

The Effects of Destination Marketing on Tourism Performance in West Pokot County

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Abstract

Tourism is an ever-growing service industry with great development potential. It has become one of the most important drivers of socio-economic development worldwide and has attracted interest for research. Many nations rely on tourism industry as a key source for foreign exchange, private sector growth, infrastructure development, and poverty alleviation in terms of employment opportunities and improvement of the welfare of the people in tourist destinations. According to United Nation World Tourism Organization, development agencies and policymakers are increasingly advocating tourism as an effective way to reduce poverty in least-developed countries. However, lack of proper marketing strategies is a challenge in many county governments, posing further challenge in tourism performance. The general objective of the study was to assess the effect of destination marketing on tourism performance in West Pokot County. Specifically, the study sought to establish the influence of awareness creation, developing new markets, advertising and branding on tourism performance in west Pokot County. To achieve these objectives, descriptive research design was used. Target population consisted of employees of hotels, officials of tour firms and officers in the ministry of tourism in the County Government of West Pokot. Purposive sampling technique was used and a total of 41 respondents selected. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study established that 41.8 % of the changes in tourism performance in West Pokot County was attributed to destination marketing. The P-value was 0.000 indicating that destination marketing had a significant influence on tourism performance of west Pokot County. The study recommends that destination marketing should be promoted by all the stakeholders involved and the funds allocated to destination marketing should be increased. This will promote the performance of tourism since destination marketing increases awareness among domestic and foreign tourists.

Key words: *Destination marketing, new markets, tourism performance*

Introduction

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2007), development agencies and policymakers are increasingly advocating tourism as an effective way to reduce poverty in least-developed countries. The tourism industry is the world's largest and most multifaceted institutional industry (UNWTO, 2014). Many nations rely on tourism industry as a key source for foreign exchange, private sector growth,

infrastructure development, and poverty alleviation in terms of employment opportunities and improvement of the welfare of the people in tourist destinations (UNWTO, 2014). However, tourism development has often been undertaken as a last resort by communities that have few remaining resources to exploit other than the expanse that surrounds them (Hall, 2005). Despite mixed results on the relationship between tourism performance and destination marketing, tourism persists as a tool for regional development but a more carefully considered approach is needed (Saarinen, 2003).

UNWTO (2012) reports that tourism economy has expanded consistently over the last few decades with global international arrivals reaching one billion annually in 2012. An increase in demand met by a general growth in business activities saw many regions develop the tourism economy, as part of broader regional development strategies. Tourism has reached almost all regions of the world and has a notable growth in the peripheral regions of Europe where many communities are traditionally dependent on the primary sector. However, they have been adapting to the tertiary (service) sector including tourism (UNWTO, 2012).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the global economy was projected to record a growth of approximately 4.5% annually which would lead to 66 million new jobs opportunities by 2020. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2010), tourism activities involved over 880 million people all around the world and would continue growing approximately 3% each year, and arrivals would reach over 1.6 billion by the year 2020.

Africa has continued to improve on tourism like other continents. UNWTO (2012) forecast that international tourist arrivals would increase by 3% to 4% by 2013. This forecast was in line with its 2030 long term forecast: +3.8% a year on average between 2010 and 2020. Optimism about the future growth of tourism worldwide, combined with Africa's small current market share and its internationally known resource legacy for tourism, is leading several countries to consider ways in which tourism could accelerate economic growth and diversifies their economies.

Destination Marketing

Destination marketing is a type of marketing that promotes a destination (town, city, region, country) with a purpose to increase the number of visitors (Moradkhani, 2014). The subject of competitiveness of tourism destinations has developed increasingly important subject for industry stake holders, particularly for countries, counties and regions that rely heavily on tourism (Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005). Destination may be classified as competitive if it can attract and satisfy potential tourists. Not only does the competitiveness of a destination directly affect tourism receipts in terms of visitor numbers and expenditures, but also indirectly influences the tourism-related businesses, such as the hotel and retail industries in that destination, to a certain extent.

Boniface and Cooper (2009) posit that tourism potential in sub-Saharan Africa is unfulfilled and problems can be attributed to basic transport network, poor organizational framework, and the little level of industry development of most countries. They further acknowledge that some African countries have identified tourism as an area for expansion to attract foreign currency and enhance their economic situation. This has been most manifested in Southern Africa and some of the Islands of the Indian Ocean, but most of the countries of West and Central Africa have been less successful (Boniface & Cooper, 2009). It was upon this background that this study sought to establish the role of destination marketing on tourism performance in West Pokot County.

Statement of the Problem

West Pokot County is a distant area within Kenya that is characterized by unexploited tourism potential and lack of accessibility due to poor infrastructure contributing to underdevelopment. Botteril et al. (2000) argue that disparities at the global and national levels have long been the focus of academic interest. Key factors in the success of destinations are connected to accessibility of tourism attractions, amenity standards, marketing and positive image, a supportive government and safety (Johns & Mattson, 2005). Past studies have addressed various variables such as an analysis of culture as a tourism commodity and the effect of terrorism on the economies.

Cattle rustling remains a major security impediment to all forms of tourism in West Pokot County. This causes internal conflicts and divisions between these communities that result in insecurity that hamper tourism development. Kiprutto Akama, & Sitati (2007) argue that cattle theft is occasional, although it is perceived as a safety and security risk to tourists. In addition, inadequate allocation of funds, has made it difficult to market West Pokot as a tourist destination.

Studies have been done both locally and internationally on the effect of destination marketing on tourism performance. For instance, a study by Mckercher, Ho, and du Cros (2004), established factors relating to product, experience and marketing as key to popularity of cultural attractions in Hong Kong. Further the cultural place must function as an attractions site for it to be popular. Another study that examined the socio-economic impacts of Sport tourism in West Pokot County, North Rift region of Kenya found that the North Rift region as the cradle of Kenya's athletic prowess has witnessed increase in sport related excursions, participations and involvements (Ng'oriarita, 2009). One such unique sport that has gained currency in West Pokot County is the annual Tegla Loroupe peace race. Although tourism as an income generating venture has been taking place for quite some time in Kenya, little has been done to market Kenya and specifically the western circuit as one of the best tourism destinations. No known study has been carried out to establish the extent to which destination marketing affects tourism performance in West Pokot County which this study intends to establish.

The Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to assess the effect of destination marketing on tourism performance in West Pokot County.

Specifically, the study sought to establish the influence of awareness creation, developing new markets, advertising and branding on tourism performance in west Pokot County.

Literature Review

Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness

Integrated model of destination competitiveness was developed by Dwyer and Kim in 2003. In the integrative model comparative advantage refers to a destination's natural endowment in factors of production and the resources that make the destination attractive. The model also demonstrates best practice on a global platform in the international market. The use of a competitiveness model will assist with long-term marketing strategies; increase tourist volumes in West Pokot County, increase spending power, which would create economic prosperity, job creation, to ensure that all tourism resources are adequately marketed and to create destination appeal by providing unique memorable destination experiences (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

Goeldner and Ritchie (2000) advance that attractions are the reason why people travel thereby making it the single, most significant component of the tourism system and without attractions drawing people to destinations, there would be little need for tourism services such as transportation, lodging, food and others. The key observation made by Goeldner and Ritchie (2000), in respect to attractions is that it draws the smallest portion of the tourist expenditure with the majority of the disbursements going to air transportation, accommodation and food. To become competitive within the attraction sector there is need to have a combination of attractions, like sightseeing, shopping, entertainment, gaming, culture and recreation and this play an important role in determining the competitiveness of a destination (Goeldner & Ritchie. 2000). Inherited, created and supporting resources encompass the various characteristics of a destination that make it attractive to visit West Pokot County. Destination management covers factors that enhance the attractiveness of the inherited and created resources, strengthen the quality of the supporting factors and those which best adapt to the situational conditions.

The development of a competitiveness model for West Pokot County would assist tourism stakeholders in their long term marketing strategies, which would ensure that the county is a preferred destination in Kenya and worldwide. Visitor attractions are a vital component of developing destinations, which is a major component that attracts tourists.

Destination Marketing

According to the UNWTO, (2012), destination marketing consists of all the activities and processes aimed at bringing buyers and sellers together. It focuses on responding to consumer demands and competitive positioning; is a continuous coordinated set of activities associated with efficient distribution of products to high potential markets; involves making decisions about the product, branding, the price, market segmentation, promotion and distribution (UNWTO, 2012). In this study, destination marketing was operationalized as advertising, developing new markets, creating awareness and branding.

Advertising. Destination marketing is tourism stakeholder advertising for a specific place. Advertising is defined as the activity or profession of producing advertisements for commercial products or services (Moradkhani, 2014). The tourism industry can use advertising as the primary tool for its professional gain. The successful promotion of tourism in each country is based on cultural values, and the professionals understanding of advertising and its values. Professional advertising can be seen as a winning tool for the economic development both inside and outside of the given country.

However, inappropriate, insufficient and inadequate advertising can be a waste of money and energy. The advertiser is required to identify the target audience which will increase tourism, investments and other positive behavior dependent on the volume of the advertising aimed at attracting the tourists (Moradkhani, 2014). Like in other branches, tourism advertising has its major functions in influencing the audience in three different ways: confirmation and reinforcement; creation of new patterns of behavior and attitude; or the change of these behaviors and attitudes. Therefore, companies in the tourism and leisure industry primarily use images to communicate with the (potential) customers (Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 2006). This study proposes that the county government of West Pokot would benefit from advertising its tourist attraction sites. The West Pokot region is endowed with diverse tourist attraction sites which include Nasolot Game Reserve; scenic escarpments such as Marich Escarpment, Kaisagat view point, Mtelo and Koh Hills, Turkwell Dam; culture and artifacts in Kapenguria Museum, curio shops and a proud home of infamous “Kapenguria Six Cells found in Kapenguria Museum.

Branding. According to the American Marketing Association (AMA, 2011), the concept of branding has been used extensively for products and services, however, in a tourism destination context it is still a relatively recent phenomenon. A brand can be defined as a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. Simply put, an organizations brand is its promise to the customer (AMA, 2010). A brand is a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2006).

There are various ways to increase the market in the tourism industry, for instance the use of a brand name in getting the public's attention works well or method of regional cooperation in tourism (Rong & Mu, 2013). Brand recognition and other reactions are created by the accumulation of experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use, and through the influence of advertising, design, and media commentary. According to Baker and Cameron (2008) brands have become more and more important to organizations, because they have the potential to be, if managed properly, one of the few strategic assets to provide true competitive advantage.

Unlike product marketing, where the products are delivered to customers through distribution channels, in destination marketing consumers move to the destinations. According to online digital marketing company (promodo.com, 2016), travelers went online to discover the places they were going to visit, booked hotels and transportation, planned trips and shared their emotions and memories with friends. The main answer to the question 'why destination marketing?' is – to stay competitive.

Consequently, brands can be a source of competitive advantage as well as of financial profits. For the consumers, on the other hand, a brand is primarily an identification of the source of the product, a symbolic device and a promise by the producer. In order to be successful, a brand must ensure that the consumers' needs and the brand's values and characteristics match each other, thus it must establish an emotional relationship with the consumer (Baker & Cameron, 2008). Hence, the aim of a brand is to create communication with consumers and eventually inspire trust, consistency and brand loyalty. This is done by promising certain features and above all consistent quality (Tasci & Kozak, 2006). The county government of west Pokot would greatly benefit from branding its products and services.

Tourism Performance

Tourism performance includes the growth of tourism and the impact of tourism in the economic and social environment. Tourism is known as one of the world's leading industries and has an impact on a wide variety of economies, in both the developing and the developed world. Tourism income occupies an important place in the national income of a country (Bhatia, 2007).

According to the implications of Yasarata, Altinay, Burns, and Okumus (2010) sustainable tourism development should be beneficial not only to their direct investors but also for the local community, like new employment opportunities and environmental issues. When government establishes goals and objectives for national tourism development, their strategies are supposed to meet short-term and long-term aspirations.

Tourism in Kenya was the fastest growing industry and was the second highest foreign exchange earner after tea a decade ago (GOK, 2004). Its receipts grew from United States dollars (US\$) 699 million in 2005 to US\$ 803 million in 2006 (UNWTO, 2007). Estimated tourism receipts for 2018 were Kshs. 157,386,

151,000. The receipts have increased by 31.2% compared to 2017 receipts of Kshs. 119,900,000,000 to record the highest earnings (Tourism Research Institute, 2018).

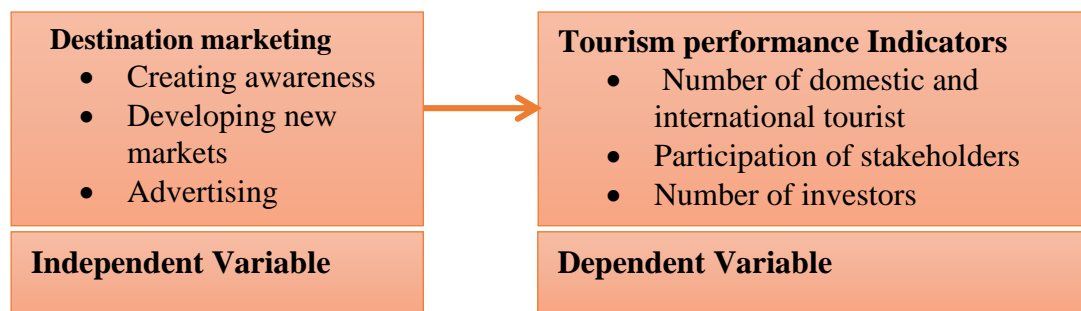
According to a report by Airbnb, since its founding 3.5 million guests have arrived at listings across Africa. In Kenya guest arrivals have grown by 68%. The improved numbers of visitors saw the tourism industry post Ksh157.3 billion in revenue in 2018, a 31.3 per cent increase from the previous year (The Kenyan Wall Street, 2019).

Unfortunately, tourism in Kenya is spatial and only few regions receive substantial number of tourists. Kenya is predominantly a nature-based tourism destination with wildlife concentrated in southern part of the country and beaches along the Indian Ocean, and therefore they have become the hot spots that exist in Kenya. The rest of the country including the West Pokot region is less visited by tourists. West Pokot is located in the Northern part of Rift Valley province in Kenya. The West Pokot County is part of the Western Kenya Tourist Circuit that was launched in 2002 as a tourist destination. The region is endowed with rich cultural attractions, wonderful landforms, and high altitude climate suitable for sports, forests and wildlife. In spite of these attractions and its launching, visitation to the region has not improved significantly (Kiprutto Akama, & Sitati, 2007).

Statistics indicate that the coast region receives 60% of all the tourists in the country while the Western Kenya Zone including West Pokot region receives a paltry 2% (GOK, 2004). The West Pokot region is endowed with diverse tourist attraction sites which include Nasolot Game Reserves, scenic escarpments such as Marich Escarpment, Kaisagat View Point, Mtelo and Koh Hills, Turkwell Dam, culture and artifacts in Kapenguria museum, curio shops and a proud home of infamous “Kapenguria Six cells found in Kapenguria Museum. Despite the various tourist’s attraction sites, west Pokot County has not achieved any growth in the tourists who visited the area. The study operationalized tourist performance as the number of tourists, stakeholder participation and number of investors. The study proposes that with increased advertising and branding, awareness and new markets will be created leading to increased tourist performance in west Pokot County.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presented the relationship between the study variables. The independent variable was destination marketing while dependent variable was tourism performance.



Methodology

This study used a cross sectional descriptive survey design to establish the effect of destination marketing on tourism performance. Descriptive studies seek to obtain information that describes phenomena by asking individuals about their perception, attitudes, behavior or values, (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The population for the study included personnel in hotels, tour firms and officials in the ministry of tourism West Pokot County Government. Stratified sampling technique was used and a sample of 41 respondents constituting 20 hotel employees and 16 employees from The Ministry of Tourism and 5 tour firm managers was obtained.

Closed-end Questionnaires were used as the primary tools for data collection. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized in data analysis. The analyzed data was presented in form of tables, pie charts and bar graphs. The following equation was used in the linear regression analysis.

$$(Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon)$$

Where:

β_0 ... Constant

ϵ ... Error

X_1 ...Destination marketing

Y Tourism performance

Data Analysis and Results

The study analyzed data using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results from descriptive statistics were presented using pie charts and tables.

Findings

Effect of Destination Marketing on Tourism Performance

Respondents were asked in their opinion if destination marketing had an effect on performance of tourism in West Pokot County. The results indicated that majority (74%) of the respondents agreed that destination marketing affected the performance of tourism in west pokot county. The fact that majority of the

respondents were of the opinion that destination marketing influences performance of tourism in west pokot county is a clear indication that destination marketing plays an important role in the tourism industry.

Table 1
Influence of Destination Marketing on Tourism Performance

	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
Destination marketing facilitates the Success of tourism by creating awareness of tourist sites			2.7	36.8	60.5	4.34	.534
Destination marketing helps in opening up remote areas		7.9	18.4	73.7		3.66	.627
Advertising influences the tourist by increasing confirmation and reinforcement among the tourist		5.2	5.3	31.6	57.9	4.42	.826
Destination marketing uses images to communicate with the potential customers to increase customer base		23.7	2.6	39.5	34.2	3.84	.751
Coordination manifested in joint destination marketing by hotels can increase tourism performance		10.5	7.9	36.8	44.8	3.63	1.014

A Majority 60.5% respondent strongly agreed that destination marketing facilitates the success of tourism by creating awareness of tourist sites. The high mean of 4.34 and no variations in responses (standard deviation ≤ 1), can be interpreted that destination marketing influences tourism performance by creating awareness of unpopular tourist sites.

Another majority 73.7% respondent, and with a mean score of 3.66 and no variations in responses (standard deviation ≤ 1) it meant that destination marketing improves tourism performance by opening up remote areas.

Further, the study revealed that majority 57.9%, and mean score of 4.42 strongly agreed, and no variations in responses (standard deviation ≤ 1), it can be interpreted that advertising positively influences performance of tourism.

The findings further indicated that majority (39.5%) of the respondents agreed that destination marketing uses images to communicate with the potential customers to increase customer base. The mean score of 3.84, and no variations in responses (standard deviation ≤ 1 , it can be concluded that destination marketing communicates to potential customers hence increasing tourism performance.

Also a further majority 44.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that coordination manifested in joint destination marketing by hotels can increase tourism performance. This agrees with the mean score of 3.63 and no variations in responses (standard deviation ≤ 1) results.

Regression Analysis

The Effect of Destination Marketing on Tourism Performance in West Pokot County

In assessing the Effect of Destination Marketing on Tourism Performance in West Pokot County, the following hypothesis was formed for testing;

HO₁: There is no Significant Relationship between Destination Marketing and Tourism Performance in West Pokot County.

To test the hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was performed. The results obtained are as shown in Tables below.

Table 2

Influence of Destination Marketing on Tourism Performance Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.646 ^a	.418	.416	.100689	.418	266.367	1	37	.000
. Predictors: (Constant), Destination Marketing									
. Dependent Variable: Tourism Performance									

Table 2 shows the regression results for the influence of destination marketing on tourism performance in west Pokot County and it reveals that the value of R Square (R^2) was 0.418 meaning that 41.8% of the changes in tourism performance in West Pokot County was explained by destination marketing. These results also show that

58.2% of changes in tourism performance is influenced by other factors other than destination marketing.

The study also conducted Analysis of variance (ANOVA) as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	2.701	1	2.701	34.626	.000 ^b
	Residual	3.761	37	.010		
	Total	6.462	38			
a. Dependent Variable: Destination Marketing						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Tourism Performance						

The results in Table 3 show the P-value for the regression model was 0.000, which was less than 0.05. The null hypothesis was thus rejected. This indicates that destination marketing is significant in predicting performance of tourism in west Pokot County.

The study further sought to determine the coefficients of the independent variable and the results are as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.328	.021		15.349	.000
	Destination Marketing	.560	.034	.646	16.321	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Tourism Performance						

The results in Table 4 indicate that the constant had a coefficient of .328 indicating that holding destination marketing at zero, performance of tourism in west Pokot County would be equal to 32.8%. At the same time, it was noted that destination marketing had a coefficient of .560 meaning that a unit increase in destination marketing would result in a 56 percent increase in tourism performance.

Discussion

The objective of the study was to establish the effect of destination marketing on tourism performance in West Pokot County. Descriptive statistics revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that destination marketing influences tourism performance. Majority of the respondents posited that their organizations participated to a small extent in destination marketing. This implies that most of the respondents have confidence in destination marketing as one of the tools that can be used to make tourism thrive. These results agree with the propositions of Cirikovic (2014) who argues that tourist destinations that have appealing attractions and a clear market positions are able to place themselves top in the consumers' minds. Tourism market is determined predominantly by tourism offers and tourism demand; in this case marketing plays a major role in competitively positioning a destination's product in the market (Cirikovic, 2014). Further the results reveal that majority 42.1% agreed that their organizations allocated only 5% of their income to destination marketing. The fact that only a small percentage of income was allocated to destination marketing could mean that adequate marketing of West Pokot County cannot be done leading to low tourist attraction.

The results of the study indicated that majority 60.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that destination marketing facilitates the success of tourism by creating awareness of tourist sites. Further, majority 73.7% of the respondents agreed that destination marketing helps in opening up the remote areas. The results also indicate that most 57.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that advertising influences tourism by increasing confirmation and reinforcement among the tourists. The results also showed that majority 39.5% of the respondents agreed that destination marketing uses images to communicate with the potential customers to increase customer base. A further majority 44.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that coordination manifested in joint destination marketing by hotels can increase tourism performance. All the above results indicate that majority of the respondents were in agreement that various forms of destination marketing influenced the performance of tourism in west Pokot county.

Regression results of the study showed R squared value of 0.418, meaning that 41.8% of the variance in tourism performance was explained by destination marketing. The P- value was 0.000 indicating that destination marketing was significant in predicting performance of tourism in west Pokot County. The study also established that a unit increase in destination marketing would result in a 56 percent increase in tourism performance. These results are consistent with propositions of (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg 2006) who posit that people are exposed to various images designed by marketers to influence their decisions about certain places and the various products that it offers in a particular captivating way. Therefore if tourist destinations are marketed aggressively, it would lead to more people making decisions to travel to see what has to be offered. Further, (Bolan & Williams, 2008) posit that tourist destination brand image is a major influencing factor in a traveler's destination choice. Branding West Pokot as a safe tourist destination with many tourist sites to see would go a long way in increasing the performance of tourism in West Pokot County.

Conclusion

The results of the study showed that destination marketing influences the performance of tourism in West Pokot County. This means that focus should be placed on destination marketing activities. Further, the stakeholders only participated in destination marketing to a small extent. The budget allocated by individual organizations to tourism was found to be minimal and participation of all stakeholders in destination marketing is not adequate for improvement of the performance in the tourism sector at large.

Recommendations

With reference to the findings of the study, it is recommended that county government of west Pokot should allocate adequate funds to ministry of tourism at the county level. This will ensure enough funds are available to carry out marketing of all the tourism products available in the county. It is also recommended that all the tourism stakeholders should work together to ensure that West Pokot County is marketed by both locally and globally. The stakeholders should increase their participation in destination marketing activities. The county government should improve the security in West Pokot and rebrand the county from the previously known area where cattle rustling is rampant and insecurity is part of life so that it can attract tourists both from other counties and globally.

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