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Challenges of Tourism Initiative on Local Community Empowerment in Kakamega County, Western Kenya

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Abstract:
Community empowerment is concerned with how members of a group are able to act collectively in ways that enhance their influence on, or control over decisions that affect their interest. Local residents, particularly the indigenous people, who live around tourist sites in Kakamega County, are of low economic status, they are not empowered despite the many tourist attractions in the region. The study intends to ascertain the challenges of these initiatives on local community empowerment in Kakamega County, Western Kenya. This research examined the study objectives by use of survey research design. The research targeted a population of 53325 in surrounding 6 tourism destinations. The sample size was 397 respondent sampled through stratified, simple random sampling and purposive sampling method. Self-administered questionnaires and interview were used to collect data. Data collected was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics, using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20 for analysis. The findings were; cultural festivals and artefacts were preferred by tourists, earning the locals income. In nature tourism forest trek, bird watching ,cool weather and forest herbs were major attractions earning the locals a good income as tour guides and language translators. In recreational tourism the tourists enjoyed the camping sites and forest resorts where the local community worked. The sturdy recommends promotion of cultural tourism in the region because of its rich culture that boosts the economy of the residents. Kenya tourism board to develop and empower local community in sustainable use of tourism resources. It therefore suggested a study on recreational facilities to be established as an attraction of many tourists to bring foreign exchange.

Keywords: Challenges, Tourism initiatives, Community empowerment, Kakamega County

1. Introduction

Community empowerment is concerned with how members of a group are able to act collectively in ways that enhances their influence on, or control over decisions that affect their interest. Empowerment may happen through development of local social relationships among stakeholders, and increased knowledge and skills. Authorities need to engage with local societies and facilitate the development of social relationships by providing spaces for interaction and by creating multiple opportunities for participation in local affairs. Interactions within sustainable tourism development framework initiatives enhance communication among stakeholders, and tourism often becomes a means to their empowerment in other local affairs.

Tourism is considered as one of the largest and fastest developing sectors of the world and its high growth and development rates, considerable volumes of foreign currency inflows, infrastructure development, and introduction of new management and educational experience actively affect various sectors of economy, which will positively affect the social and economic development of the country (Nayomi and Gnanapala. 2015).

In developing countries like Kenya, tourism industry generates substantial economic benefits to both host and guest countries. One of the primary motivations for a region to promote itself as a tourism destination is the expected economic improvement. As with other impacts, this massive economic development brings along both positive and negative consequences (UNEP, 2003). Local communities in Africa and especially in Kenya are usually perceived as having a comparative advantage in the development of tourism. This is due to the fact that they possess unique indigenous cultural and nature-based attractions that the Western tourists lack in their transformed and urbanized environments (Butler, 2006). Many

Western tourists are haggling for these forms of touristic attractions in order to escape from the perceived monotony of everyday life in the often over-crowded and congested urban areas. In this regard, tourists want to travel to other places, at least temporarily, in order to escape from the monotony of routine life and are, therefore, looking for alternative environments that are perceived as having fascinating indigenous cultures and nature attractions.

Most of the tourism establishments in Kakamega County in particular and Kenya in general are externally oriented, and mainly respond to exogenous socioeconomic factors. Consequently, the local communities around these attractions are not empowered, they are not involved in decision making because of their low level of education, making it very important to assess the role of tourism initiatives on the empowerment of the local communities. The local community spends much of their time burning charcoal, fetching fire-wood,   gathering fruits and roots in the forest and cutting timber. This is because it is perceived by the local community as income generation at the expense of going to school. Regardless of the existing eco-tourism features, the local community has completely not benefited from the tourism activities and is affected by the high poverty levels. Youth and women have also been adversely affected since they cannot contribute effectively to the development of the economy. It is against this background that the study seeks to examine the critical role of tourism initiatives on local community empowerment in Kakamega County, Western Kenya in order to establish the mitigation measures.

2. Literature Review

In previous studies access to funding was highlighted repetitively as the main challenge for tourism. This is because like other forms of tourism, as an economic activity, community development must compete effectively in the tourism marketplace, and access to the market and ability to compete will depend on a number of fundamental factors common to all forms of tourism (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). As indicated by Mowforth and Munt (2009). Such factors include, geography (the desirability of the place and its accessibility), the level of understanding and knowledge of the tourism sector, level of disposable resources and access to decision making

Despite the rhetoric of tourism as a poverty reduction strategy in Sabah, in reality such programme has excluded the participation of poorer families (Chok and Macbeth, 2007; Harrison, 2008). Due to the high requirements set out by the ministry to comply, families who are unable to afford refurbishment their homes are excluded from the program (Chok and Macbeth, 2007). Findings indicated that tourism is limited to those better-off households with steady income from cash crop agriculture or employment.

The challenges facing community-based tourism in Tanzania is lack of business, lack of English language training, the logistical difficulties of booking and marketing (Masuruli, 2014). Lack of formal education is also a challenge for many tour guides and other service providers, speaking very little English when they are first hired is another challenge. They are chosen for their personality or knowledge of the area (SNV, 1999). Barriers are still existing, this exclude a majority of the villagers not getting visitors frequently on their villages, shops, or markets; this is due to corruption, and lack cooperation between villages which hinder any advancement that individuals attempt to make (Slocum, 2010).

Mitchell and Muckosy (2008) reported that evidence from Africa and Asia show that the most likely outcome of CBT initiatives collapse after funding has dried up. Two main causes for the collapse are poor market access and poor governance. Furthermore, Mitchell and Muckosy (2008) observe that the low level of patronage and business generated by Village Life Tourism (VLT) was not sustainable for either the business or the associated enterprises. Briedenhann and Wickens (2004) observe that in the South Africa, the lack of capacity at local government level, the difficulties involved operational zing Community Based Tourism and the death of entrepreneurial expertise, management skills and capital with which to expand the community-based tourism infrastructure. Sebele (2010) states that community engagements in Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) and tourism have elicited many views as far as natural resources utilization is concerned. Some ask for the importance of CBNRM; others question it, while yet others call for its improvement. Results show that, although some benefits have been identified, there remain many challenges. Among these challenges at Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust (Selebe, 2010) are lack of tangible benefits and employment creation, the loss of benefits from the land; poor management, marketing and Entrepreneurial skills, lack of community involvement and participation, lack of sense of communal ownership of the project, imbalance from board representation, and the heavy reliance on foreign donors.

3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Kakamega County in Western Kenya, using the survey research design. Households targeted were Kenya Wildlife Service (Buyangu Station), Rondo retreat centre (Kakamega forest), bull fighting of Ikolomani, Isecheno forest station and Malava Forest. Stratification-sampling procedure was used to categorize households into strata and simple random sampling procedure was used to pick individual respondents. The data was collected using interview schedule and questionnaires, content validity was adopted to measure the validity of the instruments and reliability analysis done using Cronbach's alpha. Finally collected data was analyzed using descriptive (mean and standard deviations) and inferential statistics using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20.

4. Results and Discussions

The section provides results on the problems facing tourism in the region. The problems range from those associated with funding, community involvement, impact on youth and women, government policies, laws and regulations as well as how to address the challenges facing tourism.

4.1. Funding

Respondents were asked to outline the problems facing tourism in terms of funding. The results were recorded in Table 5.

Problem	Frequency	Percent
No funding	220	57.4
Inadequate funding	69	18.0
Miss appropriate of funds	42	11.0
Few people benefit from funding	34	8.9
Temporal funding from community	18	4.7
Total	**383**	**100.0**

Table 1: Problems associated with funding

The findings in Table 1 above shows 57.4% respondents agreed that lack of funding, 18% of them agreed on inadequate funding, 11% of them said misappropriation of funds, 8.9% of them said few people benefiting, and the least representation of 4.7% said temporary funding. Data obtained through interviews confirmed that the tourism sector was indeed underfunded.

4.2. Community Involvement

Respondents were asked to outline the problems facing tourism in terms of community involvement and the results were recorded in Table 6.

Problem	Frequency	Percent
Community not involved	172	54.3
Poor utilization of resources	27	8.5
Lack of co-operation	22	6.9
Self centered of some members in the community	17	5.4
Limited land for pottery activities	16	5.0
Community members are reluctant due to lack of funds	13	4.1
Gender issues/ inequality	13	4.1
Limited education	12	3.8
Poaching	12	3.8
Laziness among youth	13	4.1
Total	**317**	**100.0**

Table 2: Problems associated with community involvement

The findings in table 2 above shows that there are challenges associated with community involvement, 54.3% of the respondents agreed that the community did not involve themselves, 8.5% of the said lack of co-operation, 6.9% agreed on self-centered of some members in the community, 5.4% said limited land for pottery activities, 5% agreed that the community members are reluctant due to lack of funds, 4.1% said gender issues/ inequality, 4.1% agreed on limited education, 3.8% said poaching and 4.1% said laziness among youth. However, information obtained through interviews pointed out that efforts were being made to involve community members in any matters pertaining to tourism in the region, especially management and conservation activities.

4.2.1. Impact of Tourists on Youth and Women

Respondents were asked to name the problems facing tourism in terms of youth and women. The results were recorded in Table 7.

Problems	Frequency	Percent
Adultery	76	19.2
Cropping of western way of life	67	16.9
Drug abuse	67	16.9
Increased HIV infections	64	16.2
No impact	37	9.3
Exposure to negative foreign culture	24	6.1
Early pregnancy in youth	22	5.6
Joblessness	15	3.8
Lack of funding and gender discrimination	13	3.3
Youth are involved in bullfighting rather than other economic activities	11	2.8
Total	**396**	**100.0**

Table 3: Problems associated with impact of tourists on youth and women

The findings in table 3 shows that there are problems associated with impact of tourists on youth and women, 19.2% of them agreed on adultery, 16.9% said cropping of western way of life, 16.9% agreed on drug abuse, 16.2% said increased HIV infections, 9.3% said no impact, 6.1% agreed on exposure to negative foreign culture, 5.6% said early pregnancy in youth, 3.8% said joblessness, 3.3% of the respondents said lack of funding and 2.8% said gender discrimination and youth being involved in bullfighting rather than other economic activities. Similar results were obtained through interviews with key informants.

4.2.2. Government Policies
Respondents were further asked to outline the problems facing tourism in terms of government policies and the results were recorded in Table 8.

Problem	Frequency	Percent
No security	72	29.6
Restriction of community from accessing the forest	53	21.8
Hash laws on tourists	47	19.3
Harsh government policy	39	16.0
High taxes	19	7.8
Some policies are outdated	13	5.3
Total	**243**	**100.0**

Table 4: Problems associated with government policies

The table 4 above shows that there are problems associated with government policies, 29.6% of the respondents agreed on no security, 21.8% said restriction of community from accessing the forest, 19.3% of them agreed on hash laws on tourists, 16.0% of them said harsh government policy, 7.8% said high taxes and 5.3% agreed on some policies are outdated. However, officials in the sector pointed out that the existing government policies were aimed at ensuring that the tourism resources were well managed and conserved hence not aimed at harassing the community.

4.2.3. Laws and regulations
Respondents were asked to outline the problems facing tourism in terms of youth and women. The results were recorded in Table 9.

Problem	Frequency	Percent
Breaking of laws by people	38	13.2
Denied access to forest e.g. grazing	85	29.5
Friendly laws and regulation	33	11.5
Grazing in the forest is not allowed	38	13.2
Hash laws imposed on tourists and locals	18	6.3
Laws restrict tourists from visiting some areas	30	10.4
Most tourists are restricted in some areas	3	1.0
No clear rules and regulation	15	5.2
Poor implementation of laws	13	4.5
Restriction of community from accessing the forest	9	3.1
Tight rules affect the sector negatively	6	2.1
Total	**288**	**100.0**

Table 5: Problems associated with laws and regulations

The results in table 5 shows there were problems facing tourism in terms of laws and regulations, 13.2% said Breaking of laws by people, 29.5% of the said that denied access to forest e.g. grazing, 11.5% agreed on friendly laws and regulation, 13.2% said grazing in the forest is not allowed, 6.3% agreed on hash laws imposed on tourists and locals, 10.4% said laws restrict tourists from visiting some areas, 1% of the respondents agreed on that most tourists are restricted in some areas, 5.2% said no clear rules and regulation, 4.5% agreed on Poor implementation of laws, 3.1% said poor implementation of laws and 2.1% agreed on tight rules affect the sector negatively. Most respondents were of the view that the laws were too tight and they negatively affected by tourism activities. From the interviews, officials in the sector pointed out that the existing laws were aimed at ensuring that the tourism resources were well managed, conserved and protected, emphasizing that they were not as tight as pointed out by some residents.

4.2.4. Effect of Low and High Season
Respondents were asked to give the problems facing tourism in terms of low and high seasons. The results were recorded in Table 10.

Effect	Frequency	Percent
Impassible roads in rainy season	85	27.7
Business closes during low season	43	14.0
Business does well during high season	18	5.9
Business is not affected by season	24	7.8
Has little impact	44	14.3
Improvement in livelihood in high season	23	7.5
Few job opportunities in low season	13	4.2
Products are spoiled in rainy season	23	7.5
Soil erosion caused by water from the forest	34	11.1
Total	**307**	**100.0**

Table 6: How low or high seasons affect business

4.2.5. Assistance by Organizations
Table above shows that changes in season had an impact, 27.7% agreed that it has an effect on Impassible roads in rainy season, 14.0% agree on business closes during low season, 5.9% of them said business does well during high season 7.8% agreed on business is not affected by season, 14.3% said it has little impact, 7.5% of them said improvement in livelihood in high season, 4.2% said few job opportunities in low season,7.5% of them said products are spoiled in rainy season and 11.1% of them agreed on soil erosion caused by water from the forest.
The results were recorded in table 7

Assistance	Frequency	Percent
Control of pest and diseases	53	15.6
Creation of awareness in the community	24	7.1
Creation of employment	66	19.4
Educating children	83	24.4
Educating community on farming methods	13	3.8
Educating community on wildlife management	16	4.7
Protecting the community	39	11.5
Provision of tree seedling for planting	13	3.8
Security of wildlife	30	8.8
Support community by providing food	3	0.9
Total	**340**	**100.0**

Table 7: How organizations e.g. KWS help the community

From the results the findings showed that 15.6% agreed that the organizations help the community through control of pest and diseases, 7.1% said that creation of awareness in the community, 19.4% of them said creation of employment, 24.4% said educating children, 3.8% said educating community on farming methods, 4.7% agreed on educating community on wildlife management, 11.5% said protecting the community, 3.8% agreed that provision of tree seedling for planting, 8.8% said security of wildlife and 0.9% of them agreed on supporting the community by providing food.

4.2.6. Impact of Community Activities
Respondents were asked to give the impact of community activities on the ecotourism resource. The results were recorded in table 8

Impact	Frequency	Percent
Afforestation activities	59	28.5
Conservation of environment	6	2.9
Conserving forest	16	7.7
Cultivation of forest land	24	11.6
No impact	21	10.1
Positive effect through preservation	47	22.7
Reaforestation	34	16.4
Total	**207**	**100.0**

Table 8: Impact of community activities on the ecotourism resource

The findings showed that there is impact of community activities on the ecotourism resource in rank order were: 28.5% of them said afforestation activities, 2.9% of them said conservation of environment, 7.7% of them said conserving forest, 11.6% cultivation of forest land, 10.1%said no impact, 22.7% agreed on positive effect through preservation and 16.4% said reforestation.

4.2.7. Existence of Conflicts

Respondents were asked to outline the conflicts that exist between the local community and the organizations managing the resource. The results were recorded in table 9.

Conflicts	Frequency	Percent
Animal human conflict	156	39.4
Conflict between organisations (police) and community e.g. due to grazing	96	24.2
Conflict between pouchers and organisation	69	17.4
Charcoal burning	33	8.3
Breaking of laws by tourists	24	6.1
Pouchers and community	12	3.0
No conflict experienced	6	1.6
Total	**396**	**100.0**

Table 9: Conflicts that exist between the local community and the organizations managing the resource

The findings showed that there were conflicts that exist between the local community and the organizations managing the resources, 39.4% of the respondents agreed on animal human conflict, 24.2% of them said conflict between organizations (police) and community e.g. due to grazing, 17.4% said conflict between poachers and organization, 8.3% said charcoal burning, 6.1% said breaking of laws by tourists, 3.0% agreed on Poachers and community and lastly 1.6% said there was no conflict experienced.

5. Conclusions

The study concluded that the problems facing tourism were inadequate funding, misappropriation of funds, low community involvement, poaching, early pregnancies, and increase in the spread of HIV/AIDS, harsh policies and laws as well as human-wildlife conflicts. The study recommends that Effort should be made to promote cultural tourism in the region since the region is endowed with a rich culture which could boost the economy of residents. There is need to promote nature tourism by enhancing facilities in the attraction sites such as hotels and camping sites. Areas with natural features need to be protected to limit misuse of the resources. More recreational facilities need to be established as they attract many tourists that bring in foreign exchange. There is need for creating job opportunities for community members, improve infrastructure, strict enforcement of laws, reduced grazing fees, protecting scenery areas, community involvement and government support to boost tourism in the region.

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