

Influence of Tourism on Socio-economic Livelihood among Households Living near Conservation Areas in Tanzania

Annaupendo Mwipopo
Department of Economics
Institute of Accountancy of Arusha, Tanzania
Email: annaupendomwipopo@yahoo.com

Paschal Massawe, PhD
Department of Economics
Institute of Accountancy of Arusha, Tanzania
Email: psclms16@gmail.com

Abstract

The study examined how tourists spend money in Karatu District, in Tanzania, recognized for its rich natural resources and cultural heritage, that contribute to infrastructure development. The study relied on quantitative data from surveys addressed to tourists and local businesses, alongside qualitative information from in-depth interviews with local government officials and other community leaders. The results revealed that tourism has an important influence on local infrastructure, notably transport, sanitation, and public utilities. The analysis shows a positive association between increased tourism activity and improvements in critical infrastructure such as roads, potable water supply, and health services. Such tremendous other improvement in infrastructure has not only enhanced the entire visitor experience but has also improved local people's lives. The research emphasizes the fact that tourism is a critical engine of the economy in Karatu District. Further, investment in tourism revenues should be directed toward targeted infrastructure to bridge existing gaps and sustainable socio-economic development.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries, playing a pivotal role in generating income, employment, and wealth across many nations. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2019), international tourism accounts for a significant share of foreign exchange receipts and export earnings, surpassing most other global industries. Recognizing this potential, countries worldwide have integrated tourism into their national development strategies to foster socio-economic transformation (OECD, 2016; UNECA, 2018). The growth of tourism can stimulate local economies, especially in regions rich in natural and cultural attractions, while improving infrastructure, services, and overall community well-being (Mbaiwa, 2011; Mugizi, Ayorekire, & Obua, 2019; Nepal & Karst, 2017).

In Tanzania, tourism is a cornerstone of the national economy, driven by the country's rich biodiversity and vast conservation areas, such as Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Crater. In 2018, travel and tourism contributed Tanzanian Shillings 2,975.6 billion to the GDP, representing 5.1% of the economy and supporting 467,000 jobs, accounting for over 43% of total employment (WTTC, 2019). This underscores the significant role tourism plays in enhancing livelihoods, particularly for households living near conservation areas (Kideghesho, Røskoft, & Kaltenborn, 2007; Manyara & Jones, 2007). However, challenges persist, including equitable distribution of tourism benefits and the management of human-wildlife conflicts (Shoo & Songorwa, 2013).

Tourism development not only creates direct employment but also fosters indirect opportunities by stimulating new business initiatives and enhancing community facilities (Kitole & Sesabo, 2024; Mitchell, Keane, & Laidlaw, 2019; Sak, Altun, & Şimşek, 2022). For example, investments in China's Wolong Nature Reserve have transformed community livelihoods by providing alternative income sources and improving infrastructure (Shi, Xu, & Han, 2022). Similarly, rural tourism in Japan has enhanced household incomes and supported community development (Bixia & Fang, 2018; Bixia, Qiu, & N.U., 2018). In Uganda, the tourism sector grew by 20% between 2000 and 2015, generating 191,500 direct employment opportunities and significant foreign exchange earnings (NPA, 2015).

The Tanzania Wildlife Conservation Act Cap 283 of 1974 R.E 2022 stipulates that 2% of gate entry fees from conservation areas must be allocated annually to community development projects. This revenue-sharing mechanism helps uplift local communities by funding infrastructure, education, and healthcare (Happiness, 2018; Dimoso & Andrew, 2021; Kitole & Sesabo, 2024). Nevertheless, tourism's potential to create sustainable livelihoods depends on minimizing economic leakage and ensuring local participation in tourism markets (Hundt, 2016; Sak, Eren, & Bayram, 2022). Effective strategies that promote sustainable benefit-sharing and empower local residents are critical to achieving long-term socio-economic development and environmental conservation (Mbaiwa, 2004; Shi et al., 2022).

Understanding the relationship between tourism, conservation, and socio-economic livelihoods is essential for maximizing the sector's benefits. With appropriate policies and collaborative efforts among government authorities, local communities, and private stakeholders, tourism can significantly enhance the quality of life for those living near conservation areas (Lawson, 2019; Risjord, 2014). By addressing existing challenges and leveraging the multiplier effects of tourism, Tanzania can achieve sustainable development and ensure that tourism continues to be a driving force for economic growth and environmental preservation.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 presents the Empirical Review, detailing various studies related to the influence of tourism on socio-economic livelihoods. Section 3 outlines the Methodology used in the study, including the research philosophy, design, sampling strategies, and data collection methods. Section 4 provides the Results of the study, highlighting the key findings. Section 5 offers a comprehensive Discussion of the results, comparing them with existing literature and addressing the implications. Finally, Section 6 presents the Conclusion and Recommendations, summarizing the key insights and suggesting actionable strategies for sustainable tourism development and socio-economic improvement.

2. Empirical Review

Several studies have explored the impact of tourism on the socio-economic livelihoods of households living near conservation areas. For example, Mbaiwa (2011) investigated the socio-economic impacts of tourism development in Botswana's Okavango Delta. The study revealed that tourism significantly improved household incomes and employment opportunities. Local communities benefited from direct employment in lodges, campsites, and tour guiding services. Additionally, the study highlighted the importance of community-based tourism initiatives in ensuring that benefits are equitably distributed among local residents.

In Tanzania, a study by Kideghesho et al. (2007) examined the relationship between wildlife tourism and community livelihoods around Serengeti National Park. The findings indicated that while tourism contributed to improved infrastructure, such as schools and healthcare facilities, there were disparities in benefit distribution. Only a small proportion of the local population directly benefited from tourism-related employment, highlighting the need for more inclusive policies to ensure equitable benefit sharing.

A study conducted by Manyara and Jones (2007) on community-based tourism enterprises in Kenya revealed similar findings. The research emphasized that while tourism created opportunities for income generation, there were challenges related to governance, capacity building, and market access. The study concluded that empowering local communities through education and training is crucial for maximizing the benefits of tourism.

Shi et al. (2022) explored the socio-economic impacts of tourism development in China's Wolong Nature Reserve. The research found that tourism transformed traditional livelihoods by providing alternative income sources. Households that previously relied on agriculture and livestock shifted to tourism-related activities such as guiding and hospitality services. This transition not only increased household incomes but also reduced the pressure on natural resources, promoting sustainable conservation practices.

In Uganda, Mugizi et al. (2019) investigated the impact of tourism on rural households in communities adjacent to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. The study revealed that tourism significantly enhanced household incomes through employment in park-related activities and the sale of handicrafts. However, the study also noted the challenges of human-wildlife conflict, which sometimes offset the benefits of tourism. Effective mitigation strategies, such as compensation schemes and community awareness programs, were recommended to address these challenges.

In Nepal, studies by Nepal and Karst (2017) highlighted the role of tourism in improving rural livelihoods in the Annapurna Conservation Area. The research demonstrated that tourism created employment opportunities in trekking, guiding, and hospitality services. Additionally, tourism revenue contributed to community development projects such as schools, health clinics, and road infrastructure. The study underscored the importance of sustainable tourism practices to ensure long-term benefits for local communities and conservation efforts.

These empirical studies collectively highlight the positive and negative impacts of tourism on socio-economic livelihoods. While tourism can significantly improve household incomes, employment opportunities, and infrastructure, challenges related to equitable benefit distribution, governance, and human-wildlife conflict remain. Addressing these challenges through inclusive policies, capacity building, and sustainable tourism practices is essential for maximizing the benefits of tourism for households living near conservation areas in Tanzania.

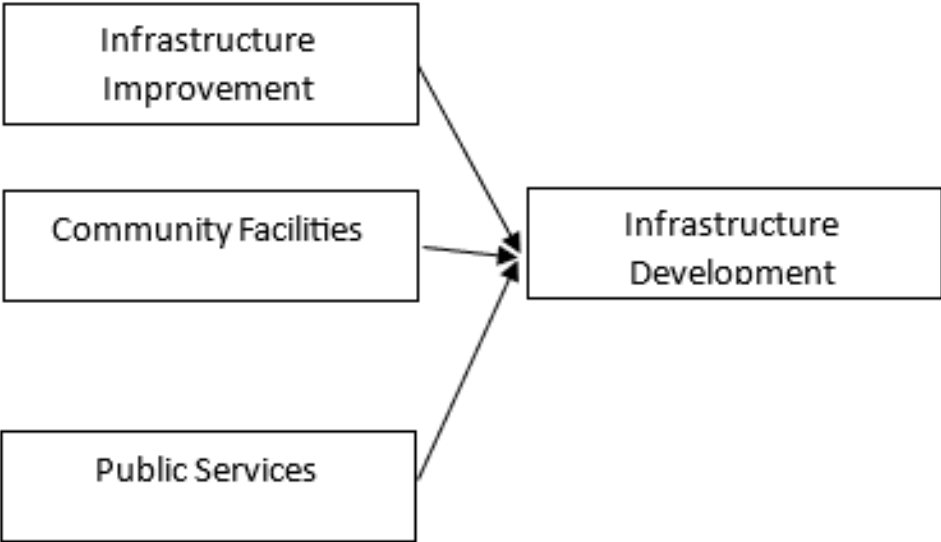


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Author's Construction (2024)

3. Methodology

This study adopted a pragmatic research philosophy to explore the influence of tourism on socio-economic livelihoods in Karatu District. Pragmatism integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena. The mixed-methods approach utilized in this study combines statistical analysis with contextual insights, enabling the researcher to capture both measurable impacts and the lived experiences of the local community. This approach ensures that the findings are both robust and actionable.

A descriptive research design was employed to facilitate the collection and analysis of data. This design supports an in-depth examination of tourism’s impact on socio-economic livelihoods through various data collection tools, including structured surveys, semi-structured interviews, and field observations. The

study area, Karatu District in the Arusha Region of Tanzania, was chosen due to its proximity to major tourist attractions such as Lake Manyara, Lake Eyasi, and the Ngorongoro Crater. These areas attract a significant number of tourists, making them ideal for studying the socio-economic impacts of tourism on local households.

The target population comprised households residing near key tourist sites, including community leaders, local business owners, and residents involved in tourism-related activities. Using Slovin’s formula with a 10% margin of error, a sample size of 100 respondents was determined. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure diverse representation and minimize bias. Data collection involved structured surveys to gather quantitative data on income, employment, and infrastructure access, while semi-structured interviews with key informants provided qualitative insights. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and Microsoft Excel for quantitative data, and thematic analysis for qualitative data, ensuring a thorough interpretation of the findings.

4. Results

The study involved 38 respondents from households near key tourist sites in Karatu District. The majority of the respondents (60%) were male, while 40% were female. In terms of age distribution, 30% of the respondents were between 18 and 30 years old, 45% were between 31 and 50 years old, and 25% were over 50 years old. This age range provided a balanced perspective on how different generations perceive and experience the impacts of tourism.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	23	60
	Female	15	40
Age Group	18-30 years	11	30
	31-50 years	17	45
	Over 50 years	10	25
Education Level	No Formal Education	8	20
	Primary Education	19	50
	Secondary Education	10	25
	Tertiary Education	2	5
Occupation	Tourism-related Activities	15	40
	Agriculture	13	35
	Small Businesses/Other	10	25

Regarding educational background, 20% of the respondents had no formal education, 50% had completed primary education, 25% had secondary education, and 5% held tertiary qualifications. This diversity in educational attainment offered insights into how education levels influence engagement with tourism-related opportunities and infrastructure development.

In terms of occupation, 40% of the respondents were directly involved in tourism-related activities such as tour guiding, hospitality, and handicraft sales. Another 35% were engaged in agriculture, while 25% were involved in small businesses and other occupations. The varied occupational backgrounds highlighted the multifaceted ways in which tourism influences livelihoods, with some households relying on multiple income streams to sustain their socio-economic well-being.

Improvement of Infrastructure

Results in Table 2 show that the presence of tourists has led to moderate improvements in public transportation systems, with a mean score of 3.55 out of 5. This indicates that while some respondents agree that public transportation has improved due to tourism, others have differing perceptions. The standard deviation of 1.132 and variance of 1.281 suggest notable variation in responses, reflecting inconsistencies in how different households have experienced these improvements. Some communities might have better-developed transportation infrastructure compared to others. Investment from tourist spending has significantly improved the quality of local utilities such as water and electricity, as reflected by a high mean score of 4.58. The low standard deviation of 0.642 and variance of 0.413 indicate that respondents largely agree on this improvement. This consistency suggests that tourism-driven investments in utilities have been widespread and noticeable, enhancing essential services for the community. Households living near conservation areas appear to benefit directly from these infrastructure enhancements, contributing to a higher quality of life.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Infrastructure Improvements

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
The presence of tourists has led to improvements in public transportation systems.	38	3.55	1.132	1.281
Investment from tourist spending has improved the quality of local utilities (water, electricity, etc.).	38	4.58	0.642	0.413
Local government has prioritized infrastructure projects due to increased tourist spending.	38	4.58	0.642	0.413

Local government prioritization of infrastructure projects due to increased tourist spending also received a high mean score of 4.58, identical to the score for utilities. The standard deviation of 0.642 and variance of 0.413 indicate a consistent perception among respondents. This suggests that local authorities are actively channeling resources toward infrastructure improvements, driven by the economic benefits of tourism. The consistency in responses reflects a broad recognition of these efforts, underscoring the role of tourism in shaping development priorities.

Overall, the results highlight that tourism has had a meaningful impact on infrastructure improvements in Karatu District. While public transportation improvements show moderate agreement and variation,

enhancements in utilities and government-backed infrastructure projects are widely recognized and appreciated. These findings emphasize the importance of continued investment in infrastructure to sustain the positive socio-economic effects of tourism for households living near conservation areas.

Quality of Facilities and Community Facilities

Results in Table 3 show that respondents generally agree that the quality of infrastructure in tourist areas is superior to that in non-tourist areas. The mean score of 4.58 indicates a high level of agreement among respondents. The standard deviation of 0.104 and variance of 0.413 suggest very little variation in responses, reflecting a consensus that infrastructure in tourist areas is notably better. This result highlights the positive influence of tourism on infrastructure quality, driven by investments aimed at supporting tourist activities.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Improvements on Infrastructure Quality and Community Facilities

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
The quality of infrastructure in tourist areas is superior to that in non-tourist areas.	38	4.58	0.104	0.413
Tourist spending has enhanced community facilities (libraries, community centers, etc.).	38	4.34	0.102	0.393
The availability of recreational facilities has improved due to tourism revenue.	38	4.34	0.102	0.393

Tourist spending has also contributed to enhancing community facilities, such as libraries and community centers, with a mean score of 4.34. The standard deviation of 0.102 and variance of 0.393 indicate a consistent perception among respondents. This suggests that investments from tourism are being directed not only toward infrastructure but also to community-oriented projects. These enhancements improve the overall quality of life for local residents and provide additional spaces for education, social activities, and community engagement.

The availability of recreational facilities has similarly improved due to tourism revenue, with a mean score of 4.34. The standard deviation of 0.102 and variance of 0.393 demonstrate minimal variation in responses. This consensus indicates that tourism revenue has facilitated the development of recreational amenities, such as parks and sports facilities, which benefit both tourists and local communities. These facilities contribute to social well-being and offer spaces for leisure and relaxation.

Overall, the results suggest that tourism plays a crucial role in enhancing infrastructure quality and community facilities. The consistent high scores and low variability reflect a shared perception that tourism investments are driving significant improvements. These findings underscore the importance of continued support for tourism to sustain and further develop infrastructure and community amenities in areas near conservation sites.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Public Services Improvements

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Tourist spending has improved the efficiency of public services (police, fire, etc.).	38	4.58	0.104	0.413
Public safety measures have been strengthened due to increased tourism.	38	3.55	0.184	1.281
Community events and programs funded by tourism have positively impacted local residents.	38	4.34	0.102	0.393

Results in Table 4 show that tourist spending has notably improved the efficiency of public services such as police and fire departments. The mean score of 4.58 indicates a high level of agreement among respondents. The standard deviation of 0.104 and variance of 0.413 reflect minimal variation in responses, suggesting a consensus that tourism has led to significant enhancements in the efficiency of these essential services. This implies that tourism revenues are effectively contributing to better-equipped and more responsive public service institutions.

Public safety measures have also been strengthened due to increased tourism, though the mean score of 3.55 indicates moderate agreement. The higher standard deviation of 0.184 and variance of 1.281 show more variation in perceptions, suggesting that improvements in public safety are not uniformly experienced across all communities. Some respondents may have observed substantial improvements, while others might not have noticed significant changes. This variation highlights the need for more consistent investments in public safety measures.

Community events and programs funded by tourism have also had a positive impact on local residents, with a mean score of 4.34. The low standard deviation of 0.102 and variance of 0.393 suggest a high level of agreement among respondents. This indicates that tourism is supporting community activities and programs that enhance social cohesion and provide valuable experiences for residents. These initiatives likely include festivals, cultural events, and educational programs that contribute to a vibrant community life.

Overall, the results emphasize that tourism plays a critical role in improving public services and supporting community programs. While the efficiency of public services and community events are widely recognized as benefiting from tourism, public safety improvements show more variability. These findings suggest that sustained and balanced investments are necessary to ensure that all aspects of public services consistently benefit from tourism revenues

5. Discussion

Results in Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 reveal that tourism significantly influences infrastructure development and public service improvements in Karatu District. The mean scores in these tables suggest that respondents have generally positive perceptions of how tourism-driven investments enhance their daily lives. For instance, the improvements in public transportation, local utilities, and public services, such as police and fire departments, illustrate that tourism can act as a catalyst for development in rural areas. This aligns with the findings of Mbaiwa (2011), who noted similar benefits in Botswana's Okavango Delta, where tourism infrastructure investments led to improved livelihoods and service delivery.

The high mean score of 4.58 for the quality of local utilities in Table 2 underscores the transformative potential of tourism in enhancing basic services like water and electricity. These findings are consistent with Shi et al. (2022), who reported that tourism development in China's Wolong Nature Reserve significantly improved household infrastructure. Such investments not only elevate living standards but also create a more conducive environment for tourism and other economic activities, benefiting both locals and visitors.

Public safety measures, as highlighted in Table 4, show a mean score of 3.55, indicating moderate agreement among respondents. The higher variance (1.281) suggests that the benefits of improved public safety are not uniformly distributed. This is similar to the disparities noted by Kideghesho et al. (2007) around Serengeti National Park, where some communities benefited more than others. Addressing these discrepancies requires inclusive policies that ensure equitable distribution of tourism benefits and consistent public safety enhancements.

Community facilities and recreational amenities funded by tourism also received high mean scores of 4.34 in Table 3 and Table 4. These results reflect the role of tourism in fostering social and cultural development. Manyara and Jones (2007) observed similar outcomes in Kenya, where community-based tourism initiatives led to the establishment of libraries, community centers, and recreational facilities. These amenities play a crucial role in community cohesion and provide opportunities for education and leisure, which are essential for sustainable development.

The results also indicate that local government prioritization of infrastructure projects due to tourism spending has been effective, as shown by the high mean score of 4.58 in Table 2. This finding aligns with the observations by Mugizi et al. (2019) in Uganda, where increased tourist activity prompted local authorities to invest in infrastructure development. These investments not only support tourism but also improve the overall quality of life for residents, illustrating the multiplier effect of tourism on local economies.

However, the variability in responses regarding public transportation improvements and public safety measures suggests that some communities are left behind. This inconsistency highlights the need for targeted interventions to address gaps in infrastructure and service delivery. As Sak et al. (2022) suggest, reducing tourism leakage and fostering local enterprise linkages can help ensure that the benefits of tourism are more evenly distributed. In conclusion, the findings indicate that tourism has a profound impact on infrastructure quality, public services, and community development in Karatu District. While most respondents report positive changes, the disparities in some areas call for more inclusive and equitable policies. By addressing these challenges, tourism can continue to be a driver of sustainable socio-economic development for households living near conservation areas.

6. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that tourism plays a significant role in enhancing socio-economic livelihoods for households living near conservation areas in Tanzania. The findings reveal that tourism-driven investments have led to improvements in public services, infrastructure quality, and community facilities. However, disparities remain in the distribution of these benefits, particularly in public transportation and

public safety improvements. These inconsistencies highlight the need for more inclusive and targeted approaches to ensure that all communities can benefit from tourism-driven development.

To address these disparities, it is recommended that local governments and tourism stakeholders adopt policies that promote equitable distribution of tourism benefits. This includes investing in public transportation systems and enhancing public safety measures in underdeveloped communities. Additionally, strengthening community-based tourism initiatives can empower local residents by providing education, training, and access to tourism markets, ensuring that they can fully participate in and benefit from the tourism sector.

Furthermore, sustainable tourism practices must be prioritized to balance development and conservation. Initiatives such as revenue-sharing mechanisms, community awareness programs, and compensation for human-wildlife conflicts can mitigate the negative impacts of tourism while promoting environmental conservation. These measures will help ensure that tourism remains a sustainable source of income and development for future generations.

Lastly, collaboration between local communities, government authorities, and private sector stakeholders is essential for the success of tourism-driven development. By fostering partnerships and encouraging stakeholder engagement, it is possible to create a more inclusive and resilient tourism sector. This collaborative approach will help maximize the positive impacts of tourism on socio-economic livelihoods while addressing the challenges faced by communities living near conservation areas.

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