

How Lack of Standardized Service Delivery by Tour Providers in Shared Tourism Destinations Negatively Affects Ecotourism Development: Case of Serengeti-Mara

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Abstract- Cross-border ecotourism development in shared ecosystems such as Serengeti-Mara needs to take a common direction even for tour operators. The EAC regional tourism policy has taken cognizance of this fact and stipulate that an agreed regional quality and standards control mechanism harmonizing the standards for registration, classification, and accreditation and grading of service providers and tourism facilities should be observed. The policy indicates that tourism service providers such as lodges, tour companies, and camps, among others, would adhere to harmonized standards for registration, classification, and accreditation and grading of service providers and tourism facilities. The standardization is meant to ensure that two sides of the border provide quality service while at the same time inequality and competition do not occur. Ironically, no set standards exist for lodges, permanent tented camps and Special Campsites in SMME. These standards include the requirement to monitor and efficiently manage the disposal of waste, use of water and fuel wood. The study used questionnaire, interviews and focused group discussion to collect primary data while secondary data were collected using journals, documents, acts, legislations, sessional papers and conventions/protocols on tourism. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The qualitative data were analysed by consolidating emerging themes from the key informant interviews and topic analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Data were presented in form of tables, pie charts and narrations. The result of the study indicates that service providers in SMME are yet to standardize service delivery across the border. There is a general argument that international standards are met but not in all aspects of the tourism industry. The standardization of services across Serengeti Mara is hampered by different regulations on labour, tax systems and general business operations requirements. It was found out that Tanzania lacks highly skilled labour in certain areas in the tourism industry but rigid immigration regulations such as work permits and punitive tax systems make it an attractive for skilled personnel to work in Serengeti. Although both the regional and bilateral policies indicate that exchange of skills and sharing of information through seminars/workshops and even joint training is allowed, there is no evidence of the same at the implementation level. Thus,

standardization of registration, licensing and service varies which falls short of regional and international standards service delivery. Tour operators are negatively affected by punitive taxation systems; the most affected side is Serengeti. There is no clear policy to enforce tour operators' support for local community and regulation for them to adhere to environmentally best practices. This study, therefore, recommends common policy for tour operators which would standardize operations and service delivery so that international and regional standards continue to be met. This should include harmonized immigration laws and taxation systems so that skewed revenue distribution is eliminated.

Index Terms- Cross-border tourism, standardization, bilateral, conventions and immigration

I. INTRODUCTION

The EAC (1999) regional tourism policy indicates that tourism service providers such as lodges, tour companies, and camps, among others, would adhere to harmonized standards for registration, classification, and accreditation and grading of service providers and tourism facilities. Within SMME, there exists a diverse range of visitor accommodation which include lodges, permanent and non-permanent tented camps, and public campsites of accommodation types and communal conservancies. The standardization is meant to ensure that two sides of the border provide quality service while at the same time inequality and competition do not occur. The policy indicates that partner states establish an agreed regional quality and standards control mechanism harmonizing the standards for registration, classification, and accreditation and grading of service providers and tourism facilities (EAC, 1999). This policy focuses on harmonized tourism service delivery such that tourism service providers meet international and regional standards. This standard tourism service delivery, however, is not explicit on eco-friendly policies these tourism service providers are supposed to adhere to. On tourism activities, lodges and camps ensure that education/natural history interpretation is a part of these facilities. To realize this, nature walks are conducted by schedules guided

outings for guests to visit the local community. This creates interactive experiences with local leaders, business people, artisans or craftsmen. Even hunting as a tourist activity is done within some ethical hunting programme such as being sensitive to current composition of animal populations. It is a fact that expansion of wildlife sites and related activities such as creation of hotels, lodges and camps generally improve livelihood of the communities around those sites. However, it affects the environment and natural resources which calls for proper management of waste so that it does not affect the surroundings.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Serengeti-Mara region is found within the EAC region on which the regional tourism policy applies. The United Republic of Tanzania and Republic of Kenya share one of the greatest ecological regions of migrating wildlife in the world, known as the Maasai Mara Game Reserve in Kenya and the Serengeti National Park. The Mara River, the only perennial river in the transboundary ecosystem, is often the only source of water for grazing animals during the dry season. Increasing water demands from agriculture, industries, and growing human populations are likely to reduce its availability for migratory species. Within SMME, there exists a diverse range of visitor accommodation which include lodges, permanent and non-permanent tented camps, and public campsites of accommodation types and communal conservancies. The standardization is meant to ensure that two sides of the border provide quality service while at the same time inequality and competition do not occur. To gather data, there were 92 questionnaires which were administered to respondents in total. The researcher with the help of two research assistants administered structured questionnaires to gather information from 2 EAC agency directors, 2 Park Managers, 3 directors of state agencies (KWS, TANAPA and TWS), 3 directors of INGOs, 6 directors of NGOs, 70 managers of camps/eco-camps and lodges/Eco lodges; 3 heads of conservancies and 3 heads of wildlife management areas. Secondly, the researcher used interview schedule. The researcher and research assistants spent at least 5 days in each study site to conduct interviews. Both an in-depth formal and informal interviews were done. The formal interviews were structured since they involved a set of questions of predetermined questions. The interview schedule was used with EAC agency directors, Park Managers, directors of KWS, TANAPA and TWS, directors of INGOs and NGOs and tour operators. The research instruments were trial tested in Kilimanjaro Heartland between Kenya and Tanzania. These instruments were trial tested in a pilot survey was conducted in February 2018 using 30 respondents to validate them. The Focused Group Discussion focused attention on the given involvement of the local community in ecotourism activities. This method was used to probe various aspects of ecotourism activities that Community Based Natural Resource Management Groups engage in within dispersal areas of Serengeti Mara ecosystem. There were specific topics that were discussed by the groups. Members involved in this included heads of conservancies, wildlife management areas and existing community based natural resource management groups in these dispersal areas of the SMME. In total, there were 6 Focused Group Discussion groups comprising of 7 to 12 members in each group.

This study relied on secondary data by examining books, reports, journal articles, online materials and newspaper materials and articles on aspects of ecotourism, bilateral agreement between Kenya and Tanzania, EAC Protocol on tourism and international protocols on tourism. The researcher sourced secondary data by analysis of publications such as journals on tourism, EAC tourism related legislations and government documents. These documents included Kenya tourism strategic master plan, Tanzania tourism strategic plan, bilateral and EAC regional tourism protocol/agreements.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Quantitative data consisted of measuring numerical values from which description such as frequencies and percentages were made. The data were first entered into the computer for analysis using statistical package for social sciences SPSS Version 12. This generated frequencies and percentages which were used to discuss the findings. Qualitative data basically involved themes and content analysis. The frequency with which an idea or word or description appears was to interpret the importance, attention or emphasis. Content analysis examined the intensity with which certain words had been used. A classification system was developed to record the information in interpreting results. The frequency with which a symbol or data appeared showed the measure of importance, attention or emphasis. The researcher presented data findings in form of frequency tables, pie charts, bar graphs and narratives. There were factors that affected the results of the study. One, the researcher was unable to gather information from some respondents who declined to participate or were unavailable for interviews. Also, there were geographical limitations that were experiences due to rough terrain in the wilderness, poor road network and bad weather. Lastly, there was language barrier in the rural areas. To overcome these shortcomings, the researcher engaged a tour guide to interpret and translate questions for the respondents. Further, research assistants from the area were engaged to assist in data collection. The researcher used four wheeled vehicle to overcome geographical limitations. In addition, the researcher utilized secondary materials from EAC Ministry, EAC agencies, Kenya Tourism Board and Tanzania Tourism Corporation and other institutions that had previously studied this ecosystems tourism status. On language barrier, the researcher engaged an interpreter to explain and interpret for the respondents.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The regional tourism policy indicates that an agreed regional quality and standards control mechanism harmonizing the standards for registration, classification, and accreditation and grading of service providers and tourism facilities should be observed (EAC, 1999). The policy indicates that tourism service providers such as lodges, tour companies, and camps, among others, would adhere to harmonized standards for registration, classification, and accreditation and grading of service providers and tourism facilities. Within SMME, there exists a diverse range of visitor accommodation which include lodges, permanent and non-permanent tented camps, and public campsites of accommodation types and communal conservancies. The standardization is meant to ensure that two sides of the border

provide quality service while at the same time inequality and competition do not occur.

Across SMME, tour operators who serve tourists are expected to provide service, facilities, food and beverages that meet international standards. The problem is that few SMEs are insured and do not operate professionally in Tanzania. This is the reason why Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT) has records of small number of registered and licensed suppliers. This is not the case with Kenya. For example, Mara has over 600 licensed tour operators, nearly double the number in Tanzania, and over 400 Luxury and four star tented camps, more than 10 times Tanzania. Kenya received only 130,000 more international tourists than Tanzania (Global Development Solutions, 2015). Poor regulatory and tax policies hamper the growth of the local tourist sector, particularly for small- and medium-size businesses, and stakeholders are constantly at loggerheads with the government of Tanzania on the legality, fairness and conformity of new regulations with existing policy. The relatively well organised Hoteliers Association of Tanzania (HAT) and Tanzania Association of Tour Operators (TATO) complain of inadequate communication and consultation between the government and the tourism and hospitality industry over policy and taxation issues (Kathryn, 2011).

The low number of investors in Serengeti could be attributed to a government controlled sector and a socialist ideology that limited growth of tourism industry in general. Other factors include stringent investment climate that had compromised service delivery. For example, all tourist operators are required by the Tourist Agents Act to be registered and licensed in order to offer tourism services in Serengeti. This tourist operators are registered and licensed based on Class A and Class C businesses. Findings indicate that registration and licencing fees are beyond local community. A tourism officer argued that licensing and regulatory issues in both countries in tourism are cross-sectoral. For example, Kenya has a considerable body of law related to tourism and has tourism policy framework. Because of many institutions, Kenyan tourism service providers are overloaded with institutions and regulations. It was found that 44 different legislative instruments regulate the tourism sector. This intricate web of regulations is further made difficult by the overlapping functions of more than 15 public organizations regulating the sector and 11 associations and civil societies representing different markets (Global Development Solutions, 2015).

To illustrate this, the Republic of Tanzania (2006-2016) report indicates that challenges that tour operators experience in Serengeti include problems with water supplied to Seronera via a pipeline built in the early 1970's from the Bologonja Springs in the northern extreme of the Park. With years passed by, the condition of the pipeline deteriorated such that water availability is sporadic and a continual problem for the Seronera staff village, park offices and other facilities that depend on the pipeline for their water. These water supply problems have led to difficulties with the management of the Park's six public campsites, resulting in two being closed down. The facilities at the remaining campsites are overused and do not meet tourist expectations.

The policy indicates that partner states establish an agreed regional quality and standards control mechanism harmonizing the standards for registration, classification, and accreditation and grading of service providers and tourism facilities (EAC, 1999).

This policy is focuses on harmonized tourism service delivery such that tourism service providers meet international and regional standards. This standard tourism service delivery, however, is not explicit on eco-friendly policies these tourism service providers are supposed to adhere to.

The findings indicate that tourism facilities do not have a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certificate as a sign of commitment to adoption of eco-friendly policies. This certificate is important because tourist facilities demonstrate their commitment to minimizing environmental damage when putting up new or renovating buildings. These facilities should be LEED certified with evidence of appropriate use of alternative energy so that one could operate 'off the grid' and adoption of water conservation practices. A park manager argued that use of tertiary waste water treatment including recycling and eco-friendly disposal practices are in place. Further, lodges are fitted with alternative energy sources such as solar panels.

The researcher also asked park managers, directors of EAC agencies/KWS/TWS/TANAPA and tourism officers in Ministries of EAC and Tourism to identify eco-friendly policies that apply to SMME with regard to tourism related businesses. The number of

respondents was 10. Two questionnaires were not returned. Table 1 is a summary of findings.

Table 1: Eco-friendly Practices in SMME

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	LEED certified	0	00.0	00.0	00.0
	Use of alternative energy	4	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Waste water treatment	3	37.5	37.5	87.5
	Recycling/compositing	1	12.5	12.5	100.0
	Practices				
	Total	8	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 indicates that fifty per cent (50%) 4 of the respondents agreed to use of alternative energy sources such as solar as a requirement for tourism facilities while thirty-seven per cent (37.5%) 3 of the respondents agreed that treating waste water is a measure while twelve and a half per cent (12.5%) 1 agreed to recycle and compositing practices. These tourism facilities are not environmentally certified.

It is a fact that expansion of wildlife sites and related activities such as creation of hotels, lodges and camps generally improve livelihood of the communities around those sites. However, it affects the environment and natural resources which calls for proper management of waste so that it does not affect the surroundings.

On tourism activities, lodges and camps ensure that education/natural history interpretation is a part of these facilities. To realize this, nature walks are conducted by schedules guided outings for guests to visit the local community. This creates interactive experiences with local leaders, business people, artisans or craftsmen. Even hunting as a tourist activity is done within some ethical hunting programme such as being sensitive to current composition of animal populations. The discussion indicates that culture as a tourist product is not given much attention by park management.

To find out effects of tourism activities by tour operators on culture of local community, the researcher analysed the regional policy which indicates that partner states develop common policies to minimize adverse impacts of tourism on the environment and natural resources. Further, partner states should designate world heritage sites and other conservation areas that protect the environment, respect the rights of local communities and provide appropriate access, infrastructure and services for visitors (EAC, 1999).

The regional tourism policy points out that environmental and natural resources need to be protected from tourism activities. With regard to local communities, their rights need to be protected. By mentioning rights, the policy does not directly imply that local culture needs to be protected from tourism activities. Therefore, protection of local culture is not clearly stated in the policy. One of the key aspects of ecotourism is that local culture remains intact in view of tourism activities.

To this end, the researcher asked park managers, tourism officers in Ministries of EAC and Tourism, directors of EAC agencies, KWS, TWS and TANAPA to identify any socio-cultural effects of tourism activities on the local populace culture in SMME. The number of respondents was 10. Two questionnaires were not returned. Table 2 is a summary of findings:

Table 2: Effects of Tourism Activities on Local Community Culture

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Changes in community value systems and behavior	1	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Commercialization of local culture	3	37.5	37.5	50.0
	Collective traditional life style	3	37.5	37.5	87.5

Change of Community structure	1	12.5	12.5	100.0
Total	8	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 indicates that thirty-seven per cent (37.5%) 3 of the respondents agreed that there is commercialization of local culture and collective traditional life style as a result of tourism activities across SMME. Findings show that twelve and half per cent (12.5%) 1 of the respondents agreed that there are changes in community value systems and behaviour, and change of community structure. In an interview, a tourism officer said:

The Maasai depend on their livestock and environment for their basic needs, but things have changed because local community depends on food produced from outside the area. This is due to change of life style from pastoralism to semi-agriculture and pure agriculture. In addition, indigenous medicine-based knowledge is on the decline (Interview held on 30th March, 2018 at Tourism Ministry, Nairobi).

This assertion indicates change in life style as a result of tourism across the SMME. The local community's needs are not fully supported by tourism activities. This finding concurs with Kathryn (2011) argument that ecotourism activities are yet to completely support local community economic needs. However, a tourism officer argued that preservation and maintenance of the indigenous knowledge of traditional Maasai food and medicine is through ethno-botany research that provides a quantitative, analytical understanding of potential impact of these changes to the Maasai Mara ecosystem. Further, educating the young members of the Maasai community about their traditional food, medicines and cultural contexts is important. But cultural distortion is rampant due to tourism activities. In an interview, a tourism officer opined:

Maasai culture is distorted as a result of over-commercialization. For example, traditionally, a Maasai woman would do beadwork for her own beauty, her and for ceremonial purposes such as weddings, circumcision and childbirth ceremonies. Today, the beadwork is not only for beauty and ceremonies but also as a business (Interview held on 3rd May, 2018 at Tourism Ministry, De re salaam).

Traditionally, the Maasai women did bead work for beauty and ceremonies but today it mainly to sell to tourists. Moreover, this business is infiltrated by non-Maasai communities who either imitate the Maasai beadwork or buy them cheaply from the Maasai women. This finding concur with Kathryn (2011) argument that sell of handicraft is a commercial activity. This denies the Maasai their traditional art and crafts heritage as well as income. This beadwork, Maasai 'Shuka' and other traditional craft are now littered in all major towns in Kenya. These negative cultural impacts are a result of host communities' direct and indirect interactions with tourists and with the tourism industry. The effects arise when tourism brings about changes in communities' value systems and behaviour; which has threatened indigenous identity.

Therefore, unchecked tourism activities can cause changes or loss of local cultural identity and values, through commercialization of local culture as is the case with communities living around SMME. Tourism has commercialized local culture, local customs and festivals to conform to tourist expectations. This standardization is as a result of having to satisfy tourists' desires. This could cause severe social stress on local communities in the form of cultural distortion and damage to cultural heritage.

IV. CONCLUSION

On tourism service delivery, each side of the border independently oversees tour operators' operations within its borders. Thus, standardization of registration, licensing and service varies which falls short of regional and international standards service delivery. Tour operators are negatively affected by punitive taxation systems; the most affected side is Serengeti. There is no clear policy to enforce tour operators' support for local community and regulation for them to adhere to environmentally best practices. Tourism policies applicable to Serengeti Mara are yet to be harmonized due to state sovereignty. Lack of harmonization of these norms, practices or strategies with regard to ecotourism development has resulted into little community development, incompatible land uses, restricted flow of tourists between the parks and competition among stakeholders.

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