

Small scale locally owned tourism in the Mid-Rift region, Kenya: Current realities and future possibilities

Gesa Kobs
Leisure and Tourism Geographies,
University of Trier

IGU Pre-Conference Symposium

*Transforming and Managing Destinations:
Tourism and Leisure in a Time of Global Change and Risks*

22–25 August 2012, Trier (Germany)

Presentation outline

1. Overview of small scale locally owned tourism
2. Case Study
 1. Kenya`s Tourism Industry
 2. Mid-Rift Region
 3. Research Method
 4. Findings
3. Conclusion

Small scale locally owned tourism

- Projects of international NGOs and governmental cooperation have been focused on facilitating small scale locally owned tourism initiatives
- Small scale locally owned tourism:
 - is considered to empower rural communities and to eradicate poverty
 - can contribute to strengthen the economic, cultural and social structures within a community

→ But the success of those projects seems to be limited.

Small scale locally owned tourism

- Most of those projects fail due to
 - Lack of financial viability
 - Lack of cooperation
 - Lack of commercial orientation
 - Lack of attention to product quality
 - Lack of professional training
 - Too strong focus on the positive effects of poverty alleviation by International aid: International aid mostly concentrates on community development while disregarding the need of business expertise and successful market participation

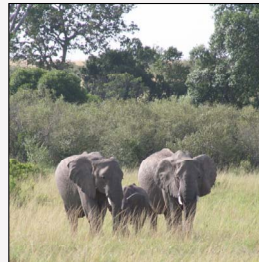


→ **Market access as the missing link?**

Case Study – Mid-Rift Region, Kenya

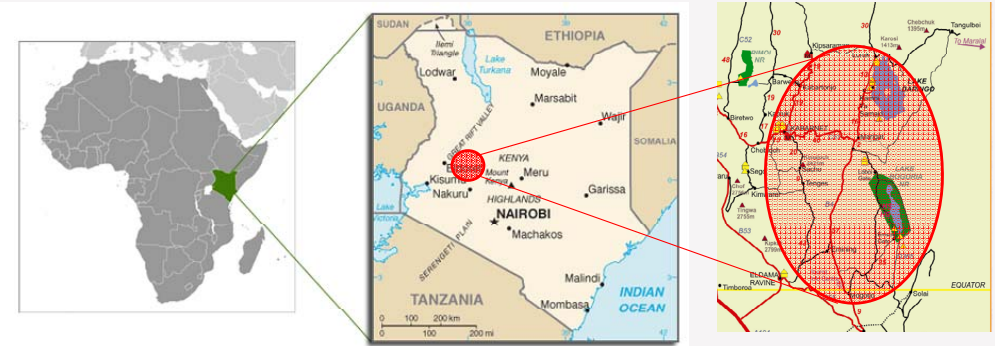
Kenya`s Tourism industry

- one of the leading tourist destinations in Sub-Saharan Africa
- heavily based on beach and wildlife safaris
- Confronted with the challenge of diversifying the tourism product



5

Mid-Rift Region



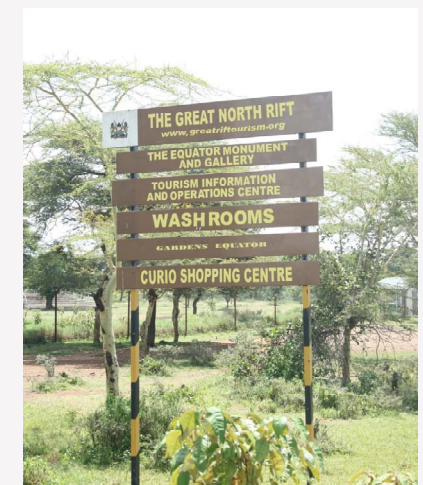
6

Case Study – Mid-Rift Region, Kenya

- A certain tradition of touristic activities (mainly domestic / short term / special interest)
- Not included in the traditional Kenyan tourism product (distance to the coast, not a classical Safari-region – lack of the "Big Five")
- Lake Baringo and Lake Bogoria as core attractions
- Tugen hills and Pokot region as neighbouring possible complementary regions
- First regional Tourist information at Mogotio as nucleus for a future DMC

7

Mogotio Tourism Information Centre



8

Case Study – Mid-Rift Region, Kenya

How do small scale locally owned tourism initiatives access the market?

Case Study – Mid-Rift Region, Kenya

Research Method

- Guided interviews with owner or employee
- Criteria to select tourism initiatives
 - Owned by local individuals or community
 - Small scale (1 to 30 members / employees)

	CO	IO
Boat trip company	x	x
Cultural village	x	
Museum	x	
Campsite	x	
Home stay		x
Guides		x



Case Study – Mid-Rift Region, Kenya

Findings

Small scale tourism enterprises in the Mid-Rift Region were struggling with access to the tourism market, physically, operational as well as financial.

Case Study – Mid-Rift Region, Kenya

Physical market access

- Level of accessibility
 - road conditions
 - own website
- Distance to main tourism attraction



Case Study – Mid-Rift Region, Kenya

- Operational market access

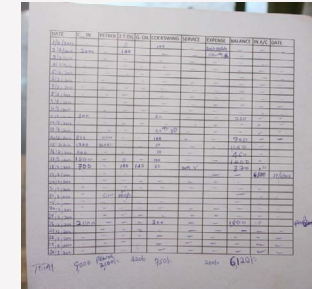
- Marketing
 - Kenya Tourism Board
 - Own marketing plan
- Cooperation
 - National
 - Regional
 - Local



Case Study – Mid-Rift Region, Kenya

- Resource based market access

- Level of reinvesting in market access
- Business skills



Case Study – Mid-Rift Region, Kenya

Location		Baringo		Bogoria	Tugen Hills
	Ownership	Community	Individual	Community	Individual
General Information	Number of members/ employees	1-30	1-5	1-20	1-5
	Type of offer	Cultural village visits	Boat trips, bird and nature walks	Campsites, nature walks	Home stays, nature hike, museum
	Donor dependent	++	+	+	++
	Product quality	o	o	o	o
	USP	--	-	+	+
	Language skills, knowledge of culture, nature	-	++	+	+
Physical market access	Level of accessibility	--	o	-	-
	Distance to main tourist attraction	o	++	+	-
Operational market access	Marketing	--	-	o	-
	Cooperation	--	o	-	-
Resource based market aspect	Level of reinvesting in market access	--	-	o	-
	Business skills	--	o	o	-

Conclusion

- Small scale locally owned tourism enterprises can contribute to the diversification of tourism products
- But characterised by limited success
- Market access as major challenge
- Internal aspects (lack of business skills, poor marketing activities) and external aspects (accessibility and governmental marketing) have to be taken into account
- Visitor Centre: promising potential but underachieving

“Asanta sana!”

Thank you very much for
your attention!

