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Involvement in Tourism Activities and Perceived Benefits in Communities around Udzungwa Mountain National Park in Tanzania

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Abstract: Tourism constitutes one of the fastest growing sectors in Tanzania. The industry is placed as one of the major means through which development of local communities can be achieved. There is, however, paucity of information on how local communities living close to the national parks are involved in tourism. A cross-sectional study was carried out in February 2013 in six villages adjacent to Udzungwa Mountain National Park (UMNP). The objectives of the study were (i) to examine the extent to which people living close to UMNP participate in tourism, (ii) to identify the determinants of individual involvement in tourism activities, and (iii) to assess the benefits accrued from tourism by local communities. Data were collected from 150 households using a semi-structured questionnaire. A 3-point Likert scale was used to obtain information on residents' involvement and perceived benefits in tourism activities. Data were then analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 20. Results show that almost all respondents (97%) were involved in at least one activity related to tourism. The activities include hotel and local restaurant services, agro-tourism, environmental protection, transport services, adventure tourism, local handcrafting, revenue sharing and walking safari. In most of these activities, residents' involvement was rather moderate. Overall, findings show that tourism provides array of benefits that contribute to the wellbeing of people. However, lack of transparency on revenues from UMNP was identified as ingrained challenge that affected cooperation and trust between residents and leaders. These results underline the need for the Local Government Authority to contextualize governance challenges taking into account the social-political environment. These results underline the need for changes in social-political environment with emphasis on increased accountability and transparency. Addressing these challenges will build greater trust between community members, village leaders and UMNP authority in pursuit of economic development, conservation requirements and sustainability in tourism industry.

Keywords: Benefits, Community Development, Conservation, Tourism

1. Introduction

Many developing countries now regard tourism as an important and integral part of their economic development strategies. For sub-Saharan African countries, the industry presents an opportunity to diversify export earnings and contribute to economic growth from sources other than primary commodities [24]. The industry is placed as one of the major means through which development of local communities can be achieved [3, 4, 25, 30, 32, 35]. Tanzania is endowed with various natural resources that form a main stay of tourist attractions. During the past decade, tourism increased its contribution to GDP, from US \$615 million in

2005 to US\$1.75 billion in 2010, making it the largest source of foreign exchange and constituting about 8% of the Tanzanian GDP [31].

Udzungwa Mountains in Tanzania's southern highlands are internationally recognised as an area of rich biodiversity and a hotspot for a range of unique endemic species. Tourism activities in these areas are mainly nature-based and recreation which are categorized as cultural ecosystem services [12, 17]. These present high potential for conservation of protected areas if local communities gain a sense of ownership of the natural resources. Effectiveness of nature-based tourism in providing incentives for sustainable ecosystem management often depends *inter alia* on sufficient

returns to neighbouring communities through elaborate profit-sharing mechanisms. Community involvement in the tourism development process can be viewed from at least two perspectives: in the decision-making process and in the benefits of tourism development [39, 40]. It is widely acknowledged that participation of local communities in enterprises linked to natural resources determines the extent to which such strategies achieve conservation and economic development goals [5, 8, 13, 23, 26, 33]. Thus, community involvement is indispensable if tourism is to contribute to economic development and attain sustainable levels of growth [7, 16, 19, 21, 25, 27, 36]. Despite the growing significance of tourism in the country, there is limited information on the level at which local communities are integrated in the industry. The objectives of this study were (i) to examine the extent to which communities living close to Udzungwa Mountain National Park participate in tourism, (ii) to identify the determinants of individual involvement in tourism activities, and (iii) to assess the benefits accrued from tourism by local communities.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Area

This study was conducted in villages surrounding Udzungwa Mountain National Park (UMNP). This park is located at 7°46'S and 36°43'E with a size of 1990 km² in Kilombero District, Morogoro Region. The park is famous for high species diversity and endemism. Tourism in UMNP revolves around hiking and trekking. Kilombero district is

situated in a vast floodplain, between the Kilombero River in the south-east and the Udzungwa-Mountains in the north-west. The area is predominantly rural with the semi-urban district headquarters in Ifakara. The majority of the villagers are subsistence farmers of maize and rice. The district has an estimated 407,880 inhabitants of whom, 205,091 (50.3%) are females and 202,789 (49.7%) are males [41].

2.2. Data Collection

The field surveys were conducted in February, 2013 in six villages namely MsolwaIteja, SanjeBarabarani, SanjeShuleni, Mang'ula A, Mang'ula B and Mwaya (Fig 1). The villages were selected on the basis of proximity to the UMNP. A cross-sectional design was applied to enroll 150 randomly selected respondents. Approximately equal sample size (average 25) was drawn from each village. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire covered the following aspects: social-demographic characteristics, personal involvement in tourism activities and benefits accrued from tourism. A 3-point Likert scale (i.e. 1 = "not at all", 2 = "somewhat", and 3 = "a lot") was used to rate the level of involvement and benefits in tourism activities. Mean scores were generated and categorized into three levels (low, ≤ 1.5 ; moderate, 1.6-2.5 and high, 2.6-3.0). In addition, qualitative data were obtained from four focus group discussions (FGDs) – each consisting of 8 to 12 members. Each group meeting involved, among other issues, discussion on stakeholders' involvement in tourism activities and benefit sharing in the community.

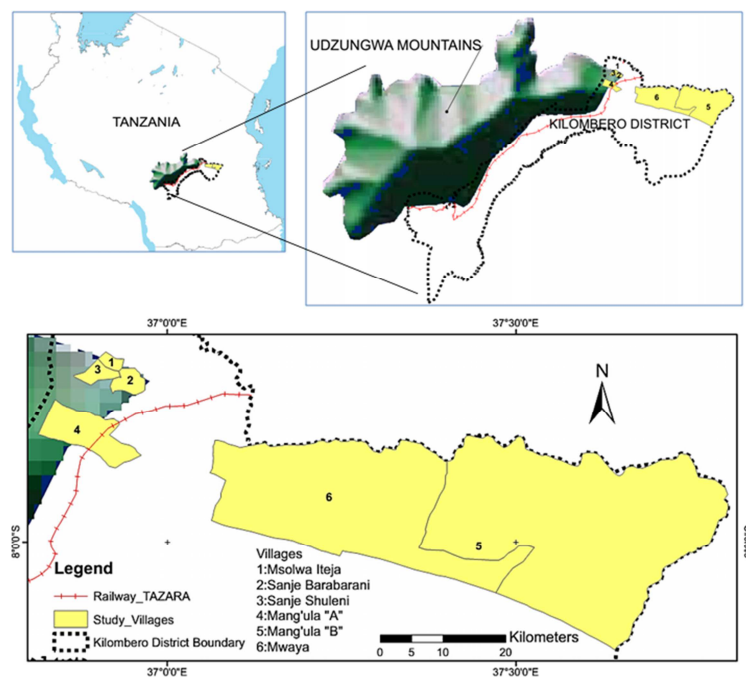


Fig. 1. Map showing surveyed villages around the Udzungwa Mountains, Tanzania.

2.3. Statistical Analysis

Data were entered, edited and analyzed in Statistical

Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. The analysis included descriptive statistics to determine distributions of means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages. To

identify the factors that may influence involvement of individuals in tourism activities, linear regression analysis was performed. Individual scores for each activity were summed to form a composite index for the overall involvement in tourism activities. During regression analysis, the index was used as a dependent variable against age, sex, education level, marital status, distance to the park, length of residence, and employment status of the respondent as independent variables.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Characteristics of Respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. Age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 50 years. Mean age was 30.5 ± 6.9 years (29.1±7.1, females and 31.4±6.7, males). Majority of the respondents (55.4%) were in the age of 25 to 45 years. More males (62.7%) than females (37.3%) were involved in tourism activities. The average household size was 4.5 members, which is slightly higher than the district average of 4.3 but lower than the national average of 4.8 [41]. With regard to education level, 38% of the respondents had completed primary education while 50.7% and 17% had completed secondary and tertiary studies, respectively. Most families depend on agriculture (50.7%) and small business (36.7%) for their livelihood.

3.2. Involvement of Local Communities in Tourism related Activities

Tourism in UMNP involves various attractions including nature, views, climate, recreation and culture. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents were involved in at least one activity related to tourism. The activities include hotel and local restaurant services, agro-tourism, environmental protection, transport services and adventure tourism (means score 1.5-2.0 or moderate involvement). Others were local handcrafting, revenue sharing and walking safari (means score <1.5 or low involvement). Since agriculture is the mainstay in this community, supply of agricultural produce to hotel and restaurants is of high significance. In Udzungwa Mountains, adventure tourism is a central activity. It entails viewing waterfalls and primate species such as Crested Mangabey (*Cercocebusgaleritussanjei*) and the Udzungwa

red colobus (*Procolobusbadiusgordonorum*) which are only found in UMNP. Through adventure tourism local residents (usually young men) were hired as touring guides.

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents (N=150).

Variables	n	%
Age (Years)		
18-24	37	24.7
25-35	64	42.7
36-45	19	12.6
46+	30	20.0
Sex		
Female	56	37.3
Male	94	62.7
Education level		
Primary	57	38.0
Secondary	76	50.7
Tertiary	17	11.3
Marital status		
Single	55	36.7
Married	64	42.7
Divorced/ Widow/widower	31	20.6
Main source of income		
Agriculture	76	50.7
Small business	55	36.7
Employment (civil service)	19	12.6

Results from a 3-point Likert scale show that the overall mean score for involvement in tourism related activities was 1.6 (Table 2). This means that respondents scored 'somewhat' for most activities. Further, results show that none of the activity scored 'high' in involvement. In general, tourism in this area is still limited in scale partly because the industry itself is not well developed. Deficiency in infrastructure, travel facilities and service industries present a major challenge for the delivery of world-class service quality. This explains why the clientele of the UMNP tourism are mainly budget and backpacker tourists [34]. Thus, a considerable amount of investment will be required for the improvement of transportation infrastructures and networks necessary for tourism to occupy a market niche. During focus group discussions, lack of transparency on revenues gained from UMNP was reported as ingrained challenge that needed attention. There were suspicions on how well funds from UMNP were used by the village leaders. Village members did not have influence or control over village resources.

Table 2. Community involvement in tourism related activities (N=150).

Variable	Not at all n(%)	Somewhat n (%)	A lot n (%)	Mean	S.D
Hotel & local restaurant services	5(12.5)	12(30.0)	23(57.5)	2.0	0.8
Agro-tourism	7(13.7)	30(58.8)	14(27.5)	1.8	0.8
Environmental protection	8(19.5)	20(48.8)	13(31.7)	1.7	1.0
Transport services	13(28.9)	18(40.0)	14(31.1)	1.6	1.0
Adventure tourism	14(35.9)	18(46.2)	7(17.9)	1.5	0.7
Local handcrafting	10(41.7)	12(50.0)	2(8.3)	1.4	0.7
Revenue sharing	9(45.0)	8(40.0)	3(15.0)	1.4	0.7
Walking safari	13(46.4)	14(50.0)	1(3.6)	1.3	0.6
Overall mean				1.6	1.1

Participants of the focus groups claimed that planning and decisions regarding resources and community benefits associated with the park remained entirely in the hands of leaders. Cooperation and trust between citizens and leaders were limited although these two are necessary to enhance participation in collective activities [29]. This scenario presents a clear example of marginalized voices of community members. Indeed, it shows failure of the ostensible aim of participatory approaches to development that advocates for increased people's influence or control over development initiatives [10,18]. On the other hand, experience shows that protected areas can deliver multiple benefits that contribute to wellbeing but require a strong social and political framework in which to spread benefits equitably [11]. In this regard, success cannot be achieved in conditions of weak governance, unrealistic expectation and inadequate engagement of stakeholders and mechanisms to transfer benefits [20]. Poor governance has negative consequences both on community development and conservation of resources. There is compelling evidence that communities that lack sense of ownership or of benefit-sharing are less inclined in looking after the natural resources [1, 4]. Experience from Uganda, for example, shows four key components of successful revenue-sharing programmes are needed: long-term institutional support, appropriate identification of the target community and project type, transparency and accountability, and adequate funding [4]. Thus, these aspects need to be taken into account for efficient

utilization of resources and local economic development.

3.3. Determinants of Individual Involvement in Tourism Activities

Table 3 shows that age, sex and education level of an individual were determinants of involvement in tourism related activities ($p < 0.05$). More men than women were involved in tourism related activities ($p = 0.01$). It has been documented that women are often less engaged in business because of barriers associated with socialization practices, stereotypes, educational experiences, household chores and lack of networks of business contacts [9, 15, 22, 28]. It is possible that some of these factors were responsible for the observed pattern in our study. Findings also show that respondents in their middle age (25-35 years) were more likely than those in younger or older groups to engage in tourism activities ($p = 0.024$). On the other hand, having tertiary education was associated with high level of involvement in tourism activities ($p = 0.02$). Respondents with lower level of education, especially women, often remarked that they did not have skills and capacities to engage in tourism activities. This challenge is not exceptional to this community. Elsewhere, lack of education and the wide range of business and marketing skills necessary to manage day-to-day operations have been identified as significant barriers to engagement in tourism [37].

Table 3. Linear regression analysis for determinants of involvement in tourism related activities ($N=150$).

Potential determinant	β	SE	T	p-value
Constant	4.14	0.87	4.76	0.00
Respondent is in middle age (25-45)	1.14	0.62	2.27	0.02
Sex of respondent is male	0.96	0.37	2.59	0.01
Respondent is married	0.22	0.14	0.76	0.45
Distance to national park is <15 km	0.01	0.01	1.53	0.13
Length of residence is >10 yrs	0.00	0.04	0.06	0.96
Respondent has tertiary level of education	1.26	0.53	2.36	0.02
Respondent is not formally employed	-0.41	0.48	-0.86	0.39

$R^2 = 0.42$, Significant at $p < 0.05$

3.4. Benefits of Tourism

Respondents were inquired whether tourism had any benefit at the family level. The question was not simply whether they enjoyed personal benefits from tourism but the degree to which each of the potential benefit contributed to household living condition. Table 4 shows a wide range of acquired benefits. These include acquisition of both productive assets (e.g. increased value of land) and non-productive assets (e.g. television) and access to basic needs (e.g. food supply) and other services (e.g. electricity). Overall, data show that tourism has important role on improving standard of living of community members (mean

score 1.9). Increase in food supply, paying school fees and enhancing small business were among the most frequently mentioned benefits. At community level, the benefits included supporting schools, health facilities and supply of potable water. Community members also received environmental education which was designed as a strategy for conserving biodiversity. Through this program, UMNP authority raises environmental awareness of community members. The program works with community groups, such as youth and women, and provides support in planting trees for supply of fruits or delimitating the farms.

Table 4. Benefits of tourism at household level.(N=150).

Attribute	Not at all n(%)	Somewhat n (%)	A lot n (%)	Mean	S.D
Improves standard of living	6(7.5)	43(53.8)	31(38.8)	1.9	0.3
I own a bicycle because of tourism	7(21.2)		18(54.5)	1.9	0.7
Increases food supply	2(5.7)	29(82.9)	4(11.4)	1.8	0.2
Helps me to pay school fees	4(10.3)		7(17.9)	1.7	0.2
Enhances small business	13(24.5)	30(56.6)	10(18.9)	1.6	0.5
Increases value of house and land	26(33.8)	38(49.4)	13(16.9)	1.5	0.6
Led to installation of electricity	23(38.3)	20(33.3)	17(28.3)	1.5	0.8
I own a car because of tourism	3(42.9)		2(28.6)	1.4	0.9
I own a generator because of tourism	3(33.3)		1(11.1)	1.4	0.6
I own a motorbike because of tourism	4(40.0)		2(20.0)	1.4	0.8
Helps savings income	19(38.8)	26(53.1)	4(8.2)	1.4	0.6
Helps to improve farming skills	15(46.9)	13(40.6)	4(12.5)	1.3	0.7
I own a Television because of tourism	5(50.0)		5(50.0)	1.2	0.6

However, environmental education was not perceived as real benefit by some members of the village as they associated it with punitive and restrictive policies pursued by the park. Others had the view that tourism provided minimal economic benefits to the local community and so they demanded more support than they had received. The above argument suggests that creating a platform that is more inclusive in planning and decision making processes is likely to result in reduced tensions among different actors in the community. Through such a platform, stakeholders will have a chance to negotiate their demands and seek to agree upon. Limited participation of local communities in decision making process in the sampled villages is a reflection of what is referred in [40]:

“...participation in tourism development process in many developing countries has been recognized as helping people get more economic benefits...rather than creating opportunities for local people to have a say in decision-making process of the tourism development”

In this regard, it is important to note that while the role of tourism has been critical for achieving sufficient support and legitimacy among local people in many places [14], it is widely posited that, increased involvement of local community increases trust, positive future biodiversity outcomes and can promote conservation of protected areas [2, 38, 42]. Indeed, considering the fact that at least 96 vertebrate species are endemic in these mountain ranges [6], increasing stakeholder involvement is critical for sustainable management of resources and the overall tourism development.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study shows moderate involvement in tourism activities among people living close to UMNP. Through this involvement, the industry provides array of benefits that contribute to the wellbeing of people. However, residents' involvement and benefits in tourism activities is limited by underdeveloped infrastructures necessary to attract international tourism and increase service industries. Inadequate representation of community members in planning and decision making process poses a challenge to

growth in tourism. Further, women and individuals with low level of formal education seemed to be disfranchised groups in tourism activities. The described limits to community participation may not be only specific to tourism development but rather a common problem in day-to-day community activities – a situation that could undermine collective actions for economic and social development in the area. These results underline the need for changes in social-political environment with emphasis on increased accountability and transparency. Addressing these challenges will build greater trust between community members, village leaders and UMNP authority in pursuit of economic development, conservation requirements and sustainability in tourism industry.

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