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

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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.

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

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
Case Study – Mid-Rift Region, Kenya

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

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)

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<tbody>
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<td>Boat trip company</td>
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<td>Cultural village</td>
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<td>Museum</td>
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<td>Campsite</td>
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Findings

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

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

### Resource based market aspect

- **Level of reinvesting in market access**
- **Business skills**

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**Location**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Baringo</th>
<th>Baringo</th>
<th>Tugen Hills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ownership</strong></td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of members/employees</strong></td>
<td>1–30</td>
<td>1–5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Type of offer</strong></td>
<td>Cultural village visits</td>
<td>Boat trips, bird and nature walks</td>
<td>Campsites, nature walks</td>
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<td><strong>Donor dependent</strong></td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Product quality</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
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<td><strong>USP</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Language skills, knowledge of culture, nature</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>++</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Physical market access</strong></td>
<td>Level of accessibility</td>
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<td><strong>Distance to main tourist attraction</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Operational market access</strong></td>
<td>Marketing</td>
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**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!