Fostering Sustainable Tourism in Kenya

Kariuki Muigua

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Kariuki Muigua*

Abstract

The paper critically interrogates sustainable tourism. It defines sustainable tourism and identifies its salient elements. The paper further discusses how the concept of sustainable tourism has been embraced in Kenya. It also examines the challenges facing sustainable tourism in the country and proposes recommendations towards fostering sustainable tourism in Kenya.

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1.0 Introduction

Tourism has been defined as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual place of residence for personal or business/professional purposes[1]. Tourism involves both leisure and business travel, as well as the philosophy and practice of travelling, the industry of attracting, hosting, and entertaining visitors, and the industry of running tours[2]. Some of the main concepts related to tourism are leisure, entertainment, hospitality and recreation[3]. Tourism can be classified into domestic and international[4]. Domestic tourism entails tourism activities conducted with one's own country[5]. International tourism on the other hand involves tourism activities conducted outside a person's country of residence[6].

It has been observed that tourism is among the world's largest industries[7]. Further, it has been asserted that tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the world and can provide an essential economic boost for countries pitching themselves as holiday destinations[8]. Tourism is one of the key sectors driving social-economic development in the continent of Africa[9]. In Kenya, tourism remains the cornerstone of the economy, and a leading foreign exchange earner for the country[10]. Kenya has been described as an ideal

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[1] World Tourism Organization., 'Glossary of Tourism Terms.' Available at https://www.unwto.org/glossary-tourism-terms (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[2] IGI Global., 'What is Tourism?' Available at https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/which-sociology-of-urban-tourism-in-the-day-after-viral-society/30288 (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[3] Netto. A.P., 'What is Tourism? Definitions, Theoretical Phases and Principles' Available at https://books.google.co.ke/books?hl=en&lr=&id=3XAHXFpPYSIC&oi=fnd&pg=PA43&ots=aa8oHwbfdx&sig=bxoclvunLn-3c4Z23uEQ9Zre3OY&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[4] World Tourism Organization., 'Glossary of Tourism Terms.' Op Cit

[5] Ibid

[6] Ibid

[7] Sinclair-Maragh. G., 'The 5Ps of the Tourism World Today.' Available at https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/the-5ps-of-the-tourism-world-today/ (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[8] Sustainability Management School., '5 Examples of Sustainable Tourism around the World.' Available at https://sumas.ch/5-examples-of-sustainable-tourism-around-the-world/ (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[9] United Nations Environment Programme., 'Sustainable Tourism in Africa: Focus on Ecotourism.' Available at https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/34622;jsessionid=5F4FF95871609496F19F0B9AF5A09865 (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[10] Republic of Kenya., 'Ministry of Tourism: Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2010 on Enhancing Sustainable Tourism in Kenya.' Government Printer, Nairobi

tourist destination with many attractions ranging from the sandy beaches at the coast, diverse flora and fauna, game parks, cultural heritage, scenic landscapes among others[11]. According to the Annual Tourism Sector Performance Report, in 2022, Kenya international tourist arrivals were 1,483,752 which represents 70.45% increase as compared to 2021 arrivals of 870,465[12]. The inbound receipts grew up to Kshs. 268.09 Billion compared to Kshs. 146.51 Billion in 2021 which is a growth of 83%[13]. The tourism sector in Kenya accounts for 10.4% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 5.5% of Kenya's formal employment and contributes to 4.2% of National Gross Fixed Capital Formation (new investments)[14]. Moreover, the sector has high multiplier effects as its growth stimulates further development in other activities[15]. The tourism industry is therefore thriving in Kenya.

However, despite the viability of the tourism sector in Kenya, Africa and across the globe, it has been argued that tourism has historically had devastating effects on the environment, people and their cultural identities[16]. Tourism can destroy the very resources on which it depends, thus, the importance of managing its development in a responsible way[17]. African economies are highly dependent on natural resource sectors such as mining, *tourism(emphasis added)*, agriculture, forestry and fishing among others and ensuring that these resources are sustainable is crucial for future generations[18]. This has led to the emergence of the concept of sustainable tourism.

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[11] Republic of Kenya., 'Kenya, Africa's Leading Tourist Destination.' Available at https://kenyahighcommission.ca/tourism/ (Accessed on 19/08/2023)
[12] Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife & Heritage., 'Annual Tourism Sector Performance Report-2022.' Available at https://www.tourism.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ANNUAL-TOURISM-SECTOR-PERFORMANCE-REPORT-2022-2.pdf (Accessed on 19/08/2023)
[13] Ibid
[14] Ibid
[15] Republic of Kenya., 'Ministry of Tourism: Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2010 on Enhancing Sustainable Tourism in Kenya.' Op Cit
[16] Sustainability Management School., '5 Examples of Sustainable Tourism around the World.' Op Cit
[17] Sinclair-Maragh. G., 'The 5Ps of the Tourism World Today.' Op Cit
[18] United Nations Environment Programme., 'Sustainable Tourism in Africa: Focus on Ecotourism.' Op Cit

The paper critically interrogates sustainable tourism. It defines sustainable tourism and identifies its salient elements. The paper further discusses how the concept of sustainable tourism has been embraced in Kenya. It also examines the challenges facing sustainable tourism in the country and proposes recommendations towards fostering sustainable tourism in Kenya.

2.0 Interpreting Sustainable Tourism

The World Tourism Organization defines sustainable tourism as that which takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities[19]. Sustainable tourism factors in the economic, environmental, and social aspects of tourism, ensuring that it does not have any negative consequences on the environment[20]. Sustainable tourism has also been linked with eco-tourism which is primarily a low impact nature of tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly through contribution to conservation and/or indirectly by providing revenues sufficient for local people to value, and therefore, protect their wildlife and heritage areas[21]. Sustainable tourism involves the adoption of sustainable practices with the aim of minimizing the negative impacts and maximizing the positive effects of tourism[22]. Sustainable tourism acknowledges the negative impacts that tourism can have on a country or destination[23]. Tourism is associated with a lot of travelling, a situation that contributes to the problem of climate change due to greenhouse gas emissions when

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[19] World Tourism Organization., 'Sustainable Development.' Available at https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[20] Sustainability Success., '10 Sustainable Tourism Examples.' Available at https://sustainability-success.com/sustainable-tourism-examples/#google_vignette (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[21] Chebus. P., 'The Effect of Ecotourism Initiatives on the Livelihood of Local Community around Kit Mikayi Site in Kisumu County, Kenya.' *International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies*., Volume 7, No. 1 (2018)

[22] Angeli. S., 'What is Sustainable Travel: 8 Best Practices.' Available at https://ecobnb.com/blog/2022/03/sustainable-travel-good-practices/ (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[23] Ibid

modes of transport such as airplanes are used[24]. Sustainable tourism envisages developing tourism in a sustainable way so as to preserve the resources of destinations, inclusive of the people, culture, and natural and physical environments[25]. Sustainable tourism has also been described as 'green' tourism[26]. The greening of the tourism industry in pursuit of moving towards sustainability has risen in the global agenda of Sustainable Development due to its vast potential and increased awareness of tourists demanding greening of the industry and better information on the effects of their travelling to the surrounding natural and social environments[27].

According to the World Tourism Organization, sustainable tourism must conserve environmental resources and protect biodiversity; respect and preserve the cultures of host communities whilst benefiting them and address the needs of the visitors and industry whilst providing socio-economic benefit to all[28]. Sustainable Tourism therefore encapsulates various facets including making optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity[29]; respecting the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities; conserving their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contributing to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance;* and ensuring viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation[30]

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[24] CBI., 'How to be a Sustainable Tourism Business.' Available at https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/how-be-sustainable-tourism-business (Accessed on 19/08/2023)
[25] Sinclair-Maragh. G., 'The 5Ps of the Tourism World Today.' Op Cit
[26] International Labour Organization., 'Sustainable Tourism.' Available at https://www.ilo.org/global/industries-and-sectors/hotels-catering-tourism/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=The%20hotels%2C%20catering%20and%20tourism,employment%20in%20other%20related%20sectors. (Accessed on 19/08/2023)
[27] Ibid
[28] World Tourism Organization., 'Sustainable Development.' Op Cit
[29] Ibid
[30] Ibid

It has been argued that sustainable tourism is anchored on four pillars which are environmental responsibility, social equity, economic development and cultural vitality[31]. The International Labour Organization (ILO) further observes that sustainable tourism is based on the pillars of social justice, economic development and environmental integrity[32]. Sustainable tourism is also linked with elements such as fostering energy efficiency, promoting water conservation and waste management, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and carbon offsetting schemes, enhancing community relations, labour practices and human rights, promoting positive impacts on local cultures and ensuring the health and safety of all stakeholders[33]. Integration of these pillars and elements can drive sustainability in the tourism sector[34]. Sustainable tourism seeks to achieve several goals including economic viability, local prosperity, employment quality, social equity, visitor fulfilment, local control, community wellbeing, cultural richness, physical integrity, conservation of biological diversity, promoting resource efficiency and ensuring environmental purity[35].

It has been argued that sustainable tourism can enhance realization of the Sustainable Development agenda[36]. Sustainability in tourism is strongly connected to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), developed by the United Nations as a call to action to promote global prosperity while protecting the planet[37]. Tourism is recognised as a key sector in the challenge to meet the 17 SDGs[38]. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development envisages the promotion of sustainable

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[31] The Four Pillar Approach to Sustainable Tourism., Available at https://thisiscarpedm.com/the-4-pillar-approach-to-sustainable-tourism/ (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[32] International Labour Organization., 'ILO Guidelines on Decent Work and Socially Responsible Tourism.' Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_546337.pdf (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[33] CBI., 'How to be a Sustainable Tourism Business.' Op Cit

[34] Ibid

[35] World Tourism Organization., 'Making Tourism More Sustainable : A Guide for Policy Makers', UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p.11-12 Available at http://www.unep.fr/shared/publications/pdf/DTIx0592xPA-TourismPolicyEN.pdf (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[36] CBI., 'How to be a Sustainable Tourism Business.' Op Cit

[37] Ibid

[38] Ibid

tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products[39]. The recognition of the role of tourism in sustainable development and the emphasis placed in the SDGs on the development of public policies for sustainable tourism is a landmark breakthrough that provides a unique opportunity for all governments to create a sound and favourable policy foundation towards fostering sustainable tourism[40]. Fostering sustainable tourism is therefore vital in realizing the Sustainable Development agenda.

3.0 Sustainable Tourism in Kenya: Prospects and Pitfalls

Fostering sustainable tourism is not only a point of focus in Kenya but across Africa. Africa Union's *Agenda 2063* identifies tourism and hospitality as one of the priority areas in realization of the aspiration of a prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and Sustainable Development[41]. Among the targets of Agenda 2063 in the tourism sector is fostering eco-friendly tourism in Africa; increasing intra-African tourism; implementing an African tourism strategy and creating/nurturing an African tourism organization[42]. Realizing the vision of Agenda 2063 can foster sustainable tourism in Africa.

In addition, the *African Tourism Strategic Framework[43]* seeks to provide a strategic action plan geared towards development of a competitive, sustainable and integrated tourism

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[39] United Nations., 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf (Accessed on 19/08/2023); See also the Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 8.9

[40] Republic of Kenya., 'Second Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.' Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26360VNR_2020_Kenya_Report.pdf (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[41] Africa Union., 'Agenda 2063.' Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-framework_document_book.pdf (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[42] Ibid

[43] Africa Union., 'African Tourism Strategic Framework (2019-2028).' Available at https://www.tralac.org/documents/resources/african-union/3118-african-tourism-strategic-framework-2019-2028-executive-summary/file.html#:~:text=The%20African%20Tourism%20Strategic%20Framework,for%20a%20continental%20tourism%20development (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

industry in Africa[44]. Among the guiding principles of the Framework is tourism development in Africa while pursuing sustainability principles and ensuring a balance between economic benefits and socio-cultural and environmental costs[45]. The Framework seeks to establish and operationalize an African Tourism Organisation as an institutional coordinator and driver for continental tourism development[46]. The Framework is guided by the vision of Africa becoming a preferred destination for tourism offering unique and diverse African experience and committed to *sustainable and inclusive tourism(emphasis added)* development that contributes to regional integration and the socio-economic well-being of the African People[47]. It also recognizes the role of sustainable tourism in preserving the rich cultural and natural heritage in Africa[48]. Implementing this Framework can foster sustainable tourism in Africa.

Further, the *East African Community Tourism Marketing Strategy[49]* seeks to develop and promote inclusive and sustainable intra-regional and international tourism across the East African Community (EAC) region[50]. It urges member states of the EAC to implement key strategic actions in order to enhance their competitiveness, position the EAC region as the leading sustainable tourism destination in Africa and realize the full potential of the sector in the region[51]. The strategy identifies tourism as one of the sectors that can greatly contribute to inclusive growth and Sustainable Development[52]. Realizing the ideal of this Strategy can enhance sustainable tourism with the EAC community.

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[44] Ibid
[45] Ibid
[46] Ibid
[47] Ibid
[48] Ibid
[49] East African Community., 'Tourism Marketing Strategy 2021-2025.' Available at https://www.eac.int/tourism/78-sector/tourism-wildlife-management#:~:text=The%20EAC%20Tourism%20Marketing%20Strategy,tourism%20across%20the%20EAC%20region' (Accessed on 19/08/2023)
[50] Ibid
[51] Ibid
[52] Ibid

The idea of sustainable tourism is also recognized in Kenya. The *Tourism Act[53]* is an Act of Parliament that provides for the development, management, marketing and regulation of *sustainable tourism* and tourism-related activities and services in Kenya. The Act defines sustainable tourism as that meets the needs of present visitors and hosts while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future[54]. The Act envisages the formulation of a National Tourism Strategy in order to foster sustainable tourism in Kenya[55]. The Act requires the National Tourism Strategy to prescribe innovative schemes, incentives and ethics to be applied in the development and marketing of sustainable tourism, including public private partnerships[56]. The Act also establishes the Tourism Regulatory Authority whose functions include inter alia to formulate guidelines and prescribe measures for sustainable establishments and operations to realize sustainable tourism development throughout the country and to monitor and assess tourist activities and services to enhance continuous improvement and adherence to sound principles and practices of sustainable tourism[57]. The Act further establishes the Tourism Research Institute which is tasked with collecting and analyzing information relating to processes or activities likely to impact on sustainable tourism researching on sustainable tourism and other emerging areas[58]. The tourism Act also envisions the use of tax and other fiscal incentives, disincentives or fees to induce or promote the development of sustainable tourism in Kenya[59].

Sustainable tourism in Kenya is also recognized under the *National Tourism Blueprint[60]*. The Blueprint seeks to achieve a booming and *sustainable tourism* industry that is vibrant and innovative, and where local, African and international visitors can freely explore

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[53] Tourism Act., No. 28 of 2011., Government Printer, Nairobi
[54] Ibid, S 2
[55] Ibid, Part II
[56] Ibid, S 3 (2) (e)
[57] Ibid, S 7
[58] Ibid, S 53
[59] Ibid, S 106
[60] Republic of Kenya., 'National Tourism Blueprint 2030.' Available at https://www.tourism.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/NTB2030-Web-Version-1.0-1.pdf (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

tourist destinations in Kenya[61]. It identifies the need to set policies and identify programmes that will make tourism a catalyst to sustainable national development, engine in protecting the environment and preservation of cultural heritage, creating shared value of tourism to surrounding communities and enhancing gender equality[62].

In addition, sustainable tourism in Kenya is also provided for under *Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2010 on Enhancing Sustainable Tourism in Kenya[63]* which advocates the need to shift from traditional tourism products to sustainable tourism[64]. According to the Sessional Paper, it would be vital to invest in sustainable tourism products and services if the country has to deliver an environmentally sustainable and socially responsible tourism towards the aspirations espoused in Vision 2030[65]. It acknowledges that Kenya's tourism industry is closely linked to the ecologically sustainable development of the country's natural and heritage resources hence the need to promote sustainable tourism[66]. According to the sessional paper, sustainable tourism enhances economic development, environmental sustainability and social justice[67]. In order to foster sustainable tourism, the Sessional paper requires that tourism be undertaken in a manner that does not compromise the quality and value of the resource, or degrade the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems[68]. Further, it requires tourism to be based on the principles of inter and intra generational equity wherein tourism management is based on long term objectives where present generations make choices that will benefit future generations[69]. Sessional Paper

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[61] Ibid

[62] Ibid

[63] Republic of Kenya., 'Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2010 on Enhancing Sustainable Tourism in Kenya.' Available at https://repository.kippra.or.ke/bitstream/handle/123456789/1125/REPUBLIC_OF_KENYA_MINISTRY_OF_TOURISM_SE.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (Accessed on 19/08/2023)

[64] Ibid

[65] Ibid

[66] Ibid

[67] Ibid

[68] Ibid

[69] Ibid

No. 1 of 2010 therefore succinctly captures the salient components that are vital in fostering sustainable tourism in Kenya.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the concept of sustainable tourism is well recognized in Kenya. It has been observed that the country has implemented various measures to promote sustainable tourism, including an eco-rating scheme that is consistent with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), an annual eco-warrior award, and has developed green destinations guidelines[70]. The Eco-rating certification scheme affirms Kenya's commitment to promote sustainable tourism products and services[71]. The ecowarrior award is an annual prize that recognizes individuals and companies who promote sustainable tourism in Kenya through measures such as promoting local economies, addressing climate change through adaptation and mitigation, promoting biodiversity conservation, promoting responsible tourism practices in operations and promoting heritage and cultural integration[72]. These initiatives have enhanced ecotourism practices in Kenya such as investing in renewable energy sources, waste segregation among others[73]. Kenya also recently embraced the green tour project that was designed to create a socially and environmentally sustainable Kenya tourism supply chain by providing guidance, support, and best practices to African tourism companies to adapt and replicate globally proven sustainable consumer products supply chain methodologies[74]; increasing the implementation of best eco and socially responsible practices among African tour operators, accommodation providers, and their suppliers and marketing sustainable tourism products, strengthening business and destination

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[70] United Nations Environment Programme., 'Sustainable Tourism in Africa: Focus on Ecotourism.' Op Cit

[71] Global Sustainable Tourism Council., ' Ecotourism Kenya Eco-rating Certification Scheme Achieves GSTC Recognition' Available at https://www.gstcouncil.org/ecotourism-kenya-eco-rating-certification-scheme-achieves-gstc-recognition/ (Accessed on 20/08/2023)

[72] Ecotourism Kenya., 'Ecowarrior Awards 2023.' Available at https://ecotourismkenya.org/ecowarrioraward/#:~:text=The%20award%20would%20like%20to,in%20promoting%20sustainable%20tourism%20practices. (Accessed on 20/08/2023)

[73] Ecotourism World., 'A Sustainable Vacation in Kenya.' Available at https://ecotourism-world.com/a-sustainable-vacation-in-kenya/ (Accessed on 20/08/2023)

[74] Ibid

promotion between international buyers and Kenyan suppliers[75]. It has been observed that the foregoing measures can motivate the tourism industry in Kenya to embrace practices that are ecologically and ethically sustainable[76].

There have also been efforts towards fostering community- based tourism in Kenya[77]. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has been pushed as one of the strategies for poverty alleviation and it might enhance the sustainability of marginalized regions and communities[78]. CBT is characterized by the fact that it is the community itself which has control over tourism management and gets a significant proportion of the benefits generated by such activity[79]. This kind of tourism has emerged as a possible solution to the negative effects of mass tourism in developing countries[80]. CBT can foster sustainable tourism since it has a positive impact on the conservation of natural and cultural resources in regions and enhances socio-economic development among local communities[81]. Some of the CBT initiatives in Kenya include cultural villages, Lodges owned and managed by community such IL Ngwesi in Laikipia county, beadwork and craft, bandas and cottages owned and managed by communities and excursions in forests, caves and historic sites[82]. CBT can therefore foster sustainable tourism in Kenya.

In addition, it has been asserted that the conservancy model which has been embraced in Kenya has fostered sustainable tourism by permitting the coexistence of local

[75] Ecotourism Kenya., 'Green tour Kenya Project Comes to a Close.' Available at https://ecotourismkenya.org/greentour/greentour-kenya-project-comes-to-a-close/ (Accessed on 20/08/2023)

[76] Ibid

[77] United Nations Environment Programme., 'Sustainable Tourism in Africa: Focus on Ecotourism.' Op Cit

[78] Juma. L., & Khademi-Vidra. A., 'Community-Based Tourism and Sustainable Development of Rural Regions in Kenya; Perceptions of the Citizenry.' *Sustainability*, 11(17) 2019

[79] Ibid

[80] Ibid

[81] Armstrong. R., 'An analysis of the Conditions for Success of Community Based Tourism Enterprises.' *Int. Cent. Responsible Tour*. 2012, 21, 1–52

[82] United Nations Environment Programme., 'Status of Community Based Tourism in Kenya.' Available at https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/33373;jsessionid=082194E711446103C2FE7B52B468AD4C (Accessed on 20/08/2023)

communities and wildlife[83]. Conservancies have begun to spring up across the country, particularly in areas surrounding the Maasai Mara Game Reserve, Laikipia and Northern Kenya where an abundance of wildlife can be found[84]. It has been argued that conservancies provide connected landscapes which complement national parks and reserves while enabling communities to benefit from wildlife management[85]. In the Maasai Mara, for example, 15 conservancies protect over 450,000 acres of a critical habitat for the great Serengeti-Mara wildebeest migration[86]. Some of the well known conservancies in Kenya include the Northern Rangeland Trust, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and the Ol Pejeta Wildlife Conservancy[87]. Conservancies can foster sustainable tourism since they allow tourists to gain an insight into local lifestyles; allow community members are able to stay on their land and generate a sustainable income; reduce the rate of encroachment to wildlife areas; promote socio-economic development since the fees and lease money paid to the conservancies is sometimes directly reinvested in the land and the communities and avoid the overexploitation of the environment since they have fewer visitors and beds per square kilometre which creates a much more personalised experience for tourists that is environmental friendly[88]. The use of conservancies can thus aid in the realization of sustainable tourism in Kenya.

From the foregoing it is evident that there is immense potential for sustainable tourism in Kenya. The country has been ranked among the top performers on the sustainability

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[83] Tubey. W., Kyalo. D., & Mulwa. A., 'Socio-Cultural Conservation Strategies and Sustainability of Community Based Tourism Projects in Kenya: A Case of Maasai Mara Conservancies.' *Journal of Sustainable Development;* Vol. 12, No. 6 (2019)

[84] Ibid

[85] Ibid

[86] Tubey. W., Kyalo. D., & Mulwa. A., 'Environmental Conservation Strategies and Sustainability of Community Based Tourism in Kenya: A Case of Maasai Mara Conservancies.' *International Journal of Tourism Policy.*, Volume 10, No. 2 (2020)

[87] Ibid

[88] Ibid

of the tourism industry[89]. However, despite the promises of sustainable tourism in Kenya, several challenges hinder effective realization of this idea in Kenya.

Among the key problems facing sustainable tourism in Kenya is climate change[90]. Adverse impacts arising from changes in climate are already being observed as evidenced by vanishing glaciers on Mt. Kenya and Kilimanjaro, rise in sea level, loss of biodiversity, among others[91]. People and the environment are increasingly suffering from the effects of natural disasters such as floods, landslides and prolonged droughts[92]. There is need to practice sustainable tourism to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Further, it has been observed that poaching hinders sustainable tourism in Kenya[93]. The rise in demand for wildlife products in the international market has led to a resurgence of elephant and rhino poaching[94]. Escalating incidences of poaching, smuggling and trafficking of their trophies like ivory and rhino horns has led to loss of wildlife in their natural habitat[95]. An increase in poaching is deemed proportionate to tourist security and affects the tourist's interest in the destination[96]. There is need to address this challenge in order to foster sustainable tourism in Kenya.

It has also been observed that tourist activities can sometimes result in environmental pollution, overcrowding which puts too much pressure on ecosystems and negative effects on local communities and cultures[97]. These challenges hinder the realization of

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[89] United Nations Environment Programme., 'Sustainable Tourism in Africa: Focus on Ecotourism.' Op Cit
[90] Nyamwange. M., 'Impacts of Climate Change on Tourism in Kenya.' *Journal of Geography and Earth Sciences*, Volume 4, No. 2 (2016)
[91] Ministry of Tourism & Wildlife., 'Revised National Tourism Policy, 2020 on Enhancing Resilience and Sustainable Tourism in Kenya.' Available at https://www.tourism.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/28th-August-National-Tourism-Policy-Review.pdf (Accessed on 20/08/2023)
[92] Ibid
[93] Onchwati.J., Sommerville. H., & Brockway. N., 'Sustainable Tourism Development in the Masai Mara, National Reserve, Kenya, East Africa.' *Sustainable Tourism* IV 319
[94] Ministry of Tourism & Wildlife., 'Revised National Tourism Policy, 2020 on Enhancing Resilience and Sustainable Tourism in Kenya.' Op Cit
[95] Ibid
[96] Onchwati.J., Sommerville. H., & Brockway. N., 'Sustainable Tourism Development in the Masai Mara, National Reserve, Kenya, East Africa.' Op Cit
[97] CBI., 'How to be a Sustainable Tourism Business.' Op Cit

sustainable tourism. There is need to address these among other challenges in order to realize sustainable tourism in Kenya.

4.0 Way Forward

In order to foster sustainable tourism in Kenya, there it is necessary to continue embracing green tourism practices such as eco- tours[98]. Eco- tourism initiatives in Kenya such as the rhino charge and the Lewa safari marathon have enhanced sustainable tourism by raising money which has been challenges into wildlife conservation and socio-economic development[99]. There is need to continue embracing these practices in order to foster sustainable tourism in Kenya.

Further, there is need to create visitor awareness of responsible behaviour in communities and the environment[100]. Both local and international tourist should therefore be encouraged to embrace sustainable practices such as staying in eco-friendly accommodations and avoiding the use of single-use plastics[101]. Such practices can minimize the impact of tourism on the environment[102]. In addition, it has been pointed out there is need to encourage international tourists to promote socio-economic development in places where they visit through measures such as respecting the culture of local communities and buying from and supporting local businesses[103]. These measures can enhance sustainable tourism in Kenya.

Tourism is associated with a lot of travelling a situation that contributes to the problem of climate change due to greenhouse gas emissions when modes of transport such as airplanes are used[104]. It has been observed that in order to address this challenge, there

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[98] Ecotourism World., 'A Sustainable Vacation in Kenya.' Op Cit
[99] Op Cit
[100] Ministry of Tourism & Wildlife., 'Revised National Tourism Policy, 2020 on Enhancing Resilience and Sustainable Tourism in Kenya.' Op Cit
[101] Angeli. S., 'What is Sustainable Travel: 8 Best Practices.' Op Cit
[102] Ibid
[103] Ibid
[104] CBI., 'How to be a Sustainable Tourism Business.' Op Cit

is need to foster sustainable travel models in the tourism industry such as the use of trains and public transport in order to minimize greenhouse gas emissions[105]. Further, there is need to encourage domestic tourism in order to foster sustainable tourism[106]. Domestic tourism can foster sustainable tourism by minimizing the effects of transport, injecting more money into the economy and supporting local businesses[107].

It is also imperative for the government to enhance sustainable tourism in Kenya. This can be achieved through developing national minimum standards for responsible tourism, implementing policies and guidelines on sustainable tourism in Kenya, facilitating awareness and capacity-building on responsible tourism and providing support such as training, finances and information sources to tourism businesses and communities to enable implementation of responsible tourism practices[108]. The government is therefore a key stakeholder in fostering sustainable tourism in Kenya.

Finally, it is important to market Kenya as a destination for sustainable tourism[109]. The country is blessed with an abundance of natural and cultural heritage including sandy beaches at the coast, diverse flora and fauna, game parks, scenic landscapes among others[110]. There is need to market these destinations in order to foster sustainable tourism in Kenya. Players in the tourism industry such as hotels and tour companies should be encouraged to embrace sustainable tourism by investing in ecofriendly products and services such as eco- lodges, eco- tours, sustainable waste management and sustainable tour operations[111]. The government through its various agencies and entities such as the Kenya Wildlife Service, the Kenya Forest Service and the National Museums of Kenya

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[105] Conserve Energy Future., '13+ Ultimate Ways to Promote Sustainable Tourism.' Available at https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/ways-promote-sustainable-tourism.php (Accessed on 20/08/2023)
[106] Ibid
[107] Ibid
[108] Ministry of Tourism & Wildlife., 'Revised National Tourism Policy, 2020 on Enhancing Resilience and Sustainable Tourism in Kenya.' Op Cit
[109] Ibid
[110] Republic of Kenya., 'Kenya, Africa's Leading Tourist Destination.' Op Cit
[111] United Nations Environment Programme., 'Sustainable Tourism in Africa: Focus on Ecotourism.' Op Cit

should also foster the respect, conservation and sustainable utilization of biodiversity and the natural and cultural heritage of Kenya[112]. These initiatives will market Kenya as an ideal destination for sustainable tourism and enhance the realization of this idea in the country.

5.0 Conclusion

Sustainable tourism is a fundamental idea that as that takes full account of the current and future economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism by addressing the needs of visitors, the tourism industry, the environment and host communities[113]. Sustainable tourism has been acknowledged in Kenya and there have been attempts towards fostering this idea[114]. However, in the wake of challenges including the threat of climate change and loss of biodiversity, there is an urgent need to effectively unlock sustainable tourism in Kenya[115]. Sustainable tourism has the ability to enhance the viability of the tourism industry in Kenya in a manner that ensures its contribution to national development while promoting environmental conservation, protection of biodiversity and socio-economic development in local communities[116]. In order to realize sustainable tourism in Kenya, there is need to embrace green tourism practices, create visitor awareness of responsible behaviour in communities and the environment, foster sustainable travel practices, enhanced government support and marketing Kenya as a destination for sustainable tourism[117]. It is therefore possible to foster sustainable tourism in Kenya.

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[112] Republic of Kenya., 'Ministry of Tourism: Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2010 on Enhancing Sustainable Tourism in Kenya.' Op Cit

[113] World Tourism Organization., 'Sustainable Development.' Op Cit

[114] Republic of Kenya., 'Ministry of Tourism: Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2010 on Enhancing Sustainable Tourism in Kenya.' Op Cit

[115] Ibid

[116] Ministry of Tourism & Wildlife., 'Revised National Tourism Policy, 2020 on Enhancing Resilience and Sustainable Tourism in Kenya.' Op Cit

[117] Ibid

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