

The All-Inclusive Holiday Concept at the Kenyan coast

Mary Mumbua Mutisya
Kenyatta University
School of Hospitality and Tourism
P.O. BOX 43844
NAIROBI, KENYA
EMAIL: mumbuamm@yahoo.com
TEL: +254733772572/ +254722299278

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper aims at profiling the application of the all inclusive holiday concept in Kenya, and identifying the positives and draw backs of the current mode of application.

Design/methodology The study was a cross-sectional survey design and it targeted the hotels along the Kenyan coast offering the all inclusive holiday package. The study was carried out in between December 2008 and April 2009. The data was analysed descriptively.

Findings: The outcome of the study shows that the application of all-inclusive concept had been varied from the original; these modifications have had both strengths and drawbacks to the hospitality and tourism industry. The current application of all inclusive in Kenya needs to be reviewed

Practical Implications: understanding the strengths and draw backs of the modified mode of all inclusive is useful to the hospitality practitioners and the tourism industry at large. The study gives recommendations on how to improve service delivery to all-inclusive guests, this is more profitable to the economy and would yield greater customer satisfaction; does not stretch the limited resources, it would also result in sustainable tourism.

Originality/value: The study will contribute to knowledge, especially in the of all inclusive holidays area where there very is little documentation.

Key Words: All Inclusive Holiday Concept; Customer Satisfaction, mode of application, service delivery, hospitality industry, Kenya

Introduction

In today's competitive business environment, the ability to meet and exceed customers' expectations and extend a hand to the host community is important for any business. In turn, customer satisfaction has a direct positive impact on the economic viability of any hospitality organisation. Thus all customer service organisations should strive to meet and exceed customer expectations in every aspect, (Torres and Kline, 2006).

Customer delight goes beyond customer satisfaction. Delight has recently drawn more attention in the service industry research field. Different from satisfaction, delight is a positive emotional response to surprising product attributes or service encounters. It is more positively correlated with customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and repeat patronage than guest satisfaction. All inclusive holiday packages in the hospitality industry should therefore be more interested creating delightful experiences for their guest, rather than attracting masses. (Berman, 2005; Torres et al, 2006; Parasuraman 1986)

The purpose of this paper is to profile the application of the all inclusive holiday concept in the Kenyan, with a view of identifying the positives and draw backs of the current mode of application, and thereafter evaluate the level to which service delivery meets customer expectation.

Background to the Study

All-inclusive holidays have been a strong growth sector within the total holiday market since 1997. They are defined as those holidays where all travel, accommodation, food and drink, entertainment, trips or sports coaching, are paid for when booking for one established price.

Issa, J. and Jayawardena, C., 2003, established that the all-inclusive holiday concept was first introduced in holiday camps in Britain in the 1930's and was a different holiday concept where a guest had to carry no form of currency while on a holiday. It was a package designed to eliminate extra charges that can sour the sweetest of vacations.

Issa, J. *et al.* (2003), further explain that all-inclusive clubs have revolutionised and made a major impact on the concept of hospitality service. In the 1950's, 'Club Mediterranean', a French company popularly known as 'club-med' introduced the concept on the Spanish island of Mallorca and later spread all over the globe. It was the first hotel product created for warm weather beach destinations. After its inception, the concept spread to Europe, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. The concept exploded through the Caribbean with different variations on the package. In Africa, the concept was first introduced in South Africa, later to Zanzibar, and

was introduced in Kenya in the early 1980. An explosion of the concept was experienced in Kenya in the late 1990's.

The spread of all-inclusive to Kenya can be attributed to the low business experienced at the coast during the 1997 land clashes and the 1998 terrorists' attacks which drove tourists away, as hoteliers tried to salvage their businesses to avoid closing down. The application of the all-inclusive concept in Kenya has been varied from the original.

The modification on the concept has had both positives and drawbacks to the Hospitality and Tourism Industry. Some of the positives include the ability of the concept to cater for a varied range of tourists and tourist inflows throughout the year. The all inclusive concept has had draw backs areas in its validity, efficacy and its ability to provide guest delight, professionalism of the personnel employed, value for money, quality of food, drink and accommodation offered; quality of tourists it attracts, and a low multiplier effect to the host country.

The modifications done to the original all-inclusive concept have touched on the range and quality of products and services on offer. A study was therefore important to profile the concept, and identify its strengths and draw backs, and thereafter make recommendations on delivery of quality service. Such a study had not been carried out at the Kenyan coast.

Research Design and Methodology

The study utilised a cross sectional survey design. The survey was carried out among the Kenyan coastal hotels offering all inclusive holiday packages. The Kenyan coast was considered suitable for the survey because it harbours 60% of the tourists visiting Kenya, and secondly because all inclusive concept is popular among beach hotels. The study used the purposeful sampling procedure to select hotels that embraced the all inclusive concept. The study instruments were researcher administered; they included Interviews with the hotel managers in the various hotels and observations, (GOK, 2009).

A Theoretical Framework on a Delightful All Inclusive Experience

The framework models an ideal all inclusive holiday package. Such a package would ensure service quality of products and services. This would result in customer delight and in turn leads to customer loyalty, and repeat patronage.

Accessibility to the Premises

Hotel guests appreciate fast and efficient reservations and booking process. Many hotel bookings are done in advance via email, mail, telephone, online or even in person. Many times clients have the option of booking directly to the hotel or through a travel agency. Whichever method is used, customers need convenience and time saving. Online and telephone bookings are seen as some of the most efficient means in the industry. In cases where airport transfers and hotel taxis are used to transfer guest, this should be done with minimal inconvenience to the guests, (Lockeyer, 2005)

Front Desk/ Reception Experience

At the front desk is where staff-guest interaction is probably most intense. In this area, guests need courtesy, competence and prompt responsiveness. The welcome accorded should be warm, fast and efficient. Billing should be accurate and clear; while porters should be prompt with the baggage and any other assistance required by guests, (Rutherford and O'Fallon, 2007).

Dining and Bar Experience

The area of dining is broadly categorised under breakfast, dining (lunch and dinner) and bar. Customers need efficiency and promptness in provision of these products and services; quality and variety should be ensured in the provision of both food and drink. The styles of service applied in the provision of both food and drink should ensure that food and drink are brought out in the best way possible and that high customisation of products and services is ensured. The décor and ambience in the dining area should be well harmonised, (Lillicrap, 2005).

The Room Experience

In the guest rooms, standards and comfort should be ensured. Peace and quiet are key to a guests comfort. The quality and standards of cleanliness of bed linen and towels should be high. The bathrooms should have adequate and quality toiletries. The rooms should have quality and variety of media channels. The décor and ambience need to be well harmonised to give quality to the room. Other amenities that are important in a room are hair driers, bathrobes, air conditioners and mini bars (Davis, 1990; Nielsen 2007).

Facilities and Recreation Experience

The facilities found in most star-rated hotels include a business centre, internet, swimming pools, gymnasiums, health clubs and spa treatment facilities. These facilities should be

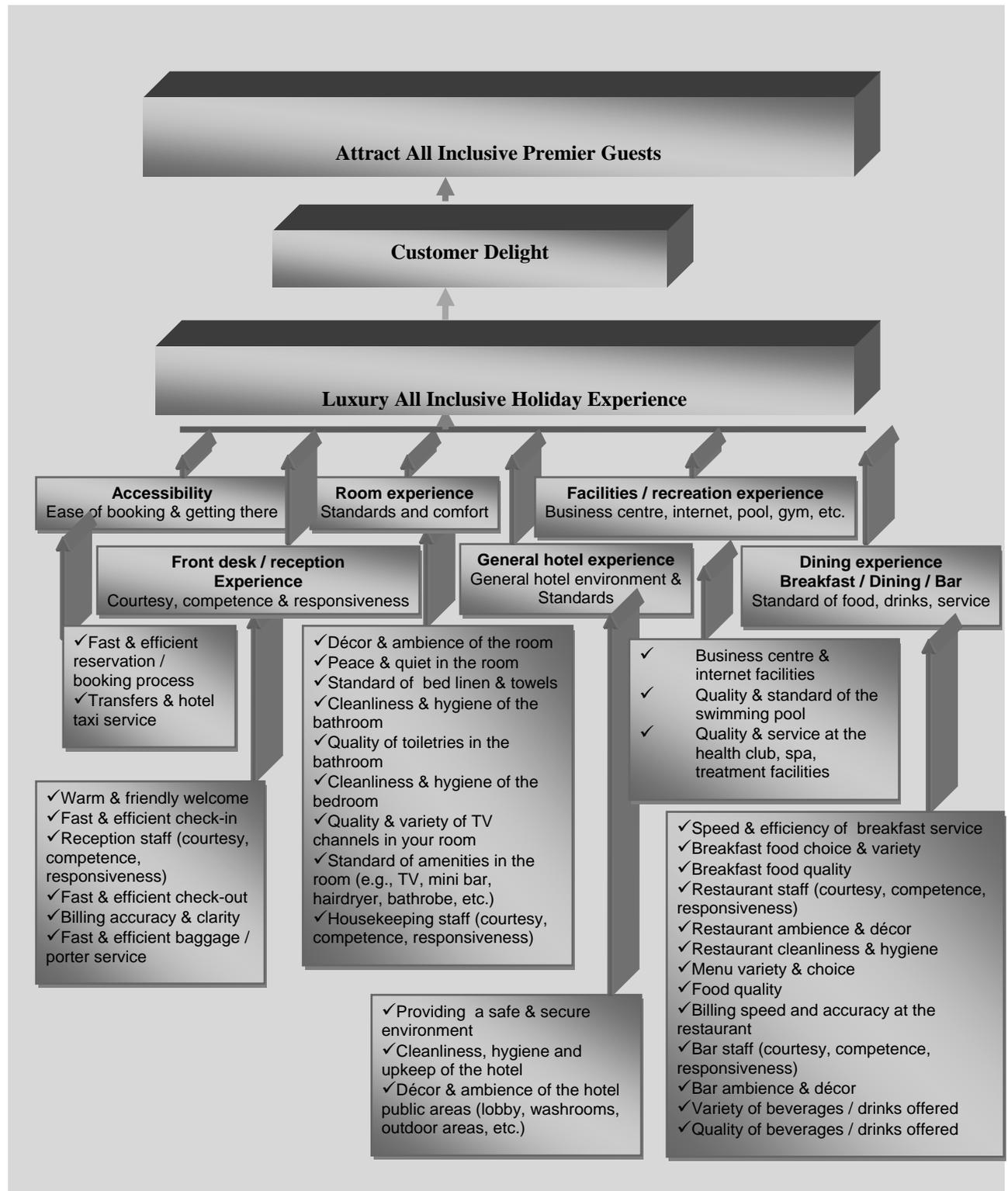
updated and in good working condition. High levels of cleanliness should be ensured. The entertainment offered should be well varied and appropriate for the clientele. Part of the reasons why some guests prefer all inclusive packages is because they do not wish to move out of the hotel while on holiday. Hotels therefore need to develop well integrated day and night guest entertainment programs to avoid causing boredom to their clients. (Rutherford et al, 2007)

According to Issa, J. *et al*, (2003), in the original all inclusive concepts, guests were kept well entertained. Guests who were not well entertained tended to use more of their time taking alcoholic beverages which was increased the costs of keeping the guests in the hotel. Day adventure tours can be organised as a way of enhancing guest preoccupation

General Hotel Facilities

Guests need a safe and secure environment. The hotels need to be well secured from any harm that may be caused to clients; guests should be safe as they move to various parts of the hotel even throughout the night; fire safety precautions should also be well addressed. The décor and ambience of the hotel public areas gives quality to a hotel. The cleanliness, hygiene and upkeep of the general areas in the hotel is an area of importance to the clients (Lillicrap, 2005)

Figure 1: Hotel Services and the Guest Experience



Source: Developed in this Study

Findings

Respondent characteristics

The response rate in this study was 90%, an equivalent of 26 hotels out of the 29 that offer all inclusive holiday packages. Out of these respondent hotels, 65% hosted tourists from the United Kingdom, 5.5% were Kenyan tourists; Italians and Americans each contributed to

4.9%; while the Hollandaise and the Czechs each comprised of 3.7%; Germans comprised 3% while other countries shared the remaining 9.3%. Most of the tourists for this market were over 45 years old with the majority being retired. Male tourists accounted for more than a half of the tourists. 95% of the tourists visited the respondent hotels on leisure trips; 4% were on honey moon and a minority of 1% on business trips. A majority of the all inclusive hotels fell between the 2 and 4 star hotel category. 99% hotels targeted mass all inclusive tourists while only a minimum of 1% targeted premier all inclusive tourists.

Reasons for Introducing the All Inclusive Concept

The respondent managers were interviewed on the reasons for embracing the all inclusive holiday concept. 9.1% said it was a cheap way of doing business, 18.2% had signed contracts with Travel Conglomerates to ensure they got tourists on the European Chartered flights; another 18.2% started all inclusive as a way of catering for a tourist segment that was not willing to carry money while on holiday

12.1% of the hotels introduced all inclusive because it was a market trend; 3% embraced the concept because of the good results realised by other coastal hotels; 6.1% the hotels at the Southern Coast found all inclusive convenient because their location which was away from other business activities; 15.2% of the hotels introduced all inclusive in 1998 after the Land clashes and terrorist attacks which scared international tourists to avoid closing down; another 15.2% introduced all inclusive because it was a sure way of ensuring the hotels don't suffer lack of customers during the low season and 3% of the respondents introduced all inclusive to tap an unexploited market in Kenya. Figure 1 shows the different reasons for embracing the all inclusive concept.

Table I: Reasons for Introducing the All Inclusive Concept

Reasons	Percent
It was a Cheap way of doing business	9.1
It was a get a way of getting guests through the European chartered flights	18.2
It was a way of catering for guests not willing to carry money while on holiday	18.2
It was started to keep up with current market trends	12.1
It was started after good results were realised from other hotels practising it at the Kenyan coast	3
The location of the (South Coast) location is ideal for All Inclusive	6.1
The concept was started after the 1998 land clashes out of desperation for guests	15.2
The concept was started to enable the hotel keep the hotel open throughout the year even during the low seasons	15.2
It was a way of tapping an unexploited market in Kenya	3

A Profile of the Products and Services on Offer

The study went further to profile the products and services in an all inclusive package.

The Meals

From the table II, 50% of the five star hotels gave the guests a choice of eating either from the buffet or ordering a la carte meals which are specifically prepared for individual guests. The other 50% of five star hotels, guests were required to have their meals from the buffet, and no option of an individual choice was provided for. From the sample population, the entire 4 star, 3 star, 2 star and 1 star hotels provided only the buffet option for meals. Among the hotels that gave the buffet option only, guests who wished to have meals from the a la carte restaurants were required to pay cash for the specific meal.

The entire sample population provided their guests 10 clock and 4 clock teas and snacks, at a convenient place near the main guest recreation areas, and guests were free to serve themselves at will.

The Refreshments

The entire sample population offered drinks for their guests. The drinks on offer included soft drinks such as soda, waters, and juices and local alcoholic drinks including wines, whiskeys, gins, brandies, vodka and rum. It was noted that champagnes, cognacs, and other premium drinks were not offered as part of an all inclusive package. The drinks on offer were varied in packaging, form and variety. 50% of the 5 hotels offered bottled drinks with their respective glass ware. The remaining 50% of the five star hotels together with the entire 4 star, 3 star, 2 star and 1 star hotel population offered cold beverages by glass. All inclusive guests were not entitled to drinks sold by bottle as it was not cost effective for the establishment

The Recreational Activities

The entire sample population had both day and evening programs for their guests. The hotels had guest programs and posted them at convenient points for guest collection. The adult day activities were separate from the children’s activities. The adult programs included water volleyball, water aerobics, beach football, tug of war, net ball and volley ball.

All the hotels had animators to keep children entertained them when the adults were preoccupied with other activities or needed relax in their rooms. The animators kept the children busy with activities including computer games, drawing, building castles with sand, beach games, and swimming competitions. In all the hotels night swimming was not allowed

Evening Recreational Activities

All the hotels offered evening entertainment during and after dinner. The entertainment offered varied from live bands, disco music, carols, acrobatic shows, African and foreign dances from different communities and drama skits. The table II gives a summary of the products and services offered in different hotels.

Table II: All Inclusive Products and Services Offered

All	Inclusive	5 star	4 star	3 star	2 star	1 star
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components						
1. Guest Meals						
a) Breakfast	50% offered a la carte; 50% offered buffet breakfast	100% offered buffet breakfast	100% offered buffet breakfast	100% offered buffet breakfast	100% offered buffet breakfast	100% offered buffet breakfast
b) 10 o'clock	100% provided a 10 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks	100% provided a 10 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks	100% provided a 10 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks	100% provided a 10 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks	100% provided a 10 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks	100% provided a 10 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks
c) Lunch/ midday meal	50% allowed guests on AI to order a midday meal of their choice at the al carte restaurant; 50% provided buffet lunch	100% provided buffet lunch	100% provided buffet lunch	100% provided buffet lunch	100% provided buffet lunch	100% provided buffet lunch
d) 4 o'clock	100% provided a 4 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks	100% provided a 4 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks	100% provided a 4 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks	100% provided a 4 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks	100% provided a 4 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks	100% provided a 4 Oclock tea buffet with assorted beverages and snacks
e) Dinner	50% allowed guests on AI to either order dinner from the al carte restaurant have it from the buffet; 50% provided buffet lunch	100% offered buffet dinner	100% offered buffet dinner	100% offered buffet dinner	100% offered buffet dinner	100% offered buffet dinner
2. Guest Drinks						
	Limited AI drinks to local alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks; 50% of the hotels served guests were served with bottled; 50% served drinks from the	Limited AI drinks to local alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks; 100% hotels served drinks from the	Limited AI drinks to local alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks; 100% hotels served drinks from the dispenser	Limited AI drinks to local alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks; 100% hotels served drinks from the	Limited AI drinks to local alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks; 100% hotels served drinks from the	Limited AI drinks to local alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks; 100% hotels served drinks from the

	dispenser	dispenser	dispenser
3. Day Recreational Program	100% offered separate programs for adults and children between 9.30am and 4pm. the program included non-motorized water and beach sports	100% offered separate programs for adults and children between 9.30am and 4pm. the program included non-motorized water and beach sports	100% offered separate programs for adults and children between 9.30am and 4pm. the program included non-motorized water and beach sports
4. Evening Recreational Program	100% offered evening entertainment	100% offered evening entertainment	100% offered evening entertainment
5. Rooms	100% offered standard rooms to AI guest	100% offered standard rooms to AI guest	100% offered standard rooms to AI guest

Strengths and Drawbacks of the All Inclusive Concept

The strengths and draw backs of all inclusive can be viewed from customer, hotel management and economic perspectives.

1. The travel agents plan for the trip; this means that guests have fewer worries. On the other hand, guests miss out on personal choices of the holiday itinerary. Personal tastes and preferences are not taken care of.
2. All inclusive is a package that highly favours heavy drinkers as no extra costs are incurred from drinks. The over consumption of alcoholic drinks has negative side effects to an individual's health, mood and socially to others members of the group. This study revealed premium drinks are rarely part of the mass all inclusive package. Non Premium drinks have even worse effects than the premium. Further still, all inclusive drinks were sold by glass; this dilutes the hospitality experience as the art of service of is highly ignored.
3. All inclusive is packed with recreational day and night activities targeting both children and adults. An analysis of these activities showed most all inclusive packages did not include motorized sports and the entertainment programs greatly

ignore personal tastes and preferences, yet guests are already captive to the hotels and may not want to spend extra money looking for entertainment elsewhere. A guest stuck with whatever entertainment the hotel offers - which might be very good, or not too good at all.

4. The guests under all inclusive were preoccupied with a variety of activities within the hotel, basically a guest spends most of the time in the hotel complex to avoid unnecessary additional expenditure. The disadvantage here is that some of the more appealing tourist locations go unvisited because of the additional cost of providing the family with food and refreshments.
5. On an all inclusive package, the guest rested assured that no extra charges can sour the sweet vacation; however, it is also a fact that the guest has no choice over what to eat unless he/she is willing to pay from the pocket. Dining in one hotel for a prolonged period of time can be monotonous and boring; this may affect the level of satisfaction obtained by the customer
6. A number of hotels favour all inclusive because it was viewed as a cheap way of doing business, especially when not run concurrently with other holiday packages. The hotels were able to operate with a minimum number of staff, positions such as those of cashiers were minimal, the hotel did not have to hire expensive specialised staff, the hotels enjoyed economies of scale especially in catering, drinks provided for all inclusive are non premium. On the other hand, the customers may view the services as non-customised; the hotel may also be compromising on the quality of products and services
7. The findings of this study show that all inclusive mainly applied the self service buffet style. Table I shows that all the hotels that targeted mass tourists also offered buffet service; and only the few that targeted premier tourists used other styles of service. The buffet style may seem advantageous to the hotel, offering a wide selection of food that has been attractively presented. However, a few truths of the buffet need to be noted:-
 - i. Buffet does not allow for customized or personalized service.
 - ii. The dining experience is diluted when compared to service styles such as gueridon and other forms of plated service which encourage showmanship. In buffets, the art of food service is not given any detail
 - iii. Food ingredients used on buffet may not be of superior quality as those used on plated food

- iv. Notorious hotels have been accused of recycling buffet leftover food
 - v. Sea food, which is a delicacy, is rarely found on buffet, guests have to pay separately for it. This beats the purpose of all inclusive in a coastal holiday experience
 - vi. Buffets encourage food wastage as guests may serve more than they can manage
 - vii. Personnel with low levels of hospitality training or none at all have been used for the service of buffet
 - viii. They freshness of food may be compromised
8. Hotels viewed all inclusive as a way of keeping their doors open throughout the year without having to suffer over the off peak of low seasons. A quick check at how much guests pay per night showed that the average guest paid an average of USD70 per night, yet the hotels end up spending on average USD50 per guest per night. How profitable is such business?
 9. None all inclusive hotels viewed all inclusive as being a way of compromising on the quality of clients a hotel attracts. In Kenya, all inclusive packages were not popular with both the local population and premier tourists from the rest of the world.
 10. The accommodation offered to all inclusive guests has been 'a standard room', guests who wish to have more comfortable rooms have to pay for room upgrades. Guests on holiday are out to relax and need to be accorded high quality accommodation.
 11. The economic drawbacks of all inclusive rotate around the multiplier effect to the host country and community. Most of the payments are made abroad to the travel conglomerates; and very little money trickled down to the hotels.

Conclusion

An analysis of the all inclusive tours is among the under researched areas in hospitality and Tourism industry, yet it is a fast growing sector of the economy. This study endeavors to contribute to knowledge. The study revealed that all inclusive is a popular holiday concept along the coast, but had been varied from the original. The variations from the original had more drawbacks than strength. It was therefore important for the hospitality practitioners to review the all inclusive package on offer in order to be able to capture the premier tourism segment. The study foresighted that unless in the mode of application was changed it would

lose customers in due course; and that currently, it only continues to attract mass tourists. A review of literature highlighted an ideal all inclusive holiday package that would yield a high guest satisfaction. The all inclusive holiday concept is a good business idea; however, the practitioners need to check on its application. The study highlighted the strengths which can further be improved; most of the draw backs of this package emanate from the limited amount of money per guest that trickles to the hotels from the travel conglomerates. An upward review of the amount paid to the hotels for guest per night would greatly improve the quality of products and services. The hotels are in business, and therefore can only offer so much to a guest who pays a limited amount. Most of the all inclusive guests ended up paying for room upgrades, premium drinks and delicacy meals, especially sea food and choice steaks. This means the target market still has an extra to spend in order to get a quality holiday. The premier all inclusive concept would probably be a good approach to the concept. This would ensure hotels offer individualized quality services. This study recommends a comparative study on the practice of all inclusive across selected African countries and a bench marking study of the all inclusive concept with the Caribbean.

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