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Abstract
Tourism and wildlife are symbiotically related core features on Kenya’s economic and socio-cultural landscape. Kenya’s cultures, flora and fauna have attracted tourist interests as far back as the British East Africa Protectorate times, through to the post-independence period. Throughout this period, economic proceeds from tourism remained a crucial pillar of the economic rubric in Kenya and beyond. Fifty years after independence, the policy realm on tourism and wildlife development in Kenya finds itself at a critical phase amidst widespread poaching, human-wildlife conflict and concerns over moral decadence. Adopting a holistic approach, the authors delve into a critical analysis that sheds light on the political economy of tourism and wildlife development in Kenya; with specific reference to the environmental, cultural, sociopolitical and economic challenges permeating the policy environment in Kenya; before prescribing pertinent policy directions and/or solutions on the same. The core argument in this paper is that the push-and-pull factors in question ought to be handled with immense foresight, ingenuity and rational sobriety lest Kenya and her local and international partners in the tourism and wildlife sectors lose focus and proper orientation on pertinent issues of the policy kind.

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Introduction

Tourism and wildlife are symbiotically related core features on Kenya’s economic and socio-cultural landscape. Kenya’s cultures, flora and fauna have attracted tourism interest as far back as the British East Africa Protectorate times, through to the post-independence period. Throughout this time, economic proceeds from tourism have remained a crucial pillar of the economic rubric in Kenya and beyond (Sindiga, 2003). National Wildlife Reserves, Parks and other gazetted wildlife sanctuaries areas cover 25,334 KM$^2$; that is 4.3% of the total land mass of 582,646 KM$^2$. In 2012 alone, the tourism sector contributed an estimated KES 210 billion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Nonetheless, fifty years after independence, the policy realm on tourism and wildlife development in Kenya finds itself at a critical phase amidst widespread poaching, human-wildlife conflict and concerns over societal moral decadence under the influence of would be aliens posing as tourists. Incidences of human-wildlife conflict have been on the increase while poaching of wild game in and around national parks, reserves and privately owned sanctuaries seems to have reached dangerous proportions. Adopting a holistic approach, this paper delves into a critical analysis that sheds light on the political economy of tourism development in Kenya; with specific reference to the environmental, cultural, sociopolitical and economic challenges permeating the policy environment in Kenya; before prescribing pertinent policy directions and/or solutions on the same. The core argument in this paper is that the push-and-pull factors in question ought to be handled with immense foresight, ingenuity and rational sobriety lest Kenya and her local and international partners in the tourism and wildlife sectors lose focus and proper orientation on pertinent issues of the policy kind.

A Conceptual Framework

If politics is about power, authority and influence and the bearing upon which these have on the flow of public policy over time and space; then it would be equally true to contend that in every historical epoch humans have been involved in a constant state of competition with the aim of influencing various public decisions with the goal of benefiting individually or on behalf of certain group interests they represent. True, there is something “political” about almost all forms of human activity; and in agreement with Aristotle’s thesis “man is a political animal.” On the other hand; tourism is a human activity that is possibly as old as human civilization? Literally, the word “tourism” is derived from the word “tour” meaning a journey on which one returns to the starting point, a trip usually for business, pleasure, or education during which various places are visited and for which an itinerary is usually planned. Well, this is quite a simplistic definition that only points to a number of motives to travel. Beyond such a definition are conceptual, technical and holistic definitions (Walton 2005).

Medlik (1974:41) observed that the conceptual definition of tourism provides a framework, which identifies essential characteristics and which distinguishes tourists from similar, often related, but different phenomena. To put it more accurately, according to the conceptual definition “tourism is a sum of relations and phenomena resulting from travel and stay of non-residents in so far as it does not lead to permanent residence and is not connected with any permanent or temporary earning activity.” The technical definition is also known as a statistical definition because it allows the various agencies to compile the statistical measurement of activity. The need for a technical understanding arises with the major actors such as government and tourism organizations’ requirement of tourist statistics in order to maintain the size and characteristics of tourists markets. Ogilvie (1933:5) defined the “tourist” as all persons who satisfy two conditions, that they are away from home for any period of less than a year that while the are away they spend money in the place they visit without earning there. The first condition in this definition appears to be arbitrarily yet it is necessary because it tries to distinguish between a migrant and a tourist. The Second condition which is as good as the first is the time limit of one year; however, there can be certain differences in such technical definitions this is because there can be tourist activities for less than a year and at the same time examples can be found of persons who are away from home but they are not necessarily tourists (medical doctor) or scientist doing field work or an invading army. Nonetheless, the common denominator in this definition points to the temporary change of residence.
The holistic definition embraces the whole essence of the subject. Jafari (1977) defined tourism “as the study of man, away from his usual habitat; of the industry which responds to his needs and of the impacts that both he and the industry have on the host’s social-cultural, economic and physical environment”. This definition clearly introduces a new dimension, the impact of tourism developments on the host environment. However this definition is criticized on the grounds that it is too broad and the spatial focus is too narrow. Nonetheless, it is a worthy definition because it caters for the environmental aspect which is critical in a discussion of the political economy of tourism. The holistic approach appears most suitable as a theoretical starting point, as far as the policy of tourism and wildlife development is concerned.

At the centre of any policy debate at a national level is the role of government. Governments play a critical role as far as the policy environment of tourism and wildlife management is concerned. After all, governments personify the state; ideally, they are formed by citizens of any given state in order to authoritatively act on their behalf and for the good of all. This way public policy is whatever government chooses to do or not do. This definition covers government action, inaction, decisions and non-decisions as it implies a deliberate choice between alternatives. For a policy to be regarded as public policy at the very least, it must have been processed or at least ratified by public agencies. Tourism policy therefore is whatever government chooses to do or not to do with respect to tourism. Tourism is today an important policy of concern in most governments. There is an almost universal acceptance by governments around the world regardless of ideology that tourism is a “good thing” with most tourism policies being designed to expand the tourism industry, governments are important in this discussion because they shape the economic climate for industry, help provide the infrastructure and educational requirements for tourism, establish the regulations environment in which business and to take an active role in promotion and marketing. However the tendency to privatize and commercialize functions that were once performed by government has become commonplace in many western nations. However in many developing countries the tourism industry still continues to be closely controlled by government.

In summary the role of government in tourism and wildlife development can be discussed from a number of premises that include co-ordination, planning, legislation and regulation, entrepreneurship and stimulation. Co-ordination is necessary both within and among the different levels of governments if effective tourism strategies are to be developed and if duplication of resources among various governmental tourism bodies is to be avoided. Planning for tourism occurs in a number of forms (development, infrastructure promotion, and marketing); involves various structures (different government organizations) and occurs on various levels (international, national, regional, local and sectoral). In several countries, national tourism development plans have been drawn up in which government decides which sectors of the industry will be developed, the appropriate rate of growth and the provision of capital required for expansion. As in most forms of economic planning it is desirable to balance the development of supply (attractions, facilities and infrastructure with the promotion of demand the number of tourists). In this sense therefore without government involvement in tourism planning, development of the industry will lack cohesion and direction and short term initiative might well jeopardize long term potential.

Similarly, government has a number of legislative and regulative powers which directly and indirectly impinge on the tourism industry. Government involvement in this area ranges from policies on passports and visa to policies on industrial relations. At both national and local levels general measures such as industry regulation, environmental protection and taxation policy significantly influence the growth of tourism. On the other hand government has long had an entrepreneurial function in tourism. Government not only provides and/or facilitates the provision of basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, and waste management but also governments operate and own tourist ventures including hotels and travel companies. For the most part, post-independence governments in Africa sought to stimulate industrial growth and development through the establishment of public enterprises popularly known as parastatals. More often than not however, the performance of these state enterprises as far as tourism is concerned was rather dismal especially in the decade of the 1980s, through to the 1990s. This state of affairs informed the structural changes (otherwise known as
Structural Adjustment Programmes) that were proposed by international financial institutions (IFI’s) particularly the World Bank and IMF particularly to allow for a greater role of the private sector in the tourism industry.

Finally, governments have the capability to stimulate tourism in three ways. First, government can assist through financial incentives such as low interest loans or a depreciation allowance on tourist accommodation. Secondly, government tries to sponsor research for the general benefit of the tourism industry; research that would otherwise be too costly for individual organization and association to undertake. Thirdly, government can stimulate tourism development through marketing and promotion aimed at generating tourism demand in general.

Tourism and Wildlife Development in Kenya: A Background

Kenya is one of the most developed tourist destinations in the world. In terms of international tourism receipts, Kenya has been ranked many times as third after Mauritius and South Africa. Figure 1.0 below shows international tourist arrivals since 1963. On the whole, the trend has been an impressive rise though rudely interrupted by the 2007/2008 post-election violence but quickly regaining the same positive pattern in 2011.

Figure 1.0: A Table Showing the Total Tourist Arrivals, 1963-2011

The line graph in Figure 1.0 above depicts the fluctuating nature of tourist arrival data from 1963-2011. In 1963, the newly independent state attracted about 116,792 tourists. In 2011, the country having undergone tremendous developments, the number of tourist who visited the country stood at 1.8 million. Fluctuations occurred between 1976-1977, 1977-1988, 2003-2004 and 2007-2008. The main reason for the
fluctuation between 2007 and 2008 was due to the post-election violence that rocked the country after the 2007 elections which made tourist avoid the country. Tourist population growth rate to the country increased significantly from a low of 0.26% to 6.58% between 1969-79 and 1979-1989 respectively. Between 1989 and 1999, tourist arrivals in the country decreased to 1.65% before finally increasing to 4% between 1999 and 2009. In general, since 1963, the country’s tourist population over the last 48 years has increased by 18 times.

The gross national income associated with tourism has for the most part been ranked as second after agriculture. It is therefore agreeable that tourism is very core sector in Kenya’s economy. In this light; apart from injecting foreign exchange earnings into the economic, tourism generate government revenue through taxes e.g. customs and exercise duty for imports. Sales tax and value added tax for goods brought into the local market, accommodation tax and training levy on hotel guests, consensual or rental fees paid by game lodges and campsites and trade licenses and company taxes paid by various tourism enterprises. The government also charges income tax on the earnings of employees in the tourism sector. However government tourism revenue is much smaller, most of the earning across to the private sector which largely control the industry.

It is noteworthy however, that in the immediate post-independence period Kenya lacked a well engrained and elaborate tourism and wildlife management policy. For more than a decade, the concerned government departments lacked comprehensive tourism planning programmes. Instead, they simply took a reactionary approach towards the influx of mass tourists and were initially unable to control and/or manage these developments well enough. However, the Kenyatta government did take measures to expand the tourism market segment form the premise that foreign exchange earnings would grow in the numbers; but overt time, it dawned on the stakeholders that the county’s tourism resources were stretched to the limit and the quality of tourism products had began to decline (Sindiga, 2003).

As the 1990s set-in, large tourist numbers exerted enormous pressure on the environment especially on conservation areas, water catchments and wetlands. Over exploitation of park resources has been observed in Nairobi, Amboseli and Lake Nakuru National Parks as well as Samburu and Maasai Mara National reserves. This is because the tourist population is concentrated in a few places particularly at the coast and in selected parks. In fact over 90 percent of the wildlife safari visitors mainly visit Nairobi Amboseli, Tsavo East, Tsavo West and Lake Nakuru National Parks, in addition to the Maasai Mara National Reserves and Nairobi Animal Orphanage. In the same token human populations have encroached into forest areas which are the country’s water towers such as the Aberdare ranges and the Mau forest complex, this has meant that water feeds the river in the game parks and reserves has largely decreased while human populations and settlements have continued to interfere with the wildlife migratory corridors such as the case of Kitengela migratory corridor in Kajiado County.

Kenya’s road network has for many years continued to be in a virtual state of collapse and neglect. Generally, the maintenance standards have been very low. In the late 1990s the situation was worsened by El Nino rains in which flood waters washed away bridges and sections of roads. In recent years the cost of transportation has also gone up and road network expansion has taken at a slow pace also water and electricity is a persistent problem because of insufficient- and irregular supply throughout the country. However with the introduction of mobile phone technology in late 1990s and there after telecommunication has improved immensely and this has come in handy for the tourism industry (Sindiga, 2000).

During this period also, a number of issues cropped-up on the political landscape. The post-1990 political environment in Kenya has changed drastically. More often than not, it is spells uncertainty and an aura of anxiety and panic to investors, while potential tourist source states declare travel advisories. In this light the dark political events of 1992, 1997 and worse still 2007, which were characterized ethnic animosity and violence did adversely affect on the tourism sector. Many similar events have form time to time continued to flare-up form time to time, thereby disrupting and/or potentially affecting tourism activities. More importantly however, is the fact that communal violence as witnessed in parts of the country such as the Likia clashes of 2004 and 2005; the Turbi Massacre, Isiolo Violence, Tana River Massacre among others are partly
associated with competition over scarce and/or depleting natural resources key among them being water and pasture. Such situations are further aggravated if and when they become rallying points among short-sighted and unscrupulous political leaders thereby pitting communities against each other.

Although tourists or tourist establishments have not been direct targets of cattle rustling, ethnic clashes and electoral violence; drastic falls in tourist arrivals have been witnessed each time such events occur. For instance, the Kenya tourism Board (KTB) estimated a loss of about 280 million US dollars in tourism earnings between 1997 and mid 1998 because of the violence and general the insecurity associated with the 1997 incidences of violence in Kenya’s coastal region. Similarly, following 2007/08 post-election violence (PEV) it is estimated that the economy suffered loses to the tune of at least 3 billion KES in tourism alone. It can therefore be argued that political stability in the country is essential and most important as far as the performance of tourism industry is concerned.

Sadly most of the proceeds of Kenya’s tourism go to multinational corporations rather than to the country itself. Sometimes the leakage of total tourism revenues is as high as 70% for beach only, tourism however the leakage falls substantially for Safari visitors because of the element of local travel. This problem of “leakage” is made worse by the foreign monopoly and management of most of Kenya’s tourism “private” ventures. It has been suggested that the government does have the ability to regulate and mid-wife the Foreign Direct Investment environment in so as to guard against inequity, unfair competition and losses; especially through well premised negotiated agreements with potential investors. However, such negotiations ought to conducted and presided over by highly skilled government personnel and this will arrest and stop the tendency of signing of agreements that are written in general terms that later provide multinational corporation with the opportunity in their own interest and or with negligible benefit to the lost country.

Kenya’s international tourism is mostly seasonal. The so called “high season” for arrivals starts in September and lasts until March the following year. This flow of tourist “dries up” during the period of April to August. This seasonality may affect employment because workers may be laid off in the low seasons. Because of these reasons the government of Kenya sought to have a domestic tourism policy as early as 1984, despite government policy on promoting domestic tourism, the mechanisms to do so are not in place. So far the strategy has been for tourism accommodation facilities to reduce their tariffs during the low season of international tourism. Nonetheless in a country where more than half of the population lives below the poverty line, domestic tourism continued to be challenged and tour operators and travel agents tend to serve the need of international tourism.

In another line of argument, it is imperative upon the analyst to be cognizant of the fact that Kenya does not exist in a vacuum. It is part of a wider political-economic environment that several ways is intricately ramified in the tourism and wildlife development environment. At the macro-level, the tourism industry in Africa has been affected and shaped by several factors of the political and economic kind. The African political economy is one that is rather unstable given the fact that very few African economies have actually be regarded at having “taken off”. Similarly, most of these African countries are generally underdeveloped; characterized by a weak industrial base, over population, rampant unemployment, poor infrastructure, slow technological, innovation, rural poverty and urban destitution (Poirier 2003).

Similarly, the African countries represent weak political structures. This means that the various political actors, structures and processes lack institutional value. It is against this background that the post independence African state has suffered general malaise. This state of affairs is exercised by: one parts dictatorship, personal rule, military juntas, and other manifestations of poor governance which have led to civil war, high crime rates, unconstitutional power takeovers and total regime (state) collapse. These political and economic realities have either directly or indirectly affected the tourism industry. Firstly, the economic weakness of Africa countries has meant that governments are forced to borrow externally in order to finance their fiscal budgets. This means that tourism industry is likely to be conditioned by the policies that are recommended by external donors of the bilateral and multilateral kind. Secondly, in countries where there is
very little liquid capital in circulation as well as a small private sector base the tourism industry is likely to adversely affect the domestic economy since it is funded by external forces (Sharpley and Telfer 2003).

Thirdly, the weak political systems on the African continent mostly exist under unstable economic conditions. This means that countries that suffer from general insecurity will not be able to attract tourism demand let alone sustain it. In the same token poor infrastructure in the form of roads, water, electricity and waste management become the order of the day such weaknesses in which governments are vulnerable to external interference from foreign investors; they are unable to regulate, coordinate, stimulate and promote the tourism industry from within and are therefore caught up in a vicious cycle as far as these structural weaknesses are concerned.

In a nutshell therefore, the major issues that have shaped the political economy of tourism in Africa are generally internal as well as external. Internally weak political systems which breed bad governance will negatively impact on tourism because of poor infrastructure, bad politics, general unemployment and the lack of a formidable (domestic) sector base. Externally, the political economy of tourism in Africa is shaped by world economic trends in a state of affairs where the African countries are inferior players as far as international trade, commerce and exchange is concerned and this opens up the African tourism industry to external control (Poirier 2003). All these factors do permeate the immediate international environment as tourism and wildlife development in Kenya is concerned. Take for instance the question of poaching and illegal trade in endangered species of flora and fauna. While Kenya has over the years put up a spirited fight to uphold and enforce the CITIES Protocol, some of her African neighbours, among other states around the world have done little or nothing at all to enforce the Protocol. In fact, some of these states are major sources of ivory and other wildlife contraband that ends-up in overseas markets especially in Asia and the Far East.

Push-and-Pull Factors in the Politics of Tourism and Wildlife Development

Human activities such as the establishment of urban centers as well as industries among other forms of human activity, more often than not, are likely to find themselves in a collusion course due to the incompatibility of interests. For example, while government will set aside designated regions for the preservation of the natural environment and the promotion of tourist activity, it so happens that indigenous communities in those areas will naturally claim a stake in the ownership and control of the proceeds from such tourist activity. A good example is Maasai Mara Game Reserve where locals from the Maasai community have sought to be recognized and formally involved in the management of the reserve. Further, there are many instances in which human activity has encroached into wildlife and wild game welfare while in the same token; wildlife has also encroached into human activities.

In the Tsavo West National Park in Kenya and its environs, there have been many incidences in which wild animals have intruded into farmlands and caused wanton destruction. This state of affairs has led to a situation of human wildlife conflict in which wild animals are killed as farmers trying to protect their properties. Conversely, the intrusion of private property by wild game has also led to the loss of human lives. The most prevalent of such cases have been witnessed around the main national park as well as the Samburu Game reserve.
Total national park area in square kilometers has been increasing steadily over the years. This is basically the habitat for wild animals. Between 1989-1987, total national park area in the country was 25,334 km². Between 1987 and 1989, total national park area increased to 26,704 km² and finally, between 1990 and 2011, total national park area has remained constant standing at 27,198 km².

The core argument here is that; while governments are meant to protect the life, liberty and properties of its citizens, in the event that they fail to do so then they are subject to criticism and controversy. At the same time, when humans encroach into wildlife sanctuaries, this compromises the tourism industry. Similarly, any tourism activity that interferes with the well being of indigenous populations is likely to cause political controversy (Hall, 1994). At the Kenyan Coast, just like other world-famous tourist destinations, indigenous populations have cried foul due to the adulteration of their indigenous social-cultural setting under the influence of tourists from overseas. Locals and politicians from Kenya’s coastal region and elsewhere in the country have from time to time protested against certain vices such as drug trafficking, child commercial sex, amongst other practices that contradict the cultural integrity and religious values of the local people.

At the macro-economic level, the control of the tourism industry has continued to be a contentious issue especially in developing countries. For instance, many critics of Third World tourism have argued that
the industry has continued to benefit the “wrong” people in the sense that it is overly controlled by corporate bodies in the form of Multinational Corporations which literally repatriate all the profits back to their countries of origin in the North. They argue further that the tourism industry in developing countries has been turned into a conduit for economic extraction from the poor countries of the South to the benefit of the rich industrialized countries of the north.

In other words, the future of tourism and wildlife development grown to be a contested issue especially among the developing economies which are equally striving to “develop” and equitably compete with their more industrialized counterparts of the North. In another line of arguments, it is noteworthy that the contemporary world has witnessed a phenomenal decline in wildlife populations as well as general forest cover. This has been a worrying trend that is squarely being blamed upon the industrial activities of nations. The enrichment of uranium, the burning of coal amongst other industrial activities has led to the depletion of the ozone layer due to the emission of chlorofluorocarbons (state of things that is threatening particularly wildlife with extinction). Be it as it may however, the fact remains that the standard measure of a country’s wealth and degree of industrialization is by its manufacturing activity and technological processes. This has ushered-in the debate on sustainable development in the face of stark realities that face nations at the beginning of the 21st century; human populations, rural poverty and urban destitution, the spread of diseases as well as rampant unemployment and growing insecurity (Mowforth and Munt 2003).

The challenge posed by these realities is the degree to which human populations in Kenya will be able to sustainably exploit the available environmental resources without jeopardizing the access and control of the same by future generations. In conclusion, it may be observed that tourism tends to find itself dealing with the delicate issue to scarce resources. These scarce resources, move often than not, permeate the debates -that end up being at the core of political controversy. It can therefore be said that tourism cannot be devoid of politics and political activity because it is an activity that is involved in the exploitation of scarce resources.

The concept of sustainable development is a rather contemporary one. It was in the late 1960s that various international non-governmental bodies in the field environment such as the international green peace movement raised concern about the exploitation of the world’s natural resources, the growing populations and the side effects of industrial growth and industrial activity in general on the physical environment. The first international convention on environmental matters was held in Stockholm in 1972, it was known as the international conference on the human environment and development. Following the deliberation at Stockholm it was proposed that an international body under the umbrella of the United Nations (UN) be set up in order to carry out research of the policy, regulative and educational kind in order to conserve the natural environment. It was against this background that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established, with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya (Huybers and Bennet 2002).

In 1981, the Palme Commission investigated the relationship between human security and the physical environment. It was in the mid 1980s that the term ‘sustainable development’ came to the fore. It was popularized by the Bruntland Commission. Sustainable development means that the present access and use of natural resources should not jeopardize the future generations, access and exploitation of the same. This line of thinking was further institutionalized and widely publicized in the earth summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 in what is famously known as ‘Agenda 21’. The main component of Agenda 21 point a broad spectrum of international policy directives as far as the protection of aquatic life, soils and general flora and fauna in addition to the atmosphere is concerned (Ibid).

The most contemporary debate in the thinking of sustainable development is associated with industrial activity more so in the developed countries of the north and its effects on the ozone layer through the emission of chlorofluorocarbons. It has come to be known as the politics of the ozone layer or better still ozone diplomacy. Tourism like any other economic activity is involved in the exploitation of various factors of production particularly land, labour and capital. In this process tourism activist finds itself faced with the stark realities as far as the sustainable development debate is concerned. The land on which tourism facilities; plant and animal life are found is also the target of other actors e.g. local communities around game reserves will
possibly find themselves within such facilities on premises as they such for pasture and water for domestic animals. Similarly, agricultural activity is likely to find itself in competition with tourism over such resources (UNEP, 2011).

A worthy example is that it is presented by Lake Naivasha in Kenya. While government as well as other corporate and private actors have singled out the lake and its natural endowments as a formidable base for tourist activities and tourism development in general; other private investors particularly in the horticultural industry (for example flower farms) are similarly out to exploit the lakes resources and this seems to have had negative impact on the volume of water in it has significantly declined while aquatic life in it has adversely been affected due to industrial waste and human waste from such facilities and activities. From an international point of view it appears that most of the unexploited grounds for tourism are to be found in the Third World countries. The carbon emissions debate seems to be largely at the door steps of the more developed economics of North America and Western Europe. The irony presented here is that the more industrialized countries have been accused of attaining their industrialization status at the expense of the environment. And while they continue to perfect this process they seem to discourage the less developed countries from following the same path in the name of preserving the environment, sustainable development.

The dilemma that is presented by this state of things is that developing countries feel somewhat restricted in exploiting their own resources- including resource areas that involve tourism and wildlife- in order to develop and catch up with their northern counterparts. In other words, the “tragedy of the commons” debate seems to be a one-sided debate that casts a blind eye on the environmental transgressions of the more developed world, while applying double standards against the less developed countries; which are always being reminded to conserve the environment, while they continue to be inferior players in a world trade system that mostly spells doom at their plight to develop. It is against this background that it may be observed that though the sustainable development debate has a lot of the implications it leaves the tourism industry in developing countries with limited options in as far as long term development goals are concerned.

Yet while the macro-environment of tourism and wildlife development seems to disfavour the developing world, Kenya included; individual states cannot be exonerated when it comes to an examination of their own shortcomings on the same. Take for instance the poaching menace in Kenya. There is much evidence to the fact that pre-colonial Eastern African societies managed their tourism and wildlife resources far much better. They hunted for food, clothing and medicinal purposes- activities that were strictly controlled as they were intricately linked to strong belief systems that had nature and its preservation at the core. Wildlife protection and human-wildlife co-existence are therefore not benign concepts to the African mindset. The commercialization of wildlife by-products and game trophies in the region is strongly associated with the slave-trade period and the advent of European exploration and imperial expediency on the continent in the late 19th century. These were the early years of decimation and extinction of wildlife populations in the hands of “hunting” expeditions. By the time governments in post-independence Africa sought to restrict and/or criminalize these and related activities, several millions wild animals, bird species, trees and vegetation had perished. On its part, the Kenya government sought early measures to curb poaching and illegal trade in many other plant species such as the endangered saddle wood tree. Today, Kenya had lost over 50% of her wildlife population mainly to poaching as well as the destruction of natural habitats and water catchments such as Mt. Kenya, Mt. Elgon, Cheranganyi, Aberdares and the Mau. In 2012 alone, 384 elephants were lost to poachers. Meanwhile, Kenya’s population has increased steadily since independence, the higher incidences of human-wildlife conflict. Figures 3.0 and 4.0 below illustrate these trends.
Figure 3.0: A Figure Showing Wildlife Population Trends 1990-2011

As shown in figure 3.0 above; the total wildlife population over the years has been on a downward spiral from a high of 1.113 million animals in 1990 to a low of 794,100 animals in 2011 representing a decline of 29%. The data had some marginal fluctuations over the years. The downward trend depicted above is very alarming since the wild animals are a very important resource for this country. Total wildlife population density across all the national parks in the country has been on a downward spiral. In 1991, wildlife animal’s population density increased from 40.95 animals per square kilometer 1990 to 44.40 animals per square kilometer. Afterwards, wildlife population density has been on a decline over the last twenty years with wildlife population density in 2011 standing at 29.20 animals per square kilometer on average, wildlife population density over the years has decreased by 0.7 times since 1991. Conversely, Kenya’s population has been on the up-ward spiral from a low of about 8 million in 1963 to a high of about 42 million in 2012. Growth in birth rates, improved income levels, improved public healthcare services together with decreased infant and child mortality levels have seen the population increase 4.5 times since 1963.


Tourism and wildlife development are economic activities that involve the mobilization of human and material resources with the view of accessing and exploiting a country’s flora and fauna with the view or the objective being preserving the country’s national heritage, indigenous cultures in their material and non material forms; and most importantly, creating wealth and gainful employment (through public or private investment) and revenue for the fiscal needs of countries. Such undertakings involve competition for scarce resources at various levels over time and space- local, national, regional and international/global. Nonetheless, in settings of poor governance; compounded by deteriorating infrastructure and an uncertain political climate caused by political sectionalism, insecurity and the likes, the tourism sector in any country is likely to be faced with many hurdles. It is such hurdles that Kenya seeks to overcome and/or manage at the policy level.

For many years the Kenya government laid emphasis on policies aimed at attracting more and more tourists while protecting wildlife. This was a challenging process especially in the first 2 decades of independence. While the then Ministry of Tourism has over the years been mandated to manage the tourism sector, a special state corporation KWS established through an Act of Parliament (The Wildlife Conservation and Management Act) in 1990. In addition, another public agency, the Kenya Forest Service is specifically mandated to manage and protect forests including all water catchments. While much has been done to improve
the tourism sector, its key resource base, wildlife is dwindling by the day. While many answers to this story of affairs are rather obvious, a number of valuable solutions of the policy kind are prescribed herein.

It is well possible too that there a good number of Kenya’s wildlife attractions consist of delicate ecosystems that are endowed by nature and privileged by geography but partly threatened by tourism activity as well as other retrogressive forms of human activity. We contend that at this level, the way forward is a policy towards tourism and wildlife development that is premised on wider local, national, regional and international consultation. The realities of the contemporary past; such as the urge to industrialize and the questions of cultural change, urbanization and industrialization more so among the developing countries must inform the evolving policy realm as far as tourism and wildlife development in Kenya is concerned. A proper blend of well informed tourism forecasting and marketing, innovativeness, creativity and sustainability all come to mind at this juncture. Diversification and exploration into new areas of tourism interest such as rural tourism, ecotourism and development tourism is the prescriptive import that this essay targets to inject into the current and future cycles of tourism and wildlife development policy environment.

Similarly, there is dire need to further embrace available and quality technology in order to mainstream tourism and wildlife development in Kenya within the progressive cycles of social media travel and hospitality that is heavily powered by technological innovativeness and prowess. In this direction, we suggest that Kenya’s policy platform on hospitality and the touchy questions of cultural erosion and moral decay in the face of international human trafficking syndicates and child sex tourism and bestiality—as has been alleged to have taken place in several areas of tourism face around Kenya in the recent past—ought to be better streamlined and managed. Learning from experiences of Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, Cambodia, Finland, Greece, India, S. Korea, Nepal, Thailand, Vietnam and the United States which attract tourist of the liberal hospitality setting would add value in the quest finding practical solutions to these challenges (MacMenamin, 2001; Sharply and Stone 2009). Well guided and informed policies may be deliberated that would either enforce a well premised policy that is totally against such ventures on one hand; or one that enables a sober and well governed approach on the same (Das et al, 2013).

In another line of argument, since 2010, Kenya is under a new constitutional dispensation that lays out a national-county government setting that at this early stage requires well crafted and practical legislation, implementation, coordination and evaluation; this has all do with tourism and wildlife development. As such country governments should not grow to be inhibitors but able facilitation platforms for tourism and wildlife development in the near and distant future. As such, teething and bottle-necking policy making, implementation and evaluation ought to be well anticipated and practical solutions found in order that the new constitutional dispensation in Kenya makes a truly positive impact as far as tourism and wildlife development in Kenya is concerned. Such tasks require wide public participation, intra-governmental and inter-agency communication, as well as general and specific education and advocacy on the same is concerned (Zahra 2010).

Various geographical locations in Kenya are endowed by nature and privileged with unique ecosystems which will call for inter-county cooperation and exchanges in terms of exposure and training for the locals which will encourage tourists to transcend through different tourist spots which can be augmented by local cultural presentations. Innovativeness, creativity and sustainability of rural tourism can be encouraged for locals to consider hosting tourists. The tourists could then be living for days with the locals getting involved in light economic activities. Working on shambas for a couple of hours for example, could be tried, meant for introducing the tourists to local cultural experiences. While technology can be important in marketing tourism, care must be exercised in avoiding watering down of cultural practices, values and traditional practices.

Further, it is imperative that actors and structures in the policy cycles acknowledge and appreciate the fact that Kenya is not operating in isolation. This way; so long as Kenya is fighting international poaching, human trafficking and child sex tourism as well as trade in endangered species of flora and fauna in isolation; then its current and future efforts in as far as tourism and wildlife development could be in futility. Kenya’s
latest engagement with China in which the latter committed to a comprehensive grant targeting the protection of wildlife against poachers is move in the positive direction. As such, diplomacy and positive engagements and compromises ought to inform the policy realm; one that is sensitive to the regional and international realities facing the tourism and wildlife sector. We argue that such a process would best be approached holistically in the context of enhancing tourism and wildlife development from the premise of fighting rural and urban poverty, enhancing the governance capacity of the devolved system of government through wider stakeholder interaction, liaison and consultation at all levels (Murphy and Murphy 2004).

Conclusion
This paper sought to make a critical analysis of what we call “push-and-pull factors” in the politics of tourism and wildlife development in Kenya; with the aim of making prescribing pertinent policy directions and/or solutions on the same. We contend that while, tourism will continue to play an important role which will remain core for most counties economies in the newly devolved system of Kenyan government. However, a more balanced approach between the national and county governments in planning and managing tourism and wildlife is necessary to ensure sustainability, maximizing productivity while conserving the environment. The symbiotic nature of tourism, wildlife and the national economy should be transferred to the Counties and local populace. Local populations ought to be involved in the strategic planning and management. The counties hence ought to be part and parcel of strategy formulation, execution and later monitoring and evaluation steps simplified through advocacy for their understanding. We argue hence that; It is noteworthy too that Kenya does not operate in isolation. Its tourism and wildlife management environment is -either directly or indirectly- affected by myriad regional and international factors.

Vast game parks like Maasai Mara transcend into Tanzania’s Serengeti calling for concerted effort across the borders in conservation and management of wildlife, environment and ecology. The national government will need to coordinate management with the neighboring countries while the counties work with the local neighboring administrative regions. The development of local legal framework to protect the tourism industry and enhance management will be necessary. This will ensure protection from international onslaught through exploitation and provide basis for legal recourse incase of violation. Development of this legal framework at national level can be mirrored and replicated to the counties for purposes of sustainability and posterity. Kenya has over the years suffered from regional inequality, with several societies being marginalized and generally features less in the nation’s development landscape. Sadly these regions are home to the Kenya’s leading wildlife attractions. Under the new constitutional dispensation, it is necessary that a balanced approach be adopted; one that streamlines tourism growth development into the new county structures and processes. The recent discoveries in oil and other minerals ought to be harnessed in a way to attract more tourism demand. As such the push-and-pull factors in question ought to be handled with immense foresight, ingenuity and rational sobriety lest Kenya and her local and international partners in the tourism and wildlife sectors lose focus and proper orientation on pertinent issues of the policy kind.

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3China pledged to fund Kenya’s efforts to curb wildlife poaching in a meeting between Kenya’s Secretary for Environment, Water and Natural Resources Prof. Judy Wakhungu and Chinese Ambassador to Kenya Liu Guangyuan. See The Daily Nation, 10th August 2013:5.
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