

BUSINESS DIPLOMACY MANAGEMENT COMPETENCY MODEL FOR THE MANAGERIAL LEVEL IN THE KENYAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Abstract

This study aims to create a competency model for managers in the Kenyan tourism sector, with an emphasis on business diplomacy. The investigation was directed by two main objectives and research questions that concentrate on the existing and aspirational competencies of managers concerning business diplomacy in Kenya's tourism sector. The research employs a qualitative design centred on core competencies as well as the emotional and social competencies theories put forth by Boyatzis (2008). Twenty tourism enterprises in Kenya were chosen using purposeful, stratified, and simple random sampling techniques, with their managers constituting the sample size for the research. The interview schedule serves as a mechanism for data collection, with its reliability assessed through a non-proportionate method by experts who evaluate the quality of the tool to ensure it is thorough, clear, and measurable. Data collection was conducted in five stages: phase 1 involved a pilot study, followed by phases 2, 3, 4, and 5, with analysis commencing immediately thereafter. The modified Van Kaam Moustakas method was utilized to direct the data analysis process, which is presented in a thematic narrative format consistent with the study's objectives. The study revealed that managers have knowledge, skills, and attitudes relevant to business diplomacy; however, these alone are inadequate for fostering effective growth in the tourism sector, underscoring the need for critical competencies in the field of business diplomacy. Validated by experts, a competency model of business diplomacy has been developed using the Focus Group method. The adoption of this model would greatly enhance human capital development in the tourism sector, in accordance with the Kenyan vision 2030.

Keywords: Business Diplomacy, Business Diplomacy Competencies, Kenyan Tourism Industry.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kenya's potential to attract foreign tourists depends on its rich natural and cultural history, tourism infrastructure, and dedication to environmental sustainability. Kenya experienced the benefits of 3S tourism (sun, sand, and sea) and wildlife tourism until recently, notably among European tourists (Odhiambo, 2022). Kenya's market dominance has declined due to Southern Africa's peace, prosperity, and the end of apartheid. Tourist who previously preferred Kenya for its stable political climate now have other options in East and Southern Africa (Biersteker, 2022). New possibilities are available. Tourists with experience in Africa have added Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa to their itineraries. Unfortunately, many aspects of Kenya's tourism business and infrastructure have not kept up with industry needs. Building upon the comprehensive

review by Njiru et al. (2025), which identified a significant research gap in business diplomacy competencies among tourism managers in Kenya, this study develops an empirical competency model to address these gaps.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The research aimed at developing a competency model of business diplomacy management for the managerial level in the Kenyan tourism industry. The study specifically assessed

1. Current business diplomacy competencies among managers within the Kenyan Tourism Industry.
2. Desirable business diplomacy competencies for managers within the Kenyan tourism sector
3. Develop a business diplomacy model for managers in the Kenyan Tourism Industry

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Beltyukova et al. (2015) define competence as the ability to succeed in professional tasks and challenges through skills, knowledge, and experience. Thus, competency includes motivation, character, self-perception, social standing, and professional expertise. However, Tomastika et al. (2015) define management competences as the talents and abilities needed to succeed under pressure. Armstrong (2013) perceived competency as a foundation for above-average responsibility. The composition includes talents, personal qualities, interests, life experiences, and work-related abilities that suggest great role performance (Amin, Zahra & Atyieh, 2024). Alaghband (2012) believes that competence comes from qualities, reasons, self-perception, attitudes and values, behavioural and cognitive abilities, and content knowledge, an identifiable trait that may be quantified, organized, and shown to distinguish people. Competency is a combination of interconnected knowledge, skills, and attitudes that greatly affect work and job performance, according to Abdollahi (2015). The International Society of Performance defines competency as the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to perform job duties well. Kwoba (2018) evaluated the potential and economic impact of domestic tourism in Kenya, identifying financial incentives and job security as the primary economic drivers for tour operators and hotels in enhancing domestic tourism.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Core Competency Theory

The research is based on the core competency theory proposed by Prahalad and Hamel (1990), emphasizing the significance of core competencies in achieving a company's success. This theory posits that core competencies are distinctive and pertinent skills that differentiate a business from its rivals. The primary components of this theory include core competencies, critical capabilities, and team learning, as illustrated in figure 1.

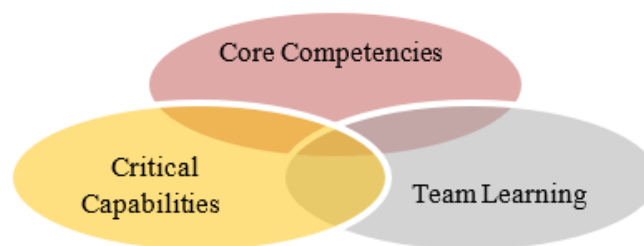


Figure 1: Premise of core competency theory

Source: Prahalad and Hamel (1990)

A company's core competencies are its talents and technology, vital capabilities are the skills needed to execute them, and team learning aligns teams to develop core competencies. Companies should emphasize their strengths to defeat the competition. According to the core competence model or Hamel and Prahalad model, core competences help organizations access new markets and grow quicker, enhancing manager conduct. Core capabilities are characterized by specialized expertise that other organizations cannot reproduce. Unlike Michael Porter's "outside-in-view," this theory emphasises "inside-out-view". An organization can create surprising items utilizing its core competence if production costs are cheap and development is faster than the competitors are. Applying core competence to all organization-wide technological and manufacturing skills is better. This will let the organization respond quickly to changing conditions using core expertise. Figure 2 shows the model's four core competencies.

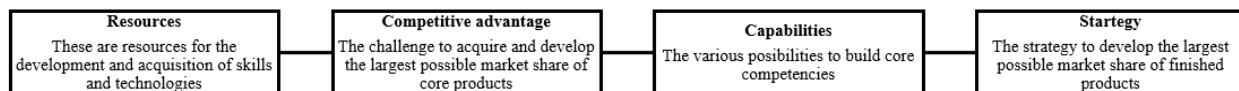


Figure 2: Core Competencies of Hamel and Prahalad Model

Source: Hamel and Prahalad (1994)

The core competence model emphasizes specialized, collaborative, integrated, and applied skills, knowledge, and attitude. Hamel and Prahalad (2006; 1994) affirmed that strategic objectives focus on creating a new competitive space rather than fighting competitors. West (2001) says core competency theory is powerful, but how to implement it in organizations is unknown but the study employs it because it matches managers' business diplomatic competence for business performance. The theory's matrix of emerging and current abilities fit the study's goal of assessing tourism managers' skills. Tourism managers can identify, build, and use business diplomacy competencies to grow their enterprises by rethinking professionally and following standard tourism business operations to boost performance.

Hamel and Prahalad (1994)'s core competency theory affects competency models by providing a structured framework to comprehending and analyzing occurrences. This methodology helps identify talent and technology development and acquisition sources. It emphasizes identifying and including critical competencies in the sector management model. This would help managers develop the skills needed for tourism business diplomacy, enabling them to develop growth and performance initiatives and gain a competitive edge against non-implementers. This theoretical framework defines the competency model's scope, aligns it with existing models and concepts, and informs the methodology. Through the concept, Kenyan tourism organizations would analyze their basic strengths to guide strategic decisions like mergers, acquisitions, and collaborations to improve their business diplomacy.

Boyatzis (2008) Emotional and social competence model

The study additionally used the Boyatzis (2008) emotional and social competency model to enhance its theoretical depth and behavioural validity. The approach includes three emotional and social intelligence categories.

Emotional intelligence competencies. This cluster requires recognizing one's feelings, preferences, and resources and managing moods, urges, and emotions to finish the task. Emotional self-awareness is the ability to recognize one's feelings, use them to make decisions, and realistically assess one's skills. Emotional self-control, which is crucial in stressful workplaces; positive outlook, which is the ability to see the bright side; drive to achieve, which is the ability to set goals and improve; and adaptability, which helps quickly adapt to change in volatile and unstable environments, are also included. Personal and professional self-management is vital since moods affect others through emotional contagion (Goleman, 2006).

Understanding and managing relationships are *social intelligence skills*. Individuals may understand others' experiences, perceive their perspectives, and create relationships with numerous individuals through social awareness competencies. Empathy and organizational awareness are examples. Empathy means understanding and feeling another's feelings and this requires listening and comprehending their perspective, which may vary by culture. Organizational awareness entails understanding power, networks and collective values in contrast; relationship management skills emphasize emotional control and connection influence, coaching, mentoring, inspiring leadership, teamwork, and conflict management, persuasion, guide, negotiate, resolve conflicts, and collaborate. Positive influence affects others, persuasion convinces others to accept one's beliefs, and coaching and mentoring promote long-term learning. Inspirational leadership involves others and creates emotional resonance, such as group pride and a compelling vision to perform well. Organizational teamwork is vital, it requires respecting and working with the group, encouraging people to happily join in the cause, and promoting teamwork. Handling difficult people, organizations, or situations requires diplomacy and tact.

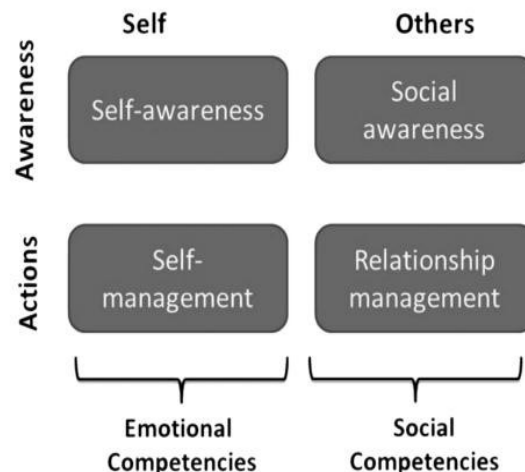


Figure 3: shows that the two clusters cover four skill categories.

Source: Boyatzis, et al. (2019) (Adopted)

Cognitive competencies involve comprehending complex events and recognizing patterns. System thinking and pattern identification are its strengths. First is the ability to explain complex situations and understand cause-and-effect relationships and results. Second, recognize schemas or models in causally related information or events, find similarities, and use analogies to explain concepts.

This study add business diplomacy competencies from Boyatzis' 2008 emotional and social competency model. The three ESC model components may reflect how well a management practices business diplomacy for tourism industry growth. Cognitive, social, and emotional skills are well defined. The ESC model assessed managers' current and desired skills that may affect Kenyan tourism, and to improve tourism business and performance, management used knowledge, skills, and attitudes to predict business diplomacy abilities for human relations management, negotiation, collaboration, and teamwork.

The framework helps identify trends and correlations in Kenya's tourism business, and improving communication. The tourism industry's fundamental policies should incorporate this approach to build strong leaders who can inspire and motivate their teams. This will increase workplace dynamics and management collaboration and productivity, improving organizational performance. Managers should develop emotional and social abilities to improve interpersonal relationships, according to this view. Boyatzis' 2008 model was used to propose coaching, training, and assessments to improve emotional and social skills in business diplomacy within corporate and educational settings.

5. METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Research Paradigm

The study uses constructivist theory in qualitative business diplomacy research to emphasize how identities, norms, and common understandings affect state interests and interactions. It argues that international systems are social rather than material and uses qualitative approaches to study diplomats' and other stakeholders' meanings and viewpoints. The research process examines the intersubjective reality of business diplomacy competencies among Kenyan tourism managers and the essential competencies they should develop for growth and performance of the sector. Interviews to understand how diplomacy shapes the world as a social practice was used as data collection tool. Competencies are impacted by communal attitudes and interactions within systems, not objective facts and this view supports the idea that desired competencies are socially created through contact and training. Constructivism, which emphasizes competencies from observable occurrences, and interpretivism, which emphasizes social settings, dominate this study. Therefore, qualitative methods within a social framework are needed to reveal participants' subjective meanings, beliefs, and perspectives, such as interviewing them and analyzing speeches to understand how shared understandings are modelled. They affected the study's methodology and analysis.

Strategy of Inquiry

The qualitative study employed phenomenological investigation to examine human experiences from the first-person perspective. This study relied on Edmund Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology (1970). Phenomenology, according to Edmund Husserl (1970), is the "science of the essence of consciousness" since it emphasises intentionality. In Husserl's method of investigation, intentionality describes consciousness's directedness towards phenomena or situations, including mental activities like remembering, picturing, and dreading. In phenomenological study, "bracketing" meaning leaving aside previous beliefs and assumptions

about the world is common. This permits researchers to approach phenomena with an open mind and focus on how they appear in experience to better comprehend participants' experiences. Methodology for this study's bracketing: The researcher studied the topic and examined his prejudices and beliefs about business diplomacy competencies. Write down biases, attitudes, and assumptions about the phenomenon, and then acknowledge them without judgement. For instance: *“It would be unreasonable to expect someone who has no qualification and experience in international relations, business, public relations, or diplomacy to have the knowledge of business diplomacy. It is unrealistic to expect someone who is not in that profession to take it up and not ask, “Where, how and what do I do? Some managers do not fit this description since they have some understanding of business diplomacy based on experience over time”.*

The study collected and analysed data without assumptions and focused on participants' perspectives and experiences. Open-ended interview questions let participants speak, listen, and avoid leading questions that disclose researcher biases. The researcher explores how early preconceptions affected data interpretation after data collection. The researcher kept a reflective diary to track thoughts and feelings for study transparency and rigour. However, findings and mentors' bracketing process supplied new perspectives and revealed any remaining biases by representing participants' experiences rather than the researcher's preconceptions.

“Some time ago, I faced a situation with the Turkish government that was successfully resolved through effective communication. By utilizing the appropriate language and persuasive wording, I was able to convince them to approve the visas for tourists that my organization had applied for. Until intervention was made, the approvals had not been granted prior to the travel date”

To better comprehend a phenomenon or condition, qualitative research uses non-numerical data (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research was chosen because it understands human and social experiences. The design prioritizes depth over width, focusing on how people interpret their experiences. This design lets the researcher study complicated phenomena like Kenyan tourism managers' business diplomacy knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Actively engaging people to capture their perspectives and lived experiences provides contextual understanding of behaviours, motivations, and social situations.

The legitimacy and dependability of qualitative research findings are greatly improved by analytical transparency and rigour. Documenting research processes and following systematic methods are required. The study articulated data gathering methodologies to ensure analytical transparency in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. To ensure this research meets high quality and reliability requirements, member checking verified the findings while, to ensure transferability, the study provides enough background for others to evaluate the findings in different contexts. Consistent application of the research procedure throughout time ensured confirmability and objectivity by allowing external verification of findings. The study produced qualitative findings that improved business diplomacy and tourism by integrating these ideas. Qualitative research emphasizes contextualizing human behaviour, adaptive methods, and participant views. Twenty managers from licensed tourism enterprises in four categories namely travel and tour, hotel and hospitality, travel/airline, and recreation were interviewed in Nairobi,

Kenya's capital. Researchers stratified subjects and randomly sampled them. Purposeful sampling selected segments that accurately reflected the population and provided excellent research findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The distribution of key informants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Key Informants Distribution

Tourism Company Type	Key Informants
Tour and Travel	4
Hospitality	9
Travel/Airline	4
Recreation	3
Total	20

The empirical study on corporate diplomacy was limited, but the key informants’ technique helped the researcher discover data sources and data to collect by establishing relevant ideas and categories. Five probing questions were asked of Kenyan tourism managers to verify their business diplomacy skills for improve firm performance. The method made data collection easier. Kenyan tourism managers were interviewed to examine their knowledge, skills, and attitudes of business diplomacy and how they affect business growth and performance. The interview guide was revised and improved to include focused questions for additional research objectives-aligned categories. The researcher creates a tool quality assessment form to analyze interview guide accuracy, substance, and measurability. This document includes the researcher's demographics, study title, research questions, objectives, and quality assessment guide where five business diplomacy experts approved the interview questions. Multiple coding and member checking ensured interview item consistency between raters. This ensures the researcher and participants may use the findings. Figure 4 depicts five systematic data collecting phases.

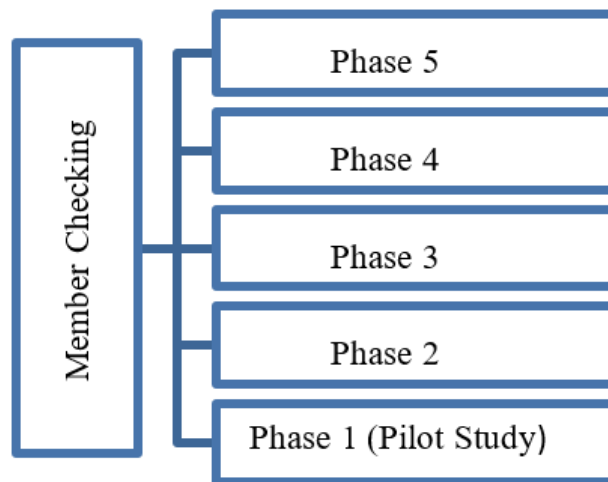


Figure 4: Description of the data collection Procedure

Email invitations for interviews were sent from Nairobi tourism companies' websites. The communication introduced the researchers and research goals. The abstract describes the study's goals and scope. Participants were interviewed at their convenience using standard data collection

methods. The pilot project began with five interviews, followed by four in the second phase, four in the third, four in the fourth, and eight in the fifth. The phase allocation and manager assignment seemed haphazard. The data was collected from March to June 2025 and accurately identifies managers available for interviews. Following parts provide recorded and transcribed audio data for analysis. Data was analysed using Moustakas analytical model (Table 2). Thus, member checking lets participants assess the findings and offer feedback.

Table 2: Steps of the van Kaam Method Modified by Moustakas

Steps	Methodological procedures
1	Horizontalization: Listing and preliminary grouping
2	Reduction and elimination: Determination of invariant constituents
3	Categorization and Thematization of invariant constituents
4	Application and Validation: Final identification of invariant constituents and themes
5	Construction of individual textural description
6	Construction of individual structural description
7	Composite description: construction of structural-textural description

Source: Moustakas (1994)

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data analysis was based on Moustakas' modified Van Kaam method (1994) analytical model as follows:

Step 1: Horizontalization: Listing and Preliminary Grouping: It is easier to horizontalize phenomenon descriptions when the researcher recognizes that each participant has a unique perspective on the shared phenomena. Though the expressions may initially be equal, perspectives with consistent experience become important during this comparing process. In the preliminary step, the researcher seeks collective experience cores.

For example, the researcher read participant transcripts on the current and desired competencies of Kenya tourism industry managers to understand concepts worth including in the model of business diplomacy for managers in the sector while listing and grouping identical responses. A rough drawing was created to categories participant descriptions. This approach may employ independent judges and quantitative expressions to boost investigative comprehensiveness.

Step 2: Reduction and Elimination: Determination of Invariant Constituents: Most narratives contain abstract statements that support a dominant topic throughout this phase of analysis. The selected facts are categorized in phrases unrelated to the phenomenon's basic knowledge and eliminated, leaving the foundational aspects of the experience. Van Kaam anticipates that the researcher reduces participants' unclear and repetitious utterances into more descriptive phrases.

Themes were deleted if there was not enough material, integrated into existing categories, or placed into new categories as the investigation progressed. Due to its similarity and application in the same environment, "team building and management" was first created as a separate

category but then merged into "collaboration and stakeholder management". No other interviewee mentioned business administration/management certifications. This competency was deleted and did not appear in the conceptual categories, although it is used to improve corporate diplomacy abilities.

Step 3: Categorization and Thematization of Invariant Constituents: In this step, expressions are analyzed by grouping and classifying invariant experience constituents' perspectives. The earliest descriptions of the phenomenon's essential features allow us to establish structural assumptions for its characterization. The phenomenon's universal attributes, time, space, the "self," causality, and corporeality inform its themes.

This analysis focused on context, not the term. When discussing language in the context of cross-cultural understanding, it was categorized under cultural awareness and sensitivity, not communication or language ability. When the participant discusses language to master another, it is under communication.

Step 4: Application and Validation: Final Identification of Invariant Constituents and Themes: The created themes are compared to the narrative descriptions at this stage. The researcher also considers whether the themes are necessary and/or sufficient to describe the phenomenon's essential structure, a process Moustakas calls application and validation. He suggests the following questions for reflection: Are invariant elements explicitly in the transcript. Do they fit the context even if not addressed in the transcript? Without explicit presence and compatibility with the whole, how do they make sense of the phenomenon? After this stage, the invariant constituent themes convey the experience's meaning, as articulated in the original transcripts and linked with the phenomenon.

Remember that conceptual category names are discretionary; another researcher may use a different name or label. Proper naming must be complete, clear, and relevant to the statements. The term "interaction and engagement" is more complete and illustrative than "relationships," "engagement," or "networking." The remarks were made to communicate and interact with stakeholders to create and maintain goodwill.

Step 5: Construction of Individual Textural Description: Using "verbatim" transcript expressions, the researcher creates an Individual Textural Description. The Individual Texture Descriptions highlight each participant's themes' common textural features. Individual Textural Description depicts. Thus, the substance of the phenomenon is emphasized as a more objective component in light of the invariant constituents and themes from the previous analysis.

For instance, "systems knowledge" may be a subset of "technical and business operational knowledge," but it was categorized as a separate conceptual category because business diplomats need it to represent their firms.

Step 6: Construction of Individual Structural Description: The researcher uses professional and personal insights to provide a unique abstract structural account of the event. Based on imaginative diversity and personal textural perception, this feature is more subjective. "Imaginative variation" is a deliberate cognitive process used by the researcher to analyze potential meanings, embrace multiple perspectives of the phenomenon, and thoughtfully and intuitively

explore structural qualities and textural characteristics. The researcher must evaluate the data from a unique perspective, considering the varied human senses in interpreting the world and excelling in creative data analysis.

Comparing incidences and categories at every coding stage prevented subjective bias and improved data accuracy and consistency.

Step 7: Composite Description: Construction of Structural-textural Description: The researcher combined the Individual Textural Description and Individual Structural Description to create the Structural-Textural Description, which encapsulated the lived experience. The data analysis concludes with a Composite Description that encompasses the phenomenon. This process blurs original descriptions, revealing similar traits that represent the phenomenon's core structure. According to Van Kaam, data analysis yields organized abstractions that mirror the individual's perception of nature. The Composite Description of the lived experience is a conscious and instinctive merging of all Individual Structural-Structural Descriptions into a universal narrative that captures the phenomenon's essence and context.

In this phase, comments were compared across all themes, shifted, merged, rewritten, and modified to fit the data and explain the phenomenon.

Objective 1: To Study the Current Business Diplomacy Competencies of Managers in the Kenyan Tourism Industry

Current Knowledge of Business Diplomacy: The researcher performed a content analysis to assess the frequency of repetition in selecting a minimum of 12 common attributes from 20 items derived from interviews with participants regarding the current knowledge of business diplomacy among Kenyan tourism managers. The results were summarized as follows: Communication methods, marketing for hospitality and tourism, finance and budgeting, human resources management, customer relations and management are areas of knowledge that were referenced in over 12 instances. Managers possess a comprehensive understanding that encompasses facts, principles, theories, and specialized insights gained through education, training, or experience. A robust cognitive foundation enables managers to make informed decisions, address challenges, and apply critical thinking to enhance work performance.

Current Skills of Business Diplomacy: Kenyan tourism managers possess skills in communication, technology, negotiation, networking, teamwork, collaboration, problem solving, and decision-making. Managers leverage their practical and technical expertise to accomplish tasks effectively. This study categorizes skills into two types: hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills encompass competencies such as foreign language proficiency, data analysis, digital marketing, among others. Tourism businesses and services require specific skills, acquired through training, education, or experience, to function effectively. Effective communication, strong leadership, and collaborative teamwork are current skills that shaped managers' attitudes, beliefs, ideals, and inclinations, influencing their work and interactions with others.

Current Attitudes/Attributes of Business Diplomacy: The research indicates that managers within the Kenyan tourism sector exhibit creativity and sociability, demonstrate a desire for skill enhancement and innovation, and possess empathy along with a cosmopolitan perspective,

resilience, and adaptability. They demonstrate a welcoming demeanour, hospitality, and engage in transparent communication with clients, consumers, and staff. Optimistic thinking fosters a growth mindset, enhancing initiative, collaboration, and continuous learning focused on elevating proficiency within the industry.

Objective 2: To Study the Desired Business Diplomacy Competencies of Managers in the Kenyan Tourism Industry

Desired Knowledge of Business Diplomacy: The researcher conducted a content analysis to evaluate the frequency of repetition in the selection of at least 12 common attributes from 20 items obtained through interviews with participants about the desired knowledge of business diplomacy among Kenyan tourism managers. The findings were presented in the following manner: knowledge of governance structures, leadership frameworks and interpersonal dynamics, proficiency in language and diplomacy, understanding of business diplomacy, operational expertise, international business acumen, insights into international political economy (IPE), and comprehension of international relations. The effectiveness of managers in the Kenyan tourism industry is heavily reliant on this knowledge to optimize tourism operations and promote growth and performance.

Desired Skills of Business Diplomacy: Tourism managers in Kenya must demonstrate strong leadership and management capabilities, possess analytical skills, and be adept in protocol and etiquette. They should also have cross-cultural competence, negotiation and conflict resolution skills, and the ability to build relationships and engage stakeholders. Additionally, strategic thinking, an analytical mindset, ethical decision-making, and active listening skills are essential. Managers are anticipated to utilize their practical and technical skills to achieve objectives focused on enhancing the tourism sector.

Desired Attitudes/Attributes of Business Diplomacy: Managers in Kenyan tourism sector desire competencies in emotional intelligence and adaptability within the realm of business diplomacy. Key attributes include cultural intelligence, effective communication and negotiation skills, relationship building, resilience, ethical integrity, and a strong commitment to harmonizing business interests with societal and environmental considerations. These skills are essential for enabling managers to effectively navigate intricate corporate landscapes, address conflicts, and cultivate enduring relationships with various stakeholders.

Objective 3: To Present a Competency Model of Business Diplomacy for Managers in the Kenyan Tourism Industry.

1. The researcher created a business diplomacy competency model for Kenyan tourism managers based on the analysis in Part 1 using three steps:
2. Ask experts to assess the draft competency model for Kenyan tourist managers and integrate input for improvement.
3. Introduce the business diplomacy competency paradigm for Kenyan tourist managers.

Step 1:

The data analysis conducted in objectives one and two facilitated the identification of the essential components required for a business diplomacy competency model tailored for Kenyan tourist

managers. A content analysis informed by a literature review and pertinent research, including participant interviews, is employed to investigate the competency model concept for Kenyan tourist managers. The researcher has developed an initial business diplomacy competency model tailored for tourism managers in Kenya. This model comprises two primary components and has undergone evaluation by experts to enhance all associated studies. The content encompasses essential concepts and reasoning, objectives, model components, and results, structured in alignment with Steiner's (1998) methodology for format development via draughting.

Drafting a Competency Model of Business Diplomacy for Managers in the Kenyan Tourism Industry

1. Principles and Reasons

The complicated and ever-changing tourism business environment requires business diplomacy, including diplomatic attitudes and skills. Business diplomacy covers geopolitical risks, non-business partners outside organization borders, and government-free countries. Business diplomacy is emergent; therefore, many authors highlight its importance in business effectiveness. The researcher's 2022 early assessment of the tourism industry's complexity to improve business interactions and manager performance found Kenya's tourism sector underperforming. Despite regular tourism, managers may blame inadequate business diplomacy for underperformance. Few studies identified managers' business diplomacy experiences and how they employ frameworks and skills to improve tourism business performance. Research gaps obscure the role of business diplomacy among Kenyan tourism managers, highlighting the need for the development of a competence model that focusses on the knowledge, skills and attributes essential for the success of these professionals. Managers must assess business diplomacy for success by integrating practices, skills, and policies that are in harmony with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to effectively fulfil their responsibilities and enhance the performance of the tourism sector. Clarifying managerial responsibilities, expanding capabilities, nurturing talent, and fostering career advancement should elevate the professionalism within the tourism sector, with the goal of enhancing tourism and ensuring job retention.

2. Objectives of the Model

1. To be a standard for building business diplomacy competencies among managers in the Kenyan tourism industry.
2. To systematically improve human resources in the Kenyan tourism sector, essential for industry growth and national development.

3. Components of the Model

The components of competency and the competencies of managers in the Kenyan tourism industry are categorized into two types:

3.1 Current Managers' Competencies of Business Diplomacy Consists of Three Domains:

Knowledge: include Communication methods, marketing for hospitality and tourism, job knowledge (tourism and hospitality management), human resources management, finance and budgeting and customer relations and management

Skills: include foreign language proficiency, data analysis, communication and technological skills, digital marketing, teamwork and collaboration skills, leadership skills, problem solving and decision-making skills, negotiation and networking skills

Attitudes/Attributes: including creativity and strong interpersonal relationship, open to training and receptive to acquiring new skills and innovation, resilience and adaptability, strong sense of empathy and cosmopolitan in outlook, kindness, friendly and welcoming demeanor, open-minded communication and engagement with clients, customers and employees.

3.2 Desirable Competencies of Business Diplomacy for Managers in the Kenyan Tourism Industry Include:

Knowledge: including knowledge of governance structure, leadership structure and interpersonal relation, language and diplomacy, business diplomacy and operational knowledge, international business, international political economy and international relations.

Skills: include leadership and management skills, analytical skills and protocol and etiquette skills, cross-cultural competence, negotiation and conflict resolution, stakeholder engagement, relationship-building, ethical decision-making, strategic thinking and analytical mindset, and active listening skills.

Attributes: include emotional intelligence and adaptability, cultural intelligence, effective communication and negotiation, relationship-building, ethical integrity and strategic thinking.

4. Results of the Pattern

1. The objective is to create a competency model for business diplomacy that enhances managers' skills in the Kenyan tourism sector.
2. Companies and organizations can enhance managerial competence by incorporating the manager competency model of business diplomacy into training programs in partnership with government agencies.
3. Successfully implementing the competency model of business diplomacy for Kenyan tourism managers to enhance their profession and provide opportunities.
4. Educational institutions can implement the business diplomacy competency model for tourism managers. This technique will help create a country-specific curriculum.

Step 2: Develop a Competency Model of Business Diplomacy

1. Selection of Participants for the Validation of the Competency Model of Business Diplomacy

This study used the Delphi technique to calculate the expert index or competence coefficient to assess the reliability and credibility of the model validation experts, confirming the consensus's validity. Key factors usually revolved around two main components, which formed the expert competency coefficient: Knowledge Level (KL): Participants' self-evaluation and researchers' appraisal of their diplomacy, business diplomacy, tourism, human resource management, and international relations knowledge. Argumentation Ability (AA) assessed the expert's ability to make rational, evidence-based decisions. This includes being clear and succinct in their stance or opinion, being able to substantiate statements with pertinent data, making logical links between claims and evidence, and acknowledging and rebutting opposing views.

The importance of each component determined its weight. Knowledge Level (KL): 0.7, Argumentation Ability (AA): 0.3, as the total must equal 1. The study used self-assessment questionnaires and researcher evaluations of objective factors including qualifications and experience to score each KL and AA of expert from 1 to 5. $EI = (K \times Wk) + (A \times Wa)$ was the mathematical model used to create the Expert Index (EI). Where (K) is the Knowledge score, (A) is the Argumentation score, (Wk) is the Knowledge Weight, and (Wa) is the Argumentation Weight. The five specialists had high indices of 7.5-7.8, according to the survey. Thus, the specialists are trusted and adept at validating the business diplomacy competency model. This ensures that the Delphi method uses well-informed and rational expert viewpoints.

2. Validation of the Competency Model of Business Diplomacy

The Delphi approach validated the business diplomacy competency model. The business diplomacy competency model aims to standardize business diplomacy training and provides a methodical framework for improving business diplomacy in this sector, which is crucial for industry growth and national development. Validating the competency model of business diplomacy evaluates its clarity, comprehensiveness, and usefulness in developing Kenyan tourism capital, improving tourism experience, business growth, and performance. The competences include business diplomacy knowledge, skills, and attitudes and according to the Delphi method, the validation process involves two rounds and expects expert consistency. Five subject matter experts from tourism, academia, and government demonstrated considerable knowledge and experience in the validated competences.

The study created a standardized questionnaire for Kenyan tourist managers using the business diplomacy competency model. The questionnaire includes the three areas of the competency model of business diplomacy (knowledge, skills, and qualities), five sustainability rating scales (least (1), little (2), moderate (3), a lot (4), and most (5)), and open-ended questions for qualitative input. The panel of experts has completed the questionnaires, ranked them by competency, and analyzed the results to suggest areas for improvement or clarification.

Table 3: Description of Expert Suggestions for the Competency Model of Business Diplomacy for Managers in the Kenyan Tourism Industry

Sections	Suggestions	What has been done
1. Principles and reasons	Appropriate	Adopted
2. Purpose of the format of the business diplomacy competencies model for managers in the Kenyan tourism industry	Comprehensive and measurable	Adopted
3. Composition of business diplomacy competencies of managers in the Kenyan tourism industry	Adequate and Significant	Adopted
4. Draft the competency model of business diplomacy for managers in the Kenyan tourism industry	Improve on the clarity and shape of the model	The clarity and shape of the model has been

		enhanced through 3-D graphic design
5. Evaluation (Meaning and appropriateness of the competency model of business diplomacy for managers in the Kenyan tourism industry)	Meaningful and appropriate	Adopted

Round 1's findings were summarized by identifying key patterns and themes for further discussion, modifying the model based on expert feedback, and adding desired adjustments and clarifications. The connoisseurship session took place online on September 13, 2025, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm east Africa Time. This session evaluated Delphi validation approaches to improve the model by incorporating prior rounds' input if needed. Experts were requested to revise their views based on group consensus to align opinions and agree on competency model competencies. The experts reviewed the validation result: Ideal ideas and reasoning were in the model. Kenyan tourism managers' business diplomacy competencies model was robust and thorough. Due to tourism's financial impact, experts said this is appropriate for achieving the vision 2030, the government's long-term growth strategy, aims to establish an affluent, internationally competitive society with excellent quality of life by 2030. The incorporation of the model into the Kenyan tourism development framework will strengthen human capital through training and the subsequent adjustments aligned with the National Tourist Strategy (2025-2030). The competency model is both current and relevant, as indicated by the evaluation. This iterative and collaborative approach guarantees that the business diplomacy competency model remains robust, pertinent, and endorsed by diplomacy and tourism agencies

Step 3: Presentation of the Competency Model of Business Diplomacy for Managers in the Kenyan Tourism Industry

1. Fundamentals and rationale

The Kenyan government promotes indigenous businesses like tourism, which boosts the economy. Any sector can thrive if society values honesty, integrity, no cheating, and trust to deliver results that satisfy stakeholders. Experts manage the tourism sector in a changing commercial landscape, and tourism managers use diplomacy to suit clients' demands and preferences. Sector managers sometimes fulfil stakeholders' demands and aspirations by personal effort, skill, and work experience, resulting in efficient work and organizational success without a business diplomacy competency model. Tourism, consumer happiness, and business growth and performance would benefit more from a competency model of business diplomacy.

2. Objectives of the Model

1. To be a standard for building business diplomacy competencies among managers in the Kenyan tourism industry.
2. To systematically improve human resources in the Kenyan tourism sector, essential for industry growth and national development.

3. Components of the Model

3.1 Competency Model of Business Diplomacy for Managers in the Kenyan Tourism Industry

The competency model of business diplomacy consists of three domains:

Knowledge: include knowledge of governance structure, leadership structure and interpersonal relation, language and diplomacy, business diplomacy, international business, international political economy, international relations, job knowledge, marketing for hospitality and tourism, finance and budgeting, human resource management, customer relation and management.

Skills: Hard skills: foreign language proficiency data analysis technological skills digital marketing. Soft skills: leadership and management skills analytical skills protocol and etiquette skills, relationship building, cross-cultural competence, negotiation and conflict resolution, stakeholder management, strategic thinking and analytical mindset, ethical decision-making and active listening.

Attitudes/Attributes: including emotional intelligence, adaptability, protocol and etiquette, credibility, cultural intelligence, effective communication and negotiation, relationship building, ethical integrity, strategic thinking, communication and leadership skills.

4. Results of the model

1. The objective is to create a competency model for business diplomacy that enhances managers' skills in the Kenyan tourism sector.
2. Companies and organizations can enhance managerial competence by incorporating the manager competency model of business diplomacy into training programs in partnership with government agencies.
3. Successfully implementing the competency model of business diplomacy for Kenyan tourism managers to enhance their profession and provide opportunities.
4. Educational institutions can implement the competency model of business diplomacy for tourism managers. This technique will help create a country-specific curriculum

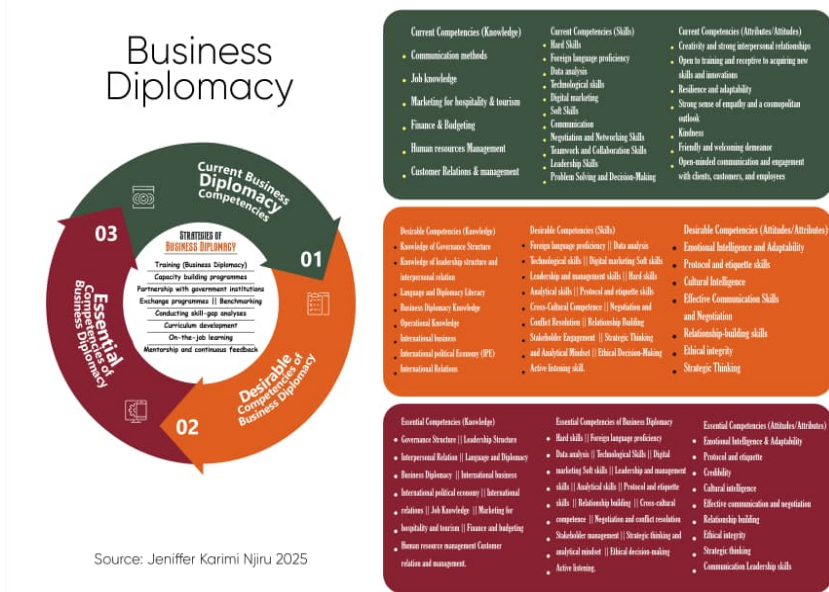


Figure 5: Competency Model of Business Diplomacy

The core competency theory allows for the identification of the unique strengths and capabilities of managers within the tourism sector. This study recognizes these as current competencies, which do not align with the ideal business diplomacy competencies necessary for the sector's growth and

development. Therefore, there is a need to develop a competency model for business diplomacy. The Boyatzis' 2008 emotional and social competency model served as the foundation for developing a strategy to acquire business diplomacy competencies aimed at enhancing tourism business and performance. This approach enables managers to leverage knowledge, skills, and attitudes to forecast business diplomacy capabilities in areas such as human relations management, negotiation, collaboration, and teamwork. The core competencies outlined in the model developed by this study correspond with those identified by Saner, Yiu, and Sondergaard (2000). Their research indicates that the business diplomacy competency model for managers in Asia encompasses several critical elements that improve effectiveness in international and multicultural settings. These elements include cultural awareness, communication skills, relationship building, strategic thinking, ethical judgement, and decision-making. Essential competencies encompass adaptability, the ability to influence and persuade, as well as effective networking. Furthermore, there is an emphasis on international business practices, political acumen, and conflict management as key areas of expertise. These elements collectively assist managers in navigating the complexities of business operations in Asia, empowering them to lead effectively in the tourism sector. The findings align with those of Gutu (2017), who recognized diplomacy as the eyes and ears of business diplomacy on an international scale. Highlights that business diplomacy has evolved into a dynamic set of practices tailored to the unique conditions of a particular business environment at any given moment, influenced by international politics and economic pressures. This serves as a primary channel for communication between corporations and local business representatives, leading to informed and appropriately adjusted international management decisions. Integrating the competency model of business diplomacy for managers requires the incorporation of identified competencies into key HR processes, including recruitment and selection, employee development, performance management, and succession planning. The objective is to synchronize the talent management strategies of the sector with the competencies of business diplomacy essential for success across various roles and job functions within the Kenyan tourism industry. This will be achieved through effective communication of the model to stakeholders, including managers and executive leadership within the tourism sector. Additionally, training will be provided to HR and managers on the application of the competency model of business diplomacy for recruitment, employee development, performance management, and succession planning. The model will assist in creating focused training and development programs that target the skill gaps among managers in the sector, emphasizing areas that need enhancement.

7. CONCLUSION

Kenyan tourism managers have some competences, but they need essential ones to succeed. Existing skills do not match business diplomacy. Therefore, a systematic training approach is needed to give managers the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to improve tourism, growth, and performance. Thus, conventional and professional institutions offering programs in business management, international relations, human resource management, and tourism should incorporate business diplomacy into their curriculum, and Kenyan tourism companies should work with government institutions like the Kenyan Foreign Academy to facilitate diplomacy training and

retraining. Assessments, seminars, and workshops given by experts, and adopting and implementing this study's new corporate diplomacy competency model can also achieve this. Improved human capital development would support a strong tourism sector.

The research suggested using the competence model of business diplomacy to implement policy to achieve Kenya's vision 2030, a long-term development plan to create a prosperous, globally competitive nation with a high standard of living by 2030, since the tourism industry contributes significantly to the nation's revenue. Upon integration into the Kenyan tourism development blueprint, the model is designed to enhance the sector's human capital development through training and the implementation of changes that align with the country's National Tourism Strategy (2025-2030). This strategy seeks to position Kenya as a competitive and sustainable travel destination while promoting the economic contributions of the tourism industry through effective development, management, and marketing in collaboration with partners.

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