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INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION FORMALITY ON PERFORMANCE OF DOMESTIC TOURISM IN ABERDARES NATIONAL PARK

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ABSTRACT

This1study is aimed1at establishing the1influence of communication strategies on performance of domestic tourism promotion initiatives, the case of Aberdares national park. It focused on communication formality. Descriptive survey was1employed1in this research. The study population included employees of Aberdares National Park (ANP) at their head office in Nyahururu County and local community living around Aberdares National Park. A total of 170 employees are found at ANP head office in Nyahururu County. Stratified random sampling was employed as per the departments (General Administration, HR, IT and Operations, finance and accounting), a 50% sample of the total population was adopted therefore 85 respondents made up the target population. Structured questionnaires were used in data collection. Validity was measured by half split method. Pilot testing was done to ensure validity of the instrument where by a sample of 10 were chosen to confirm validity and reliability1of the1instrument. Data1was further presented1in form of tables. The return rate of 94.12% was achieved from the 80 filled questionnaires out of 85 respondents chosen each from ANP staff and domestic tourists. Results showed that Communication formality played a vital role in influencing performance of domestic tourism at A.N.P. The statement that achieved the highest mean were; ANP had well established communication media in place. The study made recommendation that A.N.P needs to more often improve communication content so as to help in changing public opinion on local tourism and that A.N.P should be able to make use of all media channels available so as to achieve maximum coverage.

KEYWORDS: *Communication Strategies, Communication Formality, Performance, Domestic Tourism Aberdares National Park*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Considering the rapid pace of change in the tourist business, it is imperative that every tourism company devise efficient ways to deal with the myriad of changes that are occurring. Taking this into consideration, companies need to devise transparent communication channels in order to entice domestic visitors. Communication may be broken down into three primary categories: verbal communication, visual communication, and written communication. Here are the three primary modes of communication. Without a doubt, communication is recognized as the most important instrument in both the administration of organizations and the management of social lives. According to Duncan and Moriarty (2008), it plays a significant part in the process of participating with any human activity with the purpose of connecting individuals and establishing connections.

According to the World Trade Council (2007), the tourist industry constitutes the largest and most rapidly expanding sector in the world. It is also the top provider of employment worldwide. The tourism sector gained $2 trillion, according to the World Bank (2009). In terms of GDP, inter-related business regions, labour market and economic welfare in general, visitor expenses have positive consequences. This hopeful influence on tourism may be seen at both the local and the macro level. Jordan's domestic tourist industry is a significant contributor to the country's economy. According to the Statistics Division (2009), this accounts for 11% of GDP in 2009, with a compound annual

growth rate (CAGR) of 16.2% between the years 2003 and 2009. Including indirect employment, it was projected that there were around 130,000 jobs in the tourist cluster, which accounts for 11% of the workforce. Tourism hires 34,405 people in the visitor cluster itself, of which 77.5% in the hotel and food sectors. In 2009, there were 72 workers just around Amman (the capital)

Since the late 1990s Chinese domestic tourism has been experiencing rapid performance. According to the CNTA, 784 million/Chinese moved throughout the country and spent RMB352.2 billion ($43.6 billion) of the population. Domestic tourism in China in recent years has outpaced foreign tourism. A number of scholars have been very concerned about the rapid performance of Chinese domestic tourism (Cai & Knutson, 1998; Wu et al., 2000). The research examined the causes or features of rapid development.

Wu and Cai (2000) guarantee that China's rapid domestic tourism performance has mainly been induced by Chinese people's per capita income performance, higher leisure time and the Chinese national economy's structural change. According to Zhang (1997), China's tourist industry is characterized by a low starting position, enormous market potential, and tight state macro control. The amount of domestic tourism achieved by China is still uncertain, however; which region should be given priority in future performance by China's tourism authority and what are both national and foreign businesses' capacity and opportunities regarding China's domestic tourism industry.

African countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, also experience considerable performance as the global tourism industry continues to expand. Despite several challenges impacting industrial performance and growth, it is essential to acknowledge that tourism continues to be one of the few feasible policy alternatives for numerous African nations, particularly in light of limits prevalent in the developed world, and should be optimized (Christie and Crompton, 2001).

In domestic and international tourism, Africa's real competitive edge. According to experts, this industry is the leading performance driver in the field of tourism in general, for example. Southern Africa remain the domestic tourism market with 79% of the overall 2010 amount being generated from domestic tourist receipts, rendering the highest contributors to tourism in South Africa. This is a direct investment in domestic tourism in South Africa, which is being encouraged (SAT 2001). Africa Domestic Tourism Agency's executive officer, Mrs Barima Adu-Asmoa, said the trend in domestic tourism has been rising gradually in the two previous decades. An incentive for investors, entrepreneurs, and policymakers to boost the domestic tourist industry in Africa is provided by the tourism sector. According to the South African Tourism (SAT) Domestic Tourism 2011 Success Survey, the percentage of individuals who had traveled inside their own country rose to 44% in the year 2011. Despite this, the number of visitors saw a significant drop, going from 29.7 million in 2010 to 26.3 million in 2011. Since 2007, domestic travel has mostly been driven by the desire to see loved ones (SAT, 2001).

Domestic tourism has become an effective tourism type in Kenya, where tourism can be amalgamated during the low international tourist arrivals. The vigorous domestic marketing is estimated to dramatically increase local tourism industry as disposable income grows steadily. Modes of communication delivery of this kind are considered to be inconspicuous in Kenya's tourist destinations. "Put litter in the bins" is an example of textual communication that serves the tourist industry. There are no pictures or other forms of visual communication that are available. Several tour guides working in Kenya's tourism business are not well-versed in the subject matter, and as a result, they provide clients and visitors with information that is insufficient. The communication skills of some individuals are lacking, while others fail to take into account the people they are speaking to.

The travel and tourism business is becoming more dependent on information that is current, relevant, and easily available. Concerning this subject of research, the information in question may pertain to the many lodging options that are accessible, the tourist destinations that are located at the location, such as Aberdares National Park, and the transportation options that are available to reach the location. When it comes to communication, there have been difficulties in Kenya, despite the fact that there are a multitude of sources of information on tourism. There are either no definitive methods for information dissemination or the information fails to reach its intended recipients.

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1.2 Statement of the Problem

For any organization to be competitive, effective communication is important. In order to offer a more effective delivery, sales, and customer support in this knowledge-intensive business, it is essential to provide information in a timely manner that is dependable and up to date (O'Brien & Fullagar 2009). The most efficient method of communicating information to visitors is required in the 21st century in order to enable travelers to make the most of the time they have available to them.

When it comes to travel and tourism, choices always include selecting one place over another. Because of this, the likelihood of a certain destination being selected by customers increases in proportion to the amount of relevant information that it has and the degree to which it is able to effectively communicate with the relevant audience. It is of the utmost importance that the information provided to customers is trustworthy, accurate, pertinent, and up to date. Due to the fact that this information is always being updated by socio-economic and political waves, it is crucial that visitors get information that is both accurate and up to date in order to ensure that they make the appropriate judgments about their tourism experiences. Due to the influence this will exert on the choice of domestic visitors interested in the park, pertinent organizations must prioritize prompt communication regarding new offerings, such as the introduction of new attractions or the establishment of appealing picnic areas.

The Aberdares National Park is a unique ecosystem characterized by steep forested ravines and open moorland. The park is located at the eastern side of East African Rift valley in Kenya covering an area of 767km2. The park has a diverse array of animal species and flora. Artificial dams inside the park have created an additional environment conducive to over 250 avian species and other water organisms. The primary animal attractions include elephants, black rhinos, warthogs, leopards, various African wildcats, bushbucks, and baboons, among others.

The number of domestic visitors that visit the park is rather modest, despite the fact that it showcases all of these distinctive qualities. Because the majority of residents are unaware of tourist attractions that are located in their immediate area, this implies that there is a breakdown in communication. Many residents in the area are unaware of possible leisure locations, such as Aberdares National Park, which is a regular occurrence across the region. As a result of the widespread perception that tourism is both costly and exotic, the public's attitude toward the activity is often negative. In light of this, tourism has been seen as an international enterprise, despite the fact that the resources upon which it is dependent are held by the people of the local community. The goal of communication should thus be to alter the way the general public views tourism.

For the general public to systematically and intentionally become interested in domestic tourism, the local tourism business needs to go through a major paradigm shift. Therefore, it is critical to change the public's view of the local tourism business so that more people are aware of and understand the opportunities and resources that this sector has. Therefore, along with the language, it is important to take into consideration the medium that was used. To study sought to answer to what extent does communication formality influence performance1of1domestic tourism in Aberdares National Park?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The information architecture theory was employed, as the study intended to1determine1the influence1of communication formality on performance1of1domestic1tourism in Aberdares National Park. Information architecture is a crucial element that significantly contributes to the development of effective communication systems. In accordance with Brancheau and Wetherbe (1986), information architecture is defined as a profile of the primary types of information that are used inside an organization and is independent of the company's human, organizational, and technical aspects. It illustrates the ways in which business operations are connected to the categories of information, as well as the ways in which the categories of information need to be linked together in order to provide assistance to decision makers.

According to Barker (2005), the most common linked information architecture for websites and intranets may be used in any information or computer system. Using this architecture is a possibility. In the year 1975, Richard Saul Wurman was the one who first used the phrase "information/architecture." Although Wurman had a background in architecture,

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he was more concerned in gathering, arranging, and conveying meaning via the use of information (Barker, 2005; White, 2004).

The prospect of building an information architecture should never be considered without first gaining an in-depth familiarity with the company's policies, goals, culture, technology, resources, and capacities. Content communication is also an essential aspect to consider. When it comes to analyzing the quantity and quality of contents that are recommended in a system, the most effective technique is to create an inventory of content, which includes things like functionality and information. Content inventories contain any content proposed in a system that currently contains the contents, who owns the content, as well as any existing relationship between the contents. Inventories of content are often used regularly to promote the transfer of content from new structures to existing. Effective information architecture is heavily dependent on people's and users' perspectives on the topic.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The hypothesized relationship between independent variable and dependent variable is summarized in figure 1.

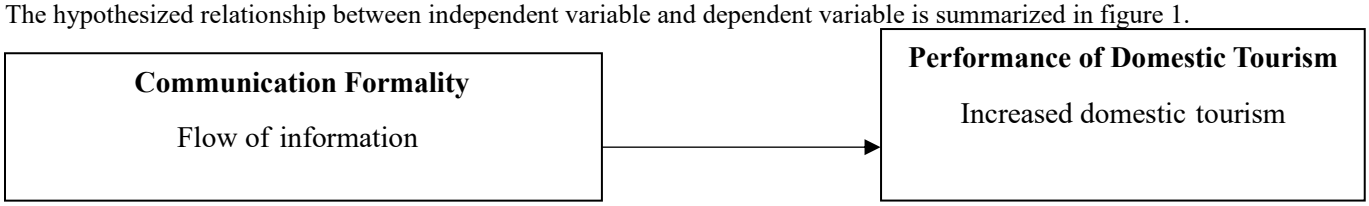


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.3 Empirical Literature

If an organization does not have formal channels of communication, it becomes more difficult for information to flow from employees to managers, managers to employees, sub-units to other sub-units, and customers to suppliers. In the channels of the organization, it is necessary to have information on performance, goals and targets, processes and practices, and it is also urged that issues be coordinated and resolved across the borders of the organization. For the purpose of enhancing both upstream and downstream communication, several strategies should be established. Systems for suggestions, reporting on performance, and polls of behavior are all part of these tactics. Some examples of downstream communication include meetings, briefings, bulletins, and videos. According to Kouzes and Posner (1995), the literature on vision highlights the significance of informal communication channels including symbols, artifacts, and rituals. These channels make the organization's basic ideas evident.

The communication in the organization, according to Lisa and Christina (2003), serves four roles: regulation, persuasion, information and integration. Church (1996) has noted that communication is often taken for granted as far as managers know that communications are essential for the success of their organizations. According to Church (1996), management and employees sometimes fail to pay attention to symmetrical communication procedures both inside and outside of their specific workplaces. That is despite the fact that managers who are good communicators are able to encourage their teams to work together more quickly and effectively on the tasks and projects that make up their businesses.

An organization's external environmental pressures will always affect the culture, view, leadership, and communication of the organization (Church, 1996). These external pressures mean that an organization needs continuous change. Communications are critical in order to maintain stability and to ensure adaptation to change during this period of continual change (Litteljohn and Peng, 2001). Managers see the ever-changing business arena confuse many participants with their company's future. This means that managers need clearly articulated communication objectives (Barrett, 2002). In order for management communications to be successful, they need to enlighten and educate all workers' managers on the strategy that has been established, as well as encourage and align employees to behave in a way that would allow them to reach the objectives and goals of the firm.

According to Katz and Kahn, who were mentioned in Church in 1996, the communications department is the most essential component of an organization on account of the fact that contemporary companies would not exist without it, as we are aware that they do exist at the current time. According to McAdam and Henderson (2003) and Philip and Finbarr (2002), Hargie and Tourish provided support for this viewpoint. They are of the opinion that the quality of

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communication inside a company is a significant aspect that has a significant role in determining the success of that enterprise. The leadership, management, organizational structure, competitiveness, technological advancements, and a great deal of other facets of a business that is always evolving will continue to undergo change. Communication is used to comprehend the direction of an organization and, as a result, to motivate staff members, as well as to gather the knowledge of workers (Smythe, 1996). Even if communication plays diverse functions at different levels for different organizations, it is often employed for these purposes.

Furthermore, Smythe (1996) contends that communication may serve to establish a knowledge of the company's expectations and ethics, and that it may also be utilized to generate a powerful and inspiring publicity campaign by putting new product and service information in line with the corporate vision. Smythe's argument is supported by the fact that communication may also be made use of to construct a publicity campaign. According to Kurt (1999), the function of communication in regards to the provision of information, the creation of understanding, and the development of ownership of corporate processes and objectives is maintained. This particular function of communication serves as the foundation for the function of communication. According to Worley and Doolen (2006), excellent communication may help enhance quality in a manufacturing setting where there are numerous changes in production and quality can be improved from time to time. As was discussed in the paragraphs that came before this one, communication is used in order to develop a knowledge of the objectives and objectives of a company. From the perspective of Barron and Nelda (1995), it is used to construct and encourage the involvement of an organization. Barron and Nelda (1995) assert that communication functions as a lubricant for the mechanisms of leadership. Effective communication should lead to the cultivation of proficient employees, customer pleasure, income enhancement, and the minimization of superfluous expenditures. Moreover, John (1997) contends that a fundamental aspect of comprehensive quality management is the continuous collection of data from customers and consumers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design:

A descriptive survey was taken into consideration for this study. A description of the behaviour, feeling, values and characteristics of things such as possible is determined and reported by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). The concept of a case study was followed. A case study design is a way to organize data by looking at the phenomena as a whole. A case study explores a particular subject or set of phenomena in detail (Kothari, 2005).

3.2 Population and Sampling Techniques

This study targeted the employees of Aberdares National Park based at their head office in Nyandarua county. A total of 170 employees in Aberdares National Park were targeted. The study targeted a sample of 85 respondents/from A.N.P staff and it also targeted 90 Domestic Tourists. Stratified random sampling was adopted in the study as per the departments (finance and accounting, IT and Operations HR, General Administration); a 50% sample of the total population was used. Thus, 85 respondents constituted the study's sample. Gay (1983) as cited by Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003) suggests that for descriptive study a sample of at least 10% - 20% of the total population is enough. The study also Sampled 90 domestic tourists living around Aberdares National Park. Data was collected from the community by use of key informants. These comprised of the area chief, sub-chief, women leaders, church elders and youth groups leaders

3.3 Instrumentation

Questionnaire formed the instrument for gathering data. The study employed semi-structured questionnaires which consisted of both open and closed ended questions. The questions covered in the questionnaire included knowledge on, communication formality, communication channel, communication frequency and communication content. The researcher handed personally the questionnaires to the respondents. To ascertain the content validity of the research instrument, the researcher consulted colleagues who help to enrich the data collection instruments. This helped the researcher to come up with instruments that would yield valid, relevant and reliable data. The reliability of the instruments were tested by use of split-half technique. The device was divided in two sub-sets (sets with peculiar numbers and even numbers). All even numerated items and unusual numerical responses were calculated separately in the pilot study. The researchers used this method to determine the internal coherence and the reliability coefficient, which vary between 0.00 (no reliability) and +1.00 (perfect reliability).

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3.4 Data Analysis and Presentation

Raw field-based data is hard to understand, and must be cleaned, coded, taped, and analysed (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Data that was gathered was compiled and analyzed for clarification using SPSS.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The goal was to find out how much of an impact formality in communication had on the success of domestic tourism at ANP. Researchers learned about A.N.P.'s communication style from domestic visitors. The results are shown in Table 1

Table 1: Communication mode Used by A.N.P

	Frequency	Percentage
Formal	18	23
Informal	20	25
Both	42	53
Total	80	100

Table 1 showed that 23% of the respondents indicated that ANP used formal modes of communication while 25% of them indicated that the park used informal modes of communication. A further 53% of the respondents indicated that the A.N.P used both formal and informal modes to communicate. The Table 2 shows the results from domestic tourists on how communication formality affected the domestic tourism performance.

Table 2: Communication Formality's influence on domestic tourism

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	52	65
No	28	35
Total	80	100

Only a lesser proportion of respondents, 35%, claimed that communication formality did not impact domestic tourism performance. It was discovered that the majority of respondents, who accounted for 65% of the total, indicated that the communication formality had an effect on the performance of domestic tourism. The data on the degree to which ANP staff members believed that communication formality had an effect on the outcomes of domestic tourism are shown in Table 3. Table 3 presents the results with their respective categories.

Table 3: Communication Formality's influence rating on performance of Domestic Tourism

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	45	56
Agree	15	19
Moderate Agree	10	13
Disagree	5	6
Strongly Disagree	5	6
Total	80	100

Table 3 showed that 56% of ANP staff strongly agreed that communication content affect the performance of domestic tourism. This is an indication that the employees felt that the quality of information released from their organization to the external environment was a crucial variable when determining the organization's success.

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Table 4: Communication Formality and domestic tourism ratings

	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Std Dev.
Official lines of communication are used by the administration of Aberdares National Park to facilitate better coordination and cooperation regarding park operations and activities.	39	20	15	10	1	1.988	0.167
Both the communication processes that are prominent symmetrically over the park and those that are present in the local working environment are the ones that the management of Aberdares National Park neglect to take into consideration	40	30	10	3	2	1.788	0.201
Organizational culture, vision, leadership, and communication are all influenced by the influences that come from the external world.	40	28	10	5	2	1.835	0.192
Formal communication from management must enlighten and educate all segments of the workforce on the tactics that have been implemented in order for it to be successful.	40	25	10	8	2	1.906	0.181
Through formal communication in ANP circumstances, one may have a better understanding of the company's expected standards and ethics.	39	20	15	10	1	1.988	0.167

Note: Strongly Agree (5), Agreed (4), Neutral (3), Disagreed (2), Strongly Disagreed (1)

Respondents agreed that official communication channels facilitate coordination and cooperation in park operations, with a high mean score of 1.988 and a low standard deviation of 0.167, indicating consensus. However, some felt that ANP management neglects local and symmetrical communication processes, with this statement receiving a lower mean score of 1.788 and a slightly higher standard deviation of 0.201. Additionally, external influences on organizational culture, vision, leadership, and communication were acknowledged, with a mean of 1.835. Formal communication was also noted as important for educating employees about implemented tactics (mean 1.906), supporting an understanding of standards and ethics across ANP (mean 1.988).

4.3 Discussion of the Results

A further objective of the research was to determine the extent to which the formality of communication has an impact on the performance of domestic tourism in A.N.P. The results of the research indicate that the A.N.P. has used both formal and informal styles of communication in their interactions with one another. The majority of ANP staff members, accounting for 54% of the total, said that communication formality had a significant impact on domestic tourism. On the other hand, domestic tourists, accounting for 55% of the total, also reported that communication formality had a significant impact on the performance of domestic tourism. This is supported by the findings of Heckman and Karim, (2005). They say that in order to maximize benefits brought by a communication process, managers in organizations must be in a position to make use of both planned and controlled approaches1to1communication. For1communication from management to be1effective, it should be in a position to inform and1educate all cadres of employees about the strategies to be adopted and it must be in a position to be a motivation on its own and align staff to act in a way that1facilitates the1fulfillment of organizational goals and objectives. Thus, ANP should ensure that formal channels of communication are enhanced.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that communication formality influence performance of domestic tourism in Aberdares National Park. The study reveals that Aberdares National Park (ANP) demonstrates effective communication practices, particularly in facilitating coordination, conveying standards, and fostering employee understanding of ethics. The high agreement scores indicate that formal communication is widely regarded as valuable within ANP. However, the lower agreement on local and symmetrical communication practices suggests room for improvement in addressing communication needs across different levels and functions within the park.

The study recommended that ANP should put in place formal modes of communication to enhance flow of information and also create better understanding. The mode used in the communication to domestic tourists should be intensified to create performance in the domestic tourism sector. Kenya Tourism Board needs to budget for marketing and promotion of Nyahururu County tourism circuit and ANP in particular.

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