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Community Perception and Attitudes Towards Tourism Development in Rimoi National Reserve, Kenya

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Abstract

Tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve has been expanding, yet little research has examined how local community perceive its impacts and how these perceptions influence their attitudes towards tourism development. This study aims to address this gap by examining the perceptions and attitudes of residents towards tourism development in the reserve. The study employed a Mixed Methods approach within a pragmatic paradigm and a convergent research design. The target population consisted of 548 household heads in the Rimoi community. The sample size included 231 household heads selected using systematic random sampling, and 10 resident youths selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected using survey questionnaire and a focus group discussion. Quantitative data was analyzed using frequency tables, percentages, means, standard deviations, and hierarchical multiple linear regression, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. Quantitative findings showed that tourism's economic ($\beta = .148, p < .05$) and socio-cultural impacts ($\beta = .452, p < .05$) positively influence community attitudes toward tourism development. However, environmental impacts have a negative effect ($\beta = -.126, p < .05$). Qualitative findings revealed that residents had mixed attitudes toward tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve, appreciating its economic benefits like job creation but fearing environmental harm and unequal gains. While some embraced cultural exchange, others were concerned about tradition loss and social inequalities. The study concludes that economic, environmental and social-cultural tourism impacts have a significant impact on community attitudes towards tourism development. The study recommends the development of sustainable tourism initiatives that prioritize economic benefits and community well-being, implementation of environmental conservation programs, and promotion of socio-cultural exchange and understanding between tourists and the local community. The results of this study have invaluable implications for policy and tourism management and practice in the development of targeted interventions for sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Rimoi National Reserve, Tourism Impacts, Community Attitudes, Sustainable Tourism, Socio-Cultural Exchange

INTRODUCTION

Tourism, as a global industry, has risen to prominence rapidly, offering economic growth, inclusive development, and environmental conservation (Sharpley, 2014; UNWTO, 2010; WTTC, 2018). To combat poverty, promote gender equality, promote economic growth, and lessen inequality, it is essential to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, 2010; WTTC, 2018). However, the expansion of tourism brings both benefits and challenges to destination communities. While it revitalizes economies, enhances the quality of life, and preserves natural and cultural resources, it also triggers socio-cultural, economic, and environmental transformations, necessitating a delicate balance to ensure sustainable development (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Doh, 2010).

The success of tourism development activities is significantly influenced by the views of the community (Egresi & Kara, 2018; Algassim et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019). Good opinions among locals, which are frequently generated by engaged community involvement, support tourist development by encouraging cooperation, acceptance, and teamwork (Jaafar et al., 2017; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019; MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019; Tosun & Timothy, 2003). On the other hand, unfavorable sentiments could undermine the potential advantages of tourism by causing opposition, disputes, and hostile greetings to visitors (Gursoy et al., 2018; Handinejad et al., 2019). To ensure the fair distribution of costs and benefits and promote sustainable tourism development, effective tourism planning and management necessitate a nuanced understanding of community perceptions and active engagement (Cardoso & Silva, 2018; Choi & Jang, 2023; Moghavvemi et al., 2017; Moyo & Tichaawa, 2017).

For tourism to flourish sustainably, locals' opinions about the effects of tourism and their attitudes toward its advancement are crucial (Sharpley, 2002; UNWTO, 2010; WTTC, 2018). Despite tourism's potential as a driver of economic and environmental development, its effects on host communities are complex and context-dependent. While some communities benefit from increased income and employment, others face challenges such as environmental degradation, cultural shifts, and social displacement. Understanding local residents' perceptions is crucial for sustainable tourism planning. However, existing research has largely focused on well-established tourist destinations, leaving gaps in knowledge about emerging nature-based tourism sites. In particular, the perceptions and attitudes of the Rimoi National Reserve community remain underexplored (Kemboi, 2018). This study aims to address this gap by examining how economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts influence local attitudes toward tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve.

Problem Statement

In Rimoi National Reserve, like many other destinations in developing countries, local communities have been largely excluded from pre-implementation assessments of their attitudes towards tourism development and its subsequent phases (MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019; Gannon et al., 2021). Despite the pivotal role of community support in sustaining tourism, there exists a gap in understanding how tourism impacts shape the attitudes of gateway communities, particularly in Rimoi National Reserve.

Furthermore, neither before nor after the reserve's rebranding in 2015, there is any indication of previous research analyzing the effects of tourism on the gateway community's perceptions regarding tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve (Kemboi, 2018; MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019). This lack of research knowledge is particularly concerning for Rimoi National Reserve, an emerging and understudied nature-based destination.

General Objective

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of tourism impacts on the community attitudes towards tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve, Kenya.

Specific Objectives of the Study

This research study was guided by the following three specific objectives:

- i. To determine the effect of tourism economic impacts on community attitudes towards tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve, Kenya.
- ii. To analyze the effect of tourism environmental impacts on community attitudes towards tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve, Kenya.
- iii. To examine the effect of tourism's socio-cultural impacts on community attitudes towards tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve, Kenya.

Research Question

In what ways do residents perceive tourism impacts, and how do these perceptions shape their attitudes towards tourism development?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested;

H₀₁: Tourism economic impacts have no effect on community attitudes towards tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve, Kenya.

H₀₂: Tourism environmental impacts have no effect on community attitudes towards tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve, Kenya.

H₀₃: Tourism socio-cultural impacts have no effect on community attitudes towards tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve, Kenya.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by Social Exchange Theory (SET), first formulated by Homans in 1962. SET is widely applied in tourism research to explain how communities evaluate the costs and benefits of tourism development. The theory posits that individuals and groups engage in social interactions based on a perceived balance between rewards and costs (Gannon et al., 2021). In the context of tourism, residents are more likely to support tourism initiatives when they perceive the benefits, such as economic gains, improved infrastructure, and cultural exchange, to outweigh the associated costs, including environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and economic inequality (Sharpley, 2014; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015).

In this study, SET was applied to analyze how residents of Rimoi National Reserve assess tourism impacts and how these perceptions shape their attitudes towards tourism development. The theory provided a framework for understanding the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural dimensions of tourism and their influence on community

support. From an economic perspective, SET helped to assess whether residents perceived tourism as a source of financial benefits, such as employment opportunities and business growth, or whether they viewed it as contributing to income inequality and increased costs of living (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019). Environmentally, the theory was useful in evaluating whether the community perceived tourism as beneficial to conservation efforts or as a contributor to environmental degradation through pollution and habitat destruction (Boley et al., 2014). Additionally, SET provided insights into the socio-cultural impacts of tourism, explaining how interactions with tourists influence local traditions, social norms, and cultural identity. Positive socio-cultural exchanges, such as the promotion of cultural heritage and global networking, could enhance community support, whereas perceived cultural dilution or exploitation could lead to resistance (Moghavvemi et al., 2017).

Despite criticisms that SET places significant emphasis on economic rationality, its ability to account for both tangible and intangible exchanges make it a robust framework for this study (Sharpley, 2014; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). By applying SET, this research provides a structured understanding of how residents of Rimoi National Reserve perceive and respond to tourism development, offering insights into the factors influencing their support or opposition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Community Attitudes towards Tourism development

The concept of attitudes in tourism development pertains to individuals' predispositions and feelings towards tourism-related activities, significantly influencing their behaviors and perceptions (Almeida-García et al., 2016; Choi & Jang, 2023). Attitudes are dynamic and subject to change over time, influenced by factors such as direct experiences, social interactions, and cultural values (Khanom et al., 2019). Understanding community attitudes towards tourism is essential for effective management of its impacts and ensuring sustainable growth in tourism destinations (Almeida-García et al., 2016).

Factors such as family influence, socialization, and cultural values play significant roles in shaping these attitudes, highlighting the importance of assessing and analyzing community attitudes for successful tourism management. Research suggests that values, socialization, and cultural backgrounds heavily influence attitudes toward tourism, with variations in attitudes arising from differences in value orientations (Choi & Jang, 2023; Kihima, 2015; Khanom et al., 2019).

Consequently, assessing community attitudes becomes pivotal for anticipating and managing the effects of tourism development and making sure that plans reflect the interests and values of the community (MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019; Moghavvemi et al., 2017; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019). This knowledge makes it possible to create efficient tourism management plans that maximize the benefits of tourism to host communities while minimizing its negative effects (Kihima, 2015; Almeida-García et al., 2016).

Tourism Impacts and Community Attitudes toward Tourism development

The broad consequences of tourism operations that go beyond direct results are included in the idea of tourism impacts. As traveler preferences and destination dynamics change over time, these effects also change, affecting people's attitudes and behaviors (Almeida-García et al., 2016; Cheer et al., 2017). Tourism is often promoted as a means of

economic revitalization, offering opportunities for local communities to address various needs and enhance overall quality of life (Nicholas *et al.*, 2009). However, tourism development can lead to both positive and negative consequences, affecting community attitudes, social dynamics, and environmental sustainability (Choi & Jang, 2023).

As tourism expands, so do its induced impacts on surrounding communities, necessitating careful consideration of the dual nature of tourism development. Local community engagement is crucial for effective tourism strategies, as positive attitudes can enhance tourist satisfaction and promote sustainable growth (Moscardo, 2015; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2017). While tourism creates jobs and boosts the economy, it also presents problems like social unrest and environmental degradation, which emphasizes the need for thorough planning and analysis in the development of the tourism industry (Almeida-García *et al.*, 2016; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Olya & Gavilyan, 2017). Tourism's influence on local communities typically spans three main dimensions: environmental, sociocultural, and economic (Gomes, 2020; Uslu *et al.*, 2020).

Tourism significantly impacts the economy of host communities in various ways, both positively and negatively. Job opportunities are generated directly and indirectly across various sectors, including hospitality, transportation, and local services, contributing to improved living standards (Ghaderia *et al.*, 2020; Gursoy *et al.*, 2019; Hadinejad *et al.*, 2019). Foreign exchange revenues strengthen local and national economies, encouraging infrastructure development and supporting other industries (Hadinejad *et al.*, 2019). However, leakage of income to foreign investors and economic downturns can hinder the economic benefits of tourism, leading to income insecurity and fluctuating financial gains for communities (Ritchie *et al.*, 2019). Strategies like locally oriented tourism development and community cooperatives can help mitigate these challenges and ensure more sustainable economic benefits for host communities (Letoluo & Wangombe, 2018).

Tourism has complex interactions with the environment (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004), leading to both positive and negative impacts (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2019). Natural resource depletion, exacerbated by the construction and maintenance of tourism facilities, poses a significant environmental challenge (Ravikumar *et al.*, 2022; Uslu *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, seasonal demand for resources during peak tourist seasons can strain local availability, particularly water resources (Thompson *et al.*, 2018). Land clearing for infrastructure development and pollution from resorts and entertainment venues further degrade ecosystems and diminish biodiversity (Ritchie *et al.*, 2019). Negative effects of tourism development on host communities include noise pollution, waste management problems, and pollution (Hanafiah *et al.*, 2013). Nevertheless, tourism can also contribute to conservation efforts by generating revenue for the upkeep of natural parks through admission fees (MacKenzie & Gannon, 2019).

The socio-cultural fabric of host communities is significantly impacted by tourism, both positively and negatively. Commercialization of local culture can lead to the loss or transformation of indigenous identities, as cultural heritage is commodified to cater to tourist demands (Shahzadal, 2016). Moreover, staged ethnicity and the sale of souvenirs may contribute to cultural erosion, despite benefiting the local economy (Yang & Wall, 2009). Tourists' desire for familiarity can lead to the standardization of cultural experiences, potentially detracting from authenticity (Gursoy *et al.*, 2018). Cultural clashes may arise from disparities in values and lifestyles between tourists and locals, leading to social disturbance

and conflicts (Zhuang et al., 2019). However, tourism can also rejuvenate local culture, fostering pride and unity among community members (Jaafar et al., 2017).

Strong cultural and environmental attitudes among locals make them more likely to be in favor of tourist development because they think it will help keep local customs alive (Gannon et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019).

Despite challenges, interactions between communities and tourists can create opportunities for societal harmony and cultural integration, enriching both residents and visitors (Alamineh et al., 2023). However, because of social issues and overpopulation, some locals could have an unfavorable perception of tourism (Hanafiah et al., 2013; Zhuang et al., 2019). Although the impact of tourism on community attitudes toward tourism development in tourist destination communities has been the subject of numerous past empirical studies, there is a paucity of literature on destination communities at the nascent stages of development. Therefore, this study set out to fill in this gap.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study used a convergent parallel one-phase research design that was situated in the pragmatic paradigm. The study site was the Rimoi National Reserve, located in Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya, within the former Rift Valley Province. Situated in the western Kerio Valley, Rimoi National Reserve was established in 2015 and offers camping opportunities and wildlife observation along the Kerio River. The reserve aims to conserve nature while providing alternative income sources for local communities. The study targeted 548 household heads residing in the Rimoi gateway community (GoK, 2019; EMCK, 2018). The target population was deemed appropriate because these households are situated adjacent to the Reserve, and are directly exposed to the impacts of tourist activities and future tourism developments.

Systematic random sampling technique was used to select 231 household heads, whereas purposive sampling was employed to choose 10 resident youths that comprised six men and four women, ranging in age from 18 to 34 years, each possessing a diverse range of experiences. Quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire, while qualitative data was generated through a focus group discussion. This group comprised six men and five women, ranging in age from 18 to 34 years old, each possessing a diverse range of experiences. This composition ensured that the group not only represented the overall demographic of the community but also provided a rich mixture of local perspectives, experiences, and attitudes. The questionnaire scales were adapted from existing literature and subsequently evaluated for face and content validity through expert judgment. Table 1 shows that all variables had Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.7, indicating that the questionnaire items were reliable (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1: Reliability of the study Variables

Study Variable	Cronbach Alpha α
Tourism Economic Impacts	0.774
Tourism Environmental Impacts	0.906
Tourism Social-Cultural Impacts	0.857
Community attitudes Towards Tourism Development	0.773

Member-checking was conducted on the participants' comments from the focus group discussion to ensure the generated data was reliable, credible, and trustworthy (Yin, 2016). Informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality were ethical concerns considered. While the qualitative data was studied conceptually, the quantitative data was analysed using multiple linear regression and descriptive statistics (percentages, means, and standard deviations).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Community Attitudes Towards Tourism Development

The items for community attitudes towards tourism development were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, and 5=Strongly Disagree). The results are presented in Table 2. The results offer significant perspectives into the community's attitudes towards tourism growth, which are essential for upcoming planning and decision-making. There is a general sense of optimism with 72.3% of respondents thinking that the advantages of tourism exceed the disadvantages; nonetheless, there is a range of perspectives with 27.2% disagreeing. Similarly, 80.1% actively advocate for new tourism development, while 7.0% hold contrasting views. Regarding the community's capacity to handle more tourism, 72.7% express confidence, but 13.0% harbor reservations. Concerns about the potential impact on quality of life are voiced by 21.2%, highlighting the need for safeguards to protect cultural heritage and tranquility. Despite this, 80.1% believe tourism contributes to heritage conservation.

A substantial 75.8% of respondents express collective support for new tourism development, with 84.4% believing it enhances overall quality of life and 84.4% supporting its role in local business growth and diversification. While generally positive, there are dissenting voices, with 6.5% and 6.1% respectively disagreeing with these notions. The higher grand mean (4.038) and low standard deviation (0.995) indicate an overall positive attitude towards tourism development, with little variation. Verbatim quotes capture a nuanced perspective, acknowledging both positive impacts like economic benefits and infrastructure improvements, as well as concerns about cultural erosion and loss of community control.

The verbatim quotes from the participants in the focus group discussion revealed tourism development as a force for both positive transformation and potential challenges to community values and way of life.

"Tourism has brought opportunities for our youth, and there is a sense of pride in showcasing our beautiful culture and wildlife. This has made our Rimoi national reserve known to the world as a tourist destination" [PP5]

"Tourism development has impacted this area positively; we have improved infrastructure and job opportunities. On the negative side, our original natural environment is slowly disappearing" [PP1]

"On the positive side, tourism has boosted our businesses around. On the negative side, it feels like we are losing control of our community. Our traditional culture and mannerisms are fading away" [PP9].

Overall, the results indicated that residents of the Rimoi National Reserve Gateway community are in favor of and actively endorse tourism development within their locality. They described the current conversation about conservation tourism as containing both positive and negative perspectives.

Table 2 Community Attitudes Towards Tourism Development

Item Code	Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
TD1	Overall, the benefits of tourism development in my community outweigh its costs.	10 (4.3%)	16 (6.9%)	38 (16.5%)	85 (36.8)	82 (35.5%)	3.922	1.089
TD2	In general, new tourism development should be actively encouraged in my community.	2 (0.9%)	14 (6.1%)	30 (13.0%)	95 (41.1%)	90 (39.0%)	4.113	0.911
TD3	My community can handle more tourism development.	14 (6.1%)	16 (6.9%)	33 (14.3%)	73 (31.6%)	95 (41.1%)	3.948	1.175
TD4	Increased tourism would not hurt my community's quality of life.	13 (5.6%)	36 (15.6%)	31 (13.4%)	75 (32.5%)	76 (32.9%)	3.714	1.232
TD5	Tourism development contributes to the conservation and preservation of our local heritage.	1 (0.1%)	14 (6.10%)	31 (13.40%)	127 (55.0%)	58 (25.1%)	3.983	0.818
TD6	I support new tourism development in my community	2 (0.9%)	6 (2.6%)	48 (20.8%)	69 (29.9%)	106 (45.9%)	4.178	0.913
TD7	I believe tourism development enhances the overall quality of life for residents of our community.	5 (2.2%)	10 (4.3%)	21 (9.1%)	113 (48.9%)	82 (35.5%)	4.113	0.897
TD8	I feel that tourism development supports the growth and diversification of local businesses.	3 (1.3%)	11 (4.8%)	22 (9.5%)	65 (28.1%)	130 (56.30%)	4.333	0.926
	Valid N=231							
	Grand Mean						4.038	0.995

Positive perspectives included worries about the community's perceived capacity to handle increased tourism and its possible impact on quality of life. Negative perspectives included concerns about conservation tourism's potential to undermine local businesses and contribute to the preservation of local heritage.

Tourism Impacts

The study's main objective was to evaluate how tourism affects the aspects of Rimoi National Reserve. The respondents were requested to assess how they perceived the impacts of tourism and how they anticipated these impacts to alter as tourism developed. This assessment used a Stapel scale to gauge current experiences and anticipate future changes, rather than the commonly used scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Residents' attitudes toward tourism development were investigated, considering their existing experiences and projected outcomes. Respondents rated each survey item twice: once for current conditions and then for anticipated impacts of additional tourism development. The difference between these scores determined the net impact, with negative differences indicating negative impacts and positive differences indicating positive impacts. Tables displaying percentages, averages, and mean differences for the effects on the economy, environment, and society culture were used to display the descriptive data. These results made it easier to comprehend how the locals view the effects of tourism now and what they anticipate from future growth in the Rimoi National Reserve.

Residents' Perceptions of Tourism Economic Impacts

The results in Table 3 offer insight into the community's views regarding current economic conditions in Rimoi (1= Poor, 2= Below Average, 3= Moderate, 4= Above Average and 5= Excellent) and their expectations for change with the potential tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve (1= Worsen, 2= Slightly Worsen, 3=Not Change, 4= Slightly Improve and 5=Improve. The findings in Table 3 show that 74.4% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of employment opportunities (ECO1), perceiving them as below average. While 66.2% were optimistic about improvements in tourism development, a notable 8.7% anticipated a worsening scenario, emphasizing the importance of addressing challenges in the job market. Similar findings were reported in the focus group discussion. For instance, one of the participants had this to say;

"Finding a job here is quite challenging, and opportunities are below average. It is tough for the youth. I believe that with more tourism, there is a chance for improvement. We might see new job opportunities coming in." [PP10]

The analysis of money generated by local businesses (ECO2) revealed a dominant 'moderate' category at 40.3%, suggesting a moderate economic scenario for local businesses in the community. With 39.8% foreseeing improvement due to tourism development and 31.6% anticipating a slightly worsening scenario, uncertainty and potential trade-offs associated with future economic changes existed. One of the residents pointed out that; *"Our local businesses are doing okay, not great. It is a moderate situation, and we need more income. We are hopeful that more tourism will bring more customers to our businesses"*[PP5] In assessing the quality of employment (ECO3), a significant 45.5% perceived the current job quality as below average. While an equal percentage believed that tourism development would enhance job quality, 6.1% expected a slight worsening, showcasing the complexity of predicting the

impact on employment standards. This was reinforced by one of the participants indicating that; *"The quality of jobs available is below average. Many are struggling with temporary and low-paying jobs. Tourism might elevate the job standards. We can expect better opportunities and conditions."* [PP7]

Regarding personal income (ECO4), the data indicated that almost half (47.2%) of respondents currently considered personal income to be at a moderate level. Anticipation for improved personal income with tourism development was expressed by 39.0%, accompanied by 6.1% expecting a slight worsening. This called for a closer examination of the factors influencing income dynamics as one participant pointed out; *"Our income is just moderate. It is not great, but we get by. I am optimistic that tourism can boost our income. We might see a positive change in our financial situation."* [PP2] The community held a complex view of property value (ECO5), with 43.7% perceiving property values as moderate. While 42.9% anticipated improvement with tourism development, policymakers should address concerns of the 14.3% foreseeing a slight worsening, underscoring potential challenges in the local real estate market. One of the participants indicated that; *"Property values are okay, not high or low. It is a moderate situation in the real estate market. With additional tourism, property values could go up. However, there are concerns about potential downsides."* [PP6]

Regarding the cost of living in the area (ECO6), the data revealed affordability challenges, with 40.3% perceiving the cost of living as below average. While 37.2% anticipated an improved cost of living with tourism development, the concerns of the 13.4% expecting a slight worsening highlighted the need for comprehensive planning to ensure equitable benefits. The mean difference (W-C) of 1.51 shows that the respondents perceived a better cost of living with further development of Rimoi National Reserve due to economies of scale and business competitions that will make goods and services widely available and at lower costs. This finding contradicts other studies where residents acknowledged, however, that their living costs had increased due to the development of tourism in their area. This is a negative economic impact (Algassim, et al., 2021; Hadinejad et al., 2019). This contradiction could be attributed to the context specificity of the study. It underscores the complexity and context specificity of tourism impacts. Suggesting that what holds true in one destination may not necessarily apply to another, emphasizing the importance of considering unique contextual factors in understanding the connection between the effects of tourism and local perceptions of its growth.

"The cost of living here is challenging. I hope more tourism will bring improvements, more money into people's pockets, making living costs more manageable for everyone." [PP9].

The overall insights, as indicated by the grand mean difference of 1.55, reflect a positive rating for all economic aspects of tourism development and demonstrate a positive attitude among the residents of the Rimoi National Reserve gateway community toward tourism development in general. This shows that there is strong support for the growth of tourism in the area. The diverse Mean Differences observed across different economic indicators, with the highest for employment opportunities (1.71) and the lowest for personal income (1.44), suggest varied economic expectations of the benefits that tourism development will bring to their life and the community.

Table 3 Residents' Perceptions of Tourism Economic Impacts

		Current Condition						Tourism Development Will								
Item Code	Item	Poor	Below Average	Moderate	Above Average	Excellent	Mean (C)	Worsen	Slightly Worsen	Not Change	Slightly Improve	Improve	Mean (W)	Mean Difference (W-C)		
ECO1	Employment opportunities	37 (16%)	135 (58.4%)	44 (19.0%)	9 (3.9%)	6 (2.6%)	2.19	4 (1.7%)	20 (8.7%)	54 (23.4%)	70 (30.3%)	83 (35.9%)	3.90	1.71		
ECO2	Money generated by local businesses	37 (16%)	84 (36.4%)	93 (40.3%)	16 (6.9%)	1 (0.4%)	2.39	5 (2.2%)	24 (10.4%)	37 (16.0%)	92 (39.8%)	73 (31.6%)	3.88	1.49		
ECO3	Quality of employment	28 (12.1%)	105 (45.5%)	83 (35.9%)	13 (5.6%)	2 (0.9%)	2.38	4 (1.7%)	14 (6.1%)	39 (16.9%)	105 (45.5%)	69 (29.9%)	3.96	1.58		
ECO4	My personal income	14 (6.1%)	96 (41.6%)	109 (47.2%)	11 (4.8%)	1 (0.4)	2.52	5 (2.2%)	14 (6.1%)	44 (19.0%)	90 (39.0%)	78 (33.8%)	3.96	1.44		
ECO5	Property value (cost of real state)	19 (8.2%)	89 (38.5%)	101 (43.7%)	20 (8.7%)	2 (0.9%)	2.55	5 (2.2%)	14 (14.30%)	33 (14.30%)	80 (34.6%)	99 (42.9%)	4.10	1.55		
ECO6	Cost of living in the area	31 (13.4%)	93 (40.3%)	96 (41.6%)	9 (3.9%)	2 (0.9%)	2.39	8 (3.5%)	17 (7.4%)	42 (18.2%)	86 (37.2%)	78 (33.8%)	3.90	1.51		
	Valid N=231															1.55
	Grand Mean							2.40							3.95	

Residents' Perceptions of Tourism of Environmental Impacts

The results in Table 4 offer insight into the community's views regarding current environmental conditions in Rimoi and their expectations for change with the potential tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve. The findings in Table 4 show that the Rimoi National Reserve Gateway community has a prevailing sense of peace and tranquility (ENV1), with 58.4% of respondents expressing satisfaction. However, concerns arise regarding potential tourism development impacts, with 34.2% anticipating a decline in the serene atmosphere. In a focus group discussion, fears are voiced about losing the area's therapeutic ambiance with an increase in tourists. *"This place has always been our sanctuary of peace and very therapeutic. However, with talk of more tourists, I fear we might lose that. More people mean more noise, and I worry this place will turn into just another bustling spot."* [PP6].

Concerns over litter and trash (ENV2) are evident, with 50.4% of the community expressing worry about the current state, and 43.7% anticipating a worsening situation with tourism development. Participants emphasized the need for effective waste management strategies. *"Look around; you can already see some trash in some areas. It is like they come, enjoy, and leave their mess behind. We must figure out a way to manage this before it worsens."* [PP3]

The community holds a favorable view of the current natural environment quality (ENV3), with 66% expressing satisfaction, and 64.6% foreseeing no change or improvement. Preserving this environment is seen as crucial in any sustainable tourism strategy. Human-made noise levels (ENV4) are perceived as above average to excellent by 51.3% of respondents, but 41.1% anticipate an increase due to tourism. Efforts to mitigate noise pollution and foster responsible tourism behavior are deemed essential. While traffic conditions (ENV5) are viewed favorably by 84.4% of respondents, 42.8% anticipate increased traffic with tourism development. Balancing economic benefits with sustainable transportation solutions is emphasized.

Opinions on the current number of people in the area (ENV6) are divided, with 65.8% viewing it positively, but concerns about overcrowding are voiced. *"I am torn about more people coming in. On the one hand, it might mean more business for us locals. On the other, I worry about overcrowding."* [PP4].

Preserving natural open spaces (ENV7) is a priority for 67.5% of respondents, with expectations of either no change or improvement. This underscores the importance of environmental conservation efforts. Air quality (ENV8) is perceived positively by 63.2% of respondents, with 51.5% expecting no change or improvement with tourism development. Maintaining and monitoring air quality standards is crucial. The appearance of Rimoi National Reserve (ENV9) is rated as moderate to excellent by 64.1% of respondents, with expectations of either no change or improvement. Participants stress the need for regulations to preserve the area's visual appeal.

Regarding human-made structures (ENV10), 69.3% perceive the current amount as moderate to excellent, but opinions on the potential economic impacts of additional tourism development are divided. Water quality (ENV11) is rated positively by 64.1% of respondents, with expectations of either no change or improvement with tourism development. Sustainable water management practices are deemed essential. Waste management (ENV12) is viewed positively by 60.1% of respondents, with expectations of either no change or improvement with tourism development. Strengthening waste management infrastructure is considered vital.

Table 4: Residents' Perceptions of Tourism of Environmental Impacts

Item Code	Item	Current Condition						Tourism Development Will						Mean Difference (W-C)
		Poor	Below Average	Moderate	Above Average	Excellent	Mean (C)	Worsen	Slightly Worsen	Not Change	Slightly Improve	Improve	Mean	
ENV1	The peace and tranquility of the area	12 (5.2%)	41 (17.7%)	43 (18.6%)	65 (28.1%)	70 (30.3%)	3.61	31 (13.4%)	48 (20.8%)	55 (23.2%)	35 (15.2%)	62 (26.8%)	3.21	-0.40
ENV2	Amount of litter and other trash	23 (10%)	22 (9.5%)	50 (21.6%)	89 (38.5%)	47 (20.3%)	3.50	36 (15.6%)	65 (28.1%)	36 (15.6%)	43 (18.6%)	51 (22.1%)	3.03	-0.47
ENV3	Quality of natural environment	16 (6.9%)	20 (8.7%)	63 (27.3%)	89 (38.5%)	43 (18.6%)	3.53	31 (13.4%)	64 (27.7%)	39 (16.9%)	33 (14.3%)	64 (27.7%)	3.15	-0.38
ENV4	Amount of human made noise	22 (9.5%)	17 (7.4%)	51 (22.1%)	99 (42.9%)	42 (18.2%)	3.53	47 (20.3%)	58 (25.1%)	38 (16.5%)	45 (19.5%)	43 (18.6%)	2.91	-0.62
ENV5	Amount of traffic in the area	10 (4.3%)	26 (11.3%)	48 (20.8%)	74 (32.0%)	73 (31.6%)	3.75	51 (22.1%)	53 (22.9%)	28 (12.1%)	55 (23.8%)	44 (19.0%)	2.95	-0.80
ENV6	Number of people in the area	7 (3.0%)	16 (6.9%)	58 (25.1%)	101 (43.7%)	49 (21.2%)	3.73	29 (12.6%)	53 (22.9%)	52 (22.5%)	51 (22.1%)	46 (19.9%)	3.14	-0.59
ENV7	Amount of natural open space	5 (2.2%)	21 (9.1%)	49 (21.2%)	103 (44.6%)	53 (22.9%)	3.77	21 (9.1%)	80 (34.6%)	38 (16.5%)	35 (15.2%)	57 (24.7%)	3.12	-0.65
ENV8	Air quality	11 (4.8%)	14 (6.1%)	60 (26.0%)	84 (36.4%)	62 (26.8%)	3.74	34 (14.7%)	60 (26.0%)	45 (19.5%)	33 (14.3%)	59 (25.5%)	3.10	-0.64
ENV9	Appearance of the area	8 (3.5%)	23 (10.0%)	53 (22.9%)	87 (37.7%)	60 (26.0%)	3.73	26 (11.3%)	53 (22.9%)	50 (21.6%)	49 (21.2%)	53 (22.9%)	3.22	-0.51
ENV10	Amount of human made structures	6 (2.6%)	10 (4.3%)	62 (26.8%)	109 (47.2%)	44 (19.0%)	3.76	23 (10.0%)	56 (24.2%)	53 (22.9%)	46 (19.9%)	53 (22.9%)	3.22	-0.54
ENV11	Water quality	11 (4.8%)	21 (9.1%)	53 (22.9%)	81 (35.1%)	65 (28.1%)	3.73	28 (12.1%)	71 (30.7%)	34 (14.7%)	50 (21.6%)	48 (20.8%)	3.08	-0.65
ENV12	Waste management	18 (7.8%)	23 (10.0%)	51 (22.1%)	64 (27.7%)	75 (32.5%)	3.67	56 (24.2%)	46 (19.9%)	31 (13.4%)	47 (20.3%)	51 (22.1%)	2.96	-0.71
	Valid N=231													
	Grand Mean													3.09
														-0.58

The overall grand mean for perceived environmental impact indicates a potential decline in environmental quality associated with additional tourism development activities in the area.

Residents' Perceptions of Tourism of Socio-Cultural Impacts

The results in Table 5 offer an insight into the community's views regarding current socio-cultural impacts in Rimoi and their expectations for change with the potential tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve.

The results in Table 5 show that opinions regarding the small-town atmosphere (SOC1) were diverse, with 47.1% expressing it as below average or moderate. Concerns and hopes about potential shifts due to tourism were voiced. *"The atmosphere is just okay right now. I think some tourism could bring in some excitement and improvements."* [PP3] *"I love the small-town feel we have now. It is cozy and close-knit. I am worried that more tourists might change that."* [PP7].

There's a prevailing concern about high perceived crime rates (SOC2), with 63.2% categorizing it as above average or excellent. While some worry about potential increases, others anticipate improvements. *"I fear more tourists might attract the wrong crowd and worsen the situation."* [PP5] *"I have seen much improvement in safety lately. I believe tourism can help maintain this positive trend."* [PP10]

Personal safety and security (SOC3) are perceived positively by 60.2% of respondents, with a balance of concerns and optimism about potential impacts. *"I feel safe here but worry about personal security with more tourists. We need to ensure our safety is a priority."* [PP7].

Regarding overall quality of life (SOC4), 41.6% rate it as below average or moderate, with hopes for positive changes through tourism. *"Our quality of life is not the best. Tourism might inject new life and opportunities into our community."* [PP1]

The current community spirit (SOC5) is viewed with mixed sentiments, with hopes for improvement. *"Our community spirit is strong, and I fear an influx of many tourists might dilute our sense of community."* [PP2] *"Tourism is a chance to showcase our community spirit to the world. It's an opportunity for positive change."* [PP8].

Relationship dynamics between residents and tourists (SOC6) are varied, with hopes for positive changes. *"The relationship between us and tourists is strained. More efforts are needed to ensure a positive interaction."* [PP6] *"I think a better relationship with tourists can open up economic opportunities for us. We need to manage it well. Residents and tourists need to understand each other better. Tourism might be the bridge that connects us positively."* [PP3].

Understanding of different people and cultures (SOC7) is seen as moderate to below average by 43.7% of respondents, with hopes for improvement through tourism. *"Our understanding of different cultures is limited. Tourism could be an enriching experience for everyone."* [PP1] *"I am concerned about cultural clashes with more tourists. We need education programs to foster understanding. Tourism can open our minds to different cultures and make our community more inclusive."* [PP5]

Perception of the conservation of local culture (SOC8) is largely positive, with hopes for preservation amid tourism development. From the focus group discussions, some of the participants reported that *"Our culture is unique, and we must preserve it. I worry that tourism might overshadow our local traditions. Tourism should be an opportunity to showcase and preserve our local culture. We need to find a balance."* [PP2] *"Although our culture is at risk. Tourism might be the key to preserving and celebrating our local heritage. I believe it has also revived our culture. Every time visitors come, we showcase our cultural heritage, and they buy our traditional ornaments; the pride of our culture improves."* [PP8]

Overall, the residents of Rimoi National Reserve generally hold positive attitudes toward tourism development, with community spirit showing the strongest positive mean difference. However, concerns exist regarding certain factors such as crime rate, personal safety, and conservation of local culture.

Table 5: Residents' Perceptions of Tourism Socio-cultural Impacts

		Current Condition						Tourism Development Will								
Item Code	Item	Poor	Below Average	Moderate	Above Average	Excellent	Mean (C)	Worsen	Slightly Worsen	Not Change	Slightly Improve	Improve	Mean	Mean Difference (W-C)		
SOC1	Small town atmosphere of the area	23 (10.0%)	56 (24.2%)	53 (22.9%)	46 (19.9%)	53 (22.9%)	3.22	16 (6.9%)	57 (24.7%)	43 (18.6%)	56 (24.2%)	59 (25.5%)	3.37	0.15		
SOC2	Crime rate	11 (4.8%)	21 (9.1%)	53 (22.9%)	81 (35.1%)	65 (28.1%)	3.73	30 (13.0%)	26 (11.3%)	44 (19.0%)	74 (32.2%)	57 (24.7%)	3.44	-0.29		
SOC3	Personal safety and security	18 (7.8%)	23 (10.0%)	51 (22.1%)	64 (27.7%)	75 (32.5%)	3.67	20 (8.7%)	23 (10.0%)	57 (24.7%)	86 (37.2%)	45 (19.5%)	3.49	-0.18		
SOC4	Overall quality of life	47 (20.3%)	58 (25.1%)	38 (16.5%)	45 (19.5%)	43 (18.6%)	2.91	8 (3.5%)	37 (16.0%)	72 (31.2%)	66 (28.6%)	48 (20.8%)	3.47	0.56		
SOC5	Community spirit among local residents	28 (12.1%)	71 (30.7%)	34 (14.7%)	50 (21.6%)	48 (20.8%)	3.08	7 (3.0%)	21 (9.1%)	65 (28.1%)	82 (35.5%)	56 (24.2%)	3.69	0.61		
SOC6	Relationship between residents and tourists	29 (12.6%)	53 (22.9%)	52 (22.5%)	51 (22.1%)	46 (19.9%)	3.14	5 (2.2%)	27 (11.7%)	62 (26.8%)	98 (42.4%)	39 (16.9%)	3.6	0.46		
SOC7	Understanding of different people and cultures	36 (15.6%)	65 (28.1%)	36 (15.6%)	43 (18.6%)	51 (22.1%)	3.03	5 (2.2%)	22 (9.5%)	87 (37.7%)	87 (37.7%)	30 (13.0%)	3.5	0.47		
SOC8	Conservation of local culture	8 (3.5%)	23 (10.0%)	53 (22.9%)	87 (37.7%)	60 (26.0%)	3.73	22 (9.5%)	49 (21.2%)	44 (19.0%)	53 (22.9%)	63 (27.3%)	3.37	-0.36		
	Valid N=231															
	Grand Mean							3.36							3.49	0.13

Testing Effects of Covariates on the Community Attitudes towards Tourism Development

The study's control variables were three demographic factors: age, gender, and educational attainment. This was done to take into consideration their confounding impact on the opinions of the community regarding support for the growth of tourism. Table 6's R^2 value for these control factors in the multiple regression model was 0.084, meaning that the covariates could only account for 8.4% of the variation in community opinions regarding support for tourism development among Rimoi National Reserve locals.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig. F Change
1	.289 ^a	0.084	0.072	0.65659	.000
<i>a Predictors: (Constant) Age, Gender, Level of education</i>					
<i>b Dependent Variable: Community Attitudes towards Tourism Development</i>					

The joint prediction of the covariates (Table 7) was statistically significant, $F(3, 227) = 6.912$, $p < 0.05$.

Table 7: Model Fit

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.94	3	2.98	6.912	.000 ^b
	Residual	97.861	227	0.431		
	Total	106.801	230			
<i>a Dependent Variable: Community Attitudes towards Tourism Development</i>						
<i>b Predictors: (Constant), Age Gender, Level of education</i>						

The results of the regression analysis, presented in Table 8, showed that community sentiments regarding tourism development were not significantly impacted by either gender or age variables. Nonetheless, the degree of education of the residents was discovered to have a significantly favorable effect ($\beta = .233$, $p < 0.05$). It's important to emphasize that although these factors greatly influenced the variation in the dependent variable, the study's main focus was not on them. The purpose of their inclusion was to account for potential confounding factors, hence improving the findings' reliability.

Table 8: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	
1	(Constant)	3.439	0.257		13.39	.000
	Age	-0.041	0.045	-0.067	-0.915	0.361
	Gender	0.123	0.087	0.09	1.414	0.159
	Level of Education	0.167	0.052	0.233	3.199	0.002
<i>b Dependent Variable: Community Attitudes towards Tourism Development</i>						

Testing Direct Effects

The three hypotheses (H01, H02, and H03) on the conceptualized relationships (direct effects) between economic, environmental, and socio-cultural impacts and community attitudes toward support for tourism development in Rimoi National Reserve were tested using hierarchical multiple regression analysis, as indicated in Tables 9, 10, and 11.

Table 9: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Sig. F Change
1	.289 ^a	0.084	0.072	0.65659	0.084	.000
2	.613 ^b	0.376	0.359	0.54553	0.292	.000

a Predictors: (Constant) Age, Gender, Level of education
b Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Level of education, Environmental Impacts, Socio-cultural Impacts, Economic Impacts
c Dependent Variable: Community Attitudes towards Tourism Development

Table 9's findings demonstrated a strong positive correlation ($r=.613$, $p<.005$) between the effects of tourism and local perceptions of its growth. The change in coefficient of determination (R^2 change = 0.292) indicates that the perceived tourism impacts account for approximately 29.2% of the total variation in community attitudes towards tourism development.

Table 10: Model Fit

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.94	3	2.98	6.912	.000 ^a
	Residual	97.861	227	0.431		
	Total	106.801	230			
2	Regression	40.138	6	6.69	22.479	.000 ^c
	Residual	66.663	224	0.298		
	Total	106.801	230			

a Dependent Variable: Community Attitudes towards Tourism Development
b Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Level of education
c Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Level of education, Environmental Impacts, Social Impacts, Economic Impacts

Jointly, manipulation of tourism impacts (Table 9) statistically and significantly predicted community attitudes towards tourism development, $F(6,224) = 22.479$, $p<0.05$. This implied that economic, environmental, and socio-cultural impacts had a statistically significant influence on community attitudes towards tourism development. The regression coefficient output was examined to determine each factor's specific contribution to the overall model. The results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.439	0.257		13.39	.000
	Age	-0.041	0.045	-0.067	-0.915	.361
	Gender	0.123	0.087	0.09	1.414	.159
	Level of Education	0.167	0.052	0.233	3.199	0.002
2	(Constant)	2.298	0.325		7.076	.000
	Age	-0.034	0.039	-0.055	-0.872	.384
	Gender	0.073	0.073	0.054	0.999	.319
	Level of Education	0.061	0.045	0.085	1.358	.176
	Environmental Impacts	-0.072	0.033	-0.126	-2.179	.030
	Socio-cultural Impacts	0.325	0.045	0.452	7.258	.000
	Economic Impacts	0.153	0.061	0.148	2.489	.014

a Dependent Variable: Community Attitudes towards Tourism Development

H₀₁ stated that economic impacts had no statistically significant effect on community attitudes toward tourism development. However, Table 10's results demonstrated that the economic impact of tourism had positive and significant coefficients of the estimate ($\beta = .148$, $p < .05$), suggesting that for every unit increase in the economic impact of tourism, community attitudes toward tourism development increased by a predicted .148 units. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The study concluded that community perceptions of tourist development are positively impacted by the economic benefits of tourism. These results align with earlier studies that demonstrate the favorable effects of tourism on quality of life and community views (Bhat & Mishra, 2021; Halim et al., 2022). The results of this study, however, contradicted those of Letoluo and Wangombe (2018), who noted that tourism had both beneficial and detrimental consequences on nearby communities, such as price increases, income inequality, and seasonal swings in employment.

H₀₂ stated that environmental impacts had no statistically significant effect on community attitudes toward tourism development. The null hypothesis was rejected due to the findings, which indicated that environmental impacts had a significant negative impact on community attitudes towards tourism development ($\beta = -.126$, $p < .05$). This suggests that the perceived environmental impacts of tourism have a negative effect on community attitudes towards tourism development. These findings support the conclusions made by Ravikumar et al. (2022), which show that attitudes toward sustainable tourism in the local community are negatively impacted by environmental factors. The bulk of research, such as Sharpley (2014), Kihima (2015), and Almeida-García et al. (2016), have also indicated that destination communities typically regard the environmental impacts of tourism negatively, which is consistent with our findings.

H₀₃ stated that socio-cultural impacts had no statistically significant effect on community attitudes towards tourism development. The results demonstrated that perceived socio-cultural impacts had a positive and significant impact on community attitudes toward tourist development ($\beta = .452$; $p < .05$). As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This is consistent with the findings of Peters et al. (2018), who maintained that favorable socio-cultural effects frequently exceed unfavorable ones and have a major impact on local perceptions. In a similar vein, Runya, et al. (2022) emphasized the great potential of regional cultural customs to advance environmentally friendly travel. Tourism often revitalizes local cultures, fostering a sense of unity and renewed interest in traditions.

CONCLUSION

The gateway community of Rimoi National Reserve benefits economically from tourists, which emphasizes the significance of giving sustainable practices that boost the local economy top priority. Through the emphasis on economic advantages and the improvement of community welfare, these approaches have the potential to gather heightened backing for the advancement of tourism. Conversely, the negative influence of tourism's environmental impacts on community attitudes signals that environmental disturbances and degradation may decrease local support for development. This highlights residents' awareness of natural resource significance and the need to address environmental concerns alongside tourism growth through sustainable strategies. The socio-cultural impacts of tourism development in Rimoi align with Social Exchange Theory (SET), with positive effects outweighing negative

ones. Emphasizing sustainable and culturally sensitive practices can strike a balance between these impacts, fostering community welfare and supporting tourism growth. Therefore, addressing environmental and sociocultural concerns through sustainable practices is essential for fostering positive community perceptions and ensuring a harmonious coexistence with tourism development in the Rimoi National Reserve gateway community. This not only contributes to the overall well-being of the community but also lays the groundwork for sustainable tourism development that benefits both residents and tourists.

RECOMMENDATION

The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife (MOTW) should create sustainable tourism strategies that put the community's general well-being ahead of financial gains. This could involve promoting local entrepreneurship, providing training and support for small business owners, and facilitating access to tourism-related opportunities to ensure long-term economic sustainability. This will lead to increased support and cooperation from the residents for further tourism development in the Rimoi National Reserve.

Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and the Directorate of Tourism, culture, and Wildlife of Elgeyo Marakwet County government should develop and implement environmental conservation initiatives. To protect the reserve's biodiversity and natural environment, this may involve taking steps to reduce and manage the negative effects that tourism has on the ecosystem. Some of these initiatives include waste management plans, conservation campaigns, and sustainable tourism practices. This will ensure that environmental conservation is prioritized and that tourism's potential adverse environmental impacts are minimized.

The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife (MOTW) and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) should promote socio-cultural exchange by encouraging initiatives that promote cultural interchange and understanding between tourists and the residents of the Rimoi National Reserve gateway community. Such as cultural heritage preservation projects, community-based tourism initiatives, and educational programs to foster mutual respect and appreciation for diverse cultures. These practices balance tourism's positive and adverse effects by minimizing negative socio-cultural impacts while promoting positive interactions between tourists and residents in the Rimoi National Reserve gateway community.

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