

**EFFECTIVENESS OF VISITOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON THE
SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN OL PEJETA
CONSERVANCY, LAIKIPIA COUNTY, KENYA**

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been previously presented for an award of degree in any other University

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Recommendations

This thesis has been examined, passed and submitted with our approval as University supervisors.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my loving husband Samuel, my son Theo, my parents Mr and Mrs James Mwangi and my siblings; your patience, encouragement, financial and moral support and has been my pillar throughout this journey.

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability is one of the most essential strategic concepts being upheld in the Ol Pejeta conservancy. This is through initiatives like environmental conservation, income generation, and local community empowerment. However, the current rise in tourism numbers poses risks to establishing a balance between these efforts in the long term. Visitor management strategies including physical, interpretive, economic and regulatory management strategies have been adopted to oversee tourist flows in the conservancy. Despite adopting these management approaches, issues like human-wildlife conflict, unemployment, and water shortages still persist in the area. Besides, there is limited research on the effectiveness of these strategies on the sustainability of tourism in the area. Therefore, the main purpose of this study sought was to assess the effectiveness of visitor management strategies on the sustainability of tourist attractions in Ol Pejeta conservancy, Laikipia County, Kenya. Specifically, the study aimed to determine the relationship between physical management strategies and sustainability of tourist attractions, establish the relationship between interpretive management strategies and sustainability of tourist attractions in Ol Pejeta conservancy, Laikipia County, investigate the relationship between economic management strategies and sustainability of tourist attractions in Ol Pejeta conservancy, Laikipia County and assess the relationship between regulatory management strategies and sustainability of tourist attractions in Ol Pejeta conservancy, Laikipia County. The study employed convergent parallel mixed research design and was guided by World Commission on Protected Areas Framework. Data was collected from 167 visitors and 10 tourism officials using questionnaires and interview schedules respectively. Descriptive analysis and inferential statistics were used to analyse quantitative data while narrative analysis was employed in qualitative data analysis. Quantitative results revealed that interpretive strategies were the highest predictors of sustainability ($\beta=0.436$, $p<0.001$) compared to physical ($\beta =0.177$, $p<0.008$) and regulatory strategies ($\beta=0.104$, $p<0.012$). Narrative results also demonstrated that interpretive, physical and economic strategies were relevant in ensuring sustainability in the conservancy. The study concluded that interpretive, physical and economic management strategies were effective in ensuring sustainability, while regulatory strategies did not significantly influence the sustainability of tourist attractions in Ol Pejeta conservancy. The study recommended that tourism managers should reevaluate and refine regulatory strategies to address issues of enforcement and visitor compliance thus ensure their effectiveness in ensuring sustainability.