

The Effect of Ecotourism Initiatives on the Livelihood of Local Community around Kit Mikayi Site in Kisumu County, Kenya

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Abstract- Eco-tourism is primarily a low impact nature of tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly through contribution to conservation and/or indirectly by providing revenues sufficient for local people to value, and therefore, protect their wildlife and heritage areas. This paper presents a study done in areas adjacent to Kit Mikayi cultural site about the effect of ecotourism initiatives on the livelihoods of local community living adjacent to it. Study targeted 500 people and used a sample size of 70 heads of households drawn from target population, who were randomly selected in the interval of every 4th homestead within the study area. For key informant interviews purposive sampling was used to identify the respondents by virtue of the roles they play in tourism sector. This paper relied on both primary and secondary data to provide an account of ecotourism initiatives and improvement in the livelihoods of the locals. Most outstanding result from the local community's perspective is that ecotourism activities can create jobs and generate wealth as well as facilitate the growth of social networks locally known *chamas* which in turn improve the livelihoods of the local community.

Keywords- Ecotourism; Livelihood; Local Community and Conservation.

I.BACKGROUND

Travel and tourism are among the fastest growing industries and a major source of foreign exchange earnings for many developing countries [1]. The United Nations World Tourism Organization reported an increase in the number of international arrivals to 1.1 billion in 2017 [2]. This economic importance of tourism has captured the attention of the world. Conversely, the growth of tourism poses threat to cultural and biological diversity. As a result, ecotourism is an alternative form of tourism that is consistently gaining grounds on a global scale during the past few years [3]. It is a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature [4]. It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation or preservation of the same. According to Fennell [5] ecotourism is "Nature tourism encompassing all forms of adventurous, low-impact tourist activities which uses natural resources in a wild or undeveloped form – including species, habitats, landscape, scenery and salt and fresh water features. Ecotourism activities using natural resource attractions in remote rural areas can be important sources of economic diversification and livelihood

opportunity ([6],[7]; [8]). For instance, in Kenya, N'gwesi Ecotourism Site was awarded the Equator Initiative Award at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002 due to how the destination impacts economically on the local residents. Again, in South Africa, Buffalo Ridge Thakadu River Safari Camp within Madikwe Game Reserve is a 100% owned ecotourism site which gives numerous economic returns to the local people (www.africacommunity-basedecotourism.com). In Ghana, ecotourism gained prominence since 1996 towards developing economically and culturally sensitive locations in rural parts of the country [9]. It has created opportunities for rural communities to earn income and created tourism related jobs through the conservation of local ecosystems and culture. Due to the contribution of ecotourism to socioeconomic development of local people, such laudable projects receive funding from donor agencies such as USAID and Netherland Development Organization (SNV) to which Siring Pottery and Art in the Karenni Nangana West District in the Upper East Region is one of the few lucky beneficiaries.

Despite interventions that have been put in place to encourage participation in ecotourism initiatives statistics

show that over 60 per cent of population in Kisumu, Kenya is poor compared to the national average of 46 per cent as at 2006 [10]. This can be attributed to the fact that the locals lack information about how to get involved and when to participate in ecotourism initiatives. This paper presents a study in which ecotourism initiatives are analyzed to find out the effect it has on the livelihood of local community around kit mikayi cultural site in Kisumu, with the basic premise that once the economic value of eco-tourism activities is exposed it becomes easier to mobilize people to participate in it.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Ecotourism was first defined by Hector Ceballos-Lascurain in the early 1980's [11]. Hector Ceballos-Lascurain recounted his initial definition in a 2006 interview.

"...Tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (both past and present) found in these areas. Ecotourism implies a scientific, aesthetic or philosophical approach, although the 'ecotourism' is not required to be a professional scientist, artist or philosopher. The main point is that the person who practices ecotourism has the opportunity of immersing him or herself in nature in a way that most people cannot enjoy in their routine, urban existences." [12].

A definition for ecotourism agreed upon by all has yet to be found despite its roots in the early 1980's. Two most commonly cited definitions are put forward by the Quebec Declaration of Ecotourism and the International Ecotourism Society. The Quebec Declaration of Ecotourism defines ecotourism as tourism that:

"Contributes actively to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage; includes local and indigenous communities in its planning, developing and operation, and [contributes] to its well-being; interprets the natural and cultural heritage of the destination to visitors; [and] lends itself better to independent travelers, as well as to organized tours of small group sizes." [13].

The International Ecotourism Society (IES) defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" [14].

2.1 Local communities and ecotourism

Murphy [15]; Jamal and Getz [16] established that the use of the term community in tourism research has thrived considerably over the past twenty years. Thanks to the evolution of tourism products, the community can bring these cultural resources as a tourism commodity. Regardless of this growth, not many researchers have devoted much attention to defining community. Researchers constantly refer to an assemblage of people dwelling in the same location. Some include a perception of ecosystem or habitat in their explanation. Sociologist Bernard (17) explained the differences between the communities that are an accumulation of people at a specific site. What's more, community can be typified by social interplay, intimacy, moral actions, relationship and perpetuation through time. Besides, Stoddard [18] found that the interdependence concept of community needs, social organization rooted in sharing prizes and beliefs by the community members, directed the many-faceted relations.

According to the discovery of [19] about the domestic participation in the nature-based tourism aspect, 60% of the 50 million domestic tourism trips taken each year in Thailand are nature based. It can also be assumed that whatever the level of nature-based participation, not all would qualify as ecotourism. He added that at least 40 million of the trips happen outside protected areas, where the formal opportunities for ecotourism are extremely limited at present. Furthermore, ecotourism alludes to methods of recreational behavior among Thais and other Southeast Asians when referring to nature and /or protected areas, visits are prone to be a holiday experience involving large groups on public holidays or vacations, and concentrated on pleasure-based recreation by the middle class people. This was brought to [20] attention that Thailand is probably situated about halfway between Costa Rica and Kenya, if considered in western cultures.

2.2 Impacts of ecotourism on the livelihood of local community

2.2.1 Economic impacts

[21] provided a practical notion that when thinking whether or not a community has been given economic freedom by an ecotourism business, it is necessary to think about opportunities, which have been derived from both casual and formal sector employment and business opportunities. Provision of education to the host community can reduce the level of unemployment. Meanwhile, some economic gains are from time to time gained by a

community. Problems may occur if these are spasmodic and cannot supply a constant, foolproof income. Besides, concerns may derive over parity in the scattering of economic profits. It is hard and not certain to effectively accept that all community members possess equal importance and the same rights including opportunities in life with mutual targets. This brings to the identical comprehension of [22] that to identify the sustainability of an ecotourism business, the allotment of economic benefits from this genre of tourism is only as pressing as the exact quantity of benefits a community may come by.

2.2.2 Environmental impacts

With [23] explanation, people have become increasingly aware of the unfavorable socio-cultural and environmental effects of unlimited mass tourism. The merging of the term 'eco' implies that ecotourism should be an environmentally accountable form of tourism. Actually, if it does not act according to this requirement, then the natural attractions will experience degradation so that the tourists will no longer visit. The level of those ecotourism activities indirectly states that comparatively fewer tourists will arrive. In consequence, the supporting facilities can be kept up to a minimum and will be less intrusive. It is important to realize that any human activity relying on the use of a large amount of ecological resources like ecotourism cannot be sustained continually if the consequential doctrine does not give any support to its organization. Ecotourism, with its meanings of good environmental management and ensuing supporting funding of environment, should provide a viable economic choice to utilization of the environment. Nevertheless, [24] emphasized that the effect on the natural ecology is consequential as graphically observed in natural parks in the Alpine region. Present development in distant areas to provide domestic and international tourism presents a future which will damage rural ecosystems in two ways. It is through increasing stress for construction or through urging traditional rural activities and practices [25]. Those will cause the management of natural resources to be neglected. [26] agreed that environmental issues in rural areas are not always caused by abandonment and ignorance. Harsh problems of environmental degradation are also put down to over utilization of resources integrated with the lack of resource management.

2.2.3 Social impacts

Thanks to [27] understanding, social empowerment means that a community's sense of unity has been proved or made more effective by an activity like ecotourism. Social empowerment may take place when the tourists' activities

bring about crime, begging, discovery of tourist congestion, or prostitution forcing local residents to move from their original habitats and loss of genuine sense of place. [26] contended that the effects of tourism might also be favorable. Because of providing lodging accommodation for the arrival of a large number of tourists and visitors, local residents have the advantage of access to upgraded infrastructure, facilities and services such as transport, waste water management and so on thus improving environmental quality. Also, thanks to the better life and the increased prosperity to those local residents, local values and attitudes can be altered. Therefore, the local communities can become more ecologically circumspect and place greater importance on local resources and their cultural inheritance.

2.2.4 Cultural impacts

[28] found that within most destinations, the degree to which tourisms' negative socio-cultural results depends on several conditions, including paramount divergence in monetary status between tourists and the host community, large cultural and racial differences between tourists and the host society, strong desires of tourists to stick to their own cultural norms. In the meantime, brisk growth of the tourism industry at the destination, judgment and involvement in material focused on tourists, high number of tourists depending on local population, more noticeable tourism beyond the destination economy and external manipulation over a principal segment of the tourism industry can influence socio-cultural concerns. Through [28] findings, the socio-cultural costs take place as a consequence of the economic costs, even certain reporters from the support group have suggested that the socio-cultural impact be anticipated as the continual cost of the economic benefits. In [29] conception, the true socio-cultural costs generated by the stated variables may be categorized into many interblended genres based on an alteration of research. [30] found that the vitality of anthropologists for the development of sustainable tourism in the developing nations should not be overlooked. Clearly, in particular, in nature-based tourism, the role of the hosts must be center to the sustainable tourism development procedure. To provide them this central role, it is critical to have a clear comprehension of their culture. The change phase is accelerated by these local influences instead of being imposed from outside.

2.3 Level of Income

Expansion of ecotourism initiatives in a community creates opportunities for individuals to invest in related enterprises for income generation. Tourism stimulates

investment, improving income, which influences the ability by local people to access tourism benefits. In 2011, US\$650 billion in capital investment, or 4.5 percent of total world economy, was driven by Travel & Tourism. While a portion of this is related to individual investments in facilities that directly benefit tourists, such as the construction of hotels and resorts; tourism also drives infrastructure improvements that collectively benefit tourists, local residents, and the wider economy [31]. Growth in the ecotourism sector typically leads to development of restaurants, bars, cafes, retail establishments, theatres and other tourism related businesses.

These businesses help to improve the quality of life for local residents by expanding the choices available to them in their local community. For example, the increase in international business and leisure travel in Abu Dhabi has led to private investments in Saadiyat Island, a mix of residential and leisure projects off the coast of Abu Dhabi. Once completed, the island will act as a hub of international commerce and upscale cultural district providing a host world class amenities for tourist and residents of Abu Dhabi, including access to a world class championship golf course as well as branches of the Louvre and Guggenheim museums [31]. The big challenge is not only to encourage tourism growth but also to ensure that this growth is sustainable. Most South Australians consider that tourism has a positive impact on their region and can be sustainable in the future. Concerns were only expressed in environmentally sensitive areas. South Australian residents recognize that tourism can create employment opportunities and can create demand for business.

2.5 Development of Social Networks in the local community

The tendency of people to come together and form social groups is inherent in the structure of the society and the ways in which such group take shape and evolve overtime is a theme that run through large parts of social science research. The study of groups and communities is also fundamental in ecotourism [32]. For instance, the evolution of informal close knit groups within a large organization can provide insight to the organization global decision making the effects of ecotourism initiatives on the livelihood of local community and the discussion with an internet based forum can be used to follow the emergence and the popularity of new ideas and technologies. The digital domain has a significance growth in the scale and richness of online community and social media, through the rise social networking site beginning with Friendster and its

relatives and continuing to more recent system including Myspace, Facebook and live journal as well as media [33].

Understanding the structure and dynamics of social group is a natural goal for network analysis since such group tends to be embedded with larger social structure. Since many people are already in social groups for one reason or another they should upgrade the existing Chama into an investment club instead of forming a new group. This is because old groups have gone through the teething problem associated with association and members as well as acquainted with each other. With years of helping each other in merry go rounds or social welfare group this group can easily graduate into investment clubs thus this upgrade has advantage of having previous financial interaction enabling members to know how each other can commit financially, credit worthiness or even their level of commitment to responsibility

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Kit Mikayi is a tourist's attraction site at Central Seme Location in Kisumu County, Kenya. Three mystically arranged granite rocks characterize the site, where the largest and centrally imposed one symbolizes the first wife in a polygamous Luo family set up. The one on the right and the left represent the second and third wives in that order. Tourists visit this community through Kit Mikayi legend rock, which is an opportunity for the local community to participate in ecotourism tourism. Socio-economic activities of the area are livestock keeping, crop cultivation, small scale businesses, cultural activities and fishing. The area is an emerging tourist destination which has been earmarked for niche product development within Western Kenya tourism circuit. Tourists frequently visit the place to experience the rock formation of Kit Mikayi Legend Rock. There is potential for ecotourism given the fact that the indigenous knowledge and mythical stories behind the rock is with the host community. The rich cultural values, practices and cultural events are some of the potential areas for ecotourism at Kit Mikayi in Kisumu County.

The research design used in this study was exploratory through interview based surveys. This was because the study was a qualitative research which involved conversations with the host community members to obtain in-depth information about their way of life, ecotourism initiatives and the livelihood of the local community.

The study targeted heads of households at East Othany and Kit Mikayi Sub-Locations in Central Seme Location and 6 key informants (County Director of Tourism, County

Director of Culture, CEO of Lake Victoria Tourism Association, Curator of Kisumu Museum, Chief of East Seme Location and the coordinator of Kit Mikayi Cooperative groups). 10% of the sample size was used to conduct pilot study for validity and reliability of data collection tools. The nature of the accessible population depended on the time and resources of the researcher.

The data was collected using semi structured questionnaires containing questions administered to respondents to solicit information appropriate for analysis [34,35,36,37]. The study used descriptive statistics which

are intended to illuminate the data, so that its core characteristics were revealed, thus organize, summarize, and describe the data.

Qualitative data was collected from open and coded to allow for exploratory and descriptive data analysis. Data analysis was of great significance as it was the core through which variables were employed to code data in the study bringing out meaning in content. Data was analyzed using inferential statistics and descriptive statistics with the aid of SPSS. Tables, frequencies, percentages was presented and interpreted.

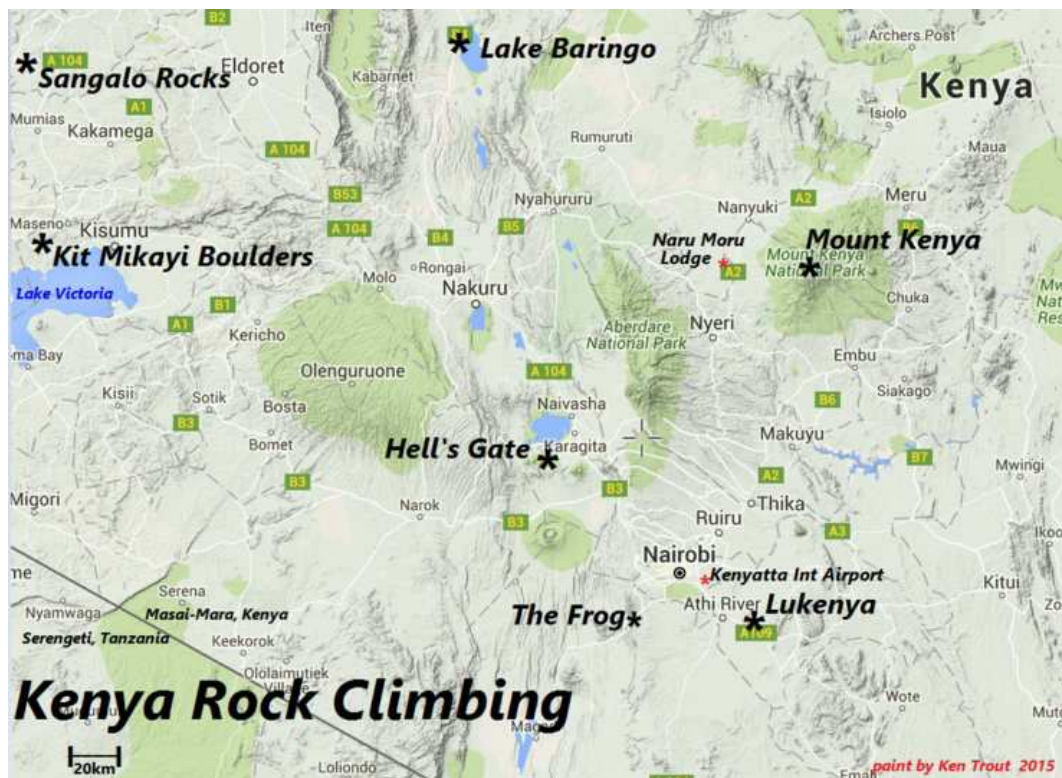


Figure 1. A map of Kit Mikayi Tourists' Site

IV.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The most relevant socio-demographic variables of the sample are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Socio demographic profile

VARIABLE	%	VARIABLE	%
Gender		Marital Status	
Men	40	Married	50
Women	60	Single,	30
		Widowed	15
		Divorced.	5

Age		Level of Education	
Below 25	19	None	30
25-35	27	Primary	25
36-45	23	Secondary	20
Over 45	31	Degree	18
		Masters	7
Monthly Income		Tourist Services	
High(50,000)	2	Accommodation	0
Medium(20,000)	17	Homestay	7
Low(5,000)	81	Guide	36
		Shop	13
		Restaurant	0
		Transport	0
		Traditional performances	43

The study analyzed the demographics of the local community around Kit Mikayi on six variables: Gender, Age, Monthly Income, Marital Status, and Level of education and Tourist Services. On gender it is evident that majority of the people living around the cultural site are of the female gender (60%). The study showed that the average age of household heads at Kit Mikayi is 31 years old. This reflects a youthful population, which can easily adapt to tourism activities and start small enterprises to generate income for poverty reduction. On monthly income, the results indicate that the majority of the area residents earn a low income (81%). This implies that the community can use eco-tourism initiatives to diversify their sources of income. On the question of marital status, 50 of the respondents indicated that they are married. This is due to the fact that the area has a rural setting and marriage is preferred due to numerous responsibilities. This could mean that spouses are able to help each in planning, decision making and implementation of ecotourism initiatives. Results on level of education reveals a majority of locals who are illiterate and a group slightly below average going beyond primary level of education. On the issue of tourist services offered by the local community, it is clear that a higher percentage of the services offered by Kit Mikayi residents (43%) are

entertaining visitors with traditional performances for example dancing and (36%) are in the form of guiding visitors to the direction of Kit Mikayi rock. Those who operate curio shops are 14 per cent and those who are engaged in home stay services to tourists are only 7 per cent of the respondents. The research revealed that no respondent owned accommodation facility, restaurant or transport for the service of the tourists in this community. Most of the people who guide tourists said that they simply give direction of the tourists' site to the visitors but not for business. This means that ecotourism at Kit Mikayi is underdeveloped and therefore has not been realized by the local community. The kind of tourism that takes place at Kit Mikayi is either religious or is linked to foreign based tour guides who have nothing to do with development of the community.

4.1 Effects of ecotourism initiatives

Statements were presented to the respondents to give their views on effects of ecotourism initiatives on the livelihood of the local community. The scores range from 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree) as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Effects of ecotourism initiatives

	Statement	Percentages				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	Ecotourism has created opportunities for small enterprises in this community	7	21	14	35	21
2	Ecotourism has improved the livelihood of the local community	29	21	14	21	14
3	Ecotourism has facilitated growth in the other sector of the economy	11	7	39	23	33
4	Promote culture and conservation of Kit Mikayi site	50	36	7	7	0
5	Ecotourism brings together people	36	43	4	19	13

Likert scale for effects of ecotourism initiatives on the livelihood of the local community 5=strongly agree, 4=agree, 3 =not sure, 2=disagree 1=strongly disagree

Table 2 shows that 11% of the respondents agreed that ecotourism have improved the growth in other sectors of the economy for example transport sector. Respondents (11%) agreed that ecotourism has created opportunities for small scale businesses. 29 per cent agreed that ecotourism has improved the livelihood of local community. They also agreed (36%) that ecotourism brings together people for a common good. Most respondents (50%) agreed that ecotourism promote culture and conservation of Kit Mikayi site. These results indicate that ecotourism is still underdeveloped hence the community is not benefiting as it should.

4.2 Responses on the level of income

Table 3: Responses on the level of income

	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Yes	39	64.
No	25	36
Total	70	100

Table 3 shows that the highest percentage of respondents (64%) agrees that ecotourism have improved the level of income of the poor. On the other hand 36% of the sampled respondents do not agree that eco-tourism has improved the livelihoods of the poor in the community. Therefore, ecotourism has increased people's capacity to provide for themselves and lift themselves out of poverty by providing an alternative to income diversification.

4.3 Views on the developments of social networks

To answer the question on the development of social networks on the livelihood of the local community.

Table 4: views on the development of social networks

Ratings	Frequencies	Percentages
Yes	45	64.2
No	25	35.8
Total	70	100

Table 4 shows that 64% agree that ecotourism has enabled them to form social networks for example Chama's, merry-go-round and other social group which helps in the contribution of fund for the local residents to get involved in the ecotourism initiatives.

4.4 Key informants views

Key informants opinions regarding the effects of ecotourism are displayed by table 5 below. Likert scale for effects of ecotourism initiatives , development of social networks, level of income and sustainability of natural resources on the livelihood of the local community 5=strongly agree,4=agree, 3 =not sure, 2=disagree 1=strongly disagree

Table 5: Informants views on effects of ecotourism initiatives

	Statements	Percentages				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	Ecotourism has improved the livelihood of the local community	33	33	0	33	0
2	Ecotourism has affected the level of income in the community	67	16	0	17	0
3	Ecotourism has	83	0	0	17	0

	contributed to sustainability of natural resources					
4	Ecotourism should be the platform for skills training and learning new ideas for the community	83	0	0	17	0
5	Ecotourism should create employment opportunities to graduates at all levels	83	0	0	0	17

The key informants (33%) agreed that ecotourism has improved the livelihood of the local community around Kit Mikayi despite the local community using the attraction area for religious purposes. During discussions with the key informants, the experts supported the fact that most community members are not even aware of the benefits that accrue from ecotourism and therefore are hostile to tourism related issues at Kit Mikayi.

The informants also agreed (83%) that ecotourism has affected the level of income that the locals have moved to a level of earning an income as result of engaging in ecotourism initiatives and therefore the majority of them suggested that people should be empowered to enhance their knowledge and ability to participate in ecotourism as a business to improve their livelihood.

V.CONCLUSION

The study sought to explore effects of ecotourism initiatives on improving the livelihoods of the local community adjacent to Kit Mikayi cultural site in Kisumu County. The attraction site has immense potential in uplifting the lives of the local community through engaging in ecotourism initiatives. In addition, tourists are increasingly becoming environmentally conscious and support projects that benefit the community. The findings of this study revealed that the average age group of residents of Kit Mikayi is 31 years old, which reflects a youthful community which can be trained on matters of the industry for employment and entrepreneurship. These groups are very young and energetic and can engage in ecotourism initiatives. If only community members can be fully involved in ecotourism initiatives their livelihoods can improve.

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