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Determinants of religious tourism branding tactics in Kenya

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Source: *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, OCTOBER 2018, Vol. 18, No. 4 (OCTOBER 2018), pp. 456-469

Published by: Sage Publications, Inc.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26510752>

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# Determinants of religious tourism branding tactics in Kenya: A cross sectional study

Tourism and Hospitality Research  
 2018, Vol. 18(4) 456–469  
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 DOI: 10.1177/1467358416670937  
[journals.sagepub.com/home/thr](http://journals.sagepub.com/home/thr)



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## Abstract

Shrines' market appeal and authenticity drive religious tourism branding initiatives. Ideal packaging strategies further determine product performance in religious destinations. This article examined the potential contribution of market appeal and authenticity to religious tourism branding in the Kenyan Coast, Western, and Eastern regions. Multistage Cluster Sampling was used to sample 700 respondents. Surveys were conducted using structured interviews between February 2012 and April 2013. Questionnaires targeted communities, tourists, and tourism developers. Questionnaires examined the types of shrines, utilization rate, perceived importance, and current development levels. It further assessed applicable religious tourism branding strategies within regions. Data analysis involved factor analysis, ANOVA, and t-tests. Results indicated that Kenyan shrines serve natural, physical, and cultural purposes, which determine their market appeal. New brands, line-extensions, and brand extensions emerged significant product branding strategies ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, it implied perceived loss of product authenticity.

## Keywords

Market appeal, authenticity, product development, branding, religious tourism

## Introduction

Pilgrimages are documented as highly developed tourism products in India, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Israel, Portugal, and Italy (Al-Akhras, 2008; Nolan and Nolan, 1989; Sudhir, 2007; Vijanayad, 2012). In these countries, pilgrimage product development supports religious tourism growth characterized by increasing local and international tourists' demand. Religious tourism highly supports economic development in these tourists' destinations (AICEP, 1997; Angeles and Javier, 2008; Mitroff and Denton, 1999). However in Kenya and other countries where religious tourism is at its exploration stage, there are major challenges hindering pilgrimages product development (Olsen, 2006; Shackley, 2001).

Kenyan religious pilgrimages occur as community practices but are not fully developed into tourism

products (Henningfeld, 2010; Parsitau, 2006). Failure to develop pilgrimages results to product homogeneity and increased social economic costs associated with the currently prioritized mass tourism forms. Kenya international perception as a beach and wildlife destination draws more leisure oriented tourists than religious tourists (Akama, 2002). Religious tourists thus represent a potential market niche to serve with competitive product initiatives. Developing pilgrimages is an attempt to diversify Kenyan tourism product and increase religious tourism demand. Assessing religious tourism demand

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provides destination managers with market knowledge that guides new product development.

Religious tourism product development entail; branding, packaging, labeling, and product support services (Kotler and Armstrong, 2005). Branding thus anchors the foundation for developing other product initiatives. Product development efforts aim at transforming existing resources to differentiated consumer experiences (Lunven, 2003; Martine, 1993). Religious product development strategies are widely reported in previous studies but their capability to influence substantial tourists' demand is less explored (Kaszowski, 2000; Raj and Morpheth, 2007).

Approximately 80% of Kenyans are Christians (Parsitau, 2006) but only about 1 million spend in religious tourism activities. This segment represents a substantial market to develop for religious products consumption. Tourism product development efforts currently focus on domestic market needs and increased community participation to attain sustainability in the 21st century (Buhalis and Costa, 2006; Cole 2006; Gupta, 1999). The recent growth of cultural tourism on the Kenyan countryside provides a platform for initiating religious activities as cultural brand extensions (UNESCO, 2002). Linking religious products with local cultures has enhanced tourists' demand and product consumption through creative branding tactics (Hunter, 1995; Reisinger, 2009). Religious tourism branding and consumption highly depends on existing market appeal and resource authenticity (see Figure 1). These are among other factors that this study examined.

## Market appeal

Religious tourism is presented as a highly demanded business. AICEP (1997) reveal that approximately 26% of world travelers are religious tourists. This global figure could be used to project demand in destinations where religious tourism is formal, institutionalized and organized into an economic sector (Muriuki, 2014). It is however challenging to estimate the demand for religious tourism where much pilgrim's activities remain informal (Raj and Morpheth, 2007). In Kenya, for instance, religious centers develop by establishing attractions, activities, and basic facilities. The pattern of supply here provides an ideal framework for assessing levels of religious tourism development. The types and abundance of shrines can be assessed in order to segregate important places from non important areas (Vukonic', 1996). Products and networks developed around these shrines can also evaluate the structure of religious tourism growth (Lin, 2005; Woolclock and Narayan, 2000). Areas with diverse shrines are considered important due to their inertia for religious tourism products development (Nolan and Nolan, 1989; Vukonic, 1992). In support of this, the following hypothesis emerged:

*H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the types of shrines and the levels of religious tourism product development*

It is often claimed that the availability of attractions' determines the supply of tourism products in destinations (Page and Connel, 2007). However, literature has demonstrated that many religious shrines exist but

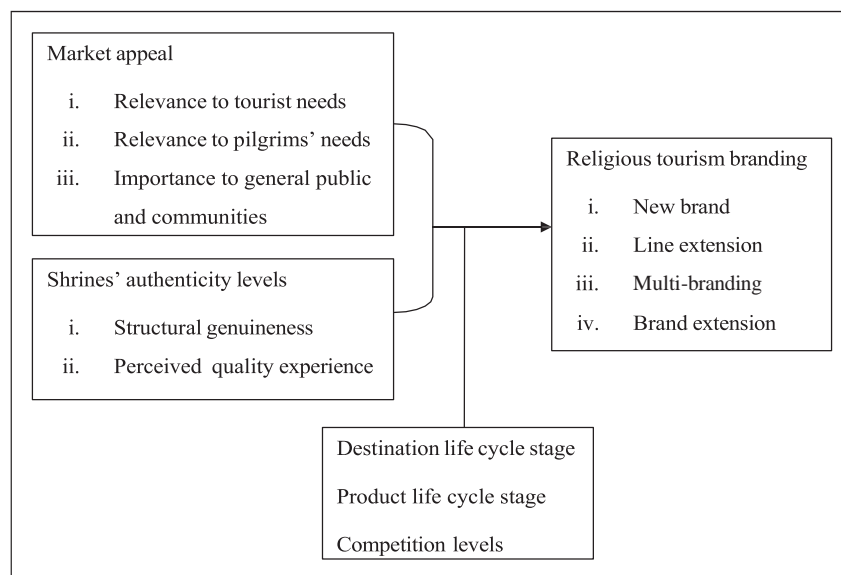


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for religious tourism branding (Source: Author).

are not developed (Vukonic, 1996). This possibly implies that such shrines lack the required market appeal for their potential development. Various scholars have underpinned that the utility of existing shrines' is arguably more important than the number of shrines' in an area (Martine, 1993; Tyson, 1999). Perceived importance of shrines could therefore reveal the attached value in religious attractions and demand. In attempt to examine this assertion, the following hypothesis emerged:

*H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between perceived importance of shrines and market appeal*

Lunven (2003) explains that religious tourism demand is based in four different perspectives: (a) the spiritual perspective, which is driven by a search for personal dialogue with God; (b) the sociological perspective, which makes a religious person interact with other believers; (c) the cultural perspective, which makes a religious tourist to value the social-cultural significance of religion in the society; and (d) geographical perspective, which creates shifts in tourist patterns when religious tourism begin in a destination. Tourists' and communities' perceptions could therefore inform the current demand for religious shrines in an area (Santos and Gracía, 2000).

Religious tourism demand is estimated by assessing the number of pilgrims to popular shrines (AICEP, 1997), including the total bed nights observed in religious accommodation centers. This conventional method applies in measuring demand in popular religious tourism promotion zones. This method is ideal when communities can project current religious tourist numbers. In this case, the following hypothesis was developed:

*H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the number of religious tourists and the demand for religious tourism*

Religious tourism is viewed to be a locally viable business and a responsible travel niche capable of providing revenues with minimal cultural disruption (Muriuki, 2014). However, research has demonstrated that religious tourism development would secularize the pilgrimage sacred content while disrupting pilgrims' worship (Sharpley and Jepson, 2010). It is therefore a challenge for Kenyan destination managers to balance between the extent of commoditizing pilgrimages and the need to retain product authenticity. This prompted an interrogation onto the potential and optimum levels of pilgrimages commoditisation in Kenya.

### *Authenticity and religious tourism product branding*

Many writers have considered authenticity to denote the genuine, different, and novel objects in tourism (Gnoth and Wang, 2015; Olsen, 2002). MacCannel (1999) was the first to introduce the concept of authenticity in tourism research, which became an important theoretical construct. Wang (1999) provided a more detailed analytical framework for conceptualizing authenticity and authentic states in tourism objects. He reported four types of authenticity: objective, symbolic, existential, and performative (Wang, 1999). Symbolic and performative types are important in authenticating objects while objective and existential types provide ideal features for evaluating the state of authenticity. This framework has been extensively used to explain authentication of destinations (Reisinger, 2009). Wang (1999) framework further proposes three approaches of examining authenticity (Constructivism, Objectivism and Existentialism).

Constructivism is the idea that authenticity is socially constructed and that behavioral observation and associations can be used to evaluate genuine objects. Many writers consider this approach as subjective since ideal images and assumptions are used to assess authenticity (Betta, 2014; Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Objectivism is the structural description of tourist objects. It uses rationalism and empiricism in interpreting the truth (Gnoth and Wang, 2015). This approach has gained much attention due to its utility in quantifying authentic states. Existentialism is the inspirational and empathetic orientation toward genuine objects. In this approach, a tourist has to encounter genuine objects in order to experience them.

Authenticity has therefore been measured in three methods: structural description of tourist objects, reactive affect by tourist objects and sense of existential attachment to tourist objects. More recently, theoretical constructs such as intentionality (Betta, 2014) and authentic knowledge (Gnoth and Wang, 2015) have been used to examine authenticity.

Convincingly genuine objects, unique values, and preserved symbolic meanings attached to resources are sought by tourists during their destination choices (Reisinger, 2009; Rickly-Boyd, 2012). These innate features are used by destination managers to develop tourism products. Smith (1994) observes that tourism production is highly localized and depends on attractive destinations' resources. Religious product development specifically converts the sacred elements, meaningful cultural contents and activities into commercial tourists' packages. The sacred elements in shrines and perceived cultural value denote religious product authenticity (Olsen, 2006). Religious product

authenticity positively identifies, differentiates, and positions sacred experiences through branding initiatives. While many studies report on processes to convert tourism resources into final service experiences, few attempts have been made to link such experiences to resource originality. This has arguably caused loss of authenticity through representation and commoditization (Raj and Morpheth, 2007).

Swarbrook (2002) observes that commoditization is a key concern facing cultural and religious centers in the 21st century. Safeguarding the sacred content in religious shrines is therefore an attempt to preserve product authenticity. However, developing pilgrimages for tourists' consumption represents commoditization and potential loss of sacred value. Religious tourism usually detaches pilgrims from their sacred sensation in many undeveloped holy centers (Barber, 1993). Previous reports suggest that global religious tourism business occur independently without integration with other tourism forms. This represents levels of religious product authenticity (Reisinger, 2009). In few other destinations, religious tourism is often interlinked to existing tourism forms, such as cultural tourism. This demonstrates possible levels of product in-authenticity (Raj and Morpheth, 2007). In this regards, a totally new brand is considered authentic while a line extension or a multi brand is viewed as in-authentic. This paradigm suggested the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant relationship between pilgrimages development as a new brand and levels of product authenticity*

### Theoretical framework

The theory of intentionality was used to guide this article. Intentionality is a psychological desire to consume a quality package. Betta (2014) observes that intentionality is a mental state and a defining characteristic of authenticity. There are two properties of intentionality: referential and content intentionality. Referential intentionality explains the directedness toward quality objects. Sacred elements of shrines can act as reference points to visit and experience religious destinations. Tourists gauge quality in reference to authentic encounters thus seeking experiences in such destinations (Gnoth and Wang, 2015). Marketers therefore stage such experiences to lure tourists' consumption (Wang, 1999). Content intentionality refers to aspectual shapes in tourism objects. It evaluates the tangible elements and the images formed about tourism objects (Gnoth and Wang, 2015). It therefore elaborates whether staged objects qualify to be authentic.

## Research methodology

### Research design

Cross sectional analytical research design was used for this research. This relied on structured interviews aided by questionnaires. Cross sectional design was an effective method utilized since the type of research involved collection of personal information, related to feelings, attitudes, and motivation of the respondents (Veal, 2006).

### Study area characteristics and target population

This study was conducted in the Coast, Western, and Eastern regions of Kenya, in East Africa. This area had an approximate population density of 13,325,712 people. Coast region consisted of 3,325,307 people, Western region comprised of 4,334,282 people while Eastern region comprised of 5,666,123 people. These areas host approximately 25 ethnic groups (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

Approximately 3,464,685 respondents were targeted (26% of the entire density). Twenty-six percent represented the total world travelers engaging in religious tourism (AICEP, 1997). It included 864,580 people in Coast region, 1,126,913 people in Western region, and 1,473,192 people in Eastern region. The population comprised of pilgrims, community members, Ministry of Tourism officials, and tourism developers. The population was represented by a sample of 700 respondents. Respondents were drawn from three regions at random.

### Sampling procedure and sample size

The sample was derived from the population using the infinite population sample formula  $SS = \{Z^2 \times (P) \times (1 - P)\} / C^2$ , where  $SS$  = sample size,  $Z$  = Z value (1.96),  $P$  = percentage of population picking a choice, and  $C$  = confidence interval (0.04). The resultant sample  $SS = \{3.8416 \times 0.5 \times 0.5\} / 0.0016$ . This resulted to a sample of 600. The infinite population sample was converted to a finite population sample formula:  $New\ SS = SS / \{1 + (SS - 1) / pop\}$ . The New  $SS = 600 / \{1 + (600 - 1) / 3,464,685\} = 599.90$ . This sample frame was added by 100 to counter the rate of non-response. The resultant sample size was 700 respondents.

Multistage Cluster Sampling was used as the main sampling technique. The three regions represented clusters which formed a sample of 700 respondents. Each region represented a broad cluster varying according to regional density in relation to the whole population. Coast region generated 864,580/

3,464,685 × 700 = 175 respondents. Western region generated 1,126,913/3,464,685 × 700 = 228 respondents, while Eastern region generated 1,473,192/3,464,685 × 700 = 298. The above clusters were subdivided into five sub counties. Each sub county therefore constituted 35 respondents in the Coast, 46 respondents in Western, and 60 respondents in Eastern regions.

Bordens and Abbot (2008) argue that multistage sampling involves identification of large clusters and randomly selecting from among them (first stage), then randomly selecting individual elements from the selected clusters. Sample size was determined on the criteria of required level of precision in the results; the level of detail in the proposed analysis and the available budget (Veal, 2006).

### *Data collection procedures and analysis*

Three questionnaires were developed targeting communities, tourism developers, and tourists. Questionnaires sought to establish the existing religious shrines and attractions while examining their development rates. Questionnaires also examined the perceived importance attributed to each religious attractions, religious product branding strategies, and religious tourism demand. These questionnaires comprised respondents' demographic variables in section P1–P7. Section 1(a) and (b) comprised questions related to attractions used for pilgrimages. Section 1(d) comprised questions related to religious tourism demand. Part 1(e) comprised questions related to the importance of shrines. Section 2(e) comprised questions addressing components viable for religious product development. Part 2(h) comprised questions related to religious product branding strategies.

A pilot study was carried out in order to enhance data reliability. Bordens and Abbot (2008) explain that pilot study is important in pretesting questionnaires in order to minimize errors. Split-Half test was used to examine data reliability (Guttman Split Half coefficient,  $r = 0.80$ ; Turkey's non additivity test,  $F = 110.82$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Data validity was tested using Kolmogorov–Smirnov test.

Factor analysis was used to explore the rates of development in existing shrines. Factors were rotated using Principle Components Analysis and their differences examined using Varimax. Important components with Eigen values  $\geq 1$  were selected. Factors score of  $\geq 0.67$  was considered significant in the rotated matrix. Independent sample t-tests were used to analyze the importance of religious attractions. ANOVA was used to examine the branding strategies for religious tourism product with means separated using LSD test. The resultant F, t, and p values were

reported and represented in tables. Variables that scored p values  $\leq 0.05$  were considered significant. Religious tourism demand was examined using Chi-square and its variation tested using one sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov test.

### **Results**

The actual respondents comprised of 375 community members, 218 tourism developers, and 108 tourists. Results indicated that 79% community members were Christians, 15.5% Muslims, 1.1% Hindu, 1.6% Traditional African religion, and 2.1% Atheists. Ages for community members differed. In all, 27.5% were aged between 25 and 35 years, 26.7% aged between 15 and 25 years, 16% aged between 45 and 55 years, 12% aged between 35 and 45 years, 11.6% aged between 55 and 65 years, 2.2% aged between 65 and 75 years, 1.6% aged less than 15 years, and 1.4% aged more than 75 years.

Tourism developers had differences length of operations and mandates. In all, 44.50% of the tourism operations had existed for less than 15 years. Among these enterprises, 46.31% engaged in developing travel products, 31.96% were engaged in providing infrastructure, and 12.37% were engaged in providing travel information. Only 5.96% of the operations had existed for more than 75 years. Among the enterprises, 38.46% were involved in providing travel information, 30.77% were involved in developing travel products and 23.08% involved in providing infrastructure.

Means for tourists' religious affiliations were compared within regions. Christians (mean = 2.00,  $sd = 0.82$ ) and Muslims (mean = 2.11,  $sd = 0.90$ ) contributed to high means. Hindus, Rastafarians, and Atheists contributed to low observable means (mean = 1.00,  $sd = 0.00$ ). Tourists' expenditures varied within regions ( $\chi^2 = 47.11$ ,  $df = 10$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Highest means were observed for 1501 Dollars and above. Lowest means were observed for 1001–1250 dollars per month. This is illustrated in Table 1 below.

### *Types of shrines and religious tourism product development levels*

Resources with potential for religious tourism product development were identified. Their relationship with the level of tourism development was established. Using factor analysis, 16 types of resources were examined. Values with Eigen value greater than 1 were selected and extracted using Principle components. Varimax was used in factors extraction, which converged after 10 iterations. Factors that contributed to values  $\geq 0.65$  after rotation were considered significant. Factors related to either potential religious

Table 1. Tourists' expenditures within the Kenyan visitation regions.

Tourists' expenditure	% Coast	% Western	% Eastern	Regional Means	N	sd
250–500 dollars	40	0.00	20.00	1.55	22	0.91
501–750 dollars	10	0.00	13.33	2.00	8	1.07
751–1000 dollars	20	6.25	13.33	1.71	14	0.91
1001–1250 dollars	5	12.50	0.00	1.67	6	0.52
1251–1500 dollars	10	37.50	0.00	1.75	16	0.45
1501 dollars and above	15	43.75	53.33	2.28	36	0.74
Total	100	100	100	1.90	102	0.83

Table 2. Rotated principal components factor scores for types of shrines and attractions.

	Rotated component matrix (a),(b)			
	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Churches	–0.29	0.41	0.48	–0.06
Mosques	0.23	–0.46	0.45	0.24
Temples	–0.05	0.03	0.63	0.47
Forests	0.71	0.22	–0.09	0.12
Caves	0.80	–0.03	0.04	0.18
Religious festivals	0.48	0.10	0.64	–0.14
Events	0.43	0.06	0.69	–0.21
Mountains	0.02	0.65	0.06	–0.03
Sacred homes	0.33	0.46	0.11	0.34
Monasteries	0.29	0.07	–0.03	0.64
Monuments	0.65	–0.25	0.25	0.20
Rivers	0.06	0.73	–0.01	0.14
The sea	0.65	–0.25	0.15	0.40
Stadiums	–0.04	0.60	0.51	0.07
Cultural centers	0.74	0.13	0.15	0.02
Others	0.06	0.05	–0.02	0.57

Extraction method: Principal component analysis.

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

<sup>a</sup>Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

Bold face: Significant scores with values of 0.67 and above.

centers (mainly built environments) or religious shrines (mainly natural environments) were examined. Results indicated about three significant factors (see Table 2).

Component 1 indicated three factors (Forests = 0.71, Caves = 0.80, and cultural centers = 0.74) to be significant. These factors were related to natural and cultural religious shrines. Component 2 included (Rivers = 0.73), which was related to shrines that exist on physical environment.

Component 3 indicated one significant factor (Events = 0.69), which was related to shrines that serve cultural functions. Results indicated no significant factor related to built environment. This demonstrated that shrines that serve natural, physical, and cultural functions have potential for religious tourism development. It also revealed that built environments are less preferred for religious tourism functions. This suggested the rejection of Hypothesis  $H_01$ .

In attempt to establish the potential use of attractions in religious tourism product development, the researchers estimated the importance attached to various shrines by communities and developers. This was projected to show the perceived value of those shrines. Five shrines (Churches, Mosques, Forests, Caves, Mountains, and Sacred homes) were compared and ranked in order ranging from Very important = 5 to Less Important = 1. ANOVA test indicated that all the variables were significant. Churches scored ( $F_{(2,582)} = 75.22$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Mosques ( $F_{(2,581)} = 42.62$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Forests ( $F_{(2,581)} = 4.39$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Caves ( $F_{(2,579)} = 39.26$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Mountains ( $F_{(2,579)} = 25.40$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), while Sacred homes scored ( $F_{(2,573)} = 3.32$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Means for the regional data were separated using LSD. Results indicated that Caves were significant in the three regions ( $p < 0.05$ ). Churches, Mosques, Forests, and Mountains emerged significant in the Coast region. Sacred homes were significant in the Coast-Eastern data ( $p < 0.05$ ) (see Appendix 1).

Using t-tests mean scores for both high and low season were assessed. Forests' (High season, 2.66, vs. Low season, 3.10,  $df = 582$ ,  $t = -3.18$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and Sacred homes (High season, 1.97, vs. Low season, 2.30,  $df = 574$ ,  $t = -2.78$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) importance emerged significant. This means that both natural and built attractions are valued by communities although such attractions might lack proper development. Churches scored (High season, 4.31, vs. Low season, 4.25,  $df = 583$ ,  $t = 0.60$ ,  $p = 0.55$ ), Mosques scored (High season, 3.13, vs. Low season,

Table 3. t-tests for importance of attractions within seasons.

	Season	N	Mean	sd	SEMean		t	p
Importance church	High	292	4.31	1.13	0.07	EVA	0.60	0.55
	Low	293	4.25	1.26	0.07	EVN	0.60	
Importance mosques	High	292	3.13	1.54	0.09	EVA	-4.45	0.65
	Low	292	3.19	1.57	0.09	EVN	-4.45	
Importance forests	High	292	2.66	1.61	0.09	EVA	-3.18	0.00**
	Low	292	3.10	1.69	0.10	EVN	-3.18	
Importance caves	High	292	2.45	1.55	0.09	EVA	0.00	1.00
	Low	290	2.45	1.55	0.09	EVN	0.00	
Importance Mt.	High	292	2.61	1.63	0.10	EVA	-0.53	0.60
	Low	290	2.68	1.57	0.09	EVN	-0.53	
Importance homes	High	286	1.97	1.33	0.08	EVA	-2.80	0.01**
	Low	290	2.30	1.51	0.09	EVN	-2.80	

Forests and homes emerged important attractions ( $p < 0.05$ )

3.19,  $df = 582$ ,  $t = -4.45$ ,  $p = 0.65$ ), Caves scored (High season, 2.45, vs. Low season, 2.44,  $df = 580$ ,  $t = 0.00$ ,  $p = 0.10$ ), and Mountains scored (High season, 2.61, vs. Low season, 2.68,  $df = 580$ ,  $t = -0.51$ ,  $p = 0.60$ ) (see Table 3). Diverse attractions types scored significant means within regions hence suggesting the rejection of Hypothesis  $H_02$ .

Chi-square and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were used to assess the market appeal for religious tourism products. Many respondents cited that religious tourism contributed to high demand levels ( $\chi^2 = 647.21$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated significant demand variation in religious tourism ( $n = 4.34$ ,  $sd = 0.97$ ,  $Z = 8.35$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Seasonal variation of religious tourism demand was then assessed. Results indicated a strong relationship between demand and season ( $\chi^2 = 18.06$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). High season accounted for high tourists' volume than the low season.

The monthly number of religious tourists was arranged in intervals (1-25 tourists = 1, 26-50 tourists = 2, 51-100 tourists = 3, 101-200 tourists = 4, 201 tourists and above = 5). This represented an independent variable with demand as a dependent variable. Results indicated a non significant association ( $SS = 5.92$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $F = 1.58$ ,  $p = 0.18$ ) with means ranging from 4.26 to 4.62. The lowest means were observed in 201 tourists and above ( $n = 4.26$ ,  $sd = 1.03$ ), 51-100 tourists ( $n = 4.31$ ,  $sd = 0.98$ ), 101-200 tourists ( $n = 4.36$ ,  $sd = 0.94$ ), and 1-25 tourists ( $n = 4.47$ ,  $sd = 0.94$ ). High means were observed in the interval 26-50 tourists ( $n = 4.62$ ,  $sd = 0.49$ ). This means that approximately 201 religious tourists visit various shrines in any of the three regions annually. The results did not fully support the rejection of Hypothesis  $H_03$ .

### Religious tourism product development initiatives

Pilgrimage attractions components viable for product development were assessed. These were divided across themes. The test variables included: Faith, Activities, Rituals, Gatherings, and Religious centers. Their scores were ranked as follows (Very viable = 5 to Least Viable = 1). Using ANOVA test, all the test variables emerged significant. Faith scored ( $F_{(2,575)} = 12.44$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Activities ( $F_{(2,573)} = 18.43$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Rituals ( $F_{(2,571)} = 29.92$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Gathering ( $F_{(2,575)} = 23.18$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), while religious centers scored ( $F_{(2,574)} = 6.37$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Means were separated using LSD test. Results indicated that religious tourism activities were viable within the three regions. Faith was significant in eastern region while rituals, gatherings, and religious centers were significant in Coast region ( $p < 0.05$ ). Significant scores for the test variables are illustrated in Table 4.

This demonstrated that all attractions related to spiritual, activities, and destination physical characteristics are viable for religious tourism product development in Kenya's Coast, Western, and Eastern regions.

Post hoc test was undertaken using LSD, which indicated three significant variables across regions.

Faith was significant in Eastern region ( $p < 0.05$ ). Eastern and Coast data scored ( $SE = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), while Eastern and Western data scored ( $SE = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Activities emerged significant in all the three regions ( $p < 0.05$ ), while rituals were significant in the Coast region ( $p < 0.05$ ). Coast and Western data scored ( $SE = 0.16$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), while Coast and Eastern data scored ( $SE = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Rituals and Gatherings were highly significant in the Coast ( $p < 0.05$ ). Religious Centers developed in Coast and Western contributed to ( $SE = 0.17$ ,

Table 4. LSD scores—Attraction components viable for religious tourism product development.

Component	Region	I-J	SE	<i>p</i>
Faith	Eastern (I)—Coast (J)	−0.82	0.17	<0.05
	Eastern (I)—Western (J)	−0.58	0.19	<0.05
Activities	Coast (I)—Western (J)	0.65	0.17	<0.05
	Coast (I)—Eastern (J)	−0.47	0.17	<0.05
	Eastern (I)—Western (J)	1.14	0.19	<0.05
Rituals	Coast (I)—Western (J)	1.07	0.15	<0.05
	Coast (I)—Eastern (J)	0.90	0.15	<0.05
Gathering	Coast (I)—Western (J)	0.80	0.14	<0.05
	Coast (I)—Eastern (J)	0.74	0.14	<0.05
Religious center	Coast (I)—Western (J)	0.44	0.17	<0.05
	Coast (I)—Eastern (J)	0.55	0.17	<0.05

Table 5. ANOVA scores for religious tourism branding strategies.

Branding strategy		SS	<i>df</i>	Mean square	F	Sig.
New brand	Between groups	14.99	2	7.50	3.28	0.04*
	Within groups	1290.44	564	2.29		
	Total	1305.43	566			
Line extension	Between groups	9.60	2	4.8	8.49	0.00**
	Within groups	315.44	558	0.57		
	Total	325.04	560			
Brand extension	Between groups	3.98	2	1.99	2.98	0.05*
	Within groups	358.83	538	0.67		
	Total	362.81	540			
Multi brand	Between groups	10.10	2	5.05	1.80	0.17
	Within groups	1555.18	554	2.81		
	Total	1565.29	556			

Line extensions emerged highly significant ( $p > 0.01$ ), while New brands and Brand extensions emerged significant branding tactics ( $p < 0.05$ ).

$p < 0.05$ ), while Coast and Eastern contributed to ( $SE = 0.17$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (see Appendix 2).

### Religious tourism branding tactics

Effectiveness of applying diverse religious tourism brands was investigated using Chi-square tests. Four categories of brands (New brand, Line extension, Brand extension, and Multi brands) were considered and weighted as follows: Least applicable = 1, less applicable = 2, just applicable = 3, highly applicable = 4, and extremely applicable = 5. Results indicated that varied branding strategies were applied for religious tourism. New brand scored ( $\chi^2 = 702.20$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); Line extension scored ( $\chi^2 = 1107.90$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); Brand extension scored ( $\chi^2 = 1577.46$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and Multi brand scored ( $\chi^2 = 408.88$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). ANOVA results indicated a significant relationship between branding

strategies and the regions under study. New brand scored ( $F_{(2,564)} = 3.28$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); Line extension scored ( $F_{(2,558)} = 8.49$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and Brand extension scored ( $F_{(2,538)} = 2.98$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (see Table 5).

This means that introducing religious products as new brands, line extensions, or brand extensions was quite applicable in Coast, Western, and Eastern regions. Introducing a new religious tourism product therefore requires support by existing products attributes. The observed significance of Line extension among respondents implied that visitors prefer to consume religious products that are closely related with familiar products, whether conventional or special interest. For instance, religious tourism could be introduced as a new brand line of cultural tourism. This demonstrated levels of Kenyan pilgrimage product inauthenticity. It also revealed aspects of religious tourism product commoditization.

Means were separated using LSD. Results indicated significant observable differences between uses of branding strategies across the regions. New branding strategy contributed to high mean differences in the Coast and Western regions ( $SE = 0.016$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); Line extension emerged significant in Western region ( $p < 0.05$ ). Western and Coast scored ( $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), while Western and Eastern scored ( $SE = 0.09$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Brand extension strategy emerged significant within Western and Eastern data ( $SE = 0.09$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (see Appendix 3).

Coast and Western regions are arguably developed tourism markets; with pre-existing tourism products and substantial tourists' numbers compared with Eastern region. Smaller consumer niches in such markets including religious customers, would have been previously served with traditional products hence would require to have a new product for a change. This means that it is less possible to develop religious tourism as a new brand. It therefore suggested lack of product authenticity. Hypothesis  $H_{04}$  was therefore accepted.

## Discussion

Existing shrines in the Coast, Western, and Eastern regions of Kenya serve natural, physical, and cultural functions. Among these shrines, the undeveloped natural areas such as forests and caves have more potential for religious tourism activities compared with artificial settings such as churches. Built settings such as churches and mosques have a lower development index since they are perceived to be closed entities. These are often disrupted by modernized settings and rituals, which hinder the spiritual sensation in shrines. Additionally, the African cultural religious sensation is arguably constructed rather than authentic. In this way, built environment are perceived unattractive for religious tourists and their future viability as tourism attractions is arguably low. Many other unstructured shrines have greater potential for product development because of their convenience for hosting religious activities and rituals.

Pilgrimage attractions components such as faith, activities, rituals, gatherings, and characteristics of religious centers are all viable to support religious tourism development. This is likely to satisfy diverse categories of religious tourists. However, these attractions components are shaped by destination's niche of choice and the stage of tourism development in the destination's life cycle. Results revealed that faith is more viable in Eastern region suggesting the importance of considering the sacred value of products when developing religious tourism. Eastern region is at the exploration stage of the destination life cycle and the

existing attractions are seemingly authentic. Leisure tourism is not well developed in the region and the existing shrines might have been preserved in their natural state.

Rituals and gatherings were significant in the Coast region due to the predominance of Muslims who observe the *Maulidi*, *Ramadhan*, and *Id fitri* festivals. Religious centers emerged significant in the Coast and Western region due to the presence of many built centers with historical value for the communities. Again, the Coast is at the development stage of the destination life cycle characterized by presence of expansive tourism infrastructure that communities consider important. Activities were considered significant across the three regions. This suggests that active participation in spiritual settings is an important component of religious tourism attractions irrespective of the development stage in the destination life cycle.

Branding is considered an important tactic for the tourism product development strategy (Kotler, 2004). New branding emerged significant in the Coast and Western regions. These regions have previously developed beach and cultural tourism, respectively. Developing religious tourism as a sacred experience is an attempt to diversify the existing tourism products hence creating an alternative appeal for visitors with spiritual intentions. Line and brand extensions emerged significant in Western region, which has developed a position on cultural tourism. Religious activities in this region would be well introduced as elements of cultural functions hence making religious tourism more appreciated by communities. The Kenyan pilgrimage can therefore be developed in two dimensions: as a new brand (when considered as a purely sacred phenomenon) and as a line extension (introducing religious experiences besides the existing cultural products). The current findings suggest strong aspects of product diversification.

The strength of religious tourism branding relies on the inertia derived from existing cultural products. A popular cultural brand can therefore be extended with new religious elements. The predominance of cultural tourism in Western and Eastern regions provides suitable geographical characteristics for such an extension. It is possible to introduce religious tourism in Shinyalu, Kimilili, Sang'alo, Kakamega, and Mt. Elgon in Western region. Nzambani, Ithumbe, Kyumbi, Koma, Katoloni, and Kiima Kimwe are possible places to develop religious tourism in Eastern region. This would contribute to a strong brand identity since syncretism emerged as a major theme for product development in these regions. Religious tourism independency in regions without any pre-existing tourism forms is arguably challenging. This suggests that religious tourism relational bond with other forms

of tourism is focal. The findings agree with Reisinger (2009) and Mu et al. (2007) who claim that religion is a major component of culture. However, developing new brands of religious tourism in Eastern region emerged significant.

Tourism in Eastern region is at the exploration stage of the destination life cycle. This region is unlikely to have been much affected by the effects of leisure tourism. At the exploration stage, destinations are quite authentic while visitors have more spiritual intensions. This makes Eastern region suitable for religious tourism development. Pioneering religious tourists will therefore prefer visiting destinations at the exploratory stage of development to have pure sacred experiences. This agrees with Sharpley and Jepson (2010), Raj and Morpheth (2007), and Barber (1993) who contend that religious tourism products need to provide pure sacred experiences for pilgrim's consumption. It is possible to develop new religious brands to satisfy pilgrims visiting the undisrupted attractions in Eastern region.

Product development is perceived to be important in convincing various pilgrims' categories. Many religious tourism destinations therefore develop essential product features to achieve competitive advantage. However, the relationship between product availability and tourist consumption remains unclear. Existence of demand can therefore inform product decisions when developing religious tourism. Results indicated a significant demand for religious tourism in both high and low seasons ( $\chi^2 = 18.06$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). However, the difference in demand within seasons emerged insignificant ( $\chi^2 = 0.63$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.43$ ). These findings suggested that religious markets are quite predictable. The idea that religious tourism can minimize business seasonality in Kenya therefore emerged relevant. This article demonstrates that alternative forms of tourism are less fragile to seasonality challenges.

The monthly flow of religious tourist in each targeted districts was translated to 2412 tourists annually. This demonstrated a significant market niche. However, religious tourists' statistics might lapse with other existing tourism forms such as the cultural tourism statistics. Results also revealed that religious tourism could be developed as a subset of cultural tourism, which means that religious tourists consume other cultural aspects.

## Conclusions and policy implications

Religious tourism emerged an important tool for structuring undeveloped shrines. A significant market niche for religious tourism exists in Kenyan Coast, Western, and Eastern regions, which require future target marketing. This is achievable when sacred activities and

events are developed. Line and brand extensions emerged effective branding strategies, which demonstrated elements of syncretism. However, integration of religion with culture suggested potential loss of sacred authenticity. Communities were cited to be key stakeholders in religious product development who incur the highest revitalization costs.

Inadequate application of branding strategies curtails development of religious tourism in the Coast, Western, and Eastern regions of Kenya. Shrines that exist in natural settings are more suitable to develop for leisure and recreation activities. Line-extension emerged an effective branding strategy for religious tourism in these natural settings. However, shrines that exist in built centers such as churches and mosques are more suitable to serve sacred purposes. New branding emerged an effective strategy for religious tourism products in these built environments. The ideal use of natural settings for religious activities diversifies the tourism product from the conventional adventure and recreational use. This article demonstrates that religious tourism contributes to product diversification. The contemporary use of shrines for sacred functions indicated their levels of authenticity. However, the proposed use of shrines for leisure activities revealed potential loss of product authenticity.

Product diversification strategy remains imperative in the Kenyan Tourism Act (Ministry of Tourism, 2011). Chapter 4.1 of Sessional paper 1, 2010, considers tourism product diversification an effective strategy for enhancing tourism development. Cultural tourism is discussed as a potential product capable of redistributing tourism flows from popular visited parks and beaches to other unvisited areas. The policy explains the need for enhancing quality in the tourism products. It is however not clear how the new products' quality would be achieved without pretesting products at the exploratory stage of destination life cycle. For instance, the viability of religious tourism products can be pre-tested in reference to their importance, brand appeal, demand, production costs, and relevance to communities' activities.

## Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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## Appendix 1

*LSD scores for importance of shrines within regions*

Importance	(I) Region	Region (J)	(I-J)	SE	Sig.	95% confidence	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
Church	Coast	Western	-1.08	0.11	0.00*	-1.28	-0.84
		Eastern	-1.09	0.11	0.00*	-1.30	-0.88
	Western	Coast	1.07	0.11	0.00*	0.86	1.28
		Eastern	-0.02	0.12	0.75	-0.28	0.20
	Eastern	Coast	1.11	0.11	0.00*	0.90	1.32
		Western	0.04	0.12	0.75	-0.18	0.28
Mosques	Coast	Western	1.20	0.15	0.00*	0.91	1.49
		Eastern	1.02	0.14	0.00*	0.74	1.30
	Western	Coast	-1.20	0.15	0.00*	-1.47	-0.91
		Eastern	-0.18	0.16	0.27	-0.50	0.14
	Eastern	Coast	-1.00	0.14	0.00*	-1.30	-0.72
		Western	0.18	0.16	0.27	-0.14	0.50
Forests	Coast	Western	0.35	0.17	0.04*	0.02	0.68
		Eastern	0.45	0.16	0.01*	0.13	0.77
	Western	Coast	-0.33	0.17	0.04*	-0.66	-0.00
		Eastern	0.10	0.19	0.58	-0.26	0.47
	Eastern	Coast	-0.43	0.16	0.01*	-0.77	-0.13
		Western	-0.10	0.19	0.58	-0.47	0.26
Caves	Coast	Western	0.78	0.15	0.00*	0.49	1.07
		Eastern	1.24	0.15	0.00*	0.96	1.53
	Western	Coast	-0.78	0.15	0.00*	-1.07	-0.49
		Eastern	0.46	0.16	0.01*	0.14	0.78
	Eastern	Coast	-1.24	0.15	0.00*	-1.51	-0.94
		Western	-0.44	0.16	0.01*	-0.78	-0.12
Mountains	Coast	Western	-0.91	0.16	0.00*	-1.20	-0.59
		Eastern	-0.90	0.15	0.00*	-1.20	-0.60
	Western	Coast	0.91	0.16	0.00*	0.61	1.22
		Eastern	0.00	0.17	0.96	-0.33	0.35
	Eastern	Coast	0.90	0.15	0.00*	0.60	1.20
		Western	-0.00	0.17	0.96	-0.35	0.33
Sacred Homes	Coast	Western	0.09	0.14	0.56	-0.18	0.37
		Eastern	0.37	0.14	0.01*	0.08	0.65
	Western	Coast	-0.07	0.14	0.56	-0.35	0.20
		Eastern	0.28	0.16	0.09	-0.02	0.60
	Eastern	Coast	-0.35	0.14	0.01*	-0.63	-0.08
		Western	-0.27	0.16	0.09	-0.60	0.04

\*emerged significant within the regions ( $p < 0.05$ )

## Appendix 2

*LSD—Attractions components viable for religious tourism product development*

Component	(I) Region	(J) Region	(I-J)	SE	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
Faith	Coast	Western	0.24	0.17	0.15	-0.09	0.57
		Eastern	0.84 <sup>a</sup>	0.17	0.00	0.507	1.17
	Western	Coast	-0.24	0.17	0.15	-0.57	0.09
		Eastern	0.60 <sup>a</sup>	0.19	0.00	0.22	0.97
	Eastern	Coast	-0.82 <sup>a</sup>	0.17	0.00	-1.17	-0.51
		Western	-0.58 <sup>a</sup>	0.19	0.00	-0.97	-0.22
Activities	Coast	Western	0.65 <sup>a</sup>	0.17	0.00	0.32	0.98
		Eastern	-0.47 <sup>a</sup>	0.17	0.00	-0.81	-0.14
	Western	Coast	-0.65 <sup>a</sup>	0.17	0.00	-0.98	-0.32
		Eastern	-1.14 <sup>a</sup>	0.19	0.00	-1.51	-0.75
	Eastern	Coast	0.49 <sup>a</sup>	0.17	0.00	0.16	0.81
		Western	1.14 <sup>a</sup>	0.19	0.00	0.77	1.51
Ritual	Coast	Western	1.07 <sup>a</sup>	0.15	0.00	0.76	1.37
		Eastern	0.90 <sup>a</sup>	0.15	0.00	0.60	1.20
	Western	Coast	-1.05 <sup>a</sup>	0.15	0.00	-1.37	-0.75
		Eastern	-0.17	0.17	0.33	-0.49	0.17
	Eastern	Coast	-0.88 <sup>a</sup>	0.15	0.00	-1.20	-0.58
		Western	0.17	0.17	0.33	-0.17	0.51
Gathering	Coast	Western	0.80 <sup>a</sup>	0.14	0.00	0.53	1.07
		Eastern	0.74 <sup>a</sup>	0.14	0.00	0.47	1.01
	Western	Coast	-0.80 <sup>a</sup>	0.14	0.00	-1.07	-0.53
		Eastern	-0.04	0.15	0.70	-0.36	0.24
	Eastern	Coast	-0.74 <sup>a</sup>	0.14	0.00	-1.01	-0.47
		Western	0.06	0.16	0.70	-0.24	0.36
Religious Center	Coast	Western	0.44 <sup>a</sup>	0.17	0.01	0.11	0.78
		Eastern	0.55 <sup>a</sup>	0.17	0.00	0.22	0.88
	Western	Coast	-0.44 <sup>a</sup>	0.17	0.01	-0.76	-0.09
		Eastern	0.11	0.19	0.58	-0.27	0.48
	Eastern	Coast	-0.55 <sup>a</sup>	0.17	0.00	-0.88	-0.20
		Western	-0.09	0.19	0.58	-0.48	0.27

<sup>a</sup>The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

## Appendix 3

*LSD scores of applicable religious tourism branding strategies within regions*

Dependent	(I) Region	(J) Region	(I-J)	Std. error	95% confidence interval		
					Sig.	Lower bound	Upper bound
New brand	Coast	Western	0.40 <sup>a</sup>	0.16	0.01	0.09	0.70
		Eastern	0.14	0.15	0.36	-0.16	0.44
	Western	Coast	-0.40 <sup>a</sup>	0.16	0.01	-0.70	-0.09
		Eastern	-0.26	0.17	0.13	-0.59	0.08
	Eastern	Coast	-0.14	0.15	0.36	-0.44	0.16
		Western	0.26	0.17	0.13	-0.08	0.59
Line extension	Coast	Western	0.32 <sup>a</sup>	0.08	0.00	0.17	0.47
		Eastern	0.12	0.08	0.11	-0.03	0.27
	Western	Coast	-0.32 <sup>a</sup>	0.08	0.00	-0.47	-0.17
		Eastern	-0.20 <sup>a</sup>	0.09	0.02	-0.37	-0.03
	Eastern	Coast	-0.12	0.08	0.11	-0.27	0.03
		Western	0.20 <sup>a</sup>	0.09	0.02	0.03	0.37
Brand extension	Coast	Western	0.15	0.09	0.07	-0.01	0.32
		Eastern	-0.07	0.08	0.41	-0.24	0.10
	Western	Coast	-0.15	0.09	0.07	-0.32	0.01
		Eastern	-0.22 <sup>a</sup>	0.09	0.02	-0.41	-0.04
	Eastern	Coast	0.07	0.08	0.41	-0.10	0.24
		Western	0.22 <sup>a</sup>	0.09	0.02	0.04	0.41
Multi brand	Coast	Western	-0.07	0.17	0.68	-0.41	0.27
		Eastern	0.27	0.17	0.12	-0.07	0.60
	Western	Coast	0.07	0.17	0.68	-0.27	0.41
		Eastern	0.34	0.19	0.08	-0.04	0.71
	Eastern	Coast	-0.27	0.17	0.12	-0.60	0.07
		Western	-0.34	0.19	0.08	-0.71	0.04

<sup>a</sup>The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.