**TourKenya: A mobile application that helps you find places to visit.**

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Tourism is seen as a popular global leisure activity. It can be domestic or international. Tourism has both incoming and outgoing implications on a country's balance of payments.1 Today tourism is a major source of income for many countries, and affects the economy of both the source and host countries. In Kenya, Tourism is currently the second largest source of foreign exchange revenue followed by agriculture. Kenya receives an estimated 2 million visitors every year (World Bank, 2016). As a country, Kenya is bestowed with several endearing attraction sites.

Through improved Information, Communication and Technology the world has become a global village and there is so much awareness due to media coverage, of world events and places, entertainment, TV documentaries, film and Education. Advances in travel technology provide a wider range of ways to travel. Transport has become quickier, easier and cheaper enabling free movement of goods and services in the shortest time possible. Tourists are increasingly using mobile applications to locate and find out information about places they could visit.

# **Statement of the research problem**

Finding information about places to visit and attractions to see can be daunting to a first time traveller. Most of the information available in various media sources or online publications is either biased towards marketing certain destinations, or completely outdated.

This study seeks to show how the use of a mobile application to find and (Baines, 1998) locate tourism destinations can help tremendously improve tourist visits to various places.

# **Research Objectives**

1. To find out the various ways tourists use to locate tourist attractions.
2. To find out the role of technology in tourism.
3. To find out how a mobile application be used to help visitors locate tourism sites.
4. To find out how the above application be validated.

# **Research Objectives**

1. What are the various ways tourists use to locate tourist attractions?
2. What is the role of technology in tourism?
3. How can a mobile application be used to help visitors locate tourism sites?
4. How can the above application be validated?

# **Scope and Limitations**

This research will only focus on the tourism sector in Kenya. The study will only focus on a mobile application that runs and operates on the iOS operating system from Apple.

# **Literature Review**

This section will review existing literature on the influence of mainstream media and their impact on tourism with special emphasis on Kenya. The country has been a victim of several terror attacks targeting international tourists and political turmoil witnessed in 2007-2008. As a result, foreign governments have issued travel advisories to Kenya warning their citizens against travelling to the East African nation. This has had serious consequences not only to the sector but also to the economy as a whole since the industry is a key contributor to the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Analysts have long noted that terrorism being a political endeavor seeks wide media and online coverage. This can easily be obtained free of charge by targeting international tourists. The online media is observed to give incidents of terror attacks on foreigners a lot of attention which in one way or the other portrays a negative perspective about various destinations in the world (Kennepohl, 1999).

It has to be noted however that the media also happens to be a major source of credible information about various natural events such as the great wildebeest migration of the Serengeti plains in Tanzania. In particular, the presence and power of media in disseminating information about events and places to be at any time cannot be underscored. The main challenge however is that such information tends to be biased, either intentionally or otherwise, to the desires of the reporting media. In other words, what a media house places emphasis on may not be of any importance or interest whatsoever to specific tourists. Places which have unique attractive features may end up never receiving as much publicity as is required (Ojala).

Against this background, the use of a mobile application which provides authoritative data to tourists can greatly improve the type and amount of information users receive. This application, at its core, will not only allow tourists to find attraction sites within their vicinity, but will provide non-biased details, leaving the decision whether to or not to visit to the discretion of the user (Derek, 1999).

# **Tourism and technology**

As Anna (Baines, 1998) the technology industry may have been slow to see the potential of technology, but is now embracing it eagerly. Tourism is an activity of great importance both economically and in terms of the pleasure it gives to holidaymakers worldwide. Nearly all individuals in the western world take some sort of holiday away from home every year, although the number of days differs across and within different countries. Tourism is also an activity that can divide rich and poor, through a negative or parasitical effect that damages places: ‘touristification’ (Apostolopoulos et al., 1996). As one would expect, there is a large body of literature that explores these issues from economic, cultural, environmental and other perspectives (Pearce, 1995; Urry, 1995; Tribe, 1999).

Previous tourism studies have noted that insufficient attention has been paid to the experience and practices of the tourist. Instead, most work has focused on the effects of tourism. Fodness and Murray comment that “detailed knowledge of the basis of actual tourist behaviour [is] lacking” (Fodness, 1999) and (Aramberri, 2001) argues that much tourism research “does not help to explain the nature of modern mass tourism” (Aramberri, 2001). The work that has looked in most detail at tourist practice has been the “tourist information seeking” literature ( (Snepenger, 1990); (Moore, 1995). This literature has tended to avoid detailed qualitative description, focusing more on broad categorizations of tourist practice and questionnaire–based studies (Riley, 1999). This lack of detailed observations presents a number of problems for the design of technologies. Specifically, there is a lack of understanding of the methods tourists use to choose the places to visit, how they get information about these places and how they arrange their various activities during their travel.

# **Tourist problems**

We start by outlining the problems which tourists face on their holidays. Although these observations come from our fieldwork, we will refrain from discussing the fieldwork in depth until the next section. The first, seemingly straightforward, problem which tourists face in an unfamiliar place is what to do. Unlike work, where tasks are often determined (in part) by an overall goal or by other people’s plans, tourism is much more open-ended. Tourism encompasses a broad range of activities such as sightseeing, relaxing, shopping, visiting friends and visiting family. Indeed, since tourism can be part of business travel, the boundary between work and leisure is often blurred. Yet whatever tourists do, they must at least make some sort of decision about what to do, often in advance.

This decision must take into account the time it takes to get to different places, as well as balancing the attraction of different sites. Even when one arrives at a tourist ‘attraction’ this problem reappears at a different scale, e.g. which parts of a large museum to visit?

Along with the question of what to do, tourists need to work out how they are going to do these different activities. When one reaches a tourist site one has to be careful about how one acts, since behavioral norms can be different in different countries. Ignorance about local customs is an oft mocked feature of tourists.

Along with what and how, tourists have to manage when they do different activities. Tourism is usually constrained in time, because of the need to return home. Time is also a problem in that tourists work with organizations that provide services: opening times must be co-ordinated with the times of public transport, such as trains or buses. This is compounded by the ‘pre–booking problem’. Many facilities require pre–booking, so decisions need to be made before one has been to a place.

These two problems in turn interact with our third tourist problem: finding where things are. In visiting a city many of the attractions are distributed around the city. There is therefore a need to minimize the times spend travelling between places, understand what one might see and do along the way, and group together attractions which are close together.

However, it is important to note that while these are problems from an observer’s perspective, they are rarely a negative part of tourism. In particular, these are the invaluable part of tourism. Indeed, part of the joy and fun of travelling is going to new places, interacting with new cultures and taking all these experiences home.

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