INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC TOURISM MARKETING PRACTICES ON TOUR OPERATOR FIRMS' PERFORMANCE IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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DECLARATION

Declaration by the Candidate

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for Degree in any other University

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this Ph.D. work to my wife Mary, and daughters Pristine, Precious, and Victoria. Throughout my Ph.D. journey, you have proven to be consistent in your support, encouragement and prayers.

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I'm forever indebted to God for His unending love and mercies, and for enabling me complete my studies in this prestigious institution. I'm grateful to my supervisors; Dr. Shem Wambugu Maingi and Dr. Vincent Maranga for their invaluable support during my studies. Many thanks to Dr. John Achuora and Dr. Gabriel Okello for their immeasurable and unconditional guidance in shaping my Ph.D. thesis work. My sincere gratitude to Mr. Fred Kaigua, Catherine, and Sam, all from KATO for creating amazing connections to Tour Operators within Nairobi City County. To all the Tour Operators that collaborated in this study, thank you!

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDA	Attention, Interest, Desire and Action
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CNN	Cable News Network
CRS	Computerized Reservation System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDS	Global Distribution System
GIS	Geographic Information System
GoK	Government of Kenya
GPS	Global Positioning System
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
KATO	Kenya Association of Tour Operators
MRM	Multiple Regression Model
NTSB	National Tourism Strategy Blueprint
SMPs	Strategic Marketing Practices
STMPs	Strategic Tourism Marketing Practices
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
VOIP	Voice Over Internet Protocol
WEF	World Economic Forum

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Strategic Marketing: Process by which a firm differentiates itself from its competitors by focusing on its strengths so as to provide its customers with superior service and value.

Strategic Tourism Marketing Practices (STMPs): Refers to activities that tourism enterprises perform or work at repetitively so as to create high affinity tourist products that are strategically placed, efficiently promote them, and successfully sell them to tourists. In this study, STMPs are drawn from the Marketing Mix and include Product Practices, Pricing Practices, Place Practices and Promotion Practices.

Strategic Tourism Place Practices: Refers to activities that tourism enterprises perform or work at repeatedly so as to become proficient in placing tourism products, organizing accommodations, meals, sightseeing and transportation components

Strategic Tourism Price Practices: Refers to activities that tourism enterprises perform or work at repeatedly so as to become proficient in pricing their tourism products

Strategic Tourism Product: A strategic tourism product is a specific offering or item that holds a substantial and deliberate importance in an overall tourism business strategy.

Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices: Strategic tourism promotion refers to the deliberate and planned efforts that are undertaken by governments, tourism boards, tour operator firms, or other relevant authorities towards attracting visitors, boosting the local economy, and maximizing the positive impacts of tourism

Tour Operator Firm Performance: Refers to several aspects of a tour firm including profitability, growth, and market value.

Tour Operator: A business that combines two or more travel services, including transport, accommodation, meals, entertainment, and sightseeing and sells them directly to final consumers as a package.

ABSTRACT

The study purposed to establish the Influence of Strategic Tourism Marketing Practices (STMPs) on tour operator firms' performance in Nairobi City County. Specific objectives of the study were: To establish the influence of strategic tourism product practices on tour operator performance; To assess the effect of strategic tourism pricing practices on tour operator performance; To determine the effect of strategic tourism place practices on tour operator performance; To establish the impact of strategic tourism promotion practices on tour operator performance; and To examine the moderating effect of ICT on the relationship between STMPs and tour operator performance. This study was conducted in Nairobi County.. A mixed methods research design was adopted. 256 KATO Full Members that are located in Nairobi City County constituted the target population for this study. Stratified random sampling was used to sample the unit of analysis while purposive sampling was applied to sample the unit of observation. The primary data collection instruments were questionnaires and interviews. The findings on the influence of STMPs on Tour Operator Performance revealed that, to a large extend wildlife was the most sought tourism product at 89.3% followed by beach & marine at 71.0%. Strategic Tourism Product Practices had a positive influence on Tour Operator Performance though not statistically significant($\beta = 0.032,\ t\,(129) = 0.335, p = 0.738 > 0.05$). To a large extent Tour Operators used transportation cost as a strategic pricing practice (81.7%) followed by accommodation cost (69.5%). Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices had a positive influence on Tour Operator Performance though not statistically significant($\beta = 0.029,\ t\,(129) = 0.398, p = 0.390 > 0.05$). To a large extent, Tour Operators used accommodation and other facilities at the attraction as a strategic place practice (74.0%) followed by security to and at the attraction (71.8%). Strategic Tourism Place Practices statistically had a significant and positive influence on Tour Operator Performance($\beta = 0.161,\ t\,(129) = 2.349, p = 0.02 < 0.05$). To a large extent Tour Operators used recommendations as a strategic promotional practice (67.2%) followed by advertising (45.0%). Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices had a statistically significant positive influence on Tour Operator Performance($\beta = 0.170,\ t\,(129) = 2.013, p = 0.046 < 0.05$). The findings also showed that to a large extent Tour Operators used E-Mail as an ICT practice (84.0%) followed by E-Payment (61.8%). There was a statistically significant positive moderating effect of ICT practices on the relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance ($\beta = 0.355, t\,(129) = 3.070, p = 0.003 < .05$). In conclusion, STMPs can enhance tour operators' revenue and customer growth. Tour Operators could apply strategic product and pricing practices for their revenue and customer growth, but only to a certain extent. On the other hand, Tour Operators use of Strategic Tourism Place and Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices appears worthwhile. The same applies on the use of ICT practices to facilitate the application of STMPs. The study recommends that Tour Operators desiring to increase their numbers in terms of revenues and customers should consider additional strategic practices that would bring more synergy to Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices. The study also recommends Tour Operators to embrace ICT practices and minimize overdependence on product and price practices.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The continued survival and efficiency of a tourism-related business in a competitive and financially challenging environment depends majorly on its capacity to satisfy customers' needs and desires and also on how it strategically responds to present-day challenges. Strategic marketing is a plan that is developed and implemented so as to give a firm an upper hand in its pursuit of business excellence (Cleverism, 2018). Consequently, this plan becomes important in defining and streamlining the route that the objectives of a firm should take so as to be achieved. According to Brooksbank et al., (2012), strategic tourism marketing practices (STMPs) are essential in determining the long-term direction of a tourism organization. STMPs are necessary in linking tourism strategy to tour operator's marketing execution. Strategic marketing, therefore, becomes an essential practice for modern-day tourism firms. Substantial contribution to organizational tour operator performance has been observed in firms that have embraced STMPs (Brooksbank et al., 2012).

Tour operator firms provide an essential link between supply and demand in the tourism value chain. According to Khairat & Maher (2012) tour operator firms work with a number of other organizations to craft packages and sell them at a particular price to tourists. When a tour operator books the holiday there is normally a lower occurrence of health, security, and visa hitches. According to Yarcan and Cetin (2021) tour operator products and services provided by include international and local transportation, land services at the destination,

accommodation, catering, transfers, museum services, recreation, entertainment, sightseeing, guiding, foreign independent tour arrangements, individual travel arrangements, information provision, passport and visa services, currency exchange, cultural tours, cruises and inclusive holiday package sales. As such, for tour firms, developing products that differentiates them from those of their competitors is a prerequisite for achieving long-term strategic objectives (Owusu-Bempah et al., 2013).

Further, according to Cavlek et al., (2014) the business of tour operations has changed significantly since the development of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Most ICT creates various advantages for the travel trade. For example, Yarcan and Cetin (2021) explains that ICT has created speed and efficiency, increased the geographical scope of tour operator firms, and reduced costs. According to Bethapudi (2013), application of ICTs facilitates the amalgamation of customer relations management and supply chain management. This in turn assists in a multiplicity of operations including product selection, ordering, payment, and reporting. Effectively, ICT not only results in a cost-effective operation but also offers improved efficiency in business processes, resulting in productivity, profitability and growth (Fuza et al., 2015)

1.1.1 Firm Performance

According to Taouab and Issor (2019), firm performance is increasingly becoming a relevant concept in strategic management research and is frequently used as a dependent variable. Nonetheless, the definition of firm performance has mutated over the years; from organizational efficiency in the 50’s, to organization's ability to exploit its environment for accessing and using the limited resources in the 60’s and 70’s; and to ability to create value for its clients in the 80’s (Taouab & Issor, 2019). Selvam et al., (2016) assert that the

definition of firm performance should be achieved through piloting, evaluation, efficiency, effectiveness, and quality.

In order to survive in a competitive business environment, firms should operate in conditions of performance. Selvan et al., (2016) believe that profit and growth are relevant justification for the existence of a business firm and they must be included in any attempt to measure performance of firms. A company may grow internally or externally. The performance of a tour operator can be a measure of the number of visitors who come to its website, but more importantly the percentage of those visitors who complete a desired action, such as booking a tour or filling out a form to request more information. Other performance metrics include customer lifetime value, conversion rate, average sale value, and growth in profits.

Although the main business philosophy of tour operators based on economies of scale stays the same, i.e. concentration on product, distribution and operational efficiency, their marketing strategies have been significantly changing (Nevenka, 2013). For instance, tour operators have become aware that their long-term strategic goals can be achieved only if they develop products with content that differentiates them from competitors (Owusu-Bempah et al., 2013). They also need to acknowledge that price is very important as it determines the company's profit and hence, survival (Owusu-Bempah et al., 2013). Further, according to Nevenka, (2013), tour Operators must ensure that potential customers know about the product, through effective promotional practices which includes every aspect - mass-media, advertising, public relations, press releases, direct mail, etc., to draw the attention of customers to the product. They must also apply distribution practices by

thinking about where to sell the product, in which area and through what kind of sales network (Owusu-Bempah et al., 2013). The product should be easily accessible to enable potential customers to buy it.

1.1.2 Tour Operator Firm Performance

A tour operator is a company that plans, produces, markets, distributes and sells the organized tourist product (Yarcan & Cetin, 2021). According to Yarcan and Cetin **(**2021**),** **a**n inclusive tour is sold with a mark-up or profit margin to the public either directly or through distribution networks, intermediary travel agencies, electronic media, and electronic distribution channels either owned by the tour operator or information communication technology companies.

The TUI Travel Group and Thomas Cook Travel group, both in Europe cater for over 55 million customers from over 30 different source markets and have over 230 brands (Nevenka, 2013). In 2016, Kuoni Global Travel Services, a luxury Tour Operator in the United Kingdom (UK), took nearly 630,000 people to 120 countries on behalf of over 1,000 clients (KUONI, 2018). In the United States (U.S) travel industry, three major travel companies - Altour, Protravel, and TravelStore - drive nearly US$2.5 billion in annual sales (Travel + Leisure Marketing & the Singapore Tourism Board, 2013). In addition, the world's longest established tour operator, Cox & Kings, employs over 1,400 travel professionals worldwide (Nevenka, 2013). In Sub Saharan Africa (SSA), the tour operation sector is thought to include some 2,500 to 3,000 ground operators providing direct employment for 35,000 to 40,000 people (Iain et al., 2014). Thirty-one million tourists arrived in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2010; of these, about 16 percent (4.9 million) arranged

their trip using a tour operator, suggesting that tour operators are responsible for between US$2 billion and US$3 billion in spending annually in SSA (Iain et al., 2014)

In Kenya, all tour operators must be licensed by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA). The TRA is a corporate body established under section 4 of the Tourism Act No.28 of 2011 and is mandated to regulate the tourism sector (KenInvest, 2024). This entails developing regulations, standards and guidelines that are necessary to ensure an all-round quality service delivery in the tourism sector (KenIvest, 2024). Further, tour operator firms are expected to be members of the Kenya Association of Tour Operators (KATO). KATO is tourism trade associations for tour operator firms in Kenya, and represents the interests of over 400 of the most experienced professional tour operators (KATO, 2017). The tour operator firms are bound by the association Code of Conduct to provide the highest possible quality of service to their clients (KATO, 2017). KATO categorizes the tour operator firms in into three major classes: Full Members, Associate Members and Affiliate Members.

The Kenya Government expects tour operator firms to be one of the key pillars in socio-economic development of the country (GoK, 2015). According to Maru and Damianah (2013), tour operator firms play a critical role in the tourism sector which is the main source of foreign currency for the country (GoK, 2017). The tour firms' performance directly affects the country's tourism performance and by extension the attainment of Vision 2030 (GoK, 2017). 1.1.3 STMPs in the Tourism Sector in Kenya

Following an all-inclusive scrutiny of Kenya's global attractiveness, *Kenya Vision 2030 Economic Blueprint*, covering the period 2008 to 2030, listed tourism among six crucial

sectors under the economic pillar identified to deliver a 10 percent economic growth rate per annum (GoK, 2007). According to this Blueprint, Kenya's aim was to offer a diverse, high-end, and distinctive visitor experience. This goal was to be achieved by applying several strategies including: aggressive development of the Kenyan coast by constructing three resort cities in strategic locations - Isiolo, Diani and Kilifi; increasing tourist revenues by enhancing the quality of service provision and applying commensurate charges especially in Kenya's premium safari parks, and enhancing product offering in parks that were underutilized. Other interventions included creation of new and high value unique products; attraction of high-end global hotels; and boosting business tourism by investing in new conferencing facilities. The fulfillment of these strategic interventions would place the country in the global map and place it among the top ten most sought long-haul tourist places to visit.

However, a progress report on the implementation of Kenya Vision 2030 released in 2022 indicated that most of these strategies were yet to take shape. For instance, the resort cities were only identified in 2019 (GoK, 2022), with little or no activity happening there. Several implementation challenges were cited, including inadequate allocation of funds; poor co-ordination amongst government departments; and insecurity/terrorism threats (GoK, 2022). As at December 2021, the progress report further noted that both the modernization and expansion of KICC and the establishment of the proposed Nairobi International Convention Centre were at only at 34.4% and 10% complete, respectively. In this view, the realization of the Kenya's Economic Blueprint was more of a mirage (GoK, 2022).

Post COVID-19, The *New Tourism Strategy for Kenya 2021-2025* was launched in May 2022 (Government of Kenya, 2022). According to the strategy, 30% of the revenues generated by the top 5 KWS parks occurs between July-August, while another 20% is received between September and October (GoK, 2022). During the rest of the months, tourism activities are at an all-time low, posing a serious challenge of sustainability. One way of handling the challenge of overcrowding involves redirecting visitors to more underutilized parks (GoK, 2022). The strategy further indicates that the Kenya's coastal tourism has declined due to a continuous loss of market share to its equally worthy competitors. The key reasons cited for this decline include insecurity, poor infrastructure, dirty beaches and deteriorating tourism infrastructure. In addition, the coastal region boasts of five airports, but only the Mombasa International Airport has capacity of handling large body aircraft because it is internationally connected. Several recommendations are made including developing tourism-related infrastructure so as to remain competitive because out of 140 countries, Kenya is ranked 103rd (GoK, 2022).

On the ICT front, the strategy makes several recommendations including: Keeping Magical Kenya as the only source of truth; Improving the functionality of the e-VISA website; and enhanced Wi-Fi connectivity in major tourist destinations. Others are: partnering with digital payment firms; digitizing entrances to KWS parks; and developing a tourist app for the country (GoK, 2022).

To mitigate against further tourism sector negative effects brought about by COVID-19, the Kenya Government launched *The COVID-19 and Travel and Tourism in Kenya Policy Brief.* The policy stipulates several strategies geared towards turning around Kenya's

tourism sector performance. They include: Re-packaging the tourism product; Introducing new and improved tourism products; Pricing revision for tourism products; and digitizing travel and tourism (Government of Kenya, 2020). To further rejuvenate Kenya's tourism sector, *The National Tourism Blueprint 2030* proposes several strategic interventions amongst them Product Strategy; Infrastructure Strategy; Marketing Strategic Direction; and Institutional Structure among others (GoK, 2017). Further, according to the *Sector Plan for the Tourism Sector for the period 2018 to 2022*, Kenya's target was to increase tourism arrivals from 1.45 million in 2017 to 2.5 million; and grow tourism revenues from Ksh.119.9 billion to Ksh.175 billion (GoK, 2018). However, available statistics as published in The Annual Tourism Sector Performance Report - 2022 indicates 1,483,752 international tourist arrivals, way below the 2.5 million tourists' target (GoK, 2023).

Kenya's tourism sector has been bedeviled by many challenges. For instance, in 2011, safety and security instances undoubtedly triggered the decline in Kenya's tourism industry. Furthermore, according to *The National Tourism Blueprint 2030*, other challenges included: Over-dependence on international leisure and a few source markets with a dependence on one sector; weak marketing activities and Magical Kenya brand; and highly seasonal tourism. Traffic congestion in major towns resulting to unpleasant experiences due to excessive travel times, poor road network, difficult access and unacceptable driving experiences; unaffordable tourism products; and run-down accommodations, especially beach resorts and some lodges. Kenya also suffered from a negative perception of the country because it was considered unsafe (Government of Kenya, 2017).

The poor performance of Kenya's tourism sector was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic. To combat the spread of COVID-19, the Government deferred international passenger travel for four months effective 25th March. Consequently, international visitor arrivals declined by 71.5% from 2.03 million in 2019 to 0.58 million in 2020 (Government of Kenya, 2021). Similarly, according to Kenya's 2021 Economic Survey Report, tourism receipts dropped by 43.9% between 2019 and 2020 (GoK, 2022). Domestic tourism similarly nosedived due to restriction of movement of people within the Nairobi Metropolitan and Mombasa County. Most socio-economic activities were suppressed from the second to the third quarter of 2020. All these unfortunate state of affairs have complicated the tour operations business in Kenya over the years.

Regardless, the Kenya Government continues to underscore the role tour operator firms play towards the country's social and economic development (GoK, 2015; GoK, 2017; Maru & Damianah, 2013). This expectation notwithstanding, Kenya's tourism sector has not only performed continuously below the government's annual target of three million tourists as stipulated in the 2013-18 National Tourism Strategy, but has never at any one instance achieved such a target (GoK, 2013). This has led to the country being ranked a distance 96th below a host of African countries including South Africa, Rwanda, Morocco, and Botswana (WEF, 2017). Therefore, this study intends to examine the relationship between STMPs and tour operator firms' performance in the Kenyan context. Drawn from the 4Ps Marketing Mix (Kotler et al., 2014), this study will specifically focus on four STMPs – Strategic Tourism Product; Strategic Tourism Price; Strategic Tourism Place; and Strategic Tourism Promotion.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The impact of tourism to the Kenyan economy, much of it derived from visits to national parks, is actually much lower than expected (World Bank, 2017). Several methods of improving tour operator firms' performance such as branding of parks and reserves (Kihima, 2014); reduction of tourist's visa fees by 50% (Njiraini et al., 2015); broadcasting positive statements on the global media channels, such as Cable News Network (CNN) and the BBC; and participating in international trade fairs are increasingly being criticized for their lack of visibility (Mburugu, 2015). For instance, in 2013, international visitor arrivals dropped by 11.2%, while tourism earnings recorded a 2.1% decline over the same period (GoK, 2018). Further, tourism revenues dropped by 2.6% from KSh.87.1 billion in 2014 to KSh.84.6 in 2015. Similarly, a decline in visitor arrivals of 12.6% was reported in 2015 (GoK, 2018). In this view, Kenya's Tourism Sector set an ambitious five –years target of increasing international tourist numbers from 1.45 million recorded in 2017 to 2.5 million (GoK, 2018). However, the Annual Tourism Sector Performance Report – 2022, reported 1,483,752 international visitor arrivals in the year 2022, way below the 2.5 million target (GoK, 2023). This declining trend in tourism performance has dimmed the operations of tour operators, raising serious concerns about their sustainability. Al-Najjar (2014) provides evidence that tourism growth improves a country's economic conditions and in turn boosts the performance of its tour operators. Poor tourism performance can result in decreased demand, affecting operators' income. Consequently, the interplay between tourism performance and tour operator performance is dynamic, with each influencing the other in various ways (Al-Najjar 2014)

There's therefore a need for tour operator firms to embrace a more robust marketing approach aimed at improving their contribution towards the realization of Kenya's Vision 2030 Economic Blueprint; The National Tourism Blueprint 2030; and The New Tourism Strategy for Kenya 2021-2025. Evidently, a number of firms in Kenya have embraced strategic marketing practices in an attempt to address performance issues (Kamau et al, 2015; Nansubuga, 2016). However, there has been minimal empirical research linking STMPs with tour operator performance in Kenya, hence the study on the influence of STMPs on tour operator firms' performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

The overall objective of the study was to establish the influence of strategic tourism marketing practices (STMPs) on tour operator firms' performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Arising from the general objective, the study was guided by the following specific objectives:

i. To establish the influence of strategic tourism product practices on tour operator performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya
ii. To assess the effect of strategic tourism pricing practices on tour operator performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya
iii. To determine the effect of strategic tourism place practices on tour operator performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya

iv. To establish the impact of strategic tourism promotion practices on tour operator performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya

v. To examine the moderating effect of ICT on the relationship between STMPs and tour operator performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya

1.4 Hypotheses

H_{01}There is no significant relationship between strategic tourism product practices on tour operator performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya

H_{02}There is no significant relationship between strategic tourism pricing practices on tour operator performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya

H_{03}There is no significant relationship between strategic tourism place practices on tour operator performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya

H_{04}There is no significant relationship between strategic tourism promotion practices on tour operator performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya

H_{05}ICT does not significantly moderate the relationship between STMPs and tour operator performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya

1.5 Significance of Study

Through the study findings and recommendations, tour operators will be in a position to understand and appreciate how strategic tourism price, strategic tourism product, strategic tourism place, and strategic tourism promotion affect their operations, and thereby apply sufficient measures to avert adverse effects of any of these variables. Additionally, this study will assist in resource allocation in various marketing activities. The findings of this study may help tour operators appreciate the role of ICT in their marketing activities. The findings of this study will assist the government and other regulatory bodies design

guidelines and procedures that may help the players get direct support through tax rebates and exemptions on tourism activities related to product, price, place, promotion and ICT.. The conclusions of the empirical study shall facilitate a greater appreciation of the influence of STMPs on the operations of tour operators in Kenya. Consequently, researchers shall use the findings of this study to advance their field of knowledge. The findings are also expected to open up more research opportunities, thereby reducing research gaps in the field of strategic tourism marketing practices and its effect on tour operator firms.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is centered on the influence of strategic tourism marketing practices (STMPs) on tour operator firms' performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Due to the catastrophic disruption of the Tourism Industry following the outbreak of the COVI-19 Pandemic, data collection was conducted between January 2021 and October 2021. Drawing from the 4Ps Marketing Mix Model (Singh, 2012) the study focused on four controllable variables – Strategic Tourism Product, Strategic Tourism Price, Strategic Tourism Place and Strategic Tourism Promotion – which formed the basis of this study. Tour operator firm performance was measured by both number of visitors and profit as recommended by Wadongo et al., (2010) and Santos et al., (2012)

1.7 Theoretical Framework

A theory, according to Cooper and Schindler (2011), is a set of interconnected concepts, propositions and definitions applied to describe and forecast an occurrence. Just like it is difficult to construct a house without a blueprint, a study that is not based on a theory is unclear and unstructured (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The following theories are relevant in explaining the effect of STMPs on the performance of tour operator firms in Nairobi County, Kenya:

1.7.1 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The resource-based view of competitive advantage suggests that by applying unique, uncommon, valued, not substitutable and imperfectly imitable resources, a competitive advantage may be sustained (Barney et al., 2011; Spanos & Lioukas, 2001). The resources of a firm include competencies, assets, organizational procedures, qualities, knowledge and information (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003).

The RBV underscores resources as the key determining factors of not only a unique selling position for the firm, but also, performance (Barney, 1991; Porter, 1991)). According to Tokuda (2005) resource heterogeneity is an essential condition for a competitive resource bundle. The reasoning behind this argument is that firms with the same stock in a market have no strategy to differentiate them from other firms in the same market (Tokuda, 2005). It is in this view that Wolf and Crotts (2011) contend that STMPs are unique resources that when applied appropriately have the potential of influencing tour operator performance. These STMPs assist firms in sustaining uniqueness and maximizing their chances of achieving not only a steady, but also a continual success in their operations (Kotler, 2003). For example, according to Remeňová, and Kintler, (2020), effective pricing can indeed

become a unique asset that enhances a firm's competitive advantage. Similarly, Agustia et al., (2022) argues that a product can be a unique resource for a firm when it embodies innovation, quality, branding, or other attributes that differentiate it from competitors. This uniqueness can lead to increased market share, customer loyalty, and overall business success (Agustia et al., 2022). According to Singh (2012), STMPs help firms retain their customers by living up to their product claims.

1.7.2 AIDA Theory

The AIDA - Attention, Interest, Desire and Action- Theory was first developed by E.St. Elmo Lewis in 1898 (Li & Yu, 2013). Rawal (2013) elucidates AIDA as an acronym that is used to describe what transpires when a consumer interacts with an advert. The effect of advertising on a firm's monetary growth is manifold. Advertising leads enhanced profit margins, which in turn creates a positive effect on profit (Saha & De, 2022). According to Ramgouda (2022), the AIDA model includes four stages: Stage one is involves attention (and awareness) attraction. The implication is that firms must attract the customers' attention before selling something. The second stage is about generating interest in the customer: As firms exhibit product characteristics and benefits, there's a likelihood that potential customers will get interested in the product. The third stage is to generate a desire in the people towards purchase. The last step is to end the purchase or sale. Often, firms that encourage customers to act quickly make the difference between realization and failure in marketing efforts (Rawal, 2013). The firm must be able to give customers the reassurance that their decision was correct.

Customers that are satisfied by their own decisions are most likely to offer repeat business to the firm, hence improved firm performance (Sharmeela-Banu et al., 2013). Furthermore,

there’s a tendency in such customers spreading positive word of mouth among their peers (Rawal, 2013). Studies have found that satisfied customers, who have had a positive experience with the firm, are likely to return and purchase again thereby improving the firm’s performance (Sharmeela-Banu et al., 2013)

1.7.3 Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory assumes that ideals we hold dear are inevitably and obviously inherent in the way we undertake business (Freeman et al., 2004). According to Freeman et al., (2004), this theory allows managers to communicate how they desire to run their firms in general, and especially the types of relations they should have with their stakeholders so as to deliver on their mandate. Stakeholders can have an impact or get impacted by the attainment of the company’s objectives. As such, managers need to cultivate relationships that motivate their stakeholders, and build societies where every person endeavors to put their best foot forward in delivering value to the firm’s undertakings (Freeman et al., 2010). Harrison et al., (2010) contend that the basis for the stakeholder theory is that each and every one of the firm's genuine stakeholders hold powers similar to that of customers. As such, they could opt to be involved or not be involved with the firm and that the value that one stakeholder creates is somewhat reliant on the conduct of other stakeholders of the same firm.

Donaldson, and Preston (1995) belief that firms that adopt a stakeholder oriented management style are likely to experience improved financial performance. D’Aveni (1994) undescores the importance of firm managers understanding the concerns of their stakeholders so as to develop relevant objectives that they (stakeholders) will not find difficult to support.

The stakeholder theory is applicable to various industries, the tourism sector included, and can have repercussions on the performance of tour operators. For tour operators, stakeholders typically include a diverse range of individuals and entities, such as customers, employees, local communities, suppliers, government agencies, and environmental groups. The relationships between the principals, suppliers, service providers, tourist product producers, product distribution media, retail travel agencies and other intermediaries such as electronic distribution networks all affect the destination and tourist product choice and hence, the tourist. Applying stakeholder theory in the context of tour operators involves recognizing the interdependence and interconnectedness of these various stakeholders and incorporating their interests into business decisions. By doing so, tour operators can build a more sustainable and resilient business model that ultimately contributes to enhanced performance and long-term success.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

In view of the theoretical framework, the relationship of the study variables is conceptualized in Figure 1.1 below:

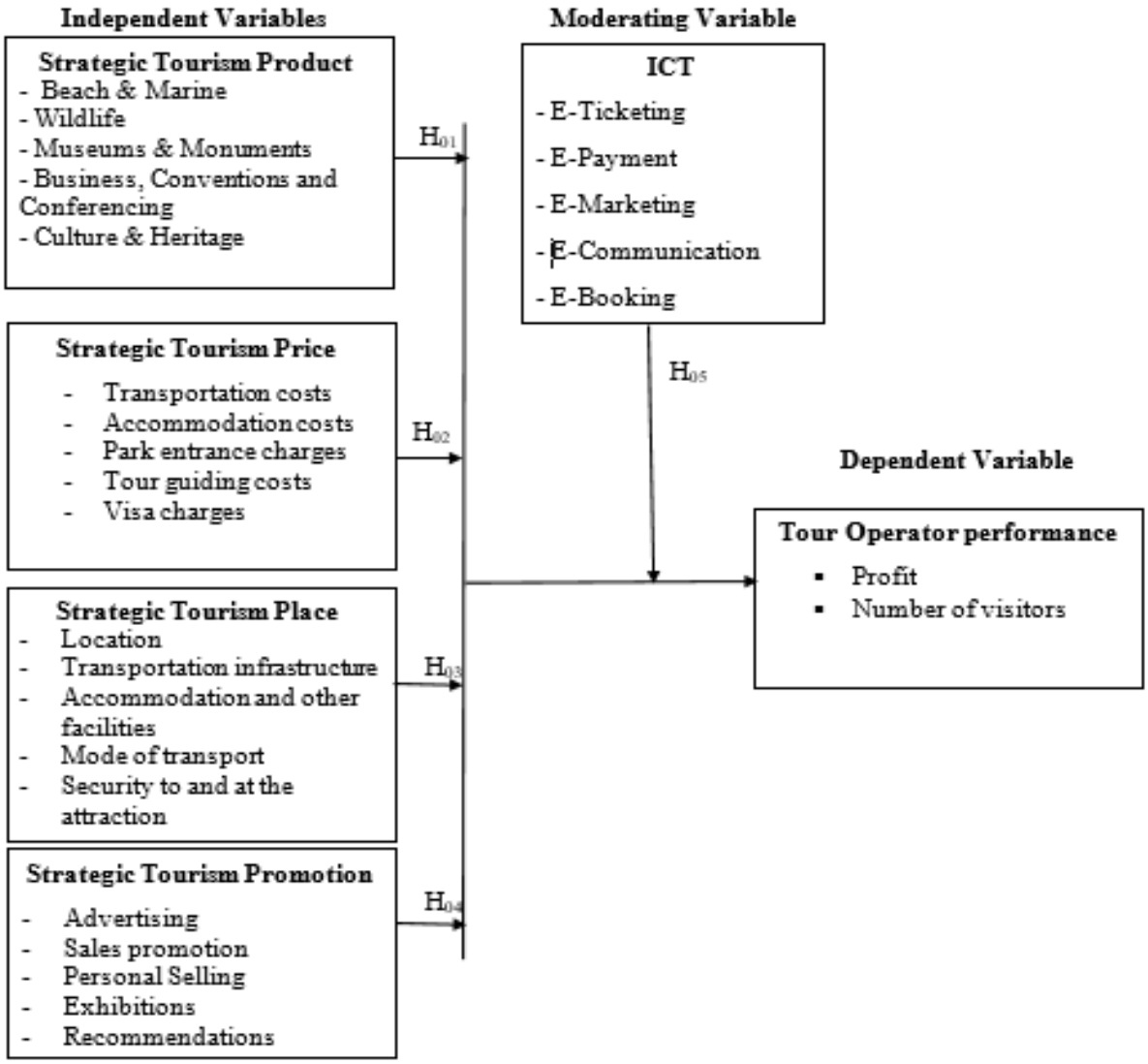

Figure 1. 1: Conceptual framework

Source: Author, 2019

Kotler et al (2014) defines a product as something that can be availed to a market for use or consumption, purchase or even for attention. In this study, the tourism product refers to Beaches, Parks and Reserves; Historical Monuments; Business; Conventions andConferencing; and Sports (Koutoulas, 2015). Price refers to costs associated with transportation, accommodation, food, attractions, tour services and Visa charges and government taxes (UNWTO, 2015), while Place includes Location; Transportation Infrastructure; Mode of Transport; Accommodation and other Facilities; and Security (World Tourism Organization , 2007; Page, 2015).

Promotion is about raising a customer's knowledge of a product or brand, thereby creating brand loyalty and generating sales (Kotler et al, 2014). It includes Exhibitions; Advertising; Sales Promotion; Personal Selling; and Recommendations (Kim & Min, 2016). The moderating effect of ICT on the relationship between STMPs and tour operator performance in Nairobi County was established. This study also focused on the application of ICT by tour operators. Special attention was on E-Ticketing; E-Payments; E-Promotions; E-Mail; and Mobile Phone (M)-Communication (Josef, 2009; Fletcher et al., 2013; Holloway et al., 2009; Mihaliča et al., 2015). Tour operator firm performance was computed both in terms of number of visitors and profit (Wadongo et al., 2010).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an examination of the independent variables and their influence on tour operator performance. Other areas discussed hereunder include tour operator firm performance, theoretical framework and empirical framework. The chapter concludes by presenting a summary of research gaps.

2.2 Strategic Tourism Product and Tour Operator Performance

Simply put, a product is anything that is manufactured and available for sale (Manangiuli et al. 2019). Tourism is basically a service industry, and the tourism product differs from other manufacturing goods in terms of four main factors - intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability, and inseparability (Gautam, 2020). A tourist product is the sum of services and products consumed by the tourist (Yarcan & Cetin, 2021). Koutoulas (2015) defines tourism products as those which satisfy tourists' needs. Tourism products are a therefore a combination of goods and services demanded by a tourist during travel to and stay at a destination. These include natural, cultural and manmade attractions and facilities such as hotels, transport and ancillary service. Strategic decisions that are made by the tourism company depend on the focus of the firm, the markets in which it operates, and the tourist product that the firm sells. In strategic tourism product practices, the firm's product is expected to address a well understood market problem, i.e. the product should come from a deep understanding of the market of customers. According to Gautam (2020), a product is a commodity produced, built or sold to satisfy the need of an individual or a group of individuals.. Kotler et al., (2019) defines a product as anything that can satisfy a need or

want in a market by way of attention, acquisition, use, or consumption. Koutoulas (2024) explains that tourist products are complex in nature for they consist of numerous components that are products by themselves. Each one of these products plays a distinct purpose. These components include beaches, parks, and historical monuments among others (Koutoulas, 2015). According to Manangiuli et al., (2019), the tourist product is a combination of the tourists' attraction, destination facilities, and the destination ease of access. Each of these components offers only a fragment of the total number of benefits that tourists seek, making them functionally interdependent (Kotler & Keller, 2013; Koutoulas, 2015). It therefore follows that if one or more of these components are compromised, the tourism product is by extension compromised and loses it appeal. In such a scenario, the tour firm performance is negatively affected. This is because from the tourist's point of view, the travel experience constitutes the tourist product and includes what is experienced and consumed while on the trip (Kotler, 2012). It therefore follows that a diverse range of tourist products allows operators to create rich, varied itineraries that keep travelers engaged and fulfilled throughout their trips. According to Kotler et al (2019) tourist needs are satisfied through provision of tourist products. Unique tourist products help operators stand out in a competitive market, allowing them to attract customers with distinct experiences that cater to specific interests. Furthermore, high-quality tourist products lead to positive experiences, increasing customer satisfaction and encouraging repeat business and referrals. As such, tour firms operating in highly sought-after destinations may experience higher booking rates and revenue. It is also true that tour firms in seasonal destinations need to plan their operations and marketing strategies accordingly, otherwise their performance will be compromised..

Kenya’s key tourism products have mainly centered on African Safari (wildlife) and beach destinations (Government of Kenya, 2020). This is due to the fact that, the country is well endowed with a long coastline and a diversity of wildlife species. However, the government admits that Kenya's Safari and Beach products have not been innovative and in tandem with changing consumer needs and trends (Government of Kenya, 2018). Nonetheless, Kenya’s tourism product is diverse and also includes cultural experiences, historical sites, adventure tourism, and urban experiences.

2.3 Strategic Tourism Price Practices and Tour Operator Firms’ Performance

Strategic pricing methods help a company penetrate the market, compete with other businesses, or sell off products at the end of their product life cycle (Saif, 2015). Determining product pricing is strategic because the price assigned to a firm’s product impacts the value consumers place on it and further determines its subsequent purchase (Onyeaghala et al., 2019). Strategic pricing focuses on value the product delivers to the customer, or on the firm’s competitive edge, rather than on production cost (McCormick, 2016). This approach is premised on the fact that customers often make their purchasing choices based on psychology as opposed to logic. In this view, what is most valued by the consumer may not necessarily be the most costly to produce (McCormick, 2016). Further, strategic product pricing incorporatesbest practices and assures that pricing strategies and analytics supplement business operations. Worth noting is that pricing in the tourism and hospitality sector is multifaceted for it involves varied factors including product characteristics and uniqueness, the operating business environment, the costing of the tourism and hospitality industry investment, and the customer’s sensitivity to price and their unique inclinations (Barros & Sousa, 2019). Consequently, it’s imperative for tour

firms to distinguish price setting from strategic pricing as they should differentiate reacting to market conditions and proactively managing them. Enhanced profitability is realizable by discovering and utilising collaborations between customer needs and seller capabilities. The coordination of competitive decisions, interrelated marketing, and financial decision-making so as to set prices profitably is at the heart of strategic pricing (De Toni et al., 2016). Rapaccini (2015) declares price as the only Marketing Mix component that generates income.

Besides changes in attitude, strategic pricing also requires a change in when pricing decisions are made, how they are made, and who makes them (De Toni et al., 2016). For consumers, more often than not, the price of a product is the most obvious indicator of cost (Armstrong& Kotler, 2009; Dudu and Agwu (2014). Getting the right price for the product cannot therefore be over emphasized. The hospitality sector, more than ever, is fiercely competitive. To stay ahead of the pack, tourism enterprises must employ innovative managerial solutions, including but not limited to, ingenious pricing solutions (Barros & Sousa, 2019).

According to the UNWTO (2015), the competitiveness of a tourist destination is determined by price and includes costs associated with transportation, food, accommodation, and attractions among others. Pricing for tour operators entails a strong mix of strategic marketing and financial analysis. This is because pricing has a direct bearing on the income achieved and, combined with costs, will affect the overall profitability of the tour firm. This makes the pricing strategy critical for long-term success of the firm (Janssen, 2021). Owing to the fact that pricing is the single source of revenue

for the tour firms' product, strategic pricing ensures that pricing is done with the aim of recouping costs and delivering satisfactory profitability (Adhikari, 2019).

Consequently, pricing decisions have a significant impact on tour operators' performance for they directly influence revenue streams and profitability (Dudu & Agwu, 2014; Kotler et al., 2014). More purchases translate to more revenues and vice versa. After all, price is the sole generator of revenue; the value attached to goods and/or services (Lihao et al., 2016). Price determines a tour firm's market share and effectiveness. As such, managers of tourism enterprises must possess competencies and skills in designing pricing policies which results to greater levels of performance underscored by a competitive price advantage (Buiga et al., 2017). It is important to note that effective pricing strategies are therefore essential for the sustainability and growth of tour operators, impacting everything from customer attraction to long-term profitability. Setting the right price for tourism offerings can determine the success of a tour operator, influence customer perception, and directly impact the bottom line.

An effective pricing strategy should propel tour firms towards profit maximization. Further, it should enable the tour firm realize the targeted investment returns, enhance profitability and actualize the sought after market share (Ammar, 2019). Strategic pricing should propel tour firms towards profit maximization, help them achieve the target rate of return on investment, reduce losses and obtain the desired market share. Proper application of strategic pricing enables tour firms to attract and maintain customers on the long-term, gain leadership in the market, obtain competitive advantage and survive tough times of the market.

2.4 Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Firms' Performance

When a destination is to be introduced by tour operators to the tourism markets, one of the prime concerns is the existence of an adequate supply of high-quality hotels, holiday villages and other tourism facilities such as local transport facilities, restaurants, recreation areas, leisure activities etc., at the destination. Strategic place (or placement) practices is about how the product will be provided to the customer (Dibb & Simkin, 2010).

Unlike the practice as observed in the purchase of manufactured goods, the tourism industry is unique in that the customer has to travel to the product rather than the product being delivered to the customer (Kotler, 2012). In the tourism industry, the 'place' is where the tourists visit and stay, also known as destination (Al-Azzam, 2016)... According to Kotler & Keller (2013), the location of tourist attractions and facilities is mostly explained by factors that are physical. For instance, according to Kamalahmadia & Mellat-Parastb (2016), the growth of mass tourism in Europe is mainly attributed to a cool and cloudy weather that the large urban areas in the north experience.

Besides location, other factors that determine the performance of tour firms include transportation infrastructure; accommodation and other facilities; mode of transport; and security among others (Page, 2015). The location of attractions is a critical factor that can significantly impact the performance of a tour firm because attractions that are easily accessible and located in convenient areas tend to attract more visitors.

The transportation infrastructure to and at attractions significantly affects the performance of a tour firm. Obviously, efficient transportation infrastructure can lead to cost savings for tour firms. It may reduce expenses related to transportation, such as fuel costs, vehicle maintenance, and other operational expenses. Further, tourists tend to visit attractions that

are easy to reach, which can lead to higher demand for tours to those locations. Besides, a robust transportation network enables tour firms to offer a wider range of tours, including those that cover multiple attractions in a single day or over a short period (Chen et al., 2023). In any case, tour firms may be able to enlarge their market scope by venturing into areas that are well-connected by transportation infrastructure, thereby allowing them to target a larger customer base and potentially increase their customer acquisition. On the contrary, delays, congestion, or other transportation issues can lead to loss of customers and by extension revenues due to customer dissatisfaction and negative reviews.

Moreover, security at attractions is a critical consideration for it can substantially affect performance of a tour firm. This is because tourists are more likely to choose tours to attractions that prioritize their safety and well-being. Effectively, tour firms that operate tours to these attractions benefit from this positive association, which can lead to increased bookings and repeat business (Badiora et al., 2022). Likewise, accommodation and other facilities at attractions can significantly impact the performance of a tour firm, because quality accommodation and other facilities enhance the overall experience for tourists.

Well-equipped facilities, such as restrooms, dining areas, and recreational spaces, contribute to customer comfort and convenience (Song et al., 2019). Satisfied customers are more likely to leave positive reviews, recommend the tour firm, and potentially become repeat customers (Camilleri, 2018). More often than not, Song et al., (2019) argues that that tour firms offering tours to attractions with well-maintained facilities are likely to experience increased demand and booking rates. The appeal, reputation, and characteristics of a tourism destination play a crucial role in shaping the performance of tour operators, affecting everything from demand and pricing to customer satisfaction and business

partnerships. Tourism destinations must therefore diversify their products to include niche products which a have a huge potential to boost competitiveness and the value of tourism. Destinations should also seek to diversify beyond traditional markets in order to increase arrivals, grow earnings and deal with seasonality of the tourism sector.

2.5 Strategic Tourism Promotion and Tour Operator Firm Performance

In many ways, the marketing mix elements are bound together by promotion. Promotion involves how you inform the audience about your product, price or place and how that audience behaves towards your product. (Kim & Min, 2016). Strategic Tourism Promotion is geared towards informing potential visitors about the most attractive and innovative attributes of a tourism product offering (Thabit & Raewf, 2018). It involves utilizing a variety of mediums including but not limited to television, radio, internet, and print. Timing is critical towards the successful promotion of a tourism product or service.

Strategic promotion is beneficial to a tourism business in several ways including: to establish a tourism brand; to create and increase the demand for a tourism product in the market; to communicate the differentiating factor of the tour firm; and to strengthen the tour operator brand image (Alexandrescu & Milandru, 2018). According to Ganesh (2020), strategic promotion can be done through an advertising campaign; demonstrations and exhibitions; temporary price cuts, and door-to-door sales among others. Alexandrescu and Milandru (2018) assert that the key tool of communication for a firm is the promotional mix comprising a combination of advertisement, personal selling public relations, and sales promotion.

The travel and tourism industry was heavily and negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation was further exacerbated by the fact that the conventional

promotional marketing strategies including billboards, print media, radio, and flyers, etc failed the test (Moodley & Naidoo, 2022). To mitigate against the destructive impact of COVID-19, and to further restrict its infection rate, travel restrictions were implemented, adversely affecting the tourism and hospitality industry (Matikiti-Manyevere & Rambe, 2022). Tourism activities comprises the application of marketing promotion so as to enlighten, inspire, and motivate travelers (Mkwizu, 2019). In this view, it is imperative to craft a promotional drive that is not only versatile and flexible to the firm's competitive environment, but also strategic in nature, (Moodley & Naidoo, 2022). By their nature, the tour operator promotes, markets and sells holiday types and organized group tours with emphasis on local facilities and product quality.

With existing COVID-19 variants globally, Mkwizu (2022) argues that African countries have to re-think their advertising dynamics as destinations re-open for tourism. Advertising, according to Mkwizu (2022) allows information on products and services to reach tourists in different geographical locations.

Notably, Saif (2015) argues that of all the promotional mix elements, advertising is the most researched. It is based on the belief that with solid advertising processes, tour operator firms can successfully channel information, offer constant reminders, and induce tourists to buy their products and services.

However, Pembi et al., (2017) roots for sales promotion whose purpose is to persuade clients to procure a particular product immediately hence increasing sales. Accordingly, firms undertake promotion to grow sales by increasing product usage by consumers. Strategic promotion practices help in connecting the members of the target audience with the behavior. According to Abdeta and Zewdie (2021), the objectives of a promotional

strategy for a firm include boosting sales, successfully launching new products, and asserting the presence of a brand. Others are positioning of a product, reacting against business rivalry, and crafting a corporate appearance (Abdeta & Zewdie, 2021).

For tour operator firms, adoption of strategic tourism promotion practices is a matter of when, and not if. Indeed, according to Pemba et al. (2017) the promotional mix elements have over time become the essential actors in the life of any business, regardless of its size. Al-Azzam (2016) explains that strategic promotion is interchangeably used with strategic communication. According to Armenski et al. (2018), strategic tourism promotion is aimed at persuading tourists to buy or consume more of the tourism product offering. Indeed, strategic tourism promotion practices, according to Kim and Min (2016), contribute significantly to increased sales and profits for tour operator firms. If tourists don't know what products and services a tour firm is offering, then that firm might not survive in today's competitive marketplace.

Strategic tourism promotion practices are closely related with information on the whereabouts of the tourism products and services. Strategic promotion initiatives are available in such forums as in trade exhibitions, and the internet among others (Reid & Bojanic, 2010). Strategic promotion enhances tour operator firms' performance for it plays other critical roles such as building loyalty for the brand, reminding and reassuring customers, launching a new tourism product and defending the share of the market by implementing intentional advertising. In addition, strategic tourism promotion enhances tour firm performance for it leads to increased demand, business growth, and diversification of offerings (Armenski et al., 2018).

Further, according to Ashraf et al., (2014), tour firms that practice strategic promotion benefit from improved competitive position, enhanced credibility, and better adapation to trends. Strategic promotion is therefore crucial for tour operators differentiate themselves in the market, increase visibility, drive sales, build reputation, and effectively engage with their target market, ultimately leading to long-term success and growth.

2.6 ICT, STMPs and Tour Operator Firm Performance

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has a significant impact on the performance of tour operators, inluding increased efficiency, improved customer experiences, and enhanced competitiveness. According to Ansari, et al (2017), ICT refers to broadly varied technologies of communication. These technologies range from basic to composite and includes digitized cameras, applications embedded on mobile phones, wireless internet, voice over internet protocal (VOIP), global positioning system (GPS), georgraphic information system (GIS) and digital radio, among others.

Ezzaouia and Bulchand-Gidumal (2020) explain that ICTs are wide digital technologies that allow access to, convey, store, and update data via networks. Reservation systems (CRSs), customer relationship management systems (CRMs), global distribution systems (GDSs), property management systems (PMSs), knowledge management systems (KMSs), mobile applications, and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are just some of the technologies that are used in the hospitality industry today (Abdel-Rady & Hussien, 2022). The way by which companies in every enterprsie manage their business operations has been evolving thanks to ICT deployment. Of all departments, marketing has been the most impacted (Ansari, Jain, & Kaur, 2017).

Roy and Ahmed (2019) assert that ICT plays various roles for tourism industry such as ensuring excellence in service through providing customised services, confirming affordability, as well as accessibility by reducing cost and increasing the speed of internet, acting as a catalyst for the tourism industry, and increasing the business competitivenes.

According to Haller and Siedschla (2011) there is growing evidence suggesting that ICT affects tour operator firm performance because it is a strong determining factor towards productivity growth differentials and globalization. In addition, there is existing empirical evidence to show that ICT significantly affects tour operator firm performance because its adoption and application enhances production and growth of firms (Kotler & Keller, 2013). Haller& Siedschla (2011) argue that firms that encounter stiff competitors are more likely to adopt innovation so as to remain afloat. They are also most likely to embrace new technologies to help strengthen their business operations and improve their presence and command in the industry.

One of the major roles Information and Communication Technology plays are the promoting of tourism products locally, regionally and globally by ensuring operational excellence (Fuchs & Sigala, 2021). It also ensures effective collaboration between partners and removes intermediaries which ultimately brings some benefits in the form of integration. According to Gupta (2012), tourism firms have embarced the use of ICT in training of tourism sector personnel,product development, marketing, and distribution. Application of ICT has transformed the way tourism firms conduct their business. For instance, the application of Computerized Reservation System (CRS) in the 1970's and Global Distribution System (GDS) in the 1980s (Gupta, 2012). In the coming years, E-

tourism emerged and encompassed the complete array of ICT applications in tourism enterprises (Gupta, 2012).

Some aspects of ICT that have a significant impact on tour operator firms' performance include Electronic Ticketing; Electronic Payments; Electronic Promotions; Electronic Mail; and Mobile Communication (Fletcher et al., 2013; Holloway et al., 2009; Mihaliča et al., 2015). Further, according to Abdel-Rady and Hussien (2022) some of the ICTs applications that have been widely adopted throughout sectors include reservation systems, procurement and inventory systems, wireless internet, e-mail, electronic transactions, and hotel websites. Undoubtedly, ICT enables tour firms to establish a strong online presence through websites and mobile apps (Aramendia-Muneta et al., 2013).

This allows customers to easily access information about tour packages, destinations, and pricing. Online booking systems streamline the reservation process, making it convenient for travelers to plan and make reserevations for their trips. In addition, social media and electronic mail marketing are some of the digital marketing tools that empower tour firms to capture a broader audience. Indeed, Information and Communication Technology, according to Fuchs and Sigala (2021), also helps the hotel, restaurant, travel agency and tour operator firms to be globalised, create better chance to protect themselves in tough times, strengthen themselves, and give opportunities for modification of the products andproces.

ICT has enabled tour firms to optimize websites and online content to improve their visibility on search engine results pages (SERPs). Effectively, targeted online advertising can attract potential customers, increase brand visibility, and generate leads.

The adoption of ICTs by tour operator firms has several advantages, including reduced operating expenses, improved customer happiness, increased market share, and improved staff performance (Abdel-Rady & Hussien, 2022). Furthermore, the integration of ICT into tour firm operations can lead to increased efficiency, expanded market reach, improved customer experiences, and a more competitive position in the travel industry. Tour firms that embrace and leverage ICT effectively are better positioned to adapt to the evolving landscape of the tourism sector.

Furthermore, ICT facilitates the implementation of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, allowing tour firms to manage customer interactions, preferences, and feedback. Personalized communication and tailored services based on customer data can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. According to Rahman et al., (2022) there are many more benefits that can be obtained through the adoption of ICTs, such as lower operational costs, improved customer satisfaction, increased market share, and increased operational efficiency all of which are linked to increased profits and sales targets.

2.7 STMPs and Tour Operator Firm Performance

Strategic tourism marketing involves planning and implementing activities to promote a destination or tourism-related product in a way that aligns with the overall objectives of the organization or the destination itself (Pandey, 2021). Effective strategic tourism marketing practices take into account the distinctive target market characteristics, the competitive landscape, and the goals of the destination or tourism business (Sofronov, 2019). Generally, STMPs deals with marketing mix-elements and their adaption to environmental forces (Sweeney et al., 2011). It develops from the interaction of the marketing mix variables and the environment-based elements (Omwoyela, 2013).

The function of STMPs is to determine the type, strength, course, and interrelationship between the marketing mix- variables and the environment-based factors (Brooksbank et al., 2012). STMPs are crucial for successful tour operator firm performance. By integrating strategic marketing practices, tour firms can enhance their competitiveness, strengthen customer relationships, and ultimately improve the overall performance of the tours and travel industry. According to Omwoyela (2013), STMPs strengthens the firm's market share and have an impact on competition and industry's growth. By having good marketing practices, customer satisfaction is achieved by offering timely and quality products and services, at fair prices, spread over a wide distribution set up, and supported by effective promotional strategies.

Creating an effective mix consisting of the relevant product, which is offered at the correct price, and in the place where it is needed, and by applying the most appropriate promotion, is a prerequisite to enhanced firm performance (Mohammad & Sunayya, 2012). The tourism product significantly influences tour operator performance by affecting customer satisfaction, market demand, pricing strategies, and overall brand strength (Manangiuli et al., 2019). Tour firms that innovate and adapt their products to meet consumer needs are likely to outperform their competitors. Additonally, tourism pricing significantly impacts tour operator performance by influencing demand, perceived value, market positioning, and revenue management (Armoni et al., 2018).

Operators that effectively manage their pricing strategies can enhance competitiveness and profitability. Furthermore, according to Aleksanyan (2021), the location (place) of a tourism product presents a considerable impact on tour operator performance by affecting accessibility, attractiveness, market demand, and customer satisfaction. Tour operators that

strategically choose and manage their locations can enhance their competitiveness and overall success. In the same vein, Moza & Olimpia (2022) explains that promotion substantively affects tour operator performance by enhancing visibility, attracting and retaining customers, differentiating offerings, and ultimately driving sales and profitability. Effective promotional strategies by tour operators can lead to sustained growth and a stronger market presence.

Pour et al., (2013) agrees that STMPs positively affect firm performance for they have been applied to: Fix prices that are commensurate with the capabilities of the buyer; enable the manufacture of goods and services and make them available to customers purchasing them; and plan for promotions targeting potential consumers of such products. According to Guyo and Kero, (2022), strategic marketing practices plays a substantial purpose towards improving the performance of tour firms by helping them attract and retain customers, differentiate themselves from competitors, and ultimately drive revenue

2.8 Firm Performance

Firm performance refers to how well a company achieves its goals and objectives, typically evaluated through various financial and non-financial metrics (Naknok, 2022). At the core of firm performance is overall business efficiency and success exhibited in the achievement of its intentions, goals, and desired outcomes (Taouab & Issor, 2019). It is an all-inclusive measure that incorporates various aspects of a company's operations, financial health, and strategic accomplishments. Traditionally, firm performance has been measured by way of revenues or profit. According to Naknok (2022), profitability is mainly considered to be an important indicator for assessing the firm performance of an organization.

At other times, key financial ratios including financial performance, business performance, and organization effectiveness have been used to measure firm performance (Santos & Brito, 2012). According to Kotler et al (2014), three main dimensions of a firm's financial performance are: profitability, assets count, and equity multiplier. Non-financial performance could be measured using dimensions such as service quality, consumption of resources, and invention (Zigan, & Zeglat, 2010).

Tour firm performance refers specifically to the effectiveness and success of a business entity operating in the travel industry. Assessing the performance of a tour firm involves evaluating various aspects related to its operations, customer service, financial health, and overall competitiveness within the travel market. According to Samad (2022), key dimensions of tour firm performance include: Customer satisfaction; Operational Efficiency; Financial Performance; Marketing and Branding; Technology Adoption; and Tour Offerings and Innovation. Overall, tour firm performance is a comprehensive measure that reflects a company's success in achieving its business goals, maintaining customer satisfaction, and competing effectively in the tourism market.

2.10 Empirical Review

Brooksbank and Taylor (2012) underscored the important role that strategic marketing practices (SMPs) played towards enhanced performance of companies in New Zealand.

In their study on how price affects tourist loyalty, Campo and Yagüe (2008) explained that price promotions do not directly erode the tourist loyalty to tour operator, while Kabonda (2018) concluded that many pricing strategies have positive correlation with performance of tour operator companies in different performance variables namely profit, Return on Asset (ROA) and Return on Investment (ROI) and contribute significantly to performance.

Another study finding by Stojanovic et al., (2021) indicate that price competitiveness has rather limited effects on the outcomes of the tourism industry and is not a cause of overall tourism competitiveness in improving tourism performance. According to Abercrombie et al (2013), many commercial and social marketers use SMPs to help them understand individual customer experiences. Based on the results of their study, Zahara and Rombe (2017) concluded that product attributes, promotion and tourist characteristics have significant effect on the tourists' decision to visit the tourist site.

According to Purwono et al., (2024), key elements of a tourism destination such as connectivity, infrastructure, demand drivers, sustainability, and enabling environment significantly influence performance of tour operator firms in Asia. Furthermore, Morrison et al. (2024) study concluded that accessibility, activity, awareness, availability, and assurance were rated as highly important and influential in tourism destination revisit intentions. In their recent study on “The Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies of Tour Operators in the Promotion of Small Tourism Enterprises in KwaZulu-Natal”, Myeni and Chili (2024) assert that efficient customer service had a significant positive effect on sales performance of tour operator firms. Their findings further suggested that having a broad product line for tour firms may not necessarily lead to improved sales performance.

Vukadinovic et al. (2016) study revealed that information and communication technologies (ICT) increase efficiency, productivity and improve overall tour operator business performances. Further, Khan and Hossain (2018) study concluded that an effective application of information technology has turned out critical for the attractiveness and prosperity of tourism enterprises, since it has persuaded their ability to distinguish their offerings, as well as their manufacture and transport costs. In yet another study, Iwona et

al., (2022) revealed that ICT technologies offer a broad spectrum of solutions affecting the entire tourism industry, including travel, transportation, leisure, and hospitality, and increase the efficiency of economic processes in the tourism sector.

Empirical results from the study by Lee et al (2021) show that increasing mobile cellular subscriptions, secure Internet servers, and fixed broadband subscriptions have greater positive effects on traveler arrivals and therefore tour operator performance. Study findings by Gajendra and Prakriti (2020) revealed that application of ICT by tour firms brings positive impacts to tourism industry assisting branding, promotion of the country, enhancing networks through communication and easily booking tours.

Globally, several firms have embraced the application of SMPs to improve performance, i.e. In Kerala, India - in marketing of libraries (Kumar, 2013); In Iran (Pour et al., 2013) & Hongkong (Yee-kwong, 1992) - in the banking sector; In developing countries - to produce quality farm produce (Dodor, 2013); in McDonald's – to build its brand (McDonald's Corporation, 2008); and in China - to revive her international tourism (Chen, 2009). SMPs have also been applied in Cyprus - on Buying Holiday Homes (Nouri & Soltani, 2015) and in Jordan - in improving performance of medical tourism (Al-Azzam, 2016). Phornlaphatrachakorn et al., (2020) studied strategic pricing and firm performance on the cosmetics SMEs in Thailand; while Gryglewicz and Kolb (2023) considered strategic pricing in volatile markets.

Consequently, a number of firms in Kenya have embraced SMPs to address performance issues. For example, in the SME Sector (Kimani et al., 2010); in Customer Service Delivery of Public Universities (Kegoro et al., 2020); in General Insurance Companies (Wambugu

et al., 2021); and in the Pharmaceutical Companies in Nairobi Metropolitan (Wangari & Letting, 2021)

2.11 Summary of Research Gaps

The research gap is an issue that has not been adequately addressed by research. Ajemba and Chinwe (2022) defines a research gap as an area where lack of information restricts the inference of a specific question. It can also be a problem not properly addressed as a result of insufficient data to support claims or an area of research not ventured and as such missing in the literature (Baako et al., 2022). In other words, a research gap is the missing element in the existing research literature that a researcher sets out to fill with his study.

Research gaps can occur due to a variety of reasons ranging from information that is inaccurate, partial or biased evidence including procedures of research that are unsuitable. When identification of these research gaps happens, it presents an opportunity for new research/ enhanced research to be done. Appendix 6.1 summarizes research gaps that this study identified.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Philosophy

This study was founded on the pragmatism research philosophy. The emergence of the mixed research approach, as applied in this study, has been accompanied by searching for a philosophy that legitimates mixing quantitative and qualitative methods in one research. Many researchers consider pragmatism as the most common philosophical justification for the mixed research approach (Maarouf, 2019). According to Kaushik and Walsh (2019) pragmatism takes a more practical and flexible approach, focusing on the usefulness and applicability of research findings, rather than an all-or-nothing, mutually exclusive philosophical position.

Pragmatism is best applied in studies that adopt a mixed-method approach, utilising a combination of different data types and analysis methods. Pragmatism, according to Neupane (2024), enriches research by prioritizing practical relevance, flexibility, and collaborative inquiry, ultimately leading to more impactful and meaningful contributions to knowledge and practice.

3.2 Research Design

At the heart of a research design is the overall strategy that, if applied, helps a researcher to get evidence that would help determine the extent to which a theoretical hypothesis is correct (Creswell, 2014). This study adopted a mixed methods research design. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001) a mixed method research design is applied by researchers interested in collecting both numeric and qualitative data. Mixed methods research designs helps in adding more information to the analysis done, hence a more definite conclusion.

According to Sharma et al., (2023), mixed methods research may be the correct choice when the research process specifies that quantitative or qualitative data alone cannot sufficiently answer the research question.

Proponents of mixed research believe that using only quantitative or qualitative research is limited and incomplete for many research problems (Okello, 2022). According to Maarouf (2019), the mixed methods research design offers "complementary strengths" which means using the strengths of one research method to enhance or support another one. The Mixed Methods Research Design was necessary in this study so as to examine the relationships between different variables because examining the relationships between diverse variables was not viable just through a single research design.

The mixed methods research design applied in this study was necessary to determine the effect of the independent variables of Strategic Tourism Product, Strategic Tourism Price, Strategic Tourism Place, and Strategic Tourism Promotion, on tour firm performance - the dependent variable. This type of design facilitated the study of the moderating variable – ICT. This design was expected to aid the researcher produce richer, more nuanced findings that might not have been achievable through a single-method approach.

3.3 Research Variables

A study variable, according to Okello (2022) is any characteristic, number, or quantity that can be measured or counted in a research study. Further, (Marudhar , 2023) describes variables as qualities, properties, or characteristics of person, things, or situations that change or vary. This study applied *Independent* (predictors) Variables - the variable that is manipulated or changed to observe its effect on another variable; *Dependent* Variable - the outcome or response that is measured in the study; and a *Moderating* variable - that

influences the strength or direction of the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable - as indicated in Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 below:

Table 3. 1: independent (predictors) Variables

Variable	Indicators
Strategic Tourism Product	- Beach & Marine - Wildlife - Museums & Monuments - Business, Conventions and Conferencing - Culture & Heritage
Strategic Tourism Price	- Transportation costs - Accommodation costs - Park entrance charges - Tour guiding costs - Visa charges
Strategic Tourism Place	- Location - Transportation infrastructure - Accommodation and other facilities - Mode of transport - Security to and at the attraction
Strategic Tourism Promotion	- Advertising - Sales promotion - Personal Selling - Exhibitions - Recommendations

Source: Koutoulas, (2015); UNWTO, (2015); World Tourism Organization, (2007); Page, (2015); Kotler et al, (2014); Kim & Min, (2016)

Table 3. 2: Dependent Variable

Variable	Indicators
Firm Performance	- Profit - Number of visitors

Source: Wadongo et al., (2010)

Table 3. 3: Moderating Variable:

Variable	Indicators
ICT	- E-Ticketing - E-Payment - E-Marketing - E-Communication - E-Booking

Source: Josef, (2009); Fletcher et al., (2013); Holloway et al., (2009); Mihaliča et al., (2015).

3.4 Study Area

This study was conducted in Nairobi County, as demonstrated in Appendix 4. Nairobi is Kenya's capital city. Located south of the country, it stands at an altitude of 1,660 meters above sea level. The county was picked for this study because it plays host to about 256 tour operators of different levels out of 400 tour operators registered members of KATO as at June, 2017 making it the most representative compared to the rest, as indicated under Appendix 4.

3.5 Target Population

Population, according to Creswell (2014) refers to all members that meet a set of specifications or a specified criterion. The target population in research refers to the specific group of individuals or elements that the researcher is interested in studying

(Okello, 2022). According to KATO, (2017), Kenya's tour operator firms are broadly categorized in three groups: Full Members; Associate Members; and Affiliate Members. As at 2017, KATO listed a total of 305 Full Members country wide, and went further to categorize them into Classes A though E as shown in Table 3.4 below. Only Full Members of KATO that are located in Nairobi City County constituted the target population in this study.

Table 3. 4: Categories of KATO's Full Members in Kenya

Category	Number	Description
Class E	195	Annual Turnover below 10 million
Class D	50	Annual Turnover from Kshs 10 Million to Kshs 40 Million
Class C	21	Annual Turnover from Kshs 40 Million to Kshs 80 Million
Class B	8	Annual Turnover from Kshs 80 Million to Kshs 120 Million
Class A	31	Annual Turnover exceeding Kshs 120 Million

Source: KATO, 2017

According to Table 3.5, 256 Full Members of KATO are located in Nairobi, City County, and constituted the target population in this study.

Table 3. 5: Categories of KATO's Full Members in Nairobi County

Category	Number
Class E	161
Class D	43
Class C	19
Class B	5
Class A	28

Source: KATO, 2017

In this study, the unit of analysis was the tour operator firms in Nairobi County while the unit of observation was the managers of the respective tour operator firms. The unit of analysis is defined as the major entity that is being analyzed in a study (Okello, 2022). The unit of analysis is also defined as the basic entity or object about which generalizations are

based on an analysis, and for which data has been collected (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). In this view, the Tour Operator Firm constituted the unit of analysis because it was considered to be the main focus of the study.

The unit of observation, on the other hand, refers to the specific entity from which data is collected in a research study (Denton, 2007). It is the actual item or individual whose characteristics or behaviors are being measured. A unit of observation is the item (or items) that you actually observe, measure, or collect in the course of trying to learn something about your unit of analysis (Keller, 2010). In this view, the Managers of Tour Firms constituted the unit of observation

3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling was used to sample the unit of analysis while purposive sampling was applied to sample the unit of observation. According to Creswell (2014) stratified random sampling is a method that aims at restricting possible samples to the ones which are “less extreme” effectively assuring that all parts of the population are represented in the sample, with the aim of increasing efficiency. This approach was used to take care of the five categories – Class A; Class B; Class C; Class D; and Class E -of tour operators in Nairobi County as shown in Table 3.2 above.

Moreover, Purposive Sampling was used to cater for special attributes of respondents; knowledge of marketing, firm Strategies, operations activities of the firm and firm performance knowledge. The researcher deliberately choose tour managers who were considered likely to provide valuable insights or information relevant to the study. One tour manager from each of the five categories was picked for this study, making a total of five tour managers.

The study used Yamane (1967) formulae in computing the sample size:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where *n* is the size of sample, *N* is the size of the population, and e is the precision level desired, where e =1- Confidence level. This study preferred this formula because it's simple to use, scientific, and applicable in huge populations (Yamane, 1967). Substituting the values gives a sample size of 156 i.e.

$n = \frac{256}{1+256(0.05)^2} \approx 156.09 = 156,$

Table 3.6 indicates the size of sample in each category as obtained through stratified sampling, with a sampling fraction of ≅ 0.61. Sample fraction = actual size of sample /total population (Yamane, 1967).

Table 3. 6: Sample Size in each Category

Category	Number of Firms	Proportions	Stratified Sample
Class E	161	63%	98
Class D	43	17%	27
Class C	19	7%	11
Class B	5	2%	3
Class A	28	11%	17
Grand Total		100% 156	
Sample size (Yamane, 1967) formula =156			
Sampling fraction≅ 0.61			

A manager from each of the categories was taken as the sample for the interviews.

3.7 Research Instruments

During collection of data, this study applied simultaneous triangulation of various quantitative and qualitative techniques. Semi structured interviews collected primary qualitative data, while semi-structured questionnaires collected primary quantitative data. According to Bird (2009), a questionnaire is a well-tested method for gathering data on a

subject's social characteristics, and the explanation for their behavior in regard to the topic under study. Further, a questionnaire has the capacity to collect information about a respondent's attitudes, opinions, current and former behavior.

The use of a questionnaire in this study was suitable because questionnaires can be crafted and applied to collect huge amounts of data from respondents that are varied (Zikmund, et al, 2010). Structured interviews were also appropriate because it would help obtain in-depth information from the respondents (Okello, 2022).

3.8 Pre-Testing

Pretesting in research, according to Hashim et al. (2022) is a critical step that involves evaluating the research instruments - like surveys, questionnaires, or interviews - before they are fully deployed. This process helps identify potential issues such as confusing wording, unclear questions, or biased response options.

In this study, the pretest constituted a total of 20 Tour Operators (respondents) as suggested by Monette, Sullivan and DeJong (2002). The respondents were selected from the target population frame consisting 256 tour operators, and were excluded from the final list of 156 tour operators used for the actual survey. The feedback received was critical in shaping the instruments before they were finalized for the study. The study further pretested the instruments for reliability and validity as discussed in the following section:

3.8.1 Reliability

According to Zikmund, et al (2010) cronbach's alpha is a popular method used in determining internal consistency in the behavioral sciences. By demonstrating the homogeneity of a group of items, cronbach's alpha is a good measure of internal

consistency. It exemplifies the level of complementarity of different items to each. The model for Cronbach's alpha is: $\alpha = \frac{N.\bar{c}}{\bar{v}+(N-1).\bar{c}}$,Where: N = the number of items; $\bar{c}$ = average covariance between item-pairs; $\bar{v}$ = average variance. Cronbach's alpha value falls between zero and one.

Values closer to one demonstrate higher internal consistency while values closer to zero point to a lower internal consistency. In this study, a scale of 0.7 and above was used to explain the reliability of the instrument, (Zikmund et al., 2010, (Okello, 2024). Sekaran and Bougie (2013) posit that a reliability measure shows the degree to which this measure is void of prejudice, thus assuring replication and consistency of measurement over time. Tavakol and Dennick (2011) contend that cronbach alpha is an important concept in evaluating questionnaires. The study's general reliability, with 26 items, had a Cronbach Alpha of 0.827, which was considered excellent. These results are illustrated in Table 3.7.

Table 3. 7: General Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.827	26

The Cronbach Alpha for each study variable and the number of constructs is shown in Table 3.5. In summary, all six variables had Cronbach's Alpha value ranked as good and excellent (>0.7). The independent variable, "Strategic Tourism Place Practices" had the highest Cronbach Alpha value of .884 while the independent variable "Strategic Tourism Product Practices" had the second-highest Cronbach Alpha value of .872. The dependent variable, "Tour Operator Performance," had Cronbach Alpha value of .873. These results are shown in Table 3.8.

Table 3. 8: Reliability Test for Each Variable

Research Objectives	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Verdict
Tour Operator Performance	8	0.873	Excellent
Strategic Tourism Product Practices	5	0.872	Excellent
Strategic Tourism Price Practices	5	.726	Good
Strategic Tourism Place Practices	5	.884	Excellent
Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices	5	.839	Excellent
ICT Practices	5	0.780	Good

3.8.2 Validity

At the core of validity is how accurate and meaningful inferences are (Kothari, 2004). Ensuring the validity of a research instrument is crucial for maintaining the credibility and integrity of the study findings. The study derived the measures from the Study Theories and used supervisor's advice in determining the study measures.

3.9 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted between January 2021 and October 2021. To facilitate the collection of primary quantitative data, the researcher sought the help of KATO to help administer the semi-structured questionnaire to its members. Members had an option of printing the questionnaire or filling it online through a google link that was provided in the same email. Email was preferred due to several reasons including cost effectiveness, speed, wider reach, and convenience. Other copies of the questionnaires were printed and issued physically to those who, for one reason or another, had not received the email.

Using semi structured interviews, primary qualitative data was collected. The researcher targeted one tour firm manager (or senior official) from each of the five categories of tour operators – A, B, C, D, and E. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes, and was conducted virtually via Zoom or by telephone, depending on the respondent's preference. Issues of data protection including anonymity of the respondent's identity was assured.

Secondary data including the names, categories, and numbers of KATO Members, and their annual financial worth, was obtained from KATO's website and other published materials, including annual reports. The researcher extracted relevant information based on the study variables and utilized it for triangulation.

3.10 Data Analysis and Presentation

Analysis of quantitative data was by both descriptive and inferential statistics (Okello, 2022). Data description was done using descriptive statistics, such as tables, graphs, charts, and percentages. Inferential statistics such as correlation analysis, one-way analysis of variance and linear regression analysis (Okello, 2022) were applied. Correlation Analysis is a statistical procedure for determining the strength and direction of relationships between the two numeric variables (Okello, 2022). The study used Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, which was used to calculate it, was -1 to +1. For the correlation values closer to zero, they were weak while for the correlation values closer to 1 or -1 were strong.

At the same time, positive correlation values implied positive association while negative values implied negative association. One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is a statistical procedure for determining if there is a statistical and significant difference in a

given numeric variable across more than two groups (Okello, 2022). The study used F-test, from where if the p-value for F-test was less than 0.05, it implied that there was a statistical and significant difference in a given numeric variable across more than two groups. Linear Regression Analysis is a statistical procedure for determining if a statistical and significant linear relationship between independent and dependent variable exists (Okello, 2022).

The study used F-test, from where if the p-value for F-test was less than 0.05, it implied that there was a statistical and significant linear relationship between independent and dependent variable. T-test was used to determine if a given independent variable had a statistical and significant effect/ influence on the dependent variable, from where if the p-value for a given t-test value was less than 0.05, it implied that there was a statistical and significant effect of a given independent variable on the dependent variable. Regression coefficients were used to develop the linear regression equation/ model. The study used SPSS version 27 to facilitate data analysis. SPSS Version 27 was proposed for this study because it is designed to handle a large set of variable data formats (Okello, 2022).

Qualitative data was analyzed using Nvivo Version 12, a qualitative data analysis software that helps researchers organize, analyze, and visualize unstructured data, (Allsop et al., 2022). According to Kristi and Pat (2019), Nvivo is designed to organize, analyze and create a better understanding of unstructured or qualitative data such as interviews, survey responses, articles, social media or other types of online material. In this study, analysis of qualitative data was done as recommneded by Kristi and Pat (2019) and involved interviews with the respondents, via Zoom or Telephone. The responses obtained were transcribed, and grouped to each question. Thereafter, the researcher created themes –

Product, Price, Place, Promotion, ICT, Performance-, and then analyzed connections between the themes.

The Multiple Regression Model (MRM) was proposed for this study due to its ability to test and analyze multiplicity of variables' associations and the ability to test and analyze the influence of moderating variable on the study (Chiang, 2003). The moderating effect of ICT on the relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance was established using multiple regression analysis. Table 3.9 below gives the summary of the regression models to test hypotheses H_{O1} to H_{O5}

Table 3. 9: Summary of Analytical Framework

Objective	Statistical Model	**Analysis Model**	**Type of Analysis**
To establish the influence of strategic tourism product practices on tour operator performance in Nairobi City County,	Regression Analysis	$P = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PRO + \varepsilon$	• Descriptive • Correlation • Tests for assumptions of linear regression • Linear regression • Content Analysis
To assess the effect of strategic tourism pricing practices on tour operator performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya	Regression Analysis	$P = \beta_0 + \beta_2 PRI + \varepsilon$	• Descriptive • Correlation • Tests for assumptions of linear regression • Linear regression • Content Analysis
To determine the effect of Strategic Tourism Place Practices on the Tour Operator Performance in Nairobi County, Kenya	Regression Analysis	$P = \beta_0 + \beta_3 PL + \varepsilon$	• Descriptive • Correlation • Tests for assumptions of linear regression • Linear regression • Content Analysis
To establish the impact of Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices on the Tour Operator Performance in Nairobi County, Kenya	Regression Analysis	$P = \beta_0 + \beta_4 PROM + \varepsilon$	• Descriptive • Correlation • Tests for assumptions of linear regression • Linear regression • Content Analysis
To examine the moderating effect of ICT on the relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance in Nairobi County, Kenya	Regression Analysis	$P = \beta_0 + \beta_5 ICT + \beta_6 (ICT \times \text{STMPs}) + \varepsilon$	• Descriptive • Correlation • Tests for assumptions of linear regression • Multiple regression • Content Analysis

Source: Author (2019)

Where: PRI = Price, PRO = Product, PL = Place, PROM = and Promotion, STMPs - Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices, ICT = Information, Communication and Technology, P=Tour Operator Performance, β_0 (Alpha) is constant or P intercept, β_1 = slope or the coefficient of PRI, β_2= coefficient of PRO, β_3= coefficient of PL, β_4= coefficient of PROM, β_5= coefficient of ICT, β_6= coefficient of ICTxSTMPs, and ε= error term

The following tests were used to establish the assumptions for linear regression analysis: Test for Normality (using Normal Q-Q plot), Test for Linearity (using Deviation from Linearity test), Test for Multicollinearity (using Variance Inflation Factor) and Test for Homoscedasticity (using Homoscedasticity Scatter plot) (Okello, 2022).

Qualitative data from the interviews was analyzed using contents Analysis, NVIVO Version 12 (Kristi and Bazeley, 2019). In this case, the presence of patterns in some key words was analyzed and quantified. This was after establishing the relationships from the quantitative data that had been analyzed.

3.11 Logistical and Ethical Considerations

Logistical and ethical considerations are both vital for the success and integrity of research. Balancing these considerations helps in assuring that research is conducted effectively and responsibly, ultimately contributing to its credibility and societal value. It is in this view that, the researcher, prior to the commencing the data gathering exercise, considered both ethical and logistical factors for the study. These considerations bordered on seeking consents, confidentiality, honesty and truthfulness on the researcher and respondents' part as shown below.

3.11.1 Logistical Consideration

In this study, logistical considerations included budgeting, engaging trained Research Assistants and pre-testing of the instruments. Soon after the proposal was approved, a Research Approval Letter (Appendix 7) and Authorization Letter (Appendix 8) were obtained from the Kenyatta University Graduate School both of which facilitated the data collection process. Further, the researcher sought and received from NACOSTI a Research Permit for the study (Appendix 6).

3.11.2 Ethical Considerations

Issues surrounding data protection and privacy of the respondents were observed as prescribed under the Data Protection Act of 2019 (Government of Kenya, 2019). Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits before agreeing to participate. Further, participants' consent was obtained voluntarily, without any coercion. If they felt that their rights were being violated, participants had the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The researcher protected the participants' identities by anonymizing data whenever possible, and implemented secure data storage methods to prevent unauthorized access to personal information. Honesty and accuracy in data collection assured the integrity of data.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter gives the presentation of the analyzed data and interpretation of the findings obtained from the field. The chapter further presents the comprehensive discussions of the findings of the analysis based on the specific objectives of the study.

4.2 Response Rate

The study collected primary quantitative data from a sample size of 156 Tour Operators. 131 questionnaires were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 84%. This response rate was acceptable for the purpose of drawing conclusions since it was representative enough. For purposes of analyzing and presenting, a response rate of 50% is acceptable; a 60% response rate is good, while response rate of 70% or more is considered excellent (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this view, the response rate for the study was excellent. Figure 4.1 demonstrates the response rate for the study.

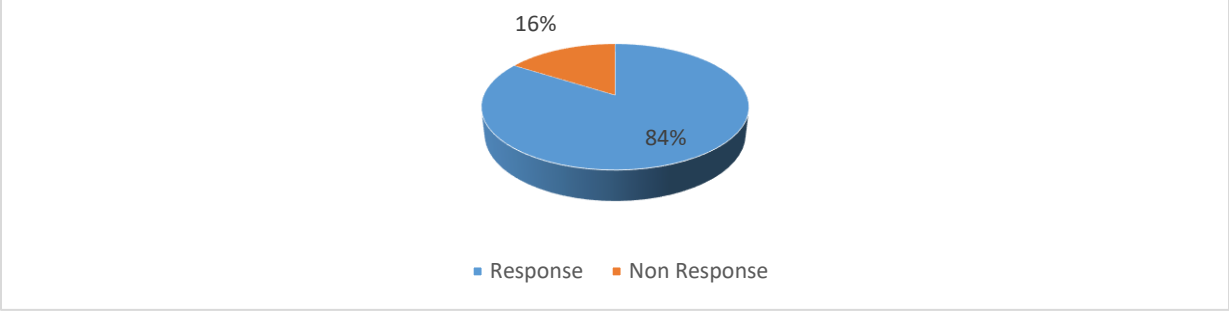

Figure 4. 1: Response Rate

4.3 Demographic Information of the Respondents

The demographic features presented included duration of operation for Tour Operators, number of employees, number of branches, , and the number of visitors handled by the tour firm per year.

4.3.1 Duration of Operation in Years

Regarding duration of operation in years, the study's findings indicated that 30.70% of the Tour Operators had been in operation 21 – 30 years, while 28.07% had operated for 11-20 years.

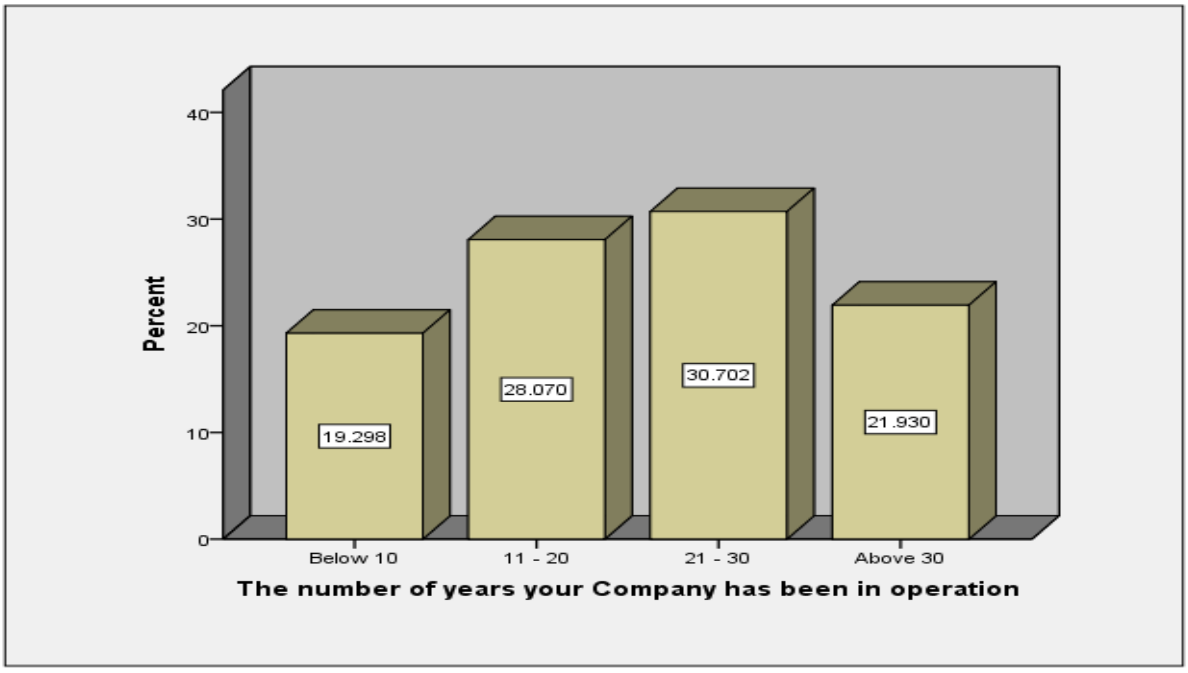

Figure 4. 2: Duration of Operation in Years

4.3.2 Position in the Company

Table 4.1 below shows that data collected on the positions in the company indicated that 15.3% were general managers in the Tour Operators.

Further, 10.7% indicated they are were operations managers while 6.1% indicated they were directors of the Tour Operators.

Table 4. 1: Position in the Company

Position in the Company	Frequency	Percent
Missing Information	27	20.6
Assistant General Manager	2	1.5
Branch Manager	5	3.8
Business Development Manager	3	2.3
CEO	1	0.8
Chief Accountant	1	0.8
Director	8	6.1
Driver Guide	1	0.8
Finance Manager	2	1.5
FOUNDER	1	0.8
General Manager	20	15.3
HR & Admin Manager	2	1.5
Manager	6	4.6
Managing Director	7	5.3
Marketing & IT Officer	1	0.8
Marketing Manager	5	3.8
Operations / Marketing	1	0.8
Operations & Controls Officer	1	0.8
Operations Director	1	0.8
Operations Manager	14	10.7
Owner	1	0.8
Product Development Manager	2	1.5
Product Developments and Operations Manager	1	0.8
Product Manager	4	3.1
Professional Safari Guide.	1	0.8
Reservations and Ticketing Manager	2	1.5
safari ops Manager	1	0.8
Senior Accountant	1	0.8
Senior Reservations Manager	1	0.8
Tour Operator Marketing Executive	1	0.8
Tours Consultant	2	1.5
Tours Manager	3	2.3
Travel Consultant	2	1.5
Total	131	100

4.3.3.3 Number of Employees

The study's findings on employee data, according to Table 4.2 below, indicated that the Tour Operators had between 2 to 1500 employees. 13% had 4 employees, while 9.2% had 5 employees.

Table 4. 2: Number of Employees in the Tour Operators

Number of Employees	Frequency	Percent
2	3	2.3
3	4	3.1
4	17	13
5	12	9.2
6	4	3.1
7	3	2.3
8	10	7.6
10	2	1.5
11	2	1.5
12	2	1.5
13	1	0.8
14	1	0.8
15	2	1.5
16	1	0.8
18	2	1.5
20	4	3.1
21	5	3.8
23	3	2.3
24	2	1.5
25	3	2.3
28	4	3.1
30	6	4.6
32	4	3.1
35	4	3.1
40	4	3.1
42	1	0.8
45	3	2.3
56	1	0.8
60	3	2.3
65	1	0.8
70	6	4.6
75	1	0.8
100	4	3.1
103	2	1.5

	135	1	0.8
	180	1	0.8
	1500	2	1.5
Total		131	100

4.3.3.4 Number of Branches

Data collected on the number of branches that the Tour Operators had indicated that 54.20% of the sampled Tour Operators had 1 branch, while 24.43% had two branches. Further, 10.69% of the sampled Tour Operators indicated they had three branches.

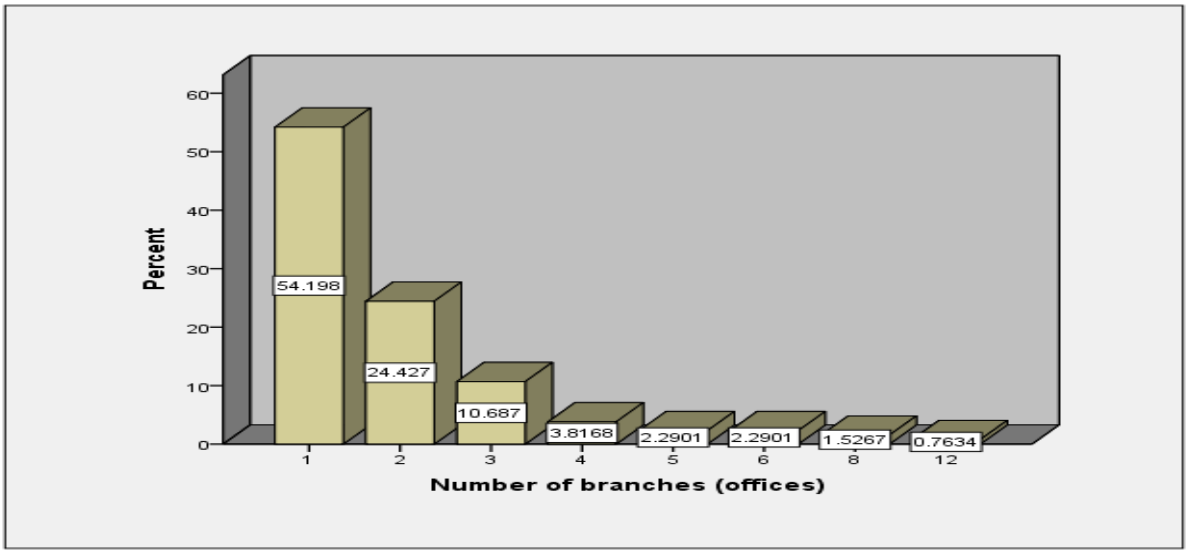

Figure 4. 3: Number of Branches (Offices)

4.3.3.5 Number of Visitors being handled by your firm per Year

Regarding the number of visitors that the tour firm had handled per annum, the study's findings indicated that 32.06% of the sampled Tour Operators handled below 500 visitors per annum, while 19.08% handled above 3000 visitors per annum.

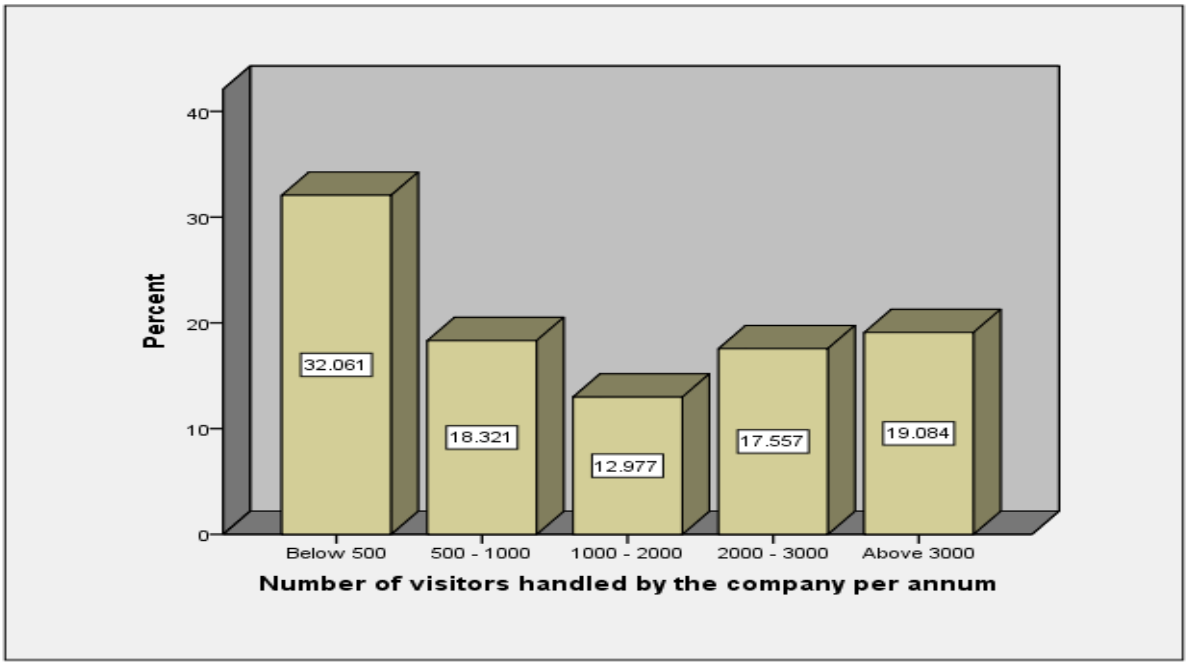

Figure 4. 4: Number of Visitors handled per annum

4.3.3.6 Firm Category

Data collected on the category of the tour firm indicated that 48.09% of the sampled Tour Operators were in category E, while 22.90% were in category D. Further, 17.56% of the sampled Tour Operators were in category A.

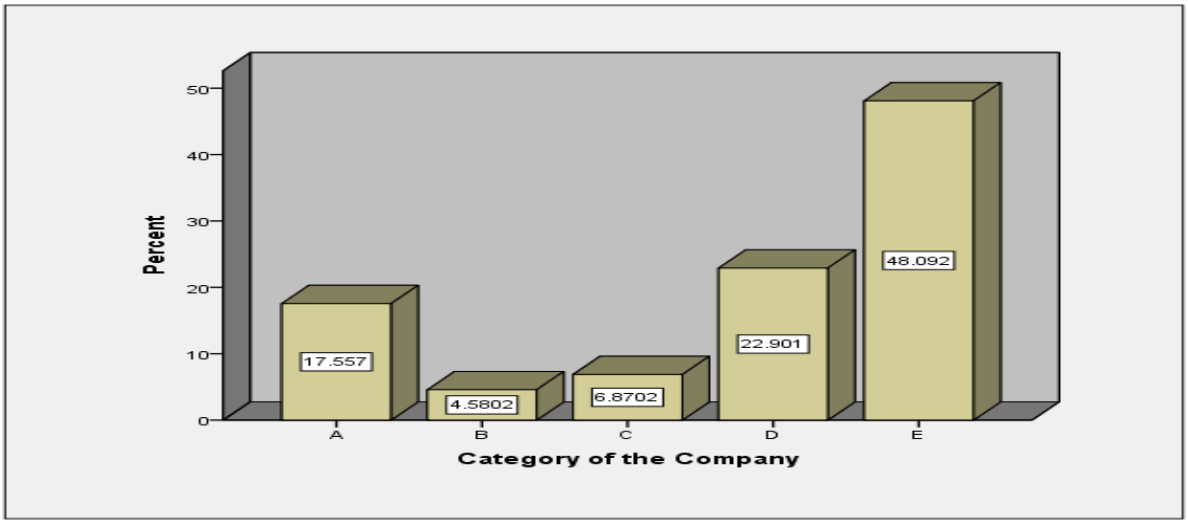

Figure 4. 5: Category of Tour Firm

4.3.3.7 Ratings on how Strategic Marketing Factors Influence Visitors' Choices of Destinations

Respondents from the selected Tour Operator Firms were invited to provide their opinions on the strategic marketing factor that influenced visitors' choices of destinations. Findings from this study, according to Table 4.3 below, showed Tour Operators substantially considered place or (location) of attraction (67.9%) as the strategic marketing factor mostly influencing visitors' choice of destinations.

Table 4. 3: Ratings of the Strategic Marketing Factors Influencing visitor's Choice of Destination

Considerations	Level of Extent				
	1	2	3	4	5
Product on offer	5 (3.8%)	11 (8.4%)	6 (4.6%)	24 (18.3%)	85 (64.9%)
Price	5 (3.8%)	3 (2.3%)	4 (3.1%)	48 (36.6%)	71 (54.2%)
Place (or location) of attraction	0	7 (5.3%)	8 (6.1%)	27 (20.6%)	89 (67.9%)
Promotion	9 (6.9%)	13 (9.9%)	22 (16.8%)	34 (26.0%)	53 (40.5%)

Key: 1=not at all, 2=very small extent, 3=small extent, 4=average and 5=a large extent

4.3.4 Influence of Demographic Characteristics on Tour Operator Performance

A one-way ANOVA was performed to check for a statistically substantial difference in Tour Operator Performance among the various demographic data. The study sought to identify whether Duration of operation, Number of Branches, Number of Visitors being handled and Firm Category influenced performance in the tour operator firms in Nairobi County. The results, captured in Table 4.4 below indicated that statistically, there was insignificant difference in Tour Operator Performance as reported between the number of

years in operations [F(3, 110)= 0.643, p = 0.589]; the number of branches [F(7, 123)= 1.625, p= 0.135]; number of visitors [F(4, 126)= 1.656, p= 0.164]; and firm category [F(4, 126)= 0.547, p= 0.701].

Table 4. 4: One-way ANOVA on Statistically Significant Difference in Tour Operator Performance among the Various Demographic Data

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Number of years in operation	Between Groups	0.665	3	0.222	0.643	0.589
	Within Groups	37.918	110	0.345		
	Total	38.583	113			
Number of branches	Between Groups	3.847	7	0.550	1.625	0.135
	Within Groups	41.605	123	0.338		
	Total	45.452	130			
Number of visitors	Between Groups	2.270	4	0.567	1.656	0.164
	Within Groups	43.182	126	0.343		
	Total	45.452	130			
Firm category	Between Groups	0.776	4	0.194	0.547	0.701
	Within Groups	44.675	126	0.355		
	Total	45.452	130			

4.4 Performance of Tour Operator Firms

Descriptive statistics as depicted in percentages, were used to measure tour operator performance as depicted in profitability and number of visitors.

4.4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Tour Operator Performance

4.4.1.1 Profitability of Firm

The respondents from the selected Tour Operators were requested to give their concurrence level with statements that were used to describe Tour Operator performance using profitability of the firm on a scale that ranged between 0% and above 20%, where 0%=not at all, Between 1% & 4%=very small extent, Between 5% & 12%=small extent, Between 13% & 20%=average, and Above 20%=large extent. Based on Table 4.5 below, the study found that to a large extent Tour Operators registered an increase in profitability as a result of product on offer (64.1%) and pricing of services at 64.1%.

Table 4. 5: Profitability of Tour Operators

The firm registered an increase in profitability as a result of the following STMPs by**:**	**Level of Extent**				
	0%	Between 1% & 4%	Between 5% & 12%	Between 13% & 20%	Above 20%
Product on offer	1 (0.8%)	6 (4.6%)	15 (11.5%)	25 (19.1%)	84 (64.1%)
Pricing of services	0	2 (1.5%)	13 (9.9%)	32 (24.4%)	84 (64.1%)
Place (or location) of attraction	0	13 (9.9%)	8 (6.1%)	29 (22.1%)	81 (61.8%)
Promotion	0	6 (4.6%)	30 (22.9%)	29 (22.1%)	66 (50.4%)

Key: 1=0%, 2=Between 1% & 4%, 3=Between 5% & 12%, 4=Between 13% & 20%, 5=Above 20%

4.4.1.2 Number of Visitors

The respondents from the selected Tour Operators were invited to state their level of concurrence with statements that were used to describe the performance of their firms as depicted in the number of visitors that they handled using a scale that ranged between 0% and above 20%, where 0%=not at all, Between 1% & 4%=very small extent, Between 5% & 12%=small extent, Between 13% & 20%=average, and Above 20%=large extent. The study, according to Table 4.6 below, found that to a large extent Tour Operators registered an increase in number of visitors as a result of product on offer (58.8%) followed closely by place (or location) of attraction at 57.3%.

Table 4. 6: Number of Visitors

The firm registered an increase in number of visitors as a result of the following STMPs by**:**	**Level of Extent**				
	0%	Between 1% & 4%	Between 5% & 12%	Between 13% & 20%	Above 20%
Product on offer	1 (0.8%)	7 (5.3%)	16 (12.2%)	30 (22.9%)	77 (58.8%)
Pricing of services	0	6 (4.6%)	7 (5.3%)	45 (34.4%)	73 (55.7%)
Place (or location) of attraction	1 (0.8%)	7 (5.3%)	17 (13.0%)	31 (23.7%)	75 (57.3%)
Promotion	2 (1.5%)	8 (6.1%)	26 (19.8%)	35 (26.7%)	60 (45.8%)

4.5 Influence of Strategic Tourism Product Practices on Tour Firm Performance

The study determined the influence of Strategic Tourism Product Practices on Tour Operator Performance. The study used descriptive, correlation, and linear regression analysis in the study.

4.5.1 Descriptive Analysis of Strategic Tourism Product Practices

The respondents from the selected Tour Operators were requested to give their concurrence level with statements that were used to describe Strategic Tourism Product Practices used by the firm and their influence on choice of destination by visitors on a scale that ranged between 1 and 5, 1=not at all, 2=very small extent, 3=small extent, 4=average and 5=a large extent. The study, according to Table 4.7 below, revealed that wildlife was the most sought tourism product at 89.3% followed by beach & marine at 71.0%.

Table 4. 7: Descriptive Analysis of Strategic Tourism Product Practices

Product	**Level of Extent**				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Beach & Marine	1 (0.8%)	0	6 (4.6%)	31 (23.7%)	93 (71.0%)
Wildlife	1 (0.8%)	1 (0.8%)	0	12 (9.2%)	117 (89.3%)
Museums & Monuments	5 (3.8%)	21 (16.0%)	32 (24.4%)	34 (26.0%)	39 (29.8%)
Business, Conventions and Conferencing	7 (5.3%)	13 (9.9%)	19 (14.5%)	19 (14.5%)	73 (55.7%)
Culture & Heritage	0	8 (6.1%)	23 (17.6%)	37 (28.2%)	63 (48.1%)

Key: 1=not at all, 2=very small extent, 3=small extent, 4=average and 5=a large extent

This finding reflects the value that tourists place on wildlife and beaches. Wildlife, beaches and marines are also popular because of their “natural products” set up. The implication is that there is a degree of gratification or fulfilment whenever individuals watch wildlife in their natural settings. This finding concurs with that of Koutoulas (2015) who also found that interacting with wild animals in their natural environment was exhilarating for tourists. According to Egresi et al., (2019), wildlife tourism is a fast growing tourism sector globally and has in fact led to tourism growth in several countries. The finding agrees with that of

Egresi et al., (2019) that international tourists engaged in wildlife tourism range between 20% and 40%. The popularity of wildlife tourism is further demonstrated by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2020 Report 'Towards Measuring the Economic Value of Wildlife Watching Tourism in Africa' which indicates wildlife tourism is so popular that protected areas in 14 African countries receive approximately US$ 142 million in entrance fees (UNWTO, 2020). Kenya's wildlife tourism accounts for 70% of total tourism revenues, at least 25% of the country's GDP and at least 10% of total formal employment (Egresi et al., 2019). It's no different when it comes to beach tourism.

Dodds & Holmes (2019) assert that a visit to the beach is one of the most popular form of tourism. According to Sivadasan (2018), beach tourism has experienced a steady and fast growth especially because it presents the 3S (Sea, Sun and Sand) to tourists. In some instances, beach tourism is so successful that countries reliant on it are challenged on how to maintain uniqueness when this form of tourism has become so routine (Picken, 2017). Many people, according to Lucrezi & Van der Walt (2016), opt for a beach holiday because they seeking relaxation, escapades and engaging in beachfront recreation.

These study findings contradicted the findings of Katsitadze & Ia (2017) who found that Business, Conventions & Conferencing Tourism is the most popular form of tourism with an annual growth rate of 5%. In fact, more than 115 countries worldwide are actively developing and promoting MICE tourism (Katsitadze & Ia, 2017). According to Trišić & Bojović (2018), an international conference with at attendance of 1,000 delegates can easily generate 1 million Euros of income. For example, in 2016, Belgrade hosted around

500 national and international meetings with a cumulative attendance of approximately 35,000 delegates bringing in an income of about 30 million Euros (Trišić & Bojović, 2018).

The study revealed that culture and heritage was the least sought tourism product. These findings concur those by Bonet (2011) that tourists shy away from cultural tourism because it is projected as a cause of conflict among travelers, tourism marketers, and natives over the significance and utilization of sites. Further cultural tourism is not considered as an exciting activity except for few people who are interested in research and history.

Cultural tourism, according to a study by Waithira (2019), is the least popular attraction for tourists. These study findings are contradicting the findings of Du Cros & McKercher (2014) who argue that cultural tourism continues to be a main attraction for many destinations, for it presents an exceptional, and affordable opportunity for strategic positioning of destinations in the market so as to deliver superior quality and sufficient experiences. In addition, according to Greg (2018) Cultural Tourism has lately been reconfirmed by the UNWTO as a key tourism segment accounting for over 39% of tourism arrivals.

4.5.2 Correlation between Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

This section presents the analysis conducted to ascertain the correlation between Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance. According to Table 4.8 below, there was a weak and positive relationship between Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance, $r\ (131) = 0.029, p = 0.738 > 0.05$. However, the relationship was not of great significance.

Table 4. 8: Correlation between Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Correlations			
		Tour Operator Performance	Strategic Tourism Product Practices
Tour Operator Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.738
	N	131	131
Strategic Tourism Product Practices	Pearson Correlation	.029	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.738	
	N	131	131

In effect, the more the products are availed to the tourists, the better the Tour Operator Performance in terms of revenues and tourists' numbers. These findings are aligned with those of Yayin & Yayinlanma (2015) that diversification of products has some relationship with tour operators' success in tourism market. This may be due to the fact that products are paid for by the tourists and the more the products are availed in the market, the more the revenues will be generated. These study findings are contradicting the findings of a South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) news Report stating that although Kenya boasts of a robust array of tourism products, her tourism industry was hit hard during the COVID-19 Pandemic Season (SABC, 2021).

While it is obvious that the pandemic did not wipe away the tourism product, the country is reported to have lost over USD. 800 million in tourism revenue, the worst performance since 2015. This scenario is best explained by Camilleri, (2017) who argues that uptake of tourism products would be non-existent if tourists are unable to travel from one destination to another, in a fast and effective manner. As a result, and in spite of the presence of

Kenya's tourism product over this period, international visitor arrivals declined by 71.5% in 2020 (GoK, 2021).

4.5.3. Tests for Assumptions of Linear Regression Analysis

Tests for Normality, Linearity, Heteroscedasticity, and Multicollinearity were performed to determine the assumption of linear regression analysis.

4.5.3.1 Test for Normality for Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To ascertain if the Tour Operator Performance variable and Strategic Tourism Product Practices variable has a normal distribution, the study used Normal probability plot (Q-Q plot). Figure 4.6 below presents the Normal Q-Q plot for Tour Operator Performance variable which indicate that data is approximately normal, while Figure 4.7 below presents the Normal Q-Q plot for Strategic Tourism Product Practices variable which indicate that data is approximately normal.

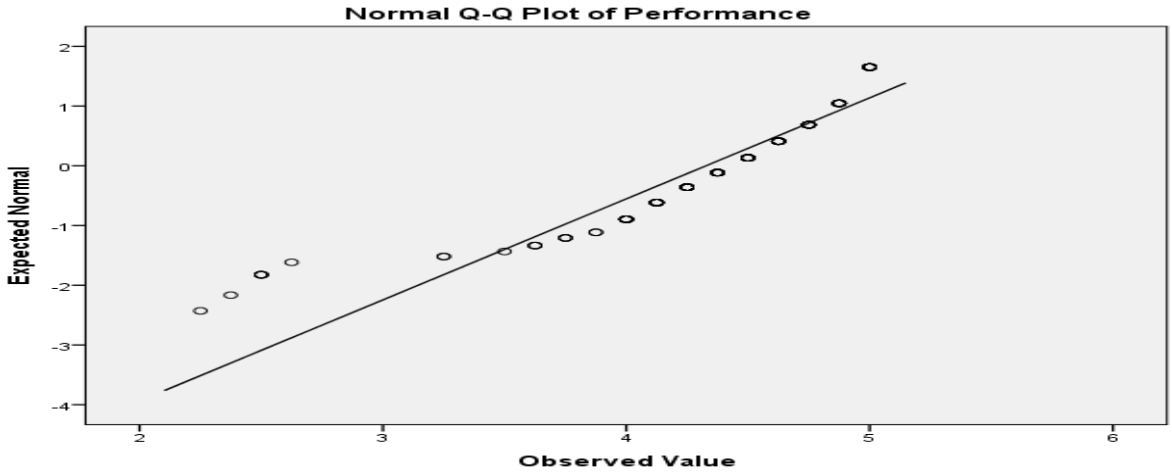

Figure 4. 6: Normal Q-Q Plot for Tour Operator Performance Variable

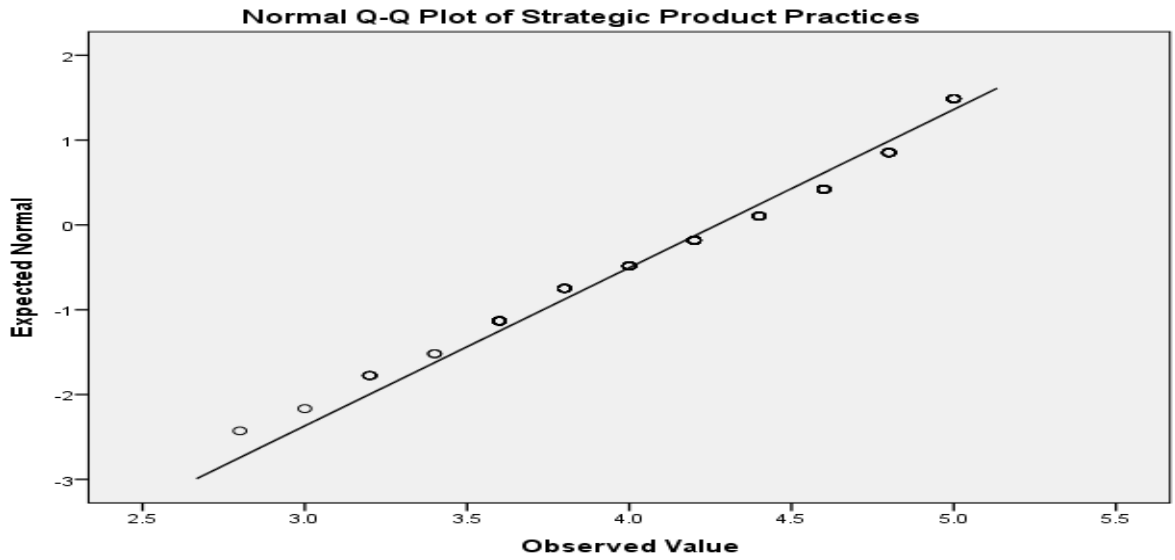

Figure 4. 7: Normal Q-Q Plot for Strategic Tourism Product Practices Variable

4.5.3.2 Test for Linearity for Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the linearity between Tour Operator Performance and strategic product practice variables, the study used deviation from linearity test. Table 4.9 presents the deviation from linearity test results which indicated a linear relationship between the variables of Tour Operator Performance and strategic product practice $F(10,119) = 0.351, p = 0.965 > 0.05$.

Table 4. 9: Test for Linearity between Tour Operator Performance and Strategic Product Practice

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tour Operator Performance * Strategic Tourism Product Practices	Between Groups	(Combined)	1.340	11	.122	.329	.978
		Linearity	.039	1	.039	.106	.745
		Deviation from Linearity	1.300	10	.130	.351	.965
	Within Groups		44.112	119	.371		
	Total		45.452	130			

4.5.3.3 Test for Multicollinearity for Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the assumption of no multicollinearity for the Strategic Tourism Product Practices variable, the study utilized the variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Table 4.10 presents the VIF values which indicated that there is no multicollinearity since the VIF value (VIF = 1) was between 1 and 10.

Table 4. 10: Tests for Multicollinearity for Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	4.189	.418		10.026	.000		
	Strategic Tourism Product Practices	.032	.097	.029	.335	.738	1.000	1.000
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance								

4.5.3.4 Test for Heteroscedasticity for Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the assumption of heteroscedasticity, Heteroscedasticity Chart Scatterplot was used to investigate if in the data there was heteroscedasticity or not. The findings from Figure 4.8 shows that that the spots are diffused and do not form a clear specific pattern. In this view, it can be established that the there is no problem of heteroscedasticity.

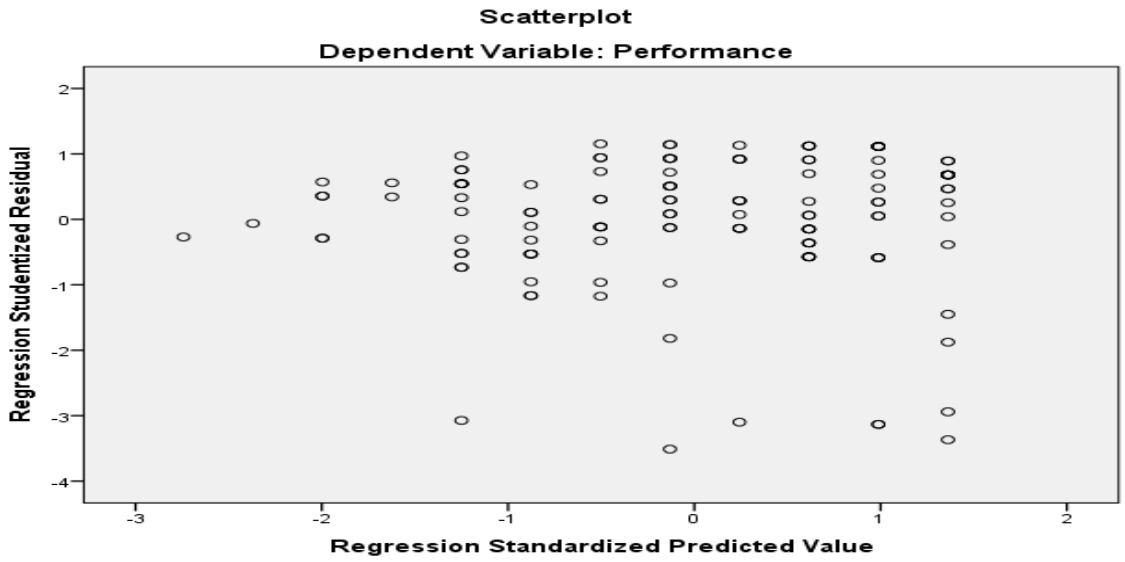

Figure 4. 8: Heteroscedasticity Chart Scatterplot for Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

4.5.4 Linear Regression Analysis Tests for Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

A simple linear regression analysis was utilized to determine the influence of Strategic Tourism Product Practices on Tour Operator Performance,

4.5.4.1 Regression Model Summary for Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

The findings of the model summary of the regression analysis, according to Table 4.11 below, indicate that strategic product practices explained 0.0841% of the variability in performance of Tour Operators $R^2 = 0.000841$.

Table 4. 11: Model Summary for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Model Summary[b]				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.029[a]	.000841	-.007	.59332

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Tourism Product Practices

b. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance

4.5.4.2 Regression ANOVA for Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

The linear regression F statistics value presented in Table 4.12 indicates that there was no statistical and significant linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance $F(1,129) = 0.112, p = 0.738 > 0.05$).

Table 4. 12: ANOVA for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.039	1	.039	.112	.738[b]
	Residual	45.412	129	.352		
	Total	45.452	130			

a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Tourism Product Practices

This simply means that more products will not automatically lead to improved Tour Operator Performance. For instance, during COVID-19 pandemic season, most of these products were available but were not utilized by the targeted tourists because movements were disrupted and even most tourist firms shut down. These findings are consistent with Kenya's Economic Survey 2020 Report indicating that international visitor arrivals plummeted by 71.5% (GoK, 2021). The implication is that the presence of the tourism product is by itself not sufficient to bring in tourists, for there may be other underlying factors that could be interfering with the uptake of the products, e.g. insecurity, low income levels, poor infrastructure and unfavorable location.

4.5.4.3 Regression Coefficient for Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Table 4.13 shows the regression coefficients for linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance. The findings indicate that Strategic Tourism Product Practices had a positive influence on Tour Operator Performance $\beta = 0.032,\ t\,(129) = 0.335, p = 0.738 > 0.05$. However, the influence was not statistically significant. This means that the impact of strategic tourism product on the performance of the Tour Operators was not significant.

The implication is that the tourism product needs to be augmented with other considerations e.g. security, price, locations. These findings agree with those of Koutoulas, (2015) that a tourism product is a package consisting physical and intangible elements, based on a destination activity. These elements are complementary to one another, i.e. they are functionally codependent with each providing only a fraction of the total quantity of

benefits that tourists seek. Furthermore, according to Camilleri, (2017), tourism products demand depends on whether or not the potential tourist has the capacity to travel. Camilleri (2017), goes further to explain that the success of a tourism product is reliant on the positive inter-connectedness of all segments. It is also clear that Tour Operators do not own products; their role is that of an intermediary, only selling the products on behalf of the suppliers.

Tour operator firms offer a vital link between travelers and their holiday destinations. They don't own these products such as wildlife, beaches and marine but their operations are depended on other factors that are beyond their controls like government regulations, political factors and economic factors. For example, a government's move to introduce a pricing formula on the products or introduction of new regulations such as "lockdowns/ curfews, visas" can easily lock out Tour Operators out of business.

Table 4. 13: Regression Coefficients for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.189	.418		10.026	.000
	Strategic Tourism Product Practices	.032	.097	.029	.335	.738
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance						

The estimated regression equation from Table 4.13 above is given by:

$$Performance = 4.189 + 0.032 * \text{Strategic Tourism Product Practices}$$

The model revealed that Strategic Tourism Product Practices positively affects Tour Operator Performance, i.e. a unit mean index increase in Strategic Tourism Product

Practices applied increases the Tour Operator Performance by a positive mean index value of 0.032.

One tour manager from Tour Firm X said that" ... *the tourism product is critical in determining my firm's overall performance*…". He added that …" *there is a direct correlation between the number of products we sell and our revenues*…". Another tour manager from Tour Firm W said that… "*the tourism product is the nerve center for this tour firm*…". According to him, … *"it is impossible to think about tourism without the tourism product…"*; and that …" *we have observed that the more products we offer in the market, the more the tourists we attract*….". While this assertion was replicated by most of the managers interviewed, a tour manager from Tour Firm Z observed that … "*the tourism product by itself is not sufficient to transform the performance of my tour firm*…". His thoughts were supported by another manager from Tour Firm Q who posed and asked…" *isn't it true that we had all these tourism products during the COVID-19 era, yet tourism grounded to a zero…?*

4.6 Influence of Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices on Tour Firm Performance

The study sought to find out the influence of Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices on the Tour Operator Performance. The researcher used descriptive, correlation, and linear regression analysis in the study.

4.6.1 Descriptive Analysis of Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices

The respondents from the selected Tour Operators were required to give their concurrence on statements that were used to describe the Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices used by the firm using a 1 to 5 scale, where 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree

and 5= strongly agree. The research outcomes, according to Table 4.14 below, revealed that Tour Operators substantially used transportation cost as a Strategic Tourism Pricing Practice (81.7%) followed by accommodation cost (69.5%).

Table 4. 14: Descriptive Analysis of Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices

Price	**Level of Extent**				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Transportation costs	3 (2.3%)	2 (1.5%)	6 (4.6%)	13 (9.9%)	107 (81.7%)
Accommodation costs	3 (2.3%)	6 (4.6%)	12 (9.2%)	19 (14.5%)	91 (69.5%)
Park entrance charges	1 (0.8%)	5 (3.8%)	20 (15.3%)	37 (28.2%)	68 (51.9%)
Tour guiding costs	5 (3.8%)	12 (9.2%)	18 (13.7%)	37 (28.2%)	59 (45.0%)
Visa charges	7 (5.3%)	16 (12.2%)	27 (20.6%)	51 (38.9%)	30 (22.9%)

Key: 1=not at all, 2=very small extent, 3=small extent, 4=average and 5=a large extent

Transportation services underscore the role of tour operators. This finding is consistent with the claim by Serge (2020) that by definition, a tour operator is charged with the responsibility of arranging transportation and accommodation services of a tour. Furthermore, according to the UNWTO (2020), for a visitor to qualify as a tourist, one must be in a given destination that is at least 80km (hence transported) away for more than 24 hours (hence accommodated). Ordinarily, a tour operator possesses a great deal of travel services spanning carriers, service providers, and lodging.

This means that the core business of Tour Operators is to transport visitors and also when visitors are transported from one area to another they will definitely need accommodation. The implication is that Tour Operators wouldn’t be in business if they weren’t involved in transporting and accommodating tourists. More often than not, transportation is the

bedrock for tourism experiences. That is why it is impossible to consider tourism without transportation.

The study revealed that the least used Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices was visa charges. This means that visas are not the core business for Tour Operators since they are issued and charged by the respective issuing governments. The implication is that tour operators cannot rely on VISA Applications to raise their revenues, except in the few instances when they facilitate the processing for visas and charge a small fee for the visa processing (Picazo-Peral & Moreno-Gil, 2018).

4.6.2 Correlation between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

This section presents the analysis conducted to ascertain the correlation between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance. The results are shown in Table 4.15 below. The findings revealed a weak and positive relationship between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance though not statistically significant, $r\ (131) = 0.035, p = 0.691 > 0.05$.

Table 4. 15: Correlation between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Correlations

		Tour Operator Performance	Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices
Tour Operator Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.035
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.691
	N	131	131
Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices	Pearson Correlation	.035	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.691	
	N	131	131

Tour Operators have authority to determine the price on the product by putting a mark-up on the price given by the supplier. Tourism pricing is probably the most important business decision that every tour operator has to make. If the right tour price is set, then the business is profitable (ORIOLY, 2018). The implication is that the higher the mark-up on the supplier's price, the higher the revenue received by the tour firm. These findings agree with those of Picazo-Perala & Moreno-Gill (2018), who also found that tour operators' price is affected through their brands, accommodations ownership, segments targeted, awards schemes and incentive programs, promotion spaces, and design elements in their brochures. Further, the role played by tour operators in price-setting in the tourism industry is critical. It is also important to note that pricing decisions are essential for the profitability of the tour firm, for it impacts demand and sales volume tremendously. Moreover, the quality of a product is normally associated with its price.

4.6.3. Tests for Assumptions of Linear Regression Analysis

Tests for Normality, Linearity, Heteroscedasticity, and Multicollinearity were performed to determine the assumption of linear regression analysis.

4.6.3.1 Test for Normality for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices Variable

To ascertain if the Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices variable has a normal distribution, the study used Normal probability plot (Q-Q plot). Figure 4.9 below presents the Normal Q-Q plot for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices variable which indicate that data is approximately normal.

Figure 4. 9: Normal Q-Q Plot for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices Variable

4.6.3.2 Test for Linearity for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the linearity between strategic tourism pricing practices and tour operator performance variables, the study used deviation from linearity test. Table 4.16 presents the deviation from linearity test results which indicated a linear relationship between the variables of Tour Operator Performance and Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices $F(12,117) = 1.082, p = 0.382 > 0.05$.

Table 4. 16: Test for Linearity between Strategic Product Practice and Tour Operator Performance

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tour Operator Performance * Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices	Between Groups	(Combined)	4.589	13	.353	1.011	.446
		Linearity	.056	1	.056	.160	.690
		Deviation from Linearity	4.533	12	.378	1.082	.382
	Within Groups		40.863	117	.349		
	Total		45.452	130			

4.6.3.3 Test for Multicollinearity for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the assumption of no multicollinearity for the Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices variable, the study utilized the variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Table 4.17 presents the VIF values which indicated that there is no multicollinearity since the VIF value (VIF = 1) was between 1 and 10.

Table 4. 17: Tests for Multicollinearity for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	4.205	.311		13.502	.000		
	Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices	.029	.073	.035	.398	.691	1.000	1.000
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance								

4.6.3.4 Test for Heteroscedasticity for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the assumption of heteroscedasticity, Heteroscedasticity Chart Scatterplot was used to investigate if in the data there was heteroscedasticity or not. The findings from Figure 4.10 shows that that the spots are diffused and do not form a clear specific pattern and hence it can be established that the there is no issue of heteroscedasticity.

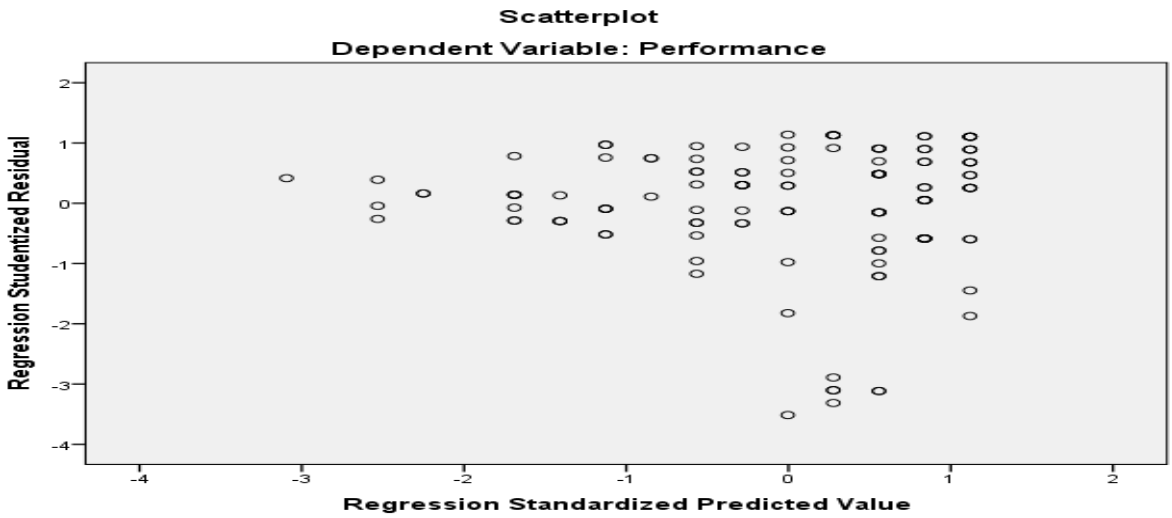

Figure 4. 10: Heteroscedasticity Chart Scatterplot for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

4.6.4 Linear Regression Analysis Tests for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

A simple linear regression analysis was utilized to show the influence of Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices on Tour Operator Performance,

4.6.4.1 Regression Model Summary for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

The results of the model summary as shown in Table 4.18 below revealed that Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices explained 0.1225% of the variability in performance of Tour Operators $R^2 = 0.001225$.

Table 4. 18: Model Summary for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Model Summary[b]				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.035[a]	.001225	-.007	.59322
a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices				
b. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance				

Based on the Model Summary, the study disclosed the absence of a statistical and significant linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance. This means that higher pricing of tourism products by Tour Operators will not automatically lead to improved performance of the Tour Operators. In other words, higher pricing of tourism products does not necessarily translate to better Tour Operator Performance. These findings are in tandem with those by Buiga, et al., (2017) that the price of a tour product is exemplified by a collection of characteristics that are observable. The overall fulfilment by a visitor is dependent on the amalgamation of goods and services; they are provided different suppliers, may they be public or private. In any case, there are other factors that may "eat" into the profit margins of Tour Operators such as government taxes and competition from other Tour Operators. For this reason, and in order for tour operators to sustain their profit margins, they must persistently evaluate their operations and business strategies.

Forsyth and Dwyer, (2009) argue that when tourists make their choices of destinations, they compare the price (costs of living) at the destination with those of their origin and also other competing destinations. Consequently, destination competitiveness and ultimate uptake is determined by two types of prices. The first one is the relative price of the

destination compared to the place of origin; the second is the price difference of the competing destinations, with a possibility of generating the substitution of price effect. Tour Operators shouldn't assume that raising the price of their products, regardless of how lucrative those products are, will automatically generate more revenues.

4.6.4.2 Regression ANOVA for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

The linear regression F statistics value presented in Table 4.19 indicates a lack of a statistical and significant linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and performance of Tour Operators $F(1,129) = 0.159, p = 0.691 > 0.05$).

Table 4. 19: ANOVA for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.056	1	.056	.159	.691[b]
	Residual	45.396	129	.352		
	Total	45.452	130			
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices						

4.6.4.3 Regression Coefficient for Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Table 4.20 shows the regression coefficients for linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance. The findings indicate that Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices had a positive influence on Tour Operator Performance though not statistically significant $\beta = 0.029,\ t\ (129) = 0.398, p = 0.390 > 0.05$.

In this view, Tour Operators could apply strategic pricing to improve their performance, albeit only to a certain extent. Effectively, Tour Operators cannot over rely on pricing, but must also explore other strategic initiatives to boost their performance. These findings agree with those of Picazo-Peral & Moreno-Gil (2018) that Tour operators develop and promote their own offerings in order to improve their profit margins, instead of just pinpointing the special attributes of the destinations and their facilities including but not limited to accommodation. This may be due to the fact that pricing is not the only determinant for revenues for the Tour Operators. Tour Operators also do not have the monopoly of determining the price of tourism products. Furthermore, tour operators are often times shareholders or owners of some of the facilities e.g. hotels, in the destinations where they are in operation, and therefore have an intrinsic and great interest in the continued existence of such establishments, giving priority to marketing them through their own brands (Picazo-Peral & Moreno-Gil, 2018). These study findings are contradicting the findings of Kotler et al., (2014) who asserts that pricing is often depicted as the most critical ingredient for enhancing revenues. In fact, Devashish (2011) declares that the only Marketing Mix variable responsible for revenue growth is price. Accordingly, several studies drawn from a wide range of business enterprises show that a considerable increase in a firm's overall revenue can be obtained by actively employing strategic pricing practices that are targeted at varied customer segments (Morten, Camilla, Kjell & Terje, 2008). According to Mayuri (2020), pricing is the most versatile in the marketing mix, because a marketer can manipulate product demand by either a price increase or decrease.

Table 4. 20: Regression Coefficients for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.205	.311		13.502	.000
	Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices	.029	.073	.035	.398	.691
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance						

The estimated regression equation from Table 4.20 above is given by:

$$Performance = 4.205 + 0.029 * \text{Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices}$$

The model revealed that Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices positively affects Tour Operator Performance, i.e. a unit mean index increase in Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices applied increases the Tour Operator Performance by a positive mean index value of 0.029.

One tour manager from Tour Firm B commented that…" *price is everything! It brings the money*…". Another tour manager from Tour Firm C commented…" *to boost our profits, we at times adjust our prices*…" A manager from Tour Firm Z said that… "*offering tourism products at the right pricing is a long and painstaking process, but worth the trouble*…".

4.7 Influence of Strategic Tourism Place Practices on Tour Firm Performance

The study determined the influence of Strategic Tourism Place Practices on Tour Operator Performance. The study used descriptive, correlation, and linear regression analysis in the study.

4.7.1 Descriptive Analysis of Strategic Tourism Place Practices

The respondents from the selected Tour Operators were required to give their concurrence on statements that were used to describe the Strategic Tourism Place Practices used by the firm using a 1 to 5 scale, where 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. In this study, respondents agreed that to a large extent Tour Operators used accommodation and other facilities at the attraction as Strategic Tourism Place Practices (74.0%) followed by security to and at the attraction (71.8%).

Table 4. 21: Descriptive Analysis of Strategic Tourism Place Practices

Place	**Level of Extent**				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Location of attraction	2 (1.5%)	5 (3.8%)	10 (7.6%)	30 (22.9%)	84 (64.1%)
Transport infrastructure	4 (3.1%)	18 (14.0%)	16 (12.4%)	58 (44.3%)	33 (25.2%)
Accommodation and other facilities at the attraction	2 (1.5%)	0	9 (6.9%)	23 (17.6%)	97 (74.0%)
Mode of transport to the attraction	2 (1.5%)	0	27 (20.6%)	47 (35.9%)	55 (42.0%)
Security to and at the attraction	2 (1.5%)	16 (12.2%)	4 (3.1%)	15 (11.5%)	94 (71.8%)

Tourists travel to destinations that they can access. By definition, a tourist must travel for leisure or business, to a destination that is outside his residence and working place, and stay for at least 24 hours (Bowen & Whalen, 2017). Consequently, they require accommodation. For this to happen, tourist destinations should avail the required services and facilities. The importance of tourists' accommodation is underscored by Nutsugbodo (2016) argument tourist accommodation facilities sometimes provide psychological healing for travelers. Bearing in mind that visitors must spend a night out of their typical residences, accommodation must be provided (UNWTO, 2019). Accommodation, thus, is

an obligatory requirement in a tourism destination. The implication is that tourism might not happen without accommodation. Further, security to/from and at the destination plays a critical role in travel. This finding is consistent with that by Steene (2013) who argues that although there might be varied reasons for a successful tourism product, including service quality, a 'good time', an amazing scenery, and/or exciting experiences, safety and security at the destination is a must have. In this view, before they embark on travel, travelers consider the probable dangers, including crime and health risks, to which they may be exposed. Consequently, for it to succeed, a holiday spot must assure a safe and secure environment for tourists.

The study revealed that the least used strategic place practice was mode of transport to the attraction. This is mainly so because mode of transport is more often than not predetermined and the Tour Operators cannot manipulate the mode of transport. According to Nutsugbodo, Edem & Adjei Mensah (2018) exclusive transportation for tourists within the tourism sector is very rare. For this reason, most tourism destinations depend on public/local transportation to meet tourists' transport requirements. While most tour operators provide transportation services, a number of independent variables such as social, economic, cultural and environmental, hold a high degree of influence on the choice of transportation modes. These study outcomes are contradictory to those by Yarcan & Cetin (2021) who found that different components of travel services, especially ground travel and international transportation services, are packaged by a tour operator, to produce an organized tour. In this view, transportation becomes a critical ingredient of a tour operator firm's performance.

4.7.2 Correlation between Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

This section presents the analysis conducted to ascertain the correlation between Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance. The results are shown in Table 4.22 below. The findings showed a statistically significant weak and positive relationship between Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance, $r\,(131) = 0.203, p = 0.020 < 0.05$.

Table 4. 22: Correlation between Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Correlations

		Tour Operator Performance	Strategic Tourism Place Practices
Tour Operator Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.203*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.020
	N	131	131
Strategic Tourism Place Practices	Pearson Correlation	.203*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	
	N	131	131

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

This means that the more the places or locations, the better the Tour Operator Performance. It therefore follows that the potential of a tourist destination is determined by its level of attractiveness or aesthetic value, how accessible it is, and what facilities it offers to the tourists (Kotler et al., 2014). Agreeably, tourists also seek places that are renowned for the activities they offer, the services and skilled workforce they provide, and their location (Al-Azzam, 2016). The more the destinations, the better for tour operator firms for it widens their scope of operation, which in turn broadens their sources of tourists.

4.7.3. Tests for Assumptions of Linear Regression Analysis

Tests for Normality, Linearity, Heteroscedasticity, and Multicollinearity were performed to determine the assumption of linear regression analysis.

4.7.3.1 Test for Normality for Strategic Tourism Place Practices Variable

To ascertain if the Strategic Tourism Place Practices variable has a normal distribution, the study used Normal probability plot (Q-Q plot). Figure 4.11 below presents the Normal Q-Q plot for Strategic Tourism Place Practices variable which indicate that data is approximately normal.

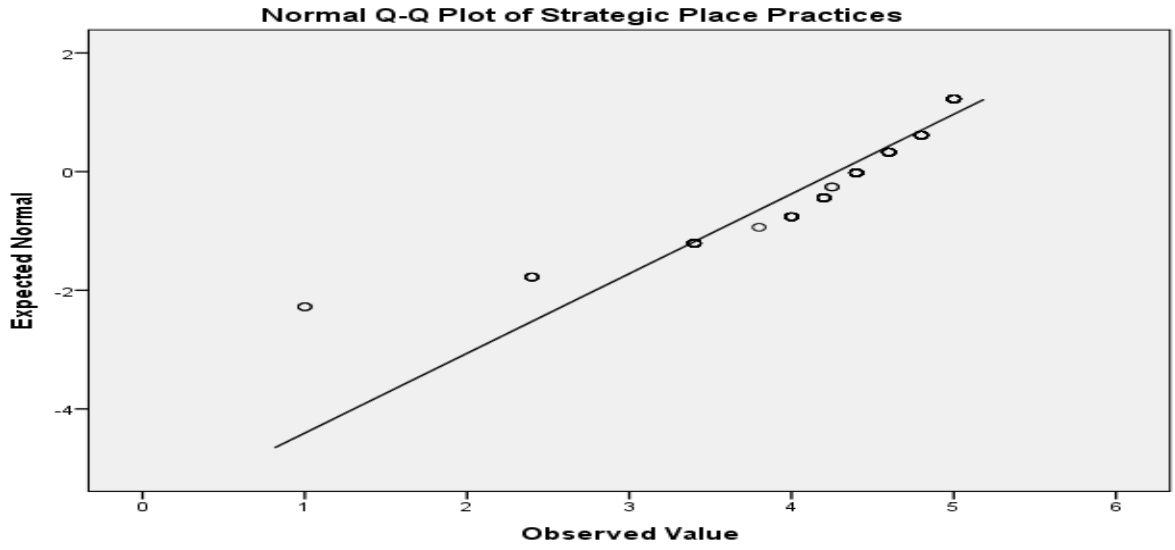

Figure 4. 11: Normal Q-Q Plot for Strategic Tourism Place Practices Variable

4.7.3.2 Test for Linearity for Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the linearity between strategic tourism place practices and tour operator performance variables, the study used deviation from linearity test. Table 4.23 presents the deviation from linearity test results which indicated that there was no linear relationship between the variables of Tour Operator Performance and Strategic Tourism Place Practices $F(9,120) = 3.472, p = 0.001 < 0.05$.

Table 4. 23: Test for Linearity between Strategic Place and Tour Operator Performance

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tour Operator Performance * Strategic Tourism Place Practices	Between Groups	(Combined)	10.870	10	1.087	3.772	.000
		Linearity	1.864	1	1.864	6.468	.012
		Deviation from Linearity	9.006	9	1.001	3.472	.001
	Within Groups		34.582	120	.288		
	Total		45.452	130			

4.7.3.3 Test for Multicollinearity for Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the assumption of no multicollinearity for the Strategic Tourism Place Practices variable, the study utilized the variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Table 4.24 presents the VIF values which indicated that there is no multicollinearity since the VIF value (VIF = 1) was between 1 and 10.

Table 4. 24: Tests for Multicollinearity for Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.639	.297		12.232	.000		
	Strategic Tourism Place Practices	.161	.068	.203	2.349	.020	1.000	1.000
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance								

4.7.3.4 Test for Heteroscedasticity for Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the assumption of heteroscedasticity, Heteroscedasticity Chart Scatterplot was used to investigate if in the data there was heteroscedasticity or not. The findings from Figure 4.12 shows that that the spots are diffused and do not form a clear specific pattern and hence it can be established that the there is no issue of heteroscedasticity.

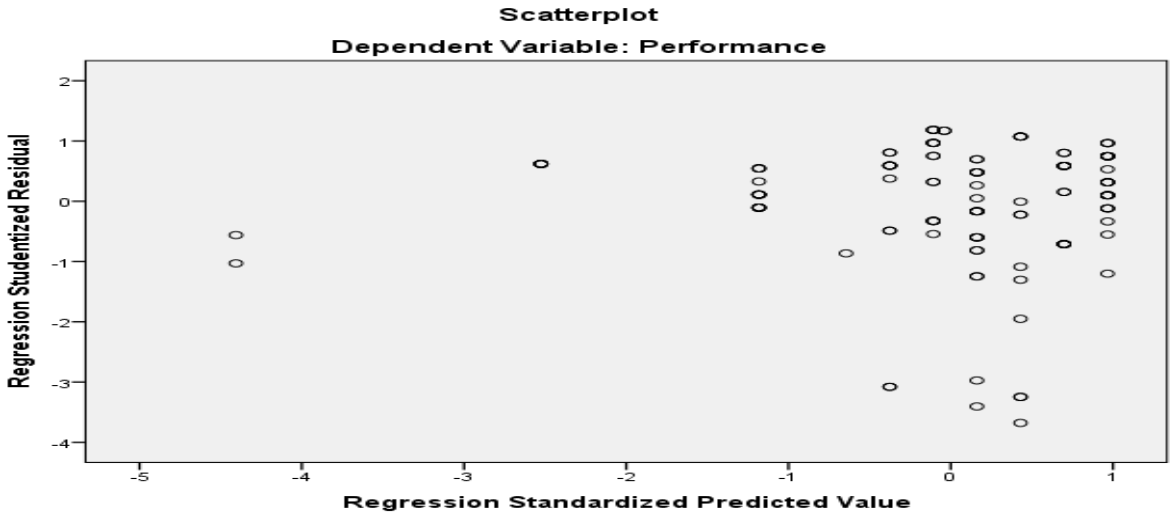

Figure 4. 12: Heteroscedasticity Chart Scatterplot for Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

4.7.4 Linear Regression Analysis Tests for Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

The section presents linear regression conducted to reveal the influence of Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices on Tour Operator Performance, a simple linear regression analysis was utilized.

4.7.4.1 Regression Model Summary for Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

The results of the model summary as shown in Table 4.25 below revealed that Strategic Tourism Place Practices explained 4.1% of the variability in Tour Operator Performance $R^2 = 0.041$.

Table 4.25: Model Summary for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Model Summary[b]				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.203[a]	.041	.034	.58128
a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Tourism Place Practices				
b. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance				

4.7.4.2 Regression ANOVA for Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

The linear regression F statistics value presented in Table 4.26 indicates that there was a statistical and significant linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance $F(1,89) = 5.517, p = 0.020 > 0.05$).

The implication of this finding is that more places/ destinations will lead to more products which in turn leads to more uptake and better Tour Operator Performance. These study finding is contradictory to the argument by Yarcan & Cetin (2021) that place or location is directly linked to customer loyalty, meaning that customers will travel to destinations to express their loyalty. Further, (Kotler et al., 2014) explains that a tourist destination potential is determined by accessibility, its level attractiveness or aesthetic value, and the infrastructure it offers to the tourists. These arguments are supported by Al-Azzam (2016) assertion that tourists visit places that are highly rated for the activities they offer, the services and skilled workforce they provide, and their location. In view of the above findings, more tourist destinations may not necessarily lead to better Tour Operator Performance.

Table 4. 26: ANOVA for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.864	1	1.864	5.517	.020[b]
	Residual	43.588	129	.338		
	Total	45.452	130			
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Tourism Place Practices						

4.7.4.3 Regression Coefficient for Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Table 4.27 shows the regression coefficients for linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance. The findings indicate that

Strategic Tourism Place Practices had a statistically significant positive influence on Tour Operator Performance $\beta = 0.161,\ t\,(129) = 2.349, p = 0.02 < 0.05.$

Table 4. 27: Regression Coefficients for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.639	.297		12.232	.000
	Strategic Tourism Place Practices	.161	.068	.203	2.349	.020
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance						

The estimated regression equation from Table 4.27 above is given by:

$$Performance = 3.639 + 0.161 * \text{Strategic Tourism Place Practices}$$

The model revealed that Strategic Tourism Place Practices positively affects Tour Operator Performance, i.e. a unit mean index increase in Strategic Tourism Place Practices applied increases the Tour Operator Performance by a positive mean index value of 0.161.

One tour manager from Tour Firm X observed that… "*tourists are very conscious when it comes to location of tourism products…*". Another manager from Tour Firm Q aptly explained that … *"the fastest way to 'kill' a tourism product is to make it inaccessible…*". Another tour manager from Tour Firm W reported that…"*my tour firm has become very intentional in picking tourism destinations…*". A manager from Tour Firm Z explained that… "*it is not just enough to have a tourism product, because it really matters where that product is placed…*".

4.8 Influence of Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices on Tour Firm Performance

The influence of Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices on Tour Operator Performance was sought in this study. Descriptive, correlation, and linear regression analysis were applied in the study.

4.8.1 Descriptive Analysis of Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices

The respondents from the selected Tour Operators were required to give their concurrence on statements that were used to describe the Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices used by the firm using a 1 to 5 scale, where 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. The study's findings showed that respondents agreed to a large extent that Tour Operators used recommendations e.g. from a friend or colleague as a Strategic Tourism Promotion Practice (67.2%) followed by advertising (45.0%).

Table 4. 28: Descriptive Analysis of Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices

Promotion	**Level of Extent**				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Advertising	5 (3.8%)	8 (6.1%)	26 (19.8%)	33 (25.2%)	59 (45.0%)
Sales promotion	7 (5.3%)	5 (3.8%)	23 (17.6%)	47 (35.9%)	49 (37.4%)
Personal selling	2 (1.6%)	9 (7.0%)	13 (10.2%)	47 (36.7%)	57 (44.5%)
Exhibitions	16 (12.2%)	19 (14.5%)	28 (21.4%)	32 (24.4%)	36 (27.5%)
Recommendations e.g. from a friend or colleague	3 (2.3%)	8 (6.1%)	5 (3.8%)	27 (20.6%)	88 (67.2%)

Tour Operators are increasingly using referrals, also known as Word of Mouth (WOM), and advertising to market the products they sell. Tourists whose destination experiences are great will more often than not recommend the same destination to their friends,

colleagues, and relatives. These findings concur with those of Robustin (2020) that WOM has a great impact, and is therefore a great tool for the promotion of tourism industry. Xu et al., (2020) agree to this assertion by stating that in this an age of mobile internet, WOM marketing is an influential tool for enhancing the marketing of a tourist destination. For this reason, and to further boost their sales, numerous Tour Operators have recognized the need for online comment systems on their websites so as to inspire consumers to share information via their personal social media (Xu et al., 2020).

Liang et al., (2018) indicate that WOM is effective in enhancing the consumers' perceived product value, and by extension plummeting the perceived product risk, thereby improving re-purchase intents. In fact, according Shirkhodaie & Rastgoo-deylami (2016) WOM has the most effect on customers and influences them to purchase a product or service more than other any other advertisements. This is because people more often than not trust what they hear directly from others. Further, advertising is an important activity that tour operators have used to boost their performance. Picazo-Peral & Moreno-Gil (2018) states that tourism advertising draws tourists from across the local and global space.

Syeda & Sadia (2011) concur with this argument, and goes further to state that advertising entails mass communicating of information that is geared towards persuading buyers to purchase products, thereby maximizing firm profits. Indeed, advertising tourism products by Tour Operators helps the visitor familiarize with the place/destination even before personally visiting it. In this view, it is important to note that an indecorous advert can result in the loss of business for the tour firm.

The study revealed that the least used strategic promotion practice was exhibitions. This may be due to the fact that during exhibitions, Tour Operators use rented space to market or promote the products they sell. It is the least used because there are other additional charges that are incurred such as renting space for exhibitions, transport and accommodation costs for employees who are participating in those exhibitions. Exhibitions are also predetermined by the organizers outside the control of the Tour Operators. For example, the Sarit Expo in Kenya is held annually in March, leaving the Tour Operators with no flexibility when it comes to planning for such events.

These study findings contradicted the findings of Armenski & Pavluković (2018) that expos increase tourism demand, increase tourist numbers, and stimulate travel, thereby improving the Tour Operator Performance. According to Nolan (2020), exhibition events hardly last a week, but they create a significant degree of enthusiasm for travelers. Exhibitions are essential in providing information to potential visitors about the destination's they wish to visit (Benur & Bramwell, 2015). Accordingly, a destination with an expectation of fully exploiting its tourism capacities must incorporate expos in their strategic promotion interventions (Zetiu and Bertea, 2015).

4.8.2 Correlation between Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

This section presents the analysis conducted to ascertain the correlation between Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance. The results are shown in Table 4.29 below. The findings indicate a statistically significant weak and positive

relationship between Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance $r\ (131) = 0.174, p = 0.046 < .05$.

Table 4. 29: Correlation between Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Correlations			
		Tour Operator Performance	Strategic Promotion Practices
Tour Operator Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.174*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.046
	N	131	131
Strategic Promotion Practices	Pearson Correlation	.174*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	
	N	131	131
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Effectively, the more promotional messaging there is, the wider the market reach, and the higher the chances of attracting more tourists. To attract more tourists, Tour Operators should promote more. This finding agrees with that Kim and Min (2016) assertion that strategic promotion practices significantly contribute to improved sales and profits for Tour Operators. Further, according to Picazo-Peral et al., (2018), tour operators improve their profit margins by developing and promoting their own brands.

4.8.3. Tests for Assumptions of Linear Regression Analysis

Tests for Normality, Linearity, Heteroscedasticity, and Multicollinearity were performed to determine the assumption of linear regression analysis.

4.8.3.1 Test for Normality for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To ascertain if the Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices variable has a normal distribution, the study used Normal probability plot (Q-Q plot). Figure 4.13 below presents the Normal Q-Q plot for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices variable which indicate that data is approximately normal.

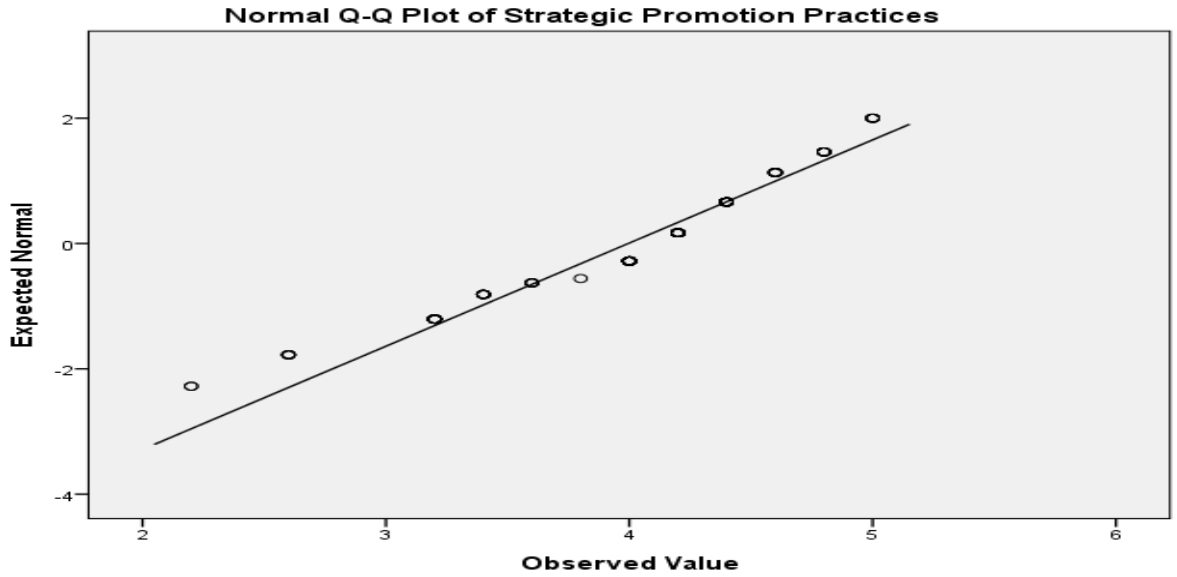

Figure 4. 13: Normal Q-Q Plot for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices Variable

4.8.3.2 Test for Linearity for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To establish whether the linearity between strategic promotion practices and Tour Operator Performance variables, the study used deviation from linearity test. Table 4.30 presents the deviation from linearity test results which indicate that there was no linear relationship

between the variables of Tour Operator Performance and Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices $F(10, 79) = 2.021, p = 0.006 < 0.05$.

Table 4. 30: Test for Linearity between Strategic Promotional and Tour Operator Performance

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tour Operator Performance * Strategic Promotion Practices	Between Groups	(Combined)	9.454	11	.859	2.841	.002
		Linearity	1.384	1	1.384	4.574	.034
		Deviation from Linearity	8.070	10	.807	2.668	.006
	Within Groups		35.998	119	.303		
	Total		45.452	130			

4.8.3.3 Test for Multicollinearity for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the assumption of no multicollinearity for the Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices variable, the study utilized the variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Table 4.31 presents the VIF values which indicated that there is no multicollinearity since the VIF value (VIF = 1) was between 1 and 10.

Table 4. 31: Tests for Multicollinearity for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.649	.341		10.698	.000		
	Strategic Promotion Practices	.170	.084	.174	2.013	.046	1.000	1.000
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance								

4.8.3.4 Test for Heteroscedasticity for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the assumption of heteroscedasticity, Heteroscedasticity Chart Scatterplot was used to investigate if in the data there was heteroscedasticity or not. The findings from Figure 4.14 shows that that the spots are diffused and do not form a clear specific pattern and hence it can be established that the there is no issue of heteroscedasticity.

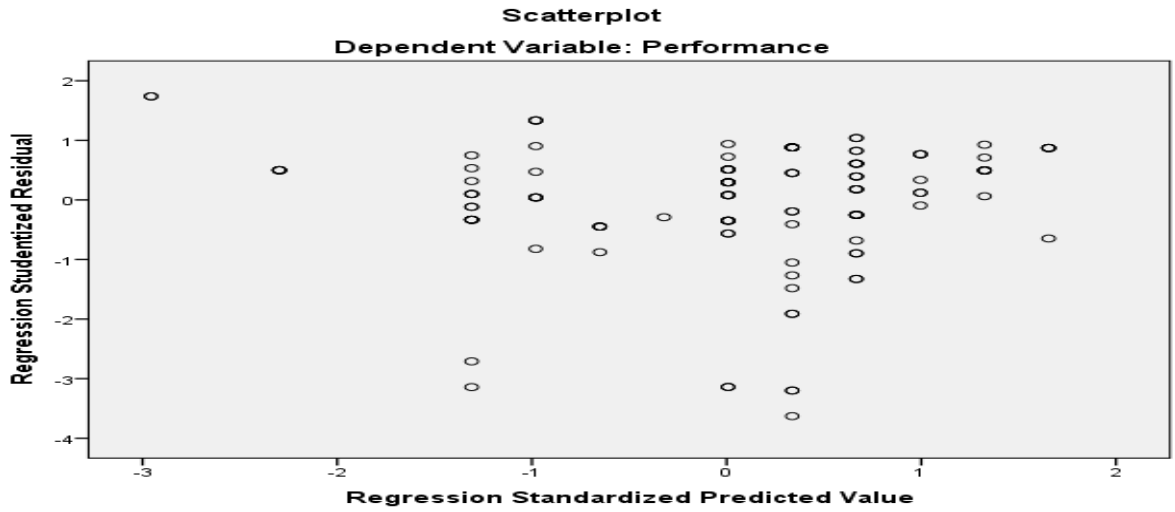

Figure 4. 14: Heteroscedasticity Chart Scatterplot for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

4.8.4 Linear Regression Analysis Tests for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

A simple linear regression analysis was utilized to determine the influence of Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices on Tour Operator Performance.

4.8.4.1 Regression Model Summary for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

The model summary findings in Table 4.32 below indicate that Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices explained 3.0% of the variability in Tour Operator Performance $R^2 = 0.030$.

Table 4. 32: Model Summary for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Model Summary[b]				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.174[a]	.030	.023	.58448
a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Promotion Practices				
b. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance				

4.8.4.2 Regression ANOVA for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

The linear regression F statistics value presented in Table 4.33 indicates that there was a statistical and significant linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance $F(1,129) = 4.051, p = 0.046 < 0.05$).

Table 4. 33: ANOVA for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.384	1	1.384	4.051	.046[b]
	Residual	44.068	129	.342		
	Total	45.452	130			
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Promotion Practices						

This finding agrees with that of Shamsi et al., (2018) that promotion has been an important technique towards increasing sales for tour firms. The finding is further supported by Angela Ya-Ping Chang (2017) who declares that promotions are initiatives geared at communicating the great attributes of the product and thereby increasing persuasions for purchase. According to Syeda & Sadia (2011), promotions are likely to have unexpected and substantial effect on sales volume. This statement is supported by Mohd & Khan (2018) claims companies that undertake promotional activities enhance their financial resources. Promotional initiatives, by their very own nature, seduce the customers to purchase more products and consume them faster; leading to enhanced sales and profitability of the firm.

4.8.4.3 Regression Coefficient for Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Table 4.34 shows the regression coefficients for linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance. The findings show that

Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices had a statistically significant positive influence on Tour Operator Performance ($\beta = 0.170,\ t\,(129) = 2.013, p = 0.046 < 0.05$).

Accordingly, more promotional activities will result to more awareness of the product and create brand loyalty which in turn will generate more sales. Subramanian (2017) asserts that in the modern and contemporary society it is not thinkable for a firm to operate without a well thought out promotional strategy. Resultantly, promotional activities will lead to better Tour Operator Performance because it will result into more uptake of the product. These findings are consistent with Subramanian (2017) findings that promotion is a very strong weapon not only in marketing, but also placing a product in the market.

Mohd & Khan (2018) describes promotion as any marketing initiative geared at communicating about the merits of a product or service so as to persuade real or prospective customers towards a purchase. The purpose is to persuade a consumer to either begin or continue purchasing the product. Further Odunlami & Akinruwa (2017) determined that promotion is essential and vital for it enhances product awareness in the market. This is because according to Angela Ya-Ping Chang (2017), promotion is a central and primary incentive that rapidly enhances the purchase of additional specific goods or services in a short period. This finding is however inconsistent with the finding of Odunlami & Akinruwa (2017) who argue that promotional activities are not necessary and in fact are wasteful. This is because the costs associated with promotion (particularly advertising) are high, leading to high prices, and by extension low product uptake my customers.

Table 4. 34: Regression Coefficients for Linear Relationship between Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.649	.341		10.698	.000
	Strategic Promotion Practices	.170	.084	.174	2.013	.046
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance						

The estimated regression equation from Table 4.34 above is given by:

$$Performance = 3.649 + 0.170 * \text{Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices}$$

The model revealed that Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices positively affects Tour Operator Performance, i.e. a unit mean index increase in Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices applied increases Tour Operator Performance by a positive mean index value of 0.170.

One tour manager from Tour Firm X said that…"*my tour firm's revenue streams have significantly improved since this firm implemented promotional practices*…". Another tour manager from Tour Firm W said that…"*my tour firm allocates substantial resources towards promotion, because it always pays off...*" A manager from Tour Firm C wondered…" *How else would our customers know of our product offering if we don't promote*…?".

4.9 Moderating Effect of ICT on the Relationship between STMPs and Tour Firm Performance

The moderating effect of ICT practices on the relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance was sought in this study. Descriptive, correlation, and linear regression analysis were applied in the study.

4.9.1 Descriptive Analysis of ICT Practices

The respondents from the selected Tour Operators were required to give their concurrence on statements that were used to describe ICT practices used by the firm using a scale that ranged between 1 and 5, where 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. The study findings showed to a large extent that Tour Operators used E-communication (E-Mail) as an ICT practices (84.0%) followed by E-Payment (61.8%).

Table 4. 35: Descriptive Analysis of ICT Practices

ICT Practices	Level of Extent				
	1	2	3	4	5
E- ticketing	9 (7.0%)	13 (10.2%)	17 (13.0%)	23 (17.6%)	66 (50.4%)
E- payment	2 (1.5%)	13 (9.9%)	8 (6.1%)	27 (20.6%)	81 (61.8%)
E-Marketing	0	0	15 (11.7%)	42 (32.8%)	71 (55.5%)
E- communication (E-Mail)	0	5 (3.8%)	4 (3.1%)	12 (9.2%)	110 (84.0%)
E-Booking (Mobile Phone (M)-Communication)	5 (3.8%)	7 (5.3%)	15 (11.5%)	42 (32.1%)	62 (47.3%)

Undoubtedly, consumers have embraced electronic mechanisms of communication and transacting business. In tandem with this finding, Tour Operators need to apply email communication and e-payments more aggressively. Email communication is more

accommodating and handy. The use of E-Communications comes with speed, portability and versatility. Furthermore, advances in technology have brought on board mobile phones embedded with smart internet. As a result, receiving and sending emails is no longer a preserve of the PC or laptops, because email communication is accessible at all times via cell phones. These findings agree with those of Dürscheid & Frehner (2013) that Email marketing, which has traditionally been considered 'old and outdated' is definitely back in fashion, with over 80% of business enterprises reporting that they presently use email marketing. According to Suthar (2014), electronic mail is one of the leading uses of the internet. Dürscheid & Frehner (2013) further alleges that email communication is still the most significant application because it is the most cross cutting for the average internet user.

More importantly, email communication is swift in transmission, making it a preferred medium to communicate with people, regardless of their location. And just like E-Communication, E-Payments has grown rapidly, providing an opportunity for firms to increase their sales over the internet. As such, tourists can pay bills/ travels expenses at their comfort. Accordingly, Fatonah et al. (2018) state that an efficient and dependable e-payment system facilitates seedy payouts, enhanced tracking, and accountable transactions. E-payments reduce transaction time, are cost saving and lead to enhanced trust between sellers and buyers. Further, E-payment are cheaper to undertake compared to paper-based payments. These findings also agree with Jameel et al., (2017) explanation that the application of e-commerce in business has led to substantial reduction in the costs of doing business.

The study also revealed that the least used ICT practice was E-Booking followed by Mobile Phone (M)-Communication. The implication of this finding is that the use of electronic booking and mobile phone communication by tourists was unpopular and therefore did not bring any significant contribution to the Tour Operators' revenue. In any case, tour operators are forced to spend lots of time taking phone calls from potential tourists looking to book, explaining the existing options to them, and managing their expectations and schedules.

Further, phone-based booking systems require a staff member to be always available to handle bookings. This renders the use of mobile phones burdensome, and often times, irritating. In addition, Millennials and Gen-Z do not like answering their phone calls, and will, in fact, avoid it at all costs. So if the only option left for them to make a holiday reservation is via the phone, chances are that they just won't bother. These study findings are contradicting the findings of Çınar (2020) who found that the usage of smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices has facilitated global tourism with enhanced flexibility, choices and the liberty to explore destinations now than ever before.

4.9.2 Correlation between ICT Practices and Tour Operator Performance

This section presents the analysis conducted to ascertain the correlation between ICT practices and Tour Operator Performance. The results are shown in Table 4.36 below. The findings indicate a statistically significant weak and positive relationship between ICT practices and Tour Operator Performance ($r\ (131) = 0.362, p = 0.000 < .05$).

Table 4. 36: Correlation between ICT Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Correlations			
		Tour Operator Performance	ICT Practices
Tour Operator Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.362**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	131	131
ICT Practices	Pearson Correlation	.362**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	131	131
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The implication of this finding is that the more the varieties of ICT platforms available to tourists, the wider the reach of the target market. This is because ICTs have significantly transformed the way tourism products are produced, packaged and delivered to the consumer. Januszewska, Jaremen, & Nawrocka (2015) estimate that world over, the application of ICT techniques in the tourism sector accounts for approximately 40% turnover, most of it associated with travel agencies' websites. In fact, Januszewska et al., (2015) posit that the application of ICT in tourism has enhanced efficiency.

Thanks to ICT, management processes are handled faster, while both the effectiveness and quality of financial procedures that are undertaken by an enterprise have been elevated. Further, according to Aramendia-Muneta & Ollo López. (2013), markets have transformed from local to global by use of ICTs platforms. In times of crisis, firms have embraced ICT practices for better prospects and higher chances of survival. Other firms have utilized ICT to advance their market position in the tourism industry whose number of competitors increases almost daily. In any case, Aramendia-Muneta & Ollo López (2013) propose the

use of ICT towards organizational competitiveness, arguing that it leads to a reduction in transaction and operational costs. Tichaawa, Mhlanga & Sicwebu (2017) support this finding by stating that ICTs in tourism industry have yielded improved productivity, enlarged markets and market share, a visibly competitive advantage and business performance, as well as a reduction in operational costs.

4.9.3. Tests for Assumptions of Linear Regression Analysis

Tests for Normality, Linearity, Heteroscedasticity, and Multicollinearity were performed to determine the assumption of linear regression analysis.

4.9.3.1 Test for Normality for ICT Variable

To ascertain if the ICT practices variable has a normal distribution, the study used Normal probability plot (Q-Q plot). Figure 4.15 below presents the Normal Q-Q plot for ICT practices variable which indicate that data is approximately normal.

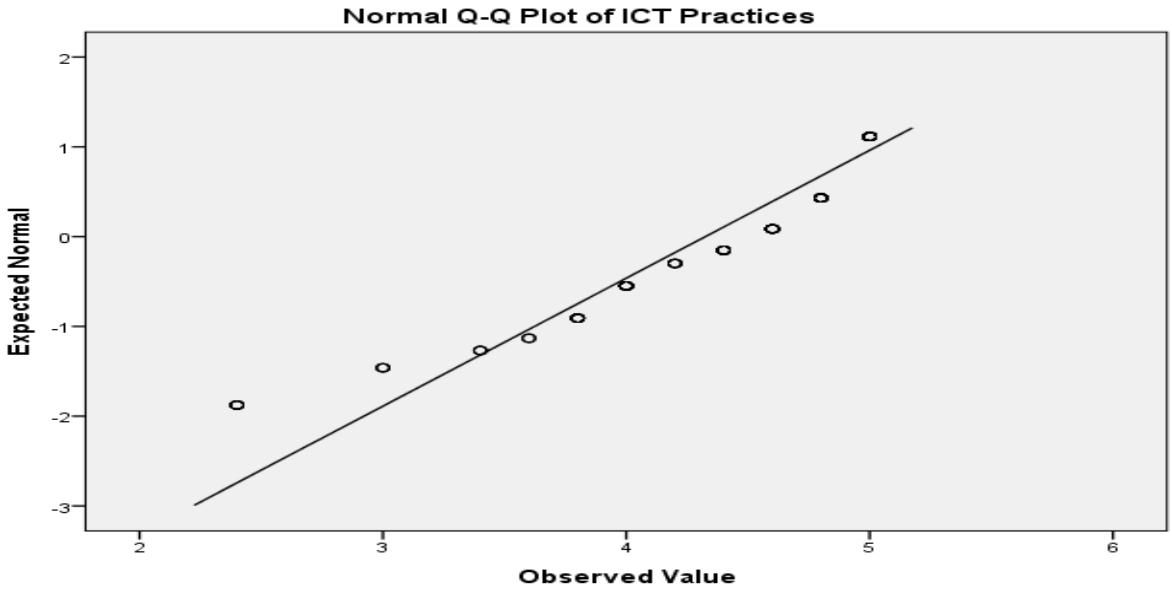

Figure 4. 15: Normal Q-Q Plot for ICT Practices Variable

4.9.3.2 Test for Linearity for ICT Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine whether the relationship between ICT practices variable and Tour Operator Performance variable is linear in nature, the study used deviation from linearity test. Table 4.37 presents the deviation from linearity test results which show no linear relationship between the variables of ICT practices and Tour Operator Performance $F(9,120) = 5.903, p = 0.000 < 0.05$.

Table 4. 37: Test for Linearity between ICT Practices and Tour Operator Performance

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tour Operator Performance * ICT Practices	Between Groups	(Combined)	18.077	10	1.808	7.924	.000
		Linearity	5.959	1	5.959	26.121	.000
		Deviation from Linearity	12.118	9	1.346	5.903	.000
	Within Groups		27.375	120	.228		
	Total		45.452	130			

4.9.3.3 Test for Multicollinearity for ICT Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the assumption of no multicollinearity for ICT practices variable, the study utilized the variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Table 4.38 presents the VIF values which indicated that there is no multicollinearity since the VIF value (VIF = 1) was between 1 and 10.

Table 4. 38: Tests for Multicollinearity for ICT Practices and Tour Operator Performance

Coefficients[a]								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.008	.303		9.928	.000		
	ICT Practices	.305	.069	.362	4.412	.000	1.000	1.000
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance								

4.9.3.4 Test for Heteroscedasticity for ICT Practices and Tour Operator Performance

To determine the assumption of heteroscedasticity, Heteroscedasticity Chart Scatterplot was used to investigate if in the data there was heteroscedasticity or not. The findings from Figure 4.16 shows that that the spots are diffused and do not form a clear specific pattern and hence it can be concluded that the there is no issue of heteroscedasticity.

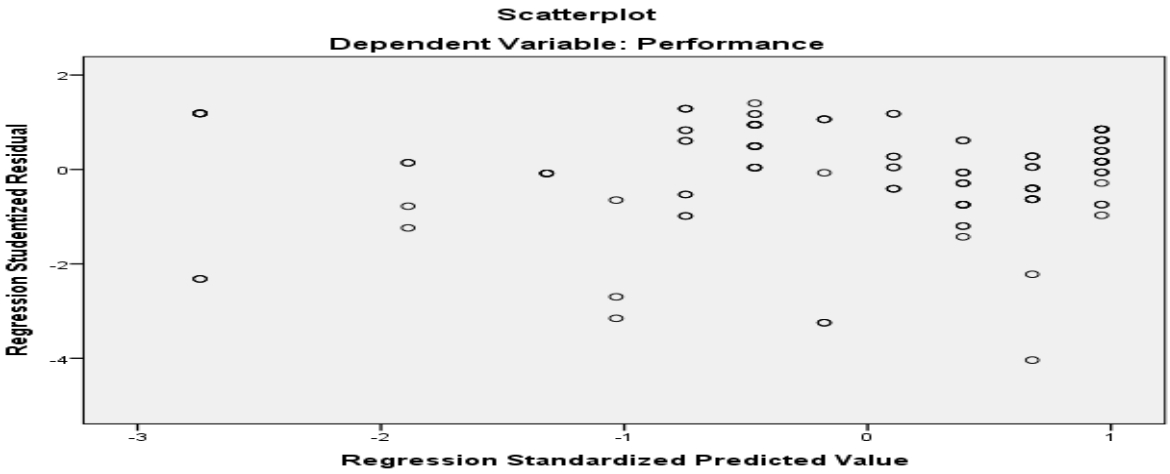

Figure 4. 16: Heteroscedasticity Chart Scatterplot for ICT Practices and Tour Operator Performance

4.9.4 Linear Regression Analysis Tests for Moderating Effect of ICT Practices on the Relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance

This study used a regression analysis to show the moderating effect of ICT practices on the relationship between the STMPs and Tour Operator Performance. This section presents linear regression findings in terms of regression model summary, regression ANOVA, and coefficients.

4.9.4.1 Regression Model Summary for Moderating Effect of ICT on the Relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance

Table 4.69 presents the model summary for the regression analysis of the combined effect of STMPs (Strategic Tourism Product Practices, Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices, Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices), ICT practices, and product of ICT practices and STMPs, on organizational Tour Operator Performance. The model summary findings indicate that the combined effect of the three independent variables explained 17.6% of the variability in the Tour Operator Performance (Adjusted - R^2 = .176). The other part of Tour Operator Performance is accounted for by other factors outside this study model.

Table 4. 39: Regression Model Summary for Moderating Effect of ICT on the Relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance

Model Summary[b]				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.441[a]	.195	.176	.53680
a. Predictors: (Constant), ICT Practices, STMPs, ICT Practices and STMPs				
b. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance				

4.9.4.2 Regression ANOVA for Moderating Effect of ICT on the Relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance

The regression ANOVA was used to assess the existence of a linear relationship between the combined independent variables (Product of STMPs and ICT, STMPs, ICT practices) and Tour Operator Performance. Table 4.40 indicates that there existed a statistical and significant linear relationship between the combined independent variables of STMPs and ICT practices and Tour Operator Performance (F (3,127) = 10.245, p=0.000 < .05).

Table 4. 40: Regression ANOVA for Moderating Effect of ICT on the Relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.856	3	2.952	10.245	.000[b]
	Residual	36.595	127	.288		
	Total	45.452	130			
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), ICT Practices, STMPs, ICT Practices and STMPs						

4.9.4.3 Regression Coefficient for Moderating Effect of ICT on the Relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance

The regression coefficients presented in Table 4.41 show the individual influence of each of the variables in the linear relationship between ICT practices as a moderating variable in the relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance. The findings in Table 4.41 show that the variable for multiplication of ICT practices and STMPs variables positively and significantly influenced Tour Operator Performance($\beta =$

$0.355, t\ (129)\ =\ 3.070, p = 0.003\ <\ .05)$, portraying a statistically significant positive moderating effect of ICT practices on the relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance.

The implication of this finding is that ICT practices facilitates the application of STMPs that in turn enhances Tour Operator Performance. For example, the contribution of social media in modern tourism cannot be underestimated. Further, the interaction between various stakeholders in the tourism industry has greatly been boosted via social media. Khan & Hossain (2018) agree to this assertion, and further explain the importance of social media as used by various stakeholders to share and exchange their opinions and experiences in the form of texts, photographs, videos, and music. Effectively, consumers, knowingly or otherwise, have promoted certain hotels or destinations when they share their positive and exhilarating experiences. Pesonen (2013) agrees that developments in ICT's have facilitated market segmentation, thereby facilitating positive business inventions. Furthermore, Pesonen (2013) argues that online systems have facilitated increased data gathering by firms, and the way this data is interpreted and applied determines the competitiveness of those companies. Masaki et al, (2021) expound this further and explain that ICT provides a platform for the new, widely experienced, or highly sophisticated and inquisitive traveler to satisfy his unquenchable needs and experiences by access the firms products and services from a click of a button. In a similar situation, the presence of ICT platforms enhances accessibility to a particular destination because bookings are completed in a blink of an eye, thereby cutting out the hustle and bustle of calls. The end result is a more pleasant, reliable and time saving undertaking. Additionally, a number of tourism business enterprises have applied ICT strategies to edge out competition.

Table 4. 41: Regression Coefficient for Moderating Effect of ICT on the Relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.322	1.885		4.415	.000
	ICT Practices and STMPs	.355	.116	2.244	3.070	.003
	STMPs	-1.371	.487	-1.055	-2.818	.006
	ICT Practices	-1.089	.454	-1.292	-2.397	.018
a. Dependent Variable: Tour Operator Performance						

One tour manager from Tour Firm X commented that "*the uptake of ICT practices in our firm has brought a tremendous revolution in the way we do things*…" He continued…" *because of the internet, we are in touch with our customers 24-7*…" Another tour manager from Tour Firm W commented that "*we are receiving more and more bookings via our social media pages...*". A manager from Tour Firm Y said that … "*because of technology, we chat with our customers in real time. Their queries and concerns are addressed promptly. Prices are shared online. Products are displayed online. Negotiations are conducted online.*" He wondered …" *How would we have survived without technology*…?"

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the key findings of the study. The chapter gives conclusions related to the study's general objective of establishing the influence of STMPs) on the performance of tour operator firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The chapter concludes by presenting recommendations and suggestions for additional research on the study subject.

5.2 Summary

Data was drawn from a sample size of 156 Tour Operators. A response rate of 84% was realized after 131 questionnaires were filled in and returned.

The findings of this study indicated that to a large extent Tour Operators considered place or (location) of attraction (67.9%) as the most strategic marketing practice influencing visitors' choice of destinations.

The results further indicated the absence of a statistically significant difference in Tour Operator Performance as reported in the number of years in operations [$F(3, 110)= 0.643$, $p = 0.589$]; the number of branches [$F(7, 123)= 1.625$, $p= 0.135$]; number of visitors [$F(4, 126)= 1.656$, $p= 0.164$]; and firm category [$F(4, 126)= 0.547$, $p= 0.701$].

The findings on profitability as a measure of performance indicated that to a large extent Tour Operators registered an increase in profitability as a result of product on offer (64.1%) and pricing of services at 64.1%. The findings on the number of visitors as a measure of

performance indicated that to a large extent Tour Operators registered an increase in number of visitors as a result of product on offer (58.8%) followed closely by place (or location) of attraction at 57.3%.

Descriptive statistics findings revealed that in terms of products practices, to a large extent, wildlife was the most sought tourism product at 89.3% followed by beach & marine at 71.0%. Correlation analysis findings further revealed a weak and positive relationship between Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance ,$r\ (131) = 0.029, p = 0.738 > 0.05$. However, the relationship was not statistically significant. Linear regression analysis model summary indicated that strategic product services explained 0.0841% of the variability in Tour Operator Performance, $R^2 = 0.000841$. Linear regression analysis findings further indicated the lack of a statistical and significant linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Tour Operator Performance $(F(1,129) = 0.112, p = 0.738 > 0.05)$. Strategic Tourism Product Practices had a positive influence on Tour Operator Performance $\beta = 0.032,\ t\ (129) = 0.335, p = 0.738 > 0.05$. However, the influence was not statistically significant.

Descriptive statistics findings revealed that to a large extent Tour Operators used transportation cost as a Strategic Tourism Pricing Practice (81.7%) followed by accommodation cost (69.5%). Correlation analysis indicated a weak and positive relationship between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance though not statistically significant, $r\ (131) = 0.035, p = 0.691 > 0.05$. Linear regression analysis model summary indicate that Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices explained 0.1225% of the variability in Tour Operator Performance $R^2 = 0.001225$. Linear

regression analysis findings further indicated the absence of a statistical and substantial linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices and Tour Operator Performance $F(1,89) = 0.747, p = 0.390 > 0.05$). Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices had a positive influence on Tour Operator Performance though not statistically significant $\beta = 0.029,\ t\ (1290) = 0.398, p = 0.390 > 0.05.$

Descriptive statistics findings revealed that to a large extent Tour Operators used accommodation and other facilities at the attraction as a Strategic Tourism Place Practices (74.0%) followed by security to and at the attraction (71.8%). Correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant weak and positive relationship between Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance though not significant, $r\ (131) = 0.203, p = 0.0.02 < 0.05$. Linear regression analysis model summary findings indicated that Strategic Tourism Place Practices explained 4.1% of the variability in Tour Operator Performance $R^2 = 0.041$. Linear regression analysis further disclosed a statistical and significant linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Tour Operator Performance $F(1,89) = 5.517, p = 0.020 > 0.05$). Strategic Tourism Place Practices statistically had a significant and positive influence on Tour Operator Performance $\beta = 0.161,\ t\ (129) = 2.349, p = 0.02 < 0.05.$

Descriptive statistics findings on the influence of Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices on the Tour Operator Performance indicated that to a large extent Tour Operators used recommendations e.g. from a friend or colleague as a Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices (67.2%) followed by advertising (45.0%). Correlation analysis findings revealed a statistically significant weak and positive relationship between Strategic Tourism

Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance $r\ (131) = 0.174, p = 0.046 < .05$. Linear regression analysis model summary findings indicate that Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices explained 3.0% of the variability in Tour Operator Performance $R^2 = 0.030$. Linear regression analysis further disclosed a statistical and significant linear relationship between Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices and Tour Operator Performance $F(1,129) = 4.051, p = 0.046 < 0.05)$. Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices had a statistically substantial positive influence on Tour Operator Performance $(\beta\ = 0.170,\ t\ (129) = 2.013, p\ =\ 0.046 < 0.05)$.

Regarding the moderating effect of ICT practices on the relationship between STMPs and Tour Operator Performance, descriptive statistics findings revealed that that to a large extent Tour Operators used E- communication (E-Mail) as an ICT practice (84.0%) followed by E-Payment (61.8%). Correlation analysis indicated the presence of a statistically significant weak and positive relationship between ICT practices and Tour Operator Performance $(r\ (131) = 0.362, p = 0.000 < .05)$. Linear regression analysis model summary findings indicate that the combined effect of the three independent variables explained 17.6% of the variability in the Tour Operator Performance (Adjusted - R^2 = .176). Linear regression analysis further indicated an existing statistical and significant linear relationship between the combined independent variables Product of STMPs and ICT, STMPs, ICT practices) and Tour Operator Performance (*F* (3,127) = 10.245, p=0.000 < .05). There was a positive and statistically significant moderating effect of ICT practices on the relationship between the STMPs and Tour Operator Performance (β = 0.355, *t* (129) = 3.070, *p=0.003* < .05).

5.3 Conclusions

The results of this study have shown that Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Strategic Tourism Pricing Practices had a positive influence on Tour Operator Performance, but the influence was not statistically significant. . Strategic Tourism Place Practices and Strategic Tourism Promotion Practices, on the other hand, exhibited a statistically significant positive influence on Tour Operator Performance. ICT practices had a statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between the STMPs and Tour Operator Performance.

In conclusion, the study findings indicate that strategic tourism product practices and strategic tourism pricing practices influence on tour operator firm performance was insignificant. Tour operators should therefore limit their dependence on strategic tourism product practices and strategic tourism pricing practices for they might not deliver the performance they expect. On the other hand, strategic tourism place practices and strategic tourism promotion practices influence on tour operator performance was significant and could therefore be applied to positively transform tour firm performance. Further, this study has established that application of ICT practices significantly improves the performance of tour firms because ICT facilitates the application of STMPs

5.4 Recommendations for Policy/Practice

In view of the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. To increase their revenues, tour operators should improve on their efforts to use strategic tourism place practices and strategic promotion practices. Over dependence on strategic tourism product practices and strategic tourism price

practices by Tour Operators should be minimized for they might not positively transform the revenue and customer growth in numbers.

2. ICT is a must have for Tour Operators that wish to enhance their growth in terms of revenue and customer base

5.5 Recommendations for Further Research

For further studies:

There is need to explore what other practices can blend in with strategic tourism promotion and strategic tourism place to strengthen Tour Operators' revenues and customer base.

Research should be done to identify a more suitable moderating factor that would facilitate Strategic Tourism Product Practices and Strategic Price Practices to enhance the revenue levels and facilitate growth in tourist numbers for Tour Operators.

5.6 Contribution to Knowledge

This study has contributed to the world of knowledge by addressing the research gaps as identified in Chapter 2. In addition, the study has demonstrated the continued vulnerability of Kenya's tourism industry and the importance of applying strategic interventions to handle this vulnerability. Specifically, the study has established how four strategic tourism marketing practices – product, price, place, and promotion, interplay with tour firm performance. The study has also enriched the world of knowledge by espousing the central role that ICT plays in moderating the interplay of the strategic tourism marketing practices and tour operator firm performance.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 6.1: Summary of Research Gaps

Researcher	Focus	Findings	Knowledge Gaps
Sarker, et al., (2012)	Investigating the Impact of Marketing Mix Elements on Tourists 'Satisfaction: An Empirical Study on East Lake	Six out of seven marketing mix elements were positively related to tourists' satisfaction but price imposed by the authority is not satisfactory to the visitors'.	Study failed to enumerate the indicators under each marketing mix variable Study was broadly focused on tourists satisfaction, but failed to highlight the specific role tour operators play towards this satisfaction Study findings may not be applicable in the Kenyan context
Ngarava and Mushunje (2019)	Marketing mix strategy determinants in pork-based agri-businesses: Experiences from Zimbabwe	Category of agri-business, distance the furthest buyer travelled, the merchandise handled and frequency of abattoir or processor buyers determined marketing mix strategy.	Ignored a critical element of the Marketing Mix – Promotion. Study was on Agri-business and not tourism
Brooksbank & Taylor, (2012)	Strategic marketing practices as drivers of successful business performance in British, Australian and	Embracing strategic marketing practices is a beneficial business practice that can help improve	Study was on golf clubs, a very small sub-sector of the tourism industry, thereby was limited in scope

	New Zealand golf clubs	long-term club viability.	
Phornlaphatrachakorn et al., (2020)	Strategic pricing and firm performance on the cosmetics SMEs in Thailand	Strategic pricing is a dynamic capability and a key factor of competitive advantage and performance	Only studied one variable in the Marketing Mix – Pricing
Myeni and Chili, (2024).	The Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies of Tour Operators in the Promotion of Small Tourism Enterprises in KwaZulu-Natal.	The findings suggested that having a broad product line may not necessarily lead to improved sales performance. Efficient customer service had a significant positive effect on sales performance.	Study was done on Small Tourism Enterprises in KwaZulu-Natal, a coastal South African province, and might not be applicable in the Kenyan context
Abdeta and Zewdie, (2021)	The Effects of Promotional Mix Strategies on Organizational Performance: Evidence from Systematic Review of Literature.	Promotion has impact on organizational performance, sales volume, market share and profitability of the firms.	Studied promotion - only one variable in the Marketing Mix Findings were based on organizational performance, and may not necessarily apply for tour firms
Government of Kenya, (2007) Government of Kenya (2013)	Kenya Vision 2030 National Tourism Strategy, 2013-2018	Poor, and often times, declining tourism performance Erratic tourism performance	Several interventions geared towards revitalizing tourism performance in Kenya have increasingly been criticized There's need to identify measures that can stabilize Kenya's

Government of Kenya 2018 Government of Kenya, (2020) Government of Kenya, (2021) Government of Kenya (2022)	Sector Plan for the Tourism Sector COVID - 19 and Travel and Tourism in Kenya Policy Brief. Economic Survey		tourism industry, and propel it towards continuous growth
Ndegwa et al (2020)	Marketing Mix Strategies and the Performance of Tour Firms in Kenya	Research findings found a positive and statistically significant influence of marketing mix strategies on organizational performance.	The study recommends that similar research be conducted based on other travel trade such as travel agencies, as the unit of analysis

Source: Author, (2019)

Appendix 6.2: Introduction Letter

Dear Respondent.

I'm a PhD student from the School of Business, Economics and Tourism, Kenyatta University. I am carrying out a research on "Influence of Strategic Tourism Marketing Practices on Tour Operator Firm Performance in Nairobi City County". You have been selected as one of the participants in the study. Please assist me in answering the following questions as accurately as possible. You are assured of absolute confidentiality of any information you give. The information will be used for academic purposes only.

Thank you.

Sign……..

Name: Michael Kisilu

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

School of Business, Economics and Tourism

Appendix 6.3: Study Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been designed to collect data and information from Tour Operator Firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The information will be used in examining **Influence of Strategic Marketing Practices on the Performance of Tour Operator Firms**. To achieve the research objectives, your participation in this study is considered crucial. The information collected from you will be treated with strict confidence, and shall be used for only the intended purposes. Please provide the appropriate response to all the questions contained in this questionnaire to the best of your knowledge.

a. <u>General information</u>

1. Please provide the name of your firm (Optional)
   _____
2. From the following, kindly tick the bracket which best describes your firm in terms of duration of operation in years:
   ☐ i. below 10
   ☐ ii. 11 - 20
   ☐ ii. 21 - 30
   ☐ v. Above 30
3. What title/position do you hold in the firm? _____
4. How many employees does your firm have? Number:
   _____
5. How many branches (offices) does your firm have? _____
6. Approximately how many visitors does your firm handle per annum?
   _____
7. From the following, tick a category which best describe your firm:

Category	**Tick**
A	
B	
C	
D	
E	

2. <u>Strategic Marketing Practices</u>

a) Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5, by ticking the appropriate box, the extent to which the following strategic marketing factors are used by your firm to influence the visitors' choices of destinations: Where 1=not at all, 2=very small extent, 3=small extent, 4=average and 5=a large extent

Considerations	**Level of Extent**				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Product on offer					
Price					
Place (or location) of attraction					
Promotion					
Any other (State)					

b) From the following items under each strategic marketing factor, please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5, by ticking the appropriate box, the extent to which they influence visitors' destination choices: Where 1=not at all, 2=very small extent, 3=small extent, 4=average and 5=a large extent.

Product	**Level of Extent**				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Beach & Marine					
Wildlife					
Museums & Monuments					
Business, Conventions and Conferencing					
Culture & Heritage					
Any other (State)					
Price					
Transportation costs					
Accommodation costs					
Park entrance charges					
Tour guiding costs					
Visa charges					
Any other (State)					
Place					
Location of attraction					
Transport infrastructure					
Accommodation and other facilities at the attraction					

Mode of transport to the attraction					
Security to and at the attraction					
Any other (State)					
Promotion					
Advertising					
Sales promotion					
Personal selling					
Exhibitions					
Recommendations e.g. from a friend or colleague					
Any other (State)					

3. ICT Practices

a) Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5, by ticking the appropriate box, the extent to which your firm has embraced ICT within the operations of the firm. Where 1=not all [ ], 2=very small extent [ ], 3=small extent [ ], 4=average [ ] and 5=a large extent [ ].

b) Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5, by ticking the appropriate box, the extent to which the following ICT tools are used by your firm. Where 1=not all, 2=very small extent, 3=small extent, 4=average and 5=a large extent.

ICT Practices	**Level of Extent**				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
E- ticketing					
E- payment					
E-Marketing					
E- communication					
E-Booking					
Any other (State)					

4. Strategic Marketing Practices and Tour Firm Operator Performance

In this study, firm Tour Operator Performance is measured in terms of **profitability** and **number of visitors**:

a) From the following statement on increase in **profitability** of your firm as a result of respective strategic marketing practices interventions, please choose by ticking the ones which best describe your firm:

The firm registered an increase in profitability as a result of the following strategic marketing practices by**:**	**Level of Extent**				
	0%	Between 1% & 4%	Between 5% & 12%	Between 13% & 20%	Above 20%
Product on offer					
Pricing of services					
Place (or location) of attraction					
Promotion					

b) From the following statement on increase in **number of visitors** as a result of respective strategic marketing practices interventions, please choose by ticking the ones which best describe your firm:

The firm registered an increase in number of visitors as a result of the following strategic marketing practices by**:**	**Level of Extent**				
	0%	Between 1% & 4%	Between 5% & 12%	Between 13% & 20%	Above 20%
Product on offer					
Pricing of services					
Place (or location) of attraction					
Promotion					

Your responses are well received. Thank you

Appendix 6.4: Interview Schedule for Stakeholder Organization

Preamble

I'd like to begin by thanking you for accepting to be interviewed for this study. I am a student at Kenyatta University pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Tourism Management. I am undertaking a study entitled 'Influence of Strategic Marketing Practices on the Performance of Tour Operator Firms in Nairobi City County'.

Your participation in this interview is highly appreciated.

1. **Background profile of stakeholder organization**

Please start by telling me something about your firm, including historical background, size, successes, challenges and any other information you deem necessary.

3. **Strategic Marketing Practices and Firm Tour Operator Performance**

In your opinion, how do the following strategic marketing practices affect the number of visitors and profitability, if at all?

- Price Practices
- Product Practices
- Place Practices
- Promotion Practices

4. **ICT Practices**

In your firm, what specific role(s), if any, does ICT play towards the following strategic marketing practices?

- Price Practices
- Product Practices
- Place Practices
- Promotion Practices

Follow with: How would the lack of ICT affect the value of these strategic marketing practices to your firm?

4. In your own opinion, which of the following strategic marketing practices has the greatest impact on your firm's number of visitors and/or profitability?

- Pricing Practices
- Product Practices
- Place Practices
- Promotion Practices

Follow with: Please rank these strategic marketing practices in order of importance

- Pricing Practices
- Product Practices
- Place Practices
- Promotion Practices

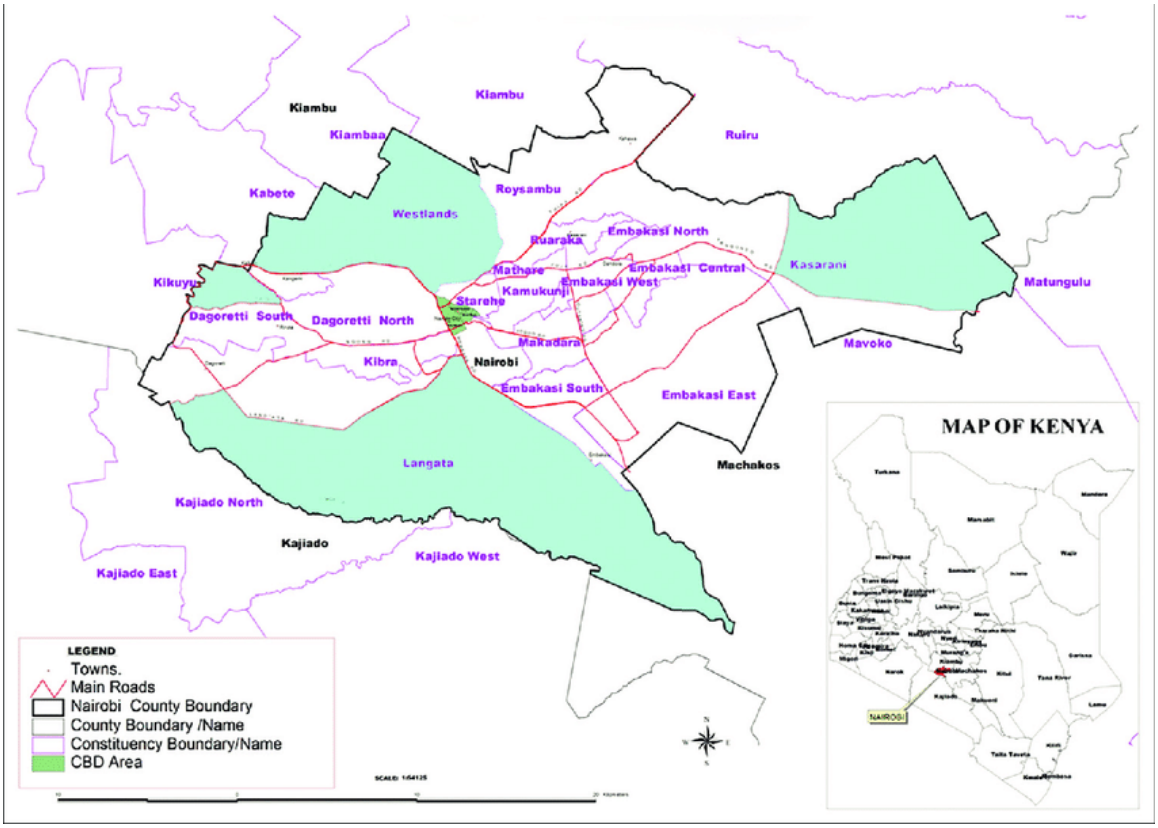
5. Closing remarks

a) Besides the strategic marketing practices listed above, would you suggest any other that you feel would affect the profitability and number of visitors in your firm?

b) Would you recommend any other relevant people with substantial experience or knowledge of marketing practices that I could possibly talk to?

Once again, thank you for you for accepting to participate in this interview

Appendix 6.5: Map of Nairobi City County



Appendix 6.6: KATO (Nairobi County) Members as at JUNE 2017

Category A

	NAME	CLASS	MEMBERSHIP NO.	YEAR JOINED
1	Abercrombie and Kent Kenya Ltd	A	1	1984
2	African Horizons Travel and Safaris Ltd	A	211	1998
3	African Quest Safaris Ltd	A	4	1994
4	Asilia Kenya Ltd	A	639	2015
5	Balloon Safaris	A	19	1990
6	Bunson Travel Service Ltd	A	484	2010
7	Charleston Tours & Travel	A	323	2005
8	Cheli & Peacock Ltd	A	31	1986
9	Bush & Beyond Ltd	A	28	1995
10	Cheli & Peacock Ltd	A	31	1986
11	Discover Kenya Safaris Ltd	A	43	1990
12	Enchanting Africa Ltd	A	383	2008
13	Express Travel Group(Hemingways Expeditions)	A	52	1978
14	Gamewatchers Safaris Ltd	A	64	1994
15	Hemingways Expeditions	A	52	1978
16	Kibo Slopes Safaris	A	253	2001
17	Liberty Africa Safaris	A	295	2003
18	Magical Skies Ltd	A	644	2015
19	Maniago Safaris	A	267	2002
20	Mini Cabs and Tours Co. Ltd	A	103	1984
21	Natural World Kenya Safaris	A	440	2010
22	Origins Safari	A	47	1983
23	Peak East Africa Ltd	A	70	1992
24	Private Safaris	A	121	1994
25	Rhino Safaris	A	127	1993
26	Somak Travel Ltd	A	143	1984
27	Southern Cross Safaris Limited	A	144	1984
28	Sunworld Safaris Ltd	A	208	1998
29	The Safari and Conservation Co. Ltd	A	576	2013
30	Transworld Safaris (K) Ltd.	A	166	1994
31	Twiga Car Hire & Tours Ltd	A	180	1984
32	Vintage Africa Ltd(Trading as Sense of Africa)	A	210	1998

33	Wild Trek Safaris Ltd	A	195	1998
34	Wildlife Safari (K) Ltd	A	194	1983

CATEGORY B

	NAME	CLASS	MEMBERSHIP NO.	YEAR JOINED
1	Big Five Tours & Safaris Ltd	B	22	1994
2	Classic Safaris Ltd	B	572	2013
3	Eco Adventures Ltd	B	477	2010
4	Muthaiga Travel Ltd	B	107	1996
5	Luca Safari Ltd.	B	357	2007
6	Robin Hurt Safaris	B	129	1984
7	Silverbird Travel Plus Ltd	B	424	2009

CATEGORY C

	NAME	CLASS	MEMBERSHIP NO.	YEAR JOINED
1	African Road Safaris	C	5	1994
2	Cosmic Safaris Ltd	C	520	2011
3	Destination Africa dmc Ltd	C	657	2016
4	Four by Four Safaris	C	58	1985
5	Ker & Downey Safari	C	90	1983
6	Ketty Tours Travel & Safaris Ltd	C	91	1988
7	Kimbla-Mantana Ltd	C	92	1984
8	Lindberg Holidays & Safaris Ltd	C	261	2002
9	Marble Travel Bureau	C	416	2009
10	Nature Expeditions Africa Ltd	C	15	1997
11	Real Africa Ltd	C	401	2008
12	Savage Wilderness Safaris	C	598	2013
13	Scenic Treasures Ltd	C	457	2010
14	Silver Africa Tours & Safaris Ltd	C	310	2004

Category D

	NAME	CLASS	MEMBERSHIP NO.	YEAR JOINED
1	Acacia Holidays	D	337	2005
2	Adventures Limited	D	363	2007
3	Afriqueen Adventure Travel Ltd	D	365	2007

4	Apollo Tours & Travel Ltd	D	12	1992
5	Archer's Tours & Travel Ltd	D	13	1978
6	Aslan Adventure Tours & Travel Ltd	D	604	2013
7	Aventure Safaris Ltd	D	673	2018
8	BCD Travel	D	291	2003
9	Bequem Travel Ltd	D	679	2018
10	Bill Winter Safaris	D	24	1995
11	Chameleon Tours	D	296	2000
12	Concorde Car Hire & Safaris Ltd	D	34	1984
13	Destination Kenya	D	36	1988
14	Diwaka Tours & Travel Ltd	D	429	2009
15	Domino Di Doriano	D	44	1998
16	Essenia Safari Experts Ltd	D	548	2012
17	Eyes on Africa Adventure Safaris Ltd	D	467	2010
18	Frate Tours Ltd	D	610	2013
19	Gameviewers Adventures	D	363	2007
20	Gametrackers (K) Ltd	D	63	1984
21	Good Hope Travel & Tours Ltd	D	589	2013
22	Helinas Safaris Ltd	D	511	2011
23	Highlight Travel/ BCD Travel	D	291	2003
24	Hirola Tours & Safaris	D	456	2010
25	Holiday Bazaar Ltd	D	255	2001
26	Jade Sea Journeys Ltd	D	74	1990
27	Jambo Travelhouse Ltd	D	404	2008
28	Kenia Tours & Safaris Ltd	D	85	1994
29	Kenya Tulia Safari Holiday Arcade	D	674	2018
30	Let's Go Travel	D	96	1983
31	Longren Tours & Travel	D	339	2006
32	Masikio Ltd	D	605	2013
33	Ngurumah Tours & Travel Ltd	D	663	2017
34	Onsafari (K) Ltd	D	259	2002
35	Oranje Exclusive Safaris Ltd	D	672	2018
36	Rickshaw Travels (Kenya) Ltd	D	250	2001
37	Safaris Unlimited (Africa) Ltd	D	135	1992
38	Sentinel Safaris Ltd	D	583	2013
39	Star Travel & Tours Ltd	D	149	1994
40	Tour Africa Safaris	D	163	1988
41	Travel Creations Ltd	D	168	1998
42	Travel 'n Style	D	169	1994
43	Travel Affairs Ltd	D	167	199

44	Travel Shoppe	D	359	2007
45	Tropical Ice Ltd	D	177	1984
46	Zoar Tours & Safaris Ltd	D	428	2009

Category E

	NAME	CLASS	MEMBERSHIP NO.	YEAR JOINED
1	Aardwolf Africa Adventure Safaris Ltd	E	599	2013
2	Absolute Adventure Africa Safaris Ltd	E	394	2008
3	Access Africa Safaris LTD	E	415	2009
4	Affable Tours & Safaris	E	448	2010
5	Africa Journeys Escapes	E	608	2013
6	Africa Safari Discovery Ltd	E	670	2018
7	Africa Untamed Wilderness Adventures Ltd	E	546	2012
8	Africa Visa Travel	E	422	2009
9	African Eco Safaris	E	436	2009
10	African Dew Tours & Travel Ltd	E	562	2012
11	African Eden Ltd	E	654	2016
12	African Hartebeest Safaris Ltd	E	682	2018
13	African Home Adventure Ltd	E	459	2010
14	African Safari Destinations Ltd	E	634	2014
15	African Sermon Safaris	E	391	2008
16	African Touch Safaris Ltd	E	570	2013
17	African Trotter Expeditions	E	658	2017
18	All Time Safaris Ltd	E	593	2013
19	Aloha Tours & Safaris	E	290	2003
20	Animal World Safaris Ltd	E	517	2011
21	Anste Tours & Travel	E	325	2005
22	Aramati Safaris	E	512	2011
23	As You Like It (Safaris)	E	225	2000
24	Asili Adventure Safaris	E	413	2008
25	Australken Tours & Travel	E	16	1998
26	Avenue Car Hire & Leasing Ltd	E	18	1996
27	Baboon Budget Safaris	E	668	2018
28	Benroso Safari	E	486	2011
29	Big Foot Adventures Ltd	E	665	2017
30	Bongo Asili Cultural Travels	E	628	2014
31	Bushbuck Adventures	E	29	1995
32	Bush Company Ltd	E	558	2012

33	Bushtroop Tours & Safaris	E	427	1999
34	Call of Africa Safaris	E	222	1999
35	Camp Kenya Ltd	E	578	2013
36	Campofrio Safaris Ltd	E	473	2010
37	Capture Kenya Expeditions Ltd	E	698	2019
38	Catalyst Travels Ltd	E	338	2006
39	Centurion Travel & Tours Ltd	E	433	2009
40	Cheetah Tours	E	439	2009
41	CKC Tours & Travel	E	294	2003
42	Conqueror Tours & Safaris	E	420	2009
43	Cottars Safaris Services Ltd	E	633	2014
44	Craters of Africa Safaris	E	676	2018
45	Cruzeiro Safaris Ltd	E	377	2008
46	Custom Safaris Ltd	E	388	2008
47	Designer Tours & Travel	E	322	2005
48	DK Grand Safaris	E	452	2010
49	Dream Kenya Safaris	E	491	2011
50	East Africa Adventure Tours & Safaris	E	515	2011
51	East African Eagle (K) Ltd	E	385	2008
52	East Africa Shuttles & Safaris	E	350	2008
53	Eastern Vacations Tours Ltd	E	466	2010
54	Easy Go Safaris Ltd	E	618	2014
55	Elida Tours & Safaris	E	476	2010
56	Elite Travel Services Ltd	E	423	2009
57	Expedition Kenya Safaris	E	647	2016
58	Explorer Kenya Tours & Travel	E	555	2012
59	Explore Safaris by Tufayn Ltd	E	664	2017
60	Fairways Solutions Tours & Travel Ltd	E	585	2013
61	Favour Tours & Safaris	E	501	2011
62	Fidex Car Hire Ltd	E	529	2011
63	Flight & Safaris International Ltd	E	499	2011
64	Flying Dove Tours & Travel Ltd	E	543	2012
65	Gat Safaris	E	300	2004
66	Glory Car Hire Tours & Safaris Ltd	E	362	2007
67	Go Africa Safaris and Travel	E	386	2008
68	Go Africa Travel Ltd	E	331	2005
69	Gofan Safaris	E	464	2010
70	Golden Holidays & Travel Company	E	534	2012
71	Holidee in Africa Consulting Ltd	E	516	2011

72	Ibis Tours & Travel Ltd	E	347	2006
73	Ideal Tour & Travel	E	434	2009
74	Impact Adventure Travel	E	552	2012
75	Imperial Air Services Ltd	E	246	2001
76	Incentive Travel Ltd	E	313	2005
77	Inclusive Holidays Africa	E	607	2013
78	Jet Travel (Trading as Raptim Humanitarian Travel)	E	83	1984
79	Jowamu Tours & Safaris	E	577	2013
80	Jungle Beach Safaris Ltd	E	553	2012
81	Kairi Tours & Safaris	E	494	2011
82	Karisia Limited	E	343	2006
83	Keigee Mountain Expeditions	E	557	2012
84	Kenan Travel & Tours	E	569	2012
85	Kenor Safaris Ltd	E	460	2010
86	Kent Tours & Travel Ltd	E	579	2013
87	King Simba Kenya Tours Ltd	E	659	2017
88	Kudu Travels Ltd	E	645	2015
89	Leboo Safari Tours Ltd	E	346	2006
90	Location Africa Films Ltd	E	641	2011
91	Lowis & Leakey Ltd	E	525	2011
92	Magical Spots Tours	E	542	2012
93	Mantra Booking Agencies Ltd	E	662	2017
94	Mara Gates Safaris Ltd	E	635	2014
95	Mathews Safaris	E	102	1986
96	Mighty Tours & Travel	E	492	2011
97	Mlilo Community Tours & Safaris	E	613	2014
98	Moto Gari Ltd	E	580	2013
99	Mtana Safaris Ltd	E	661	2017
100	Nahdy Travel & Tours	E	281	2003
101	Naked Wilderness	E	311	2004
102	Napenda Africa Safaris	E	458	2011
103	Nappet Tours & Travel	E	431	2009
104	Natures Wonderland Safaris	E	591	2013
105	New Kenya Travel And Tours Safaris Ltd	E	342	2006
106	Palbina Travel	E	361	2007
107	Papa Musili Safaris LTD	E	384	2008
108	Peaks & Safaris	E	417	2009
109	Penfam Tours & Travels	E	298	2003

110	Phoenix Safaris (K) Ltd	E	305	2004
111	Raydoll Tours & Travel	E	256	2001
112	Right Choice Tours & Safaris	E	584	2013
113	Safari Mania Ltd	E	616	2014
114	Safari Services East Africa ltd	E	631	2014
115	Safari Trails Ltd	E	400	2008
116	Saleva Africa Tours Ltd	E	409	2008
117	Savannah Adventure Ltd	E	596	2013
118	Selective Safaris	E	349	2006
119	Serene East Africa Safaris Ltd	E	565	2012
120	Shades of Africa Tours & Safaris	E	369	2007
121	Shanzu Kenya Super Safaris	E	587	2013
122	Shian Tours & Travel Ltd	E	513	2011
123	Silverbird Adventure Tours & Travel	E	340	2006
124	Silverbird Travel Plus Ltd	E	424	2009
125	Soin Africa Safaris	E	620	2014
126	Sir Michaels Tours & Safaris Ltd	E	677	2018
127	Skyview of Africa Ltd	E	389	2008
128	Skywide Tours & Travel Ltd	E	680	2018
129	Speedbird Travel & Safaris Ltd	E	299	2004
130	Sportsmen's Safaris & Tours	E	148	1992
131	Spot Kenya Safaris	E	462	2010
132	Spurwing Travel & Tours Ltd	E	329	2005
133	Steenbok Safaris & Car Hire	E	329	2005
134	Supreme Safaris Ltd	E	549	2012
135	Tano Safaris Ltd	E	495	2011
136	Tekko Tours & Travel	E	216	1999
137	Timeless Tours & Travels Ltd	E	554	2012
138	Tobs Kenya Golf Safaris	E	161	1991
139	The Exclusive Portolio Ltd	E	483	2010
140	The Scott Travel Group Ltd	E	592	2013
141	The Specialized Safari Co. Ltd	E	284	2003
142	Top Notch Luxury Safaris	E	524	2011
143	Trails of Africa Tours & Safaris	E	536	2012
144	Travel Care Ltd	E	173	1990
145	Travel Connections Ltd	E	318	2005
146	Travel Waves Ltd	E	444	2010
147	Travel Wild East Africa Ltd	E	308	2008
148	Trevaron Travel & Tours Ltd	E	522	2012
149	Umbato Safaris Ltd	E	669	2018
150	Visit Africa	E	189	1986

151	Waymark Safaris	E	406	2008
152	Wild Destinations Ltd	E	273	2002
153	Wild of Choices Tours & Travel Ltd	E	660	2017
154	Wild Times Ltd	E	351	2006
155	Wildebeest Travels Ltd	E	485	2011
156	Wildlife Sun Safaris	E	472	2010
157	Wild Vision Adventures Ltd	E	612	2013
158	Woni Safaris & Travel Ltd	E	336	2005
159	World Explorer Safaris Ltd	E	465	2010
160	WT Safaris Ltd	E	603	2013
161	Xcellent Wildlife Paradise - Holiday and Safaris	E	373	2007
162	Zaira Tours & Travel Co. Ltd	E	581	2013
163	Zakale Expeditions Ltd	E	652	2016

Appendix 6.7: NACOSTI Research Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 832088

Date of Issue: 07/November/2019

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Mr.. Michael Kizilu of Kenyatta University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC MARKETING PRACTICES ON THE PERFORMANCE OF TOUR OPERATOR FIRMS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA for the period ending : 07/November/2020.

License No: NACOSTI/P/19/2505

832088

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

Appendix 6.8: Approval of Research Proposal

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 020-8704150

Internal Memo

FROM: Dean, Graduate School **DATE:** 30th September, 2019

TO: Mr. Michael M. Kisilu
C/o Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management

REF: T130/29580/2014

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

We acknowledge receipt of your Research Proposal after fulfilling recommendations raised by the Graduate School Board of 7th August, 2019.

You may now proceed with your Data collection, subject to clearance with the Director General, National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation.

As you embark on your data collection, please note that you will be required to submit to Graduate School completed Supervision Tracking Forms per semester. The form has been developed to replace the Progress Report Forms. The Supervision Tracking Forms are available at the University's Website under Graduate School webpage downloads.

Thank you

HARRIET ISABOKE
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

CC. Chairman, Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management

Supervisors:

1. Dr. Shem Maingi
   C/o Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management
   Kenyatta University

2. Dr. Vincent Maranga
   C/o Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management
   Kenyatta University

HI/eww

Appendix 6.9: Approval of Research Authorization

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 020-8704150

Our Ref: T130/29580/2014 **DATE:** 30th September, 2019

Director General,
National Commission for Science, Technology
and Innovation
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FOR MR. MICHAEL M. KISILU – REG. NO. T130/29580/2014

I write to introduce Mr. Michael M. Kisilu who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. He is registered for M.Sc. degree programme in the **Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management.**

Mr. Kisilu intends to conduct research for a Ph.D. thesis Proposal entitled, **"Influence of Strategic Marketing Practices on the Performance of Tour Operator Firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya."**

Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

PROF. ELISHIBA KIMANI
DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

HN/ww