

Human Activities and Sustainability of Tourist Sites

Machira J. Mwangi

PhD Student Entrepreneurship, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology,
Email: majmwa2009@yahoo.com

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Abstract

Tourism in the east African countries, specifically in Kenya is the 2nd largest source of foreign exchange following agriculture. The main tourist attractions are Mt Kenya and Kilimanjaro climbing and viewing, national parks and game reserves, sceneries like the Great Rift Valley, not to forget the beaches along the Indian Ocean and other places within the region. These sites that attract the tourist are losing the features that make them unresistible to visit. The study sought to determine the effect of human activities on the sustainability of tourist sites in Kenya. It is a case study of central Kenya comprising of Mt. Kenya West forest reserves, National Parks and any other sites within the region. A sample of 156 respondents was selected from foresters, County administration, community leaders and tour guides using Stratified random sampling method. Research instruments were; questionnaires, face to face discussion and observation done by walking across the ranges inside Narumoru, Kahurura, and Gathiuru forest and mostly the two routes used by tourist up Mt Kenya mountain. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

The study found out that there was a negative impact on the Mt. Kenya West game reserves and national parks due to illegal poaching and logging, charcoal burning, clearing the forest for farming and settlement. There is the dumping of litter on the route to the mountain. This study recommended there be teamwork between all the beneficiaries of this trade; neighboring communities, government, hotels owner and even the guides in conserving the environment, wildlife and ecosystem. Laws and regulations to check the use of plastic containers papers should be introduced with harsh penalties for the defaulters. Neighboring communities should be considered in the revenue collected from tourism.

Keywords; Ecosystem, Sustainability, Poaching, Teamwork, Dumping

Introduction

Visitors or tourist Sites, as they are sometimes termed, are a vital component of any country's tourism industry, as they stimulate travel to destinations (Cooper et al., 2005) and engender customer satisfaction (Gun, 1994). Most tourists visit places because of attraction by the sites. Attractions sites can be categorized into 1, Historico-cultural which includes Religious sites, Museums, Galleries, historic sites, Interpretative heritage sites, and Multi-

faceted historic site², Environmental which comprises of Animal attractions ,Parks ,gardens and County parks³,Entertainment,sites comprising of Leisure and recreation complexes, Amusement parks, Theme parks ,Themed retail outlets and Workplace industrial visit centers. Dewhurst (1996).Yet, in spite of the widespread acceptance of their significance, it is noteworthy that the attractions sector of the tourism industry remain under-researched, mis-understood, mismanaged and not maintained, (prideaux, 2003). It in this context that this paper overall aim is to analyze whether human activities affects the Sustainability of tourist sites. A tourist site is a permanently established excursion destination, a primary purpose of which is to allow public access for entertainment ,interest or education ;rather than being primarily a retail outlet or a venue for sporting ,theatrical or film performances .it must be open to the public without prior booking ,for published periods each year, and should be capable of attracting day visitors or tourists as well as local residents .in addition ,the attraction must be a single business ,under a single management and must be receiving revenue directly from the visitors. (ETC.2001)

Tourism can be a major contributor to national income and prosperity. Its main economic impact include those on expenditure, income and employment as well as tax generation and foreign currency earnings(Muler,2001).In addition to this there is a range of favorable and unfavorable externality impacts(indirect consequences)of tourism. In some countries economic impacts are particularly strong, representing approximately 50% of the economic activity, e.g. Bermuda and the Bahamas islands(Conlin and Baum,1995).In Kenya ,tourism is the second biggest contributor to the economy from agriculture and the largest foreign exchange earning sector of the economy(Kenya county profile 2010)

Tourism development often requires substantial investment for infrastructure and various countries have different attitudes to the public/private sector mix in tourism development, because of the complexity of favorable and unfavorable impacts associated with tourism development, cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is often used to offer a rational basis for decision making when the state undertake investment in tourism project and their maintainability.(Beech and Chadwick2005) According to the American Committee for International Wildlife Protection, 'during the past 2000 years, about 106 forms (species and subspecies) have been lost due to extinction and approximately two thirds of these losses have occurred since the mid-19th century'. Primary factors in the depletion of the words fauna has been the civilized man, operating directly through excessive commercial hunting or, more disastrously, indirectly through invading or destroying natural habitats and placing firearms in the hands of people who previously were without them.

Animal protection must begin with the protection of the habitat. The area where animals feed, rest and breed. Naturally this involves the preservation of much, besides the animal population itself, including conservation of vegetation cover and soil. Conservation, of wildlife dates back to medieval times in England. According to Encyclopedia Britannica volume 18 page 83, 'large stretches of the country side were subject to a special law of the forests, intended to preserve the beasts of the chase, for the Kings hunting'. It is during these periods that royal forests in England were at their greatest extent and there was continuous conflict between the King who wished to maintain or extend the area under forest law and his subjects who wished to reduce it.

Pressure of population gradually eroded the actual area of afforested land, asserting reduced the area covered by trees and under wood also hunting and poaching reduced the animal population. The charter of forests of A.D. 1217 where forest concessions was won by barons

from King John in Magna Carta and up to A.D. 1238 forest laws were administered by Justice of the Forest.

This was never ratified until 1933, when the International Conference for the Protection of the Fauna and Flora of Africa took place and the British Government took charge in the name of the protection of the Fauna and Flora of the Empire. As a result of this in January 14, 1936 measures were taken which saw the formation of protected areas for animals, regulation of the killing of animals, trafficking of game trophies and prohibition of certain methods of killing and capturing animals Britannica encyclopedia Vol 23 page 512-513), Benton (1988).

The environment; more so the forests features top in the thinking as they provide the canopy that covers the geosphere and thereby enabling the smooth process of biological diversity. Earth's resources from which we derive our livelihood exist in fixed and limited quantities, against a dynamic, demography. It is in this respect that sustainable utilization of the forest calls for understanding of the variables that may pose as hindrance to sustainable conservation of forest and wildlife. According to MC Kibben, (1998), "the most pressing environmental problem is over population". Accelerated human population is accompanied by a wide range of environmental problems, which are linked to political, economic and social problems and solutions. Forest covers just over 4 billion hectares which is about 30% of the earth's surface these are the closed and open ventures forests United Nations (1992).

In relation to the world population of approximately 6 billion people, which is estimated double in the next century, no reason as to why the concept sustainable conservation of forests and wildlife should not be a concern to man. The human domination of Earth's ecosystem through alteration of the Earth's land surface, atmosphere, water and biology may lead to a catastrophic yield where the future generation livelihood is compromised. Animals and bird species are aesthetically pleasing; they compose the Fauna and Flora of our heritage. They not only provide game meat to human beings but are also educationally useful and income generating through tourism. Human interference with the wildlife habitat has become a straining factor leading to near extinction of large mammals. According to Bashe, (1986) "Medieval times, laws were laid down to protect royal hunting grounds and particular species of animals, the violators of these laws were customarily penalized. This serves as an indicator that sustainable usage or conservation of wildlife had a space in the culture of people and this is probably the reason we have wildlife today. Modern man has over exploited the animal habitat and killing animals for trophies beyond sustainable yield. Animals such as elephants and rhinos are at the verge of extinction. "The population of Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to triple in the next fifty years, with Nigeria alone having a population of 339 million people. Kenya's population is also expected to reach 50 million people by the year 2020 (UN Projections 1992).

In Australia, most protected areas are managed by the state and territory governments, reflecting land management responsibilities under the Australian constitution and the federal system of government. which has approximately 60 categories of protected areas encompassing an estimated 6755 terrestrial and 192 marine sites(environment Australia,2002).As many protected areas experience increase tourism demand pressures, and use becomes more intense, the potential for conflict between maintain environmental quality, maximizing recreational accessibility and satisfaction, and promoting economic development is enhanced(e.g. Pigram and Jenkins,1999,DISR,2001).The current trend for tourism and recreational developments in protected areas is one of the major threats to the sustainability of national parks identified by environmental groups such as national parks

associations. The state is not a cohesive entity when it comes to protected area management and tourist use of resources.

Problem Statement

According to Stone (1992) over exploitation of the perennial rivers, which all originate in the mountains causes severe problems in the drier lowlands, where pastoral systems, game reserves and national parks important to tourism depend on these water resources. Ewasong'iro River, which flows north from Mt. Kenya in the drier lowlands, has been diminished by 50% in the dry season during the last 30 years. The country has been hemorrhaging between 4 to 5 percent of its wildlife every year. Since 1985 the nation has lost one-third of its wildlife according to the government's Department of Remote Sensing and Resource Surveys (DRSRS). This is largely due to habitat loss, but also human-animal conflicts, including poaching and poisoning have played a role—one that is increasing.

Studies shows that only 10 of the 18 glaciers that covered Mount Kenya's summit a century ago remain, leaving less than one third of the previous ice cover. The ice on Mount Kenya has also become thinner. Emerging evidence suggests the decline has accelerated since the 1970s (UNEP 2009 By 2010, Lewis Glacier, the largest on Mt. Kenya had decreased by 90% in its volume (area) since 1934. This is common with all mountains within east Africa, and they are the main attraction of tourist. It is from this scenario that there is need of studying in depth the effect of human activities in the sustainability of tourist sites.

Literature review

There is need of Governments the world over to intervene and take control of the management of the attractive sites. There are various theories that explain this importance of why and how it(government) should intervene.

Pluralism theory has a strong focus on the role of interest (pressure)groups in public policy processes which is also something of a strength. Such a focus directs our attention for example, to the extent and nature of political organizations in politics, to interest group competition, and to the ways in which groups coalesce around a particular policy issue. However, pluralist perspective of decision and policy-making processes generally fails to explain adequately how governments and the wider state actually work. pluralists based accounts are inadequate, for example, in explaining the adoption of a particular economic theories or ideas (and hence ideology) to drive political actions, the power of multinationals corporations in developing countries, (Heywood 1997)

Elite theory is based on the premise that power (political or economic) is concentrated in a minority of the population. Public policy, then, reflects the values and preferences of governing elite (Anderson, 1984) the theory argues that power may be gained from one or more sources, including technical expertise. He argued that society is divided into the few who have power and the many that do not. The few who govern are not typical of the masses that are governed. Elites are drawn disproportionately from the upper socioeconomic strata of society; Elites share a consensus on the basic values of the social systems and preservation of the system. Public policy does not reflect demands of masses but rather the prevailing values of the elites, who influence masses more than masses influences elites.

According to Department of remote sensing and resource survey (2009) Kenya's lions have been declining for decades. Biologists point to two reasons: loss of habitat and poisoning. Although illegal, the pesticide Furadan is easily found in Kenya and is an apt lion-killer. If livestock is killed by a lion, herders will often add Furadan to the corpses which poisons

anything that feeds on it, including hyenas, jackals, vultures, and of course its target, lions. KWS says that the lion population has been dropped by 100 cats every year for the last seven years. The situation has become so bad, that recently KWS stated that the king of cats may have only 20 years left in Kenya if drastic action isn't taken.

Environmentalists are pointing fingers at policies that allow business interests to use exorbitant amounts of water, such as the flower trade for Holland. They say such policies are essentially gambling away water resources for Kenya's people, livestock, and wildlife for commercial flower production. Environmentalist, social activist, and Nobel Peace prize winner, Wangari Maathai, said that the government's laissez faire attitude toward the Mau Forest Complex, which has been highly degraded and deforested, is a good example of mismanagement leading directly to rainfall decline and the lack of drought-resistant water sources.

In a nation where drought is common—though rarely so severe—many are saying the government should have been more prepared. Global trends—both El Nino and global warming—are also said to be exacerbating the drought which by all reports is the worse 2000.

Whatever the multiplicity of causes, one has to wonder, at a time when the Kenyan government has not even been able to feed its own people, can and should the government do anything for suffering wildlife? Conservation legend in Africa, Richard Leakey, has warned that poaching may be occurring at an unprecedented scale. Worryingly, he has said that he believes some in KWS may be involved in the poaching.

A senior warden at KWS told that East African Standard that he agreed with Leakey.

"Our rangers have become demoralized and demotivated; it is true they are abetting the wildlife poaching especially the big mammals like elephants and the rhino."

The hardship brought on by the drought may also be making new poachers. Some believe that Masaai herdsmen, who have lost all their cattle to the drought, are turning to poaching simply to make money to put food on the table.

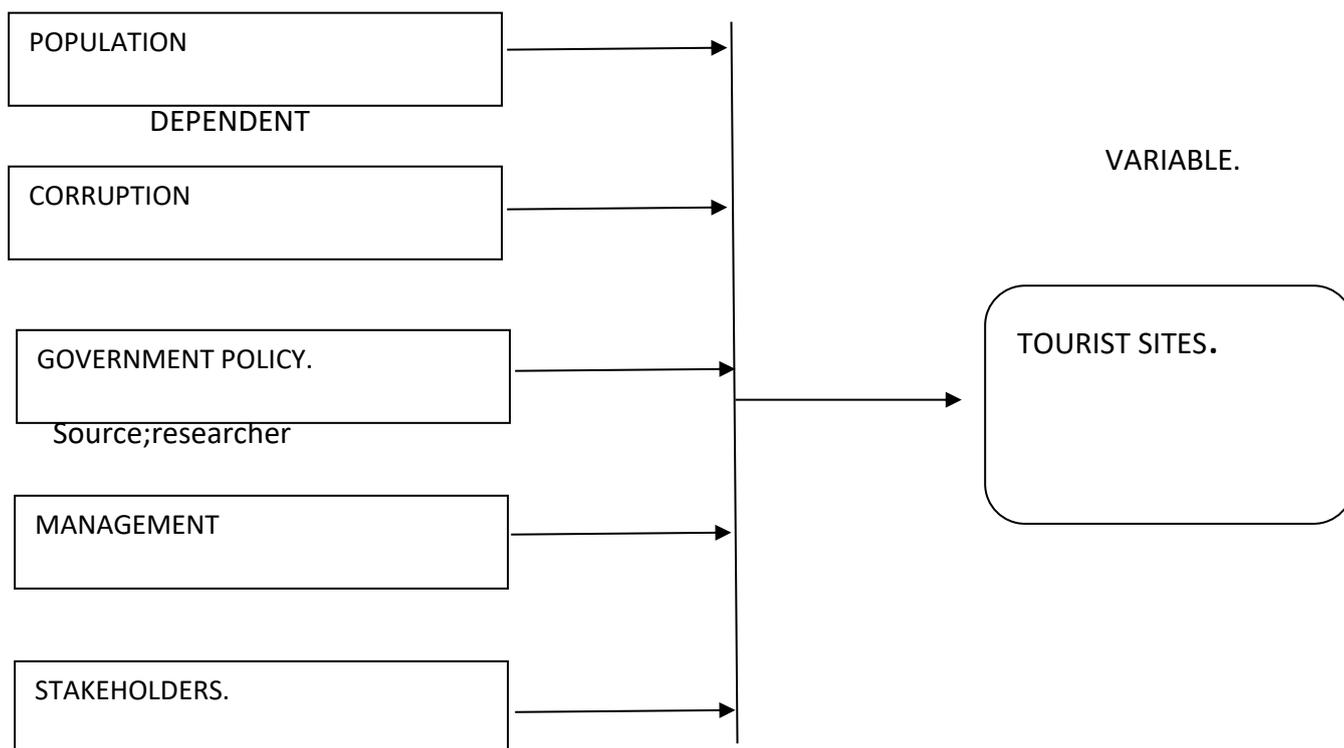
"The herdsmen, faced with starvation and extreme poverty cannot resist the extra shilling that they are being enticed with by Chinese nationals working in a nearby construction project," writes Iregi Mwenja on his Bush meat Blog at Wildlife Direct. "It is evident from the crime scene and the carcass that these elephants were killed using spears in a struggle that must have required several men to execute. These are not the ivory poachers we have known for decades who mostly use automatic weapons to kill elephants."

Usually poachers kill an elephant solely for its ivory tusks. However, recent reports state that some poachers are also cutting off the feet and trunks of elephants to be sold as bush meat—a rarity, but perhaps a sign of the desperate hunger in some regions.

Confining animals within park boundaries to protect them apparently has changed the ecology of many Kenyan parks. For example, elephants need a lot of space and move around a great deal. When confined, they consume the woody vegetation in that space, changing the biodiversity of the vegetation. The woody habitats become grassland habitats, threatening species that thrive in woody areas, such as giraffe, lesser kudu and impala. The researchers said that wildlife populations throughout Kenya—inside and outside the national parks—declined by 40 percent from 1977 to 1997. However, the overall decline is marked by considerable fluctuations.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework.

Independent



Methodology

This research used exploratory research design. This study presents the results of a research investigation on the influences of human activities in Mt. Kenya West forest reserve and National Park. A sample of 126 respondents was selected. This was composed of foresters, Provincial administration, Tour guides and community leaders. Stratified random sampling method was used in selecting the respondent. The study utilized three research instruments namely; questionnaires, observation schedule and focus group discussion. The questionnaires were administered to foresters, provincial administrators of the area and community leaders. The focus group discussion was conducted in a public hall. The observation was done by walking across the ranges inside Narumoru forest, Kahurura forest and Gathiuru forest. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and bar graphs.

A combination of stratified sampling and Simple random sampling was used to draw the sample of the study since the population was non-homogeneous and it ensured that every respondent had equal chance of being selected (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999) the population was divided into strata’s (Foresters, County administrators, Community leaders, Tour guides and wild life ministry representatives, from which simple random sampling was used to draw a representative sample of 126 members.ie 21 from each strata. Questionnaires were formulated and administered through face to face interview based on the objective of the study to allow the interviewees to have enough ideas and thoughts to be recorded. This was a kind of an enquiry that was aimed at finding out in details the way respondents viewed the subject matter. A pilot study was conducted to test validity and reliability directed to one member each from all the six strata’s.

Data collected was analyzed using qualitative (content) and quantitative after having been checked for completeness and accuracy. Statistical analysis tools like percentages, tables, pie charts and frequencies were used to summarize the findings of the study.

Findings And Conclusion

The study found out that due to overpopulation, there was tremendous amount of negative impact on the Mt. Kenya West forest reserve due to illegal logging, charcoal burning and Excision of the forest to allow room for farm lands and settlement. This was triggered by increase in human population around Mt. Kenya West causing pressure to demand for food security. Most of the respondents were on the opinion that population growth have contributed to a great extent to the extinction of wildlife and forest which are part of the tourist sites. This is due to conflict of interest between the wild life and humans.

The management of the whole setup of tourism sector was found to be wanting. the respondents had the view that there was no central control point which can claim to be in charge of the tourism sector and so that fragmentation of command has made control of the system not effective.

Policies that are in use sometimes are not in harmony with the real things that happen on the ground. The people that formulate those policies should familiarize themselves with the real magnitude of the problem by visiting the sites in person to get first degree reality. This study recommended that among others, environmental conservation both for the wildlife and the forest should involve the communities and government holistically.

Stakeholders were also said to be part of the problem even though they benefitted from the sector. Tour guides were said to have a don't care attitude and even encouraging tourist to litter the path that they follow to climb the mountain. This has rendered the previous used path to be an eye sour and no longer appealing to visitors. They are also the group that goes into the forest to hunt for wild animal in disguise that they are on tour guide episode.

Corruption was also found to be a menace to the whole problem. This problem cuts across the board .it involve everybody in this sector. This hinders the objectives of every group involved in the sector not to be realized. Because everybody seems to be maximizing on individual terms not bothered by the consequence of his/her deeds and the end repercussion. The most notable group concerning this vice are those who are in charge of the various bodies that are given mandate to manage the sector .corruption was noted to be a big problem if this sector has to safe our tourist industry.

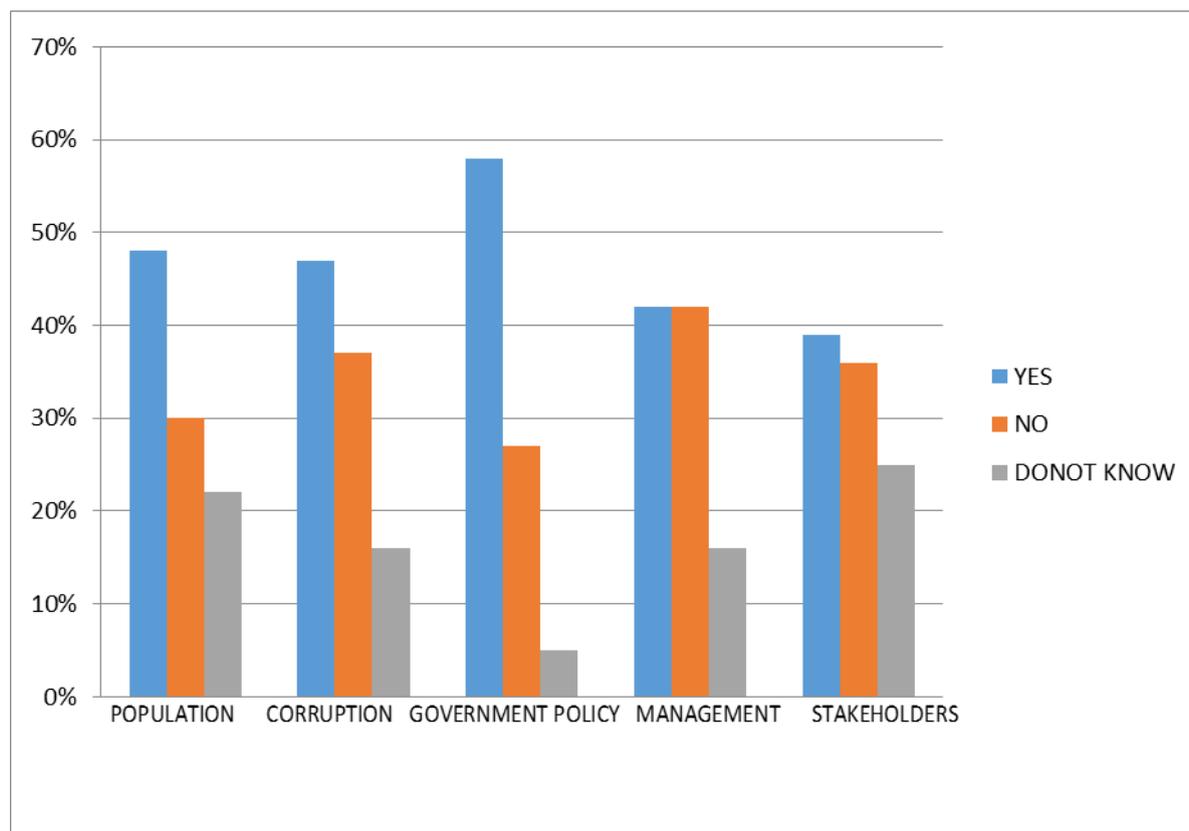


Figure2. Findings

Source; researcher 2014.

Conclusion

The study found that there is a negative correlation between human activities and sustainability of tourist sites. Human activities has to a greater extent affected the tourist sector but though there is the role played by the international community(industrialized world) through the emission of gasses which have contributed to a great extent the extinction of the snow in Mt Kenya. The study found that where there was joint corroboration of managing the site between all the stake holders, the sites were well managed because there was suspicion between the interested group and thus it turned up to be a blessing to the sites. There is need of every stakeholder to take his part in reversing the trend and the speed tourist site are being destroyed with a lot of impunity ie

Wildlife, forests, rivers, coast line, snow in Mt Kenya and even our culture which also contribute to entice tourist coming in Kenya.

The finding agrees with those of Western (2009).”The combination of local involvement with national parks makes a very good fit,” he said It is true that without the beautiful sites Kenya's tourism sector will collapses—and so does the nation’s ecosystems, already strained as they are. While these large animals draw people from around the world to take their photos, they, also affect the landscape in subtle—and not so subtle—ways. But there is another important attribute to Kenya's wildlife: it seems impossible to escape the pride Kenyans feel toward their beautiful landscapes and stunning species. It's not just show for tourists; it's something less tangible, but perhaps far more important. Sustainability of the sites.

Recommendations

Any loss or mismanagement of any tourist attraction is likely to mean the loss of tourism revenues that are so vitally important to the economies of Kenya and any country that finds itself in such a situation.

Policies will need to be addressed on how to adapt to the impacts, at the same time a promote economic development without increasing awareness to dangers of using inefficient technologies like bee keeping modern methods of bee keeping should be enhanced to prevent forest fires..

There is need of a sensitization of the tour guides and even the communities(stakeholders) neighboring the parks of the benefit and importance of co-existing with their heritage which will be a win win situation for both human and animals and this involve the conservation of even forest. This can also bring some positive results.

The local community should be enjoined in any decision concerning the conservation of tourist sites for the creation of teamwork and synergy necessary to save the eco system. This will solve the problem of corruption which is a hindrance to the conservation

The developed world which is home to 90% of the industries in the world which push them to using nuclear energy should think beyond nuclear age and put emphasis to another type of energy that is friendly to the environment if at all the environment is to be sustained. Thus the policy of protecting the tourist sites should be looked afresh to be relevant to the situation being experienced.

Africa which contributes very little to global greenhouse gas emissions considered a key driver of climate change, but it is highly vulnerable to the impacts should be compensated either in monetary terms or other means to shield them from the loss they undergo which they have nothing to about it although this will not solve the problem of sustainability of the sites

Littering of the sites by the tourist also should be controlled by educating the tourist and the stakeholders of the benefit of preserving the sites.

The Kenyan government needs to set policies to share the profits of ecotourism with local communities so that they can reap the economic benefits of protecting the wildlife and ecosystems within and surrounding the national parks

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