
**Significance of Exhibition Events Participation as a Tool for Tourism
Industry Promotion in Nairobi City County Kenya**

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doi: 10.51505/ijaemr.2023.8504

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.51505/ijaemr.2023.8504>

Received: Aug 22, 2023

Accepted: Sep 04, 2023

Online Published: Sep 11, 2023

Abstract

The exhibition sector is thriving all over the world as a crucial promotional tool that gives businesses a chance to accomplish their marketing goals and objectives. The purpose of this study was to determine the value of exhibition event participation as a vehicle for promoting the tourism sector in Nairobi City County, Kenya. 384 individuals were chosen by simple random sampling for primary data collection using questionnaires. To get qualitative information from purposefully selected exhibition managers and organizers, interview schedules were used. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were utilized to analyze the collected data. According to the study's findings, 84.3% of respondents engage in tourist and leisure activities while going to exhibition events. Additionally, the inferential statistics demonstrate that exhibition events can be used to create additional demand for tourism and hospitality products and services at a mean score strength of 4.67; increase visitor numbers at 4.62; stimulate travel for lots of people at 4.48; create the country's tourism brand awareness at 4.08; and advertise a country's tourism offering at 4.05. To increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of the sector, this study suggests that Kenya's Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife, and Heritage, the private sector, and all other stakeholders in the exhibition sector need to integrate exhibition events into their tourism promotion plans.

Keywords: Tourism industry, exhibition events, exhibition participation, promotion.

1.0 Introduction

The effects of globalization on tourism around the world have led to increased competition between well-established and emerging destinations (Song, Li, and Cao 2017). As a result, cities and regions have started to use events as an important strategy for drawing tourists, enhancing the perception of their destinations, and boosting the tourism industry (Oklobdžija, 2015). Businesses are shifting away from mass communication and toward direct marketing, and because of this, the event industry is expanding quickly (Kitchen and Tourky, 2015). As a tactic to boost tourist numbers and position themselves in the shifting global tourism markets, many cities and nations are now devoting considerable resources towards creating, promoting, and luring major events (Getz and Page, 2016).

Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) are the fastest-growing segment of the tourism industry and show enormous promise for economies' long-term expansion. The segment is regarded as one of the most favorable tools for nation-building, destination marketing, and economic growth in global tourism marketplaces (Andrades and Dimanche, 2017). This business segment has had tremendous expansion in the industrialized nations, and the so-called developing nations are now starting to take their fair share (Kariuki, 2016). Horner and Swarbrooke (2016) noted that an increase in interest in travel related to participating in a particular event has led to an increase in the importance of events in tourism offers.

In Kenya Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) are being promoted as one crucial sector for achieving the nation's 2030 Vision (Waweru and Jebotip, 2016). Even though these events are a lucrative form of travel whose potential has not yet been completely realized, safari tourism remains the main source of revenue for Kenya's tourism industry. According to Rogerson (2015), most African nations' tourism strategies regarding destination development and marketing are primarily geared toward leisure travel and fail to recognize the value and potential of business travel. For instance, leisure tourism in Kenya is being impacted by global perceptions of the country's security situation. As a result, the exhibition sector, a part of the MICE segment, has a great deal of potential to contribute to the diversification of Kenya's tourism products (Oxford Business Group, 2016).

Exhibitions are a crucial marketing tool that, according to academics and marketing professionals, can have a significant impact on a destination's ability to compete in the world market for businesses (Kellezi, 2014). Le and Karlsson (2017) claim that exhibition events continue to gain popularity and happen virtually daily, with participation from all sectors and industries. Events like exhibitions are important because they increase demand for travel, lodging, and other hospitality services in the host cities (Rogers and Davidson, 2015). To increase demand for the tourist business, exhibition events are essential for informing potential travelers about the destination's tourism products and services (Benur & Bramwell, 2015).

Exhibition events have potentially grown to be place marketers, attractions, and image-makers for a destination and can be used to improve a destination's tourist sector (Jin, Weber & Bauer, 2013). Connell et al. (2015) noted that events attract many visitors, increase participants' stays on average, and inspire them to return for leisure and hospitality-related activities. These occasions are important tourism drivers that boost a destination's capacity for tourism and aid in overall place marketing, primarily during off-peak seasons (Gorchakova, 2017). As a result, it is crucial to include exhibition events as a key component of a destination's marketing plan (Kellezi, 2014). This is because these events can be viewed both as an element of business tourism and as a way of promoting the tourism industry (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016).

Etiosa (2012) asserts that exhibition events might encourage repeat visits to a specific area and have a long-lasting effect on destination marketing. They should not be underestimated because they increase spending on local transportation, retail, and accommodation, as well as spread good word-of-mouth. These activities are a significant source of supply and demand in a given

location and help tourism destinations deal with low visitor demand (Rodríguez, Reina, and Rufin, 2015). They can encourage regional development, boost the visitor economy, provide media attention, and promote travel and leisure pursuits if well-hosted and managed (Richards, 2017). Thus, this study sought to examine the significance of exhibition event participation as a tool for tourism industry promotion in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

The study was guided by the following objective and hypothesis:

1. To examine the significance of exhibition events participation as a tool for tourism industry promotion in Nairobi City County, Kenya

H1 There is a significant relationship between exhibition event participation and tourism promotion in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

2.1 The Significance of Exhibition Events to the Tourism Industry

World tourism has been affected by globalization and a highly complex environment which has led to increased competition between established and emerging destinations. A tourism destination is truly competitive when it can increasingly attract visitors while providing them with memorable satisfying experiences (Kim, 2014). To be able to compete effectively in the market, tourism destinations need to adapt to the changing market trends using effective marketing strategies (Vellas, 2016). Therefore, every destination wanting to become an attractive tourism destination should put in place a strategy that will optimize the full potential of event tourism (Gębarowski, 2014).

Events are a major factor in destination development, marketing, and competitiveness and are becoming an increasingly important source of tourism motivation (Mair, 2015). According to Chiu et al. (2016), these occasions also encourage numerous people to travel, raise brand awareness, and shape perceptions of both business and leisure travel. Events at a certain location should be planned and set up in a way that gives the location market recognition and gives it an edge over its competitors (Getz and Page, 2016). Kuusik, Nilbe, Mehine, and Ahas (2014) indicated that events can be used as a destination's promotional activities, as they have a lasting impact on destination marketing and the ability to create repeat visitation. Disegna and Osti (2016) also note that repeat visitors to a destination should not be underestimated because they spend more money on local transport, sightseeing, and lodging.

The tourism industry is experiencing rapid development, thus, to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage, destinations must boost their tourism revenues and increasingly attract visitors through business tourism (Cucculelli and Goffi, 2016). In business tourism, the exhibition segment plays a significant role in enhancing and promoting a destination's competitiveness (Dragicevic, Jovicic, Blesic, Stankov, and Boskovic, 2012). The exhibition sector is a high-value sector that supports imports and exports while also adding value to other service sectors including travel, accommodation, and transport (Lee and Kang, 2014). These events are quick, coordinated marketing efforts that allow the distribution of various promotional

materials to a target audience (Neacsu, 2014). According to Engblom (2014), the main aim of exhibitions is to educate customers about available products and services within an industry. They are therefore regarded as a component of business tourism because they aid in motivating many people's interests to travel.

Menon and Edward (2013) also cited that exhibition events take place almost every day and should be promoted in a destination. This is because they reinforce customer relationships, create awareness of new prospects, enable sales of products and services as well and establish prospects and vendor relationships. If hosted and managed successfully, they can promote regional development, expand the visitor economy, provide media exposure, and stimulate tourism and leisure activities (Richards, 2017). The reviewed literature above demonstrates that event tourism is a significant component of achieving major travel objectives and a key component of a destination's marketing plan. Therefore, to be able to utilize the full potential of the tourism industry, the Nairobi City County tourism industry marketers must embrace the utilization of exhibition events as an effective long-term strategy for tourism marketing and promotion.

3.0 Methodology

A cross-sectional descriptive research design was used for the study. The participants in exhibition events in Nairobi City County, Kenya, made up the study's target population. A simple random sample method was used to choose the 384 respondents. Yamane's (1967) formula was applied to the statistical data of business delegates (687,916) from the Kenya Economic Survey Report for the year 2017 (KNBS, 2018) to determine the sample size for the study. Both secondary and primary data collection techniques were employed for the study. With the aid of self-administered questionnaires and interview schedules, primary data was collected from the field. Secondary information about exhibition events was acquired from published and unpublished publications. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to analyze the data. Chi-square inferential statistics were employed to evaluate the association between the variables. A response rate of 88% was gathered and deemed sufficient for data analysis out of the 384 questionnaires distributed to potential respondents, with 343 validly completed questionnaires. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 50% is considered adequate, 60% is considered good, and 70% or higher is considered very good.

4.0 Results and Discussion

Respondents Demographic Profiles

The distribution of respondents by age and gender is shown in Table 1. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 28-37 years (46.1%), 38-47 years (23%), 18-27 years (19.5%), and those between 48-57 years (10.2%) respectively. The findings are like those of Lee and Palakurthi (2013), whose respondents ranged in age from 18 years to over 50 years. Promoters of the tourism sector should react accordingly by offering travel items that appeal to all age groups. Regarding the respondents' gender, men made up 66.2% of those who participated in the exhibitions, while women made up 33.8%. The findings conflict with those of Lee and Palakurthi (2013), whose findings showed that more women than men attend exhibition

events. Additionally, Rabin's (2014) research indicates that women are traveling more and making more decisions about their leisure travel and other sorts of travel. Despite the distinction, participants of both sexes contribute significantly to event tourism.

Table 1
Distribution of Respondents by Age and Gender

Age	Gender		Female %	Total	%
	Male	%			
18-27years	47	21%	20	67	20%
28-37years	107	47%	51	158	46%
38-47years	49	22%	30	79	23%
48-57years	20	9%	15	35	10%
Above57years	4	2%	0	4	1%
Total	227	66.2	116	343	100

Source: Author

Respondents' Company Sector

The study sought to find out the industries in which the exhibiting enterprises operate. The majority of respondents (21%) worked in the building and construction industry. Next in importance were printing and packaging at 14%, hospitality, and tourism at 13%, industrial and machinery at 11%, IT & electronics at 10%, consumer and household at 9%, education at 8%, and lastly, medical and pharmaceuticals and agriculture, both at 7%. The results are consistent with those of Le and Karlsson (2017), who noted that exposition events continue to gain popularity and are held virtually daily with participation from almost all sectors and industries. The findings show that exhibition events draw attendees from practically all business sectors and industries and can be used to advertise and promote Nairobi City County's tourism industry.

Table 2
Distribution of Respondents by Company Sectors

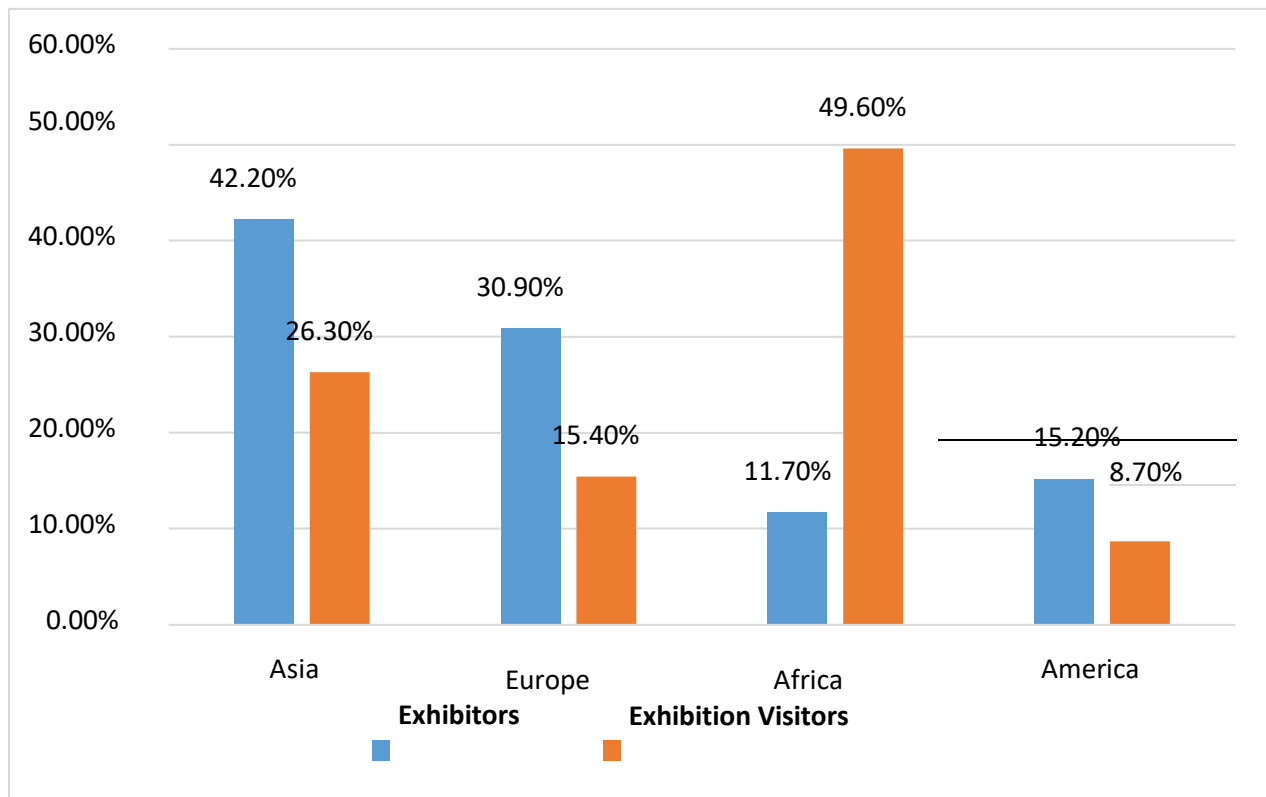
Sector	Frequency	Percentage
Building and Construction	24	21%
Printing&Packaging	16	14%
Hospitality and tourism	15	13%
Industrial and Machinery	13	11%
IT&Electronics	12	10%
Consumerandhousehold	10	9%
Education	9	8%
Medical and pharmaceuticals	8	7%
Agriculture	8	7%
Total	115	100

Source: Author

Distribution of Participants by Place of Origin

Figure 1 reveals that 42.2% of exhibitors were from Asia, 30.9% were from Europe, 11.7% were from Africa, and 15.2% were from America. These results support Getz and Page's (2016) assertion that exhibition events can serve as an effective marketing tool for the travel and tourism sector because they draw visitors from around the world.

Figure 1
Participants' Place of Origin



Source: Author

Exhibition Events as a Tool for Tourism Promotion

The results showed that creating additional demand for tourism and hospitality products and services had the highest mean score strength of (4.67), increasing visitor numbers had the second-highest mean score strength (4.62), stimulating travel for lots of people had the third-highest mean score strength (4.48), exhibition's effectiveness in creating the country's tourism brand awareness had (4.08), the effectiveness of exhibition events as means to advertise a country's tourism offering (4.05), exhibition events' effectiveness as attractions and image makers of a tourism destination (4.03); and lastly exhibition's effectiveness in providing

information about a country’s tourism products and services (3.78). These results support those of Oklobdija (2015), who claimed that destinations create and advertise events to draw more visitors, particularly during the off-peak seasons. They are also employed for general place marketing, enhancing the destination's potential for tourism, and promoting a favorable destination image. This suggests that exhibition events can be used to publicize the country's tourism offerings while also raising awareness of Nairobi City County's brand in the tourism industry.

Table3
Rating of the Effectiveness of Exhibition Events in Tourism Promotion

Indicator of Effectiveness	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation
Creates additional demand for Tourism products and services.	194	94	0	0	0	288	4.67	0.47
Increasing visitor numbers.	185	97	5	1	0	288	4.62	0.541
Stimulate travel for a lot of people.	176	93	6	8	5	288	4.48	0.818
Creates a country’s tourism brand awareness.	96	155	10	18	9	288	4.08	0.947
Advertises a country’s tourism offerings	95	150	16	16	11	288	4.05	0.976
Use as attractions and image Markers of a tourism destination.	96	135	34	16	7	288	4.03	0.946
Provides information on country’s tourism products and services.	78	140	24	21	25	288	3.78	1.176

Source: Author

Participation in Tourism and Leisure Activities

The study sought to determine whether attendees of exhibition events had time for leisure- and tourism-related activities before, during, or after the event. The results show that while attending exhibition events at the location, the majority of respondents (84.3%) engage in tourist and leisure activities, whereas 15.7% of the respondents said they do not. The results support Horner and Swarbrooke's (2016) assertion that business travelers are a high-spending group that

switches to leisure travelers when their working days are over. The results imply that exhibition attendees find time to partake in leisure and tourism pursuits in Nairobi City County during the exhibition event.

Tourism and Leisure Participation by Exhibitors

Results from exhibitors indicate that 39% of respondents return on another occasion for tourism purposes, 26% engage in excursions after the exhibition event, 21% engage in shopping for curios and artifacts, and 14.6% combine the event with a holiday. The results support Rogers and Davidson's (2015) assertion that even if attending a MICE event is a business traveler's primary goal, they typically choose to visit the local attractions. This suggests that some exhibitors find time to participate in tourism and leisure activities in addition to going to show their goods and services, which benefits the tourism sector.

Table4
Exhibitors' Participation in Tourism and Leisure Activities

Tourism and leisure activities	Frequency	Percentage
Return on another occasion for tourism purposes	38	39%
Excursions after the exhibition event	25	26%
Other activities	20	21%
Combine the event with a holiday	14	14%
Total	97	100%

Source: Author

The views of Respondent B agree with the findings:

“The exhibitors spend on average six days at the destination. They come to the destination two days early before the exhibition day and leave one or two days after the exhibition event is concluded. This could mean that the exhibitor can use the extra two days before or after the exhibition event to engage in tourism-related activities”.

Tourism and Leisure Participation by Exhibition Visitors

The results from the visitor surveys showed that during exhibition events, 53.8% of visitors engaged in tourist and leisure activities at the site, compared to 46.2% who did not.

Table 5
Visitors' Participation in Tourism and leisure activities

Tourism and leisure activities	Frequency	Percentage
Return on another occasion for tourism purposes	76	61.8%
Excursions after the exhibition event	29	23.6%
Shopping and visiting friends	10	8.1%
Combine the event with a holiday	8	6.5%
Total	123	100

Source: Author (2019)

The study also aimed to learn more about the visitors to the exhibition who answered yes and engaged in tourist and leisure activities. The results are shown in Table 5. According to the results, the majority of visitors to the exhibition 61.8% said they would return for tourism purposes on another occasion, followed by 23.6% who engage in excursions after the event, 8.1% take part in shopping and visiting friends, and 6.5% combine the event with a holiday. The findings imply that exhibition visitors do find time to partake in tourism- and leisure-related activities in addition to attending the exhibition events.

Chi-square hypothesis testing on the relationship between exhibition events participation and the effectiveness of exhibition events in tourism promotion.

The relationship between participation in exhibition events and the various metrics of tourism promotion listed in Table 3 above was tested using the chi-square method. Starting, an analysis of exhibition participation in connection with increased visitor numbers revealed a significant relationship ($X^2=8.460$, $df=3$, $p=0.037$). The results showed a substantial correlation between involvement in exhibition events and how well they stimulate travel for many people ($X^2=25.885$, $df=4$, $p=0.000$). The test on the association between taking part in exhibitions and creating additional demand for tourism and hospitality products and services revealed a favorable result ($X^2=4.339$, $df=1$, $p=0.037$). Finally, the findings also showed a significant positive association ($X^2=10.265$, $df=4$, $p=0.036$) between participation in exhibition events and exhibition events being an effective tool in creating a country's brand awareness.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the study, exhibition events have the potential to be used as a powerful tool for promoting the tourism sector. These events can be efficiently leveraged to generate demand for travel-related goods and services, encourage large numbers of people to travel, and boost the number of visitors. Exhibitions are important demand generators and brand-builders for both business and leisure travel. It can be concluded that exhibition events are significant, they support a healthy economy, and they can be utilized as a tourism promotion tool in destination marketing.

The study recommends that the Kenya Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife, and Heritage and all other players in the tourism industry pay attention to the relevance of exhibition events and their impact on the nation's tourism marketing. The Exhibition Convention and Visitors' Bureau in Kenya must assist in identifying the quantity, sufficiency, and capacity of existing venues as well as establishing anticipated future demand for those venues to enable the industry to meet the anticipated demand. This will enable access to accurate statistics on the exhibition industry in Nairobi City County and Kenya as a whole. The report suggests setting up a display at an exhibition event expressly to highlight the county's tourism offerings to participating exhibitors and visitors is crucial. Lastly, there is a need for additional study that examines all the components of the MICE tourism segment and how they might be leveraged to advance the

Kenyan tourist businesses. Future researchers could also do a similar study in Kenya's other MICE tourism regions.

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Acknowledgments

This study is part of the Author's MSc. thesis and has not been submitted for review at any other publication. The author thanks all the respondents who took part in the study.

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