https://doi.org/10.55343/CogSust.24

Analysis of domestic tourists' demographic and travel characteristics in Kenya

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Abstract
Demographic and travel characteristics are significant in forming the basis for market segmentation, positioning, and branding initiatives for a destination. This study sought to examine demographic and travel characteristics exhibited by domestic tourists and their effects on purchase decisions and travel choices. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. A simple random sampling technique was used to select domestic tourists, while data was collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive and Chi-square techniques. Four hundred questionnaires were distributed, out of which 371 were returned, representing a 73.3% rate. The findings indicated that the duration of the current visit is dependent on annual income ($\chi^2 = 23.055$, $p = 0.027$), the number of times visited is dependent on age ($\chi^2 = 30.579$, $p = 0.015$), while travel arrangement is dependent on age ($\chi^2 = 9.986$, $p = 0.041$). The mode of transport depends on age ($\chi^2 = 52.645$, $p = 0.012$), and on education ($\chi^2 = 44.734$, $p = 0.006$). The study recommends focusing on identifying and prioritising preferred local destinations and attractions for the domestic tourist market depending on demographic and travel characteristics to increase travel propensity for the sustainability of the industry.

Keywords:
Demographic characteristics, travel characteristics, domestic tourists

1. Introduction

Globally, domestic tourism has been noted as the main driving force in the travel and tourism sector in major economies, accounting for 73% in 2017 and 71.2% in 2018 (UNWTO, 2020). An estimated nine billion domestic tourist trips (overnight visitors) were recorded around the world in 2018, which is well over 50% in Asia and the Pacific. Worldwide, domestic tourism is over six times bigger than international tourism (1.4 billion international arrivals in 2018) measured in the number of tourist trips (UNWTO, 2020). Just as on the global scene, the tourism sector in Kenya has experienced impressive and sustained growth since 2015, reaching an all-time high of 2.05 million international tourist arrivals in 2019 (GOK, 2020). However, with the outbreak of Covid-19 occasioning travel restrictions and cancellation of flights worldwide, Kenya's travel and tourism industry has experienced challenges unknown in recent history (Szabó, Csete, Pálvölgyi, 2018). As a result of travel restrictions and cancelation of flights, there was a sharp decline of international tourist arrivals at 870,465 in 2021, as compared to 567,848 in 2020, and 2.05 million in 2019 (MoTW, 2021a; MoTW, 2021b). The deteriorating performance is unpredictable and might continue in the long-run due to current unprecedented issues in the international market.

As the country seeks ways of stabilising the industry, there has been consensus that the recovery of Kenya's tourism during and after the Covid era would be supported by the domestic market. The market segment has been pivotal to Kenya's tourism for some time now. For instance, between 2015 and 2018, domestic tourism accounted for more than 50% of the total bed occupancy (MoTW, 2021a; MoTW, 2021b). Furthermore, between the period of 2014 to 2018, the number of domestic tourists' bed-nights increased from 2,948,000 to 4,559,000 (MoTW, 2021a; MoTW, 2021b). Similarly, the domestic market in 2021 recorded 1,089,554, while 747,374 in 2020 and 1,675,063 visitors in 2019. Domestic bed nights grew by 101.3% between 2020 and 2021, while international bed nights grew only by 0.05% (MoTW, 2021a; MoTW, 2021b).

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These bed nights' recovery trends are an indication that the hospitality sector in Kenya was supported by domestic travel in 2021, and this ought to continue if appropriate strategies are deployed. This is in line with the forecast given by UNWTO in September 2020, according to which the recovery of destinations will be driven by domestic market and various testimonials from sector players attest to this (MoTW, 2021a; MoTW, 2021b). Invariably, with the diverse attractions spread across the country, Kenya now has an opportunity to build on domestic tourism as the next frontier.

With all these evidences, it is clear that domestic tourism in Kenya has potential to grow exponentially. However, it is hard to develop the industry when the travel needs and experiences of this specific market are scantly understood in comparison with international market. This implies that for the prerequisite tourist product and services to be developed, a thorough market survey ought to be carried out periodically due to the sector's dynamics. This would become the basis of tailoring suitable products and services for this specific market thereby spurring demand. This is only possible when the intricate details of the market as expressed by demographic and travel characteristics are known. Further, it would also be the basis of segmenting the market and helping unlock the debate on how best to capture the needs of the domestic tourism market from an informed position.

2. Literature Review - An overview of domestic tourists' demographic and travel characteristics

To understand the travel needs and experiences of domestic tourists visiting the Kenyan coast, demographic and travel characteristics were explored. The following demographic characteristics were selected for this study: gender, marital status, personal income, age, and level of education. Additionally, travel characteristics included travel frequency, purpose of visit, duration of visit, preferred mode of travel arrangement, mode(s) of transport, most recent visit, and source of travel information. Both demographic and travel characteristics are pivotal in understanding the tourism market and predicting travel behaviour patterns (Kara and Mkwizu, 2020). The above demographic factors are applicable both when providing a description of tourism market and in forecasting patterns of travel behaviour (Kara and Mkwizu, 2020).

The travel behaviour of tourists is influenced by socio-demographic attributes, such as age, gender, education, income, and occupation, which significantly influences choices and behaviours of tourists (Otoo et al., 2016). Gender is one of the factors influencing the demand for travel, since travel patterns vary between men and women based on their motivations, and at the same time men engage more in tourism than women (Aziz et al., 2018). The aspects of costs, commitments to family chores and time limit women's active participation in travel (Aziz et al., 2018). As a result, women participate more in dining, shopping, and cultural activities than outdoor activities. On the other hand, men are highly likely to engage in activities of outdoor adventure. Men engage in travel activities for business, while women engage in travel activities to visit their friends, relatives and prefer short distance travel as compared to men.

Ma et al. (2018) discussed the importance of age in tourism decisions by noting that age positively influences desire for individuals to relax and explore nature. According to them, the likelihood that an individual will engage in wildlife tourism varies with age, probability being higher among younger people and decreasing as the individual gets older. Further, age determines the time available for leisure, travel freedom, disposable income, health, fitness, and mobility of the tourist. As an individual gets older, preferences and needs changes according to Kifworo et al. (2020), who view education as a way in which an individual's perspectives are broadened, with experiences of diverse cultures and curiosity being established. Education is a primary pointer of status and tastes in the society, with individuals possessing the same education levels having the same tastes, preferences, values, and perceptions. Therefore, tourists of the same education level tend to be attracted to the same destinations and products. Education widens horizons, increases awareness level, and arouses travel desire thus increasing probability of tourism participation.

Income also determines tourism demand (Kihima, 2015). For instance, people of African origin view tourism as a costly activity that requires income that remains after routine expenses have been met. Notably, various levels of income tend to have different lifestyles, behaviors and values that affect their tourism participation (Melo, 2018). For example, participation in tourism was higher in income groups that are high and for professionals, a trend that signifies increase in disposable income, which increases tourism participation. Manono and Rotich (2013) demonstrated that park tourism highly depended on income.

In contrast, it is also acknowledged that income does not always influence travel (Gardiner et al., 2014). Their study demonstrated that despite a decrease in the cost of domestic tourism in Australia, this did not translate into an increase in domestic tourism. This is an implication that other significant factors determine domestic tourism demand apart from income.

Kifworo et al., (2020) discussed the influence of marital status on travel behaviour and choices of a destination. Individual's priorities, decision-making, disposable income, and preferences differ on marital status. A young couple

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with young children has different preferences as compared to a childless or a retired couple. Lin et al. (2020) noted that family obligations due to marriage are a limitation to tourism participation; single persons are more likely to spend any income that is disposable on themselves through tourism participation.

In conclusion, domestic tourism has been considered a vital market in cushioning the tourism industry against unprecedented issues affecting the international market (MoTW, 2021a; MoTW, 2021b). There is a dire need to develop domestic tourism market in Kenya to become an enduring foundation of demand for facilities and services (GOK, 2020; UNWTO, 2021). It is hard to develop domestic tourism market sustainably without a deep understanding of processes, information being scarce on the topic. Thus there is a need to have a clear understanding of domestic tourists' characteristics, including demographic and trip attributes. Overall, to reveal the aspects of demographic and travel characteristics is imperative, since it helps in understanding tourists' behaviour. Such a survey could help answer the questions, "why domestic tourists travel and what their travel experiences are". This study aims to examine travel and demographic characteristics of domestic tourists in Kenya in order to provide essential information on domestic tourists based on their travel needs, behaviour and experiences.

The study hypothesis was:

H_0: There exist no relationship between demographic and travel characteristics of domestic tourists.

3. Methodology

A descriptive research design was adopted, since it involves an in-depth explanation of a situation (Siedlecki, 2020). A survey of attractions along Kenyan Coast, comprising North and South Coast was carried out, as 42.1% of tourists visit those sites (GOK, 2020). Simple random sampling technique was applied, while structured questionnaires were deployed to collect data from 400 respondents of tourists visiting the attractions. The questionnaires featured demographic characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, income, and level of education, while travel characteristics surveyed included most recent visit, frequency of visit, purpose of visit, tourism activities, duration of visit, mode of travel arrangement, modes of transport, and source of information. Both descriptive (means and frequencies) and inferential analysis (chi-square tests) were used to analyse data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographic information

The demographic information about respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic information

Demographic information		*N*	%
Gender	Male	223	60.1%
	Female	148	39.9%
Marital status	Single	136	36.7%
	Married	211	56.9%
	Other (separated/divorced)	24	6.5%
Monthly personal income (Kshs.)	100,000 and below	153	41.2%
	100,001–200,000	57	15.4%
	200,001–300,000	90	24.3%
	300,001–400,000	39	10.5%
	Above 400,000	32	8.6%
Age	18-30 years	129	34.8%
	31 to 40 years	161	43.4%
	41 to 50 years	60	16.2%
	Above 50years	21	5.7%
Level of education	Primary school	5	1.3%
	Secondary school	26	7.0%
	College/technical institute	115	31.0%
	University	225	60.6%

Source: Research Data (2020)

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The majority of the respondents were male (60.1% – 223), while female respondents were much fewer (39.9% – 148). Further studies prove that gender influences demand for tourism with men engaging more in tourism than women due to family commitments and time limits (Aziz et al., 2018). Out of the total respondents, 56.9% (211) were married, 36.7% (136) were single, while 6.5% (24) were in other categories of marital status (separated/divorced). However, single persons are likely to engage in tourism activities since they have no family obligations opposed to married couples (Lin et al., 2020). The Kenyan coast is a progressive and competitive destination due to the uniqueness of its touristic attractions. As for financial status, the majority of respondents had a monthly income level not surpassing Ksh. 100,000, which agrees with a previous domestic survey which indicated that most domestic tourists have a monthly income not exceeding Ksh. 80,000. Strong domestic tourism is driven by a growing sizeable middle-class population and an increase in spending power among domestic consumers. With over 50% of the global population now categorised as “middle class”, increased people can afford to travel. People earning between Ksh.50, 000 and Ksh.99, 999 have been increasing from 2014 to 2017. Notably, the middle class in Kenya consists of people earning more than Ksh.50, 000 per month represented by 1,020,681 equivalent to 36.9% of the total employed population in the country. This segment of the population comprises potential domestic tourists in the country (MoTW, 2018). The fact that the majority of domestic tourists were those at the lower income bracket of a monthly income of Ksh. 100,000 and below does not contrast a previous study by Gardner et al. (2014), who noted that income is not always a significant factor in tourism and that other factors were more significant in determining travel decisions.

The need to promote domestic tourism even in times of economic downturn and during the aftermath of a crisis or pandemic such as Covid-19 is paramount, since it “fills the void” left by international tourists. This is because domestic tourists are more likely to be fully aware of the real situation in contrast to those outside the country (Beirman, 2016). Subsequently, massive campaigns create awareness and educate the locals about the importance of tourism, and new features added to the tourism industry within their vicinity. This eventually induces a desire among the locals to visit places with the most fascinating features (Beirman, 2016). Therefore, income level is crucial in the final purchase of tourism products and services, since it is a major determinant of tourism demand and the subsequent consumption patterns in each destination.

The results indicate a potential of a vibrant youth market, which is more adventurous, forming a lucrative niche market in Kenya. This is a robust market segment and ‘experiential’ in nature when it comes to consumption of tourism products and services since it is psychocentric hence more adventurous. The findings also agree with Ma et al. (2018), who noted that age influences individuals’ tourism desires with a high likelihood of the young engaging in wildlife tourism more than the older ones. Nature-based and wildlife tourism forms a major component of the sampled respondents appeal. Further, the youth market in Kenya is considered as one of the largest segments of tourism, having potential for future growth, as it represents a significant market in terms of size and growth rate (Njagi et al., 2017). Young tourists are often trendsetters who establish and enhance the attractiveness of tourist destinations (Njagi et al., 2017). Thus, the youth market is significant in supporting growth and development of domestic tourism in Kenya.

Concerning educational levels, the results imply that education plays a pivotal role in enhancing tourism demand, since it is a basis of creating awareness and increasing knowledge regarding existing tourism products and services on offer (Kihima, 2015). A previous study indicated that the majority of domestic tourists (81%) visiting Nairobi national park had college or university level of education (Mutinda et al., 2012). This explains the notion that people who are educated are more liberal due to a high level of exposure and awareness, hence they are prime consumers of existing tourists’ products and services.

In conclusion, based on this survey, age, income, and education were important predictors of a person’s desire to travel like the results of Jensen (Jensen, 2011). He continued to assert that travelers with higher educational background and more disposable income were more likely to travel away from their native home in search for relaxation. Seeking knowledge and novelty were more important push motives among travelers with a higher educational level. Thus, demographic factors are significant in forming basis for market segmentation, positioning, and branding initiatives in a destination.

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4.2. Travel Characteristics

Table 2 shows the results of our survey concerning the travel characteristics.

Table 2: Travel characteristics of the Respondents

Travel information		*N*	%
Specify your most recent visit to Kenyan coast	Less than one year ago	234	63.1%
	Two years ago	63	17.0%
	Three years ago	21	5.7%
	More than three years ago	53	14.3%
Overall, how many times have you visited the Kenyan coast based on your most recent visit?	Once	51	13.7%
	Twice	56	15.1%
	Thrice	57	15.4%
	Four times	36	9.7%
	Five times and above	171	46.1%
Indicate by ticking appropriately the purpose of your current visit to the Kenyan Coast.	Holiday/leisure	282	76.0%
	Visiting friends and relatives	53	14.3%
	Business purposes	17	4.6%
	Job related assignments	19	5.1%
Specify whether you have previously visited Kenyan coast for tourism related activities such as vacation or holiday	Yes	307	82.7%
	No	64	17.3%
Specify the duration of the current visit to the Kenyan Coast	A day trip	25	6.7%
	Two days	33	8.9%
	Three days	88	23.7%
	Four and above days	225	60.6%
Specify the preferred mode of travel arrangement	Free-Independent Travel (FIT)	296	79.8%
	Package tours	75	20.2%
Indicate the mode(s) of transport used during this visit	Air	43	11.6%
	Private car	117	31.5%
	Train –SGR	64	17.3%
	Public bus	110	29.6%
	KWS bus	4	1.1%
	Motorcycle	8	2.2%
	Taxi	14	3.8%
	Bicycle	2	0.5%
	Others	9	2.4%

Travel information		Count	Column N %
Specify how you obtain information for your travel/trip	Internet	146	39.4%
	TV/Radio	7	1.9%
	Social Media platforms	61	16.4%
	Friends or relatives	109	29.4%
	Travel/Tour agencies	28	7.5%

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	Travel guide/operators	10	2.7%
	Brochure/Newspaper/Magazines	4	1.1%
	Others	6	1.6%

Source: Research Data (2020)

Findings from Table 2 indicates, 63.1% (234) had visited the Kenyan coast less than one year before the time of data collection. 46.1% (171) had visited for five times and above while only 13.7% (51) had just visited once. Overall, the findings show that 82.7% (307) of the respondents had previously visited the Kenyan coast as domestic tourists, while 17.3% (64) had not previously visited the Kenyan coast. The main reason for the current visit was holiday or leisure as disclosed by 76.0% (282), followed by visiting friends and relatives 14.3% (53), business purposes 4.6% (17), and job-related assignments 5.1% (19). This main reason for travel being leisure also concurs with reasons cited by international tourists at 73.9%. As studies prove, domestic tourism has shifted from sightseeing destinations to natural landscapes, national parks, and from games reserves to newly developed leisure areas. Domestic tourists tend to be psychocentric as evidenced by their search for symbols of home, like food and drinks rather than being adventurous (Nzioka et al., 2014). It is important to note that other forms of leisure are emerging such as sports tourism, eco-tourism, recreational, and educational tourism. All these emerging leisure forms could be harnessed to expand the domestic tourists' product range available in Kenya.

79.8% (296) of domestic tourists preferred Free-Independent Travel (FIT) mode, while group tour/package recorded 20.2% (75). From these findings, it is evident that the majority of domestic tourists preferred free independent travel as compared to package tours. This is a common approach among domestic tourists who prefer to visit destinations as individuals or with immediate family members or friends, unlike international travelers who often prefer group tours. The difference is explained by the nature of the market segment. For instance, the majority of domestic tourists are familiar with the local attractions unlike the international tourists. Hence, the latter would prefer travelling in groups and cut down the holiday costs. However, in terms of associations, domestic tourists tend to be socially oriented rather than outdoor activity based, desiring experiences in a group.

In terms of length of stay, 60.6% (225) of the respondents were in the category of four days and above, while only 6.7% (25) had a one-day stay. Since on average the length of stay among domestic tourists in Kenyan coast was above two days, this is a pointer of a growing preference for short-holiday breaks mostly taken over the weekend or during off days or annual leave from one's occupation. Such propositions are ideal platforms for tour operators and other holiday organisers to tailor holiday packages to suit such local clientele, matching their travel needs and expectations.

When compared with the international tourists, whose average number of stay is usually 9–11 days, this is an indication that domestic market is unique with diverse travel needs and expectations coupled with varying experiences. However, this may also be an indicator toward producing strategies to address such scenarios. For instance, day visits accounts for 6.7% of trips, implying excursions are still less exploited in this segment.

Regarding the mode of transport, 31.5% (117) of the respondents used private cars; 29.6% (110) used public bus to travel from their place of residence. 17.3% (64) used the newly constructed Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) train, which has played a significant role in enhancing accessibility since its opening in 2017. The SGR has continued to transform travel between Mombasa and Nairobi, making them more accessible than It currently takes approximately 4.5 hours to travel between these two destinations, while using public transport buses, the same trip often takes about 10 hours. The findings also proved that Nairobi, as the capital city of Kenya, accounts for 28.3% of domestic tourists visiting the Kenyan coast. Domestic tourism has been encouraged by convenient and cost friendly transport options such as the SGR and chartered travel services through road and air (MoTW, 2018). The aspect of infusing the SGR within the tourism system in Kenya cannot be ignored, and it is expected to transform tourist flow due to ease in accessing specific destinations within these cities.

Overall, accessibility to a destination is an integral element of tourism products, since tourism and transportation are inextricably linked. As global travel and tourism increases, additional demands on the transportation sector will continue (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2012). The private automobile dominates for shorter trips and is the most popular means of travel for most domestic journeys. Therefore, it implies that accessibility to destination is a core element of tourism product, as well as other alternate cheaper means of transport, such as low-cost carriers. A destination may be

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popular, but its accessibility should equally be good. Therefore, the aspect of infusing more transport alternatives in the industry is imperative.

Internet was the main source of information for travel as disclosed by 39.4% (146) of the respondents, followed by friends and relatives at 29.4% (109) while travel agencies, tour operators' and brochures/newspaper were less popular sources for 7.5% (28), 2.7% (10), and 1.1% (4), respectively. Overall, internet search engines and social media ranked as the main sources of information for 55.8% (207). This phenomenon is well explained by the type of market dominated by the youth (age group18–40, 78.2%). Besides the Internet, friends and relatives are integral sources of information, especially through social media communication. The significance of emerging information and communication technology, and the resultant increase in Internet usage because of enhanced visibility and online activism can be noted.

Generation Y and Generation Z are the creators and early adopters of contemporary trends, who are used to innovative technologies. They are optimistic, non-linear thinkers, innovative in problem solving (Dwyer et al., 2009). They tend to share their holiday experience on social media in real time, while they write reviews with a time lag. They are addicted to the Internet and mobile devices in all stages of traveling, i.e., in information browsing, booking, communicating and content sharing (photographs and videos) on social media during and after their journeys (Starčević and Konjikušić, 2018). They rely on diverse travel apps such as TripAdvisor™, Yelp™, Expedia™, Google Maps™, and Hotels.com.™ Millennials have caused the greatest shift in tourist marketing, because they grew up with digital technologies, which transformed the specificities of demand and supply on the tourist market (Bu et al., 2021).

With increased Internet usage, marketing of tourist products has also changed due to digital marketing growth. There are also innovations connected to Internet usage, such as tourist destinations aggressively marketing themselves as holiday sites during off-peak seasons (Oxford Business Group, 2017). Tourists have been posting online ratings and online reviews to narrate, praise, criticise or refer to their travel experiences on the Internet (Oxford Business Group, 2017).

Overall, results cement the popularity of the region as a popular tourists' hub, which resonates with a common phrase *Mombasa raha* (Mombasa, the place of enjoyment). This makes the Kenyan coast synonymous with tourism activities strongly appealing to the domestic market. Thus, the Kenyan coast is a unique destination. These results assert findings by Mutinda and Makaya (2012), who noted that the most popular coastal touristic circuit is exclusively centered on two geographical areas: the south coast beaches and a handful of game reserves or national parks. Further, he noted that coastal circuit records a repeat visit rate of 81.48%. This implies that the Kenyan Coast is a popular destination making it a preferred choice among domestic tourists, since it is idyllic and historically interesting. The region's popularity is due to its image as a haven of unspoilt white beaches and azure seas, where calm waters and well-preserved coral reefs invite underwater exploration (GOK, 2020). The coast is host to a wide range of resorts capitalising on the rich coral reefs and beautiful scenery. Such uniqueness positions Kenyan coast as an ideal destination for both first time visitors and repeat visitors.

4.3. Chi-Square statistical test of demographic versus travel characteristics

To test the relationship between demographic and travel characteristics, chi square test was run as summarised in Table 3:

Table 3: Chi-Square statistical test of demographic versus travel characteristics

Variables	Chi-Square- χ^2	*df*	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Gender*Most Recent Visit to the Kenyan Coast	5.110	3	.164
Gender*Number of times visited the Kenyan Coast	2.905	4	.574
Gender*Previously Visited Kenyan Coast	0.185	1	.667
Gender*Duration of the current visit	3.166	3	.367
Gender*Whether visiting alone	.521	1	.470
Gender*Preferred mode of travel arrangement	.081	1	.775
Gender*Mode of Transport	5.464	8	.707
Marital status*Most recent visit	1.305	6	.971
Marital status*Number of times visited	11.344	8	.183
Marital status*Previously visited Kenyan Coast	.523	2	.770
Marital status*Duration of current visit	3.388	6	.759

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Variables	Chi-Square- χ^2	*df*	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Marital status*whether visiting alone	2.968	2	.227
Marital status*preferred mode of travel	2.383	2	.304
Marital status*Mode of transport	25.013	16	.070
Annual income*Most recent visit	14.589	12	.265
Annual income*Number of times visited	23.845	16	.093
Annual income*Previously visited	3.795[a]	4	.434
Annual income*Duration of current visit	23.055	12	.027**
Annual income*Whether visiting alone	4.191[a]	4	.381
Annual income*Preferred mode of travel arrangement	6.005[a]	4	.199
Annual income*Mode of transport	30.985	32	.518
Age*Most recent visit	10.930	12	.535
Age*Number of times visited	30.579	16	.015**
Age*Whether previously visited	2.740	4	.602
Age*Duration of the current visit	11.558	12	.482
Age*Whether visiting alone	9.986	4	.041**
Age*Preferred mode of travel arrangement	6.450	4	.168
Age*Mode of transport	52.645	32	.012**
Education*Most Recent visit	14.931	9	.093
Education*Number of times visited	11.793	12	.462
Education*Whether previously visited	3.734	3	.292
Education*Duration of the current visit	8.040	9	.530
Education*Whether visiting alone	7.119	3	.068
Education*Preferred mode of travel arrangement	2.753	3	.431
Education*Mode of transport	44.734	24	.006**
** Significant at $p = 0.05$			

Source: Research Data (2020)
**Significant at 0.05

The domestic tourists travel characteristics were profiled against demographic characteristics. This was achieved using Chi-Square (χ^2) statistics test of independence. The findings indicated that duration of current visit is dependent on annual income ($\chi^2 = 23.055$, $p = 0.027$), number of times visited is dependent on age ($\chi^2 = 30.579$, $p = 0.015$), while whether the domestic tourist visited alone is dependent on age ($\chi^2 = 9.986$, $p = 0.041$). The mode of transport depended on age ($\chi^2 = 52.645$, $p = 0.012$) and mode of transport is dependent on education ($\chi^2 = 44.734$, $p = 0.006$). It was evident that demographic and travel characteristics are key determinant influencing travel decisions among domestic tourists in Kenya.

The Chi-Square test was thus used to test whether two categorical variables were independent and at the same time testing the null hypothesis:

H_0: There exist no relationship between travel and demographic characteristics of domestic tourists.

The Chi-Square (χ^2) statistics indicated a *p*-value = 0.05, which is significant. Hence, it can be concluded that there was significant relationship between travel and demographic characteristics of domestic tourists in Kenya. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

From these findings, it is evident that the decision-making process and choices of destination by tourists is influenced by a number of factors. This means that tourist flow to a particular destination depends on a number of factors, since destination attractiveness alone cannot influence the travel decision process. Similarly, from the findings it was noted that travel and demographic characteristics are crucial determinants affecting travel choices, the decision-making process, and eventually travel propensity of domestic tourists to the Kenyan coast. From these results, demographic characteristics as expressed by gender, marital status, age, income, and level of education are all significant in determining travel decision of domestic tourists. These findings were supported by previous studies such as (Jensen, 2011; Kihima, 2015; Beirman, 2016; Njagi, Ndivo, Manyara, 2017; Aziz et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2020; Kara and Mkwizu, 2020; MoTW, 2021a; MoTW, 2021b).

On the other hand, travel characteristics in tourist profiles are also crucial in the travel decision and choice of destination of tourists. From these findings, travel characteristics as expressed by travel frequency, purpose of visit, duration of visit, mode of travel arrangement, mode of transport, source of information are all significant in determining travel decisions of domestic tourists. These findings were supported by previous studies such as (Goeldner and Richie, 2012; Mutinda and Mayaka, 2012; Nzioka, et al., 2014; Oxford Business Group, 2017; Mellinas and Reino, 2018; Starčević and Konjikušić, 2018; GOK, 2020).

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This study proved that the Kenyan coast is a popular destination among domestic tourists and quite appealing for all ages, but more pronounced among the youth. It is a popular getaway for families due to its uniqueness. Moreover, a strong relationship between travel and demographic characteristics was exhibited. Thus, it can be concluded that demographic and travel characteristics are key determinants influencing travel decisions among domestic tourists in Kenya, since the results indicate significant relationship between travel and demographic characteristics among respondents. The study recommends to focus on the identification and prioritisation of preferred local destinations and attractions for the domestic market to increase travel propensity for the sustainability of the industry.

6. Acknowledgements

The researchers are grateful to various respondents namely, domestic tourists for their candid participation during this study. Their devotion and dedication is well acknowledged, thank you once again. Authors are greatly appreciate the works of independent reviewers.

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