

The city of Nairobi has grown into a complex urban heritage since it sprung up as a railway camp site in 1899. Emergent historical sites reflect the global nature of the city which first developed as a colonial headquarter and later as a post-colonial capital with the trappings of metropolitan heritage. This study explores the development of touristy characteristics of historic Nairobi while vouching for their protection for posterity. This is a moral challenge given the negative perceptions of imperialism globally. However, tourism tends to transcend these perceptions as a beneficiary of both colonial and post-colonial systems. The study looks at the state of preservation of the physical character of the city through existing normative procedures recommended by the World Tourism Organization (WTO). Conservation is the single most challenging social dilemma in a developing urban centre. Development is usually averse to the notion of preservation especially in an economically vibrant environment. This study has shown that Nairobi has enjoyed international links that endear it to motivated cultural tourists. By emphasizing its historic urban character, Nairobi has the prospect of transforming its economic fortunes through increased urban cultural tourism and associated business activities. New peripheral commercial areas are emerging in Upper Hill and Parklands, outside the central business district (CBD), as well as distant locations like Tatu City and Konza Technopolis which clearly intimate that Nairobi's position is threatened. A report by the Sunday Nation dated 20th May, 2012 indicated that the city is developing in the realm of informal employment while the formal sector is moving to other smaller towns of Nakuru, Eldoret and Kisumu. This trend is likely to continue as decentralised county governance takes root. In such a scenario most cities will result to cultural heritage tourism for their economic revival and continued relevance. Early industrial cities in Europe have largely resulted to this tactic to avoid being relegated into the status of ghost towns in the face of onslaught from upcoming and relevant urban giants in this era of globalisation.

Key words: Nairobi, Conservation, Urban Heritage attractions, tourism.