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Efficacy of Tourism as a Tool for Local Community Development: A Case Study of Mombassa, Kenya

Mombassa Market
Hall

Having unique indigenous cultures, nature-based attractions, beautiful landscapes, and pleasant weather conditions, local communities in Africa, and other Third World countries, are increasingly being promoted and marketed in major tourist generating countries, particularly in Europe and North America, as offering immense touristic and recreational opportunities. Particularly, indigenous communities in the Third World are perceived as providing abundant opportunities for rich tourists from the North who have got the financial resources to spend in adventure and exotic recreational activities. As a consequence, an increasing number of international tourists are travelling to

different tourist destinations in Africa and other less developed regions of the world. In 2001 for instance, over 28 million international tourists, mainly from Europe and North America, travelled to different destinations in Africa. It is further estimated that with the current international growth rate of the tourism industry, over 77 million international tourists will visit Africa by the year 2020 (WTO 2004).

Neo-classical economists and development experts contend that unlike factor driven technology based development, local communities in Africa and other parts of the Third World have a comparative advantage in the development of tourism and other non-technology based economic sectors. The development of tourism amongst local communities is, therefore, perceived as fitting quite well with the 'natural process of development based on comparative advantage' (Brohman 1996). This argument is based on the premise that local communities, particularly in Africa, should mainly specialise in primary exports, including tourism, where they have comparative advantage rather than depending on technology based economic sectors that do not conform with the principles of comparative advantage in the global market demand.

Particularly, local communities in sub-Saharan Africa 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 urbanised environments (Butler and Hinch 1996; Cohen 1996). 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 conglomerates. In this regard, tourists want to travel to other places, albeit 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 pristine nature attractions (Smith 1995; Sharpley 1999).

Further, it is also argued that the development of tourism, particularly the development of community-based tourism in Africa and other Third World countries will, in the long run, assist in the promotion of cross-cultural understanding and social harmony amongst local host communities and tourists (Richter 1994; Nash 1996; Harrison 2000). Tourism will, therefore, assist in minimising existing stereotypes and misrepresentations of indigenous cultures. It

is therefore assumed that as tourists visit and experience indigenous cultures, their overall understanding of those cultures will be enhanced and, thus, existing stereotypes and misrepresentations will be minimised (De Kadt 1979; Butler and Hinch 1996). In this regard, tourism can contribute to the promotion of international harmony and cross-cultural understanding.

Indigenous communities
However, tourism researchers (Bachmann 1988; Debbage 1990; Agarwal 1997) contend that in most instances, local communities in Third World countries, particularly in Africa, are not appropriately represented in the planning, design, development and management of their respective indigenous cultural and nature based resources for tourism. As a consequence, members of respective indigenous communities are usually not appropriately represented in the commodification process in which local cultural or nature based resources are transformed into tourism products to be presented and sold to tourists. Thus, there are a number of critical issues as concerns the development of tourism in most developing countries, particularly in Africa, which call into question the efficacy of tourism as a tool for socio-economic development. These issues include foreign domination and dependency, inequitable distribution and development, cultural and environmental degradation, and loss of control and cultural identity, as well as the over-arching role of the state in the control and management of tourism resources (Bachmann 1988; Sinclair 1990; Sindiga 2000; Akama 2004).

The lack of representation of indigenous local communities in the commodification process raises fundamental questions, particularly, as pertains to the control of cultural tourism products and the ownership of natural resources. This inevitably leads to the question of equitable distribution of the revenues that accrue from the presentation of indigenous cultural attractions to (non-consumptive use) or the exploitation of natural resources (both consumptive and non-consumptive use) by tourists.

These forms of tourism development may lead to an increased reinforcement of the colonial images of Africa as a '*dark continent*' inhabited by belligerent and savage tribes which form additional anecdotes for international tourists haggling for exoticism and adventure in the African wilderness (Akama 1999; Wels 2000; Sharpley 1999; Sindiga 2000). Thus, in line with the above observations, it can be argued that if the development of tourism has to contribute to sustainable local community development and cross-cultural understanding, there is urgent need to

rethink the manner in which tourism is being developed in Africa in order to come up with alternative development strategies which put local African communities at the centre of tourism development initiatives.

Moreover, the development of unplanned mass tourism that mainly responds to short-term exogenous socio-economic and political factors that are not connected with the needs of local people usually leads to a high leakage of tourism revenues. This results in lower linkage and a minimal multiplier effect that may not lead to long-term sustainable socio-economic development and an overall stimulation of economic growth within local African communities (Britton 1982: Oglethorpe 1984; Sinclair 1990). In this regard, it should therefore be stated that the initiation of alternative tourism strategies that put the interests of local communities at the centre of the tourism development process is highly likely to enhance an equitable distribution of tourism revenues. Also, these forms of alternative tourism development may lead to the reduction of high leakage rates and increase the multiplier effects of tourism. This in particular will also stimulate the overall development and economic growth and will also lead to a reduction in levels of poverty amongst local people.

Grassroot level
Furthermore, it should also be stated that, in most instances, the debate on the efficacy of tourists as a tool for sustainable local community development is mainly conducted in the international and/or national arena, whereas there is minimal analysis that is conducted on tourism development at local community grassroots level. Particularly, there is a paucity of information on socio-cultural and economic impacts of tourism development on local communities in Africa and on the existing forms of interaction between tourists and host communities. This scenario should be of major concern when realising that tourism has become a major socio-economic and cultural phenomenon affecting local communities in Africa and other parts of the Third World.

For instance, it has been observed in different parts of the world, particularly in many Third World countries, that the rapid development of mass tourism can overwhelm local communities and the environment having far-reaching negative socio-ecological and economic impacts. Moreover, tourism can contribute to the exacerbation of the already existing socio-economic division and inequity by widening the gap between the beneficiaries of tourism and those who are already marginalised by the current forms of development.

Consequently, to be of any meaning to marginalised local communities and individuals, especially in developing countries such as Kenya, tourism development should be viewed as being part of a broader alternative policy framework that is designed to achieve a sustainable society. Tourism development should, therefore not be seen as an end in itself, but should be viewed as one of several alternative development strategies that can assist local communities in overcoming their socio-economic and developmental weaknesses, preserving their strengths and enhancing their developmental opportunities. Furthermore, in order to put in proper perspective the role of tourism as a tool for sustainable local community development, it is important to analyse the forms of tourism employment undertaken by the local people.

The Mombassa case study

This research uses the case study of Mombassa and adjacent townships in Kenya's coastal region to analyse the role played by tourism as one of the options for sustainable local community development. Mombassa is a leading tourist destination in Eastern Africa with the highest concentration of tourism and hospitality facilities and infrastructure. Moreover, Kenya provides a good example of an African country that has embraced tourism as a tool for socio-economic development. In recent years, Kenya has increasingly become a popular tourist destination for visitors from Europe, North America and other emerging tourist generating regions, particularly Southeast Asia. Currently, the country receives over 6% of the total international tourist arrivals to Africa, and the relative importance of tourism to Kenya's economy has risen steadily over the last 40 years (Kenya Government 2002: 140).

The Kenyan government continues to spearhead the development of tourism as a reliable source of socio-economic growth and local community development. As a consequence, due to direct government involvement and foreign capital investment, Kenya's coastal region, particularly Mombassa Resort Town, has experienced a rapid development of tourism facilities and infrastructure in recent years. Thus, for instance, of the over 1000 registered high-class tourist hotels in the country, over half are located on the coast. Along the Kenyan coast itself, the location of the tourism facilities and infrastructure is mainly concentrated within a few central locations such as Mombassa, Malindi and Diani. It has been

estimated that Mombassa and the adjacent townships receive over one third (about 500 000 per annum) of the total international tourist arrivals to Kenya. It has been noted that most of these international tourists book all-inclusive tour packages. In this form of travel arrangement tourists prepay for most components of travel including accommodation, catering services and transport to overseas tour operators and travel agents. Thus, there is minimal expenditure in the destination, estimated at less than US$100 per day (Kenya Government 2002: 50).

The collection of data and information used in this research was conducted in two distinct stages. The first stage involved a search and compilation of relevant information and data regarding critical issues on tourism development and the industry's role as a tool for local community development. The information was mainly acquired from primary and secondary sources including university libraries, government and tourism related NGOs. The second stage of data collection involved conducting field interviews and surveys in different locations in Mombassa (i.e., Old Town, and city centre) and adjacent townships (i.e. Kisauni, Likoni and Changamwe). This was undertaken over a two-month-period (June to July 2002). In total, 227 local residents were interviewed, and in addition to this, scheduled dialogue and discussion was conducted with selected private and public sector representatives, local community leaders and politicians. Finally, the data and information were organised, tabulated and analysed using computer statistical packages.

Data analysis and presentation of research findings

Economic benefits of tourism to the local residents
Interestingly, an overwhelming 91 per cent of the local residents stated that tourism has, over the years, benefited the people of Mombassa and the adjacent townships. When asked, specifically, to state the forms of benefits that accrue to local people from tourism, a significant 58 per cent of the respondents listed employment opportunities, followed by 34 per cent who listed the availability of business opportunities (see table 5.2, end of chapter). In this regard, it is generally accepted that the development of tourism creates employment and business opportunities for both the local community and other tourism investors. Moreover, proponents of tourism contend that since the industry is labour intensive, it has great potential in creating employment opportunities, particularly in economically depressed regions. As a consequence, many developing countries such as Kenya that have serious problems of unemployment and increasing levels

of poverty, the tourism industry is usually perceived as a major source of much-wanted employment and income generation.

However, in order to put in proper perspective the role of tourism as a tool for sustainable local community development, it is important to analyse the forms of tourism employment that are usually undertaken by local people. As will be shown later, in most instances, the majority of local residents who are working in the tourism industry in Mombassa and other tourism centres in Kenya tend to occupy unskilled, servile and low-paying job positions like waiters, gardeners, porters, janitors and security guides, whereas, in most instances, the well paying job positions, at supervisory and managerial level, are taken by expatriates. Furthermore, it has been estimated that over 60 per cent of the tourism and hospitality establishments in the coastal region are under foreign control and management, with the remaining 40 per cent mainly owned by the government and upcountry people.

When asked to state whom they thought benefited most from the tourism industry, a significant 56 per cent of the local residents listed the private firms (i.e. hoteliers, tour operators and travel agents); this was followed by 36 per cent of the people listing the central government. Only 6 per cent of the respondents listed local residents as benefiting most from tourism. Also, when asked specifically to state what they thought was the most serious problem confronting the local people, an overwhelming 70 per cent of the interviewees listed poverty and poor living conditions, followed by unemployment and increasing levels of school dropout samong the youth respectively.

Forms of interaction between international tourists and local residents
About 30 per cent of the respondents stated that it is the pristine tropical beaches that mainly attracts tourists to Mombassa, while 26 per cent of the respondents listed the pleasant weather conditions. Only 5 per cent of the local residents listed culture as a main attribute that attracts the tourists to the town (Table 2). Consequently, it can be suggested that, probably, the local residents are not even aware that the unique cultural attractions are a main attribute that attracts tourists to the town. A significant 50 per cent of the local people stated that they interact with the international tourists on a regular and/or daily basis, whereas 44 per cent stated that they, occasionally, interact with the tourists. When asked to list the main locations in the town where they usually interact with the tourists, 64 per cent of the respondents listed their workplace. This was followed by 33 per

cent of the interviewees who stated that they mainly interact with the tourists in recreational and entertainment centres. However, only 2 per cent of the local people stated that they mainly interact with the tourists in the residential areas. This confirms the fact that, in most instances, tour guides rarely take tourists for scheduled excursions to residential areas of the town.

Interestingly, an overwhelming 75 per cent of the sample of local residents stated that they relate well with the international tourists. The people said that, quite often, the international tourists are appreciative of the local people's lifestyles (i.e., local music and dance, indigenous cuisines and the friendly demeanour of the local waswahili inhabitants). Although this observation may need further investigation, this is an important perspective as far as the development of tourism in Mombassa in particular and Kenya in general is concerned. It appears that a majority of the residents are receptive and friendly to international tourists.

In this regard, it can be argued that it could be to the advantage of the tourism industry to take the tourists closer to the local residents (i.e. by organising scheduled excursions to residential and indigenous cultural sites. A number of cultural activities and sites can be developed and managed by the local people where tourists can visit at a stipulated amount of fees; thus generating much-sought-after income for the local people. Asked to state some of the vices that are brought about by the tourism industry, 16 per cent of the respondents listed prostitution, and 10 per cent listed drug taking and drug trafficking. Also, 10 per cent of the respondents stated the high price of commodities due to an increased demand for goods and services, whereas 7 per cent mentioned pimping and hustling, and increased crime rates, and 5 per cent listed harassment of vendors by the local police.

Discussion

The total population of Mombassa and the adjacent townships of Likoni, Kisauni and Changamwe is about 1 million people. Mombassa town in particular, and the Kenyan coastal region in general, is classified by the government as one of the regions in the country with high poverty rates and poor living conditions (Kenya Government 1999). It has been estimated that over 50 per cent of the residents of Mombassa live below the poverty line – earning less than Kshs.100 (ca. 1 euro) per day. The indicators of poverty among the local people include the inability to afford daily basic needs to support life including clothing, shelter and food. In

addition, the local residents are more and more unable to access and control basic resources and services such as education, health, water and sanitation. It has also been estimated that over 60 per cent of the residents of Mombassa and the adjacent townships live in slum environments that lack basic infrastructure, amenities and sanitation services. Paradoxically, some of these slum settlements have in recent years sprung up in areas adjacent to the luxurious tourist hotels and condominiums.

However, as shown above, most of the local residents who were interviewed perceive the development of tourism as being beneficial to the local people. They stated that the tourism industry has created employment and business opportunities. These local perceptions as to tourism's role in local community development should be put into proper perspective. It can be argued that in a socio-economic environment where most of the people live in extreme poverty and resource deprivation, the development of tourism may be perceived as a source of much-wanted employment. This is much in the same way as the national government perceives tourism as the source of much desired foreign exchange revenues.

However, it should be stated that the job positions in the tourism and hospitality industry that are taken by the local people are mainly menial and low-level unskilled job positions. These menial job positions include labourers, gardeners, genitors, guides, porters, drivers and waiters. Whereas, in most instances, the skilled high-paying managerial job positions are mainly occupied by expatriates. It has been argued that most of the foreign and multinational investors in the tourism and hospitality industry tend to hire expatriate staff for high-level supervisory and managerial positions because of the preconceived belief that a large number of expatriates assures higher quality service (Dieke 1991). As Sindiga (2000) states, this view is fallacious; nonetheless, it is a misperception that denies well-paying managerial jobs to indigenous people.

In this regard, it should be asked if tourism is a main economic sector in Mombassa and other tourism centres in Kenya, what role is the industry playing in the improvement of the living conditions of the local people? How come there are increasing levels of poverty and poor living conditions among most local residents of Mombassa after over 40 years of tourism development? Who benefit most from the tourism industry and why? Is tourism an appropriate tool for sustainable local community development? What strategies can be but in place so

that the development of tourism benefits the local people directly? These are the core questions that are addressed in this study.

The nature of Kenya's tourism industry
Over the years, the Kenyan government has mainly promoted the development of large-scale tourism and hospitality projects such as beach resorts, high-raise hotels, lodges and restaurants in Mombassa and other tourism centres in the country. Most of the large tourism projects have been initiated with the assistance of foreign and multinational capital investments (Dieke 1991; Sindiga 2000; Akama 2004). These forms of capital-intensive programmes have tended to preclude local participation in tourism project design and management. As a consequence, the local people do not directly participate in the provision of the core tourism and hospitality services (which generate most profit) such as transportation, accommodation, catering services and management of the tourism attractions. Most of the local residents mainly engage in peripheral and informal business activities (which generate minimal or no profit) such as hawking and vending of souvenirs and other goods along the streets. Thus, the provision of core tourism and hospitality service is mainly under the control and management of foreign and multinational tourism investors.

Furthermore, the promotion and marketing of Kenya's tourism products in tourist-generating countries is mainly controlled by overseas tour operators and travel companies (Sindiga 2000; Akama 2004). In order to maximise their profit margin, overseas tour companies mainly market inclusive tour packages to Kenya. In these forms of travel arrangements, prospective visitors pay overseas tour companies for a complete travel package. The payment arrangements include almost all travel components, such as air tickets, food, accommodation and recreational activities.

It has been estimated that in these forms of tour packages leakages of tourism revenues to overseas companies may range from 40 to 70 per cent (Sinclair 1990; Kenya Government 2004). Consequently, there is external control in almost all aspects of the Kenyan tourism industry, including the design and packaging of the tourism product, the provision of hospitality services, transport and accommodation arrangements, and product promotion and marketing. These forms of tourism development, with substantial ownership and management of tourism establishments by foreign and multinational investors, have resulted in high leakages of the tourism revenues to external sources (Sindiga 2000; Akama

2004).

Moreover, recent global economic trends indicate that the economies of developing countries, particularly African countries such as Kenya, are highly vulnerable and are increasingly being affected by processes of economic globalisation and increasing dominance and control by multinational corporations of global markets. As Debbage (1990: 515) postulates, 'the increasing oligopolistic structure of the international tourism industry indicates the intrinsic value of the profit cycle in explaining how oligopoly can shape product-cycle of a resort'. In consequence, the development of tourism in most African and other Third World countries is increasingly being influenced by unpredictable processes of global oligopoly (i.e. the increasing control of the international tourism market by a small number of multinational companies). The multinational tourism and travel companies can, for instance, shift the international tourism demand among various undifferentiated destinations in developing countries, depending on emerging profit considerations. This may cause unforeseeable disruption to tourism development in developing countries, particularly in Africa (Debbage 1990; Sinclair 1990; Akama 1999, 2004).

As a consequence, the marketing and promotion of Mombassa's tourist attractions are mostly under the control of overseas tour companies and their local subsidiaries with minimal or little say from the local residents on how the attractions should be marketed in tourist-generating countries. These tour operators have over the years specialised in the design and development of promotional and marketing images of various destinations in developing countries such as Kenya (Dieke 1991; Rodricks 2001). The tourism promotional and marketing information is usually aimed at communicating particular messages and information on various tourist destinations and/or tour packages that are marketed to prospect tourists. For instance, magnificent pictures of grandeur beach hotels, lodges and condominiums, and splendid sand beaches without a trace of local people may be presented in advertising brochures and other marketing channels with the aim of creating an aura of idyllic pristine and unspoilt glittering tropical sand beach destinations that are ideal for relaxation.

Moreover, in most instances, overseas tour operators and travel agents have preconceived ideas on the forms of marketing and promotional images of developing countries that they would like to present to prospective tourists in tourist-generating countries in order to promote market sales and increase their profit margins (Sinclair 1990; Morgan and Pritchard 1998). Thus, for instance, although Mombassa and its surrounding environs have diverse cultural and nature-based attractions, only a limited image of Mombassa is presented to prospective tourists. This includes the grandeur tourist hotels and condominiums that are owned by foreign investors, the pristine beach attractions, Fort Jesus (a seventeenth century military fort that was built by the Portuguese explorers), and Haller Park (a nature trail that is owned by a multinational company). In fact, sometimes scenes of the pristine tropical sand beaches, the imposing structure of Fort Jesus and Haller Park are presented in promotional and marketing brochures without any mentioning of the local people and the existing diverse indigenous cultures.

It can therefore be argued that the local people have been disenfranchised in the commodification process and marketing of local tourism resources. The local people are, usually, not involved nor are they represented in the commodification process of transforming and packaging existing nature based and cultural attractions into tourism products that are presented and sold to prospective tourists. This lack of involvement and representation of local communities in the commodification process and tourism product development raises serious and fundamental questions, particularly pertaining to the authenticity of cultural tourism products, and equitable distribution of the revenues that accrue from the tourism industry.

Indeed, when the international tourists arrive in Mombassa and other places in the country, they already have preconceived ideas and expectations of what they are going to see based on how they have been informed by overseas tour operators and travel agents. Thus, a trip to Mombassa for most international tourists is usually a routine and predictable affair. It mainly involves spending most of their time on the beaches adjacent to the tourist hotel and may include organised brief excursions to Fort Jesus, Old Mombassa Town and Haller Park (lasting for a few hours), before leaving Mombassa for more extensive wildlife

safari excursions in the inland wildlife parks and reserves.

Moreover, quite often, international tourists are given inaccurate and exaggerated information concerning the local security situation. For instance, the tourists may be informed by tour guides that areas with high concentrations of local residents, particularly the residential areas, have high rates of crime and mugging; this is intended to scare and discourage tourists from venturing into any other areas of town apart from prescribed sites. However, this may be contrary to the real situation on the ground. The over-cautiousness of tour guides has a bearing to the nature of their training in which they have been oriented to take security issues and the safety concerns of visitor quite seriously in order to pre-empt any likelihood of putting tourists in arms' way. Also, most tour itineraries are structured in such as manner that they, mainly, earmark major touristic landmarks such as Fort Jesus, Haller Park and wildlife attractions for visitation, thus excluding other unique cultural features involving local people, such as the rich Swahili culture.

Policy implications and conclusion
Over the last 40 years, the state has mainly promoted the development of large-scale tourism projects such as beach resorts, high-raise hotels, lodges and restaurants in Mombassa and the country's other tourism centres. Most of the large tourism projects have been initiated with the assistance of foreign private and multinational capital investment. As discussed in this study, large-scale, capital intensive programmes have tended to preclude local participation in tourism project design, management and ownership of the tourism resources and facilities. Most of the tourism establishments in Mombassa in particular and Kenya in general are externally oriented, and mainly respond to exogenous socioeconomic factors. Consequently there is a high leakage of tourism revenues (ranging from 40 to 70 per cent of the gross tourism revenues) resulting in lower linkage and multiplier effects with other domestic economic sectors to stimulate local, regional and national economic growth.

Consequently, for the tourism industry to contribute to the long-term sustainable development of the local people in Mombassa and other tourism centres, an alternative tourism development strategy is required which addresses issues of external control and management of the tourism industry, and the inequitable distribution of the tourism revenues. In this regard, the principal objectives of the alternative tourism strategy should include: enhancement of equitable

distribution of the tourism revenues; increasing local participation in tourism decision-making processes; reduction of the high leakage rates and increase of the multiplier effects of tourism; and minimization of the social and environmental impacts of tourism.

Policies and institutional mechanisms need to be put in place that encourage local participation in the design, implementation and management of tourism projects and local use of the tourism resources. For local participation in the tourism decision-making processes to succeed, local people need sanctioned authority to enable them to implement local tourism projects responsibly. This has to include authority for tourism and cultural resource proprietorship to determine and sanction user rights including the right to determine the types of tourism projects to be initiated and the right to benefit fully from the local tourism resources. The authority should also include the right to sanction access to the local cultural and nature-based tourism resources and protection from any external encroachment of powerful interest groups including local elites.

At least, local communities should be empowered to determine what forms of tourism projects they want to be developed in their respective communities, and how the tourism costs and benefits are to be shared among different stakeholders. To achieve this, socio-political changes will require the decentralization of tourism authority and decision-making processes from the national level to democratically elected local and grassroots institutions and organizations, such as municipal councils, welfare societies and local cultural groups.

In Mombassa and the adjacent townships, for instance, the design and development of alternative tourism projects can be done in concert with existing resort tourism activities. Here, intergrated tourism projects can be developed which will assist in moving tourists away from the concentrated beach resorts and a few tourism sites to other underutilized tourist attractions, particularly the rich and diverse local cultures. Integrated tourism projects can be developed, for instance, that incorporate the hospitable local culture, historical monuments, and contemporary African handicraft and art. In addition, aspects of ecotourism and visits to the mangrove forests, bird-watching and sport-fishing in the coastal creeks and lagoons can be incorporated in the integrated tourism projects. Community-based local tourism projects that are designed and implemented through community consensus, other than centrally planned (top-down) tourism

programmes may also enhance the opportunity for spontaneous, rather than contrived, encounters between the local people and tourists, such as stage-managed troupe dances and the provision of servile services to tourists. Also, local community based tourism projects will possibly lead to increased linkages and multiplier effect with other local economic sub-sectors.

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