

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of strategic drivers on performance of cultural heritage tourism in Western Kenya. The research objectives were: to analyze the influence of strategic competitive positioning, strategic alliance, core resources and marketing strategies on performance of cultural Heritage Tourism in Western Kenya. The study was informed by Resource based view theory, Porter's theory of Competitive advantage and Place branding theory. The study adopted quantitative and qualitative approach with research design being cross-sectional and correlational survey design. The population of the study consisted of 6 selected classified sites in Western Kenya, out of which classified heritage sites a sample size of 367 were surveyed. The selected heritage sites were: Kit Mikayi, Crying Stone, Sikele Sia Mulia, Thimlich Ohinga, Obama Kogelo Cultural Heritage and Kisumu Museum. The heritage sites were purposively sampled while respondents from household heads were selected using stratified random sampling and the key informants were selected using saturated sampling. Validity was tested by making clear statements and by use of expert judgement. Reliability of the instruments was ascertained through a pilot study of two sites that did not participate in the final study. Internal consistency was obtained by computing Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which was valued at 0.777. Normality of data was tested by use of Kolmogorov Smirnov (K-S) test. Multicollinearity was also tested and all study variables were found to be free from any multicollinearity. Primary data was collected by use of Questionnaires, Focus group discussions guide and Interview schedule. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, percentages, charts and tables and inferential statistical techniques such as Pearson product-moment of correlation, ANOVA and multiple regression analysis. Hypothesis was tested at 95% confidence level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). A two tailed test was carried out to test the significance of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic framework. The findings of the present study indicated all strategic drivers had a significant influence on cultural heritage performance in Western Kenya. The overall results indicated that there was a statistically significant linear relationship between strategic competitive positioning, strategic alliance and cultural heritage tourism performance at ( $\beta_0 = 0.138$ ) and ( $\beta=0.143$ ) respectively. There was a statistically significant moderate relationship between core resources, marketing strategies and cultural heritage tourism performance at ( $\beta_0 = 0.401$ ) and ( $\beta=0.225$ ) respectively. The study concluded that strategic competitive positioning through differentiation of cultural heritage resources, focus on particular tourists and price positioning strategy enhanced performance. Strategic alliance enhanced performance even though there were inadequate collaborative strategic alliance initiatives revealed among cultural heritage tourism stakeholders. Core resources driver had the highest significance on performance followed by marketing strategies. The study recommends differentiation of core resources within the sites, merging of department of Culture and Heritage in all County governments in Kenya to enhance synergy in policy formulation and implementation; participation of local community in all decision making processes; upgrading and rebranding tangible core resources and finally the Kenya Tourism Board should develop affirmative action on marketing of cultural heritage sites. The study adds to the available literature on cultural heritage tourism and performance. The study assists policy makers in coming up with policies on improving cultural heritage tourism performance. The study recommends further studies to establish an optimum level at which the strategic drivers' should be employed and finally recommends adoption of strategic drivers by all stakeholders in cultural heritage tourism to improve significance socio economic performance.