

Importance of Supranational Structures towards Transboundary Ecotourism Development: Case of Serengeti-Mara

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Abstract

In the East African Community (EAC) region, coordinating policies and regulations on tourism was geared towards increased coordination and pooling of resources towards tourism-related improvements in areas of improved road and air access, fewer visa restrictions, increased cross-border movement of people and goods, and more harmonization of national policies as well as on safety and security. This objective can only be achieved through creation of supranational structures with clear defined roles. In EAC region, the East African Tourism Wildlife Coordination Agency (EATWCA) is mandated with this task of marketing the region as a single tourism destination. A single tourist visa and a comprehensive roadmap for developing a brand strategy to promote East Africa as a single tourist destination is part and parcel of this strategy. Thus, transboundary tourism destinations such as Serengeti-Mara ecosystems are better managed by such supranational structures. Further, the East African Tourism and Wildlife Conservation Agency was created as an implementing agency for EAC tourism activities on conservation of tourism destinations like Serengeti-Mara. These agencies are limited to marketing and publicity which automatically limits its operations. Within it there is the East African Tourism Wildlife Conservation Association mandated to coordinate policy on conservation, but is yet to function. Thus, the inadequacy of supranational structures limits policy coordination in transboundary ecotourism destinations such as Serengeti-Mara. 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 results indicate that although the East African Tourism Wildlife Coordination Agency (EATWC) and East African Tourism Wildlife Conservation Agency (EATWCA) are responsible agencies to coordinate policy on marketing at regional and international level and conservation, they do not capture other pillars of ecotourism. Consequently, policy coordination is majorly dependent on state agencies such as KWS, TWS/TANAPA or Narok County government (Kenyan side). The 1983 bilateral agreement between Kenya and Tanzania overrides regional policy agreement in areas of tourism. The bilateral agreement is statist in that it empowers state agencies/parastatals with function of tourism policy coordination. Therefore, the EAC tourism policy should be reviewed by creating supranational organizations to oversee policy coordination in shared ecosystem. These organizations would be supported by supra-national agencies at bilateral level that would specifically implement ecotourism development in shared ecosystems such as Serengeti Mara. With supranational agencies, it would be easier to coordinate policy by information exchange and sharing

Key words: Tourism Policy Coordination, supranational agencies, ecosystems, bilateral, organizations and parastatals

Introduction

Article 115 of EAC regional tourism policy states that partner states undertake to develop a collective and co-ordinated approach to the promotion and marketing of quality tourism into and within the Community. Further, Article 116 directs Partner States to undertake to develop a collective and co-ordinated policy for the conservation and sustainable utilisation of wildlife and other tourist sites in the Community. To this end, marketing and promotion of East Africa as a single tourist destination is enabled via the East African Tourism and Wildlife Coordination Agency (EATWCA) at international tourism fairs. Secondly, the East African Tourism and Wildlife Conservation Agency was created as an implementing agency for EAC tourism activities, including the implementation of a 2007 ECA tourism marketing plan and strategy. Since Serengeti-Mara is a transboundary ecosystem in EAC region, the regional tourism policy applies to it. This is due to the fact that tourism activities or jurisdiction in one state affect the environmental and social systems in the other or East Africa region as a whole, and cross border communities have seamless cultural interactions (LVBC, 2010). However, there are policy challenges with regard to conservation and sustainable utilisation of wildlife and other tourist sites in Serengeti-Mara ecosystem as stipulated in EAC regional tourism policy. This is due to lack of adequate institutional mechanisms; thus, this has been left to national entities to coordinate. For instance in Tanzania we have the Tanzania Wildlife Division (TWD); Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) is responsible for the management of all wildlife, including those outside protected areas. Tanzania Wildlife Division (TWD) administers the Game Control Areas around Serengeti National Park. Serengeti National Park is administered by Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA). TANAPA is a government parastatal with the mandate to conserve and manage wildlife resources within protected areas for the present and for posterity. In Kenya, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) is a government parastatal with the mandate to conserve and manage Kenya's wildlife resources within and outside protected areas for the present and for posterity. Mara has been owned and managed by the Narok County government. Many NGOs operate in Serengeti-Mara ecosystem, among them African Wildlife Fund (AWF) and Wild Wildlife Fund (WWF) with conservation programs on both sides of the border (UNESCO, 2013). Thus, the international border dividing the Serengeti-Maasai Mara Ecosystem creates parallel zones of institutional rules, laws, practices or norms. These institutions are local, national, and therefore, operate at that level. These institutions lack capacity to operate at cross border level. This means that formal institutional policy coordination at cross border level is lacking.

Materials and Methods

The Serengeti-Mara region is found within the EAC region on which the regional tourism policy applies. The Serengeti-Mara Ecosystem is an area of some 25000 km spanning the border between Tanzania and Kenya (34-36 degrees East, 1-3 degrees, 30's). The Kenyan part of the ecosystem lies in the South-West of the Nakuru County, forming part of two sub-counties, Narok and Trans Mara. It comprises approximately 6000 km of which 25% represents Maasai Mara National Reserve and 75% unprotected land inhabited by Maasai and other agro-pastoral communities (Malt, 2003). The Maasai Mara National Reserve and adjoining group ranches in Kenya form the northern portion of the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem to which wild animals, especially wildebeest and zebra migrate annually. The wildebeest and zebra from Serengeti National Park migrate and stay in the Maasai Mara ecosystem between June and November (Omar, 2013). However, the ecosystem suffers from tourism policy coordination challenges that exist despite a regional tourism policy in place. This has led to mismanagement of the resources, increasing pressures exerted by a growing human population, increasing socioeconomic demands such as tourism activities, encroachment of human settlements, hostile neighbours with competing interests, and poaching (LVBC, 2010).

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.

Findings and Discussions

Tourism Policy Coordination and Organizational Structure with Regard to Ecotourism Development in Serengeti-Mara

The EAC tourism policy stipulates that the East African Tourism Wildlife Coordination Agency (EATWCA) is mandated with this task of marketing the region as a single tourism destination. Thus, marketing and promotion of East Africa as a single tourist destination are enabled via the East African Tourism and Wildlife Coordination Agency (EATWCA) at international tourism fairs (EAC, 1999). Thus, tourist awareness of tour products, a key aspect of ecotourism is conducted at international level. This strategy is inadequate and this agency operational mandate should be extended to regional and bilateral levels.

Article 116 further states that Partner States undertake to develop a collective and coordinated policy for the conservation and sustainable utilisation of wildlife and other tourist sites in the Community (EAC, 1999). To implement this mandate, the East African Tourism and Wildlife Conservation Agency was created as an implementing agency for EAC tourism activities. To this end, the East African Tourism Wildlife Conservation Association (EATWCA) Board functions as a preparation of operational procedures and guidelines on tourism in the region (EAC, 1999).

The EAC tourism treaty created the EATWCA that is responsible for policy coordination in shared ecosystems such as Serengeti Mara. However, this agency is limited to marketing and publicity which automatically limits its operations. Within it there is the East African Tourism Wildlife Conservation Association mandated to coordinate policy on conservation, but is yet to function. This means that there is lack of organizational structures to coordinate policy actions on environmental protection with focus on tourism activities, a key aspect of ecotourism in shared ecosystems, does not exist.

State driven environmental protection, however, is stipulated in the bilateral agreement which spells out that the contracting parties should take necessary steps with a view to promoting and intensifying the tourist exchange between them giving special attention to contacts made between their authorized tourist organizations and agencies (Republic of Kenya and Tanzania, 1983). Therefore national agencies and organizations are responsible for policy coordination actions in other ecotourism areas in SMME. These ecotourism aspects include tourism access and awareness of tour products; environmental protection; environmental education of both tourists and local people and local community benefit from tourism activities.

This makes information sharing and exchange difficult in the mentioned ecotourism aspects because it is solely done by state agencies. Findings indicate that Tanzania Wildlife Division (TWD), Tanzania Wildlife Services (TWS and (TANAPA) are some of state agencies responsible for the management of all wildlife, including those outside protected areas. TWD administers the Game Control Areas around Serengeti National Park while Serengeti National Park is administered by Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA). TANAPA is a government parastatal with the mandate to conserve and manage wildlife resources within protected areas for the present and for posterity (LVBC, 2010).

In Kenya, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) is a government parastatal with the mandate to conserve and manage Kenya's wildlife resources within and outside protected areas for the present and for posterity. Other organizations include Kenya Tourism Board (KTB), Ministry of Tourism, and other institutions that indirectly affect tourism activities such as Kenya Forest Services. But since the promulgation of the 2010 constitution, Mara National Reserve is under the Narok County government, yet another level of administration on Maasai Mara National Reserve. Even policy coordination at national level on the Kenyan side is disjointed since there is no joint body/committee to coordinate tourism activities.

In Serengeti, the tourism division, found within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT), is the main governmental body responsible for tourism within Tanzania. There are two main sections reporting to the Director: Travel and Facilitation, and

Hospitality and Development. Responsibilities of the Travel and Facilitation Section include industry and public relations that is concerned with licensing, policy /planning, tourism statistics and research (Kideghesho, 2008).

The wildlife division is responsibility for management and is split between the department and six parastatal which include Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA), College of African Wildlife Management (CAWM), Serengeti Wildlife Research Institute (SWRI), Tanzania Wildlife Company (TAWICO) and Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA). The Wildlife Division is responsible for all wildlife management outside designated parks and conservation areas and also issues hunting concessions and licenses while SWRI conducts research in the whole country and TAWA is responsible for management of wildlife outside national parks (Kideghesho, 2008).

Thus, tourism policy coordination in SMME is affected by lack of a regional or bilateral organizational structure with capacity to enable information sharing and exchange in all key tourism areas. Even within respective countries, policy coordination with regard to many aspects of ecotourism is made difficult because of many state agencies that directly or indirectly affect tourism as a sector. Thus, coordination of policy should start at nation-state level and move to bilateral level and then at regional level.

This finding indicates that tourism policy coordination with regard to ecotourism in SMME is majorly facilitated by state agencies. These agencies are expected to facilitate exchange of information in aforementioned common interest ecotourism areas. These organizations are incapacitated and cannot purport to operate across the border. From the EAC agencies perspective, the EATWCA is limited in its mandate which leaves organizational policy coordination to ecotourism development in general.

This leads a number of obstacles where collaboration is needed for environmental protection and community development purposes in SMME. For example, joint policy coordination action on environmental protection along migratory corridors/routes and water routes on either side of SMME. This would promote conservation and management of shared wildlife or species populations in SMME. Further, there is a likelihood of complex problems such as cross border poaching, blocked migratory routes and human wildlife conflicts that compromise protection of environment and wildlife along these corridors. These complex problems need interdependence among different actors in order to come up with joint policy actions to effectively solve them.

To find out specific organizational structures that coordinate tourism policy with regard to ecotourism in SMME, the researcher asked park managers, tourism officers in Ministries of EAC and Tourism, directors/managers of EAC tourism agencies, KWS, TANAPA, and TWS to identify the institutional organizations authorized to facilitate policy coordination in SMME. The total number of respondents was 10. Two questionnaires were not returned. Figure1 is a summary of findings:

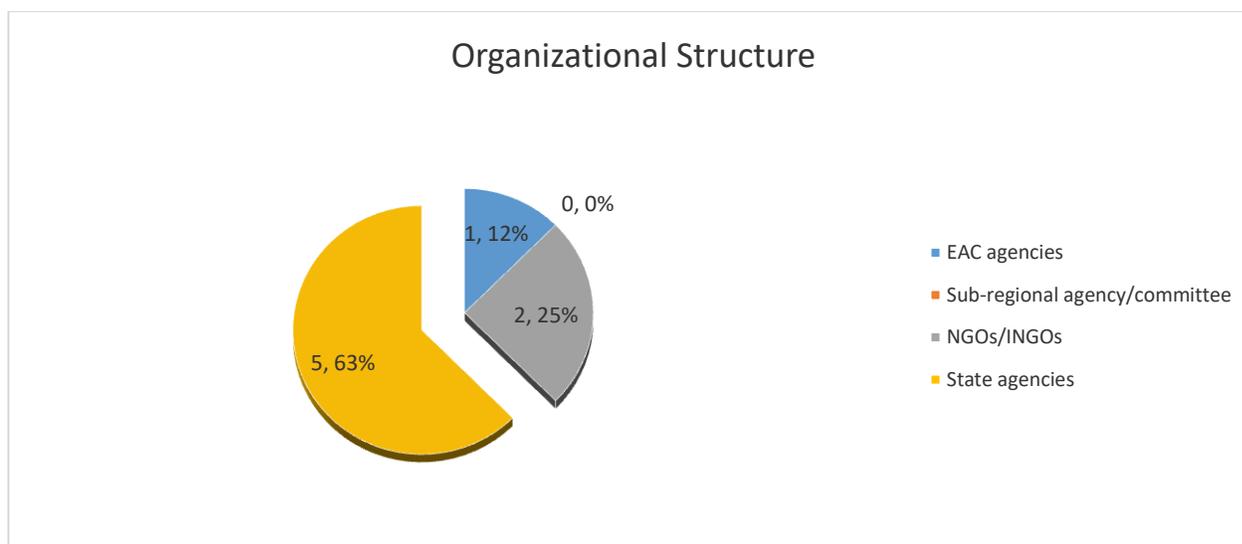


Figure 1: Organizational Structure

Source: Field Data, 2018

Figure 4.1 indicates that sixty-two and a half per cent (63 %) 5 of the respondents agreed that state agencies are institutional organizations that facilitate tourism policy coordination in SMME. Findings indicate that twenty-five per cent (25%) 2 of the respondents agreed that NGOs/INGOs do facilitate policy coordination while twelve and a half per cent (12%) 1 of the respondents agreed that EAC tourism agency is responsible for policy coordination. In an interview, a park manager was of this view:

Kenya and Tanzania are yet to jointly develop a tourism infrastructure plan to check on tourism facilities that are a threat to ecotourism while interlinked roads/airlines transport do not exist to promote tourism flow between Serengeti and Mara. The only tourism gate between the two adjacent parks was closed in 1977 (Interview held on 29th March, 2018 in MMNR).

This assertion indicates that tourism facilities such as lodges and camps are in a state of competition on both sides of the border and are controlled by respective states development policy. Because of competition between the two parks, there is a likelihood of overdevelopment of tourism facilities which goes against ecotourism aspect of environmental protection or effects of these tourism facilities. This finding concurs with Mayaka (2005) argument that tourism flow in the SMME is affected by lack of interlinked road and air network in EAC in general.

Other impediments relate to general tourism practices that differ as a result of many operators. Since areas nearby protected areas are established outside the direct control of respective national governments but by other stakeholders such as local governments, NGOs, local communities then cooperation need to be inclusive of them to achieve environmental and wildlife protection. For example, on the Mara side, the Narok County government is the main policy coordination actor in conjunction with national government agencies such as KWS and Ministry of Tourism while Serengeti side is majorly managed by national government agencies such as Tourism Wildlife Services, SENAPA and TANAPA and local authorities. The role of local authorities and county governments should be clearly defined to enhance cross border policy coordination. These levels of governments make it more difficult to coordinate policy actions in shared ecosystems.

For instance, there are many people involved on the Kenyan side due to devolved functioning of government structures in Kenya than in the Tanzanian side of SMME. Local community on Serengeti side of the border participate through local authorities. NGOs/INGOs

that operate across the SMME limit themselves to funding of projects across the border while tour operators and companies also affect operations in SMME. From this discussion, it is clear that the regional tourism policy captures key aspects of ecotourism and recognizes the importance of interdependence with regard to common regional interests and need to approach challenges that arise as a result of tourism activities. On the other hand, bilateral policy between Kenya and Tanzania limits interdependence which automatically makes it difficult to coordinate policy action in SMME. These supranational structural gaps both in regional and bilateral tourism policies arise from challenges that hinder crafting of a comprehensive regional tourism policy.

Conclusions

The main cause of little coordination is as a result of weak implementation mechanisms at regional or bilateral level to enforce policy coordination. Although the East African Tourism Wildlife Coordination Agency (EATWC) and East African Tourism Wildlife Conservation Agency (EATWCA) are responsible agencies to coordinate policy on marketing at regional and international level and conservation, they do not capture other pillars of ecotourism. Consequently, policy coordination is majorly dependent on state agencies such as KWS, TWS/TANAPA or Narok County government (Kenyan side). The 1983 bilateral agreement between Kenya and Tanzania overrides regional policy agreement in areas of tourism. The bilateral agreement is statist in that it empowers state agencies/parastatals with function of tourism policy coordination.

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