

TOUR FIRMS PERCEPTION OF SAFARI VEHICLE AS AN ENHANCING FACTOR IN CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION: Case of Kenya

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore tour firm's perception of safari vehicle as an enhancing factor in customer satisfaction. It is a mechanism for facilitating transportation or movement of tourists in such a way that they obtain closer contact with pull factors such as the local people, culture, landscape, wildlife, the infrastructure as well as pertinent amenities. The study therefore sought to examine factors that affect tourists' choice of safari vehicles and their perception of the various model/design that depict the safari vehicles as a product. The main aim of the study was thus to provide a probable relationship between tourists' satisfaction and the model/design of safari vehicles as well as the amenities offered to tourists onboard these vehicles. It finally examines tourist perception of Kenya's road transport within and out of the tourist attraction.

Methodology: Exploratory research design was applied and triangulation was done as the study utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods. Three focus groups discussion were held and their response collated to provide insight to the problem. Convenience sampling method was used to select the national parks visited and self selection sampling method was used to collect data from safari guides and customers who were found willing to complete the questionnaires.

Findings: Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS, while pertinent discussions from Focus Group Discussion's were taken through content analysis. Characteristic profile of safari vehicles were established alongside multilingual capacity of tour drives, onboard amenities and vehicle fabrications and the influence of all these on customer satisfaction.

Value: This study established that there is a significant influence of the model/design of safari vehicles on tourists' satisfaction and that the various features and amenities in these vehicles may enhance travel experience and satisfaction thereby. This paper therefore recommends that manufacturers of safari vehicles should make considerations that contribute to comfort and tour experience.

Keywords: *safari vehicle, tour experience, model/design, customer satisfaction,*