

Tourism and Hospitality

Community Resilience Models for conservation of cultural ecosystems services and tourism management post COVID-19 pandemic in park-adjacent communities within Aberdares National Park, Kenya.

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Abstract

Kenyan indigenous forests are underrated by park-adjacent communities as they do not reflect the socio-economic development priorities of communities adjacent to protected areas. Wellmanaged small scale and community-based tourism enterprises could allow the non-consumptive use of Kenya's increasingly scarce indigenous forest resources, provide alternative Post COVID19 livelihoods and thus make an important contribution to their management. The paper, sought to develop a generic best practice model for sustainable conservation of cultural ecosystems services post COVID- 19 pandemic. Cross-sectional survey research design was used to determine the sub-sets from different groups involved in the study namely the local community, key informants and observation participants. Data collection methods were both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The sampling of participant communities was done by sampling households from the areas adjacent to the National park within a radius of 2 KMS. The population of communities adjacent to the park as per Kenya Wildlife Services statistics assisted in determining the sample size of communities. Thus 100 households were included in the study. The communities adjacent to the park were randomly selected. Since this research used humans as a source of information, all the participants' information was kept confidential by using pseudo-names and coding to protect them and enhance confidentiality. The study was subjected to ethical approval from Kenyatta University Ethical Review Committee and a research permit from NACOSTI. The results indicate that a community based coping strategy is very important to enhance the resilience of communities post COVID-19. It is recommend that government reviews tourism policies to encourage local governance and community participation in development of a post COVID-19 resilience and recovery model.

Key words: Community resilience. COVID-19, Tourism, Sustainable tourism, Kenya