, hatred and exclusion (Clarke, 2008:526). Zygmunt Bauman's (1990, 1991) idea of strangers is used by Clarke (2008:527) The study brings out the notion of difference which is central to cultural identity and how it affects human imagination but it fails to indicate its positive aspect to the society such its influence in motivation individuals to participate in ecotourism promotion of sites. It does not show that the uniqueness of a people or places could be beneficial to each case such as diversity of cultural heritage attractions. This study used cultural identity to assess the level of community attachment to the sites which has an impact on determining the level of community participation in conservation and management of the site.

1.3. Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the level of cultural identity of the sites and level of community participation in the management and conservation of the sites.

1.4. Methodology

This section contains the study area, modes of data collection, data analysis, and discussion of the results, conclusions, as well as, planning strategies for improving cultural identity of the sites.

1.4.1 Study Area

Thimlich Ohinga is situated in the south-western Kenya in the Lake Victoria Basin within the county of Migori, Kenya. The Geographical coordinates to the nearest second of Thimlich Ohinga site is E 34° 19'33.9852" and S 0° 53'28.8168".



Figure 1: Location of Thimlich Ohinga and Seme-Kaila in Kenya.

Thimlich Ohinga site is situated in Migori County some 181km south of the city of Kisumu. The site lies on a gently sloping hill located by road 46km northwest of Migori town in Kiwiro sub-location, North East Kadem location, in Nyatike District which is in Migori County. It can be accessed through Migori or Homa Bay towns (Figure 1). Some parts of the roads leading to the site are rough and require mostly four-wheel drive vehicles. During dry seasons however the 20km stretch off the Homa Bay-Karungu road and the 46km Migori-Thimlich road are both accessible by any form of transportation (Figure 1).

Seme-Kaila is situated at Kaila sub-location in Seme Sub-County of Kisumu County, Kenya. The site of Seme-Kaila consists of six enclosures that are situated on Got Kaila in Seme, 4 Kms northwest of Holo market in Kisumu County (Figure 1). The site is located at S00⁰04'59.9" and E034⁰34'28.8" at a height of 1371 metres above the sea level.

1.4.2. Methods of Data Collection

Data on cultural identity was collected using questionnaires administered to various groups, namely, adult male, adult female and the youth who were selected through random sampling. The questionnaire had five main components, namely; the perception of the local community on cultural identity, the perception of the local community on cultural values, the perception of the local community on values of the sites as ecotourism destinations, the level of community participation in the conservation and management of the sites for ecotourism promotion, and appropriate strategies for conservation, management and branding of the sites. A Five Point Likert Scale was used to rate the perception of the respondents where: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Do not know (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1) (Appendix 1).

To collect data on cultural identity of the sites, the study employed phenomenology mode of data collection. It included entering the field of the perception of the participants; seeing how they experience, live, and display their past experiences for a period of one year, as well as, looking for the meaning of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 1998:31). Data collection was done through oral interviews of five elderly men who were over 70 years old from each site. They were identified through purposive sampling. They provided detailed narrative of the site through individual interviews that was tape-recorded and later transcribed. From the individual descriptions, general or universal themes were drawn which were useful for corroboration purposes with quantitative data. Ethnographic method of data collection entailed reviewing of documents, participant observation, interviewing and stakeholder consultative discussions. During the fieldwork, the study examined the participants' observable and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life both in the present and the past (Harris, 1968) in order to understand cultural identity of the sites. Consultative group discussions were held to determine and validate the consistency of the information provided by the informants during individual interviews. The information was used at the discussion stage to shed more light into quantitative data. Photography of the various features of the site and the group, as well as, individual interview sessions acted as illustrations for clarity and backup data.

1.4.3. Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the analysis of the data collected, as well as, to test the hypotheses and inform the study findings.

Descriptive statistics revealed the frequency distributions of responses that profiled the respondents. Cultural identity was seen to play an important role in any attempt to promote community participation in the management and conservation of the sites and as such was studied in depth analyzing the following areas: community's perception on Past and Present uses of the sites, cultural value of the sites, sacredness of the sites to community, use of site for cultural festival events, use of sites as places of worship, cultural artifacts at sites, immovable cultural material at sites, known myths associated with sites, and legends associated with sites.

Answers to the research questions were sought using inferential statistics and specifically; Linear Regression was applied on the hypothesis stated in section 1.5. The statistical tool used was determined by the hypothesis stated, nature and type of data obtained.

The qualitative data was organized into thematic areas using content analysis. Nachmias (2009) defines content analysis as any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages. Kothari (2009) further argues that content analysis consists of analyzing the content of documentary material such as books, magazines and the content of all other verbal material which can be either spoken or printed.

1.4.4. Research Instrument Reliability

The interim consistency reliability of measures was checked for the 53 variables used and found Cronbach's alpha at .807 which meant that the reliability of measures were acceptable as it was above the threshold of .70 (Table 1)

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.807	53

Table 1: Instrument Reliability.

1.5. Data Presentation and Interpretation

Table 2 indicates that for both Thimlich Ohinga and Seme-Kaila, are places of past settlement as represented by 83.6% for Thimlich Ohinga and 74.8% for Seme-Kaila. The data signifies high level of awareness of the sites as settlement places. This was confirmed by oral information which indicated that the enclosures were built and occupied by the Bantu and Luo migrant groups in the region. Information from oral informants indicate that the names given to the particular enclosures are names of clan leaders who are related to the present inhabitants in the area. Oral traditions tend to indicate that Thimlich Ohinga was occupied by both Bantu speakers and Luo cultural groups even though the names of the enclosures are Luo in dialect. Oral information indicated that Seme-Kaila enclosures were built and occupied by the direct ancestors of the present inhabitants in the area.

		Religion	Settlement	Industry	Defense	Cultural Use/ Festival	Total
Thimlich Ohinga	Count	6	92	4	3	5	110
	% within	5.5%	83.6%	3.6%	2.7%	4.5%	100.0%
Seme Kaila	Count	7	98	14	12	0	131
	% within	5.3%	74.8%	10.7%	9.2%	.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	13	190	18	15	5	241
	% within	5.4%	78.8%	7.5%	6.2%	2.1%	100.0%

Table 2: Community's perception of past uses of sites.

More so, the archaeological material remains found in the enclosures such as pottery, faunal remains and charcoal remains are evidence of past human habitation of the settlement enclosures. A part from cultural material remains, there are also archaeological features such as house depressions, cattle kraal, bao board game and settlement structures that signifies past human occupation of the sites (Table 2).

Cultural use was not recorded at all in Seme-Kaila (0%) while it was registered in low frequencies at Thimlich Ohinga (4.5%). This indicate that Thimlich Ohinga is considered as cultural place based on the presence of cultural activities at the site. Thimlich Ohinga has been used by the spirit mediums as a shrine to communicate with supernatural forces (gods) through offering of sacrifices to appease the gods in case of famine and calamity. Medicine men also collect herbs from the forest at Thimlich Ohinga to treat and cure various forms of human ailments. Other past uses of the sites that were recorded in low frequencies include defense (9.2%) at Seme-Kaila while (2.7%) at Thimlich Ohinga, industry (10.7%) at Seme-Kaila while (3.6%) at Thimlich Ohinga and religion at almost similar frequencies of 5.5% at Thimlich Ohinga and 5.3% at Seme-Kaila. Oral information confirmed that the stone-built enclosures acted as hill-forts which were used for defense against external human aggression and attack from wild animals as indicated by the presence of watch towers and narrow gates to spot from far any advancing enemy and control external intruders into the enclosures respectively. Though recorded in low frequencies, the sites were used as industrial areas for iron smelting exhibited by the presence of iron slug and pieces of tuyeres (clay smoking pipes) at Thimlich Ohinga, as well as, the production of pottery and stone tools at both sites. Oral information pointed out the sites as sacred places where the locals communicated to the gods through the spirit mediums. For example, Seme-Kaila has a sacred tree where sacrifices are offered to appease the gods while Kochieng enclosure at Thimlich Ohinga, was used for prayers and for carrying out rituals (Table 2).

With regard to community perception of the cultural value of the sites, Thimlich Ohinga is valued as cultural place while Seme-Kaila (37.4%) is less valued. This indicates differential attachment to the sites by communities living around them (Figure 3). The majority of the respondents at Seme-Kaila do not understand the cultural value of the site since the enclosures are used for herding, farming and quarrying purposes rather than for cultural functions. The data indicates Thimlich Ohinga is highly considered as represented by those who agreed (41.8%) and strongly agreed (42.7%) to the perception while a paltry 25.2% and 13.0% of the residents agreed and strongly agreed respectively at Seme-Kaila. The high perception at Thimlich Ohinga has impact on high community participation in cultural activities at the site. Oral information pointed out that cultural material remains, as well as, the architectural features at Thimlich Ohinga are products of human occupation and settlement in the area (Figure 3). The enclosures are places of past human habitation where people lived a communal form of lifestyle for labour mobilization and security reasons. The traditional practices and beliefs such as traditional marriages and offering of sacrifices are still practiced in Thimlich Ohinga.

On the contrary, data from Seme-Kaila shows less attachment to the site due to low awareness of its cultural value (Figure 3). This leads to low level of community participation in cultural activities at the site. Oral information indicated that there is a sacred tree close to one of the enclosures where the locals offer sacrifices to the ancestral spirits. It is important to note that while 9.2% of the residents at Seme-Kaila strongly disagreed to the perception, none of the respondents at Thimlich Ohinga strongly disagreed. This further indicates that Seme-Kaila has little cultural activity since the community is dominated by Christian faithfuls who do not believe in traditional African religion or cultural beliefs and practices. The data shows that a few residents are undecided on cultural value of both Thimlich Ohinga (12.7%) and Seme-Kaila (15.3%) which indicates either lack of interest, negative attitude or lack of knowledge on the cultural value of the sites. The negative attitude leads to low motivation towards community participation in the conservation of the site which has the effect of poor state of preservation of the enclosures (Figure 3).

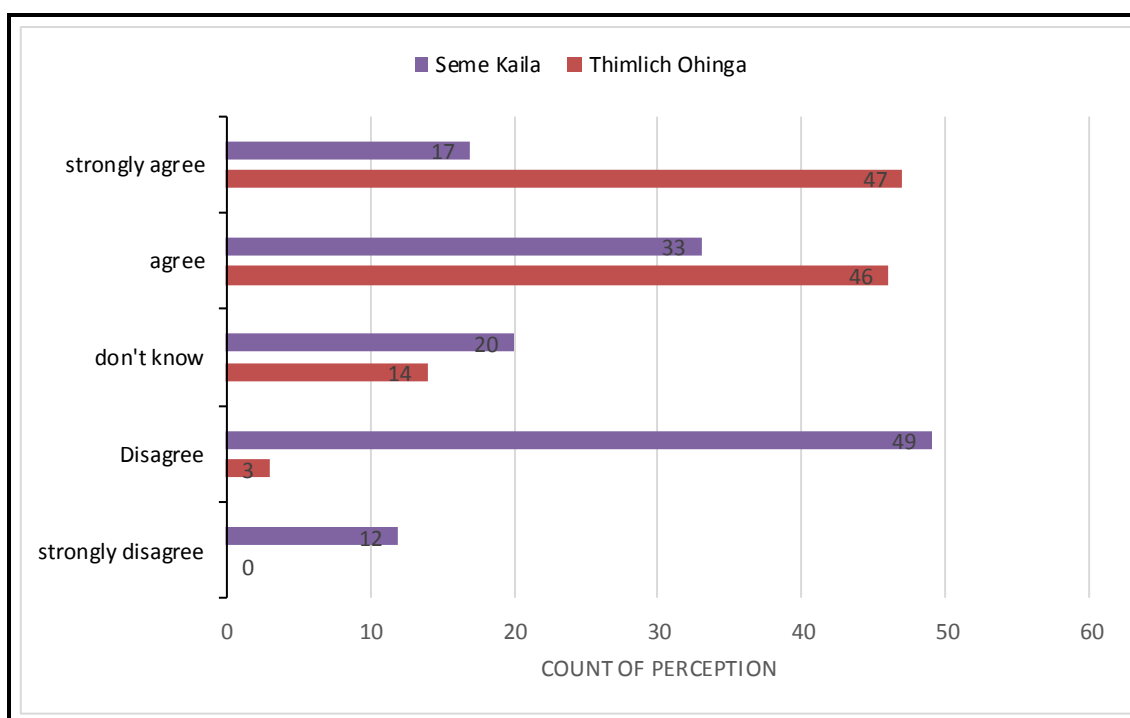


Figure 3: Community Perception on Cultural Value of Site.

Figure 4 indicates that Thimlich Ohinga is regarded as a sacred place while Seme-Kaila is not. The data indicates high perception of the site as a sacred place with 41.8% and 30.9% of residents agreeing and strongly agreeing respectively. Oral information indicates that Thimlich Ohinga is considered as a sacred place for communicating with the gods or ancestral spirits in case the community is faced with calamity or prolonged drought. On such occasions spiritual mediums lead the community in offering sacrifices to appease the gods by slaughtering a hen and a he-goat. The site is source of herbal medicines useful for treating various ailments due to its association with supernatural powers. Such ritual practices have made the locals to regard Thimlich Ohinga as a sacred place. The high level of perception has motivated the community to participate in the conservation of the site.

Data from Seme-Kaila shows low perception of the cultural value of the site as indicated by 51.9% and 15.3% of residents who disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. This low level of perception is an indication of conflict between traditional cultural practices and Christianity (Figure 4). The area is dominated by Christian faithfuls who do not believe in traditional African beliefs and cultural practices. Moreover, the sacred tree which exists at the site is used only for offering sacrifices by medicine men on behalf of the community on occasions when calamity and misfortune such as prolonged drought. The low level of perception shows negative attitude towards cultural heritage leading to less attachment to the site. This eventually translates into lack of community participation in the management and conservation of the site.

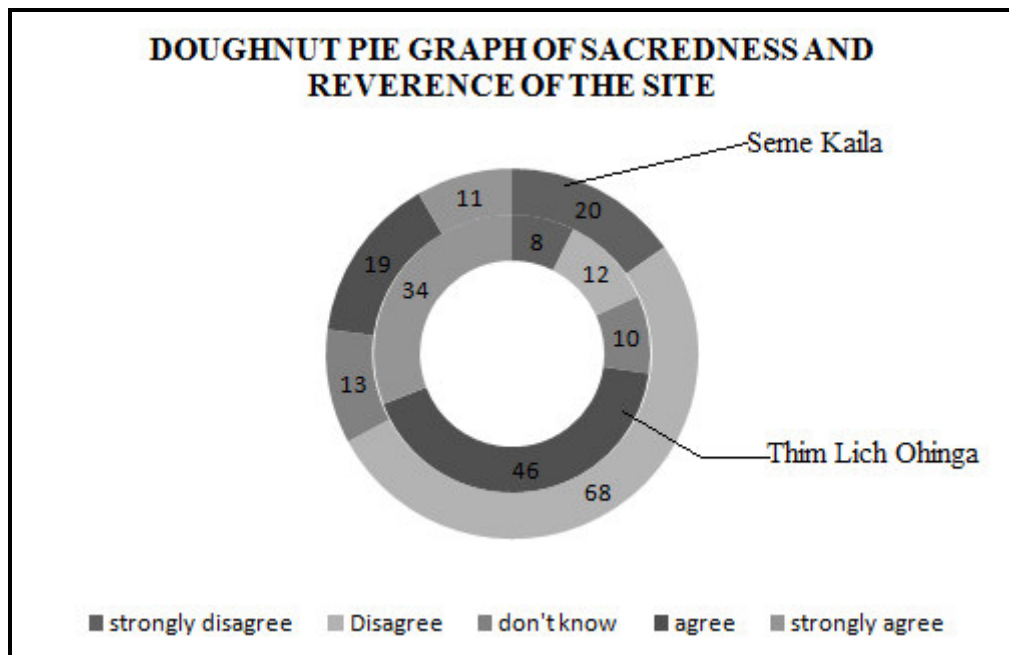


Figure 4: Perception on site is sacred and revered by community.

Data shows from both Thimlich Ohinga (9.1%) and Seme-Kaila (9.9%) indicates lack of interest due to limited knowledge of the religious value of the sites by a few of the residents (Figure 4). It further indicates that such residents are undecided whether or not the site is sacred and revered. This is an indication of the lack of participation in religious activities at the sites due to less knowledge of the presence of such religious functions. Even though the data mainly indicated that Seme-Kaila is not regarded as a sacred place, few residents still considered it as a religious site as indicated by those who agreed (14.5%) and strongly agreed (8.4%). The data therefore indicates that little religious activity has been reported at Seme-Kaila as confirmed by oral information. Oral information showed that there is a sacred tree used as a shrine to carry out sacrifices at Seme-Kaila. However, this information was reported by a few residents who could have been participants in such prayers and rituals (Figure 4).

The data also indicates that a few residents did not consider Thimlich Ohinga as sacred and revered by the community as shown by 10.9% and 7.3% of the respondents who disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively (Figure 4). The low level of perception is an indication of the lack of participation in religious functions of Thimlich Ohinga. It could be an indication of lack of belief in the supernatural forces associated with the site due to their Christians teachings leading negative attitude towards cultural heritage, as well as, lack of knowledge on the religious function of the site.

Figure 5 shows that Thimlich Ohinga is used for cultural festivals while Seme-Kaila is not used for cultural festivals. This is indicated by residents who agreed (36.4%) and strongly agreed (20.0%) to the perception while those of Seme-Kaila disagreed (58.8%) and strongly disagreed (26.0%). The data is confirmed by results of focused group discussions that outlined various cultural events that have been taking place at Thimlich Ohinga such as traditional songs, dances, football tournament and tero-buru (Luo burial rite) at the nearby Thimlich sports ground that could form part of the attraction to the site. The promotion of such cultural events annually enhances the diversity of ecotourism products at Thimlich Ohinga, as well as, creates more opportunities for the participants to use and exploit their skills and talent. The low perception of the use of Seme-Kaila for cultural

events has led to less attachment to the site which is reflected in lack of community participation its management and conservation.

Data from Seme Kaila (6.9%) and Thimlich Ohinga (17.3%) indicate that few residents are undecided on whether the site is used for cultural festival that could be due to limited participation in the sites management and activities such as cultural festival. From oral information, the inhabitants around Seme-Kaila have not engaged in cultural events which leads to low publicity and marketing of the site. Lack of community participation in cultural events could be pointing to negative attitude held towards traditional cultural practices and beliefs (Figure 5).

Results from Thimlich Ohinga also indicate that there are a few people (26.4%) who are not aware of the cultural events showing lack of participation in such activities. The data shows lack of awareness by few residents about cultural activities that are taking place at Thimlich Ohinga. It is believed that such traditional events have been replaced by western forms of entertainment and sporting activities (Figure 5).

However, a few of the residents at Seme-Kaila agreed (6.9%) and strongly agreed (1.5%) to the same perception on use of site for cultural festivals. This is an indication of exposure of some few community members who are expressing their experience of cultural events held at Kisumu City such as Western Kenya Cultural Event exhibiting different kinds of cultural artefacts, boat racing, traditional dances and songs, drama, performing art, as well as, sports like foot-ball, volley-ball and hand-ball tournaments held annually in Kisumu City at Jomo Kenyatta Sports Ground (Figure 5).

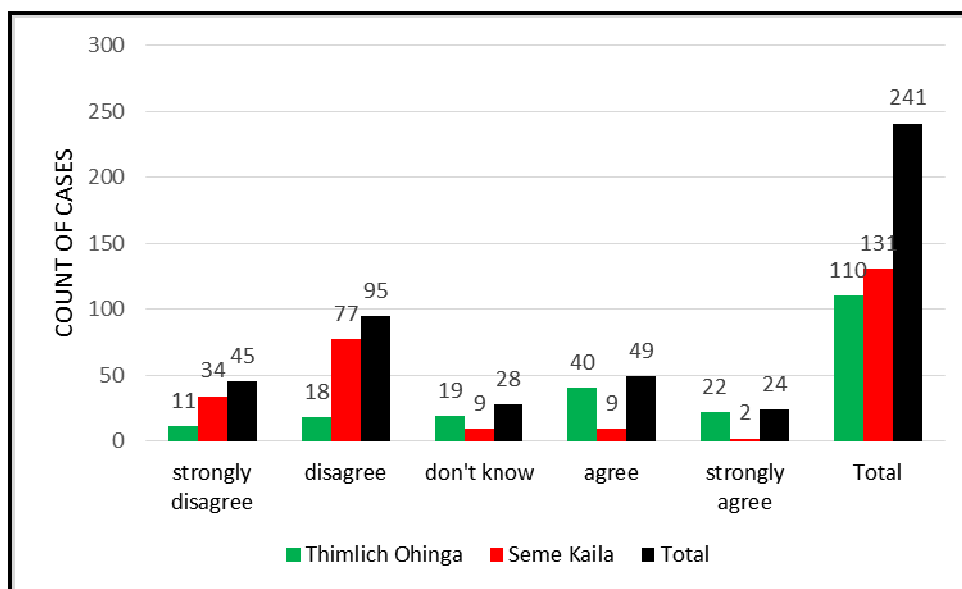


Figure 5: Perception on sites being used for cultural festivals.

Data shows that Thimlich Ohinga is used for community rituals and sacrifices while little of this activity is observed at Seme-Kaila (Figure 6). This indicates differential functions of the two sites which further shows different levels of attachment to both of them. The variation between the two sites is represented by 37.3% and 27.3% of the residents at Thimlich Ohinga who agreed and strongly agreed respectively while at Seme-Kaila, 54.2% and 27.5% of the locals disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The position is confirmed in focused group discussions that outlined various activities performed as part of the rituals and sacrifices at Thimlich Ohinga. The community has been offering sacrifices to the ancestral spirits and gods through medicine men during misfortunes and calamities such as sudden death, prolonged drought and famine. In such instances, the community led by a medicine man would converge at Kochieng settlement enclosure to pray and offer sacrifice to the gods. During the occasion, a medicine man would lead in slaughtering a goat which would be roasted and eaten by the participants. The medicine man would sprinkle the blood of the slaughtered goat on the ground while chanting prayers to the gods to accept the sacrifice and bring to an end the suffering being experienced by community members. The medicine men therefore acted as a link between the community and the spirits, or the gods. Community participation in the traditional rituals has led to high awareness of such cultural practices that identifies the community as a cultural group with its unique culture. This information shows high community perception which has a positive impact of high level of participation in conservation of

such sacred places due to cultural taboos that are observed (Figure 6).

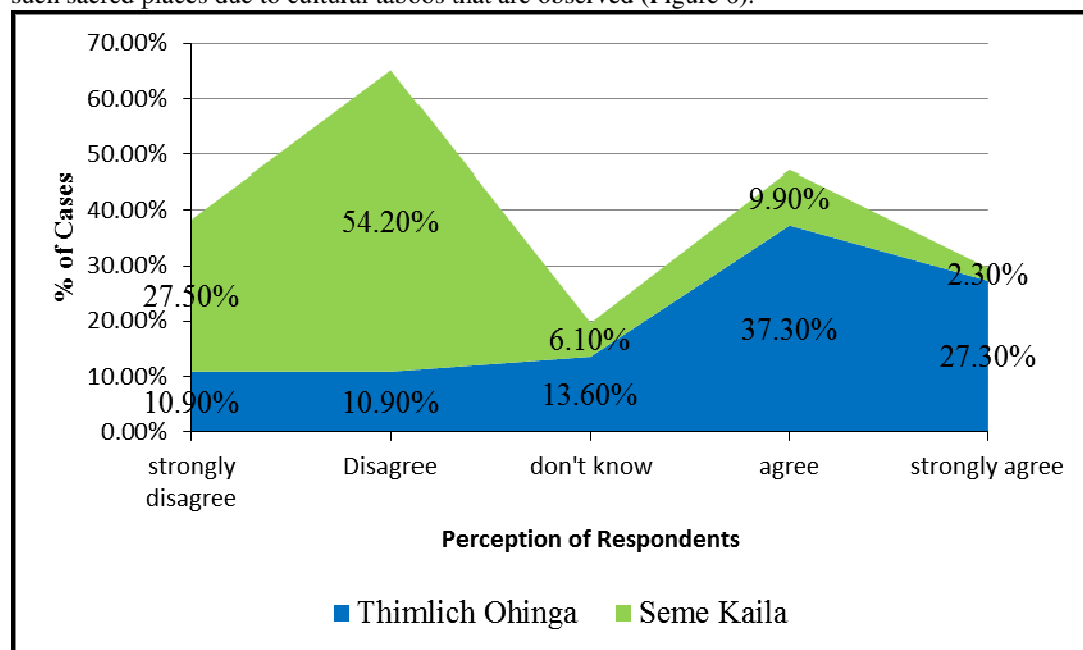


Figure 6: Perception on site being used to perform rituals or sacrifices.

The data indicates low but even proportions of the residents at Thimlich Ohinga disagreed (10.9%) and strongly disagreed (10.9%) with the perception on site use for rituals or sacrifices (Figure 6). The data indicates low perception on the use of the site for offering sacrifices possibly by few residents who have not been involved in the communal sacrifices and therefore less exposed and have limited knowledge of such cultural practices.

On the contrary, data from Seme-Kaila indicate that there is very little performance of rituals and sacrifices at the site. This could be due to lack of exposure and limited access to such cultural practices that are considered heathen and evil by Christians. It also shows lack of participation in ritual and sacrifices by the majority of the community members. This further indicates less attachment to the site hence less involvement in its management and conservation (Figure 6).

However, data that Seme-Kaila is considered as a place for rituals and sacrifices by few residents as represented by 2.3% and 9.9% of the residents who strongly agreed and agreed respectively (Figure 6). Oral information also indicated that the practice of offering sacrifices and rituals is confined to a few elderly members of the community who still believe in supernatural forces of the ancestral spirits at the site. Data shows that there is a sacred tree where sacrifices are offered to the gods. The tree has supernatural powers since it is the dwelling place of the ancestral spirits or the gods. The ceremony is usually performed by a medicine man on behalf of the local residents when they are faced with a curse from the gods in the form of incurable disease, famine and sudden death. During the occasion, a hen is slaughtered and prayers said by the medicine man to request for forgiveness of any wrong doing by the community. After offering the sacrifice, the community members believe that the gods have heard the prayers and would uplift the curse (Figure 6).

The data further shows that Thimlich Ohinga is used for worship while Seme-Kaila is not. This shows differential levels of perception between the two sites. The data indicates that Thimlich Ohinga is highly perceived as a site used for worship while Seme-Kaila is not. The data from Thimlich Ohinga shows 35.5% and 21.8% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed to perception while at Seme-Kaila, 57.3% and 30.5% of the residents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively to the perception (Table 4). The use of the site for worship was more prominent at Thimlich Ohinga than Seme-Kaila since Thimlich Ohinga. This is confirmed by oral information which indicates that the site is occasionally used for worship by African Independent Churches such as Legio Maria, Roho Maler, Israel Church and Nomia Roho. This based on the fact that the sect followers prefer to use the solitude and quietness of the place for worship. The sect members also prefer to pray and meditate in the solitude and quietness of the forest at Thimlich Ohinga. The medicine men also lead the community in communicating to the gods in case of serious problems facing the community by offering sacrifices at a shrine at Kochieng enclosure to appease the anger of the gods. Even main stream churches such as

Anglican Church are currently using the quiet and peaceful environment at Thimlich Ohinga for Sunday worship and prayer services. Such activities has led to high community awareness of its religious significance which has translated into high community participation in the conservation of the site since it is regarded as a sacred place that should not be interfered with (Table 4).

However, the data also indicates that a few residents have no information on the religious use of Thimlich Ohinga as shown by those who disagreed (13.6%) and strongly disagreed (15.5%) with the perception. The low perception indicates less knowledge of the religious use of the site because of limited interaction with the site since some of the locals view the site as a property of the National Museums of Kenya, and a place which is managed by museum staff and visited only by tourists (Table 4).

The data indicates that Seme-Kaila is not used for worship. Actual observation confirmed that the site is used for farming, and quarrying rather than religious purposes. This has resulted into degraded and poor state of preservation of the environment at Seme-Kaila which is not conducive for meditation and prayers. The low perception of the religious use of the site has led to lack of community participation in the religious functions related to the site as a result of less attachment to the site (Table 4).

		strongly disagree	Disagree	don't know	agree	strongly agree	Total
Thimlich Ohinga	Count	17	15	15	39	24	110
	% within	15.5%	13.6%	13.6%	35.5%	21.8%	100.0%
Seme Kaila	Count	40	75	6	9	1	131
	% within	30.5%	57.3%	4.6%	6.9%	.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	57	90	21	48	25	241
	% within	23.7%	37.3%	8.7%	19.9%	10.4%	100.0%

Table 4: Perception on site use for worship.

Table 5 shows that Thimlich Ohinga has cultural taboos as indicated by 44.5% and 27.3% of the respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing to this perception respectively, while the site of Seme-Kaila there are no cultural taboos associated with the site shown by 55.7% and 26.0% of the respondents, who disagreed and strongly disagreed to the perception respectively. The community at Thimlich Ohinga tend to be more aware of the cultural taboos associated with the site than the residents at Seme-Kaila who disagreed with the perception which indicates the different levels of community participation in the traditional cultural practices and beliefs associated with the sites (Table 5). This is confirmed by oral information which indicates that it is a taboo for individuals to go to the shrine where sacrifices are offered unless the community members are led by a medicine man. It is believed that any intrusion into the sacred forest and shrine, which is the dwelling place of the gods, can bring untold suffering in the form of a curse on the community. Certain trees are not cut since it is believed the act would can bring a curse on the community. It is also a cultural taboo to kill some specific birds in the forest at Thimlich Ohinga such as the awl since this can bring misfortune and bad luck to the community. The residents believe that the appearance of some of the birds and animals to individuals are either sign of good or bad luck.

		strongly disagree	Disagree	don't know	agree	strongly agree	Total
Thimlich Ohinga	Count	9	9	13	49	30	110
	% within	8.2%	8.2%	11.8%	44.5%	27.3%	100.0%
Seme Kaila	Count	34	73	9	10	5	131
	% within	26.0%	55.7%	6.9%	7.6%	3.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	43	82	22	59	35	241
	% within	17.8%	34.0%	9.1%	24.5%	14.5%	100.0%

Table 5: Perception on site has cultural taboos.

Results from Seme-Kaila show that the site has no cultural taboos. This is an indication of limited knowledge of cultural taboos based on absence of such cultural practices. The absence of cultural taboos could be due to the demise of most of elders while the remaining ones are Christian converts who do not want to teach the younger generation the traditional beliefs and practices. The data could be indicating low perception which has negative impact on community participation on conservation of the site due to less appreciation. It further shows lack of exposure to other cultural sites with cultural taboos to witness and understand the role of such traditions in preserving cultural heritage sites (Table 5).

Data from Thimlich Ohinga (11.8%) and Seme-Kaila (6.9%) indicate that a few residents are undecided on whether the sites have cultural taboos or not. This is an indication of lack of interest or negative attitude towards cultural heritage as well as, lack of knowledge of cultural practices and beliefs associated with the sites. The low level of knowledge is a manifestation of lack of involvement in the activities of the sites such as management and conservation. It could also be an indication of lack of interest by Christians who do not believe in the existence of any cultural taboos based on Christian teachings and beliefs. The category could also be the younger generation who have not learnt cultural taboos since the youth are always away in schools and in towns in search of white collar jobs (Table 5).

Data shows that a few residents at Seme-Kaila, however, agreed (7.6%) and strongly agreed (3.8%) that the site has cultural taboos. This is an indication of knowledge of cultural taboos attached to shrine at the site that includes walking bare foot on the sacred place and restriction of movement into the site in the absence of the spirit diviner. There are also cultural restrictions against killing some specific animals or birds that might bring bad omen to the community (Table 5).

		strongly disagree	Disagree	don't know	agree	strongly agree	Total
Thimlich Ohinga	Count	1	1	7	39	62	110
	% within	.9%	.9%	6.4%	35.5%	56.4%	100.0%
Seme Kaila	Count	4	32	2	55	38	131
	% within	3.1%	24.4%	1.5%	42.0%	29.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	5	33	9	94	100	241
	% within	2.1%	13.7%	3.7%	39.0%	41.5%	100.0%

Table 6: Perception on site has cultural artifacts.

The data shows presence of cultural artifacts (materials) at both sites. It was represented by 35.5% and 56.4% of the residents at Thimlich Ohinga who agreed and strongly agreed respectively to the perception. Similarly, data from Seme-Kaila indicates that residents agreed (42.0%) and strongly agreed (29.0%) to the perception (Table 6). Cultural artefacts are portable cultural material remains that can be moved from their original locality without losing much meaning or information. The data indicates high level of awareness of the presence of cultural artefacts such as pottery that are roulette decorated on the surface and have close affinities to Luo cultural group who are the present inhabitants in the region. Oral information indicate the presence of grindstones that were used for grinding cereals into flour for consumption while some of the grindstones were used for crushing herbal medicine. Other cultural artefacts that were reported include clay tobacco smoking pipes, beads and stone tools that are evidence of a thriving past culture that existed in the enclosures but also indicate some form of trade exchange with other communities in the region. On the contrary, only one respondent each disagreed (.9%) and strongly disagreed to the perception at Thimlich Ohinga while a good number of the respondents at disagreed with a few of them strongly disagreeing (3.1%) to the perception that the site has cultural artifacts (Table 6). The data shows that a few residents at both sites of Seme-Kaila (24.4%) and Thimlich Ohinga (.9%) are not aware of cultural artifacts at the sites hence not exposed to the contents of the sites. More so, it is an indication of less participation on management and conservation of the sites.

Figure 7 indicates that both the sites has immovable cultural materials exhibited by a large those who agreed (35.5%) and strongly agreed (50.9%) at Thimlich Ohinga. Similarly it is apparent that Seme-Kaila has immovable cultural heritage as represented by those who agreed (43.5%) and strongly agreed (31.3%) to the perception. The data shows high level of knowledge on the presence of immovable cultural heritage. Immovable cultural heritage are remains of the past that cannot be moved from the original context without interfering with the context, as well as, losing the meaning or interpretation. Oral information acknowledged the presence of dry stone-built enclosures and associated features such as gates, abutted walls, wall buttresses, and watch towers at Thimlich Ohinga that were used as dwelling places and protection against external enemies and wild animals

(Table 7). Other features at Thimlich Ohinga include house floors, hearth (cooking places), cattle kraals, and stock pens that indicate communal lifestyle where families lived together in one settlement while keeping large stock of cattle further pointing to the practice of pastoralism as the main economic activity by the occupants of the enclosures. An interesting feature is the iron smelting at Thimlich Ohinga that shows some form of interaction between the Luo and Bantu speakers since the art of iron smelting originated from Bantu speakers. The art was later adopted by specialist families among the Luo either through intermarriage, borrowing of skills or trade.

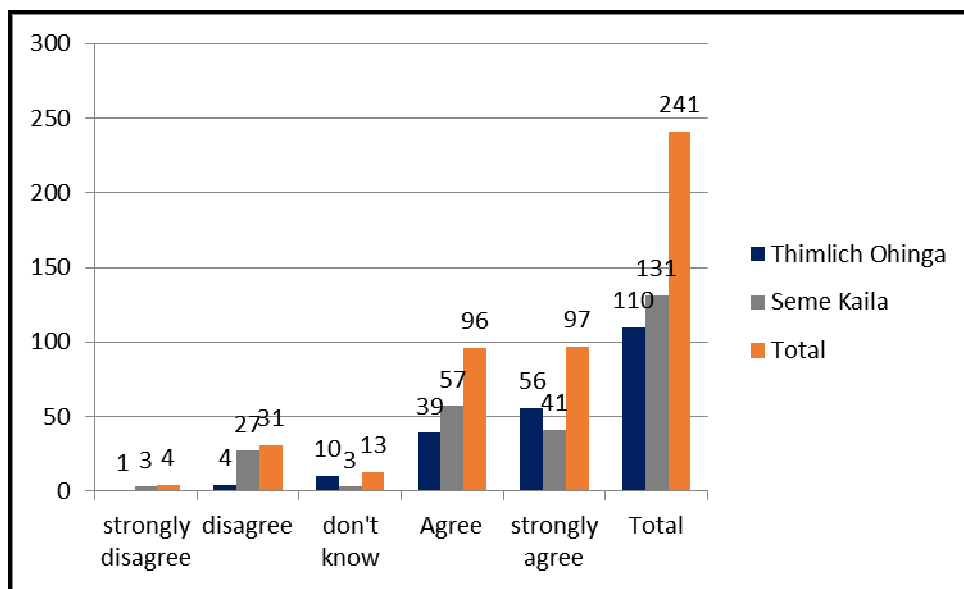


Figure 7: Perception on site has immovable cultural materials.

Data from Seme-Kaila indicates it is an immovable cultural heritage in the form of dry stone-built enclosures similar to that of Thimlich Ohinga (Figure 7). The site however has limited architectural features such as roughly circular walls and wide gates as well as, raised house floors that indicates it was used as place for past human settlement. Oral information shows that the enclosures were defensive mechanisms used for protection against external enemies during the rush for land as different immigrants clashed with one another over land acquisition and ownership. However, that results indicate that a few residents at Seme-Kaila disagreed (20.6%) and strongly disagreed (2.3%) with the perception. At Thimlich Ohinga, only one respondent strongly disagreed (.9%) and very few (3.6%) disagreed with the perception. This indicates lack of interaction with the prehistoric settlements due to lack of interest in cultural heritage leading to lack of knowledge on immovable cultural heritage (Figure 7).

Results show that Seme-Kaila (58.4%) has no myths (Figure 8). This position indicates less knowledge of myths associated with the site which indicates lack of access to information and exposure on the superstitious stories regarding the supernatural forces and ancestral spirits that exists at Seme-Kaila. The data is contradicted by few residents who are aware of a shrine (tree) was used by the community to carry out rituals to appease the gods due to the presence of supernatural forces associated with the tree. This is represented by few residents who agreed (15.3%) and strongly agreed (3.8%) to the perception. The data indicates exposure of such locals to the historical narratives of the site by the elders and could be participants in the ritual ceremonies at the shrine which is associated with supernatural forces (Figure 8).

On the contrary, data from Thimlich Ohinga indicate the site has myths. This is indicated by those who agreed (39.1%) and strongly agreed (36.4%) to the perception (Figure 8). This shows high level of awareness of the existence of myths which indicates close attachment to the site. The high level of knowledge also indicates community participation in the activities of the site hence high community involvement in its management and conservation. Oral narratives indicated the presence of myths related to supernatural forces such as the ancestral spirits and gods living at the site. It is believed that the ancestral spirits are dwelling in the forests of Thimlich Ohinga and have influence on the lives of the local people.

The data shows that a few residents at Thimlich Ohinga (20.0%) and Seme-Kaila (19.8%) were undecided as to whether there are myths which is an indication of negative attitude towards the sites. It could also be due to lack of knowledge especially among the younger generation who are not well-informed about the history of the site. Some of the locals could also be Christians who are adamant to accept the mythology of the site (Figure 8).

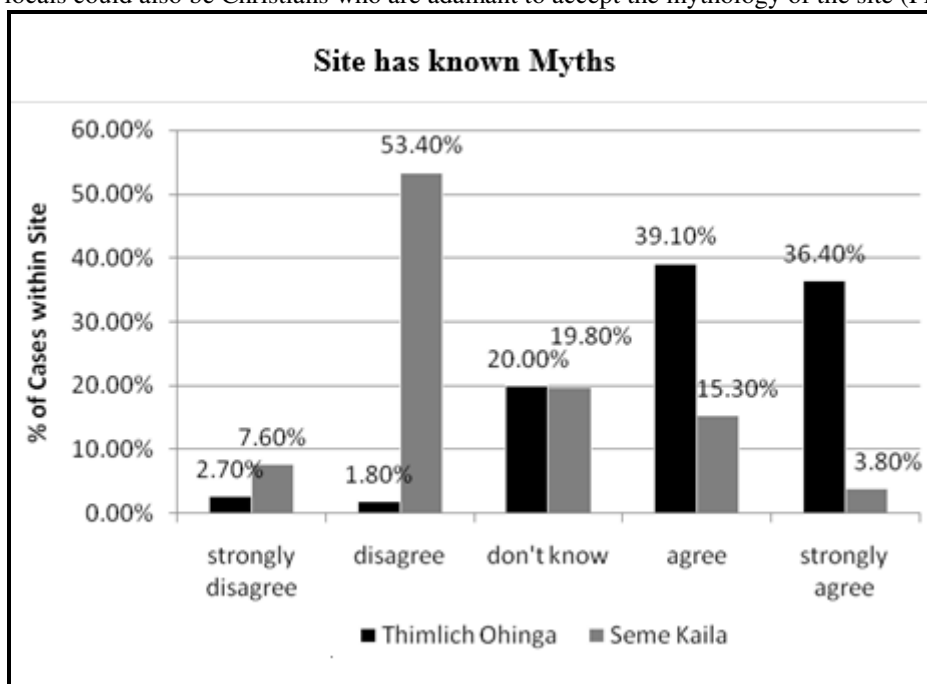


Figure 8: Perception on site has known myths.

Figure 9 indicates that Thimlich Ohinga has known legend while Seme-Kaila is little known for legends. The data is reflected by those who agreed (45.5%) and strongly agreed (35.5%) at Thimlich Ohinga while Seme-Kaila residents disagreed (38.9%) and strongly disagreed (4.6%). Legends are the narratives about the origins and occupation of the sites as presented by oral informants. Oral information indicate that Thimlich Ohinga has rich history which outlines the occupation of the site by different cultural groups of either Bantu or Luo speakers. Thimlich Ohinga enclosures were built and occupied by Bantu or Luo speakers who roamed the area as different migratory groups tried to dislodge each other from the region. The site was construction for security reasons to protect its occupants against wild naimals and from external human attacks as exhibited by the various architectural features such as high walls, narrow gates and watch towers. Oral information also suggested that the enclosures were built due to communal lifestyle that thrived in the settlements which made it easy to mobilize human labour for the construction of such massive stone structures.

Data from Seme-Kaila indicate that there is less knowledge of the legends related to the aite. This further shows less attachment to the site by the host community. The low level of pereception could also reflect the low level of interest in the affairs of the enclosures by the residents. It would also imply that the locals are not involved in any form of management and conservation of the enclosures hence not interested in the history of the site. The data could be indicating the younger generation who are more curious towards new scientific inventions and discoveries rather than interested in the past history of the site (Figure 9).

At the sametime, data shows that a number of residents at Seme-Kaila agreed (24.4%) with the perception that the site has known legends. This indicates the residents' knowledge ofthe historical origins of the settlement enclosures at Seme-Kaila, particularly the elders who associated the history of the current inhabitants with the enclosures and even provided Luo names of the individual enclosures. The enclosures were named after leaders of different Luo clans that built and occupied Seme-Kaila during the migration and settlement of the area. Oral information pointed out that the enclosures were built for security reasons against other competing cultural groups over land ownership and to ward off attack from wild animals such as Lions, buffaloes, elephants and hyenas that were roaming the region at that time (Figure 9).

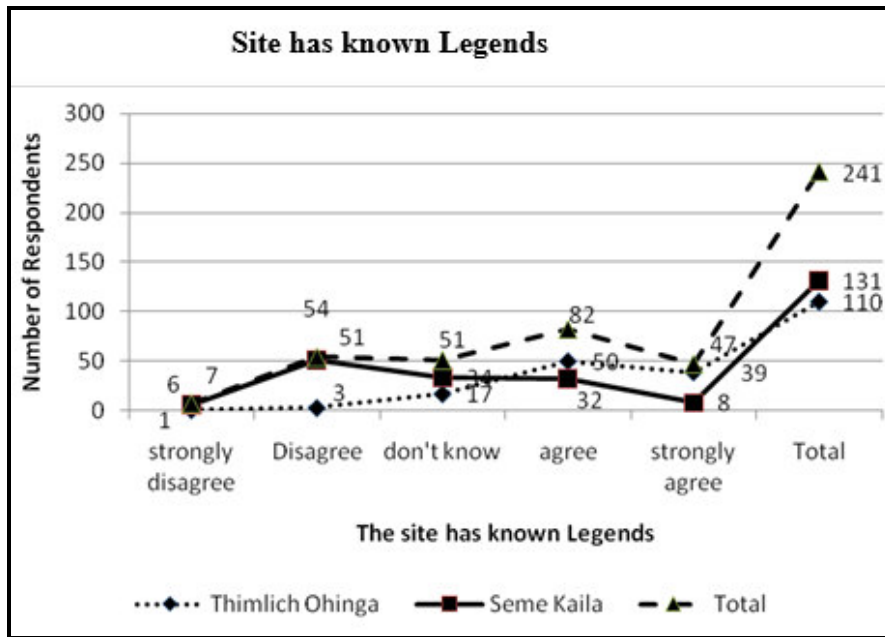


Figure 9: Site has known legends.

1.6. Inferential Statistics

Hypothesis 1 was tested using Linear Regression to further provide the result of the study as indicate below.

Linear regression

This hypothesis was tested using the Linear Regression Analysis. There were 25 variables fed into the regression model

Model Summary ^c				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.860 ^a	.739	.726	.261
2	.924 ^b	.854	.837	.202
a. Predictors: (Constant), C123, C112, C117, C120, C113, C115, C114, C122, C121, C119, C118, C116;				
b. Predictors: (Constant), C123, C112, C117, C120, C113, C115, C114, C122, C121, C119, C118, C116, LM51, LM53, LM62, LM54, LM58, LM52, LM59, LM61, LM56, LM50, LM60, LM55, LM57				
c. Dependent Variable: Local Community Involvement				

Table 7: Testing the relationship between cultural identity and community participation by Linear Regression model.

Table 7 indicates the regression model summary that presents the correlation of 0.860, and the R - Square of .734 indicates how much variation is explained and in this case reasonable for Cultural identity of the sites. For community participation, the correlation is .924 with an R² value of .854 also reasonably large (Table 7). This shows that 73.9% and 85.4% (R – Square) of the variances in the cultural identity and community participation have been significantly explained by the twelve and thirteen respective independent variables. Thus, there is no enough evidence to accept this hypothesis and so adopt the alternative hypothesis that there is significant relationship between the level of cultural identity of the sites and level of community participation in the management and conservation of the sites.

1.7. Discussion: Cultural Identity

The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between the level of community perception of cultural identity of the sites and level of community participation in the management and conservation of the sites has been proved to be false based on inferential statistics using linear regression (Table 7) that delivered an ANOVA which gives the F value of 53.916 and 50.226 that are significant since $p = .0001 < 0.05$ at 95% confidence level (Table 8). The positive hypothesis is therefore adopted, that is, there is a significant relationship between the level of community perception of the cultural identity of the sites and the level of community participation in the management and conservation of the sites. This finding of this study is relevant to a proposal by Simon Thurley (2006) who came up with the idea of what he calls the “Heritage Cycle diagram” to explain how individuals can make the past part of their future. He explained that by understanding cultural heritage, people value it; By valuing it, people want to care for it; By caring for it, it will help people enjoy it; From enjoying it, comes a thirst to understand.

The concept of cultural identities are marked by a number of factors, namely, race, ethnicity, gender and class to name but a few; the very real locus of these factors, however, is the notion of difference (Clarke, 2008). The question of difference is emotive; we start to hear ideas about ‘us’ and ‘them’, friend and foe, belonging and not belonging, in-groups and out-groups, which define ‘us’ in relation to others, or the Other. From this we get ideas about communities, even imagined communities (Anderson, 1983).

To shed more light on this research finding, several components of cultural identity were examined based on quantitative data, and corroborated by qualitative data and discussed in relation to previous studies on the subject matter. Cultural identity was seen to play an important role in any attempt to enhance community participation in the management and conservation of the sites and as such was studied in depth analysis in the following areas; community’s perception on Past and Present uses of the sites, cultural value of the sites, sacredness of the sites to community, use of site for cultural festival events, use of site as place for worship, cultural artifacts at sites, immovable cultural material at sites, known myths associated with sites, and legends associated with sites.

1.7.1. Thimlich Ohinga

The results presented in Tables 2 and 3 show that the community around Thimlich Ohinga is knowledgeable about the occupation of the site by the early immigrant groups who were either Bantu or Luo speakers. In conformity with the results of descriptive statistics, oral information indicates that Thimlich Ohinga is a place of past human occupation during the migration and settlement into the Lake Victoria Basin, Kenya.

Arising from the oral narratives, it is clear that the site of Thimlich Ohinga has witnessed a series of occupation through time. When the first Nilotic settlers came to the south of Winam Gulf, the migrants sent out scouts from their initial settlement at Ramba (the present day Kalamindi Secondary School) to survey the land for possible areas of expansion. The migrants received a report of stone-built enclosures nestled in the woods of a gently sloping hill, overlooking a vast wooded grassland and valley in the south. A pioneering group consisting of Kabuoch-Kachieng, inspired by the prospects of finding a ready-made settlement site with suitable grazing and agricultural land, arrived on the hill sometime after 1688. As the migrants climbed the slopes of the hill, they encountered not only the beautifully constructed stone built enclosures, but also a thick and dense forest containing wild animals. Most of the hills in the region were covered in thick vegetation. The state of the area prompted the group to refer to the site as Thimlich Ohinga, which translates as ‘stone-built enclosures in a scary jungle’. The name has been passed on through time to the present and is currently used to refer to the whole cultural landscape under the management of National Museums of Kenya. The name is now synonymous with the complex stone enclosures found at the site, and those found elsewhere within south western Kenya (Ayot, 1979; Onjala, 1990).



Plate 1: Outer Northern wall of Kochieng. Plate 2: Entrance to Kochieng Enclosure.

The history of Thimlich Ohinga goes back 500 years. Oral tradition mentions early Bantu groups, including the Wagire and Kamageta, as some of the site's occupants. The Nilotic group that passed through the area of Thimlich Ohinga consisted of the Kabuoch-Kachieng, Kadem, Kaler, Kanyamwa and Karungu. However, these groups later spilt and moved in different directions. Wherever these groups went, the common practice in areas of settlement was the construction of stone enclosures (Plates 1 and 2). Both Bantu and Nilotic groups seem to have adopted similar strategies in establishing their settlements. This pushes back the date of construction and occupation of the site to between 1590 and 1680, when such groups are known to have settled in the southwestern Kenya Lake Victoria region. (Onjala, 1994; Ayot, 1979). These dates also correspond to Carbon-14 dates of 110 ± 80 and 200 ± 80 BP on charcoal samples from Thimlich Ohinga, which when calibrated give us a long possible range of c. 1650 to 1900 AD (Wandibba, 1986).

According to oral traditions (Ayot, 1979; Onjala, 1990), successive occupation by different groups has been the norm at the site. Its history is characterized by periodic occupation and out-migration until it was finally abandoned in the early twentieth century. By the time the Nilotic Kabuoch-Kachieng group took over sometime after 1688, mainly Bantu groups occupied the site. The newcomers expanded the existing structures and built others further uphill. On hearing of prospects of better land elsewhere, this group later moved away. The site then fell into the hands of the Kanyamkago people led by Chief Ndisio, who was a magician, as they expanded their territory southwards. They eventually became established across River Kuja some 20 km away. Here, Ndisio established his headquarters and controlled much of the region that included Thimlich area. The control of such a wide territory, especially land across the mighty River Kuja, could not be sustained for long and soon the coveted settlement site of Thimlich fell into the hands of the Kadem people, another group that was also expanding southwards from their Raguda settlement in the present-day Karungu region. For reasons that are not clear, the Kadem people later handed over the site to the Kanyamwa people who remained there until the beginning of twentieth century. While not living on the site after this period, they continued to use it for various other purposes, mostly farming and grazing. The oral traditions therefore indicate close association of the enclosures with either Bantu or Luo speakers. The descendants of both groups are still found in the region but Thimlich Ohinga is surrounded by Luo inhabitants who claim ancestral connection with the origin and occupation of the enclosures possibly an expression of the community's pride in the stone enclosures.

Throughout the periods of occupation, the site experienced modification in terms of additional walls, repairs and general maintenance. Additional structures were constructed uphill. These were mainly built by the Kabuoch-Kachieng people. The main enclosure has a demolished wall on the northern side where an extension was built, probably as a response to an increasing population (Onjala, 1990). Enclosures to the main one, especially to the northeast, were also constructed to meet this particular need (Plate 3).



Plate 3: Extended enclosure.

Complete abandonment of the site occurred in the 1920s. There was no more active occupation within the enclosures. Families that lived outside the enclosure continued to use land within the enclosures for livestock grazing and crop cultivation. This period coincided with the end of inter-clan conflicts and/or land acquisition demands. There were no major population movements across the region. People opted for smaller or individual open settlements as the area became free of dangerous wild animals. Perhaps more important is the fact that after World War I (1914-1918) and with the establishment of British colonial rule, there was a breakdown of family and lineage ties. There were no longer large groups controlled by powerful chiefs and as a result shortage of labor to construct and maintain the massive stone structures. The site was left to decay and only survived the threats of time because of its unique in-built stability, which is the reason it has become a recognized cultural heritage in the world.

The enclosures at Thimlich Ohinga acquired Luo names during the latter's occupation from the 17th Century. The pioneer Luo people who settled in the area arrived from Siaya through Mirunda Bay. The Bantu speakers present were with time assimilated or forced to move elsewhere.

The community felt that the history of the site was important to cultural identity as one unique cultural group. This close attachment has led to high level of community participation in the management and conservation of the enclosures to ensure continuity of their culture, tradition and way of life. Thimlich Ohinga community participates in various activities at the site as providers of the site's narrative and history, as well as, in the actual restoration of the enclosures together with the maintenance of the traditional Luo homestead. Heritage protection enables the promotion, protection and curation of architectural and archaeological history. The appreciation of the site increases visibility of architectural features which define a community's character, and creates an insightful narrative useful for educating and inculcating a sense of purpose to lure visitors, scholars and investors to the sites (Agong, Odede and Ananga, 2012). This provides a strong ground for a significant relationship between community's perception of the cultural identity of the sites and level of community participation in the management and conservation activities.

With regard to the question of cultural value of the sites from community perspective, there is clear variation between Seme-Kaila and Thimlich Ohinga. The data from Thimlich Ohinga shows high perception of the cultural value of the site as opposed to Seme-Kaila which has low perception. The data from Thimlich Ohinga is further supported by oral interviews that indicated that it was used as a place of carrying out sacrifices, as well as, worship hence high level of understanding of the cultural value of the site which leads to high community participation and readiness to manage and conserve the site. The data shows high awareness of the significance of the architectural features such as the enclosures, narrow gates, cattle kraal, house depressions, watch towers, archaeological artifacts, and the Luo traditional homestead, that has made the community to be involved in one way or another in the management and preservation of the enclosures. In essence, there is a significant relationship between community's perception of the cultural identity of the sites and level of community participation in the management and conservation of the sites.

In response to the perception that the sites are sacred and revered, the residents at Thimlich Ohinga are knowledgeable of the sacred value of the site. The high perception is supported by oral interviews which indicate

that by during dry spells, sacrifices were offered to the gods. During such rituals, the community slaughtered a white hen, black bull and a he-goat as offering to the gods. The ceremonies were performed in the main enclosure, known locally as Kochieng. Oral information indicate the community's understanding of the sacred value of the site leading to close attachment to the site. Oral information further indicates that the site is a source of herbal medicine, as well as used for worship and meditation by Independent African Churches.

The perception of use of site for cultural festivals elicited varied reaction from Thimlich Ohinga. Even though there is high level of perception of the use of the site for hosting cultural festival, a significant proportion of residents are not knowledgeable of the perception. This indicates less attachment as well as limited participation in the activities of the site such as cultural festivals. Oral information shows that the site has been used for holding cultural festivals, as well as, rituals and other cultural practices.

On the perception of use of the site for ritual activities, the results show high awareness of the ritual activities at the site which points to close attachment which is necessary for the community's participation in the management and conservation of the site. The community's high level of understanding the ritual value of Thimlich Ohinga is an indication of the appreciation and closeness to the site their closeness, as well as, interest to engage in its management and conservation, thus, establishing the relationship between community's perception of the cultural identity of the site and level of community involvement in its management and conservation.

Although the use of the site as a place of worship was not well reported at Thimlich Ohinga, the data shows that it was used for worship particularly by the Anglican Church whose members enjoy the solitude and quietness of the surrounding for meditation purposes, fasting and prayer sessions. This enhances community's devotion to the site which leads to high motivation to participate in its conservation and management. Other studies have simply reported the presence of religious groups at sites like Luanda Magere, Kit Mikayi and Abindu (Hayombe, Odede, Agong' and Mossberg, 2014).

On the perception that the site has cultural taboos, data indicates that the site has cultural taboos which must be observed including its religious sacredness and sanctity to the community as places of worship and sacrifices. This is evident in the way the community relates to the walls of the structures with restraint and caution that has helped in the preservation of the site as far as cultural taboos are concerned. The sacred nature of the site as understood by the community helps in motivating them to engage in the management and conservation of the cultural and natural heritage at Thimlich Ohinga where the locals have recently established a CBO, known as Friends of Thimlich Ohinga to be co-partners in the management of the site.

In response to the perception on the presence of cultural artifacts at the sites, the results indicate high community awareness of the presence of cultural artifacts at the site. The artifacts are by product of past human culture that need to be handed down to future generations for posterity. Such artefacts include Luo roulette decorated pottery, iron slug, grinding stones and bao-board game that were used for various functions by the ancestors of the present inhabitants hence the close association and identification with the site. The appreciation of the value of such cultural material remains as tourism product is likely to enhance the conservation of the site. This supports the theory that there is a significant relation between the level of community's perception of the cultural identity of the site and level of community participation in the management and conservation of the site.

Unlike most of the responses, the communities at both sites are knowledgeable about the presence of immovable cultural heritage. The residents at Thimlich Ohinga are aware of the presence of roughly circular stone built settlement enclosures, narrow gates, circular house depressions and associated architectural features like entrances, watch towers, sewerage tunnels, wall buttresses and unique free standing dry stone walls. The community is proud of the traditional construction technology as used by the ancestors. The stone enclosures were used as hill-forts for defensive purposes during inter-tribal warfare which necessitated the need for defense against both external human foes and attack from wild animals. The respondents' pride in the traditional architecture conforms to a case study of Pula, Croatia by Urosevic (2012) where local residents were asked about the main strengths and weaknesses of the city as a tourist destination and they identified the major advantages of Pula, to include the sea, climate and the richness of cultural and natural heritage.

On the perception on site has myths, the data from Thimlich Ohinga shows high level of awareness regarding myths that are associated with the site. Myths are part of the community's narrative that must be learnt and handed down to future generations thus signifying the community's close relations with the site. Mythology is prominent at Thimlich, which is useful used for education of visitors and branding of the site high visibility and

publicity. The results show the role of myths in upholding the local community together as a cultural entity, as well as, enhancing community's participation in branding of the site using the mythology as tour guides and narrators (Odede, Hayombe, Agong' and Mossberg, 2013). Myths are mysterious and superstitious stories that are hard to comprehend in any ordinary situation and they are learnt and passed from one generation to another hence uniting that particular community as one cultural group (Odhiambo and Odede, 2012).

With regard to the perception that the site has legends, data from Thimlich Ohinga indicates high level of knowledge of the legends that are related to the site which is a source of the community's historical background that unites the group together as one cultural entity hence a basis for their cultural identity that needs to be preserved for future generations. The enclosures were built to provide security of the occupants against external human foes as different migrant groups clashed over land to claim ownership of the place. Oral information confirmed that the site was occupied by different migrant groups that have diverse cultural backgrounds. Oral history indicate that Thimlich Ohinga were built and occupied by Bantu speakers who were later pushed out of the settlements by incoming Luo migrants. The demise of the occupation of the enclosures occurred around 1940s when peace and order was restored by the colonial administration in the region, as individual families moved out of the enclosures to establish their own family units as opposed to previous communal lifestyle in the enclosures.

1.7.2. Seme-Kaila

The data shows that Seme-Kaila was used mainly for settlement. The position is confirmed by oral information was provided by elderly members of the community alongside participant observation. Community Consultative Discussions also generated information on cultural identity of the site. However, there is a significant difference in the perception of the cultural identity of the site of Seme-Kaila to that of Thimlich Ohinga.

Oral information shows that there is high level of awareness of the past use of Seme-Kaila as a place for settlement. This information suits into the general studies of population migrations and settlement in the Lake Victoria region of Kenya (Ogot, 1967; Ayot, 1979). The sites are, therefore, evidence of past human migration and settlement into the region that were used for defensive purposes against external aggression as groups struggled over land ownership claims (Onjala, 1990, 1994, 2001; Wandibba, 1986). However, the host community at Seme-Kaila are more inclined to activities that generate immediate economic returns such as farming and quarrying of the rocks from walls of enclosures for building and construction indicating less attachment and appreciation of the site as a source of their cultural identity.

With regard to the question of cultural value of the sites, there is clear difference between Seme-Kaila and Thimlich Ohinga. Data from Thimlich Ohinga indicates high knowledge of the cultural value of the site, while Seme-Kaila has little cultural value with only a small number of residents agreeing with the perception. The low level of perception of the site's cultural value indicates lack of less attachment and lack of its appreciation which translates into lack of community participation in the management and conservation of the site. This is demonstrated in the way the enclosures are indiscriminately being destroyed during farming and quarrying of wall material.

In response to the perception that the sites are sacred and revered, the data indicates that Thimlich Ohinga is considered as sacred while Seme-Kaila is not regarded as sacred. The data shows the level of differential attachment to these sites by people who live around them. This indicates that the community around Thimlich Ohinga is more involved in religious activities at the site while not much happens at Seme-Kaila. The less perception at Seme-Kaila could be a reflection of Christian's religious beliefs as opposed to traditional practices which are considered unholy thus reducing the community's interest in the management and conservation of the site. A past study reported the presence of religious activity at Got Ramogi in Siaya County (Odede, Hayombe, Agong and Ananga, 2013).

With regard to community perception on hosting of cultural festival at site, the data from Seme-Kaila shows complete absence of such activity possibly leading to less appreciation and lack of interest in the site which affects the level of community participation in the management and conservation of the site. The destruction of the site as well as lack of management organ indicates lack of community participation in the management and conservation of Seme-Kaila. The low level of perception of the use of the site for hosting cultural events indicates the low level of community involvement in its management and conservation. It also indicates less exposure to other cultural heritage sites, as well as, cultural events in the region.

A significant contrast between Thimlich Ohinga and Seme-Kaila is indicated in the use of the sites to perform rituals or sacrifices. The data indicates that Thimlich Ohinga is being used for sacrificial activities while little is done at Seme-Kaila. The data indicates religious conflicts between Christian beliefs of residents and traditional practices which are considered as heathen thus consequently creating negative attitude towards the site. The negative attitude is evident in the lack of care and management of the site. This indicates low level of community participation in the management and conservation of the site.

On the perception on use of site for worship, the data from Seme-Kaila shows it is not used for worship which indicates community's low level of knowledge of its use for worship. This further indicates that the community around Seme-Kaila has less attachment to the site which shows less appreciation of its value as a religious place of worship. The low level of perception indicates that cultural sites do not need to be places of worship (Odede, Hayombe, Agong' and Mossberg, 2013).

As to whether the sites are considered to have cultural taboos, there was disparity between Thimlich Ohinga and Seme-Kaila. The results show that Seme-Kaila has no cultural taboos associated with the site leading to less attachment and limited interaction with the site. The data further indicates that the local people have not been active participants in the management and conservation of the site. This lack of cultural taboos to control community relationship with the site is evident in the deterioration of the structures through human activities such as charcoal burning, cultivation and quarrying. Reports on cultural taboos have appeared in a study of Abindu site in Kisumu County (Hayombe, Odede and Agong', 2014).

In response to the perception on the presence of cultural artifacts at the sites, the data shows high level of awareness of the presence of cultural artifacts at the site. Although there is evidence of cultural artefacts at Seme-Kaila in the form of Luo pottery remains, as well as, grindstones used by the occupants of the enclosures, the community is not in any way conserving the site due to lack of appreciation of the cultural value of the site in comparison to the basic subsistence and economic needs.

The data from Seme-Kaila indicates knowledge of the immovable cultural heritage represented by the roughly circular stone built settlement enclosures, circular house depressions and associated architectural features like entrances, and unique free standing dry stone walls. The community is proud of the unique traditional architecture that was made by their ancestors. From oral information, the enclosures were built for inter-tribal warfare which necessitated the need for defense against external human foes and wild animals. The traditional architecture is seen as evidence of the community's past superior technological innovation that inspires and unites residents as one cultural entity. The perception of the community at the site conforms to a case study of Pula, Croatia by Urosevic (2012) where local residents were asked about the main strengths and weaknesses of the city as a tourist destination and they identified the major advantages of Pula, to include the sea, climate and the richness of cultural and natural heritage. The first place in the perception of Pula residents held the sea, then the history, culture and heritage, position and proximity to emissive markets and resources. Residents at Seme-Kaila also places site history, and architectural heritage as the main attractions that they can easily identify with as a community just like the respondents in Pula, Croatia. The assertion that there is a significant relationship between cultural identity and community participation in the management and conservation of the sites is therefore supported by this study.

The difference between the respondents from Thimlich Ohinga and Seme-Kaila is well illustrated with regard to the perception that the sites have myths. Data from Seme-Kaila indicates lack of awareness on the existence of myths related to the site. This could be due to generation gap that has led to death of elderly men who were reservoirs of narratives of the site. The lack of knowledge could be due to less interest in the affairs of the cultural practices and beliefs since the residents are mainly Christians. The data therefore shows lack of site mythology leading to less appreciation of its value further pointing to lack of participation in the management and conservation of the site. The lack of conservation is demonstrated by the serious destruction of the site by the locals through harvesting of rocks from the walls of the settlement enclosures for construction and building purposes (Odede, 2008, 2006). This further supports the positive hypothesis, established in the current study that cultural identity of the site has a significant relationship with community participation in the management and conservation of the site.

In response to the perception that the site had known legends, there was lack of understanding of the history of Seme Kaila site evident in the way the residents disagreed to the perception which indicates low level of involvement in the affairs of the enclosures. The low awareness is indicative of the limited interest and attachment to the site. This has resulted in the poor state of preservation of the enclosures in the form of fallen

walls, overgrown vegetation and quarrying of wall material for construction, as well as, farming activities that are destructive to the enclosures at the site. This low level of awareness indicates lack of knowledge transfer from the elders to the younger generation. However, a contradiction by oral narratives provided by the elders, the site has legends which indicates it was built and occupied by Luo speakers during the migration and settlement into the region as different groups fought each over land ownership. The enclosures were therefore used as defensive mechanisms to ward off external human aggression and protection against attack from wild animals (Ayot, 1979; Ochieng, 1974).

1.8. Conclusions

Arising from the discussion, it is evident that the high community perception of cultural identity of Thimlich Ohinga is a manifestation of the high community participation in management and conservation of the site. This confirms the positive hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the community perception of cultural identity of the sites and level of community participation in the management and conservation of the sites. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected by the findings of this study. The positive hypothesis is further supported data from Thimlich Ohinga which shows high level of knowledge of the value of the site as a source of the community's history as a single cultural group or entity which defines the locals as a people with one cultural background further pointing to high level of participation in the management and conservation of the sites due to the close association and identification with the site based on its cultural identity. The residents around Thimlich Ohinga are knowledgeable about the cultural identity of the site thus indicating the community's attachment and appreciation of its cultural identity which impact into high community participation in the conservation of the site.

On the contrary, it is apparent that the low community perception of cultural identity of Seme-Kaila is an indication of the low community participation in the management and conservation of the site. This further confirms that the positive hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the community perception of the cultural identity of the sites and level of community participation in the management and conservation of the sites. The data indicates low level of awareness of the cultural identity of the site thus indicating less appreciation and limited knowledge of the value of the site as a source of the community's history as a people with a single historical background. This further indicates lack of community participation in the management and conservation of the site as evident in the serious destruction of the structures through human activities such as cultivation, quarrying of rocks from walls for sale to construction firms, and charcoal burning.

1.9. Planning Strategies for Community Perception of Cultural Identity (Thimlich Ohinga)

Create a local community management committee in partnership with the NMK management team at the site. There are vibrant communities that surround the cultural heritage site. Their participation should be encouraged so as to blend the past and present cultural practices to make the heritage relevant in the present age. Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology and other groups of people have sensitized the community as definite partners in any conservation and development agenda. The community should make use of the heritage as their cultural resource through a well-structured benefit-sharing framework with the National Museums of Kenya. The community proposed development of Luo Gallery (Luo Kit gi Timbe gi) as depository for cultural artifacts.

The community should be given free access to the site through agreed formula such as, visiting days, while visitors are charged to solve issues of Human wildlife conflict is common especially where community are not allowed to harvest dead wood for firewood and their participation in the management and conservation activities of the site is not guaranteed by the NMK.

Capacity building of the local people on cultural heritage should be undertaken with preference given to the youth and women. The need for training of the locals could be achieved by establishing a cultural heritage institute was conceived to be an ideal instrument for facilitating the training of the local people on cultural heritage matters. Cultural heritage experts should be invited to lead in the training the community members through workshops and seminars.

1.9.1. Planning Strategies for Community Perception of Cultural Identity (Seme-Kaila)

Capacity building and awareness creation of the local community on the cultural identity of the cultural heritage site needs to be undertaken using heritage experts in association with the elders of the community so that the community understands their relationship with the site to appreciate its cultural identity for enhancing their participation in the management and conservation of the site. The community and the general public should be aware of this natural and cultural resource so as to enhance appreciation and perception on the cultural identity

of the site. A mechanism of continuing to create awareness amongst community members should be established. It is possible also to work with the community and network with other stakeholders, while creating a sense of ownership among the community members. They can be involved at the planning and implementation stages of particular projects. Train the members around the site on basic hospitality management, governance, project management and entrepreneurial skills to assist them in the management of the site. Using elders who have rich and in-depth historical information about Seme-Kaila, pass information on taboos, beliefs and sacred sites to younger generation. While the heritage stands out for all to see, there is need to establish information centre from which the local community and visitors can be guided through the site or reserve relevant information before walking or driving around the site. Such an initiative will enhance people's understanding of the heritage and make any visit worthwhile. But the site also needs a natural cushion, a zone around it which gives it that natural look one expects from any natural setting. Since this is lacking, there is need to seek for ways on how this can be recreated.

The protection and recognition of Seme-Kaila as a cultural heritage site should be a major priority in conservation and development plans. Such recognition and protection will also enhance the usefulness of the heritage and make it more attractive. Currently, there is no clear boundary for the cultural heritage site. Such a boundary would be appropriate to define an area in which conservation and development initiatives are to be concentrated. A fence around the heritage would help control the visitors to the site as they will access the heritage through one gate or designated points. Putting up a fence is, therefore, an activity that is mandatory. A fence should be erected around Seme-Kaila clearly delineating the site's boundaries with the local community, as well as, put a gate for accessing the site. For fencing to be done, negotiations should be initiated with the various land owners of the plots where the various enclosures are found so as to acquire the sites. Several conservation activities should be undertaken. The need for these is evident given the state of the heritage and the threats it faces. Several mitigation factors will be required that will force the management team to have a large staff base. A conservation monitoring Centre with facilities for data collection and analysis, photography and other documentation equipment, storage among others, will require more personnel, especially, experts in these fields who will assess any threats and plan for remedial actions to be taken.

To have effective management and conservation of the site and their environs, there is need to build a cohesive human resource for a community driven management committee structure, characterized by a clear and efficient hierarchy in which to carry out continuous conservation, management and development agenda. A local community management structure needs to be put in place so as to set up a proper hierarchy that will include (i) a management team headed by either a manager or chairman, (ii) board of trustees and (iii) a patron. Occupants of these committees and offices should be competitively selected or appointed so as to realize desired results. A central place or building for the management activities should be set up. Such an establishment will require relevant standby staff, such as, office support staff to help senior officers in the management process. For example, there may be need for guides, ticket clerks and marketing persons. Additionally, there may be need for more permanent staff to monitor the state of conservation, environment and carry out detailed conservation work.

More research activities should be carried out at the site to consolidate information on cultural identity that will make the heritage more interesting and enjoyable to both the local community and tourists. Such research will also bring out the values of the heritage leading to more attention from relevant government departments and even donor agencies.

Different scientists should be encouraged to carry out research at the heritage. The results of such research work will form part of the information flow needed at the site in the form of publications, brochures, information panels and boards. A lot of information will need to be gathered from the heritage to push this agenda towards its logical end. Information from research will also help in marketing and enhancing educational programs that may be run at the heritage. Such information may also be used in other publicity campaigns, such as, in workshops and seminars, public meetings, radio programs, video shows advertisements, folk media like festivals, drama & dances.

To make the heritage more useful and economically relevant, there will be need to get the support of all stakeholders in marketing and image creation of the site. Marketing should be done by opening up and developing a trail network, as well as, setting up site signage leading to the various enclosures and objects within Seme-Kaila. Long term plans should include putting in place visitor facilities such as interpretation

centre, community centre (shops, restaurants) and picnic areas among others. It will also be necessary to construct rest places and toilets at tourist attraction areas within the site.

Visitors and revenue will also be realized if and when more effort is put towards marketing and promoting the site as a tourist destination. Preparation of brochures' should be considered to aid in the marketing and promotion strategy. Relevant government departments (KWS, NMK and Ministry of Tourism) should work together to sell the site to a wider public. A well designed web-page should be used for this purpose.

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