



**COMMUNITY BASED ECOTOURISM FOR BIODIVERSITY IN AFRICA: A LITERATURE  
REVIEW WITH A FOCUS ON KENYA**

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**SUSTAINABLE AND COMMUNITY BASED ECOTOURISM FOR BIODIVERSITY  
CONSERVATION IN AFRICA WITH A FOCUS ON KENYA: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

A deep look into community ecotourism in Africa

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**Keywords:** community, eco-tourism, East Africa, sustainability, degradation, biodiversity

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## **ABSTRACT**

Ecotourism became in recent years a significant strategy for the African government in order to manage resources and boost Africans' local economies. However many local communities remain underdeveloped, creating a challenge for sustainability and economic growth. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been essential for addressing environmental degradation and enhancing the quality of life in rural areas in the third world. Specifically, ecotourism helps achieve SDGs 12.2 and 15.2, which focus on the sustainable management of natural resources and the promotion of forest preservation. Community-based ecotourism plays a vital role in biodiversity conservation by offering a sustainable response to environmental and climatic challenges. This literature study examines the intricate relationship between ecotourism and ecosystem preservation in Africa, particularly in Kenya, highlighting one of the continent's choices as a model for balancing economic needs. Mass tourism has declined due to its exploitative nature, whereas ecotourism emphasizes sustainable practices. Key elements of successful ecotourism programs include local community involvement and empowerment. Responsible tourism practices, such as low-impact accommodations and environmental education, can reduce the ecological footprint of visitors. Africa's diverse ecosystems, from savannas to rainforests, are home to unique species. Community-based ecotourism not only provides sustainable livelihoods but also encourages the conservation of these ecosystems. By creating economic incentives for biodiversity preservation, local communities become the guardians of their natural heritage.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable ecotourism in Africa reflects a journey that stands in the continent's historical conflicts and aspirations (Apelian N. M., 2013). After the colonial period, Africa started creating sustainable projects and conservation programs that empowered local communities (Zips W., 2007). Those movements, that were evolving after the post-colonialism, brought new challenges and created new jobs' opportunities inside the communities (Ashcroft B., 2013). As guardian of its natural heritage, Africa demonstrated the richness of its continent (DeGeorges P. A., 2009). In this historical and cultural journey, it is possible to go into the history of the continent that has shaped its innovative approach (Zia M. H., 2023). Sustainable ecotourism in Africa stands as a signal step for sustainable development and biodiversity conservation. The success of these initiatives has brought strong partnerships between communities, conservation organizations, and tourism (Western, D., 2015). As the global call for environmental leadership intensifies, the role of ecotourism in Africa becomes increasingly vital for ensuring the coexistence in between humanity and nature (Rutten M., 2004). Ecologically sustainable tourism should be viewed as part of society's policy objectives of sustainable development (Murphy P. E., 2012). Sustainable eco-community based tourism can be achieved only through the active involvement of all the communities and tribes in Africa. Kenya, for instance, is making a lot of efforts to create a sustainable society with a projection of nature and natural resources at the center of the communities (Mogaka H., 2006). Kenya had in fact a gross input in ecotourism initiatives such Porini project in Amboseli park and many others. This paper highlights the numerous projects and initiatives of ecotourism around Africa and their outcomes.

## **1.1 BACKGROUND: AFRICA STRUGGLING FOR INDEPENDENCE DURING THE ERA OF COLONIALISM**

Ecotourism in Africa has been succeeded by the continent's diverse landscapes and richness in cultural heritage (Diamantis D., 1999). Its historical background is connected to colonial and post-colonial periods of time, when Africa was suffering for exploitation and then struggling for independence and sustainable development (Cooper F., 1994).

The history of ecotourism in Africa is marked by colonization where Europeans tried to exploit the continent's resources (Reid R. J., 2020). The consequences of this period of time and the newly introduced methodologies created a more complex relationship between Africa and its ecosystem (Reid R. J., 2020). In fact, environmental degradation and loss in biodiversity are two problems that appeared during this time (Ayyad M. A., 2003). During the post-colonial era, instead, the need for self-determination and sustainable development was growing and seen as a new way of emancipation, especially from the authorities, the African government and African communities (Ibhawoh B., 2014). Sustainable development represented a new way of interacting with Africa's economy and environment (Boley B. B., 2016). The era of post-colonialism marked the beginning of community-based initiatives and strategies, especially with the aim of empowering local indigenous populations which were the most affected by exploitation (Murphree M. W., 2009). The emergence of community based ecotourism as a potential solution became essential for African sustainable economic growth (Boley B. B., 2016). There are few examples: countries like Namibia and Kenya became pioneers in integrating local communities into wildlife management and tourism activities (Van Wijk J., 2015). In this time, ecotourism became essential and a real vehicle for poverty alleviation and infrastructure development (Manyara G., 2007) especially in terms of social empowerment (Kramer R. M., 2000).

Mass tourism, popular during colonialism era, was characterized by the arrival of a high volume of tourists to popular destinations, leading to significant pressure on natural resources, and local communities (Akama J. S., 2004). This was not accepted by locals anymore who were becoming more open to the preservation of natural resources (Akama J. S., 2002). New programs aimed to find an assessment in between conservation goals and the socio-economic needs of communities were created (Barume A. K., 2010). The main point was under the eyes of Indigenous peoples that finally started actively to participate in decision-making, ensuring that their traditions and lands were treated with respect (Barume A. K., 2010). Today, finally, this form of ecotourism is serving as a powerful example of the continent and its actions to sustainable development instead of mass tourism (Ceballos-Lascurain H., 1996). The movement is still expanding in a way that the African continent in the 21st century is a symbol of hope, by demonstrating all the positiveness of the outcomes of cultural preservation and environmental care (Levenson M., 2011).

In order to better understand the principles, challenges, and dynamics of ecotourism, it is essential to clarify the key terms used in the field. The following section will provide definitions and explanations of the main concepts that shape the discourse around ecotourism, sustainability, and community involvement. These terms serve as the foundation for analyzing how ecotourism has evolved and continues to contribute to the development of more responsible and eco-friendly tourism practices across the African continent.

## **1.2 TERMINOLOGY**

This section defines and explains the key terminology central to understanding community-based ecotourism (CBET) within the African context. By clarifying these terms,

the study establishes a shared understanding of the concepts critical to analyzing CBET's development, challenges, and impact across the continent.

**MASS TOURISM:** Mass tourism as a term, came out in the mid-20th century. With the rise of transportation options, mass tourism became in common use particularly in the rich western society (Watts R., 2018). The term "mass" involves an aggregation of individuals (Butcher J., 2020), while the term "mass tourism" specifically came into use to describe a new form of travel, which differed from earlier modes of tourism that were typically reserved for the wealthy elite or adventurous explorers (Butcher J. , 2020.). The concept of mass tourism emerged alongside the post-World War II, when the economic boom allowed more regular people to afford leisure travels around the world (Butcher J., 2020.). This kind of tourism still controls the travel industry worldwide, affecting the status of places and economies everywhere and by generating pollution.

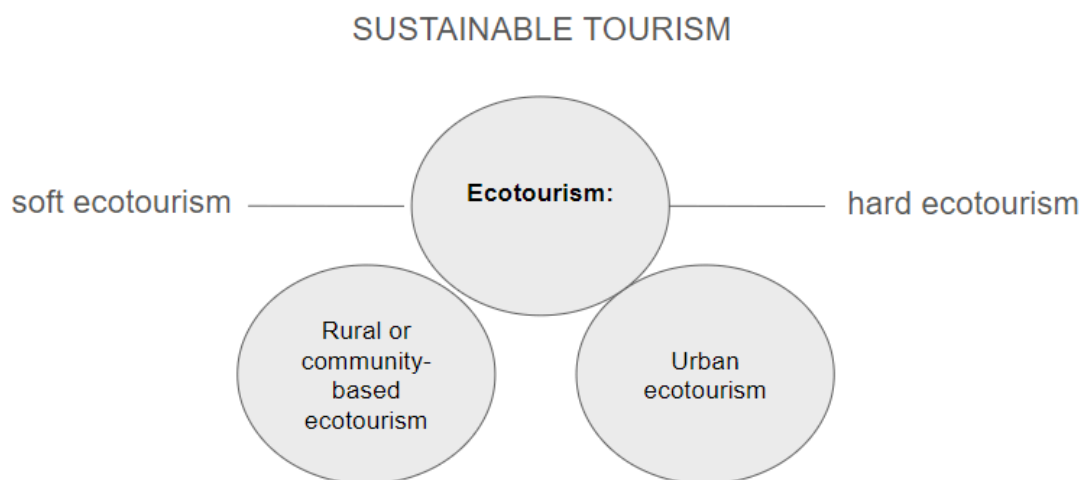
**COMMUNITY BASED-ECOTOURISM:** In 2002, during the International Year of Ecotourism, the term "community-based ecotourism" (CBET) was officially coined. Later, this concept evolved into "sustainable community-based ecotourism" (SCBET), which emphasizes sustainability mostly (Rith S. O., 2010.). The goal of CBET is to promote tourism that safeguards natural resources, and decreases poverty within local communities (Rith S. O., 2010.). CBET encourages locals to take care of their environment instead of using it. It helps them find other ways to make money and in learning how to use their resources wisely for supporting themselves (Stone M. T., 2015). SCBET basically focuses on making money, being fair to everyone, and taking care of the environment. Those types of tourism want to protect nature, considering also the local community wants and needs (Rith, S. O., 2010). It is a sustainable tourism approach that empowers indigenous communities to actively participate and benefit

from tourism activities while preserving and conserving natural and cultural resources/heritage (Mohd Noh A. N., 2020).

**URBAN ECOTOURISM:** Urban ecotourism is a form of tourism that emphasizes the exploration and the appreciation of natural areas, green spaces and cultural heritage of a city (Andari R., 2016). It definitely encourages visitors to connect with nature anytime and learn about the ecosystem of a metropolitan area. Key features include preservation and promotion of green spaces like parks and gardens (Grenier D., 1993.). These green spaces provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and wildlife observation, allowing visitors to escape from the traffic of the city and reconnect with nature directly (Hunold C., 2019.). Urban ecotourism also involves exploration of cultural heritage sites and historical landmarks (Dodds R., 2003.). In this way, visitors have the chance to learn about the cultural history and the traditions of the areas. Urban tourism also promotes sustainable travel practices, such as using public transportation (La Rocca R. A., 2015). It can be also beneficial for supporting local communities and creating employment opportunities: by supporting local businesses and manufactures or handcrafts homemade products (Borup T. 2006).

**RURAL OR COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM:** Rural ecotourism represents a sustainable form of tourism that occurs in rural areas or outside the countryside (Dorobantu M. R., 2012.). This kind of tourism lets people enjoy nature without hurting communities or the environment around them (Butler R. W., 1991). It's getting really popular at tourist spots these days because people want genuine experiences of visited places (like safaris). Activities such as hiking, wildlife safaris, birdwatching, and cultural exchanges with indigenous communities are common in rural ecotourism destinations (Zeppel H., 2006). One of the principles of it is sustainability as the first impact and also minimizing the local ecological footprint by

promoting practices that conserve natural resources, protect biodiversity, and mitigate pollution (Mondal S., 2022). Sustainable tourism projects often include eco-friendly places to stay, like hotels that are good for the environment. They also use renewable energy, manage waste carefully, and make sure people can watch wildlife responsibly. It provides opportunities for local residents to participate in tourism-related activities that contribute to income generation and economic growth in rural areas (Snyman S., 2014). Additionally, community-based ecotourism initiatives often involve partnerships between local stakeholders, conservation organizations, and tour operators, developing a better collaboration and capacity building within the communities that are part of those sustainable programs (Stone M. T., 2015). Rural ecotourism promotes cultural exchange and mutual understanding between visitors and host communities (Stone M. T., 2015). Travelers have the opportunity to learn about traditional lifestyles, indigenous knowledge, and cultural practices, while locals benefit from sharing their heritage and traditions with visitors (Stone M. T., 2015).



**Figure 1. Representing what is ecotourism in its various species**

**HARD ECOTOURISM:** Hard ecotourism focuses on educating and involving visitors in rural natural settings. It provides engaging experiences where visitors actively engage in activities to conserve the ecosystem. Examples include scientific research trips, volunteer work, and habitat restoration projects. The main aim of hard ecotourism is to minimize environmental impact. By actively engaging tourists in conservation efforts, it aims to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the natural world.

**SOFT ECOTOURISM:** Soft ecotourism emphasizes visitor comfort and relaxation. It promotes environmental awareness and conservation. It provides nature-oriented experiences that are focused on relaxation and enjoyment. It has a less focus on physical activities. It includes: guided nature walks, birdwatching tours, and stays at eco-lodges or sustainable resorts. While soft ecotourism aims to minimize environmental impact, it may prioritize visitor satisfaction and comfort.

**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM:** sustainable tourism is taking into consideration all the human activities that can harm nature and avoid them or reduce them. It is a type of tourism that takes into account the full impact of the economic, social and environmental present and future, and addresses the needs of tourists, industry, the environment and local communities (Hall C.M., 2013). Butler (1991) gives a definition of sustainable tourism as follows: *“Sustainable tourism is a tourism which concerns with management of the sustainable development of the natural, built, social and cultural tourism resources of the host community in order to meet the fundamental criteria of promoting their economic well-being, preserving their nature, culture, social life, intra and inter-generational equity of costs and benefits, securing their life sufficiency and satisfying the tourists’ needs”*. Sustainable tourism requires

the collaboration of government and private parties to anticipate the environmental damage before it's too late (Holloway, 2002). Sustainable tourism is about more than just traveling - it's about traveling responsibly. For instance, it's important to support local communities by patronizing locally-owned businesses, respecting their customs and traditions, and contributing positively to their economic well-being (Higgins-Desbiolles F., 2018). Additionally, sustainable tourism considers the social aspects of travel, such as promoting equality and fairness among different generations (Jamal, T., 2014) . Ultimately, sustainable tourism requires collaboration between governments, private businesses, and tourists themselves (Ruhanen L., 2013).

**ECOTOURISM PRINCIPLES by Erlet Carlet:** Ecotourism stands out for its active role in preserving nature and culture, engaging local communities, providing educational experiences, and favoring small-scale operations (El Moslem Badr D. M., 2022). It is made by four different types of principles which will be explained here below.

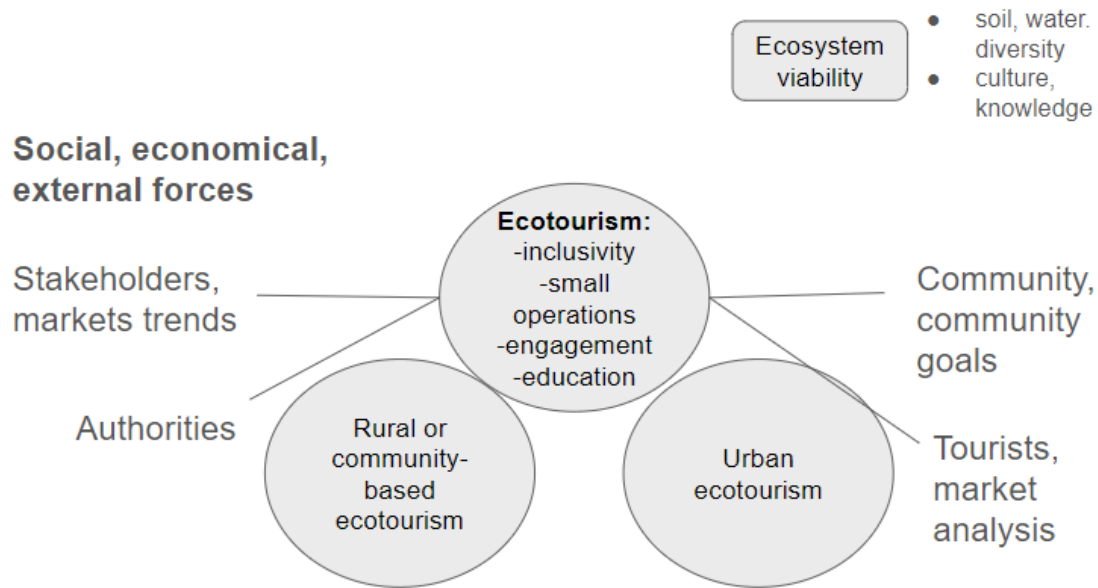
- 1) **Active Engagement:** Unlike conventional tourism, ecotourism is committed to preserving the environment and cultural heritage. This requires active engagement and behavior change from all participants, including authorities, tourists, and governments, to ensure the cleanliness and preservation of the environment.
- 2) **Inclusivity:** Ecotourism believes in locals being part of planning and managing tourism. It's not just about making money; it's about keeping cultures alive and making sure everyone benefits. Instead of leaving locals out, ecotourism makes sure they have a say in what happens in their area.
- 3) **Educational Experiences:** Ecotourism aims to educate visitors about the destinations they explore. It's not solely about entertainment; it's about promoting the



understanding and appreciation for both nature and culture. Ecotourism teaches people about the environment to make them care more and take responsibility for protecting it.

- 4) **Preference for Small-Scale Operations:** Ecotourism values intimacy and sustainability, favoring small-scale experiences over large-scale tourism. Ecotourism started with small groups or individuals who cared about nature. Having fewer people makes the experience more personal and better for the environment. But ecotourism can include different activities as long as they're done in a way that helps the environment.

Erlet Carlet's principles of ecotourism emphasize its active role in preserving nature and culture through key practices such as active engagement, inclusivity, educational experiences, and a preference for small-scale operations. Ecotourism promotes collaboration with local communities, encourages learning and environmental responsibility, and prioritizes sustainability over mass tourism, ensuring a more meaningful and environmentally conscious travel experience.



**Figure 2. Exploring the different sides of ecotourism with its social and external forces.** The map illustrates the multifaceted nature of ecotourism, highlighting its interaction with both social and external forces. On one side, it showcases social dynamics such as community participation, cultural preservation, and socio-economic benefits. On the other side, it explores external influences like government policies, corporate involvement, and environmental regulations. Together, these forces shape the opportunities and challenges of ecotourism, emphasizing its role as a bridge between sustainable development and external pressures.

In this session, we have explored key terms and concepts central to ecotourism, including its principles, practices, and the role it plays in sustainable development. By understanding these terms, such as "sustainable tourism" "community-based tourism," "mass tourism," and "soft and hard ecotourism", I gain a clearer picture of how ecotourism seeks to balance environmental preservation with cultural integrity and economic benefits. The terminology covered here serves as a foundation for further discussions and applications of ecotourism in various contexts.

### **1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This section outlines the primary aim and specific objectives of the study, providing a clear framework for addressing the research problem. The aim establishes the overarching purpose of the study, while the objectives break down this purpose into achievable and measurable goals.

This study aims to explore community-based ecotourism in Africa and in Kenya specifically by looking at how it has evolved over time, its influence on society and culture, and how effective it is at protecting wildlife and nature as well as limitations and further research. There are several objectives to be considered in the preface and as a background. First of all the historical exploration of the community-based ecotourism in the world and in Africa by considering the influence of colonial legacies and post-colonial challenges has been examined. Secondly, the social and cultural impact of it into the society by emphasizing empowerment, inclusivity, and preservation of indigenous practices was also considered in this study. The importance of them in terms of biodiversity conservation, including the protection of endangered species and ecosystems was analyzed as well as the economic empowerment (income generation, employment opportunities and community development projects). Finally, challenges and opportunities of community-based ecotourism were added in the study and analyzed in the discussion.

In conclusion, the three main research questions are:

1. How does ecotourism impact biodiversity conservation in rural Kenya communities?
2. Which ones are the limitations of community-based ecotourism in general?

3. Which are the sustainable actions in ecotourism that can indeed pave the way for a greener future in Africa?

The study aims to address all the problems by considering the principles of ecotourism which are: active engagement of the population and stakeholders as well as authorities, inclusivity, educational experiences and preference of small scale operations.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology of the study is guided by a scientific approach and literature study, aiming to provide a nuanced understanding of community-based ecotourism in Africa, with a specific focus on Kenya. The methodology, again, is structured in around: key components, data collections and data analysis techniques. The study adopts the use of scientific papers and literature to develop in-depth the exploration and the analysis of complex socio-environmental phenomena related to community-based ecotourism, all taken from Google Scholar. The literature for this study was sourced through Google Scholar, with the selection focused on the most cited works appearing at the top of the search results. Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach, focusing on identifying patterns, themes, and insights within the collected data mainly from the research papers in regards of ecotourism practices and theories in Africa and Kenya. The analysis process involved categorizing emerging themes, and interpreting the findings in relation to the research objectives and aim of the thesis in a scientific way. To understand ecotourism's impact on sustainable development in Africa, a scientific approach involves a comprehensive analysis of diverse studies. By selecting five key literatures, each offering unique perspectives on ecotourism in various regions of Africa, in particular Kenya, I could draw well-rounded conclusions about

the effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities within this field. The five different literatures provide a blend of qualitative and quantitative data, case studies, and theoretical frameworks, which together form a holistic view of ecotourism's role on the continent. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participant autonomy, was rigorously adhered to throughout the research. The document accesses multiple knowledge levels and addresses different perspectives thanks to the use of Google Scholar. A final discussion was made to insert my perspective on the work done in the previous sections and to answer the research questions.

## **2.1 PROS AND CONS OF USED METHODOLOGY**

The chosen qualitative research methods were well-suited for exploring the nuanced attitudes, knowledge, and values related to the studied issues. However, these methods also presented challenges, notably time constraints and the need for adaptation since the literature was written from scientists that had to live the experience on field, while I could not. My thesis in fact relies on their documented facts and final results/discussions. Despite these challenges, the data collected through these methods offered valuable insights. Ensuring the reliability of the study posed another set of challenges, particularly regarding the potential for misinterpretation due to cultural differences. Moreover, relying on five different literatures for both Africa and Kenya could raise concerns for readers. By basing my selection primarily on citation counts, I may have overlooked other significant scientific articles on ecotourism in Kenya or Africa. Additionally, many of the authors highlighted in the results section are from non-Western countries, which, while providing valuable perspectives, might inadvertently lead to an imbalanced representation in terms of global academic diversity. Now it is time to see a bit more about the historical context which will be presented in the next sections.

### **3. PREFACE: HISTORY OF ECOTOURISM IN AFRICA**

#### **3.1 HISTORY OF COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM**

The history of community-based ecotourism (CBET) started during the late 20th century when the concept of sustainable tourism emerged as a response to the negative impacts of mass tourism (Borchardt S., 2018). The origins of community involvement in developing tourism however extend far beyond. It says how indigenous and local communities were engaging in sustainable tourism practices much earlier than the era of colonialism or postcolonialism. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a growing need for alternative approaches that could prioritize natural conservation at its first level (Ei T., 2017). This led to the emergence of ecotourism or sustainable tourism as a movement that promotes responsible travel to natural areas (Kiper T., 2013). So, the concept of community-based ecotourism began to take shape in the 1990s. At that time, scholars and experts started recognizing that involving local communities in tourism planning, decision-making, and management could result in fairer and more environmentally friendly decisions (Dangi T. B., 2016). One of the earliest examples of community based ecotourism can in fact be found in Costa Rica, where initiatives such as the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve and Tortuguero National Park involved local communities in the conservation and management of natural areas (Boza M. A., 1993). In Africa for instance, CBET picked up space in countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, and South Africa (Amutabi, M. N., (2019). There, communities living near national parks and wildlife reserves decided to explore multiple ways to utilize the potential of tourism to improve their livelihoods (Stone M. T., 2015). Projects such as the Maasai Mara Conservancies in Kenya and the Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programs in Namibia demonstrate the principles of CBET at its first level of organization.

This, by empowering local communities to manage and benefit from tourism on their lands (Sostenes B., 2020). Over the years, CBET has evolved and diversified, with communities around the world, not only in Africa but also in countries like Brazil, Argentina or even the Philippines and East Asia. CBET helped to increase the power of the communities that could start taking advantage and benefit from the projects (Rutayuga A. B., 2014). Today, it includes a wide range of initiatives, from community-owned lodges and guided tours to cultural homestays and handicraft cooperatives. However, CBET continues to face challenges as well, including issues related to natural resource administration and fair money distribution or poverty (Afenyo-Agbe, E., 2022). Despite those problems, CBET shows that it can lead to good results for society, the economy, and the environment.

### **3.2 HISTORY OF COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM IN AFRICA**

The history of ecotourism in Africa is based on the continent's richness of cultures/communities living in a wild lifestyle (Manwa, H., 2016) **as also stated previously**. The foundation of community based practises emerged and the will to rely on natural practises and of coexisting with nature (Flint R. W., 2012.). Before the era of colonization, Africa was full of communities which were living in harmony with nature and their surroundings (Hughes J. D., 2009). Indigenous societies were already used to sustainable practices in their lifestyle and they knew very well the delicate balance between human exploitation or sustainable activities and the natural environment (McGregor D., 2004). Locals viewed natural resources as vital components of their cultural identity and survival, not as something to be afraid of or escape from.



Figure 3 - Representing the colonialism era in Africa: the presence of white people in the country and their impact on natural resources.





Figure 4 - The African tribe population working hard under the sun by collecting water or nutrients from nature under the influence of westerns.

The advent of colonialism in the 20th century brought an enormous change into the continent. Natural resources started to be exploited (see Figure 3 and 4) for financial benefits and very often the sustainable practices used by the communities were destroyed and not taken into consideration by the westerns. During this time, there was a shift from community-centric conservation to an external control over land and resources ( Kumar, V., 2015). At that time, mass tourism was practiced as well.

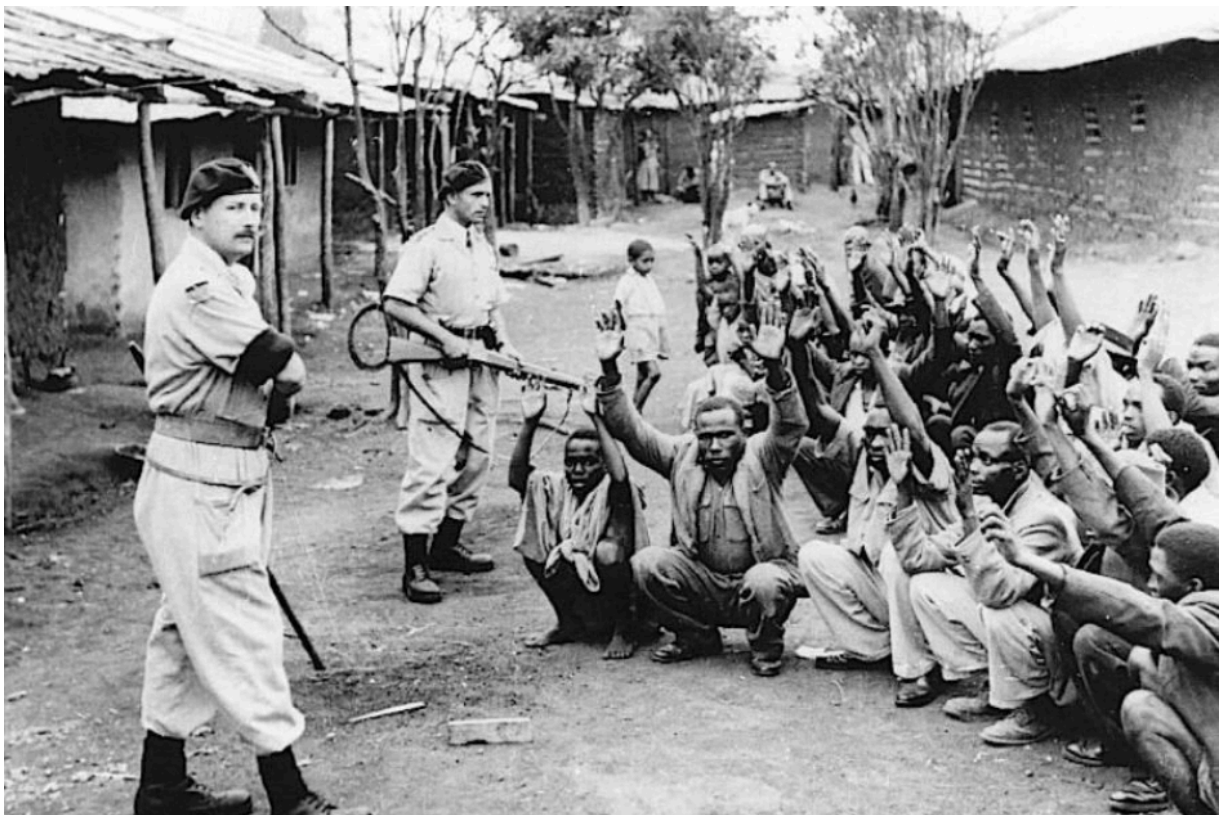
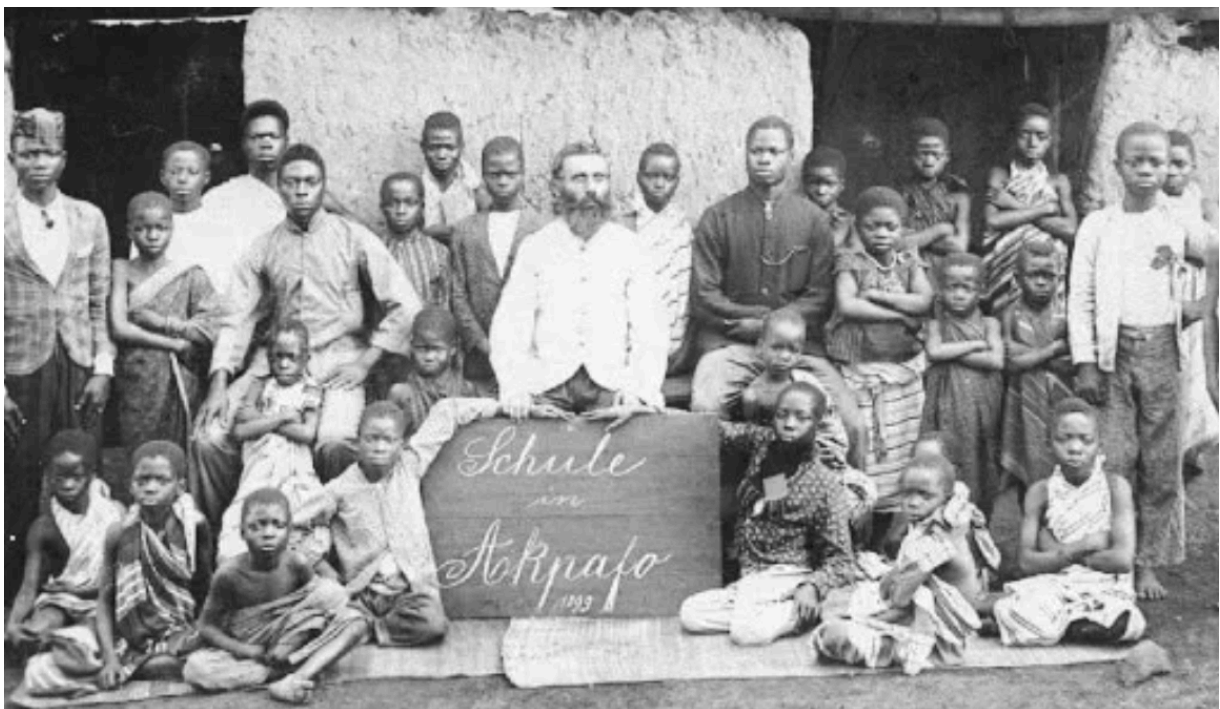


Figure 5 - Westerns commanding Africans with the use of weapons during colonialism era.

Instead, the transition from colonialism to post-colonialism in Africa marks a significant period of change and adaptation (see Figure 5). By the 1960s, most African countries had

become independent, but the period after independence brought new problems. Many nations faced political instability because of the borders created by colonial powers, which did not consider ethnic groups. There were also tensions between different ethnic groups and a lack of experienced leaders. Economically, these countries had weak infrastructures and relied too much on a few export commodities, making it hard to develop. During this time, the post-colonial era, the conservation activities that were not prioritized during the colonialism era, started again to be followed by the local communities and also by westerners (Ramutsindela M., 2004.). Postcolonialism has also had an effect on African education (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6-** Westerns educating Africans with the insert of new schools and educational system.

So, during the late 20th century a global shift happened, in regards to the conservation program of Africa biodiversity after exploitation and mass tourism activities (Frank D. J., 2006). This shift, made by the colonizers themselves, brought to the start of a new era called “ecotourism” as a sustainable alternative to regular-mass tourism. In Africa, this shift coincided with a growing awareness of the value of biodiversity (Dutfield G., 2010). Recognising that there is a need for including sustainable practices and a community-based ecotourism at this point became extremely essential (Stone M. T., 2015). Local communities at this time often started cooperating with the westerns through NGO (non-governmental organization, created by western to invest money in natural resources, educational programs and sustainability issues) whose bodies belonged to the central government in the north and started at managing tourism activities in the south to get new sources of sustainable income (Cundill G., 2019). Community-based ecotourism and NGO aimed not only at environmental conservation but also at empowering local populations economically and socially again. Indigenous knowledge became a precious resource, and cultural traditions were integrated into the tourism experience with westerns, promoting a sense of pride and identity (Xu, J., 2005). Despite its positive aspects, this type of ecotourism faced challenges as well. Inadequate infrastructure, limited access to markets, and more external pressures (Neger C., 2022.). Over time, adaptive strategies were developed and lessons were learned, leading to more sustainable models (Neger C., 2022.) but still problems were emerging on the way. During the last century, community-based ecotourism finally developed throughout the continent from Maasai Mara to the Okavango Delta in the South (Tubey W. C., 2019). These initiatives continued to evolve step by step with an increasing focus on responsible tourism and environmental education.



**Figure 7.** Baobabs in the African landscape.



**Figure 8.** Typical African fauna of the interest of Westerns for safaris.



**Figure 9.** Two little kids are enjoying themselves with locals during a Safari session.



**Figure 10.** Exploring the landscape with local communities and joining food activities: this is what the two women are doing



**Figure 11.** Westerns exploring the way indigenous and locals are watching elephants.



**Figure 12.** Safari watching wild animals activities.



**Figure 13.** Spending time in safari watching activities.



**Figure 14.** Kids enjoying their time with indigenous people: dancing traditional songs.

### 3.3 EXPLOITATION OF LAND RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN AFRICA

**As also stated previously,** indigenous people in Africa have been affected by multiple challenges in regards to their lands rights (Posey D. A., 1996). During the colonialism era, western exploitation of lands inflicted deep wounds on the heartland of the continent. Indigenous communities (see Figure 9-14) experienced various forms of exploitation such as mining, assessment of new economic development projects, building of new infrastructures, various conflicts, grabbing. Land projects faced losses because indigenous that were working hard on the field were treated unfairly and exploited under the Western rules and laws (Trubeck D.M., 2006). The imposition of new rules and laws under colonialism led to unfair treatment and exploitation, resulting in the loss of traditional lands and resources. In recent years, there have been efforts to address these historical injustices and secure land rights for indigenous communities in Africa (Scheidel et al., 2023). Those rights have been often neglected by westerners who were practicing activities such as grabbing (Barume A. K., 2010). Despite the rich cultural and historical aspects that indigenous communities have with their lands (Sissons J., 2005.), securing and maintaining land rights has been a continuous struggle (Ingwani E., 2021). This section examines the difficulties that indigenous communities in Africa encounter regarding land rights. It displays examples from various countries to demonstrate the advancements in pursuing these significant issues (Cotula, L., 2004).



### **3.4 SIX CASE EXAMPLES OF EXPLOITATION OF LAND RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES OF AFRICA**

This section examines six distinct cases highlighting the exploitation of indigenous land rights across various African countries. By exploring these examples, the study aims to illustrate the widespread challenges faced by indigenous communities in retaining control over their ancestral lands amidst pressures from external actors such as governments, corporations, and international organizations. Each case provides insights into the socio-political and economic factors driving land exploitation, the impact on indigenous livelihoods and cultural heritage, and the responses by affected communities. These examples underscore the urgent need for equitable and sustainable land rights policies to protect the rights of indigenous peoples across Africa.

**Kenya:** The Maasai have fought legal battles to secure their land rights, achieving some successes, but they still encounter challenges (Bekure S.,1990). Big farms and government projects like roads have pushed people to live away from their usual grazing areas (Bekure S.,1990.) by causing a loss of ownership of territories used in their agricultural practices.

**Cameroon:** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have collaborated with the Baka to enhance their legal education and support their efforts in defending their land rights (Awuh H. E., 2015). Bala people have in fact faced threats to their lands due to logging, mining and conservation projects (Fa J. E., 2021). Even though indigenous land rights are legally recognized, poor implementation and lack of awareness have sometimes stopped the Baka from fully controlling these territories (Hoyte D. S., 2023).

**Namibia:** The San people, also called Bushmen, in Namibia have been treated unfairly in the past and forced to move because their land was taken away for conservation and diamond mining (Nkwae B.,2006). The Namibian constitution now acknowledges communal land rights, allowing the San people to reclaim some of their ancestral lands (Zips-Mairitsch M., (2013). However, challenges persist, and ongoing efforts by the San and supportive organizations aim to strengthen their land rights and protect their cultural heritage (Zips-MairitschM., 2013).

**Nigeria:** In Nigeria, the Ogoni people have faced issues related to oil extraction on their properties, leading to environmental degradation and loss of livelihoods (Mmom, P., 2015). The fight for land rights is connected to larger worries about fairness in the environment (Chijioke B., 2018) . The Ogoni people have been actively speaking out, going to court, and working with other countries to deal with these problems and ask for compensation for the harm caused by oil drilling (Chijioke B., 2018).

**Tanzania:** The Hadzabe, a hunter-gatherer community in Tanzania, have experienced troubles on their land due to agricultural expansion and conservation initiatives (Moshi H. S., 2019). Legal recognition of their land rights has been limited (Barume A. K., (2010). Efforts by NGOs and legal advocacy groups are securing stronger legal protection for the Hadzabe's land rights and ensuring their participation in decision-making processes (Joachim, L., 2022).

**South Africa:** The Khoisan communities in South Africa, including the Nama and San people, have faced historical loss of their land (Boezak W., 2017) Land restitution initiatives have been implemented to address these historical injustices, but challenges remain in terms of implementation, resource allocation, and for ensuring meaningful participation of indigenous communities in decision-making (Spenceley A., 2021).

Positive decisions have been made in recognizing and protecting the land rights of indigenous people in few African countries in recent years (Odeny M. 2013). Changes in laws, more people knowing about the issues, and indigenous communities being part of decisions are all helping things get better through time (Robyn L.,2002) Collaborative efforts between governments, NGOs, and indigenous representatives are essential for finding sustainable solutions (Bojosi K. N., 2006). Securing land rights for indigenous people in Africa is a complex and multifaceted challenge that requires comprehensive solutions (Barber C. V., 2004) . Examples from Kenya and Cameroon illustrate the ongoing struggles and progress made by indigenous communities (Laird S. A., 2011). By making more people aware, creating fair laws, and working together, Africa can move towards a future where indigenous people own lands securely, keeping their culture alive and helping development in a good way ( Union A., 2009).

### **3.5 SUSTAINABLE MODELS FOR ECOTOURISM IN AFRICA COMMUNITIES**

To continue the discussion, there is currently a demand for responsible travel experiences by westerners. In this way, Africa is experiencing new ways to explore its economy (Palacio C. M., 2010). A unique opportunity is presented by biodiversity, cultural richness and tourism (Kimbu A. N., 2018). This creates a chance to develop sustainable models of ecotourism in local communities (Kimbu A. N., 2018). Principles of conservation, community, economic viability have been explored and are representing a new trend (Kiper T., 2013) to create positive outcomes. This discussion has been going on for a long and sustainable models have been established so that the African nation now and its communities are more sustainable than earlier (Okolie A. C., 2003). In this section, I explore how ecotourism can stimulate sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and the empowerment of indigenous communities across the continent, especially after decades of exploitation and natural loss.

This section serves as a pivotal point in the paper, where I begin to explore how ecotourism can drive sustainable development, foster biodiversity conservation, and empower Indigenous communities across Africa. In particular, the analysis looks at how these sustainable models have emerged after decades of exploitation and natural resource loss. This sets the stage for a deeper investigation into the potential of ecotourism as a tool for both environmental protection and community empowerment, especially in the context of Africa's evolving tourism landscape.

### **3.6 FIVE STUDY CASES AROUND AFRICA**

In the context of Africa's shift toward sustainable tourism, various ecotourism initiatives have emerged across the continent, each showcasing unique approaches to balancing conservation, community development, and economic growth. To provide a deeper understanding of how ecotourism is transforming both the environment and local communities, this section will examine five case studies from different regions of Africa. These examples highlight the diverse ways in which ecotourism has been implemented, offering insight into the successes, challenges, and lessons learned along the way. By exploring these varied approaches, we can better understand how ecotourism contributes to both the preservation of Africa's rich natural heritage and the empowerment of its Indigenous and local populations. These case studies will serve as a foundation for further discussion on the broader impact of ecotourism in Africa, offering practical examples of how sustainable tourism can be a catalyst for long-term positive change.

The first study case that I want to bring into discussion in this chapter is *ecotourism development in Ethiopia: costs and benefits for protected area conservation* (2021) written by **Sintayehu Aynalem Aseres**. Nowadays, people are talking a lot about how important it is to protect nature and wildlife while also elevating the economy of the state. This study looks at

how tourism that focuses on nature (ecotourism) and protecting different species (biodiversity conservation) are connected: more precisely, it uses the Bale Mountains National Park in Ethiopia as an example. Utilizing a quantitative research methodology, the study aimed to assess and quantify the dynamic components of ecotourism. The author himself has gathered information by providing surveys to 389 people who visited the park and by interviewing 20 different people who are involved in other ways. The data were collected between September 2017 and February 2018. The study's results say that the development of ecotourism and conservation of nature can be potentially reinforced by particular tasks. However the practical realization of it can face many challenges. In fact, low levels of education, limited participation, inadequate sustainable financing and environmental pressures can become fundamental issues that a growing population might have to deal with in a changing environment. These challenges highlight the complex relationship between ecotourism and conservation, showing the importance of quick policy actions. The study, moreover, shows the problems that happen when ecotourism and conservation collide, but also how they could work together in a good way with the modern conservation approaches. The study acknowledges the critical role played by stakeholders. *"Starting an ecotourism business is tough for entrepreneurs. They need to know about markets and business basics, but also form good partnerships with local communities, protect nature, and work in challenging conditions. To judge if an ecotourism project can last, the entrepreneur must grasp what makes it successful."* Cit. Parker S., 2005. The study, moreover, expresses appreciation to the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA) and the Management Department of the Bale Mountains National Park for giving the permission to conduct the research within protected areas for sustainable development. The participation of the authorities in this project aimed to unite the knowledge of the stakeholders with the life of the communities.

One of the key strengths of Aseres' study is its balanced perspective on ecotourism. By addressing both the benefits and the costs, the research avoids the overly optimistic view often associated with ecotourism literature. The study highlights how ecotourism contributes to the economic empowerment of local communities while also providing financial support for conservation initiatives. Additionally, it underscores the role of ecotourism in raising awareness about environmental protection, both among locals and visitors. The inclusion of Ethiopian-specific case studies makes the research highly relevant, particularly as the country is striving to utilize its rich biodiversity and cultural heritage for sustainable tourism. Aseres effectively contextualizes the findings within the unique socio-economic and ecological conditions of Ethiopia, which adds depth to the study and makes it a valuable reference for policymakers in similar contexts. Despite its strengths, the study has several limitations that need to be addressed. One significant issue is the reliance on qualitative data without robust quantitative analysis. While qualitative insights are essential for understanding local contexts, the absence of detailed quantitative metrics limits the ability to generalize findings or assess the precise economic and ecological impacts of ecotourism initiatives. For example, the study could have benefited from more empirical data, such as income generated, employment rates, or biodiversity indices, to substantiate its claims. Another limitation lies in the somewhat superficial treatment of the challenges associated with ecotourism. While the study mentions costs such as resource conflicts, environmental degradation, and cultural commodification, these issues are not explored in depth. A more detailed analysis of these challenges, including case-specific examples and their long-term implications, would have provided a fuller picture of the trade-offs involved in ecotourism development.

Another piece of literature and case study is the one written by Marcel M.E.M. Rutten about *partnership in community based ecotourism projects: experience from the Maasai region*,

*Kenya* (2004). The text discusses the importance of collaborations between governing bodies (World Summit of Sustainable Development) and local communities in driving sustainable development. It starts by saying that global economic growth is important, and regional cooperation can help. By improving trade and getting more investment from other countries, everyone can benefit from it. The goal is to reduce poverty and help countries be part of the global economy. The text delves into the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg. At that time, 300 voluntary partnerships were created and seen as positive steps in order to pursue all the sustainability goals set by the summit. The International Year of Ecotourism in 2002 was introduced at that time and was emphasizing the impact of tourism on the environment and local areas. It highlights the significance of voluntary alliances, honoring cultural traditions, securing advantages for natural environments, and conducting transparent planning processes. The focus on ecotourism partnerships is now on local people. Traditional methods are being considered by the Summit, especially community-based tourism local businesses. What matters most is making sure that everyone's knowledge, skills, and sense of ownership are appreciated and respected. Moreover, the paper talks about the pressure that African governments faced to reserve big areas of land for conservation programs for local communities and ecotourism. Now, there is more private involvement than before and stakeholders can often have the final word on projects. Finally, the main subject was to focus on the developments of rural areas, like the Maasai region. For instance the one of establishing national parks. In short, the text highlights the evolution of partnerships in the ecotourism sector. It stresses the importance of transparent, fair, and sustainable collaborations to achieve common objectives. Rutten's study effectively highlights the importance of partnerships in community-based ecotourism, focusing on the collaboration between Maasai communities, private investors, and NGOs. Its case-specific relevance to the Maasai region provides valuable insights into balancing

traditional land-use practices with conservation efforts. The interdisciplinary approach, drawing from anthropology, sociology, and environmental science, enriches the analysis by exploring ecological, social, and economic dimensions. Furthermore, the study critically examines challenges such as power imbalances and benefit-sharing conflicts, offering actionable policy recommendations to enhance equity and sustainability in ecotourism projects. As the study was published in 2004, it reflects conditions of that period and may not account for recent developments in ecotourism and conservation. Its findings are deeply rooted in the Maasai context, limiting their applicability to other regions with different cultural and ecological dynamics. While the study addresses power asymmetries, it could provide a deeper exploration of how these are negotiated in practice. Additionally, the focus on challenges over success stories may overlook positive outcomes that could provide a balanced perspective on the potential of community-based ecotourism initiatives.

The case of Daniel Maghanjo Mwandu about *customary ecological conservation of Mwanda-Marungu pastoral commons in Taita Hills* is also an interesting project to be addressed in this study (2023). The focus of this study was Mwanda-Marungu, nestled in the Taita hills of Kenya. The rural areas of East Africa have been crucial for both their social and economic stability. Although some actions have been taken, there is still a need to see how pastoral communities in East Africa can manage their natural resources and properties. The first author's perspective was especially precious because they had first hand experience as a pastoralist in this region until the age of 24. The study employed ethnographic approaches and semi-open interviews with 193 respondents, conducted between 2019 and 2021, specifically during periods of water and pasture stress in the dry months from July to October. The primary question was to evaluate whether the traditional governance customs in Mwanda-Marungu could serve or not a sustainable model aligning the international Union



for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) concept of other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs). This study is exploring the innovative measures that pastoral communities in the area have been implementing through time, contributing to ecological protection of the area of living. Additionally, this study focuses on pastoralism and emphasizes the importance of recognizing sustainable practices within the field of pastoralism and rural ecotourism as well as its challenges and basic needs. It basically re-evaluates the ideas and highlights the importance of understanding and preserving the socio-environmental dynamics of pastoral communities in East Africa. A common theme which has been recently evaluated under its socio-economical aspects and potentialities.

Maghanjo Mwandu's study on the customary ecological conservation practices in the Mwanda-Marungu pastoral commons in Taita Hills offers valuable insights into how indigenous knowledge and traditional practices contribute to sustainable land management. By focusing on local pastoral communities, the study emphasizes the integration of cultural values and environmental conservation. It highlights the role of customary institutions in preserving biodiversity and ecosystem services, offering a clear example of how indigenous conservation practices can be both effective and adaptable to modern environmental challenges. One limitation of the study is that it primarily focuses on the Mwanda-Marungu region, which may limit its applicability to other pastoral areas in Kenya or beyond. The study also relies heavily on traditional ecological knowledge, which, while valuable, may not fully address contemporary challenges like climate change or market-driven pressures on land use. Additionally, the lack of a comprehensive comparison with modern conservation methods could leave gaps in understanding how customary practices integrate with or compete against formal conservation systems.

The study conducted by Tara Haltfield about *music, musicians and social advocacy: environmental conservation, knowledge-sharing, and cultivating a culture of wisdom in northern Tanzania* (2019) is also a piece of art to be signaled in this paper work by analyzing the core of it. In Tanzania, popular music is playing a role that can be addressed to society's issues or problems such as poverty or lack of education. This article is examining in specific how hip hop music can relate to poverty, drug abuse and other issues among urban youth society of nowadays in a third country environment. What is said is that community-based education is totally missing and this is provoking poverty and ignorance among the youth. Tanzania is in fact recognized as one of the poorest countries in the world by recent studies. Upon this consideration, the aim of the article is to explore how musicians and music interact with communities and engage youth by bringing into the main context environmental activities. Thanks to interviews performed by this research, it was found that poverty, educational background and youth social development was seriously connected to the approach to music. Also, the use of informal conversations and active participation in music production was seen as an important environmental issue from the community. In this article, in fact, it is stated that in Tanzania, musicians use their music to promote environmental issues. For example, in the article, there is a song by Chaca na Nduguzee called "Maji Uhai" that highlights the water crisis in the area. The music video as well, called "DreamLand" is well known in Tanzania's culture with locals and it reminds of a pan-African identity. This was extremely important to be recognized by the author of the paper. In Tanzania, nowadays, there are a lot of musical communities that can promote sustainable development, sense of ownership and partnership. However, the thesis recognizes that music might not solve all the society's problems, but just highlights their impact on civils' life. In fact, a sense of wisdom in transmitting cultural traditions through songs is pushing society to new environmental attitudes and habits especially towards environmental protection. Tara Haltfield's study on

the role of music and musicians in environmental conservation in northern Tanzania is an effective exploration of how cultural expressions can serve as tools for social advocacy. By focusing on musicians as knowledge carriers, the study underscores the power of music to influence community behaviors and raise awareness about environmental issues. It highlights the importance of integrating cultural practices into conservation efforts, demonstrating how music can promote sustainable practices and foster a culture of wisdom and ecological responsibility in local communities. A limitation of Haltfield's study is its narrow focus on music as the primary form of advocacy, which might overlook other equally effective methods of environmental education and activism, such as visual arts or community-based storytelling. Additionally, the study is context-specific to northern Tanzania, which may reduce its applicability to other regions or communities with different cultural practices and environmental challenges. The long-term effectiveness and impact of music-based environmental advocacy are not thoroughly explored, leaving gaps in understanding whether such efforts result in sustained behavioral changes over time.

The last study that I am going to address is *Community Institutional Arrangements for Conservation and Development Through Tourism: An Analysis of the Nkuringo Conservation and Community Development Foundation, Uganda* (2019) by Jockey Baker Nyakaana. The research was conducted in Nteko and Rubuguri parishes in Kisoro District, Uganda, where the foundation operates. Utilizing a case study design, data were collected through observations of conservation and socio-economic activities, oral interviews with key stakeholders, documentary reviews, and focus group discussions with community members. The study aimed to explore the activities, successes, and challenges of NCCDF. The Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) model promotes the collective use and conservation of natural resources by communities with a distinct identity, aiming to provide

economic and social benefits while sustaining biodiversity. It has three main objectives: poverty reduction, natural resource conservation, and good governance, although these goals can sometimes conflict. The model emphasizes not only sustainable resource management but also community development, self-governance, and the creation of local institutions. While financial benefits are significant, non-financial benefits such as community empowerment, biodiversity conservation, and the development of diverse livelihood strategies are crucial for reducing risks and enhancing overall community well-being. The Nkuringo Community Conservation and Development Foundation (NCCDF) was established in 2004 as a company limited by guarantee, owned by all adults residing in Nteko and Rubuguri parishes within Nyabwishenya and Kirundo sub-counties of Kisoro District, Uganda. Governed by a board of 50 directors elected during an Annual General Meeting (AGM), the foundation engages in various activities including handicraft making, nature walks, cultural performances, bird watching, and managing Clouds Mountain Gorilla Lodge in collaboration with Uganda Safari Company. It was founded following the purchase of land by the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) to create a buffer zone aimed at mitigating human-wildlife conflicts by preventing animals from entering local gardens. NCCDF plays a pivotal role in community sensitization on conservation practices, financial management, leadership development, and monitoring and evaluation of activities.

Jockey Baker Nyakaana's study on the Nkuringo Conservation and Community Development Foundation in Uganda provides an in-depth analysis of community-based conservation and development through tourism. The study effectively highlights the role of community institutional arrangements in balancing conservation efforts with the socio-economic development needs of local communities. By focusing on Nkuringo, the research offers a practical example of how local communities can engage with and benefit from tourism, fostering sustainable development while supporting biodiversity conservation. The study also

underscores the importance of community ownership and governance structures in ensuring the success of conservation initiatives. One limitation of Nyakaana's study is its focus on a single case, which may limit the ability to generalize findings to other regions or conservation projects. While the Nkuringo Foundation offers valuable insights, the unique socio-political and environmental context of Uganda may not be easily transferable to other communities or countries with different challenges and governance structures. Additionally, the study does not deeply explore potential conflicts within the community or with external stakeholders, such as tourists or government agencies.

After discussing five key literatures on ecotourism across Africa, it is evident that sustainable tourism offers a viable pathway for balancing conservation efforts with socio-economic growth. Each case study highlights the role of ecotourism in empowering local communities, preserving biodiversity, and promoting economic viability. From the integration of indigenous knowledge to fostering community participation in tourism planning, these studies emphasize the importance of local ownership and responsible resource management. The collective findings underscore the potential of ecotourism to address challenges posed by mass tourism, while reinforcing the significance of small-scale, culturally sensitive operations. Africa's diverse ecosystems and rich cultural heritage are crucial assets in this regard. Yet, achieving long-term success requires policies that support inclusive development, effective resource management, and equitable benefit-sharing among stakeholders. Overall, these literatures demonstrate that with careful planning and sustainable models, ecotourism can become a powerful driver of conservation and development across the continent, paving the way for a greener, more prosperous future for Africa's communities.

#### **4. CASE OF STUDY: KENYA SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION BASED ON ECOTOURISM IN COMMUNITIES BASED IN KENYA**

##### **4.1 GEOGRAPHY OF THE AREA**

To start the discussion of Kenya, I have focused first on its economy and geography.

Kenya is situated in East Africa. It shares its borders with Ethiopia in the north, Somalia in the northeast, Tanzania in the south and Uganda in the west. To the southeast is bounded by the Indian Ocean. Kenya has a different range of landscapes due to its position at the middle of the equator. The rift Valley in the west side goes 6000 kilometers and it extends from Mozambique to the Red Sea. This valley has a lot of lakes, like lake Victoria and Turkana, the world's largest desert lake. On the east side of the Rift Valley, there is Mount Kenya (the second highest mountain in Kenya). Those highlands have rich and fertile soils and a lot of different types of vegetation. In the north, instead, there is more desert landscape. Chalbi desert and Turkana basin are the arid landscapes that populate the area. Nomadic pastoralists inhabit this area and rely on livestock. Along the coast instead Kenya hosts tourists due to its tropical climate and stunning beaches with coral reefs. The vicinity with the ocean allows the country to have a tropical climate all the year-round.

##### **4.2 BACKGROUND OF KENYA'S CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION AND OVERVIEW**

Tourism contributes to about a quarter to Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Korir J., 2013). Most of the tourism revenue, which accounts for around 70%, is coming from national parks and reserves (Korir J., 2013). One of the most sustainable options has been considered to be ecotourism practices since they are ecologically and economically slowly developing the country to a more sustainable lifese (Korir J., 2013). The government aims to sustain the

needs of people by protecting the environment and boosting wildlife resources (Korir J., 2013) for both nowadays and future generations. In sustainable tourism, investors, suppliers and employees are at the heart of big firms' decisions and stakeholders play a crucial role, including investors, government bodies, environmentalists, and local communities (Harris J.M., 2003). In this case, by neglecting their interests, it can harm the sustainability of the tourism industry where indigenous communities often are in the middle of tourism development and government or stakeholders decisions (Agrawal A., 2002). Research in Kenya has shown that most of the conflict can come from indigenous people and the latter when their voices are not listened to by the authorities. The country is facing an economic crisis that requires immediate attention and intervention. However the main source of income still remains the agriculture sector which is giving the best contribution to employment (Alila P. O., 2006.). It is certainly dominating the landscape and its scale is small; the main products are tea, coffee, horticultural products and flowers (Jaffee S., 1994). As stated previously, those plantations are recently facing a lot of challenges due to climate change and global warming (Jaffee S., 1994). Farmers are worried and are called by the local and national government to find other practices to keep their crop "awake". Specifically, they are encouraged to adopt climate-smart agricultural practices to mitigate the impact of climate change on their crops and ensure long-term sustainability (Pretty J., 2008). Another sector is tourism; this has played an important role in Kenya's economy for a few decades (Akama J. S., 2002). Wildlife tourism is one of the most considerable and fast-paced growth economically, often associated with ecotourism and sustainable practices (Korir J., 2013). The combination of a strong agricultural sector and growing tourism industry presents opportunities for economic recovery and sustainable development in the face of the current crisis (Adhikari U., 2015). In the case of ecotourism, its wildlife, its innovation hubs and technologies are the ones that made the country become an attraction for foreigners (Korir J.,

2013). Initially, tourists were coming for hunting, collection of trophies, sport-fishing and other non-sustainable activities that nowadays have been banned. Today, tourists come to see the wild in their habitats and take photographs (Korir, J., 2013). Kenya has recently been positioned as a regional technology and center of communication and innovation because its way of interacting with nature is completely sustainable and recognised by government and stakeholders (Akama J. S., 2002). Finally, the industrial sector is another side of Kenya's economic background. Manufacturing, construction and energy production are controlling the labor inside the country with agriculture (Takase M., 2021). Kenya has been making lots of steps in renewable energy, especially with geothermal and wind power, contributing to the national energy grid (Takase M., 2021) that is taking more space in terms of labor positions for Kenya's population.

#### **4.3 ECONOMIC CHALLENGES**

Kenya has a rich history that has shaped its cultural and political landscape (Kingori, 2021) (Mwebia L., 2023). Economic growth has been driven by various factors, including the role of technology in promoting and supporting industries such as the service sector, as said also previously. However, challenges such as unemployment, income inequality and poverty are still persistent in Kenya. (Kogo B.K., 2021). Informal employment remains prevalent in society and job security is not guaranteed (Chen M. A., 2002). The country remains really vulnerable in terms of fluctuation and global commodity (Eriksen, S. H.,2005). In regards to agriculture instead, the changing of weather is affecting multiple sectors (Kogo B. K., 2021). Some have public debts and this has become a concern towards fiscal consolidation and sustainable debt management (Makau, J., 2018). Persistently addressing corruption and improving governance continue to be crucial priorities for creating a favorable environment for



economic growth in Kenya (Omoteso K., 2014). But let's have a closer look at the economic opportunities.

#### **4.4 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

Kenya's Vision 2030 outlines the country's long-term development goals (Mwenzwa E. M., 2014) emphasizing economic, social, and political transformation (Mwenzwa, E. M., 2014). During the previous years, the government has recognised few factors in terms of economic growth such as the identification of key sectors for investment in infrastructures, affordable housing and healthcare (Macharia J., 2019). For instance, the chapter suggests that implementing the concept of a developed state and incorporating it into Vision 2036 and National Development Plan 11 could be crucial for Kenya to overcome its current development state and achieve greater progress in the future. In a unique net of sustainable sources such as community based-ecotourism, the country's wealth of natural resources, including wildlife, forests and renewable energy potential, can be positioned to influence sustainable practices for economic growth (Owino T.,2016). Ecotourism is part of the new opportunities that the country is exploring recently as a source of income as also stated previously.

#### **4.5 ECOTOURISM AND GREEN INITIATIVES IN KENYA'S NATURAL AREAS**

Kenya's parks cover about 44,000 km<sup>2</sup> or about 8 percent of the country's land area (Sindiga I., 1995). Most of its protected areas are located in the semi-arid and arid zones, which represent 87 percent of the total land. This region experiences low rainfall and very high rates of evaporations. Therefore it cannot support cultivations and other communities practices or pastoralism in all the area (Speranza C. I., 2008); even if agriculture is still the main source of

income. The parks are part of the tourism industries and there are more than two dozen (Korir J., 2013). The most visited protected areas are: Lake Nakuru, Maasai Mara, Amboseli, Nairobi and Tsavo. The visitor capacities for Maasai and Amboseli are currently under park construction and are exceeding infrastructures (Korir J., 2013). Too many lodges are located in the area for the consideration of the authorities (Okunya M. N. Y., 2023). Kenya's commitment to sustainable tourism is another go of a lot of initiatives (Sindiga I., 1999). The country's diversity and the presence of national parks and reserves as stated also above is attracting a lot of visitors coming from the ideas of getting complete and unique wildlife experiences from them (Okello M.M., 2008). In this way, they are able to create benefits from different activities such as: employment opportunities, community projects, and profit-sharing arrangements (Sindiga I. 1999). In particular, eco-tourists prefer using local resources and knowledge, which helps save on imports. This approach also promotes environmentally friendly practices and involves local people in the travel industry (Ikwaye S., 2019). It's appealing to Kenya and other developing countries rich in natural resources but facing rural poverty and limited export income (Cheru F., 1992.).

#### **4.6 ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF ECOTOURISM IN KENYA**

Ecotourism in Kenya has been able to generate employment opportunities in the country (Okech R.N., 2011). Local communities which are situated in the natural attraction have been taking a lot of benefits from it by participating in sustainable tourism as employers. Kenya has basically embraced ecotourism, as for both conservation and economic development (Okech R.N., 2011). This practice is directly generating employment opportunities. Locals, as stated before, are able to find multiple opportunities as guides for instance or in other hospitality roles towards tourists. All the activities are providing a source of income for them.

Moreover, there is an increase in the establishment of small businesses offering crafts, local cuisine, and transportation, further boosting the local economy in a potential way for future generations (Okech R. N., 2008). Secondly, the activity of ecotourism is giving importance to maintaining the natural beauty and biodiversity attraction (Siikamäki P., 2015) which creates spaces for job seekers for sustainable practices. Safeguards for the ecosystem are more and more required from the new system that support not only agriculture (Homewood K., 2009) change to (Bommarco R., 2013). Finally, incomes generated from ecotourism are reinvested a lot in community development projects (Stronza A., 2008). New funds can in fact be relocated in infrastructure improvement, healthcare facilities, education, social welfare programs and much more. Finally, all those investments contribute, at the end, to a total improvement of the quality of life for locals and of the country (Okech T. C., 2017) which is looking forward to extending its richness and jobs.

#### **4.7 SUSTAINABLE ACTIONS FOR A GREENER FUTURE IN KENYA**

Kenya has recently recognised the importance of facing climate change and environmental issues (Okech T. C., 2017). To enhance sustainable practices, and promote a greener future the country has implemented various initiatives (Kalama E., 2007.) (ESOK ect...). One approach that the government has chosen is the community-based conservation programs in line with UNESCO regulations and ecotourism programs (Cockerill K. A., 2020.), (like CBNRM). By in fact involving local communities in the management of natural resources (Ayoo C., 2007), Kenya has ensured that conservation aligns with the needs of people. This creates a sense of ownership and responsibility that can induce the promotion of sustainable resource practices (Atieno L., 2018), Moreover, the country has been investing in renewable energy sources to reduce its carbon footprint (Voumik L. C., 2023). The country has vast

potential for solar, wind, and geothermal energy, and initiatives such as the Lake Turkana Wind Power Project and the Olkaria Geothermal Plant showcase Kenya's commitment to clean energy (Rutich, B., 2015). With a shift towards those new energies, the environment would become cleaner and both urban and rural communities would become more sustainable in their daily practices (Takase M., 2021). In agriculture, for instance, agroforestry and organic farming are gaining a lot of attraction. The new methodologies are ensuring food security and maintaining soil health and preservation of biodiversity (Thrupp L. A., 2000.). The government, along with non-governmental organizations, provides support and education to farmers to adopt these eco-friendly agricultural approaches (Ozor, N., 2021). Kenya is engaged in wildlife conservation efforts and the country is investing in restoration projects (Oduor A. M., 2020) as it should do in line with UNESCO programmes. For instance, anti-poaching methodologies have been taken to conserve iconic species such as elephants and rhinos (Steinhart, E. 1994.). In this way, not only we preserve biodiversity but also support ecotourism, contributing to the final national economy (Korir J., 2013). In conclusion of this chapter, Kenya's commitment to the economic benefits of ecotourism and its sustainable initiatives reflects a holistic approach to development (Himberg N., 2006).

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Here is a comprehensive list of protected areas in Kenya with community-based ecotourism initiatives:

Maasai Mara National Reserve

Amboseli National Park

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

OI Pejeta Conservancy

Tsavo Conservation Area (including Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks)

Samburu National Reserve

Laikipia Plateau (including private conservancies like Loisaba Conservancy, Ol Jogi Conservancy, and Borana Conservancy)

Mara North Conservancy

Mara Naboisho Conservancy

Mara Conservancy (within the Masai Mara National Reserve)

Ol Kinyei Conservancy

Olare Motorogi Conservancy

Ol Chorro Conservancy

Ol Lentille Conservancy

Mount Kenya National Park and Reserve

Aberdare National Park

Lake Nakuru National Park

Hell's Gate National Park

Lake Bogoria National Reserve

Lake Naivasha Crescent Island Game Sanctuary

Lake Naivasha Hell's Gate National Park

Meru National Park

Mount Elgon National Park

Chyulu Hills National Park

Shimba Hills National Reserve

Ruma National Park

Kakamega Forest National Reserve

Arabuko Sokoke Forest Reserve

Watamu Marine National Park and Reserve

Kisite-Mpunguti Marine National Park and Reserve

These protected areas have a different range of ecosystems, from savannah to forests and marine environments. Different ecosystems involve different community-based ecotourism initiatives. All aimed to conserve biodiversity and promote sustainable development. In my project, I am analyzing a few of them through a few literature reviews and further discussion on the findings.

#### **4.8 FIVE STUDY CASES FROM DIFFERENT AUTHORS LOCATED IN KENYA**

In this discussion, I will explore five distinct case studies from various regions in Kenya, each highlighting unique aspects of community-based ecotourism. These examples illustrate the successes, challenges, and lessons learned in implementing ecotourism projects, emphasizing the crucial role of community involvement in achieving long-term sustainability in Kenya.

The study of **Robert M. Runya** about *local perceptions, opportunities and challenges of community-based ecotourism was conducted in Gazi Bay, Kenya (2022)*, focusing on the Gazi village, known for hosting the Ghazi Women Boardwalk ecotourism venture within a mangrove-rich area. Gazi Bay is an area located along the south of Kenya, where mangrove species exist and different types of marine fauna and migratory birds are present. The population of the studies extend not over the 5000 people residing in 500 households. Most of them belong to the Digo ethnic group, known for its fishing techniques. The study involves 102 households selected automatically with a semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to gather data about local perceptions and challenges related to ecotourism and mangrove conservation. Few more interviews and group discussions

complemented the surveys. The study has found that most of the Gazi people are aware of ecotourism activities and understand their potential benefits and environmental effects (81.4%). Many in fact have shown their interest in getting involved in ecotourism activities despite the challenges. Many visits to mangrove areas were reported and with the Gazi Women Boardwalk being the most popular destination. Ecotourism activities helped mangrove conservation despite the problems of managing the area and lack of infrastructures. Through this study it was discovered that most of the population of Gazi village was made by women and this also represented a higher involvement of them in the ecotourism activities. Additionally, a high level of illiteracy among adults highlighted the importance of education initiatives in improving community livelihoods. Overall, the study illuminated the perceptions, opportunities, and challenges related to community-based mangrove ecotourism in Gazi Bay, offering valuable insights for enhancing sustainable development and conservation efforts in the region.

Robert M. Runya's study on community-based ecotourism in Gazi Bay, Kenya, provides a thorough exploration of local perceptions, opportunities, and challenges in ecotourism development. The study's strength lies in its focus on understanding the views of local community members, which is crucial for designing ecotourism projects that are both culturally relevant and environmentally sustainable. By identifying local opportunities for economic benefits and challenges such as resource management and cultural preservation, the research offers a well-rounded perspective on the factors that contribute to the success or failure of community-based ecotourism initiatives. However, the study primarily examines local perceptions, which, while valuable, may not fully capture the broader economic, environmental, or political dynamics that influence ecotourism development. The research could have benefited from more in-depth analysis of external factors, such as government

policies, market trends, or the role of NGOs, that can affect the success and sustainability of community-based ecotourism projects.

Another interesting project is the one studied by Nina Himberg in *Taita Hills*, about *community-based ecotourism as sustainable development* (2006). The study used a qualitative approach by basing its surveys from individuals coming from different social status as a primary source of information. Interviews and meetings, experts interviews, field observations and literature analysis were chosen for data collections. This decision made upon specific studies was able to integrate ecotourism planning with national development plans by involving government and ministries. By recognising the connections in between ministers and coordinators at the national levels allowed the study to be evaluated from both "insiders" and "outsiders." The insider-outsider categorization guides the use of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods. Those two different approaches aimed to empower local communities. In particular, this study combines RRA with PRA with other expert interviews and field observations to structure questionnaires able to explore Taita Hills in Kenya. The communities of Tsavo Parks, like Taita Taveta, have faced a lot of challenges recently, especially feeling alienated from life since the park creation in 1948. Efforts were made in order to protect grazing, hunting activities in Taita Ranches. However, due to water scarcity, livestock difficulties and further economic reasons, the government has decided to let the park remain unused. Ecotourism started to be an initiative and got attention like projects of LUMO, Community Wildlife Sanctuary and Kasigau forest showcasing community involvements. At that time, NGO (non-government organizations) tried to educate the adjacent communities on conservation projects. However, poaching destroyed this hope and became a big challenge for the community. Nina Himberg's study on community-based ecotourism in Taita Hills offers a valuable examination of how ecotourism



can function as a tool for sustainable development. The study highlights the potential of ecotourism to balance environmental conservation with socio-economic development in local communities. Himberg's focus on Taita Hills provides important insights into the integration of community participation and environmental sustainability, demonstrating how local people can be actively involved in both protecting natural resources and benefiting from tourism revenue. The study also emphasizes the importance of culturally sensitive approaches to ensure that ecotourism projects align with local values and needs. The study however does not fully address the challenges of balancing the needs of different stakeholders, such as the government, private sector, and local communities, which could lead to conflicts or inequalities in benefit distribution. Additionally, while the study advocates ecotourism as a sustainable development model, it could provide more detailed analysis on the long-term viability of such initiatives in the face of global economic fluctuations or changing tourist behaviors.

Lucy Atieno realized an interesting project by studying *ecotourism as a metaphor and environmental sustainability in Kenya (2018)*. The research is discussing Kenya's geographical landscape and ecotourism as a real environmental resource. The article is discussing all the efforts that Kenya has faced to implement new regulations for sustainable projects in national parks and reserves. It is leading the rule in community-based conservation considering Africa standards. The text also addresses the problems in relation to the tourism activities themselves, with the inclusion of habitat destruction, wildlife harassment, and environmental degradation. These threats come from several factors such as too many tourists visiting at once, places becoming too crowded, and the pollution caused by tourists' while traveling. The article is giving importance towards ecotourism as well as a metaphor to promote responsible and sustainable traveling. It represents the challenges in

interpreting the concept of ecotourism into practical activities, in particular in balancing environmental management with economic interests. The used methodologies in this sector are different and each of them take into account perspectives on ecotourism that has to be analyzed with data collection. From tourism-related sources to gain a deep understanding of the various interpretations of ecotourism in Kenya, it also examine the examples that in Kenya has Porini ecotourism project in Amboseli, and discusses issues of community involvement, economic benefits, and environmental conservation associated with these initiatives (as stated also previously in many other articles). It addresses the communities' challenges and the economic exploitation so that better management for allowing visitors to come is needed as well as sustainability practices. Lucy Atieno's study on ecotourism as a metaphor for environmental sustainability in Kenya offers an innovative and theoretical perspective on the relationship between tourism and conservation. By analyzing ecotourism through a metaphorical lens, Atieno adds depth to the understanding of how tourism practices can symbolize and promote broader environmental sustainability goals. The study's strength lies in its ability to connect abstract concepts like sustainability to practical outcomes in Kenyan ecotourism, offering a unique way to interpret how tourism can foster environmental consciousness and advocacy. It also critically engages with the cultural and societal implications of ecotourism, exploring how local communities and tourists alike perceive and engage with sustainability. One limitation of Atieno's study is its reliance on metaphorical analysis, which may not provide concrete, empirical evidence of the actual impacts of ecotourism on environmental sustainability. While the metaphorical approach offers theoretical insights, it may lack the practical focus that is often necessary to address specific challenges in the field. Additionally, the study is primarily conceptual and may not fully capture the on-the-ground realities of local communities involved in ecotourism, particularly in terms of economic and social outcomes. It could benefit from more case

studies or empirical data to support the theoretical framework and provide a more grounded understanding of ecotourism's role in Kenya's environmental and socio-economic landscape.

To bring more attention to urban ecotourism, I have addressed in my studies the research made by Roselyne N. Okech about *developing urban ecotourism in Kenya's cities* (2009). Urban ecotourism in Kenya is developed in cities like Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu. In those cities it is completely changing the way the environment is perceived by locals so that tourism becomes an integrated part of the society in all aspects and economic development as well. It is stated that traditional ecotourism focuses more on remote natural areas, while urban ecotourism stays in between natural elements and cultural heritage inside the cities. Urban ecotourism sees cities as places where people can go on vacation. The article focuses on showing off the parks, historical spots, and cool things that belong to the city's culture. The goal is to help the environment, help local businesses, and make people understand and enjoy the city's culture more. Sometimes, these natural areas get used for the constructions of factories and businesses, which is not fair in terms of sustainability. Urban ecotourism offers an alternative to traditional nature-based tourism. An example can be that while ecotourism in faraway places needs a lot of transportation, urban ecotourism uses public transportations like buses and trains. This helps cut down on pollution and keeps the environment healthier. As the article says, education and interpretation play a crucial role in urban ecotourism by raising awareness about environmental conservation and promoting sustainable behaviors among visitors. In conclusion, urban ecotourism presents a sustainable approach to tourism development in Kenya's cities, offering opportunities to conserve natural areas, support local economies, and promote cultural appreciation. Roselyne N. Okech's study on developing urban ecotourism in Kenya's cities provides an insightful exploration of how ecotourism can be integrated into urban environments. The

study's strength lies in its innovative approach to urban ecotourism, which is often overlooked in favor of more traditional rural-based models. Okech effectively highlights the potential for cities to contribute to conservation efforts while promoting sustainable tourism practices. By examining the unique challenges and opportunities of urban ecotourism, the study opens up new avenues for tourism development in Kenya's rapidly growing urban centers, where environmental sustainability can be paired with economic and social benefits. One limitation of Okech's study is its focus on urban areas, which may not fully address the specific needs and dynamics of rural or protected areas where ecotourism is more commonly practiced. The challenges of urban ecotourism, such as congestion, pollution, and land-use conflicts, may not be fully explored in terms of how they could affect the long-term sustainability of ecotourism projects. Additionally, the study could benefit from more empirical data and case studies to illustrate the practical application of urban ecotourism initiatives and the extent to which they have been successful in Kenya's cities. This would help provide a clearer understanding of the feasibility and impact of such a project.

Finally, as the last project comes into discussion is the one of Leanard Otworu Juma about, *community based tourism and sustainable development of rural regions in Kenya; a perception of the citizenry* (2019). The article looks at whether Community-Based Tourism (CBT) can work well in rural areas in Kenya and how people feel about it. Since Kenya has a growing population and relies a lot on farming, it's important to find ways to develop sustainably and manage resources better to reduce poverty. The study involved asking 395 people about what they know and how they think CBT affects them. The study found that tourism can collaborate with agriculture and farming in rural areas. Since natural resources and Community-Based Tourism (CBT) can both help local people and make rural areas a better place, the article is stating how much authorities can help in this process, which means

providing technical help and investing more in people and infrastructure to get the most out of CBT. When focusing on helping marginalized communities, realizing their potential can bring many social and economic benefits, which is seen as a significant step by non-governmental organizations. The role of NGOs and civil society in development and poverty reduction. In summary, the study shows that people see Community-Based Tourism (CBT) as a good way to develop sustainably in rural areas of Kenya. It highlights the importance of finding better ways to reduce limitations, share benefits, and reduce environmental impacts. With strong partnerships, CBT has the potential to help everyone grow together, protect natural resources, and make life better for rural communities. Leonard Otworu Juma's study on community-based tourism and sustainable development in rural Kenya provides a comprehensive analysis of how tourism can contribute to the socio-economic development of rural communities. The study effectively highlights the importance of local involvement in tourism initiatives and how this can lead to more sustainable development outcomes. Juma's focus on the perceptions of local citizens gives valuable insights into community attitudes toward tourism, making the research grounded in the realities of rural populations. By addressing both the opportunities and challenges faced by rural communities, the study provides a balanced perspective on the role of tourism in enhancing livelihoods while conserving natural resources. The study however could benefit from more detailed empirical data on the direct economic impact of tourism in these rural areas, such as income levels, employment rates, or improvements in infrastructure. Additionally, the study could further explore potential conflicts between tourism development and traditional land use practices, which may not always align with the goals of ecotourism and sustainability. The broader influence of government policies and external stakeholders is also not extensively examined, which could provide a more holistic understanding of the factors affecting rural tourism development.

The five case studies from Kenya demonstrate the transformative potential of community-based ecotourism in fostering sustainable development and environmental conservation. These examples highlight how empowering local communities through ownership, capacity building, and equitable benefit-sharing can lead to improved livelihoods, cultural preservation, and the protection of natural resources. However, challenges such as resource conflicts, inadequate funding, and capacity limitations underscore the need for continuous support, innovative approaches, and strong partnerships among stakeholders. By addressing these challenges and building on the successes, community-based ecotourism in Kenya can serve as a model for sustainable tourism practices worldwide.

#### 4.9 A LITTLE INSIGHT: PORINI ECOTOURISM PROJECT IN AMBOSELI NATIONAL PARK IN KENYA



**Figure 15.** Westerners dialoguing with Africans tribe of Amboseli National Park in Kenya.

To continue the discussion, the Porini Ecotourism Project in Amboseli National Park, Kenya, is an example of sustainable tourism (see Figure 15), giving a model that balances conservation within community development (Okech R. N., 2011). Located in the heart of Amboseli, known for its breathtaking views of Mount Kilimanjaro and diverse wildlife, the Porini project shows the principles of ecotourism by prioritizing environmental conservation, community empowerment, and cultural preservation (Mugo T. N., 2021.) as all the other projects studied above, in the case of Kenya. One of the key pillars of the Porini project is its commitment to conservation programs (Atieno, L., 2018). In fact, by operating in partnership

with local communities and conservation organizations, Porini aims to minimize its ecological footprint while maximizing the protection of Amboseli's fragile ecosystems (Levy, S. E., 2009). Through responsible tourism practices such as low-impact accommodations, wildlife monitoring, and habitat restoration initiatives, the project preserves the park's biodiversity for future generations (Okech R. N., 2011). Moreover, the Porini project prioritizes the empowerment of local communities living around Amboseli National Park (Mugo T. N., 2021.). By involving community members in various aspects of ecotourism, including employment opportunities, skills development, and revenue-sharing projects, Porini ensures that the benefits of tourism are distributed equitably among residents of the area. This not only improves livelihoods but also increases a sense of ownership over natural resources. Additionally, Porini places a strong emphasis on cultural preservation, recognizing the rich heritage and traditions of the Maasai people who call Amboseli their "home" for decades (Lewis A. E., 2015). Through cultural tourism experiences such as guided bush walks, visits to Maasai villages, and storytelling sessions with local elders, visitors have the opportunity to engage with and learn from the indigenous communities in a sustainable way. This not only provides valuable insights into Maasai culture but also generates alternative sources of income for community members that before were in search of job opportunities inside the community. The success of the Porini Ecotourism Project in Amboseli National Park creates a potential for ecotourism to drive sustainable development in Kenya (Atieno, L., 2018). As ecotourism continues to gain traction as a viable alternative to traditional tourism models, initiatives like Porini serve as inspiring examples of how tourism can be harnessed as a tool for a global positive change.



## 5. DISCUSSION ON CBT AND URBAN ECOTOURISM IN KENYA

The articles present a light on various aspects of sustainable tourism development in Kenya. Particularly by focusing on CBT: community based ecotourism in both urban and rural areas. Their aim is to potentiate and give a new value to the tourism itself, so that a balance in between environmental conservation, economic and cultural development/conservation can ensure the well-being of local communities in both rural and urban areas (da Silva J. M. C., 2020). Urban ecotourism, for sure, as discussed in one of the articles, is presenting a promise for sustainable tourism in Kenya's cities like Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu (Okech R. N., 2009). Those cities, nowadays, are at the center of the attention in relation to economic growth and potential sustainability experiences. By in fact controlling natural elements and by preserving cultural heritage within these urban areas, ecotourism initiatives can offer unique tourism experiences while minimizing environmental impact (King, D. A., 1996). What is meant by that is that by protecting natural spaces in cities helps the environment of the city to boost its economy and attract more tourists even in abandoned spaces that become areas where nature can be replanted and constructed as a real form of exhibition (Higgs E., 2003). For urban ecotourism in fact to work well has to be planned carefully and managed properly. Community-based tourism projects in rural Kenya, instead, empower locals to earn money from it (Manyara G., 2007). By letting community members (like Masai Mara or Mwanda-Marungu Pastoral Communities) have a say in how things are run and making sure everyone gets a fair share of the benefits, CBT can help everyone in rural areas live better, for sure. But there are challenges like not enough roads or electricity, some people getting more benefits than others (Wasike W. S., 2001), and harming the environment which has to be considered as well. These problems need everyone's help –both the government and businesses—to work together in a legal way. Urban ecotourism and rural, community-based

tourism offer hope for sustainable development in Africa and specifically in Kenya, as analyzed in this project by me. They highlight the need to blend conservation, economic growth, and cultural protection in tourism projects (Tubey W., 2020.). But for them to work well and last long, it is important to think about a few important things. Both city ecotourism and community tourism need everyone to work together—locals, government, non-profit groups, and businesses (Stone M. T., 2015). When everyone gets involved and works together, they can solve problems and make tourism better for everyone while also taking care of the environment. If stakeholders' interests are not taken into consideration, they can ruin the sustainability of the tourism industry (Getz D., 2012). So, in order for wildlife-based tourism to be sustainable and preserve the natural ecological systems, the interests of all stakeholders must be considered at their first level (Korir J., 2013).

It's important to help local communities and tourism businesses learn and grow so that sustainable tourism can work well (Hall D. R., 2000). This means giving them training and support in things like how to run hotels or restaurants, how to take care of the environment, and how to preserve their culture. When communities have the right skills and knowledge, they can manage tourism in a way that helps everyone and makes the most out of it. Taking care of the environment is really important in both urban ecotourism and community-based tourism. It is important to focus on things like reducing waste, saving resources, and building things in a way that doesn't harm nature. It's also important to teach both tourists and locals about how they can help protect the environment. Preserving and promoting local cultures and traditions is vital for the success of sustainable tourism initiatives. Community-based tourism should prioritize the involvement of indigenous communities in tourism activities and respect their cultural practices and heritage (Dangi T. B., 2016.). By showing authentic cultural experiences, tourism can contribute to cultural preservation while providing meaningful experiences for visitors (Kastenholz E., 2022).

Making sure that everyone gets a fair share of the money made from tourism is really important for getting support from the community (Ryan C.. 2002). Local people should have a say in how tourism grows and get their fair cut of the money it brings in. This can help make life better for everyone in the community by reducing poverty, making things fairer, and bringing people together. In conclusion, sustainable tourism development in Kenya requires a holistic approach that integrates environmental, economic, and social considerations (Bricker, K. S., 2013) for having more income. Both urban ecotourism and community-based tourism offer promising pathways for achieving these goals, but they require concerted efforts from all stakeholders to address challenges and maximize benefits (Bricker, K. S., 2013). By prioritizing environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and equitable benefits distribution, Kenya can harness the potential of tourism to drive inclusive and sustainable development.

Kenya and its multifaceted approach towards sustainability and economic value towards the environment and tourism, this was what I have studied during this path specifically (Juma L. O., 2019). The discussion now evolves on economic benefits of ecotourism and all the sustainable actions that can be taken for a greener future of the country. Ecotourism has emerged as a significant contributor to Kenya's economy, empowering local employment opportunities and stimulating economic growth in rural areas (Irandu, E. M., 2014). As evidenced by studies conducted in regions such as Gazi Bay and Taita Hills, ecotourism initiatives have generated employment for locals, particularly women, in various roles ranging from guides to hospitality staff. This infusion of employment opportunities not only improves livelihoods but also enhances community resilience against economic uncertainties, especially during these harsh times (Bryceson D. F., 1999). Furthermore, ecotourism reinforces conservation efforts by highlighting the economic value of preserving natural ecosystems

around the protected area (Stronza A. L., 2019). Tourism activities are centered around wildlife and natural attractions, so they can safeguard biodiversity and promote sustainable resource management (Ceballos-Lascurain H., 1996). This symbiotic relationship between tourism and conservation not only preserves Kenya's natural and cultural heritage but also sustains all the industries that rely on ecosystem services, such as agriculture or other indigenous practices (Mugwima, B. M., 2018.). Moreover, the revenues generated from ecotourism are often reinvested in community development projects, addressing infrastructure gaps and enhancing social welfare (Snyman S., 2014). This reinvestment certainly empowers communities to actively participate in more sustainable activities. Additionally, ecotourism initiatives promote cultural preservation by presenting indigenous traditions and crafts, thus enriching the tourism experience while preserving local heritage (Halder, S., 2021).

Kenya's dedication to sustainability goes beyond just ecotourism. It encompasses a range of initiatives focused on addressing climate change and fostering environmental supervision as said multiple times in this project (Himberg N., 2006). The government's emphasis on community-based conservation programs highlights the importance of local involvement in natural resource management (Wasonga, V. O., 2010). By giving communities the power to lead conservation efforts, Kenya makes sure that sustainability matches what locals want and need (Jones B., 2013). This helps people feel responsible for taking care of the environment. In parallel, Kenya has made significant efforts in renewable energy adoption, utilizing its abundant natural resources to transition towards a cleaner, more sustainable energy mix (Owino T., 2016). Investments in solar, wind, and geothermal energy projects not only reduce carbon emissions but also enhance energy security and resilience against external shocks (Owino T.,2016). By prioritizing renewable energy development, Kenya sets a

precedent for green growth, positioning itself as a regional leader in sustainable energy solutions compared to all Africa. Additionally, sustainable agricultural practices such as agroforestry and organic farming contribute to food security and ecosystem resilience (Mulugeta G., 2014). By promoting biodiversity conservation and soil health, these practices mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity while preserving natural habitats (Mulugeta G., 2014.). Government support and educational initiatives further facilitate the adoption of eco-friendly farming techniques, ensuring the long-term sustainability of Kenya's agricultural sector (Mulugeta G., 2014). Additionally, Kenya is working hard to protect its wildlife. This helps keep the animals safe and also makes tourists want to visit more. By stopping poaching and fixing habitats, Kenya's national parks become even better for ecotourism (Himberg, N. 2006). When Kenya invests in protecting wildlife, it shows they care about the environment and helps the tourism industry make more money. While community-based tourism holds immense potential for sustainable development, it also presents several challenges that warrant attention (Giampiccioli A., 2017). Moreover, environmental sustainability remains a key concern in ecotourism development, particularly in mitigating the impacts of climate change and minimizing habitat degradation (Kiper, T., 2013.). Balancing economic interests with environmental conservation requires innovative solutions and adaptive management strategies to promote responsible tourism practices (Plummer, R., 2009). Education and awareness campaigns play a crucial role in fostering sustainable behaviors among tourists and locals alike, emphasizing the importance of preserving natural resources for future generations (Budeanu, A. (2007). To sum up, ecotourism in Kenya is a way of growing sustainably. It combines making money, protecting nature, and being fair to everyone. Kenya can become a top destination for responsible tourism by using its natural beauty and coming up with new ideas. But to make

community-based tourism work, Kenya needs to keep working hard to make sure it helps rural areas in a good way.

## **5.1 DOWNSIDES AND LIMITATIONS OF CBE**

Community-based ecotourism (CBE) offers significant benefits, but it also faces several challenges and limitations (LEAK M. L., 2017). One key issue is the dependency on tourism revenue, which makes communities vulnerable to external factors such as political instability, global economic downturns, or events like pandemics (Khan N., 2020). For example, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted ecotourism-dependent communities worldwide, including those in Kenya, leaving them without a stable income source (Yin C., 2021). Another challenge is the risk of environmental degradation. Poorly managed ecotourism can harm natural ecosystems through habitat destruction, increased waste, and wildlife disturbances (Shannon G., 2017). When tourist numbers exceed the carrying capacity of a given area, the resulting environmental impact can undermine conservation goals and reduce the appeal of the destination itself (GhulamRabbany M., 2013). Communities involved in ecotourism often lack the skills, education, or resources needed to manage projects effectively (Garrod B., 2003). Without adequate training, they may struggle with essential tasks such as marketing, financial management, and maintaining service quality. This lack of capacity leaves them vulnerable to exploitation by external actors, who may dominate the operations and profits of ecotourism initiatives (Duffy R., 2013). Cultural erosion is another downside of CBE (Stronza A., 2008). The commercialization of local traditions and customs to meet tourist expectations can lead to the dilution or misrepresentation of cultural practices. For instance, traditional ceremonies or rituals may be staged or altered for tourists, diminishing their authenticity and significance to the local community (MacLeod N., 2006). Internal power dynamics and

conflicts can also hinder the success of ecotourism projects. In some cases, pre-existing social hierarchies lead to disputes over decision-making and revenue-sharing, creating divisions within the community.

External influences further complicate CBE projects. Investors, organizations, or tour operators often dominate these initiatives, leaving local communities with minimal control or financial benefits (Goodwin H., 2002). Additionally, remote locations and poor infrastructure can limit market access, reducing tourist numbers and the economic potential of ecotourism in some regions (Neger C., 2022). To address these challenges, CBE requires strong partnerships, capacity-building programs, fair governance structures, and careful management (Stella A., 2006). By addressing these limitations, community-based ecotourism can achieve its goals of environmental conservation and improved livelihoods, ensuring long-term sustainability and equitable benefits for all stakeholders involved (Gumede T. K., 2021).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Some people in the community now have jobs in ecotourism, like working at lodges. This has changed how people make a living, with fewer people doing farming or hunting. But it's not clear if everyone in the community is making more money because of these changes. Moreover, the analysis of ecotourism participation is giving importance to the difference in between forms of engagement and others. For instance direct employment can create economic growth which would automatically reduce the local pressure on natural resources. Recognizing these subtleties is crucial for developing specific strategies that maximize the positive economic outcomes and impact of ecotourism while reducing its adverse effects on the environment. Furthermore, this study has highlighted the broader implications of

ecotourism beyond economic considerations. For instance, the social and cultural aspects of participating in ecotourism, such as building new relationships and empowering local communities, have significant implications for sustainability. Ecotourism can encourage local communities to take ownership and responsibility for their natural resources without asking authorities and potentially promoting broader conservation initiatives and raising environmental consciousness among them. In conclusion, this thesis helps me better understand how ecotourism, economic growth, and environmental sustainability interact inside indigenous and non communities and their individuals. Moving forward, it is necessary to take a comprehensive approach, considering not just economic but also social, cultural, and environmental factors when planning and carrying out ecotourism projects. Only by combining these efforts can I fully utilize ecotourism's potential to promote sustainable development and conservation.

Sustainable actions in ecotourism can indeed prepare the way for a greener future in Africa, including Kenya. To prove this, we can look at real-world examples where ecotourism has positively impacted both the environment and local communities. In places like the Maasai Mara in Kenya, ecotourism has led to better conservation of wildlife and habitats while also providing livelihoods for local communities. These successes demonstrate that when ecotourism is designed with sustainability at its core, it helps protect biodiversity, reduce environmental footprints, and foster a sense of stewardship among local populations. To improve ecotourism and make it more efficient, several key areas need attention. First, community involvement must be deepened. Local communities should not only participate in ecotourism but should also have a voice in decision-making processes. Second, there is a need for better infrastructure and technology to monitor environmental impacts, allowing operators to adapt and minimize damage. Finally, partnerships between governments, private



sectors, and NGOs should be strengthened to ensure long-term funding, clear regulations, and capacity-building for local communities. New policies should support the shift toward local community ownership by recognizing indigenous and local groups as key stakeholders in the ecotourism sector. For instance, laws that allow local communities to manage their natural resources independently, without needing constant government oversight, could be introduced. These policies could focus on providing training, education, and financial incentives for local communities, empowering them to take charge of ecotourism projects. At the same time, regulations should ensure that revenues generated from ecotourism are shared fairly among local populations, and that the environmental and cultural heritage of the regions is preserved for future generations. By framing policies around these principles, governments can help make ecotourism a true vehicle for both economic development and environmental preservation. This model, where local communities are the custodians of their natural resources, not only reduces their dependence on external authorities but also strengthens their ability to maintain sustainable tourism practices long into the future.

## **6.1 FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS FOR ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA**

Future research can develop deeper into socio-economic impacts of urban and community based ecotourism on local communities in Kenyan cities. This type of research can create the opportunities for income and employment as well socio-cultural changes. It is really important to conduct research for environmental sustainability in Kenya. This includes also the ecological footprint of tourist activities and of conservation measures. By assessing long-term impacts and making new strategies work, the effect on negative impacts for biodiversity and natural resources can be easily alleviated.

Further research should also explore the ways to enhance community participation in those processes and empowerment in ecotourism activities. Moreover, understanding the factors that can facilitate the engagement and collaboration between the communities and the tourism developers (NGO; authorities, government, stakeholders...) is critical. Research on governance structure and policy frameworks also related to this subject can enhance Kenya's government policies. This includes for instance: planning mechanism, promoting sustainable development and institutional arrangements. Comparative studies with other regions or countries can also provide good insights to the authorities for the best governance and innovations/integration of environmental social considerations. Investing in market demand trends and visitor preferences is also essential.

Understanding the motivation behind and the stakeholders' wills, is also important to retain travelers environmentally conscious of their choices about motivations, expectations, preferences etc...

Last but not least, the role that technology and innovation in enhancing sustainability issues are playing is essential and a promising area for future research. This could include studies on the adoption of digital platforms for destination marketing, the use of renewable energy and green technologies in tourism operations, and the integration of virtual reality and augmented reality experiences into ecotourism offerings. By pursuing all of these research directions, stakeholders can gain a lot and a comprehensive understanding of the real situation and opportunities and challenges associated with ecotourism in Kenya.

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## 7.1 PICTURE AND FIGURE REFERENCE LIST

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2. Mazzuoli, S. (2024). Image *exploring the strength, weaknesses of the community-based ecotourism* (Graph)
3. Resource Africa (2021). Image *representing the colonialism era in Africa: the presence of white people in the country and their impact on natural resources.* resources (Figure)  
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4. Jared, M.D. (2014.) Image *the African tribe population working hard under the sun by collecting water or nutrients from nature under the influence of westerns* (Figure).  
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