

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION BARRIERS FOR MOUNTAIN TOURISM DESTINATIONS; CASE OF MOUNT KENYA WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Rayviscic M. Ndivo*

Murang'a University of Technology, Kenya

Ann. M. Kamau

Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Kenya

Juma Misiko

Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify the existing barriers towards successful policy implementation in Mount Kenya World Heritage Site. The study adopted descriptive research design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches to identify policy implementation barriers from field survey as well as reviewed literature. The study respondents were the policy makers (government officials), porters and guides operating within the heritage site. Data was collected using key informant interviews and Likert-scale questionnaires. The study results found out that some of the policy implementation barriers in Mount Kenya World Heritage Site include: human and financial constraints, sectoral conflicts of interest, economic prioritization of the heritage site and conflicting policies resulting from the heritage site being a dual-management ecosystem.

Keywords: Mountain Tourism Destinations, Tourism in World Heritage Sites, Mount Kenya, Tourism Policies, Sustainable Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Mountain regions are home to well-known tourist destinations, which generate employment, social integration and contribute to the development of economies, services, and infrastructure (Cousquer & Beames, 2013). As a result, mountain tourism is gaining popularity as a distinct form of tourism, gradually rising its share of the overall tourism market and experiencing rapid global expansion (Upadhayaya, 2018). For instance, as international tourist arrivals reached a record 1087 billion arrivals in 2013 with receipts totalling US\$1159 billion, the UNWTO estimated that 15–20% of tourism occurred in mountain regions (UNWTO, 2014). Global estimates indicates that there were as many as 163–217 million arrivals to mountain regions in 2013 with estimated receipts amounting to US\$174–232 billion (World Tourism Organization, 2018). Mountains are water towers, home to biodiversity, and have a wealth of natural resources.

*Correspondence to: Rayviscic M. Ndivo, Murang'a University of Technology; P.O BOX 102601-00101 NAIROBI, Kenya, Tel: +254 72147244; E-mail: raymutinda@yahoo.com

Mountain communities have a rich cultural heritage that is equally significant in the growth and development of tourism (Amat Montesinos, 2017). (Schomberg & Hankins, 2019). observed that the promotion of effective policy frameworks to ensure that mountain tourism is managed in a sustainable manner is critical for the long-term sustainability of mountain regions rich in environmental and cultural heritage. (Debarbieux, 2014). noted that there should be an efficient way of formulating, preparing, and enforcing tourism policies in order to ensure that benefits are spread optimally among communities, governments, tourists, and investors.

The Mountain Agenda formulated during the Rio earth Summit in 1993, addressed the global tourism industry prioritizing the issue of sustainability, stating that "careful management is required both to preserve the exceptional recreational values of mountains while capturing benefits locally." However, overuse in congested corridors necessitates extensive waste management, infrastructure maintenance, and ecosystem conservation (Euromontana, 2017). In the 2030 agenda of sustainable development, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims at the need to support sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity-building that promote environmental awareness, conserve and protect the environment as well as respect for biodiversity, natural ecosystems and cultural diversity. Additionally, Sustainable Development Goals aims towards improving the welfare and livelihoods of local communities by supporting their local economies and the human and natural environment as a whole (OECD, 2018).

Schomberg & Hankins, (2019), observed that the promotion of effective policy frameworks to ensure that mountain tourism is managed in a sustainable manner is critical for the long-term sustainability of mountain regions rich in environmental and cultural heritage. (Trillo & Haslam, 2019). noted that there should be an efficient way of formulating, preparing, and enforcing tourism policies in order to ensure that benefits are spread optimally among affected communities, governments, tourists, and investors. The policies should focus on addressing tourism development approaches through networks, partnerships and community engagement; facilitating success through community-based tourism and small tourism enterprises and regional collaboration and governance in the context of mountain tourism (Markovic' & Petrovic', 2013).

Barriers to successful policy implementation

(Mthethwa, 2012). defined policy implementation as the carrying out of basic policy decisions, normally enshrined in a and can be interpreted as putting policies into practice or a series of governmental decisions and actions aimed at carrying out a previously agreed mandate. On the other hand, (O'Toole Jr, 2000). described effective policy implementation as agencies' compliance with the principal's requests where agencies are kept accountable for achieving particular measures of progress in terms of meeting policy objectives local goals. Policy implementation is critical to the entire policy making process as pointed out by (Elliot, 1997). stating that poor policy implementation results to wastage of both human and financial resources, time invested and knowledge contributed during the policy formulation process.

Moreover, Elliot alleged that any destination's tourist policy and implementation will be influenced by the general political environment and priorities. Contributing to the tourism policy debate, (Airey & Chong, 2010). argued

that institutional arrangements influence the shaping of the tourism policy agenda, the manner in which tourism issues are articulated and the way stakeholders arrive at possible solutions. In addition, (Viriani, 2009). found out that resources, policy implementers disposition, and attitudes are the major drivers of a successful policy implementation. In an assessment of common barriers to tourism policy implementation.

(Dodds, 2007) identifies the lack of prior planning, limited stakeholder zeal and insufficient integration with regional and national policy priorities, inadequate political good will, and focus on short-term economic issues rather than long-term as the most significant obstructions. On the same breath, (Dodds & Butler, 2009). On their study on barriers to implementing sustainable tourism policy in mass tourism identified policy implementation barriers such as: lack of stakeholder support, insufficient resources to support policy implementation, a lack of communication among relevant authorities, a lack of holistic integration and coordination among tourism stakeholders, a lack of knowledge and awareness about policies, the ambiguity of existing policies, and the prioritization of the economic value of tourism side-effects.

Furthermore, (Wang & Ap, 2013) indicated that while tourism policy is implemented at the local level, due to the centralized governance structure, politics and inter-organizational relations at the national level can have a significant impact on local implementation. The authors identified four obstacles to tourism policy implementation, including an unclear division of authority and responsibility on tourism-related issues, a lack of understanding of tourism administration and the role of tourism associations, a lack of incentive/sanction mechanisms for inter-organizational co-operation (IOC), and a combination of government and state-owned enterprises. Wang and Ap attributed the limitations to the public administration system's ineffective administrative structures, which cannot be resolved without reforming the overall institutional arrangements.

(DeGroff & Cargo, 2009) stated that the policy implementation approaches should not be based on the assumption that resources would be abundant since policy results are influenced by available capital, institutional structure, and access to the implementation arena. Subsequently, policy implementation approaches must be versatile and creative, while still paying close attention to the environment. Similarly, (Krutwaysho & Bramwell, 2010) argued that if a policy's result is unpredictable, its implementers should prepare to change its content from time to time and that policy implementation is, in the broadest sense, a policy action continuum in which those trying to bring policy into action and those on whom action depends engage in an open and negotiate process over time. Besides, O'toole Jr stated that an improved understanding of the causes of gaps between policies and regulations, as well as their successful implementation, can aid tourism policymakers and managers in closing these gaps and more effectively regulating and controlling the tourism industry's growth and impacts.

Problem statement

Mount Kenya plays a key role in promoting the growth and development of tourism especially outdoor recreation and adventure. Given its international status as a World Heritage Site; Mount Kenya consist of a national park and a forest reserve and is gazette under a dual-management system integrating policies from different actors namely; Kenya Wildlife Service, Ministry of Tourism and the Kenya Forest

Service. The management bodies are intended to work in coordination in order to ensure responsible tourism practices within the mountain ecosystem with a goal of enhancing the mountain sustainability.

However, despite the integration of the various public sector authorities who has set and provided clear policies on the management of the Mount Kenya ecosystem, the mountain is still facing threats such environmental degradation due to over-exploitation of the natural resources, lack of proper management of both excreta and solid waste generated as a result of tourist activities on the mountain, fire outbreaks, human wildlife conflicts and visitor management issues as outlined by the (IUCN, 2020). Subsequently, academic research has argued that sustainability of tourism destinations can be achieved through integration of multi-sectoral policies to enforce responsible tourism practices. Therefore, given that Mount Kenya world heritage site is a beneficiary of the integrated multi-sectoral policies but still facing depletion and ecosystem degradation threats, there is need to conduct a study on the existing policy implementation barriers for Mount Kenya World Heritage Site.

Research question

What are the existing policy implementation barriers in Mount Kenya World Heritage site?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to (Kothari, 2014). data findings become more reliable when the researcher applies different approaches to acquire the same information. The target population for the study comprised of the government officials from KWS and KFS, porters and guides. The study used simple random sampling where each member of the population had an equal chance to participate in the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A sample size of 117 porters and guides was used for the study. The study employed purposive sampling for the key informants' interviews. Purposive sampling is an intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon (Robinson, 2014) and for this study ,it enabled the researcher to select respondents who were conversant with tourism policies and codes of conduct development and implementation.

The study employed the use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through use of structured questionnaires in Likert scale format for the quantitative data while qualitative data was obtained using in-depth interviews of the key informants. Secondary data was obtained from literature review. To ensure reliability of the quantitative research instruments, Cronbach's Alpha Correlation Coefficient, which expresses the degree of reliability, was calculated using the statistical kit for social sciences SPSS. Cronbach alpha has a spectrum of 0-1, with a value of 0-0.6 indicating a low level of reliability and internal consistency, and a value of 0.7 to 1 indicating a high level of reliability and internal consistency. From the results the Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was found to be 0.756 and showed that the research instrument was consistent. Validity of the research instruments was ensured by carrying out validity checks to ensure that the data collection instruments serve the intended purpose (Hair, 2007). Data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respondent's demographics

The total number of study respondents who successfully participated in the study was 281 consisting of 177 KWS registered porters and guides and 104 visitors. The demographic analysis of the guides and porters indicated that out of the 177 porters, 60.7% were tour guides while 39.3% were porters. On the gender participation of the guides and porters 83.8% were males with only 16.2% females indicating that more males took the guides and porters roles as compared to women. On the education levels of the porters and guides, 48.7% had obtained relevant diploma and certificates, 28.2% of the respondents had completed their secondary education 16.2% had attained education up to primary level and 6.8% were below primary school level. The study sought the period of operation of the porters and guides in Mount Kenya World Heritage Site and the findings demonstrated that 70.1% of the respondents had operated in the heritage site for more than three years, with 20.5% between 1-2 years and 9.4% below one year.

Policy implementation barriers in Mount Kenya World Heritage Site

The study sought to identify existing policy implementation barriers in Mount Kenya World Heritage Site. As indicated in table 3.1, 89.8% of the guides and porters agreed that there was lack of effective communication. In view of lack of stakeholder support, majority of the respondents 58.1% were not sure about it while 33.3% agreed. On the same breath, most of the guides and porters (94%) agreed that there was absence of holistic integration of policy issues, 99.1% agreed that there was an issue with economic prioritization of tourism resources while 98.3% agreed to the existence of financial resources constraints.

The study findings were enriched by the interview findings with the KWS officer stating some of the policy implementation barriers in MKWHS;

Some of the policy implementation barriers in the Mount Kenya World Heritage site include; human and financial resource constraints, lack of a solid and effective policy communication strategy, sectoral interests as the heritage site is gazetted as a duo-management ecosystem and political interference especially during election period.'

In addition, the Forester KFS highlighted;

In Mount Kenya ecosystem, the most common policy implementation barriers are; conflicts of management, lack of a clear chain of command and reporting, conflicting policies in terms of similar policies but differing Acts, Lack of an effective joint management plan, conflict of interest, lack of precision of existing policies as well as inadequate human and financial resources to manage the ecosystem.'

According the study findings, communication of policies in Mount Kenya World Heritage Site is ineffective thus inadequate to create awareness among all the relevant stakeholders .This creates a great hindrance for the policy implementations the policy implementers are not fully aware of their responsibilities .Moreover, while stakeholders involvement and inclusivity is key in enhancing successful policy implementation, stakeholders in the heritage site were not involved fully in matters tourism policies. The study also reveals that the policies that have been established for Mount Kenya World Heritage Site are not comprehensive and consistent and they

fail to fully consider the management of cross cutting issues in policy making. While the respondents agreed that there were challenges with financial constraints to aid in the implementation of the policies it is worth noting that there is the issue of the economic prioritization of tourism resources in Mount Kenya World Heritage Site making the policy implementation efforts to be inclined on the possibility of making more profit from tourism activities.

Mount Kenya World Heritage Site is a unique ecosystem and being a dual-management ecosystem, the policy makers participating in the in-depth interviews pointed out Mount Kenya specific policy implementation barriers which include: sectoral conflict of interest between the managing bodies, conflicting policies, politics as well as lack of a clear chain of command and reporting. Besides the government officials pointed out that lack of a harmonized management plan has been a major impediment to effective policy formulation.

The findings corroborated with those of (Elliot, 1997). stating that political environment of a country influences the process of policy implementation. Additionally the study lend credence to the assertions of (Dodd’s & Butler, 2009) suggesting that policy implementation barriers hindering destination implementation of policies include; lack of stakeholder support, insufficient resources to support policy implementation, a lack of communication among relevant authorities, a lack of holistic integration and coordination among tourism stakeholders, a lack of knowledge and awareness about policies, the ambiguity of existing policies, and the prioritization of the economic value of tourism side-effects.

Furthermore, the study findings corroborate with the assertions of (DeGroff & Cargo, 2009) that policy implementation approaches should not be based on the assumption that resources would be abundant since policy results are influenced by available capital, institutional structure, and access to the implementation arena. Subsequently, policy implementation approaches must be versatile and creative, while still paying close attention to the environment. From the study, it is evident that successful tourism policy implementation is dependent on availability of resource both human and financial resources, disposition of policy implementers with capacity to implement policies, stakeholder attitudes and involvement and inclusivity as well as effective institutional arrangements as pointed out by (Viriani, 2009) (Table1).

Table 1: Policy implementation barriers (N=117).

Policy implementation barriers	SD	D	SD+D	NS	A	SA	SA+A
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Lack of effective communication	0	0	0	10.3	43.6	46.2	89.8
Lack of stakeholder support	0	7.7	7.7	58.1	23.9	9.4	33.3
Absence of holistic integration of policy issues	0	0.9	0.9	5.1	68.4	25.6	94
Ambiguity of policies	0	0	0	0.9	70.1	29.1	99.2
Economic prioritization of tourism resources	0	0	0	0.9	48.7	50.4	99.1
Financial resources constraints	0	0	0	1.7	47.9	50.4	98.3

Key: sd: Strongly disagree D: Disagree NS: Not Sure A: Agree SA: Strongly agree

CONCLUSION

As stated by the Kenya Wildlife Service officer 'having policies that are not effectively enforced and implemented is as good as not having them'. The management of Mount Kenya World Heritage site should consider the existing policy implementation barriers and develop a long-term strategy for bridging the barriers. Stakeholders' involvement and inclusivity in policy formulation and implementation should not be overlooked since it plays a critical role in informing roles and responsibilities, influencing their attitude and thus enhancing successful policy implementation.

There is need for the management of the heritage site to develop a harmonized joint management plan that can be used as a common reference point by all the management bodies in order to mitigate the issues on sectoral conflict of interest and have a clear chain of command. Additionally, the policy makers should make provision for financial resources in order to facilitate the policy implementation plans and on the other hand, build human capacity to implement the policies. Policies should be frequently reviewed to identify any existing gaps and policy communication awareness campaigns should be established.

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