

Limits and Paradoxes in the Development of Ecotourism in Kenya: Implications on the Sustainability of the Natural Environment.

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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism entails travel to natural and relatively undisturbed areas. The government plays a crucial role in delineation and management of such areas. In addition, the private sector sees to it that such areas exist for posterity. In Kenya, one such institution is Ecotourism Kenya (EK) whose motto is to 'link communities, tourism and conservation'. First, this paper takes a critical look at the conservation agenda advanced by EK through the national eco-rating scheme launched in 2002 that seeks to give every tourist accommodation facility a chance to participate, learn and apply best practices of sustainable tourism. Moreover, the theme of community empowerment is discussed based on the accommodation facilities initiated by EK in Kakamega Forest Reserve (240 km²) in Western Kenya. This paper concludes that, while certification can be a beneficial tool if properly implemented, this is not the case given that there were only 100 establishments certified in Kenya under this scheme by the year 2012. In addition, ecotourism in Kenya needs to dialogue and clearly define its agenda in order to minimize contradictions and dilemmas inherent in ecotourism practice.

KEYWORDS: [Ecotourism](#), [eco-rating](#), [local community and benefits](#), [Kenya](#)

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