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Product Offering Diversification: A Qualitative SWOT Analysis on Wedding Tourism in Kenya

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PRODUCT OFFERING DIVERSIFICATION: A QUALITATIVE
SWOT ANALYSIS ON WEDDING TOURISM IN KENYA

A Masters Thesis
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Master of Arts, Tourism Studies

By
Caroline Ngarachu
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PRODUCT OFFERING DIVERSIFICATION: A QUALITATIVE SWOT

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ABSTRACT

Wedding tourism is a developing service product in the tourism industry and it is creating an extremely competitive market segment as destinations and their service providers hope to gain a share of this niche segment. To be competitive, destinations need to be innovative in responding to the growing demands of tourists. The wedding tourism product is one such demand. As Shi (2014) points out, wedding tourism worldwide is a $28 billion industry. Nonetheless, research on this field is limited and insufficient. In Kenya, the tourism sector is a highly strategic sector for the Kenyan economy. Therefore, this thesis presents a SWOT analysis on the diversification of the wedding tourism product in Kenya to offer destination wedding packages to the foreign market in addition to the country’s already popular honeymoon and engagement packages. The thesis at hand will look at the strategic decisions of Kenyan hotels, lodges and resorts to enter the international wedding market through an analysis of interviews conducted with four professionals, each from one of the above mentioned groups of hospitality suppliers. The thesis will also use secondary data to highlight the Kenya Tourism Board’s involvement in promoting diversification of wedding tourism. It will conclude by providing a model which shows how the necessity to remain competitive leads to an improved system (Burt et al, 2014). This research refers to it as the ‘Solution Diversification Model’.

KEYWORDS: wedding tourism, destination weddings, diversification, international tourist market, events tourism, SWOT analysis,
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INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Wedding tourism has become increasingly popular in recent years (Major et al., 2010 p.249), making the wedding destination a highly sought after commodity in the service industry. The major wedding tourism venue suppliers, i.e. hotels, lodges and resorts, are becoming increasingly proactive in their wedding business by putting together packages and offering more services for those seeking wedding facilities (Terrell, 2012). These suppliers are surrounded with a market that constantly forces them to seek competitive advantage, efficiency and profitable ways to differentiate their wedding product. Honeymooners, destination weddings, and romantic tourism comprises a $28 billion industry worldwide (Shi, 2014). This tourism market of travelling internationally for the purpose of getting married includes destination wedding couples and their guests as well as honeymoon tourists (Breg, 2013). A destination wedding is defined as a wedding that takes place in a location other than the bride and groom’s home, typically a popular tourist destination. The couple is often accompanied by their friends and family who are guests at their wedding, and they then stay at the destination. The couple, usually, also has their honeymoon at the destination. The main wedding tourism market segments can be divided into engagements, honeymoons and destination weddings which include: first time marriages, re-marriages, same-sex marriages, commitment ceremonies, and renewal of vows (Major et al, 2010 p.252).

Tourism is becoming increasingly important for many countries as it is a major source of employment and it generates a significant amount of foreign exchange. Therefore, destinations that have a narrow tourism product experience problems which become more pronounced due to the dynamic global environment which can quickly make yesterday’s winning strategies out of date (Kotler et al, 1999). For instance India being a cultural destination offering a unique experience, believed that they had a definite tourist market. However, their infrastructure, and numerous formalities associated with visiting the country were pushing tourists away (Arlene, 2013). Therefore, the destination had to look at development and diversification concepts that would focus on improving their existing product range as well as offering new products in order to sustain and increase their customer base (Arlene 2013). For Kenya, this narrow product offering dilemma raised similar concerns as the core tourism products which had focused on beach and safari holidays were slowly getting to a state of plateau in the maturity stage and hence approaching the decline stage as per the product life cycle. These circumstances created the need for Kenya to transition and diversify their product offering in order to have positive consequences for both the tourists and the service providers. The service
suppliers offered a wider product range which a variety of tourists could enjoy subsequently offering solutions to seasonality. Kenya diversified to offer products such as adventure tourism, conference tourism, golf tourism, sports tourism, cultural tourism and eco-tourism which targeted the wider international market (Yan, 2015). They have also recently offered medical and shopping tourism which is targeted at the East African and African market as a whole (Liagami, 2014).

The emphasis of this research is to analyze Kenya’s entry into the destination wedding market segment from the perspective of product diversification and expansion (Proctor, 2014). Kenya is predominantly known as a nature-based tourism destination with wildlife and beaches accounting for over eighty five per cent of the international tourists visiting the country (Odunga and Folmer, 2004). Other attractions are based on the physical landscape of the country and the culture of the people (Odunga and Folmer, 2004). However, the emergence and constant growth of wedding tourists globally has fast-tracked an alternative in the pool of Kenya’s tourism supply; namely, wedding tourism. The thesis at hand will, therefore, analyze the decision of Kenyan wedding venue suppliers in targeting wedding tourists by looking at hotels, resorts and lodges involved in the supply aspect of the destination wedding product. The thesis will also pay close attention to the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB), the principal government body involved in marketing Kenya as a tourism destination. In conclusion, the thesis will determine the future potential of this event tourism niche market in Kenya. However, the main boundary of this research is that there is limited existing research on the topic of wedding tourism venue suppliers as well as wedding tourism in general. Although honeymoon travel has been common for decades, destination wedding tourism is a niche market that has been emerging only in recent years. As a result, aggregate global statistics are hard to verify (Berg, 2013). This, in turn, makes this research exploratory. This can, of course, be advantageous as through this research, which is qualitative in nature, a model of what potentially influences destinations to diversify into unique market segments like wedding tourism will be created.

**Research Question**

It is important for wedding tourism venue suppliers to gain insight in the destination wedding product as well as its future development. Hence, the key research question for this study is: Which are the drivers behind Kenyan Tourism industry’s readiness for diversifying the wedding tourism product?

i. What is the real and expected demand for destination wedding venues in Kenya?

ii. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the Kenyan wedding tourism product?
Importance of the Research

Product diversification is a prerequisite for satisfying tourists’ needs and changing demands as well as insuring profitability of the industry (Komppula, 2001). In order to survive, suppliers within the wedding tourism market need to be innovative and thereby be aware of current and forthcoming trends. However, since no prior research has been done that concentrates on the venue suppliers within the destination wedding market, this study is beneficial for suppliers to gain additional understanding of the existing wedding tourism product and how it might be featured in the future. This research delves into an unexplored topic and in turn hopes to generate a model that will be beneficial for destination wedding venue suppliers but also for other actors in the wedding market as it is a market fragmented in nature. Consequently, destination marketing agencies, their members and academics can take advantage of this study since it acts as a gateway for future research on diversification into niche tourism market segments.

Purpose and Objectives

The thesis will focus on the major service providers of wedding tourism in Kenya, namely hotels, lodges and resorts that provide venues for destination weddings and will look at their decision process in offering weddings to the foreign market. To clarify the above statement it must be noted that product development has two sides, one that reflects the demand and the other one that reflects the supply side. This study analyzes the strategic decision of foreign product diversification from the suppliers’ point of view and identifies existing and prospective demands that could be improved or developed in order to meet customer needs in the future. It does not intend to focus on the demand side, i.e. customer needs, behavior, and perceptions, in identifying strengths and weaknesses for product diversification. This is in consideration of the limitation of time. Therefore, this research works as a preliminary study and invites to further research.

This study aims to enlarge the understanding of the Kenyan destination wedding product. As already explained, the wedding tourism industry has gained a lot of attention in the last few years mainly due to its rapid expansion. Leask and Hood (2001) explain that when a market becomes more competitive, it results in a production of more unique and unusual service products. Likewise, Kotler (1999) explains that it is not enough to only focus on price battles and heavy advertising, since the suppliers should not simply defend the product but they should also consider modifying the product in terms of its characteristics, quality, features, or style.

Hence, this indicates that there is need for tourism suppliers to modify and further develop their products. Kenya is highly dependent on tourism for their revenue and adding new
products/services to give them an augmented advantage is, thus, crucial if they are to maintain their prominence in the tourism industry.

Especially as the African tourism market is highly generalized in tourism literature, with regards to the continent basically being regarded as a single country. For instance, a safari in South Africa is regarded to be the same as a safari in Kenya, this is due to the misconception that Africa is just ‘one county’. Therefore, it is important to find aspects that can give a country a comparative advantage.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Wedding Tourism Product

Wedding tourism can be defined as tourism that encompasses the features of a wedding. These include engagements, weddings and honeymoons. Some literature defines it under romantic tourism, however, in this thesis; it shall be specifically defined as wedding tourism. This is because, couples who have a romantic holiday do not have to be getting engaged, married or going on their honeymoon. Therefore wedding tourism is travel for the purpose of celebrating a happening of any of the three wedding features individually or simultaneously in a location other than the bride and groom’s home, typically a popular tourist destination (Major et al, 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wedding Tourism Features</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposal/Engagement - a promise to wed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wedding (destination wedding) - a ceremony in which two people get married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honeymoon - a holiday that two people take after they get married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Wedding Tourism Features (Source: Author’s own, 2015)

Hotels in popular tourist destinations offer a wedding package for their wedding tourists. A wedding package is a collection of itinerary that the provider will offer to the couple and their guests in relation to affordability. In Kenya, they begin from a five day package and extend to a thirty day package. The reason a five day package is the minimum is that the couple must be residents in Kenya for two working days before they can apply for a license. A typical wedding package for five days is shown in the appendices section as Appendix 6.

International Tourist Market

One of the most significant developments in tourism practice in recent years is the increased competition for a share of the growing international tourist market (Richards, 2014). This has led to destinations being more involved in exports, foreign direct investment and promotion of their products and services abroad as well as diversifying their offerings dramatically. In such circumstances, many destinations enter new international tourist markets to expand their business, be more competitive and to enter new growing product or service markets holding significant promise.

An expansion could be about both geographical and product expansion. And even if it is about geographical expansion it does not have to mean that the company has to enter a foreign market since the company could also expand domestically. As stated, an expansion could also
be about a destination wanting to penetrate a product market that has been unknown previously for that destination since they have not been working with those kinds of products or services before (Johnson et al. 2008). This is exactly the case with the destination wedding product in Kenya which is under the umbrella of wedding tourism. Although, Kenya has been a popular honeymoon destination, it has only penetrated the market in recent years promoting its offering of destination weddings.

It is an important aspect for a destination to know whether they should or should not diversify their tourism products in foreign markets. An essential first step in planning and strategy development is the destination’s need to assess its readiness to diversify in foreign markets (UN DESA, 2006). This requires the need to be concerned with strategic issues. Strategic decisions concern such issues, as choice of countries, product markets, target segments, modes of operation and timing of market entry (Albaum et al, 2002). The reasons for diversification in foreign markets could be the expected economic gain from the foreign environment or the perceived growth of the tourist share in the foreign market which equate to the competitive benefits a destination can gain from a successful foreign market entry (Laird et al. 2003). However, these perceived benefits must outweigh all underlying and perceived threats such as social-cultural degeneration as well as potential environmental degradation and also, although economic gains are usually what influences diversification, caution must be observed as an economy that becomes too dependent on tourism becomes increasingly vulnerable to the effects of affluence decline and a decrease in disposable income (Paris, 2010) which affect tourism. In addition diversification in the international tourist market can go terribly wrong if a destination does not have insight on what they are doing. This is because it is a big leap for a destination to increase their commerce in a new and unfamiliar area being it the target country or as is the case with this research an expansion in product offering. There are a lot of questions that have to be answered before trying to break into a foreign market. A destination has to be sure that they can handle and understand the foreign market and also that they offer a product or service that is needed (Johnson et al. 2008).

From as early as 1997, the government of Kenya, identified tourism as a major foreign currency earner, accounting for 10% of the GDP (Ondicho, 2000). In the formation of Kenya’s Vision 2030; a long-term vision to reach middle income society. One of the strategies is to create a sustainable tourist industry, free of ‘low’ and ‘high’ seasons in order to avoid underutilization of resources (GOK, 2011). Kenya’s Vision 2030 is composed of three pillars i.e. Economic, Social and Political. Tourism is under the economic pillar and has been targeted in the medium term plan 2008-2012, as one of the six priority sectors that make up the larger part of Kenya’s GDP (57%) and provide for nearly half of the country’s formal employment
Therefore, due to the importance that tourism holds for the Kenyan government, i.e. “Tourism revenue in Kenya, is the country’s second-biggest foreign exchange earner, following agriculture and is forecast to rise to more than 100-billion shillings ($ 1.2 billion) this year (2013)”, KTB Managing Director Murithi Ndegwa, it was vital for Kenya to find ways to attract a greater share of the international tourist market.

According to Gallego et al. (2009) a destination has to count on both real and expected demand from the new market before making a decision of which market they want to enter. This intrinsic analysis of a destination cannot override the need for an external analysis. There can be many external issues that could complicate diversification for a company. Examples of this is the strength of potential competitors, the potential market growth of the target country, cultural differences, political issues, law and financial factors (Johnson et al. 2008; Meyer, 2001). As mentioned, another important aspect while choosing a market is the timing of the entry. It is important to avoid entering when other competitors have been established for a longer period of time. For Kenya, their expansion into destination weddings was well timed as the demand for unique weddings i.e. safari weddings, was on the rise. They did well to take advantage of the opportunity by capturing the market as South Africa had just started offering the package, therefore not allowing for their competitors to get established. Nonetheless, the need for differentiation towards this new foreign market product offering is crucial in order to make Kenya’s diversification most lucrative. This is because the African tourism market is highly generalized in tourism literature, with regards to the misconception that Africa, which is a continent, is just ‘one county’.

**Product Diversification and Extension**

Diversification is defined in the literature as the process of expanding business opportunities through additional market potential of an existing product (Bovée, 2006). Diversification may be achieved by entering into additional markets or through pricing strategies. Often, the product may be improved, altered or changed, or new marketing activities may be developed (Hall and Williams, 2008). With regards, to this definition, international tourist markets, and more specifically the wedding tourism market, must offer diversified products by destinations as this process constitutes the development of successful products.

One of the main areas of the marketing function and the marketing managers’ main task is to design a product-service combination that provides real value to targeted customers, motivates purchase, and fulfills genuine consumer needs (Kotler et al., 1999). According to Middleton (2001), product decisions are of great importance since they not only influence the marketing mix but also a firm’s long-term growth strategy and policies for investment and human resources. Concerning the travel and tourism industry, companies operate within a
dynamic, global environment where every decade brings new marketing objectives, where practices and rapid changes can quickly make yesterday’s winning strategies out of date (Kotler et al., 1999). Hence, being aware of product design and being innovative is of great competitive edge.

A considerable body of research on diversification stems from the fields of economics and strategic management. Researchers from finance, economics and strategic studies have explored many different motivations for diversification. For instance, much research in finance has viewed diversification as motivated by the benefit arising from risk reduction (Markham, 1973). The argument is that when the cash flows of multi-businesses are not perfectly correlated, the total risk is reduced by diversification. However, this view is also challenged by the counter argument that the same reduction of risk can be achieved by shareholders diversifying their own portfolio of financial assets (Levy and Sarnat, 1970). On the other hand, economists examined diversification as motivated by firms’ desire to gain “conglomerate power” (Hill, 1985) or to defend themselves against prospects of decline in their dominant industry (Miles, 1982; Rumelt, 1974). As tourism has become a major source of employment, revenue, international awareness and opportunity for cities, the efficiency of tourism management in cities became increasingly important (Wöber et al., 2003). In other words, every city wanting to become a tourist destination needs a strategy that seeks to optimize the benefits to be gained from exporting their tourism products. The best and necessary way to be able to do this is to first evaluate strengths and weaknesses in the context of exporting. The concept of diversification was originally developed from the manufacturing industry (Hill, 1985), but has become as well essential for companies dealing with services (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). Strategic and tactical issues as they relate to export market decisions are essential for all kinds of companies. It is getting harder and harder for companies to defend their position in the market. Strategic decisions concern such things as choice of countries, product markets, target segments, modes of operation, and timing of market entry. In contrast, tactical decisions are concerned with operations within a given country (Albaum et al, 2002). In tourism as well as in other service activities it is not always possible to separate the product from process. In fact, in many cases the product is the process (Gallouj 2002). In this matter, Gallouj suggests to classify a new service function that is based on an existing production process as a product invention. For instance, wedding tourism is a new service product in Kenya based on existing safari and beach tourism. On the other hand, Gallouj states that an existing service function that is emerging from a new process is classified as a process invention. In this case, since wedding tourism already exists in Kenya and it requires that new marketing strategies be put in place to promote it, this use of marketing strategies would
classify as ‘process invention’. In this instance where both service function as well as production process are new, Gallouj points out that it can be categorized as both product and process invention. However, considering the characteristics of services, intangibility – a service cannot be touched, inseparability – a service is created and consumed simultaneously, perishability – services cannot be stored for later use and heterogeneity - services are unique in the eyes of the customer. The invention classification proposed by Gallouj, is difficult to apply systematically in the diversification of services (Hoffman et al, 2010) because different customers are interested in different services ranging from product, cost, quality and interchangeability. As you cannot have one service that fits all.

Ansoff (1957) on the other hand introduces the Ansoff matrix according to which four main types of strategies can be implemented in order to gain growth opportunities. These are market penetration, product development, market development and diversification.

Diversification being among the strategies for growth of either a new product or a new market stands out from the other three strategies as according to Ansoff, diversification requires an organization to acquire new skills, new techniques and new services. In relation to wedding tourism in Kenya, the new product is the destination wedding and the new market is the specifically targeted market of wedding tourists. Texier (2000) highlights “Ansoff’s diversification does not only refer to product development or market development but to a combination of the two” and this is another factor that differentiates diversification from the other three strategies.

**New Product Development and Innovation**

Innovation is essential for all kinds of companies who wish to remain relevant in the dynamic business market as it is a prerequisite for growth and development. Schumpeter (1997) described the most important factor for economic growth as the process of creative destruction. This means that the structure of a company will be revolutionized by permanently destroying old products and structures in order to create new ones. In his view, and inspired by Kondratieff’s (1935) discovery of cycles of economic boom and recession innovations become the fundamental driving forces of economic change and growth. Schumpeter (1997)
distinguishes various forms of innovations: 1) the creation of new products or services, 2) new production processes, 3) new markets, 4) new suppliers and 5) changed organization or management systems (Schumpeter 1934). Thus, innovation influences not only the production function but also factor prices and as such the total cost curve.

According to Schumpeter (1961), change is the only constant in the business environment. He argues that followers of innovators may appear late, yet finally destroy the competitive advantage of the innovator. As a result, a new round of developing new products will begin. The necessity of new and innovative products and services results from the product life cycle, which means that the life of a product, i.e. its attractiveness to the customers, will end at some point and has to be modified or replaced by a new one.

The challenge that tourism companies must face nowadays is the fact that product life cycles have shortened continuously over the decades (Weiermair, 2004). New products have to be developed by taking into consideration trends towards new travel experiences, wants, needs and changed demographics. Especially the creation of memorable tourism experiences seems to promise today sustainable competitive advantages for tourism companies (Weiermair, 2004). The time taken from developing to introducing a product to the market up to the day it becomes obsolete decreases more and more. Consequently, the competitiveness and the age of the product also decline fast. Sales of a company typically consist increasingly of “young” products (von Braun 1994). Strategic decisions should therefore be taken with regard to the product life cycle. Laws (2002), stresses that successful tourism companies show a portfolio of products in different life cycle stages. Thus, products in a phase with high profits can finance the introduction or degeneration phase of other products. The concept of product life cycle also enables us to understand the dynamics of market forces, such as market growth and profit prospects (Idea Sandbox, 2007). When a company has a product in the growth phase which also yields high profits, the entrepreneur is usually also confronted with the appearance and market entry of new competitors.

This increases the willingness to take calculated risks (Schumpeter, 1934). Even though much innovation emanates or originates from the service sector, there has so far been relatively little discussion as to its importance and prevalence in tourism. One should, therefore, expect that innovation and product development (or differentiation) should constitute unique selling propositions and a strategy towards gaining new markets (Weiermair, 2004). Even though the services and tourism sector have become a very mature market requiring innovation and new tourism attractions (Weiermair 2001, Bieger 2002), the actual situation of the tourism industry is to be rather characterised by minor almost only cosmetic changes in product offerings interceded by an ever increasing number of crises i.e. terrorism, contagious diseases; Ebola etc.
Already over two decades ago Poon (1993) noted: “The tourism industry is in a crisis – a crisis of change and uncertainty; a crisis brought on by the rapidly changing nature of the tourism industry itself. (...) The industry is in metamorphosis – it is undergoing rapid and radical change”.

The production and marketing of tourism products is distinct from industrial products and displays specific characteristics which often pose constraints or problems and hence serve as stepping stones for increasing the value of products via innovation. They are: tourism produces and sells product bundles, instead of products (products being “experiences”) which are intangible, products cannot be stored (simultaneity of production and consumption), the consumption of tourism products involves the active participation of the customer (prosumer), and tourism production/marketing may involve large capital assets (airlines, hotel chains or car rental firms) or at the intermediation, distribution and final consumption stage may involve interaction personnel (e.g. travel agencies, restaurants, coaches, etc.). Typically, when a tourist spends his holidays in a destination, he does not consume a product of only one supplier, but a bundle of services as a whole (Kaspar 1991, Weiermair 2004). A lot of different service suppliers participate in creating a tourism experience. This requires vertical co-operation, as the tourist’s overall quality assessment depends on cumulative quality perception (Koch 1998, Weiermair 2004). As far as the tourist is concerned, the product covers the complete experience from the time he leaves home to the time he returns to it.

The uno-actu-principle implies that unused offers cannot be stored, making efficient capacity utilisation one of the problematic areas in tourism. This applies to all tourism services in accommodation, catering, travel agents, transport systems, and all other businesses related to the tourism value chain (Weiermair, 2006). Intangibility of tourism products implies a large amount of risk and uncertainty about customer value (quality-price-ratio). A guest, who booked a certain holiday package, does not know with certainty what he can expect and how he will eventually perceive and judge the quality experienced in his vacation. Particularly for a destination it is crucial to create confidence, to determine quality criteria and to introduce measures to reduce risks for the customer. Overall, tourism services are very capital-intensive and depend on external partners and other factors. Similarly, the capability and the motivation of human resources are essential, suggesting the necessity of both capital and labour-related types of innovation. Finally, tourism needs local infrastructure, the local population should have positive thinking about and commitment to tourism, and local industry should act as a supplier for tourism businesses or shopping facilities (Bieger, 2002).

Tourism services are personal services and will be created by an internal (supplier) and external (consumer) factor (Smith 1994). The consumer has to be proactive and in most cases
goes to the destination. Successful innovation is innovation that is profitable to the tourism destination in a competitive market, and must also increase the value of the product or tourism experience. Since the value is customers’ perceived quality divided by the price of this quality; successful innovation must increase value by improving quality or by lowering price (Heskett, 1986).

The diversity of definitions for innovation lies in the different purposes of examining this phenomenon (Johannessen et al., 2001). Probably, the most useable definition is that one provided by the late Schumpeter which distinguishes the five areas in which companies can introduce innovation. His definition clearly distinguishes innovation from minor changes in the makeup and delivery of products in forms of extension of product lines, adding service components or product differentiation.

**Product Life Cycle Model**

The Product Lifecycle model describes how products go through the four phases of Introduction, Growth, Maturity and Decline after they are launched (Bovée, 2006). Each phase requires a different mix of marketing activities to maximize the lifetime profitability of the product. In general, this involves early investment to help secure revenue later on (Kumar and Krob, 2006). Although, the model does not predict sales, when used alongside carefully analyzed sales figures and forecasts, it provides a useful guide to marketing tactics that may be most appropriate at a given time.

![Product Life Cycle Model](image)

**Figure 3.** Product Life cycle (Source: idea-sandbox.com, 2007)
However, the model still faces criticism. Firstly, the product life cycle concept does not predict the length of each phase, nor can it be used to forecast sales with any accuracy. Another criticism is that the model can be self-fulfilling; i.e. if a marketer decides that a product is approaching its Decline phase, and stops actively marketing it, the product's sales will almost inevitably decline. This might not have happened had it been managed as if it was still in its Maturity phase (Kumar and Krob, 2006).

Furthermore, it's possible that by improving a product aggressively on an ongoing basis, growth can continue for a long time. For instance the current marketing strategy of the soft drink beverage Coca-Cola ‘Share a Coke with…’ that personalizes the soft drink bottle to have the name of the person you wish to share your Coca-Cola with. This strategy has boosted their existing product’s life cycle due to the incorporation of new ideas to their product mix. This process is a form of diversification, which is a strategy that can be used to extend a product’s life. Successful marketers need to draw on a wide range of data and analysis to help them decide which phase a product is in, and whether that phase can be extended (Kumar and Krob, 2006). Therefore, taking both, the positive and negative factors of this model into consideration, suppliers of products need to base their decisions on a good understanding of the constraints and incentives on real and expected demands of their products.

**Destination Product Differentiation**

Product differentiation is a marketing strategy that businesses use to distinguish a product from similar offerings on the market (Bovée, 2006). For any businesses, a product differentiation strategy may provide a competitive advantage. The differentiation strategy the business uses must target a segment of the market and deliver the message that the product is positively different from all other similar products available.

When a company uses a differentiation strategy that focuses on the value for money of the product versus other similar products on the market, it creates a perceived value among consumers and potential customers (Bovée, 2006). A strategy that focuses on value highlights the cost savings of a product in comparison to other products. Furthermore, the product differentiation strategy also allows businesses to compete in areas other than price. For example, a car manufacturer may differentiate its line of cars as an image enhancer or status symbol while other companies focus on cost savings. A successful product differentiation strategy creates brand loyalty among customers. The same strategy that gains market share through perceived quality or cost savings may create loyal consumers (Gallouj, 2002). The business gains an advantage in the market, as customers view the product as unique. Hence, a company must continue to deliver quality or value to consumers to maintain customer loyalty. However, fairly quickly, competitors will imitate the strategy, or even improve upon, your
unique values or advantages, and therefore the advantage is soon lost (Bovée, 2006). These once highly valued attributes become commodity features over time. To combat that loss of advantage or uniqueness, a business needs to be continually developing new value and benefits in existing products or services as well as developing new products and services to remain in a market leader position.

As part of the growth strategy, a business must consider its market segmentation, target markets and marketing mix, in order to be able to extend their product life cycle as well as know whether it is necessary to do so. Alternatively, a business needs to also consider the impact of external factors such as the economy, competitors, customers and available resources on the success of implementing the differentiation strategy (Schumpeter, 1997). To compete effectively, businesses need to build a strong product differentiation plan. It is important that they clearly understand how their product can be differentiated; this can be on one or more variables and it is important that this product differentiation is one that is desired by existing and potential customers.

**Events Tourism**

An event is a special moment in time that is beyond everyday experience (Berridge, 2007). Events are an important motivator of tourism, and figure prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations. According to Laws et al. (2002), management of tourism destinations has developed during past years from early ad hoc, opportunistic and entrepreneurial responses into a more proactive decision-making. Destination managers have become more and more interested in their product and market portfolios and more strategic approaches have become increasingly common. People have become more and more interested in events of all kinds and will travel far away to participate in events that they find interesting. According to Getz (1997) these people form their own tourism market segment - event tourism. Event tourism as a market segment consists of those people who travel to attend events, or who can be motivated to attend events while away from home.

According to Getz (1997) events have during the last decade become an important means for communities and tourist regions to gain advantage and meet a variety of economic, social and environmental goals. Due to the increased competitiveness among tourist destinations, the pursuit and development of events has become a big business (Getz, 2004b). These benefits are various, and perhaps the most obvious economic impact stems from the roles events play in attracting visitors to an area to which they would not otherwise travel (Getz, 2004a). A social benefit is that events can help in building *social capital* between different cultures through cultural interactions. For environmental benefits, events can influence a destination to protect its environment, for instance with regards to wedding tourism, Kenya takes conservation of its
flora and fauna seriously, because the consumer of this event tourism wants to experience the unspoiled nature i.e. during the safari wedding. According to Bohlin (1996, in Mossberg, 2000) events can also generate future travel to a destination, and in this sense create value in selling other products that a destination has on offer. Moreover, many destinations suffer from seasonality problems meaning that tourist flows are very concentrated into relatively short periods of the year (Moutinho, 2000). Events can play an important role in overcoming these problems and drawing tourists into destinations during off-season periods. Furthermore, events can have the effect of shaping the image of the host community leading to a more favorable perception as a potential travel destination. A more positive image is believed to have an effect, e.g., on industrial investment (Erfurt and Johsen, 2003), and can ultimately improve the well-being of the local population in many different ways.

Getz (1997) points out how every community and destination should formulate and implement event tourism strategies in order to reach their full tourism potential. He continues to describe how event tourism strategies should always be integrated with the overall tourism strategies of the destination. Event tourism strategies help destinations plan how to use events in a tourism role, set event tourism goals and find out possible ways to achieve the goals in a long-term perspective. Event tourism strategies would further lead to continuity in the development of the event industry and help maximize the possible positive benefits that events can bring to destinations. However, events also have potential negative effects, especially if the economic, social and environmental goals are not well integrated into the overall tourism strategy plan. A negative effect of event tourism on the economy of a destination can be related to over-reliance on an event. This could lead to detrimental effects in the case that the event loses its demand and there is an influx in supply. This would create a situation where investment is wasted because there is no demand to meet the supply. In addition, this could affect the social stability of a destination as consequently locals could lose their sources of income, i.e. they may lose their jobs at hotels that provide accommodation for the tourists of events, and this could lead to increased prevalence of crime as there is reduced circulation of money. Finally, with regards to the environment, the events themselves could cause environmental problems for example; wedding tourism couples and their guests could create noise pollution in areas that are supposed to be quiet i.e. animal habitat areas such as in the national park during the safari wedding. In this end, Getz (1997) emphasizes that destination specific event tourism strategies should be developed for capitalizing on the destination’s strengths, and correcting the weaknesses, as well as for realizing opportunities and avoiding or minimizing threats. This is also the case when conducting a SWOT analysis. Moreover, according to Getz (1997), individual events and event organizations in destinations would
benefit greatly from the assistance and cooperation achieved by overall destination strategies and policies.

In terms of the destination wedding event, Shone and Parry (2004) define the wedding, together with other similar personal events (e.g. birthday or anniversaries), as a type of private events. Their phenomenon arise from leisure, cultural, personal or organizational objectives, which are set apart from the normal activity of daily life and their purpose is to enlighten, celebrate, entertain or challenge the experience of a group of people. The characteristics of special events include personal interactions, ritual or ceremony, intangible, fixed timescale, labor intensiveness, ambience and service, perishability as well as uniqueness. Getz (2007) also defines a wedding as a form of planned events because it is held in venues that cater to individual and small-group clients which may require professionals or be entirely arranged by the participants. From this point of view, Getz (2007) believes that the wedding is a multi-meaning experience in both personal and social aspects, and it can be considered as celebrations in which a theme and emotional stimulation are essential.

Although, the wedding is usually defined as a type of small or personal event, it is still a research area that has been understudied compared to meeting, exhibition, incentives or other types of events.

Figure 4. Typology of planned events (Source: Getz, 2005).

**Literature Review Summary**

In light of the performed literature review this study seeks to build upon research on international market entry in tourism and the strategic decisions of wedding product
diversification for Kenya. The research will provide a qualitative SWOT analysis of wedding tourism in Kenya as we have seen that the product life cycle time has been augmented by the product development through product diversification and differentiation. If we compare this to the volatile nature of service markets we understand the importance of high quality anticipation of market change in order to assess readiness to enter foreign markets and be able to meet real and expected demands. The interest of this study is to explore the need for diversification within tourism destination processes. Because destinations are committed to international markets, it is important to understand that product development is inevitable when the destination realizes it can no longer attain its objectives through specialization. The necessity to remain competitive leads to an improved system that maintains the structure of the original by incorporating a new service or product that enables the demand to be met (Burt et al, 2014). The study refers to this change as solution diversification.

**SWOT Analysis Interpretive Framework**

What is a SWOT analysis? Well the name, equally an abbreviation, pretty well explains the frames of the analysis. The SWOT analysis helps us in setting a framework for the formation of strategies by relating internal environment, Strengths and Weaknesses, of a specific system to the external environment, with a direct or indirect influence on the system, represented by Opportunities and Threats.

All these parameters have an impact on the outcome of implementation of a certain strategy and its goal. In our case the internal environment is regarded as the Kenyan wedding tourism product and the external environment is the international markets within which Kenya has diversified their wedding tourism product in order for it to offer destination weddings. By relating the strengths and weaknesses of Kenya’s wedding tourism product with the opportunities and possible threats in the environment where it’s supposed to be implemented, we can consider their impact and form a strategy by using the internal strengths together with the external opportunities to reinforce the base of the strategy and try to reduce weaknesses and threats (Grant 2005)

**Internal analysis (Strengths and Weaknesses).** The internal analysis should lead to an assessment of strengths and weaknesses that could create a competitive advantage or disadvantage. In this case the intrinsic advantages and disadvantages of Kenya as a wedding destination.
External analysis (Opportunity and Threats). The external analysis focuses on environmental characteristics that could produce opportunities as well as threats relative to competitive solutions, in this case the diversification process.

Using the SWOT analysis we pragmatically project the most important parameters of influence for a specific situation in order to visualize and define the best road to achieve our goal, which in this case is the successful diversification in the foreign market and consequent fulfillment of the real and expected demands for Kenyan wedding destinations.

In a SWOT analysis, the current situation is analyzed and projected on the future. If the broader conditions of the game change the strategy has to change as well. Unfortunately, this feature is not intuitively taken into account in the SWOT analysis. Therefore, the debatable question of whether or not the SWOT analysis supplies an efficient framework for strategy analysis is constructed. However, one of the major aspects of the SWOT analysis, as with any conceptual model, is that it is a powerful tool only if used correctly and with care. The key is to avoid underestimating important factors of influence and take into account how they change. This is, according to the research at hand and is independent of the framework used for the analysis (May 2006). The SWOT analysis and any other analysis made for sustaining a strategy framework should naturally help the user to scale down complexity and still picture the most important factors. Downscaling complexity is a must in order to visualize a complete picture and focus on most important parameters. The danger in this is, as already mentioned, is the underestimation of certain factors (May 2006). Grant (2005), underlines the importance of emphasizing on the in depth analysis of precisely picked internal and external factors rather than performing a superficial SWOT. Performing a SWOT, or any other analysis, as a strategic framework in a sloppy way will not really create the base for a solid strategy. Another drawback is that the SWOT analysis fails to integrate the time factor, meaning the change of external factors with time. However, how the internal landscape will change is normally known by the implementer. Though, the change of the external landscape is not included in the SWOT analysis one should remember that the SWOT is an impression of the current internal and external situation. Therefore, the base for the strategy must also take in account how the rules of the game can change with time. This research used the SWOT analysis to carry out a beneficial analysis for the diversification of the Kenyan wedding product since this is a pragmatic method for scaling down complexity and giving a holistic overview.
STUDY AREA

Kenya is Africa’s twenty-third largest country by area and globally it is the forty-seventh largest, the latitude and longitude of Kenya covers an area of 582,650 sq. km. The country stretches from the snow-capped mountains in the north to the sea in the east. The terrain gradually changes from the low-lying coastal plains to the Kenyan highlands. Mount Kenya is the highest point of the country and is 5,199 meters high. In the western and central part of the country, the Great Rift Valley is one of the striking features of the geography of Kenya. The valley divides the Kenyan highlands into east and west with a visibly deep valley in between. The highlands are an important agricultural region of the country as they have a cool climate and highly fertile soil. This is where the cash crops are found and it is also the most populous area of the country. That notwithstanding, there are three national parks with big five and over more than seven five star hotels and lodges. Central circuit is a popular destination as it houses the Treetop Lodge in which Queen Elizabeth, current queen of England became enthroned. At independence in 1963, Kenya depended mainly on its exports of agricultural products such as coffee and tea for foreign exchange. However, with the decline in world market prices of these primary products, the country turned to tourism as an alternative. As in many other developing countries, tourism is one of the key drivers of Kenya’s socioeconomic development. Kenya is a popular tourist destination due to the simple fact that it offers amazing game-viewing and beautiful beaches, and crucially, the two are relatively easy to combine. Kenya also tends to be the most affordable of the ‘bush and beach’ options, though it does depend on where you stay. The great thing about Kenya is the variety of options on offer; therefore tourists can really tailor-make their vacation to suit their personal tastes, interests and budget. The Masai Mara; home of the seventh natural wonder of the world the wildebeest migration and home to the big five, namely, lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo is a fantastic safari option. For the beach option, the Watamu beach is a popular destination. It is the shore line of the Watamu Marine National Park and Reserve which are designated biosphere reserves by UNESCO. It is famous for its plethora of marine flora and fauna including the endangered sea turtle species. Diani beach is renowned for its coral reefs and white sandy beaches which are among Africa’s best beaches (http://travel.cnn.com/africas-best-beaches). These variety of options makes Kenya a suitable destination for wedding tourism as it attracts different consumers.
Further government involvement can be seen through the KTB, Kenya Association of Hotels and Caterers (KAHC), Kenya Association of Tour Operators (KATO) and Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) who were asked to work together to bring out the public/private sector cooperation (GOK 2012), which is the National Tourism Strategy for 2013-2018 to further develop and diversify tourism products in Kenya. The Cabinet Secretary (CS) for East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism; Phyllis Kandie said “The vision in the tourism sector of Kenya was to make MICE an annual event that will develop to become the biggest event in East Africa” she also added that diversifying the tourism sector product to was one of their priorities (Wafula, 2015).
RESEARCH METHOD

Research Approach

Inductive versus Deductive Research. There are two basic approaches of how a researcher can enter upon a research, an inductive or a deductive research approach. If one is using an inductive research approach, one starts to collect empirical data and make conclusions from the data which build up theories. In inductive research the theory is the result of the investigation. If a researcher is using an inductive approach, he/she does not have to start off as a blank sheet since it is accepted with pre-knowledge about a subject (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

Deductive approach is when researchers make their conclusions in coordination with their logical reasoning. Fact does not need to be proven 100 per cent true if it is logical. An investigator starts with a theory and constructs hypotheses from it. The next step is to sample data in order to test the hypotheses (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Both perspectives demand that the researcher is creative. The two different approaches demands organized data gathering and also awareness of the relevance of the questions that is asked in order to gain the data and the data that is collected. Researchers do also need to make sure that the different theories or methods that are being used are not out of date in order to make a relevant report (Ghauri and Grönhaug, 2005).

Researchers can make a relevant and rigorous investigation with both inductive and deductive research. Since this research tends to gain new knowledge about the stated problem on diversification of the Kenyan wedding tourism product earlier in the study, the research had to gain empirical data before building theories on the subject. The research approach of this study therefore was to use an inductive research. The researcher gained pre-knowledge about the subject while they worked with the literature review. After that an empirical investigation was conducted and the theories were built from the conclusions that were drawn from the empirical investigation.

Quantitative versus Qualitative research. There are two main alternatives on how one could carry out a research. These are the quantitative and qualitative research methods (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Some literature discusses that a quantitative method is better because it is more “scientific” (Ghauri and Grönhaug, 2005). However, there is some literature that argues that the suitability of the method is dependent on the project, the research problem and the purpose of the thesis (Jankowicz, 1991; Ghauri and Grönhaug, 2005).

Quantitative research methods highlight statistics, testing and verification of theories. In quantitative approach the researcher has bigger control over the different variables in a research. This is because for e.g. in a survey there is different statements that the researcher
himself comes up with. After that the researcher will state his approval to the statement and, therefore, it cannot raise any new sidelines to the topic. By other words the researcher will get data about what he wants. In quantitative research the conclusions is drawn by a generalization of the quantity of participants in for example a survey (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

Qualitative research approach is more about understanding different behaviors. In this research approach it is a heavy responsibility on the researcher that he can think critically towards different situations and statements. The researcher should also be able to see and avoid biases (Ghauri and Grönhaug, 2005). To avoid biases is very important for any research since a researcher does not want to sample or receive invalid data. Qualitative research is more process orientated than quantitative. If one manages a qualitative research properly, it will lead to valid and necessary data for the research project (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

Since the research was deemed to be an inductive research approach the preferred research method for the study was qualitative research. This is because the researcher knew that in order to answer the research question of the study with the limited time at hand, a quantitative study would not be feasible. Therefore, the option for qualitative research was chosen, as it was the approach most likely to generate a deeper knowledge and understanding of the chosen topic.

**Research Design**

Research design can be explained as a plan for how to collect valid data and how to analyze it. The research design is connected to the research questions of a project. If the research questions are ambiguous that will mean that the project will end up with a misguided research design (Bryman and Bell, 2003). A research project can be of different types and the design of the research will reveal which kind of research is applied. There are three types that researchers use:

*Exploratory* design is one approach for constructing research and is appropriate when there is an unclear problem. An exploratory approach intends to help a researcher to collect data to solve an unclear problem. As the investigation keep going the researcher will find more and more data that can help him/her to come up with a solution to the problem in question. This demands flexibility from the researcher since the new information can lead to the research having to change direction (Ghauri and Grönhaug, 2005).

*Descriptive* research is the second type of the three different design approaches in research. This research design wants to describe and explain a certain phenomenon. If a researcher uses this research design the research problem is structured and understood by the researcher (Ghauri and Grönhaug, 2005). It is important that the researcher has a great amount of knowledge about the topic while working with descriptive research (Hair et al. 2003). It is
crucial for a descriptive research that the measurements in the research is valid and also that the research procedure does not differ from one person to another because of the need for low variation in data collection (Ghauri and Grönhaug, 2005).

There is different ways of conducting a descriptive research. Researchers can use cross-sectional research which means that the researcher make a single observation of one point in time. Cross-sectional research can be divided into single cross-sectional and multiple cross-sectional designs. The difference is that in multiple design you compare different variables e.g. Kenyan wedding tourists and foreign wedding tourists (Bryman and Bell, 2003).

The third type of research design is causal design. Quantitative researchers sometimes do not want to explain how different things are but instead they want to explain the underlying reasons of why something is as it is. Causal design studies tend to explain why a specific thing happens at a specific moment. That is measured by exploring one variable’s impact on another variable. The research problem is often well structured and clear in a causal design (Ghauri and Grönhaug, 2005).

Since wedding tourism is quite an unexplored topic, the thesis at hand used an exploratory research design. Furthermore, the exploratory design is suited to the qualitative research approach as they both serve the purpose of gaining in-depth knowledge about the subject and consequently draw conclusions from the knowledge and data. This study’s purpose and research problem demanded an exploratory design in order to come up with conclusions that were relevant. There are also some descriptive elements in this study since the study aims to describe the phenomenon diversification in the international tourism market.

Data Collection Method
There are two different kinds of data; primary and secondary data. The main difference between secondary data and primary data is that secondary data is information that has already been collected by others, and is readily available e.g. published literature. Whereas primary data is originally collected by the researcher in order to answer the research question and research problems e.g. the interviews conducted for this research. (Ghauri and Grönhaug, 2005).

For this study, both data collection methods were used. The literature review and theoretical framework which is the base of the thesis at hand were sourced form secondary data while the interviews conducted constitute the primary data. When doing research, it is required to use secondary data, in order to make your work more credible because secondary data compliments the research by making it more comprehensive.

Personal interviews constitute the main source of the study. According to Saunders et al. (2003), interviews can be explained as conversations with intended objectives where the
researchers aim is to obtain specific information. The interviews help researchers gather valid and reliable data that is relevant in order to answer the research questions and objectives. The interviewees for this study were selected based on hotels that offer wedding tourism products and in particular destination weddings. The criteria was also based on the location of the hotels because the study area was Kenya it was advantageous to encompass the whole country, each hotel is from a different location in Kenya, one is from the coast region, which is a resort and offers a beach destination, one is from the Masai Mara, which is a lodge and offers a safari destination, one is from Kenya’s capital city; Nairobi and offers a city destination and the final one is from central Kenya and offers a lush green nature-based destination. The choice was also based on the popularity of the hotels and lodges to the international tourist market as well as their ability to offer and host international events. Moreover, Merriam (1998) stresses the importance of this method and refers to interviews as a technique that reveals aspects and facts that cannot be observed directly, such as attitudes, opinions, and intentions. The interviews are seen as the most important source of this study, since it is vital to directly obtain a clear picture of the involved actors. For example, every respondent was asked individually about the Kenyan wedding tourism product and how they perceive the diversification into destination weddings. Additionally, by choosing to conduct interviews, the researcher’s ability to seek and understand empirical circumstances is easier, which is important for any study as the analysis of results becomes more efficient.

According to Merriam (1998), there are three types of interviews depending on the desired structure. These are highly structured (formal), semi-structured and unstructured (informal) interviews. Since the study is of explorative and qualitative nature, the interviews were semi-structured, which include a certain set of questions; however the answers are not limited to pre-established categories. This means that the researcher has the opportunity to probe answers where the respondents can explain or build on their responses, which allows the discussion to go into areas that may not have been considered but are significant for the understanding of this topic. This kind of flexibility is crucial since it does not restrict the study to the theories and allows the researcher to explore and discover appropriate modifications of the theoretical framework. In order to structure the interview guide, the research model is used as a fundamental base. Each interview starts with personal questions in order to find out the respondents position, area of expertise, background and experiences. This information is mainly collected in order to facilitate the researchers as they consider the possible subjective interpretations of the phenomenon when analyzing the data. Furthermore, questions concerning the research topic are raised by first asking the respondent what triggered the diversification into destination weddings rather than specialize in honeymoons. These way different elements
of the wedding tourism product are identified and the discussion is encouraged to explore arguments concerning a more detailed description and importance of each element. These answers help the researcher use the SWOT analysis to interpret whether the theoretical framework, is valid and useful for evaluating and explaining the wedding tourism product. This is followed by questions about the real and expected demands of the destination wedding product purposes and what dilemmas’ might be faced as a result of the choice to diversify. Finally, the respondents are asked about their target customers and their current customers. These results of empirical data are used as the base for the study’s identification of forthcoming opportunities and threats in the international tourist market as well as for explaining the reason for diversification through the SDM. In total, five interviews were conducted, however one of the participants withdrew their participation. This is because, the person at the aforementioned participant’s establishment who authorizes the dissemination of information to outsiders refused for the information collected to be used. Therefore four interviews are presented in this thesis. All interviews were conducted with one individual at a time and had durations of between 25 – 45 minutes. This was because the time available to conduct the interviews was minimal as I had only a few days in Kenya from 23rd March to 2nd April (2015). In order to make the interview respondents prepared for the interviews the areas of discussion were sent to them in advance. Considering the semi-structured nature of the questions and the ensuing discussions, the data was recorded by taking notes and audio recording. Also, email correspondence was used to verify certain facts that had been brought up during the interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years of Work Experience</th>
<th>Star of hotel, lodge or resort</th>
<th>Location of hotel, lodge or resort</th>
<th>Duration of Interview</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Manager</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>Masai Mara</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>29.03.2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Marketing Manager</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>Nairobi</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
<td>24.03.2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>Diani, Mombasa</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>27.03.2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events Manager</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>5*</td>
<td>Nanyuki</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>1.04.2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note that all those interviewed signed the ethical consent form with anonymity discretion, therefore the names of the people interviewed and the hotels at which they are employed have not been provided for the purpose of respect of privacy.

Figure 6. List of Interviewees
RESULT ANALYSIS

Strategic Decision of Diversification

The decision to diversify product offerings lies at the very heart of any international tourism marketing strategy (Douglas et al., 1972). The importance of relevant analysis, and of resulting decisions, grows with the increasing competition for international tourists by destinations for their growth and survival. Additionally, this growing intensity of competition would call for an improved quality of the market and the product selection (Cavusgil, 1985). Diversification strategies include decisions, such as, the choice of product/market; the objectives and goals in the target market; the marketing plan to penetrate the market; and the control system to monitor performance in the target market (Root, 1994).

For Kenya, these diversification decisions were much simpler to implement as they already offered products that complimented destination weddings, namely honeymoons and engagement vacations. Therefore, the choice of a target product/market was already established and they just had to diversify the product while targeting the same market. The objectives and goals in the target market were aimed at optimizing the potential demands by meeting the existing demands for destination weddings within the wedding tourism product offerings. Kenya’s choice of the diversification strategy to penetrate the destination wedding market was construed around the tactical decision of innovation which basically did not require them to penetrate the market. Subsequently, the marketing plan to penetrate the market was minimally tweaked to include the new product as well as target the niche segment of couples. Finally, for the control system to monitor performance in the target market government statistics were used to see the real and expected demand of the destination wedding. This is a relevant stage in the decision process as it gives a prospective forecast which is very useful when making decisions.

Existing Potential Demands for Wedding Tourism

From the interviews, the existing demand for wedding tourism is very high for honeymoons and engagements and there is a satisfactory growth rate of destination weddings which also promote the demand for anniversary celebrations. The Diani, Mombasa Hotel General Manager (DM3) said

“A repeat honeymoon customer asked us why we do not offer destination weddings. So then I told her that if that is what you want we shall offer it.”

Therefore there has been existing demand for the destination wedding product. As for the potential demand of wedding tourism in Kenya, the future looks bright as there are new emerging tourist markets, for example the Indian market who are very loyal and have their
weddings in large groups which promises great economic gain for Kenya. This was also stated by DM3 who said

“...recently we decided that we want to launch our marketing plans in India as the number of tourists from there have increased, and Indians have a culture of loyalty which is great for a destination.”

Strengths of Kenyan Wedding Tourism Product

The introduction of a diversified tourism product presents advantages since it consists of a variety of integrated services. For this reason, a diversified tourism product must result from the integration of services that will meet the requirements of the real and expected demands.

For Kenya, the strengths it has are that it already has the resources required for the destination wedding product that they have diversified into. For instance DM3 said

“We have beautiful beaches which have perfect weather all year so why not offer something that we don’t really need to invest too much into, but we can gain greatly.”

This suggestion of an existing resource with which can be utilized to optimization is a great strength. As Diani beach destination has been ranked among the top twenty five beaches in the world. Kenya also has world class Safari destinations i.e. the Masai Mara National Reserve, home to the seventh natural wonder of the world; the wildebeest migration which is a growing wedding destination. The Masai Mara Hotel Marketing Manager (MM1) said

“A safari wedding is a luxury, but a worthwhile luxury especially in Kenya.”

In addition, Kenya also has the famous Mt. Kenya known for being on the equator and having glacier summits and also for its heavenly views. In the interview with the Nanyuki Hotel Event Manager (NY4), they stated

“We also have wedding photography tourists, who come for a honeymoon, but also bring their wedding attire and they take pictures on our green lawns which feature the magnificent Mt. Kenya in the background.”

The Mountain is located in the central region of Kenya, close to where Prince William proposed to Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge. It is also close to the Aberdare National Park which harbours the treetops hotel, and is where the Queen Elizabeth II as a princess in 1952, on a trip to Kenya's was told of her father George VI's death and therefore became Queen while in Kenya. These relationships to the royal family give Kenya a considerable number of British tourists. NY4 corroborated this as being a strength when they talked about a British couple who wanted their wedding “to coincide with the royal wedding”.

27
Another strength is that Kenya already had strong wedding tourism products, such as honeymoon packages and engagement packages and now they have the wedding package which is a huge strength for them to be able to offer a variety of products. This was confirmed by all interviewed managers who spoke about their honeymoon packages being popular for instance NY4 said

“Also our honeymoon product is extremely popular and we have had repeat customers who come with their children and they really enjoy it here.”

Another strength for the wedding suppliers is the government support, which was also mentioned in all the interviews as being good at minimising the cost of promoting the wedding tourism products and consequently justifying the means to the end i.e. promoting the destination wedding. For example, NY4 justified the cost of promoting destination weddings by saying that they

“are able to spend minimally on it, because the government promotes the destination.”

This is referring to Kenya as a whole destination. The strength here is the collaborative effort between the Kenya Tourism Board and the Kenya Association of Hotels and Caterers (KAHC) in the strategic decision processes. Another strength for the Kenyan suppliers, is that the Kenyan wedding market is lucrative, which means that given the changing business environment, the Kenyan wedding market would be able to somewhat cushion the impact. This is confirmed by N2 who stated that “we are overwhelmed by local weddings bookings”.

Kenya flower farms is another strength, as indicated by the Hills Balfour case study for KTB in the UK, where they gave roses to London commuters encouraging them to find love as Will and Kate did in Kenya. This marketing strategy also highlighted that the roses given were from Kenya. Therefore as weddings require flowers and Kenya has an abundance of them, this is also a strength for the destination. This was confirmed by NY4 who said

“for us the flower farms are here and so we can afford to do amazing flower arrangements.”

Finally, the hospitability of Kenyans is well known and this has enabled Kenya to gain word-of-mouth advertising, as stated by the managers of the hotels, they pride themselves in the ability to retain customers and encourage those customers to recommend them to others. MM1 stated that

“what enables us to surpass them is our hospitality and our attention to detail in the hotels”,

this was a statement referring to Kenya’s competitors i.e. Tanzania.
Weaknesses of Kenyan Wedding Tourism Product

Tourism products are based on services and, therefore, they emulate the characteristics of services for instance, they are non-storable, therefore, they are affected by low season, although Kenya’s strategy of desseasonalization is to offer the destination wedding product during this time, the fact that Kenya has low season is a weakness for them. Low season is a weakness because it means that employees must be reduced. As MM1 said regarding destination wedding opportunities

“We do not have to put too many of our employees on temporary leave. Which is great for me as a manager.”

Another problem with services is that they cannot be patented, like products, therefore, the expected level of competition is higher; the market can change at any time without warning as a hotel cannot sue a competitor for copying their product offerings. Other weaknesses that Kenya faces that are not related to the characteristics of services, are poor infrastructure, for instance the roads i.e. the road leading to Masai Mara (Narok road) is in a derelict condition, and this is a weakness as the destination becomes less attractive when there are bad transportation routes to them. NY4 verified this saying

“One of our biggest pitfalls is our road infrastructure, the roads to Narok have been bad for years, yet it leads to the Masai Mara a destination that is host to the seventh natural wonder of the world.”

Another weakness, is Kenya’s traffic congestion, which can cause a twenty minute distance become a three hour distance, this is a significant weakness as it is internal and can be controlled by Kenya. Finally, a controversial weakness is the limited number of safari weddings that Kenya is able to offer. This is controversial because it can also work as a strength that can increase the demand for Kenya as a safari wedding destination.

Opportunities of Kenyan Wedding Tourism Product

The strengths of the wedding tourism market could lead to enhanced market awareness among the target markets, therefore more international markets for the wedding tourism product are a prospective opportunity for Kenya and the wedding product suppliers. This is affirmed by all interviewed managers as they all agree that there is opportunity in potential markets such as; America, India, Germany, Scandinavia as well as the existing markets of UK and Italy.

Another opportunity is the much anticipated visit by US President, Barrack Obama in July 2015. The Nairobi Hotel Manager (N2) said

“The July visit of President Obama to Kenya will showcase the true image of our country to the world.”
This is an opportunity as his visit will work as an assurance to tourists who are pushed away by travel advisories. The visit will also see the hotels filled to capacity with conference tourists, and this could be a great opportunity for Kenya to truly market itself so as to attract these tourists to come again for leisure and even one-day have a wedding in Kenya.

Another opportunity for Kenya is their ability to differentiate their products as the country is filled with diverse landscapes and all within its territory. DM3 said

“With Vision2030 at hand which aims at expanding the potential of Kenya’s tourism; the government is very supportive both economically and socially and this also makes us as a hotel very happy and I am sure other hotels share my sentiments.”

Therefore, the opportunity for unique tourism and specifically weddings is abundant for example one could have tea weddings in the tea highlands of Kericho in the Rift Valley, there is also opportunity for rainforest weddings in the largest remaining coastal rainforest in Eastern Africa; the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and many more, therefore, there is great potential to meet existing and expected demands.

**Threats of Kenyan Wedding Tourism Product**

Possible threats to the wedding tourism product lay in factors that are mainly outside the control of Kenya as well as the wedding tourism product suppliers. The first major threat to Kenya is terrorism, the non-state militant group Al Shababab that is a sector of the international terrorist group Al Qaeda is a big threat to Kenya’s tourism sector, as governments of countries that import Kenyan tourism give their citizens travel advisories. This was echoed by all interviewees to quote one of them NY4 said

“The biggest threat is terrorism, and the resultant travel advisories that are given.”

In addition, the negative media coverage of events in Kenya, affects the image of Kenya in real and expected customers and this global phenomenon that is terrorism is slowly crippling Kenya of its tourist market. N2 verified this as they said

“The media! They seem to only report bad news and blow it out of proportion.”

Another threat, is climate change, for example this year (2015) there was a wildebeest migration at the end of March, whereas the regular migration is during July through to October. Where the wildebeest cross form the Serengeti in Tanzania to the Masai Mara in search for greener pasture. Therefore, a premature migration can only mean that there is no food as a consequence of no rain and, therefore, this depicts how climate change is a threat. In addition, MM1 said
“we have to take climatic conditions into consideration, because we don’t want heavy rains and we also don’t want very dry climates, because then the wedding photographs will not be very aesthetic.”

Another threat, is poaching, especially for the safari wedding supplier, because guests want to see the wild animals when they reserve this package. With poaching, the threat is the extinction or endangerment of animals. Furthermore, animals are in their natural habitat therefore as MM1 stated another reason they offer a minimal number of safari weddings

“we take into consideration mating season, because during this season, animals are much more aggressive so we try and avoid this as the liability of anything bad happening will fall on our image.”

The final threat is the generalization of the African tourism market and the misconception of Africa being a country and not a continent. For instance N2 stated that

“Inexperienced tour agents who themselves have never visited Kenya so they only offer ‘Africa jungle adventures’.”

This is a threat because competitors of Kenya might gain unfair advantages if products are not well differentiated.

**SWOT Analysis matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenya has:</td>
<td>Infrastructure challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Safari destinations</td>
<td>Low season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Beach destinations</td>
<td>Traffic congestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mountain destinations</td>
<td>Limited supply of safari weddings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Honeymoon packages</td>
<td>Services cannot be patented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engagement packages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government support</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenyan wedding market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower farms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Association with British Royal family</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenyan hospitality and stability</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Real demand</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Word-of-mouth</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A big international market</td>
<td>Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Europe</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• China</td>
<td>Generalization of African markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• India</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• USA</td>
<td>Media coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit by US President (July 2015)</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation of products</td>
<td>Travel advisories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected demand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPRAISAL OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The previous sections have described the reasons for Kenya’s wedding product suppliers to diversify relating to the theoretical framework. New theoretical insights as to why hotels, lodges and resorts opt for diversification have been provided. A major reason for diversification in the four cases presented was the emergence of a real demand that created the opportunity to diversify. This being said, the empirical work reflects how the theoretical framework can be summarized into sub-areas. The first area deals with reasons for diversification internal to the suppliers and within their control and management and the second deals with the aspects of the diversification which are external and beyond the control and management of the suppliers.

Diversification of Kenya into destination weddings was caused by the need for expansion and as a strategy for growth due to the maturity of existing safari and beach tourism products. A growing tourism destination has to find fields of expansion, either through increasing its existing activities or through diversification. Although the growth of the hotels has not been studied specifically, the diversification of the hotels has a connection to their growth. Kenya is a relatively successful tourism destination in the safari and beach holiday product offering having established itself as the main supplier in East Africa, seconded by Tanzania. However, the limitations of only being a safari and beach destination implied that the country had to find ways to continue its growth in different market segments of tourism. They, therefore, used their strengths to create opportunities and increase the capacity of the already well known safari and beach holiday packages by diversifying to offer destination weddings. This notion compliments Teece’s (1982) theory of economies of scope which infers that a destination or hotel might find it interesting to diversify into a new activity because the production cost of making the two products can be lower than the production cost of making each product separately. This was the case, for the hotels that were studied in this research as each of the interviewed hotel managers did say that the cost of promoting destination weddings was justified as it was a collaborative effort with the Kenyan market and also because when promoting a destination wedding it will incorporate the honeymoon whereas in the case of promoting a honeymoon it doesn’t incorporate the wedding. This is because a honeymoon is a product that is consumed after a wedding, not before. In addition, the theory of economies of scope extends to other activities of the destination, in particular the research and development activity as well as the know-how existing within the destination or hotel. The four cases and Kenya, again exhibited economies of scope as they were able to use existing research and
development capabilities to enter the foreign market segment of weddings, without destabilizing existing segments.

In relation to the theory of economies of scope, it was argued that the diversification of the destination could be explained by the need to find a use for unused resources. Unused resources could be found in the managerial and production facilities of the destination. This was true for Kenya as with all four hotels the effect of low season is usually resources having to be cut down, i.e. employees or unused i.e. hotel rooms. Therefore, diversification helped boost the use of this unused resource. It is important to note that since tourism is a service, the managerial and production facilities interact with the consumption process, as services are inseparable which makes them more prone to having unused resources.

The final reason for diversification, as discussed in the SWOT analysis of Kenya’s wedding tourism product concerns the emergence of opportunities in terms of markets and market segments. As shown in the study, the hotels diversified in order to take advantage of opportunities. Besides, there existed a vision within the management of the firms that diversification had to take place in one very specific field. The opportunity would hence trigger the shift. Although the opportunities emerged outside the firms, it was the management perception of its environment, combined with its existing will of diversification that allowed the international market entry strategy to begin.

As argued in the introduction of this section, the reasons for diversification and international market entry can be found both within the destination and outside the destination. Therefore, we shall now look at external constraints and incentives that influenced the decision process of the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) and the four hotels.

This alternative, that diversification can be triggered by reasons that are beyond the control of the destination include the transformation of the market within which it operates and the real and expected demands of that market. In the case of the Kenyan wedding tourism product, diversification was seen to be a strategy aimed at reducing the exposure to risk by ensuring that they captured the market before their competitors were established and also so that they had a variety of wedding tourism products. The wedding suppliers were proactively involved in this diversification and gained a decent market share of the target market of destination weddings. Another factor that is beyond the control of wedding suppliers is the real and expected demands; this is because of the dynamic nature of the business environment. Therefore, the wedding tourism suppliers use strategies to build loyalty and create the chance for prospective loyalty through the recommendations of their loyal customers to others. In summary, it is important to note that these alternatives, do not exclude each other, as the external environment is related to the internal.
This research has shown that once a destination embarks upon the strategy of product offering diversification, they seek to integrate it smoothly with their existing products. Moreover, successful diversification occurs in interaction between organizations through collaborative efforts. For example, the research at hand highlights how the combined influence of the KTB and the KAHC in deciding to diversify Kenya’s wedding tourism product to offer destination weddings justified the cost of diversification and the processes involved i.e. promotion of the new product offering. In conclusion, thorough assessment of the internal and external environment is vital for the success of a strategy that is to say Kenya’s diversification venture in their wedding tourism product offering.
CONCLUSION

Significance of Study
The purpose of this study was to understand the forces that assert the readiness of Kenya in diversifying their wedding tourism product in the foreign market while understanding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the real and expected demands. To this end, the study has contributed to bringing the importance of diversification in tourism to the forefront of destination’s strategic decisions. The study has shown the need for undertaking diversification and working on adopting strategic approaches in solving stagnation problems and facilitating the retention of existing markets and attainment of new ones. This study did not discuss a total new service development process from idea generation to launching. Instead, it focused on the extension of such a process, which is how to understand and manage the object of development which is to increase the lifecycle of products.

The research also made the creation of the “Solution Diversification Model” possible. The model shows a market that is not being fully utilized which leads to the generation of ideas in order to especially solve this problem of underutilization. After ideas are generated, a SWOT analysis is conducted to evaluate the viability of the ideas. At this stage, an action plan is drawn to implement the idea(s). This equals diversification, as the ideas were sort after in order to optimize the tourism industry’s potential. This resonates well with Burt et al.’s (2014), notion that the necessity to remain competitive leads the supply-chain to evolve into an improved system that maintains the structure of the original by incorporating a new service or product that enables the demand to be met.

Solution Diversification Model

![Solution Diversification Model](source: Author’s own, 2015)
With the above Solution Diversification model, the industry/market can study the underutilization of resources and identify what the resources are in order to establish their usefulness. In Kenya, there is a wide range of destinations and non-tangible resources such as the multicultural society that makes it possible for tourists to be comfortable. With these diverse resources, new ideas of usage are developed and discussed at length to come up with the best proposals that are put through the SWOT analysis. The SWOT analysis helps identify the possible weaknesses and threats while activating the strengths and opportunities for the market. It is at this stage that action plans are formulated based on the filtered ideas. This in turn leads to growth through diversification.

This solution model can assist the stake holders in evaluating ideas that will in turn utilize existing resources to bring about generation of extra revenue through higher arrivals of destination tourists.

**Limitations**

Although the study was significant with regards to answering the research questions, it had some limitations, such as data was only collected from four hotels, therefore, this can be seen as a serious limitation for a generalization of the wedding tourism market. However, it must be noted that wedding tourism is a niche market. Another limitation is the use of a SWOT analysis for the theoretical framework, as it could be presumed as being overly simplified as the SWOT analysis encompasses too many elements. Nonetheless, the SWOT analysis is a conceptual model and can be used with respect to how best it will fit a certain context. In addition however, the SWOT analysis does not take into account the changes in the business environment and this is also a limitation.

**Suggestions for Future Studies**

Wedding tourism is a social occurrence that is extensive in nature; therefore, the possibility for future studies is vast. Future studies could look at the demand side, i.e. customers of wedding tourism in Kenya because this research concentrated on the suppliers of wedding tourism. In addition, research into other forms of special tourism in Kenya could be done, i.e. festivals, motor rallies, sports tourism etc. Another suggestion, is comparative studies could be done on different types of wedding destinations, i.e. based on popularity and stage of the product life cycle they are on.

Other studies could also look at emerging trends in wedding tourism, such as same-sex marriages because staying on the cutting edge requires asking not only what is new, but what is next (Rosenbaum, 2004). This implies that there is a need to take a closer look at the current wedding tourism product as well as to explore the forthcoming trends and their impact on the
wedding tourism market. More specifically, it would be of great interest to see how the importance of different elements might change in line with the forthcoming trends.

Away from weddings, this research has created the “Solution Diversification Model” which could generate a critical analysis study of the model. The model could also be used in different market segments and industries, especially in today’s business milieu which is constantly changing.

**Ethical considerations**

All participants will be informed verbally and in writing about the study and participation will be on voluntary basis. Written consent to participate will be obtained from those who volunteer and participants may withdraw from the study at any time. The informed consent of the managers and professionals of the nominated hotels was obtained prior to the commencement of the study. All data was treated in a way that protects the confidentiality and anonymity of those involved in the study. On completion of the research, the ownership of data will belong to the researcher and to Mid-Sweden University. In reciprocity to the participants for their participation the study will be made publicly available.
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Interview Protocol

Mid-Sweden University
Kamphas Våg 1
Östersund
SE-831 35
Sweden

Wedding Tourism Research
Qualitative Research Protocol

Appendix 1-Interview Protocol

• Interviews
  ➢ The researcher conducted interviews either face-to-face, by telephone, and through video-call. The interview was semi-structured.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Protocol</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date: __________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time: ___________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee(s):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening statement/brief description of project: [READ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes: Investigator motive, purpose of study, protection of respondents, including confidentiality, willingness to continue participation, use of data, access to final report, and permission to record interview.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Wedding Tourism question:
   A. Probes (if used, depending how structured the interview)
   B. [RESEARCHER THOUGHTS BRACKETED]

2. International Market Entry question:
   A. Probes (if used, depending how structured the interview)
   B. [RESEARCHER THOUGHTS BRACKETED]

2. Sub-questions:
   A. Probes (if used, depending how structured the interview)
   B. [RESEARCHER THOUGHTS BRACKETED]

[Thank Participants]
Appendix 2 - Field Interview Questions

Research Questions:

1. What triggered you to diversify your wedding tourism product into destination weddings rather than specialize in the popular honeymoons?

2. How long have you been offering destination weddings?

3. How many destination weddings do you host in a year?

4. Who is involved in the organization of the wedding at the hotel?

5. Is the Kenyan government doing anything to promote the efforts of destination weddings?

6. What opportunities are there in offering weddings to the international market?

7. What threats are there in offering weddings to the international market?

8. Who are your main competitors?

9. Would you say the cost of promoting destination weddings is justified?

10. Who is your main target market?

11. Who are your main customers?

Any additional comments?

Thank you.

End
Appendix 3 - Interview Coding

Wedding Tourism:

- Safaris
- Beaches
- Mountains
- Rainforests

City

- Honeymoons
  - Invest in Suites
  - Great Hospitality
  - Renewal of Vows
  - Anniversaries
  - Engagements
  - Weddings

Travel Advisories

Work in association with the govt. to get clients in the market & enter foreign markets.

- Government Support - high
- Product lifecycle actions
- Understanding selling product to meet current demands
- Specialization of African market - necessary
- Entering through established reputation - already known for our Safaris - Beaches - change of target market
- Social media - #254
- Rising Middle class in Kenya
- Maasai development - Kisii
- Mijikenda

Word of mouth

Low Season - repeat customers - empathy
- Hotel plans everything to avoid kichupps
- Hotel is involved with representative of the couple in the plans (sometimes)
- Indians usually request to have their chief in the kitchen
- They spend quite a lot more than what normal tourists spend
- Honeymoons are the most popular.

We also have weddings where one of the partners is a citizen of Kenya.

Social / high end / economic
- UK - small group but spend a lot on activities and food
- India - large group with many cultural ceremonies (a wedding can take seven days)

Italy - very romantic, enjoy spending, they are often repeat customers for anniversaries

Idea of Weddings
- Conventions, peers making arrangements, couple wishing to be able to get married in Kenya
- Royal Wedding booked

Romantic Tourism:

- Identification of countries
  - Greece, France, Italy
  - Scenic, culture
  - Afluent nations also play a part
  - Kenya - Tanzania - Uganda
  - Germany, North America

- Identification of competitors
  - World Travel
  - Amadeus

- Identification of gaps
  - Lack of information
  - Lack of confidence

Personality

- Personal interactions
- Professional interactions

Product validation

- Testing product
- Receiving feedback

Marketing plan

- Sales
- Marketing
- Advertising

Rassemble a team

- Team consists of
  - Sales
  - Marketing
  - Advertising
Appendix 4 - Ethical Consent Form

RESEARCH ETHICS CONSENT FORM

INTERNATIONAL MARKET ENTRY STRATEGY: A QUALITATIVE SWOT ANALYSIS ON WEDDING TOURISM IN KENYA

By Caroline Njeri Ngachau, Master of Tourism student at Mid-Sweden University.

Please initial Box

1. I confirm that I have been informed and understand the above study and I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded

5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.

_________________________  ______________________  _________________
Name of Participant          Signature               Date

_________________________  ______________________  _________________
Name of Researcher           Signature               Date
Appendix 5 – Interviews

Interview 1 – Masai Mara

CN: What triggered you to diversify your wedding tourism product into destination weddings rather than specialize in the popular honeymoons?

IP: We often do bush breakfasts or sundowners, and there was one we did, where the couple had their family over the man had told us that he wanted it to be an engagement in the wild because his girlfriend really loved the Masai Mara. They had already been to Kenya six times before and of the six times four of them were with us. So as we were going over the plans of the engagement surprise party, one of the mangers said in jest, it would be really amazing if we could do a wedding in the wild. That is where the first notion for a safari wedding was born. However, it took many years for it to be implemented as there were government restrictions about the safety of people in the wilderness and how it would affect the animals if so many people are gathered together. Nonetheless we were determined to get a safari wedding. Then after sometime, South Africa started offering Safari weddings, and the Kenya government stepped into action and the plan was taken back to the drawing board. And in 2003 we hosted our first destination safari wedding for British tourists. It was spectacular. And we’ve not looked back since.

CN: How long have you been offering destination weddings?

IP: Since 2003, so that is twelve years now.

CN: How many destination weddings do you host in a year?

IP: We host very few, our maximum is two because we have to take climatic conditions into consideration, because we don’t want heavy rains and we also don’t want very dry climates, because then the wedding photographs will not be very aesthetic, and a wedding is a memorable life event so we try and put it in April which is also a relatively low season for the hotel, and so we try and make up on our losses. The other thing we take into consideration is mating season, because during this season, animals are much more aggressive so we try and avoid this as the liability of anything bad happening will fall on our image. So that is why we host a minimal number. It is more sustainable that way and we are also sure to provide a great experience for the couple and their guests.

CN: Who is involved in the organization of the wedding at the hotel?

IP: At the hotel premises it is strictly us but we do ask what the couple would like for their menu, any allergies, and the usual and then we do the rest. As for the airport pick up and the arrival to the hotel, we use intermediaries, we have travel agents abroad for instance in the United Kingdom, who market the wedding package for us and then they forward the details to us and we begin the plans. For the airport pick up and drop off we have a tours and travel company we use and this is relayed to our guests when they are making their reservations, however it is not obligatory if they can find cheaper transport, then they can use that however we have not had such a situation. Once they arrive at our hotel all the preparations are usually done, usually we have a one week package for guests and a two week package for the couple. Because usually the couple stays much longer, however they can also choose the one week package.

CN: Is the Kenyan government doing anything to promote the efforts of destination weddings?
IP: The Kenyan government in recent years has been doing a great deal to assist with the marketing of the Kenyan destination weddings but there is still a long way to go. Kenya is a world class destination, but we are not utilizing our full potential. One of our biggest pitfalls is our road infrastructure, the roads to Narok have been bad for years, yet it leads to the Masai Mara a destination that is host to the seventh natural wonder of the world. This are the things that our competitors beat us in, and Tanzania is looking to go there, as they have also discovered the importance of good infrastructure, the roads in Tanzania are very good, but what enables us to surpass them is our hospitality and our attention to detail in the hotels.

Nonetheless, I must commend the Kenyan government, who have now entered the Indian market targeting wedding tourists, this is very good, because Indian cultural weddings can take up to a week, and they also come in large numbers, so we are looking forward to this. But I don’t think my chef will be too happy, I read an article that said, that they must gave their own chef in the kitchen *laughs*. Anyway, we are excited about it.

CN: What opportunities are there in offering weddings to the international market?

IP: The opportunities for us are tremendous; the most important one I believe is that we are able to cushion our losses during low-season and not have to put too many of our employees on temporary leave. Which is great for me as a manager. Another opportunity is that we often have repeat guests for major anniversaries so this is great, and also the word of mouth has been great, although sometimes we have to say no to weddings because of the issues I mentioned before. We are happy that our hotel is doing very well. But that said, we often encourage the couple to look for another hotel in Kenya, we want to ensure that they can have the Kenyan experience. We by no means want our guests to go to our competition countries, we much rather that the money stay in Kenya. It is collaboration.

CN: What threats are there in offering weddings to the international market?

IP: Offering a service product is always a threat, you are never too sure when the hype might change; you are never too sure if it is just a phase or if it is permanent. That is why we do not neglect our honeymoon product. We have invested in state of the art honeymoon suites and this are occupied often. The business of romance is a good one, if there is a happy ending.

CN: Who are your main competitors?

IP: Our main competitors definitely the Southern Africa countries, first is South Africa, then we have Botswana and we also have Zimbabwe. I know it sounds ironic, but not from the tourism perspective. Zimbabwe has a lot of great destination to offer for instance the Victoria Falls and their tourism sector booms, they have very beautiful places. They are not ahead of us though because they are a country that is almost permanently on the travel advisories list, though they do take a significant number of customers and their geographic location favors them as they are close to South Africa.

CN: Would you say the cost of promoting destination weddings is justified?

IP: Promoting destination weddings is a collaborative effort in Kenya, because the Kenya Tourism Board takes our advice and then they work on that, we have regular meetings with them and also as the hotel associations, so we are like a democracy. The cost of promotion is very minimal because of this collaborative effort, what now it boils down to is competing for those tourists once they have been attracted to Kenya, especially with so many Safari destinations they have a huge choice. But for Safari weddings, because of the insurance of the guests and a plethora of other paper work that needs to be done. It somehow limits the number of hotels that can do it; therefore it is usually 5 star hotels that host them and a minimal number of 4 star hotels. A safari wedding is a luxury, but a worthwhile luxury especially in Kenya.

CN: Who is your main target market?
Our main target markets are the British tourists, and now we are hoping to get Indian tourists, we are very excited about this, especially the exchange of culture. We are hoping to host an Indian wedding in the next two years.

We also target German tourists; we have had a relatively good response but not as great as the British. The American tourists are also minimally represented, but usually, it is Kenyan citizens who have changed to American nationality or a Kenyan marrying an America. So yes we have a good market. But our main targets now will be the British and the Indians.

**CN:** Who are your main customers?
**IP:** I already answered that…or do you want me to expound?
**CN:** Yes maybe you could say what kind of weddings your customers mostly do, re-marriages, first time marriages etc.?
**IP:** We can do any type of weddings, we are not necessarily picky, but re-marriages are usually the trickiest as it involves confirming that one is actually divorced or they are truly widowed, and this can take some time. But also previously, it was unheard of to get a divorce, so before it would be very difficult to get a pastor, who could do re-marriages, but we never turned away guests and this has really boosted our image so we are happy about that. As we often have customers who tell us that they were recommended to stay at our honeymoon suites or to have their engagement party here. It is a good feeling. I hope that answers your question?

**CN:** Yes. Thank you.
**CN:** Any additional comments?
**IP:** Good luck with your research, I hope to see a copy when it is complete.
*smiles*

**CN:** Sure. Thank you, for your time.

---------------------------------------------------------------------End---------------------------------------------------------------------
Interview 2 - Nairobi

CN: What triggered you to diversify your wedding tourism product into destination weddings rather than specialize in the popular honeymoons?

IP: Our unit as you can see is both a country hotel as well as a City Hotel. We are out of the central business area of Nairobi while at the same time having all modern facilities of a city and international accreditation. We attract a lot of local wedding events for photo shows and this triggered our desire to cater for this special market of “Events” We introduced an internal section deal with bookings that were related in any way to weddings and that is when we realized it can be a standalone unit. We made specially tailored packages that attracted the international clientele. The Samantha Bridal Television shows and Bridal magazine have been source of destination wedding bookings.

CN: How long have you been offering destination weddings?

IP: We actually don’t call it so, but your word makes it feel quite sophisticated. We call it Wedding tourism but after this meeting I shall propose we call it Destination weddings. To answer your query, we have been doing it for over ten years now.

CN: How many destination weddings do you host in a year?

IP: I can confirm that it has been to us a very profitable business venture. Overseas bookings account for 20% of the wedding events that are held in our unit. That’s about one or two a month amounting to 20 weddings a year and this is great for us. I am in no way complaining as we are overwhelmed by local weddings bookings .I don’t know why they all get married over the weekend when everyone else also wants to come and relax. Our Saturdays are swarmed.

CN: Who is involved in the organization of the wedding at the hotel?

IP: We have a vibrant Marketing department that works in close relationship with outsourced professional wedding planners. We nevertheless offer our Clients an “EXPERIENCE” as all the plans are in the background and what we offer is a package that covers all.

CN: Is the Kenyan government doing anything to promote the efforts of destination weddings?

IP: Oh yes! The government has been on the forefront and has set aside funds in the National budget creating two strong Parastatals, Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) and Brand Kenya Board to enhance a positive image the country and tourism in particular. There are joint initiatives between the government and private sector. The main aim has been to promote Kenya as a favorable destination first and as a wedding destination in particular. They have variously involved us, the stakeholders in organizing trade fairs and exhibitions that attract business for us. Most five star Hotels in Kenya are a favored wedding destination.

CN: What opportunities are there in offering weddings to the international market?

IP: The greatest opportunity for our hotel and the hospitality industry in general is to showcase our wonderful products and country. The special couples come with family and friends which in itself creates a chance for many people to see our facilities. The ripple effect on our business is phenomenal as each future wedding from the group becomes a show of might within the group hence big revenue for us.

CN: What threats are there in offering weddings to the international market?

IP: The media! They seem to only report bad news and blow it out of proportion. This in effect leads to a misrepresentation of our great country. The other threat is inexperienced tour agents who themselves have never visited Kenya so they only offer ‘Africa jungle adventures’. Some Western governments have given travel warnings to their citizens in most cases without any research into such issues. Over the last two years, quite a number of bookings were cancelled because of these advisories. Despite the advisories, I can confirm that we still got our fair level of destination weddings.
CN: **Who are your main competitors?**

IP: In Africa, I can only think of South Africa. As for the East African Community block, we consider it one destination as in many cases the newlyweds will by design visit Kenya since we are the entry/exit point because of our centrality.

CN: **Would you say the cost of promoting destination weddings is justified?**

IP: Oh Yes! We have seen the fruits of the promotion overshadow the cost. For us, the chain effect of a well-organized wedding event has gotten stronger with as shown by the number of returnees who come to enjoy a holiday with us after the wedding. Most of the couples come back annually for their anniversary and we treat them like family.

CN: **Who is your main target market?**

IP: Internationally, our focus has been on Europe until five years ago when we looked to the Asian countries as our fall back whenever negative travel advisories are issued and the faint hearted believe them. Recently, China has been a valuable partner.

CN: **Who are your main customers?**

IP: As at now, our major customers for wedding destination are United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA) followed by India and Italy.

CN: **Any additional comments**

IP: The July visit of President Obama to Kenya will showcase the true image of our country to the world. Later this year Kenya will be hosting Travel Agents from the USA for a personal experience as a measure to counter negative travel advisories.

CN: **Thank you for your time.**
Interview 3 – Diani, Mombasa
CN: What triggered you to diversify your wedding tourism product into destination weddings rather than specialize in the popular honeymoons?
IP: You know the old saying don’t put all your eggs in the same basket. Well you could look at it like that. But it was more of wanting to optimize on resources we already have. We have beautiful beaches which have perfect weather all year so why not offer something that we don’t really need to invest too much into, but we can gain greatly. Also the low season which is a problem for many hotels in Kenya, this made us (KAHC) think what is it we can do that will not cost us too much money to begin. And Voila! We decided on weddings, then we approached the government and they agreed the idea was brilliant and so we began to offer it. Here at our hotel the honeymoon packages are still as popular though, our suites are top notch and we also have many anniversaries celebrated here, actually that is where the idea started. A repeat honeymoon customer asked us why we do not offer destination weddings. So then I told her that if that is what you want we shall offer it. So the next year she emailed me and told me they weren’t able to come for their honeymoon, to Kenya and I replied and told her that her suggestion had been approved now we offer weddings. She was very happy and actually they renewed their vows here last year (2014). And her and her husband loved it, the whole family loved Kenya. So the demand for the destination wedding was what triggered us to diversify.

CN: How long have you been offering destination weddings?
IP: Not too long, only fifteen years. But it picked up quite well and that has been positive for us. Although we did have a slump during the post-election violence period and a little after that but we have started picking up again. And when travel advisories…

CN: Let me stop you there, because that question is coming
*smiles* In that case next question please.

CN: How many destination weddings do you host in a year?
IP: We do two a year if we want to be ambitious we might do four. I know you’re thinking that that is few. But as a five star hotel our low season is very short which is when we prefer to offer our packages so as to cater to our customers fully but also destination weddings require a great deal of planning. Sometimes a whole a year or more, so when I say we started fifteen years ago I mean when we had our first wedding. Which actually took two years to plan, but that was because we were working with intermediaries and sometimes we disagreed, because at the end of the day it was our image that would have been damaged, so our first wedding was the most hectic, however it was very successful. And we keep in touch with the couple; actually we keep in touch with all our couples. Most of them come back for a second honeymoon or ‘Baraka za mtoto’. It is nice, we keep long lasting relationships.

CN: Who is involved in the organization of the wedding at the hotel?
IP: I have already answered *laughs*. These days we do it ourselves for the reasons I’ve mentioned which is basically to reduce churn drivers.

CN: Is the Kenyan government doing anything to promote the efforts of destination weddings?
IP: Yes. I have been waiting for this question. The government I must say been at the forefront, the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) is certainly working overtime to promote new product offerings. With Vision2030 at hand which aims at expanding the potential of Kenya’s tourism; the government is very supportive both economically and socially and this also makes us as a hotel very happy and I am sure other hotels share my sentiments. The government is trying to optimize the potential of Kenya as a destination but it is also taking into consideration sustainability. Most products we market we have to measure their viability in terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability. They also conduct the marketing at
international trade fairs and they invite us; of course, so we are working together and we are working well.

**CN: What opportunities are there in offering weddings to the international market?**

**IP:** The main opportunity for us as a hotel is reducing the impacts of low season and getting loyal and repeat customers. There is something about romance that makes a place special to those who share their moment there. Also weddings for the international market help us to promote cultural heritage and community development as traditional dancers often entertain at the wedding reception. Also a sense of trust is built, for someone to allow for you to arrange their wedding, that is a once in a lifetime event that brings together your closest friends and family for the unification of two people. In addition, these guests who attend the wedding often spend their own money to be there, and how they are treated and how they find the ceremony determines whether they will become repeat customers for leisure or business and maybe even someday a wedding. So the opportunity is a growing customer base as well as retention.

**CN: What threats are there in offering weddings to the international market?**

**IP:** So this is the question...*laughs*
The travel advisories are a big threat to the offer of destination weddings. I blatantly say these because I know of hotels where couples have cancelled their weddings because of travel advisories. And this can be after the planning process is done and the wedding is maybe scheduled in the next three weeks. I am happy to say we have not had a cancellation like that but it is a threat that cannot be ignored. And often these countries who put out travel advisories are countries with which we supposedly have good diplomatic relations with, and these begs the question is it a strategy to jeopardize us? Because the international media often exaggerate what the show, which is not the reality, but what is worse, the embassies here approve of the travel advisories. But yes the travel advisories are a big threat.

I think I shall live that question now. Next.

**CN: Who are your main competitors?**

**IP:** Well. We have two kinds of competitors. The national competitors, other five star hotels and a number of wedding venues but that is not something we often see as negative as the investment is in Kenya. However, our largest competitor is South Africa and our neighbor Tanzania. Although, Tanzania are not ahead of us, they are a competitor that we cannot ignore especially here in Diani and the coastal region, as they have Zanzibar Island, which is also a well-known destination internationally. In business there is never a permanent position, so no competitor can be viewed as insignificant regardless if their competitive position being weaker. South Africa on the other hand is a strong competitor with a number of advancements. However, we as Kenya pride ourselves in having the advantage of our world renowned hospitality. Therefore this is what we emphasize to our customers and that is why we take building relationships with them seriously.

**CN: Would you say the cost of promoting destination weddings is justified?**

**IP:** Absolutely! Destination weddings have a great potential of covering losses and enabling a hotel like ours to break-even during low season. This as I had mentioned earlier is our primary target season. The cost of promoting destination weddings is not very high as it is usually a collaborative effort supported by KTB and KAHC. Therefore the overall cost is somewhat subsidized. And hosting a destination wedding in our hotel where we plan everything we are able to minimize the loopholes that might act as churn drivers of customer satisfaction and profits. Destination weddings are certainly a great thing for our hotel and for Kenya in general. We have amazing places here.

**CN: Who is your main target market?**

**IP:** I presume you mean internationally?
*smile* Yes
IP: *laughs* Because we work with the government, we use statistics of countries that bring us the most tourists. Our current target markets are the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy. However recently we decided that we want to launch our marketing plans in India as the number of tourist from there have increased, and Indians have a culture of loyalty which is great for a destination. But within the hotel, we get couples from Norway, China as well, our website actually has Norwegian and we are working on getting a mandarin version done as well. Though I must mention that our biggest target market is still domestic, the rising middle class in Kenya is spending much more than in previous years and that is advantageous for us, sometimes we are booked for weddings to maximum capacity.

CN: **Who are your main customers?**
IP: I believe I answered the question above. I think I revised the questions a little too well. *laughs*

CN: **Any additional comments?**
Not really.
All the best with your thesis.

CN: **Thank you, and thank you for your time**

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1 Swahili which translates to 'Blessings for the child'
Interview 4 – Nanyuki

CN: What triggered you to diversify your wedding tourism product into destination weddings rather than specialize in the popular honeymoons?

IP: Our diversification into destination weddings was as a result of the central region of Kenya getting a boost from the royal wedding, as in 2011, which made the area more popular with romance tourists. The diversification decision was not hard for us as we are a popular destination for domestic weddings, therefore we knew we had the resources required to make a successful diversification. Also our honeymoon product is extremely popular and we have had repeat customers who come with their children and they really enjoy it here. We also have wedding photography tourists, who come for a honeymoon, but also bring their wedding attire and they take pictures on our green lawns which feature the magnificent Mt. Kenya in the background.

CN: How long have you been offering destination weddings?

IP: hmmmm…well officially, since 2011, actually we hosted our first destination wedding in that year; the couple wanted it to coincide with the royal wedding. That was one of our biggest weddings and it was a success, the couple has since returned seven times, and yes between 2011 and 2015. They love it here. But before that, we had hosted a wedding in 2009 between a Kenyan and a British soldier; I don’t know if that classifies as a destination wedding. But it was also quite spectacular. So I shall say we have been hosting weddings for four years now, actually that is when my title changed to events manager.

CN: How many destination weddings do you host in a year?

IP: The most we have ever hosted in a year; which was 2013, was six destination weddings. It was a lot of meticulous planning and it involved many sleepless weeks. But we had a successful weddings and that is not inclusive of domestic weddings. However, all couples have since returned and we usually offer them discounts on their anniversaries so we are looking forward to seeing them again. But I should say that now the maximum destination weddings we offer are three a year. This is for logistical purposes as well as to ensure we do not rely on destination weddings too much.

CN: Who is involved in the organization of the wedding at the hotel?

IP: The hotel is involved with all aspects of the package, there are no intermediaries, except those who promote our product in the UK, and for other markets we just have our website. But the organization of the wedding is all us. We even have our own florists who do the flower arrangements, we have our own photography upon request by the couple, and we also work with a menu that will best suit the couple. If need be we can import certain delicacies, such as truffles. We take pride in doing our weddings for our domestic and international guests; therefore because they trust us with such a momentous day in their lives, we take it upon ourselves to make it the best day of their lives.

CN: Is the Kenyan government doing anything to promote the efforts of destination weddings?

The Kenyan government is at the forefront of promoting these special tourism products that are on offer in Kenya. And they are doing a great job. They have really helped boost our image in the international arena. For instance in March (2015), KTB represented us in Berlin in the world’s largest Travel Trade Show; International Tourism Bourse (ITB) and was ranked the second best country in Africa showcasing tourism and the sixth best in the world. These endorsements have generated positive response, especially for hotels like us who are also a part of the Kenya Association of Hotels and Caterers (KAHC) and therefore we have collaborative efforts with the government when it comes to promoting the country and the array of products on offer. So definitely the government is doing a great job!

CN: What opportunities are there in offering weddings to the international market?
IP: Offering weddings in the international market enables us to be able to offer a product that will not only be a great advertising of the magnificence of Kenya but it also gives us the opportunity of taking advantage of a luxury niche market. Because wedding tourists usually spend more than regular guests, not just because of the cost of the wedding, but also in terms of experiences that the hotel has to offer, like a couple might want to go on a game drive twice in one day, just so that they can be together. Therefore, tapping into the destination wedding market has an abundance of opportunities and we are happy to be able to supply it.

**CN: What threats are there in offering weddings to the international market?**

IP: Just like any tourism product in Kenya, the biggest threat is terrorism, and the resultant travel advisories that are given. But terrorism is the bigger factor, as it is what scares people from coming, the travel advisories are just precautions a government takes. But we can only hope that things will change. That being said, is why we decided to reduce the number of destination weddings we offer in a year, because if let’s say three of the six couples cancel their wedding, those are huge losses, money wise as well as time wise. So we decided to half our risk and just offer three. And we feel comfortable, because we have an almost constant demand, therefore the likelihood of cancellations is low, because we have created an image of rarity.

**CN: Who are your main competitors?**

IP: Rwanda is our main competitor for the kind of destination we are offering, highlands, green all year round. They have similar climatic conditions and beautiful regions as well.

**CN: Would you say the cost of promoting destination weddings is justified?**

IP: It is, mainly due to the fact that will are able to spend minimally on it, because the government promotes the destination.

**CN: Who is your main target market?**

IP: The UK tourists, we have invested a lot of time and money in them, because they spend a lot on weddings in their country, and for the same price, they can get a wedding and a holiday in Kenya with plenty of flowers. *laughs* Most of the destination weddings we have hosted, the couple usually ask after the wedding as a joke if we included the flowers in the bill we sent to them.*laughs* Because they import flowers from here, therefore flower arrangements are expensive but for us the flower farms are here and so we can afford to do amazing flower arrangements.

**CN: Who are your main customers?**

IP: Our main customers for the destination weddings are the British couples. But for our honeymoons, we have tourists from all around the world. We are actually trying to find a market that we can tap into, originally we were thinking of Germany and the Scandinavian countries. But also we have to take cultural differences, we do not allow same sex-marriages in Kenya, so we cannot delve into those markets just yet. So we are back to the drawing board, and we are looking at the US.

**CN: Any additional comments?**

IP: No. But if you need any clarification, do feel free to contact me.

**CN: That is lovely. Thank you, for your time.**

-----------------------------------------------End-----------------------------------------------
APPENDIX 6

FIVE DAY (5) DAY WEDDING PACKAGE IN KENYA WITH ACCOMODATION (SAMPLE)

DAY 1
Pick up from the Airport in the selected hotel’s luxury vehicle(s).
Welcome cocktails for the couple and their guests (predetermined number) in the vehicle(s)
Arrive at the hotel and check-in
Get acquainted with the hotel wedding planner/personal host.
Couple is taken to their room(s).
Fresh Fruit and Flowers in Room(s)

DAY 2
Scheduled visit to the Attorney General’s chambers for marriage registration and legal identification of the couple and their two witnesses.
Confirmation of plans, number of guests, menu, and photography
Pre-wedding pictorial session
Fresh Fruit and Flowers in Room

DAY 3 (THE WEDDING DAY)
Private Venue within the hotel
Flowers at the venue
Photographer & 48 Photos in an Album
Bridal Flower Bouquet & Button Hole for Groom
Flowers for the bridal group
Marriage Celebrant/ Registrar
Marriage vows and exchange of rings
Luxury vehicle for bride and groom
Extra vehicle for bridal group (predetermined number)
Photo session at selected picturesque grounds (1hr)
3 layered Wedding Cake
Reception and a banquet for the guests
Honeymoon suite for the couple
Champagne, Fresh Fruit and Flowers in Room

DAY 4
Free Pamper Package for the Newlyweds couple which includes rejuvenating & relaxing treatments such as full Body Massage, Steam Bath/ Sauna/ Plunge in Pool, Jacuzzi, Customized Facial, Manicure and Pedicure Fresh Fruit and Flowers in Room

DAY 5
Breakfast and farewell
Drop off at the Airport in the limousine
Authors Reflections

The research topic was interesting and thought proving. The interview participants were well versed on the topic at hand, and they were very helpful. However, with regards to the exploratory research design, the study proved to be time consuming and it also demanded a lot of patience. The original research proposal was based on ‘events tourism’ however during the data collection period, it changed to ‘product offering diversification’. Therefore, it is important to note that when doing explorative research, you must be flexible. Another aspect of this research is that it involved travelling to Kenya, which was quite expensive because of the travel to different locations to meet with the interview participants but also the telephone interviews were quite costly as they were long duration phone calls. Other aspects to consider when conducting interviews are cultural differences, as when I did my preliminary interview here in Sweden, the participant did not mind if I quoted them personally, however in Kenya, the need for confidentiality is more pronounced. This was evident in this research as all interview participants signed the anonymity clause of the consent form, and even after assuring them that the results would be presented as being anonymous; one interviewee withdrew their interview. Therefore when doing research you must be prepared for the unexpected. All in all the research gave results that were sufficient for the creation of the ‘Solution Diversification Model’ which reflects the need for diversification in underutilized markets. For that reason, the research was successful and also fun to conduct.