



ISSN: 0975-833X

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE MAGNITUDE AND EFFECTS OF TOURIST HARASSMENT ON REPEAT VISITS: A CASE STUDY OF KENYA'S COASTAL CITY OF MOMBASA

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 19th July, 2013
Received in revised form
25th August, 2013
Accepted 09th September 2013
Published online 10th October 2013

Key words:

Tourists, Beach boys,
Magnitude, Harassment and Effects.

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ABSTRACT

Kenya's beach tourism has been facing setbacks occasioned by a number of harassment against tourists by beach boys. The main objective of this study was therefore to assess the magnitude and effects of tourist harassment in Mombasa, Kenya from perspectives of tourists. During the survey, systematic random sampling procedure was used to select a total of 224 respondents. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and subjected to descriptive and inferential test analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Results indicated that whereas harassment was high in Mombasa, this did not significantly affect tourists' repeat visits. This study concludes that although harassment exists in Mombasa, its negative or positive effects and magnitude is purely based on the perception of tourists. Therefore, there is need to streamline and ensure orderly operations on the beach by the key players in the tourism sector in order to minimize the problem of tourists harassment.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry is a fast growing industry. World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that tourism's direct contribution to GDP in 2012 was US\$2.1 trillion and the industry directly supported 101 million jobs. The total contribution from Travel & Tourism to the world GDP grew by 3.0% in 2012. This was faster than growth of the world economy as whole (2.3%), and also faster than growth of a number of broad industries including manufacturing, financial & business services and retail (WTTC, 2013). In Kenya, tourism has been ranked as the leading economic sector to realize vision 2030 (GoK, 2007). It contributes significantly towards poverty alleviation and employment creation (GoK, 2003). According to Kenya's Ministry of Tourism and wildlife (MTW), tourism is Kenya's 3rd leading foreign exchange earner after tea and horticulture (MTW, 2012). However, Beach destinations globally continue to suffer problems of tourist harassments perpetuated by beach hawkers that roam the beaches. Harassment is annoying behaviour, which is carried to the extreme (DeAlbuquerque, 1999). Harassment usually tops the list of complaints reported by tourists following their holiday. Caribbean and in particular Jamaica being noted for having one of the highest visible incidences of harassment and crime (McDowell, 1998; McElroy, 2001; WTO, 1999) thus affecting tourism sector significantly. A survey carried out in 1997 indicated that 56% of visitors in Jamaica were harassed by vendors to purchase souvenirs and/or drugs, for sex or pushed into taxis (McDowell, 1998). In Africa, harassment are notable in countries like Morocco, Egypt, Gambia and Kenya (Alzenmann, 1998; McElroy, 2001). In Morocco the relentless harassment of visitors forced the government to clamp down by deploying special plainclothes police to imprison unlicensed tour guides and hustlers (Alzenmann, 1998; McElroy, 2001). Following a bad spate of beach muggings and other criminal activities against tourists, the Gambian government sent

police to patrol beaches (Brown, 1992). Kenya's tourism mainly relies on hinterland's wildlife and coastal beach attractions. By and large however, beach tourism constitutes the bedrock of Kenya's tourism based on the number of tourists that visit the coast for various beach related activities. In 2006 for example, coast region hotels took a share of 54.5% in bed nights occupancy followed by Nairobi with 23.5%, lodges 11.9% and other areas 12.3% (GoK, 2007). The significance of coast region as leading a tourist destination in Kenya is however likely to be threatened by the problem of harassment perpetuated by business vendors commonly referred to as beach boys (curio vendors, safari sellers, boat operators, freelance tour guides also known as reef walkers, pimps, prostitutes, drug traffickers/peddlers, fruit sellers, hair dressers, beggars, massage operators, fishermen, taxi operators and translators). In 2002 for instance, travel agents and tour operators in Malindi asked the Kenya government to end harassment involving their clients in Malindi town (Kozak, 2006; Nyaga, 2004) while expressing fear that if tourist harassment menace is not contained, then its effects may in the long run threaten beach tourism whose implications include lack of repeat visits and general loss of business to other destinations with peaceful beaches free from tourist harassment. In spite of the threats posed by tourist harassment in Kenya, there has been no systematic study carried out to establish the existence of tourist harassment along Kenya' coastal beach of Mombasa and whether harassment significantly affects repeat visits to Mombasa. In view of this, the objective of this study was set to determine the magnitude of tourist harassment by beach boys in Mombasa and its effect on tourists return visit.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study area and Sample size

This study was carried out from November, 2011 to February, 2013 in Mombasa, one of the seven counties that make up the coast province of Kenya. The study population was tourists departing from Moi International Airport Mombasa. In determining the required sample size of respondents, this study considered the number of visitor

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arrivals into Moi International Airport, Mombasa in February 2010, which stood at 26,467 visitors according to Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) (KTB, 2010). It was therefore estimated that about 8,000 visitors (approximately 30% of 26,467 visitors) stayed in Mombasa while the rests were accommodated either in north coast or south coast. According to Jeff, 2001, the desired sample size for a population of 8,000 visitors is 381 at 50% variability (Jeff, 2001).

Data collection and sampling technique

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Respondents for this study referred to all those international visitors departing from Moi International Airport, Mombasa and who had spent their holiday within Mombasa. This study therefore proceeded by first screening out the non-qualifying persons, for instance, the exclusion of those tourists who spent their holiday in other beach destinations within the coast province. The 381 tourists arriving at the departure lobby were therefore selected using a systematic random sampling method whereby after the first tourist, every 20th tourist was requested to fill a structured questionnaire until the required sample was achieved. After screening of the completed 381 questionnaires, 157 were rejected because they were incorrectly or partially filled leaving a balance of 224 valid questionnaires, which is acceptable at 30% variability (Jeff, 2001).

Data analysis

Data collected was subjected to analysis using *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) Version 12. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and cross tabulations were calculated and presented using tables and graphs. In order to test the statistical significance of the descriptive statistics, this study employed inferential statistics using Chi-square test.

RESULTS

Existence of tourist harassment

Out of the valid 215 responses, 50.2% (n=108) stated that they were harassed while 49.8% (n=107) stated that they were not harassed. A chi-square goodness of fit indicates that the sample did not differ between the members of respondents ($\chi^2 = 0.005$, d.f =1, $p = 0.946$

Magnitude of tourist harassment in Mombasa

The study sought to investigate the magnitude of tourist harassment in Mombasa. Respondents were asked to rate the magnitude of harassment on a scale of 1=very low to 5= very high. Majority of respondents (46%, n=17) reported that harassment was high in Mombasa. Other respondents were of the opinion harassment in Mombasa was neither high nor low (24%, n=25) while 17 % (n=7) were of the opinion that it was very high. A few respondents (13%, n=13) indicated that harassment levels in Mombasa was low. A mere 1% (n=1) recorded that harassment in Mombasa was very low (Figure 1).

Harassment Mitigation measures

Respondents suggested four main line of actions which they thought could best minimize tourist harassment in Mombasa. The four main suggestions included increased education and training of the beach boys (28%, n=34), vetting and licensing of beach boys (17%, n=22), strengthening of security in all areas frequented by tourists (10%, n=13) and finally relocation of beach boys to market centers (10% n=13) (Table 1).

Harassment coping mechanism

Respondents were asked to identify strategies they used in coping with the problem of tourist harassment (Figure 2). The findings suggests that the majority of respondents (88%, n=112), kept the harassers at bay by saying “no” and being firm when approached by

beach boys (9%, n=11). 3% (n=4) reported the matter with their hotel. None sought the assistance of the police.

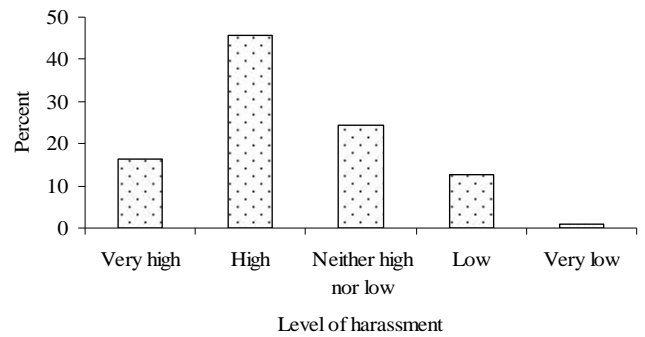


Figure 1. Tourists perceptions of level of harassment in Mombasa

Table 1. Respondents’ suggestions on ways to mitigate tourist harassment in Mombasa

Mitigating measure	Frequency	percent
Education and training	34	28
Vetting and licensing	22	17
Strengthening of security	13	10
Relocation of beach boys away from the beach	13	10
Creation of job opportunities	11	9
Ban trading on the beach	12	9
Being respectful to beach boys	7	5
Display prices for items	5	4
Organise local vendors into groups	3	2
Prior advise about their presence	3	2
Harassment is part of holiday experience	3	2
Being friendly to vendors	2	2

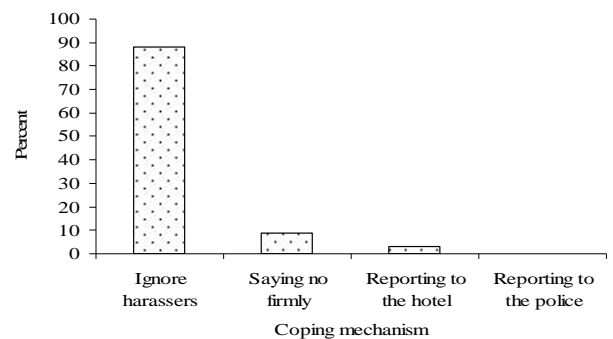


Figure 2. Respondents coping mechanism of tourist harassment

Effects of tourist harassment on return visit

It was assumed in this study that exposure of tourists to harassment is likely to influence their future intentions to make a return visit. This study therefore tested whether harassment poses a significant threat to return visit which is key to growth of tourism in Kenya. The study sought to investigate the effects of harassment on a tourist intention to make a return visit to Mombasa (Figure 3). The results suggest that majority of tourists irrespective of whether they were harassed or not would still return to Mombasa for holiday. 61% (n=65) of tourists who encountered harassment would still make a return visit to Mombasa as opposed to 8% (n=8) who had no intention to return to Mombasa. It can therefore be argued that harassment poses no threat to return visit. 31% (n=33) of those tourists who experienced harassment were not sure if they would make a return visit to Mombasa. On the other hand, 72 % (n=76) of tourists who were not harassed reported that they would return to Mombasa in future. Only 4% (n=4) of tourists who did not encounter harassment indicated that they had no plans for coming back to Mombasa. These findings suggest that over 60% of tourists would still make a comeback

whether harassed or not. What this means is that there are other factors that influence tourist decision on whether to make a return visit or not even after suffering harassment incidences in a destination. A chi-square test was then done to investigate if there were significant differences in the tourists encounter with harassment and their intention to return back to Mombasa. The results indicate that there were no significant differences ($\chi^2=3.022$, $d.f=2$, $p > 0.05$) in a tourist encounter with harassment and their intention to return back to Mombasa. Further tests were done to explore whether or not there were gender differences between tourist respondents' intention to return to Mombasa and encounter with harassment (Table 2).

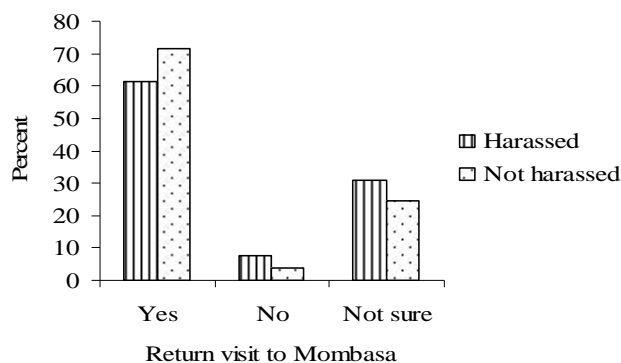


Figure 3. Tourist encounter with harassment by return visit

Table 2. Tourist encounter with harassment and intention to return back to Mombasa by gender

Encounter with harassment			Planning to return back to Mombasa			
			Yes	No	Not sure	Total
Harassed	Tourist's gender	Male	22(56%)	3(8%)	14(36%)	39(100%)
		Female	43(65%)	5(8%)	18(27%)	68(100%)
Not harassed	Tourist's gender	Male	25(83%)	1(3%)	4(14%)	30(100%)
		Female	50(70%)	3(4%)	18(26%)	72(100%)

The results suggest that female tourists (65%, $n=43$) were more likely to return back to Mombasa even after encountering harassment than their male counterparts (56%, $n=22$). Among the group of tourists who were not harassed, the intention to revisit Mombasa was high among the male tourists (83%, $n=25$) than with the female tourists (70%, $n=50$). A statistical analysis carried out however indicated that there were no relationship between tourists who were harassed and their intention to return to Kenya by gender ($\chi^2=4.368$, $d.f=6$, $p = 0.627$). Equally, there was no relationship between tourist who were not harassed and their intention to return to Kenya by gender ($\chi^2=11.103$, $d.f=6$, $p = 0.085$).

DISCUSSIONS

Existence and Magnitude of tourist harassment

Not much research on perception of harassment for a given destination has been documented except those of Caribbean countries. Studies done in Trinidad and Tobago indicated harassment levels as being somewhat serious and termed harassment as being one of the serious safety and security concerns for the government and tourism stakeholders in the two countries (Clifford, 2001). The general perception amongst tourists was that harassment in Mombasa was high. Being an attractive beach destination however, it appears that harassment in Mombasa was not considered serious by tourists. This was clearly demonstrated by the kind of coping mechanism employed by tourist when confronted by harassers. Majority of tourists preferred the option of ignoring harassers as opposed to taking legal action. Even though harassment is increasingly becoming a thorny issue with the government and the tourist stakeholders at the coast, concrete data

on the extent of the problem is lacking. Obtaining actual recorded data on harassment incidences in Kenya proved futile as the police could not avail the data. The proper picture of the extent of the problem could therefore not be established. The problem is compounded by the fact that tourist harassment is not a criminal offence by Kenyan laws. In general therefore, it can only be argued that even though the tourist perception of the problem is high, the Kenya government has not considered it a big issue worth enacting laws governing it.

Mitigation and coping mechanism of tourist harassment

It was surprising that despite being the very victim of harassment, tourists suggested a softer approach in dealing with the issue of harassment. It can be argued that despite suffering harassment incidences, tourists were more sympathetic to the poor working conditions of beach boys and were therefore against taking drastic measures such as forceful removal of beach boys from the beach. This finding is similar to studies carried by Kozak (2006) on ways to solve tourist harassment in Turkey which recommended that "vendors should allow tourists to do what they want on the beach without being harassed. Tourists were therefore of the view that the population of beach boys on the beach can easily be controlled by vetting and licensing and by strengthening of security on the beach. One elderly British tourist respondent sympathetic to beach boys blame holiday representatives for maligning the name of beach boys and suggested that there should be a formal introduction between tourist and beach boys immediately they arrive at the airport. Another female French tourist respondent commented that "beach boys were more helpful than we thought. People should not be scared to go down to meet them. I think they do a good job and by us paying them it is helping the local community and giving them jobs". It is therefore clear that tourists' pre-travel perceptions of beach boys are grossly erroneous. This may be due to wrong information supplied by their travel handlers. Arguably, well managed interactions between beach boys and tourists should in fact add value to tourist travel experience and not vice versa.

Repeat visits

A tourist return visit intention has been viewed as an important research topic both in academic and tourism industry. Many marketing and tourism studies have shown that repeat visitation has a bearing on satisfaction (Alegre, 2006; Alexandoros and Shabbar, 2005; Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Oh, 1999; Um and Chon, 2006). Tourist satisfaction in a specific destination is a significant determinant of the tourist return revisit (Baker and Crompton, 2000; Patricia *et al.*, 2006). Baker and Crompton (2000) define satisfaction as tourist emotional state after experiencing the trip. Factors determining tourist satisfaction in a given destination has over years attracted a lot attention by many scholars. Satisfaction variables such as met expectations, destination attractiveness, and general satisfaction are some of the key attributes of tourist satisfaction (Patricia *et al.*, 2006). Improving tourist satisfaction which results in increased return intentions will not only strengthens customer loyalty to a destination but will also generate more income to a destination. Factors that tend to reduce tourist satisfaction will definitely impact negatively on tourist intention to make a return visit. This study therefore on tourist harassment assumed that harassment is a dissatisfying factor that results in a reduced satisfaction of Mombasa as a destination and in so doing threatening tourists' subsequent visits to Mombasa. Overall, this study provided no significant link between harassment and tourist intention to return to Mombasa for holiday. However, the findings of this study are contrary to studies carried out by Kozak (2006) which suggested that harassment had an impact on tourist revisit intention. Kozak (2006) had argued that refusing to deal with harassment will negatively affect tourist holiday satisfaction and hence their future plans to return to a destination. Majority of the tourist were of the opinion that Mombasa is a fantastic holiday destination characterised by good climate and hospitable people.

Other factors therefore beyond harassment may have been responsible for those who indicated that they would not be coming back to Mombasa. One middle aged British female tourist interestingly noted that the problem of harassment was “the same the world over but in different degrees and therefore harassment is part of holiday experience.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study established that over half of tourists interviewed indicated that they encountered harassment along the beaches of Mombasa. In total, the findings of this study suggest that although the perception of tourists about harassment in Mombasa was high, it is not a big issue since it has no significant link with repeat visits. It also established that tourists would prefer beach boys to be trained to enhance their business and customer relation skills. Therefore, the author recommends that the authorities in Kenya should conduct regular vetting and licensing to remove illegal operators on the beach. The government should also consider enacting laws that criminalises harassment of tourists.

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