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FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMPTION OF TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES BY EMPLOYEES IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Domestic tourism has for a long time been said to be the main driving force of travel and the tourism sector in Kenya. Various studies have been done to investigate factors that influence people to consume tourism products and services, limited studies have been conducted solely on employees in the tourism and hospitality sector who normally market and sell these products to other visitors. Therefore, this study sought to establish Factors Influencing the Consumption of Tourism Products and Services by Employees in the Hospitality Sector in Kenya. The target population was 436 employees in travel agents, tour companies, and others from 3 stars to four-star hotels that were randomly selected for training in the tourism and hospitality sectors who had attended refresher course training in Kenya Utalii College. The study used a descriptive method and triangulated employing both qualitative and quantitative research methods in collecting data. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statics where Chi-square goodness of fit was applied. Content and thematic analyses were used to analyses qualitative data. Spearman correlations and multiple regression statistical techniques were used to test and investigate the relative influences of the study variables on factors influencing consumption of tourism products and services by employees. The majority (65%) were males with 35% being females. Sixty-six percent were over 30 years old with the majority (80%) having worked in the tourism sectors for less than 15 years. The majority (94%) were earning less than USD 1000 per month with a minority (6%) earning more than USD 1000. The study found out that 42% of employees sometimes have a holiday with 43% $(\gamma 2=72, df = 4, p < 0.05)$ attesting that their family members always accompany them when having a holiday. While the remaining 58 % said they hardly have any holiday reasons being (81%) lack of disposable income ($\chi 2=746$, df =3, p<0.05) 61% due to family commitments ($\chi 2=318$, df =3, p<0.05). A review of the regression coefficients reveals that most of the factors that hinder employees from having a holiday were significant with lack of disposable money being the strongest determinant factor on whether respondents have a holiday or not (β =0.51) in addition, all the variables on use of services/facilities once employees go for the holiday were significant with relaxing on the beach has the strongest way factor (β =0.184), The majority (80%) of the respondents use the distance of the destination in a selection of holiday destination ($\chi 2=285$, df =3, p<0.05) close to 76% ($\chi^{2=156}$, df =3, p<0.05) who indicated the availability of public transport influence their destination in Kenya.

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Keyword: Consumption, Tourism Products, Employees, Hospitality Sector.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The biggest market shares of visitors to Kenya's tourist arrivals remain international visitors.

Despite many scholars finding that domestics tourists support destinations in terms of visitation, this has not been fully realized in Kenya. Although many studies have been done to investigate factors that influence people to consume tourism products and services, limited studies have been dedicated exclusively to employees in the tourism and hospitality sector who normally market and sell these products to other visitors. The general objectives of this study were therefore to examine factors influencing the consumption of tourism products and services by employees in the tourism and hospitality sector. The study further investigated, factors hindering tourism and hospitality employees from having a holiday in Kenya, investigate factors used in the selection of a holiday destination, and finally, tourism products and services consumed by visitors in their destination. The study is grounded on Uncertainty Reduction Theory which asserts that people need to reduce uncertainty about others by gaining information about them (Berger, 1982). The information gained can then be used to predict others' behaviour. In this case, the researcher assumes that the more information visitors have about a destination the easier it is for them to decide on whether to visit a destination, as prior information reduces the uncertainty. This applies to both domestic and international tourists

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Information visitors have about a destination influences their choice of travel. Employees in the travel and tourism industry in any country form a big market share of the potential domestic travellers in a destination. Domestic tourism has for a long time been said to be the main driving force of Travel and The tourism sector (Lukin, et al., 2018; Aratuo, 2019; Li, 2019; and Kabote, et al., 2019). In Kenya, it accounted for 4,559,000 in 2018 bed occupancy which was more than 50% of the total bed occupancy in 2018(Economic survey 2019). Domestic travel supports and develops local and national economies provide a rationale for infrastructure upgrading disperses visitors geographically across regions and to least-visited rural areas, bridges the seasonality gap, create employment opportunities, and cushions destinations in times of crises (COVID, 2020; Wu, et al., 2000 and Dwyer, 2020). The domestic tourism industry can generate substantial visitor spending contributing to the industry's overall sustainability, financial resilience, and functionality in off-season months (Kwoba, 2018; Cheung, et al., 2019; Arbulú, et al., 2021; Holloway, 2019; and Sun, 2020).

In Kenya, the number of international visitor arrivals increased to 2,027.7 thousand in 2018, against a target of 2,100 thousand by 2020 while at the same time, domestic tourism grew from 3,645,144 in 2017 to 3,974,243 in 2018, recording a 9.03% growth (Economic survey 2019). Compared to the global market, domestic travel and tourism spending was US\$ 3,971 billion in 2017 where China and the USA accounted for over 40% of the world's total domestic travel and tourism spending (WTTC, 2018) In other countries, domestic tourism spending account for more than 50% of the total Travel & Tourism spending Pham, et al.,2019 and Pezeshki, 2019). Kenya has put a lot of effort into marketing domestic tourism through Kenya Tourist Board (KTB) a parastatal responsible for marketing tourism for the

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country. KTB has continued to actively develop new marketing campaigns for the domestic tourism industry, launching the 'Tembea Kenya and Magical Kenya' hashtags to encourage Kenyans to explore their own country.

Despite all the effort, the numbers of Kenya citizens and residents visiting travelling for holidays remain low. This study argues that if the front-line personnel who work in the tourism and hospitality industry do not consume the same products and services they sell to the world, there is a need to understand underlying factors that hinder them from travelling. When selling a tourism product or service that you have not personally interacted with, it is very difficult to convince visitors to purchase the same product. As available literature has shown that tourism products and services are associated with a lot of uncertainty and perceived risks due to intangibility nature, therefore requiring those involved to have enough facts that would help them in overcoming the sales resistance and convince potential visitors to purchase the holiday (Chiu.,2019; Dayour., 2019; Koc.,2019 and Kim, 2019).

Therefore, it is paramount to appreciate the holiday buying process of Kenya's tourism product specifically by those employed in the industry. The study postulated that the tourism sectors should facilitate incentives that would make it possible for those working in the tourism industry to travel and know the products they have in the destination. This can be done with the involvement of all frontline stakeholders such as tour operators and accommodation providers. Familiarization tours have been used in the tourism industry where tour packages are organized mostly targeting those from the supply countries, marketing, and sales agents, and anybody who can influence demand in a destination. Their main objective is to enable participants to sample the available products and sometimes use their feedback in improving the product and service. This is sometimes seen when new products are launched, or when an airline has opened a new route or even a new attraction has been developed or repackaged. This has been seen to increase the level of awareness to a destination and increase sales volume (Dai., et al., 2019; Ginaya., et al., 2019; Chacko., 1993; Chon, et al., 1993 and McKercher., et al., 2003).

3.0 STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive method and triangulated both qualitative and quantitative research methods in collecting data. The target population was 436 employees in the tourism and hospitality sectors who had attended refresher course training in Kenya Utalii College. Quantitative data was collected using researcher-administered questionnaires while qualitative data was collected by interviewing purposefully selected respondents. These were employees in travel agents, tour companies, and others from 3 stars to four-star hotels that were randomly selected for training. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statics where Chi-square goodness of fit to test the significance of observed and expected frequency while Chi-square cross tabulation was used to test the dependence of respondents attributes on the independent variables. Content and thematic analyses were used to analyses qualitative data. Spearman correlations between all the relevant study variables were calculated to investigate the degree of correlation as well as the direction of the correlation. Besides, multiple regression statistical techniques were used to test and investigate the relative influences of the study variables on factors influencing consumption of tourism products and

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services by employees in the tourism and hospitality sector. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of data collection tools which was 0.936 and was considered efficient

3.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Respondent's profile

This study is composed of 436 employees from the tourism industry in Kenya working in different departments in hotel and tour companies from different regions in the country. They had been randomly selected to attend various refresher courses offered in Kenya Utalii College. The majority (65%) were males with 35% being females. Sixty-six percent were over 30 years old with the majority (80%) having worked in the tourism sectors for less than 15 years. The majority (94%) were earning less than USD 1000 per month with a minority (6%) earning more than USD 1000.

3.2 Findings on factors that hinder respondents from having a holiday

The study sought to investigate how many respondents travel within the country to enjoy their normally selling attraction. About 42% of them sometimes have a holiday while the remaining 58 % said they hardly have any holiday. This means that majority of employees in the tourism industry do not consume what they sell to the visitors.

Follow-up questions on why the majority don't have any holiday indicated that there was the various reason the leading one being (81%) lack of disposable income($\chi 2=746$, df =3, p<0.05) 61% due to family commitments ($\chi 2=318$, df =3, p<0.05), 52% lack of holiday time ($\chi 2=230$, df =3, p<0.05), and 56% of the respondents said that holiday time is a busy season for most of them at their place of work since most of them worked in the tourism industry Table 1.1. Others said that they lacked affordable accommodation (62%) with only the minority (15%) who did not know where to visit for a holiday (Table 1).

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure	Chi- square goodness of fit	
Lack of disposable money	81	5	3	$\chi^2 = 746, df$ =3, p<0.05	The majority of respondents do not travel for a holiday due to a lack of disposable income
Lack of affordable accommodation	62	21	5	χ^2 342,df =3, p<0.05	The majority of respondents do not travel for a holiday due to a lack of affordable accommodation
Family commitments	61	21	4	$\chi^2 = 318, df$ =3, p<0.05	The majority of respondents do not travel for a holiday due

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					to family commitments
Timing of employees leave days	56	25	6	$\chi^2 = 258, df$ =3, p<0.05	The majority of respondents do not travel for a holiday due to holiday timing and school holidays
Lack of incentives such as discounts	53	25	9	$\chi^2 = 361, df$ =3, p<0.05	The majority of respondents do not travel for a holiday due to a lack of incentives from employers
Lack of holiday time	52	30	5	χ ² =230,df =3, p<0.05	The majority of respondents do not travel for a holiday due to a lack of affordable accommodation
Lack of interest	29	46	10	$\chi^2 = 145, df$ =3, p<0.05	A minority of respondents do not travel for a holiday due to a lack of interest
Not knowing where to go	15	56	10	$\chi^2 = 248, df$ =3, p<0.05	A minority of respondents do not travel for a holiday as they don't know where to go for a holiday

3.2.1 Implication to the tour operators and other stakeholders

The study found among the factors that hinder employees in tourism and hospitality from having a holiday was; lack of disposable income where the majority (73%) earn between 250-500 USD per month, lack of affordable accommodation targeting domestic group travel as most respondents travel with their families, poor holiday timing as most of the employees work during the school holiday months of April, August and December and lack of incentive from their employers. Tour companies should organize a special subsidized tour package targeting these categories of domestic holiday that is available during the low seasons.

The study also noted that although all respondents were working in the tourism industry 56% did not know a destination where they can go for a holiday that suits their interest and is within their budget.

The study also noted that most respondents had never visited some of the popular destinations some of which were less than 10 km from their offices. The majority 54% had never toured Karura forest though located within the Nairobi municipality,43% never been to Masai Mara, 35% never been to the Bomas of Kenya cultural heritage site, 42% never been to national archives 19% never visited Mombasa,56% never been to Aberdare national park and 34% been to Nairobi national park.

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The finding implies that there is a big niche market for this category of employees that marketers can target, bearing in mind their special needs. Mombasa was the most popular destination where more than 80% of respondents had visited. The main reason was that the destination was accessible by air, road using public and private transport, by rail using the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) and has a variety of accommodation from which respondents would choose according to their budget. Is it possible that most respondents have never sampled the products or services they sell? Yes. In general, the study noted that most respondents do not have personal experience of the destination they sell to another visitor.

3.3.2 Multiple Regression analysis results: Relationship between Employee hindrances to having a holiday on parameters of the study.

Table 1.2 illustrates that the linear combination of the 10 independent variables in the model significantly predicts Employee hindrances to visit any tourist attraction during their holiday. The regression analysis structural model fitted was significant (F(10,422) = 7.342, p <0.05, R=0505, R2 = 0.255). This model accounts for 25.5% of the variance in the Employee hindrances to visit any tourist attraction during the holiday. This means that at least one of the independent variables is a significant predictor of the dependent variable (Employees who do not visit any tourist attraction during the holiday) SeeTable 2.

	В	SE	В	t	sig.
(Constant)	9.822	8.139		1.207	0.228
Lack of disposable money	0.671	0.113	0.51	5.945	0.000***
Lack of affordable accommodation	0.447	0.084	0.295	5.335	0.000***
Family commitments	0.315	0.087	0.24	3.617	0.000***
Timing of employees leave days	0.237	0.074	0.268	3.199	0.002***
Lack of incentives such as discounts	0.141	0.051	0.183	2.734	0.007***
Lack of holiday time	0.114	0.047	0.122	2.449	0.015**
Lack of interest	0.029	0.142	0.027	0.205	0.838
Not knowing where to go	0.128	0.083	0.235	1.548	0.123

 Table 2: Relationship between Employee hindrances to having a holiday on parameters of the study.

R2 = 0255, R = 0.505

F-value = 7.342*

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Note: *** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10

A review of the regression coefficients reveals that most of the variables are factors that hinder employees from having a holiday. The beta weights (β =0.51), indicate that lack of disposable money the strongest determinant factor on whether respondents have a holiday or not (Table 2).

3.4 Factors used in the selection of destination visited for the holiday

The study wanted to understand what factors influence destination selections for those working in the tourism industry. The majority (80%) of the respondents use the distance of the destination in a selection of holiday destination ($\chi 2=285$, df =3, p<0.05) as compared to 76% ($\chi 2=156$, df =3, p<0.05) who indicated the availability of public transport influence their destination in Kenya. likewise, a majority (76%) would select a destination that has wildlife and availability (88%) of the low cost of accommodation. To the others, 65% would select a destination that allows the use of their personal or private transportation ($\chi 2=58$, df =3, p<0.05).

Results of the Spearman correlation between employees selection of holiday destination indicated a significant positive association with all the factors considered for holiday destination selection for example accommodation cost of the destination in, (rs(430) = 0.101, p < .05); the Safety of the destination (rs(430) = 0.165, p < .05); and distance to the destination (rs(430) = 0.445, p < .05) See Table 3.

3.4.1 Importance of findings to the tour operators

The study found that when planning itineraries for the domestic market, it is important for the tour operator to note that the most important variables in the selection of visitors destination in the country are: the distance of the destination, whether the destination can be accessed using public and private transport, availability of affordable accommodation for the locals, variety of wildlife in the destination and the culture of the local community of the destination. These variables significantly influenced the destination choice for employees in tourism and hospitality as given in table 3.

Tour operators should not shy organizing city tours to domestic visitors who might have travelled to the rural areas of the country as the research found that most of the respondents have not visited these attractions such as the Karura Forest National Museum and National Archive, Jamhuri Park, and Nairobi national park where one can have a day excursion

Very	Not	Chi- Square	Spearma n	Conclusion factors used in destination selection
Importa nt	Importa nt	C 171	Correlati on	

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	%	%			
Accommodation cost of the destination	88	2	χ2=488,df =3, p<0.05	rs(430) =0 .101, p < .05	Accommodation costs significantly influence the destination choice of visitors
Cost of the destination	87	3		rs(430) = 0.206, p < .05	Destination cost significantly influence the selection
Safety of the destination	87	2		rs(430) = 0.165, p < .05	Destination safety significantly influe nce the choice of holiday
Distance to the destination	80	9	χ2=285,df =3, p<0.05		Destination distance significantly infl uence where visitors go on a holiday
Climate of the destination	78	11		rs(430) =0.285, p < .05	climate significantly influence destination choice
Availability of public transportat ion	76	13	χ2=156,df =3, p<0.05	rs(430) =0.352, p < .05	Availability of public significantly influ ence destination choice of visitors
Wildlife found in the destination	76	10	χ2=125,df =3, p<0.05	rs(430) =0.150, p < .05	Wildlife significantly infl uence the destination choice of visitors
Availability of private transporta tion	65	21	χ2=58,df =3, p<0.05	rs(430) =0.218, p < .05	Availability of private and public transportation influence destination choice of visitors
Culture of people in the destination	57	30	χ2=52,df =3, p<0.05	rs(430) =0.155, p < .05	Local community culture significantly influ ence destination choice of visitors

3.5 Relationship between respondent attributes and reason for selecting a destination

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This study found that the respondent's age, work experience, education level significantly influence the selection of the destination visited based on the availability of public transportations. Likewise, respondents' work experience, education level significantly influence the selection of the destination visited based on cost. Table 4.

Table4:	Relationship	between	respondent	attributes	and	reason	for	selecting	a
destinatio	n								

Used in t	ents attributes he selection of a destination	Gender Chi-Squa	Work experience re Cross Tabula	Conclusions on the relationship between respondent attributes and reason for selecting a destination		
i.	The destination being served by public transportation		$\chi^2 = 22, df$ =12, p<0.05	$\chi^2 = 24, df$ =12, p<0.05	Respondents' work experience, education level,	
ii.	Cost of the destination when traveling as a family		$\chi^2 = 28, df$ =12, p<0.05	$\chi^2 = 26, df$ =12, p<0.05	significantly influenced the selection of destinations that were served by public transportation and which were affordable for those traveling as a family.	
iii.	Variety of Wildlife found in a destination	$\chi^2 = 13, df$ =6, p<0.05	$\chi^2 = 26, df$ =12, p<0.05		There was a significant relationship between respondents gender and work experience for those whose main reason in	
iv.	Climate of the destination	$\chi^2 = 16, df$ =6, p<0.05	χ ² =34,df =12, p<0.05			
v.	Culture of people in the destination	$\chi^2 = 12, df$ =6, p<0.05			selecting a destination was the climate safety and culture of the people of the destination and availability of wildlife significant influence	

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					on respondents gender, work experience, and selection of the destination visited based on culture
vi.	Safety of the destination	χ ² =12,df =6, p<0.05	χ ² =24,df 12, p<0.05		Respondents' gender and, work experience significantly influenced the Choice of the destination visited based on perceived safety.
v	Availability of private transportation	χ ² =17,df =6, p<0.05	χ ² =32,df 12, p<0.05	χ ² =44,df =12, p<0.05	Gender and work experience, significantly influenced the selection of the destination visited based on the availability of private transportation

3.6 How employees in the tourism industry have their holiday

The study further wanted to understand how the respondents travel during the holiday. Several options were given being; travelling with members of the family, travelling with friends travelling with members of the religion for those travelling for religious reasons, and finally alone. Majority of the respondents 43% (χ 2=72, df =4, p<0.05) said that their family members always accompany them when having a holiday. This means that they would only purchase a tour package suitable for a family right from the type of transportation offered to a category of the accommodation offered. In most cases, the parents would be responsible for taking care of tour package cost meaning that the cost of the destination is of importance in the choice of where to go. The study also illustrated that a higher percentage of females (51%) take their holiday with their family as compared to the male where only 43 % of them travel with their family members. Likewise, a bigger percentage of female's respondents (50%) agreed that sometimes they are accompanied by their friends and relatives while on holiday as compared to (43%) of male counterpart meaning that females have a higher preference for a group holiday as compared to males

This is followed by about 41% (χ 2=128, df =4, p<0.05) who combine both family members and friends. A sizable numbers (22%) of (χ 2=85, df =4, p<0.05) travel alone. This means that

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the respondent's gender has more influence on where to have a holiday with family or not. The study also noted that the respondent's marital status also influenced whether to have a holiday as a group or not with a higher percentage of those married preferring group holidays as compared to the singles Table 5.

		YES	NO	Chi-square goodness of fit	Conclusion
		%			
a)	I travel with Family members	43	8	χ ² =72,df=4, p<0.05	The majority of respondents travel with
b)	Travel with family and friends	41	8	$\chi^2 = 128, df = p < 0.05$	family members or with friends
c)	Travel with religious group	19	21	χ ² =119,d=4,p<0.05	
d)	Travel alone	22	22	χ ² =85,df =4, p<0.05	The minority of respondents either travel
e)	With familiarization group members	24	16	χ ² =107,df=4,p<0.05	alone or with members of their religious group

Table 5: How res	pondent in touris	m and hospitality	travel for a holiday
	point in touris	m and nospitanty	that the for a monutary

3.6.1 Activities employees engage in whilst on Holiday

The study investigated various activities that the respondents engage in a holiday. As all the respondents were employees of the tourism industry, the study expected that as visitors they always enjoy extra activities such as the use of health spa, Jacuzzi and beauty parlour, swimming pool, gymnasium, bars and restaurant, and swim or just relax at the beach for those travelling in Mombasa. Amongst these activities, the majority (56%) of the respondents use the bar ($\chi 2=22$, df =3, p<0.05) and walking along the beach as compared to 53% who use the swimming pool ($\chi 2=18$, df =3, p<0.05), 49% use health and beauty parlour with the minority (34%) who use the gymnasium ($\chi 2=72$, df =3, p<0.05). Since all respondents in the study were local Kenyans the study recommends that marketers should share in advance facilities and services offers in destinations so that customers can know afront to increase visitor's experience (Table 6).

Table 6: Activities respondent engage while on holiday

	Activity visitors take while on holiday	Always	Not at all	Chi-square goodness of fit	conclusion
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a.	Use of health and beauty parlor	49	31	$\chi^2 = 31, df$ =3, p<0.05	The majority of visitors do not use wellness centers
b.	Use of swimming pool	53	25	$\chi^2 = 18, df$ =3, p<0.05	The majority of visitors swim when on holiday
с.	Use of gymnasium	34	31	$\chi^2 = 72, df$ =3, p<0.05	The majority of visitors use the gym while on holiday
d.	Use of conference facility	40	20	$\chi^2 = 116, df$ =3, p<0.05	Conference facilities are sometimes used while on business travel
e.	Use of bar for drinks	56	20	$\chi^2 = 22, df$ =3, p<0.05	The majority of visitors use bars while on holiday
f.	Relax on the beach	56	40	$\chi^2 = 134, df$ =3, p<0.05	The majority of visitors relax on the beach while on holiday

Table 7 illustrates that the linear combination of the six independent variables in the model significantly predicts how employees in the tourism industry have their holiday to visit any tourist attraction during the holiday. The regression analysis structural model fitted was significant (F(6,426) = 2.678, p =0.021, R=0.179, R2 = 0.032. This model accounts for 3.2% of the variance in how employees in the tourism industry have their holiday. This means that that at least one of the independent variables is a significant predictor reason for having a holiday.

Table 7: Regression Analysis of how employees in the tourism industry utilize services and facilities when on their holiday

	В	SE	β	Т	sig.
(Constant)	70.579	12.944		5.453	0
Use of health and beauty pallor	0.052	0.154	0.024	0.338	0.035**
Use of swimming pool	0.053	0.112	0.026	0.472	0.037**
Use of gymnasium	0.599	0.291	0.196	2.061	0.040**
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Use of conference facility	0.246	0.195	0.103	1.259	0.0209**
Relax on the beach	0.371	0.138	0.184	2.678	0.008***
R2 = 0.179					
R = 0.505					
F-value = 2.678**					
Note: *** p < .01, ** p < .05, *	p < .10				

A review of the regression coefficients reveals that all the variables on use of services/facilities once employees go for holiday. The beta weights (β =0.184), indicate that Relax on the beach has the strongest way factor on the use of services/facilities once employees go on holiday (Table 7).

4.0 STUDY CONCLUSIONS

The study noted that the majority of employees in the hospitality sector do not have travel for holidays due to a lack of disposable income, lack of affordable accommodation, family commitments during school holidays as most of them travel to their rural homes, lack of information on the existence of incentives and discounts by services providers, and destinations attractions, while most of them work during holidays and festive seasons and yet they would desire to travel with their family members.

Those employees who travel for a holiday use various factors in the selection of the destination which includes; whether the destination is served by public transportation, cost of the destination when travelling as a family, wildlife found in a destination, the climate of the destination, and perceived safety of the destination

The majority of visitors do not use wellness centers while on holiday. A good number of visitors desire accommodations with a swimming pool and gym, bars and restaurants, and beach where they relax as the children swim or walk along the beach.

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