

**INFLUENCE OF CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS ON COMPETITIVE
POSITION OF HELL'S GATE NATIONAL PARK AS A TOURIST
DESTINATION**

Peter Geoffrey Kariuki

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ABSTRACT

In an increasing saturated global tourism market the fundamental task for the tourist destination management, is the understanding how tourism destination competitiveness can be enhanced and sustained. Therefore tourism managers have to identify and explore competitive advantages and analyze the actual competitive positioning. The constantly, growing number of travel destination in both Kenya and the rest of the world has put a lot of pressure on the management of Hell's Gate National Park to competitively position the park in the tourist market place and to do so in sustainable manner. Hell's Gate National Park tourist competitiveness on the global market is on the decline, besides insecurity, factors responsible for the decline of Kenya's once vibrant tourism industry has not so far been established. The overall objective of this study was to assess the influence of critical success factors on competitive positioning of Hell's Gate as an international tourist destination. The specific objectives of the study was to; determine the influence of organizational image, infrastructure, accessibility and tourist attractions on competitive positioning of Hell's Gate national park as a tourist destination, find the tourists perceptions of these factors. The Critical Success Factors Concept developed by D. Ronald Daniel, was employed in identifying and assessing the criticality of the factors. The study adopted a survey research design. The design was appropriate as it enabled the researcher to explore and explain the existing status of the variables/indicators of competitiveness of the park, collect in-depth empirical data about them, and describe actions as they are or as they happen. The target population comprised of tourists visiting Hell's gate national park, from 15th February and 15th March, 2016. A sample of 97 tourists was used in this study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the 97 tourist using a systematic sampling procedure. Proportional allocation was used to divide the sample of 97 between domestic and foreign tourists. The study employed questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The Cronbach alpha was used to test for reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability and validity was enhanced through pilot study. The Ms Excel 2010 and SPSS program version 18.5 aided in performing all the statistical analyses in this study. Descriptive statistics was used to perform a set of statistical analyses including but not limited to generating frequencies, tables, graphs and percentages while cross-tabulation statistical analysis was used to establish how the frequency distributions of responses was located between the sub-groups of respondents and to collate a summary of statistics. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test the significance of observed difference between variables. A research permit was secured from National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The findings of the study was that, there is a strong positive relationship between organization image, infrastructure, organization accessibility, tourist attraction and competitive position of Hell's Gate National Park a tourist destination ($r = 0.765$, $N = 97$). The study recommends that the management of Hell's gate national park should largely focus on the key critical success factors, so as to attract more visitors to the park.