



HANDICRAFT INDUSTRY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN CULTURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigated the roles of handicraft industries in cultural tourism development in Machakos County. Machakos County is home to Kenya's oldest and biggest handicraft industry. The handicraft industry comprises of wood carvers and basket weavers in Mwala and Yatta constituencies'.

Methodology: The study utilized qualitative research approach using an exploratory research design. The study population composed of wood carvers, craft cooperative officials and basket weavers drawn from two weavers' community organizations in Machakos County. These are Yatta South Women Group and Muli Kyondo. The study employed unstructured interviews where focus group discussions, in-depth face to face interview were utilized to gather views directly from the respondents. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data.

Main findings: The findings of the research revealed that cultural resources have long been providing employment for the local community.

Implications: The study, therefore, recommends that both the national and local government should collaborate with the local community in development and planning of cultural resources so as to ensure sustainability of the industry. This would, in turn, increase the competitiveness of Machakos County as a tourist destination.

Novelty: Kenya's tourism and in particular Machakos cultural tourism product plays a vital role both in the rural areas as well as in urban areas in ensuring sustainability of resources in a number of ways that include social-cultural, economic as well as environmental.

Key Words: *Handicraft Industry, Role, Cultural Tourism, Development, Machakos County*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Travelling is always about learning, and it is through travelling to various destinations that we discover about the world surrounding us. To developing countries, tourism is a financial, job creation, and gross domestic Product development tool; but to the tourist it is about visiting others people way of living as well as exploring the discovered and undiscovered environments. For example, tourism is a powerful vehicle for economic growth and job creation all over the world (WTTC, 2013). The tourism sector in 2017, is directly and indirectly responsible for 9.9 percent of the world's jobs (313 million); 10.4 percent of the global GDP (US\$8 trillion); 5.8 percent of the world's visitor exports (US\$1.4 trillion); and 4.5 percent of the world's investment (WTTC, 2018). Cultural tourism on the other hand, has been around for many generations but enjoyed by a tiny minority of the general public. For example, the "Grand Tour" was once considered an essential part of a "gentleman's" education and today, it is a worldwide mass trend (Paurafkari 2009). Thus, cultural tourism is a way of understanding another culture and to experience the world. Tourists seek cultural experiences, from the cathedrals of Europe to the the Pyramids of Giza, to the great wall of china, to the acient city of Began city in Myanmar to remote villages in the Akamba community.

Kenya is a nation endowed with a great a culture and natural heritage. With the landscape of diverse environments, cultures, countless languages, and dialects, cultural tourism is one of the fastest growing and most popular niche markets today. Today, tourists visit Kenya to explore the diverse resources including famous wildlife, beaches, or to experience of our culture that makes their stay so special. The real face of our country is found among the combined faces of Kenya's diverse cultures that brings the destination to life, the landscapes have special cultural significance to a different community such as koobi For a in Turkana, and the wildlife that has long been an essential part of our traditional cultures. Kenya's heritage extends back longer than most destinations (Dorothy, 2012). For example, the heritage sites in Kenya like Koobi Fora have the earliest evidence of human habitation on earth and is a biosphere reserve that combines a traditional symbol of the future and ecosystem management. Meet the Swahili sailors of the coast with their dhows; visit the Samburu warriors in the Northern as they dance; meet the November annual Maulidi celebrations in Lamu to the bullfights of Kakamega (Dorothy, 2012). Anywhere you travel in Kenya, you will find new and fascinating cultures and cultural events. In addition, the heart



of the coastal tourist destination, Mombasa is found in the exotic old town, among the narrow winding streets and Arab architecture together with Lamu town. Mombasa old town and Lamu town are well known for their ancient buildings, extravagant art designs and curio shops that sell antique and popular Kenyan souvenirs ([Magical Kenya, 2014](#)). Kenya's diverse culture plus its unique geographical location has led to the development of a dynamic tourism sector, through which Kenyans derive their livelihood through production and sales of crafts and artifacts ([Akama 2002](#)). Machakos County, having an intrinsic cultural background with the area known as the cradle of wood carving, should be utilized to spur development since the area is ecologically fragile rural area with over 85% of the population being poor.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural tourism is a means of preservation of the local culture. However, it also possesses a threat to the traditional way of life of the local culture through litter and disturbances of religious services. In support of this [Akama, \(2002\)](#), and [Kibicho, \(2002\)](#) acknowledges that rich visitors in Malindi and Maasai lands display their wealth which raises the expectations and the need of the local people. In retrospect, the youth engage themselves in anti-social activities like prostitution and drug peddling. [Ogora \(2014\)](#) states that in Machakos selective harvesting of preferred tree species has also led to the decline and total collapse of tree population thus contributing to the degradation of forests and woodlands. [Okumu \(2016\)](#) globalization, is the ravaging force on the social, political, cultural and economic spheres of the world, whose effects, whether negative or positive, are universally undeniable hence reshaping how we have traditionally gone about studying the social world and human culture. The study further noted that the introduction of formal education and Christianity, several cultural practices are being abandoned due to the perception that they are 'ungodly' or transmission from the bearers to the next generation is unachievable for various other reasons. [Ondimu \(2002\)](#) argued that Kenyan cultural tourism possesses potential [Greg \(2002\)](#) has underlined the problem with African cultural tourism as depending on living cultures such as dance and performances which is contrary to European cultural tourism which is more of monuments and other material heritage. While a significant body of studies has examined that historically tourism planners rely on suppliers and consumers side paying very little attention to the producers ([Reid 2002](#)).

[Clarke \(2008\)](#) argued that various problems in cultural tourism development are due to lack of coordination and cohesion among the stakeholders in the tourism industry. At the same time [Bendix, \(2009\)](#) and [Bowitz & Ibenhold, \(2009\)](#) argues that despite the majority of discussions on economic and socio-cultural challenges, cultural tourism developers forget sacred and spiritual sites which have a portion of tangible values which possess a unique intangible meaning for the local communities and the religious groups. Therefore any successful cultural tourism development in rural or in urban areas depends on commercial and other logistical issues such as the quality of the products, the accessibility, the infrastructure & superstructure of a destination, availability of manpower as well as the interest of investors. It is, however, worth noting that the rural areas may be disadvantaged compared to urban areas which may be as a result of political as well as institutional obstacles ([Akama, 2002](#)).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

Machakos County borders Nairobi and Kiambu counties to the West, Embu to the North, Kitui to the East, Makueni to the South, Kajiado to the South West, and Murang'a and Kirinyaga to the North West. Machakos County stretches from latitudes 0° 45' South to 1° 31' South and longitudes 36° 45' East to 37° 45' East. The county has an altitude of 1000 - 1600 meters above sea level ([Machakos, 2012](#)). The County is composed of 8 constituencies which cover a total area of 7,157.00 km² with a total population of 1, 283,208 ([GoK, 2013](#)). However, the study was carried out in Katangi location in Yatta Constituency and in Wamunyu location of Mwala constituency. Machakos County is inhabited by the Akamba community who are numerically Kenya's fourth largest group and live in semi-arid areas with limited economic activities because of dry seasons experienced throughout the year. Yatta constituency is one of the areas most affected by drought and has the highest poor population in Machakos County yet they are endowed with craft industry (basketry). A large number of the community has turned into handcraft industry as their main economic activities. Even though it is not the only economic activity they still engage themselves in other economic activities to supplement their income. The selection of the study site is that the Akamba community has a long history in Kenya in handcraft industry, with the highest concentration of woodcarvers and basket weavers hence a community which depends on cultural industry for a living ([Mutinda, 2014](#)).

3.2 Study Population and sample size

The population of interest in this study consisted of the local community actively involved in handcraft industry. Thus, the target population consisted of the woodcarvers, basket weavers, and their co-operative officials since they are main stakeholders in the industry. In Mwala Constituency, the woodcarvers were from Wamunyu Co-operative Society and its



environs totaling to 2,051 members comprising 7 co-operative officials. In Yatta Constituency, Yatta South Women Group have 400 members comprising 12 co-operative officials in addition and Muli Kyondo group has 100 basket weavers.

The selection of the study population in the two constituencies have a long history in Kenya in handicraft industry, with the highest concentration of woodcarvers and basket weavers' hence large number of the community has turned into handicraft industry as their main economic activities making the local community to depend on the cultural industry. There were 12 interviews conducted ranging from CO1 to CO12 while there were 9 FDGs ranging from FDG 1 to FDG 9 with an average number of 12 respondents in each group. Code CO represented the interviews and code FGD represented focus group discussion.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The qualitative content analysis was used in the study as the aim of the researcher was to systematically describe the meaning of materials in a certain respect that the researcher specified from research questions. Content analysis was then followed by creating of categories as means of suppressing a large number of text into a fewer content related to categories, coded unrelated to the research questions as well as those appeared frequently. The researcher also identified the most significant and the frequent codes using multi-sourced data of woodcarvers as well as basket weavers. The researcher established themes as a way to link the underlying meaning together in categories. The concept of themes had multiple interpretations, first as a way to describe a structural unit of meaning essential to present qualitative results, second, a recurring regularity identified within or cutting across categories and an impression of the latent content of the text (JiY & Eun 2014).

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Majority of the respondents ranged from 51+ years in age bracket followed by close ranges between 41 to 50 years age bracket and very few ranged between the ages of 31 to 40 years age brackets (Table 1). According to Mutinda (2014), the result contradicted with this study which stated that the age group aged between 17-30 years was the majority who are working in cultural tourism handicraft industry. From the discussion with the practitioners, it emerged that the youth usually prefer to work in other places like schools as cooks instead of the handicraft industry. This can be attributed due to lack of enthusiasm from the young generation to the poor paying of the sector.

Majority of the respondents (61%) had attained primary school education while 35% acknowledged having secondary school education while 4% acknowledged having a professional qualification. Despite the numerous positive impacts the cultural industry indicates that there is a high level of illiteracy in the cultural industry as it does not require skilled labor and that is the reason why it is mostly dominated by people with minimal education.

The handicraft has been there for long enough hence providing employment for the local community. It was referred as the only permanent income to the households thus being occupied by elderly people who have no alternative means of earning their living. Majority of the respondents (63%) had been in the industry for more than two decades which is dated back in 1997 while beyond while 21% have been there for more than sixteen years and 16% have been in the industry for more than ten years. This indicates that nobody has joined the industry since 2005. This being attributed to the fact that the practitioners argued that the youth generally felt that the industry doesn't pay well hence they opt to work in other areas like schools. At the same time the artifacts and craft making skills, rules and regulations are passed to the family during production. This limits opportunities for other members of the society to learn. This strategy also extends the learning period over years while indeed the handicraft industry has been very vital as it creates employment to the elderly who cannot get a job because of their age therefore, it reduces poverty in the area.

About 43% of the respondents were women who were engaged in craft beadworks basketry. On the other hand, 57% were men while by contract were active on energetic and muscular activities like woodcarving, given that the sources of raw materials sometimes were found at far distances hence this creates a bias situation in a favor of men rather than women

Table 1: Demographic Information

Handicraft Practitioners			
	Category	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Age in years	<20	0	0
	21-30	0	0
	31-40	20	20
	41-50	30	29
	51+	52	51



Years in operation	<5	0	0
	5-9	0	0
	10-15	16	16
	16-20	22	21
	21+	64	63
Education Level	Primary Education	62	61
	Secondary Education	36	35
	College	4	4
Gender	Male	58	57
	Females	44	43

4.2 Discussion on handicraft industry challenges

The handicraft industry through cultural tourism is a major informal industry in Machakos County. The handicraft industry provides a source of livelihood for many families from the drought-affected area. The area surrounding Yatta and Mwala Constituencies is semi-arid that cannot support agriculture. Therefore the study sought to find out the challenges handicraft industry faces in cultural tourism development in Machakos county. With the advent of county governments in 2010 and the vigorous way in which the county government of Machakos is advocating for the development of tourism, the demand for handcrafted products especially basketry and woodcarving are projected to rise. However, the handicrafts practitioners have faced a number of challenges over time while ensuring sustainability and authenticity of the handcrafted products (Table 2).

Table 2: Narrative Analysis on Drawbacks Encountered in Handicraft Production in Machakos County

Themes	Respondents	No.	%
1. Untrustworthy Customers		12	12
Lack of customers		62	63
2. Market		13	13
(i) Poor marketing			
(ii) No. of tourists has gone down		40	41
3. Lack of Training		15	15
4. Lack of Raw materials			
-Lack of raw materials i.e. the sisal fiber and hardwoods		56	57
-Lack of hardwood trees like Mahogany, baobab, and ebony		30	30
-The raw material is expensive		17	17
5. High Inflation by Brokers			
The stiff competition which has been received by the handicraft has affected them greatly		59	60
6. Financial problems			
Lack of enough money to finance their business		62	63
7. Politics of the day		11	11
8. Human-Wildlife Conflict			
There are monkeys which destroy their sisal		7	7
9. Terrorism and Political Instability in Kenya			
Terrorist attacks which take place in the country plus post-election violence has totally affected their business since 2007.		18	18
10. Environmental issues			
Lack of raw Materials mostly the trees which are obtained from the forest are governed by Kenya forest Act which doesn't allow deforestation.		25	26
11. Social Issues			
-Lack of people who can take over from the aging population		65	66
-Women don't want to weave when there is food hence we need labor and there is no machine in the market to work.		30	37

12.	13. Competition -Stiff competition in the global market -Competition from brokers	21	21
14.	15. Lack of Political Support -The government doesn't provide political support incentives need to be in place for investors	39	40
16.	17. Price of handicraft -Low market price of handicrafts	72	73

4.2.1 Untrustworthy customers

Twelve percent of respondents cited lack of customers or challenges dealing with them as some of the biggest challenges in handicraft business. While only 1% of the respondents argued that the customers are also another challenge to the business, sometimes they give orders and they fail to pay yet they still want the baskets. Another 1% of the respondents mentioned that some of them are not trustworthy they will acknowledge having received the basket but they will refuse to pay as they will claim that they received wrong specifications. Respondent CO 12 said:

For several years ago we (basket weavers) were doing USD 35,000 per year, but one of our customers we supplied a stock worth USD 32,000 failed to pay thus the business has been going down since then.

On the other hand, 1% of the respondents argued that wrong specification in colors is another major challenge since the color they produce from the dye given they are done manually.

Sometimes customers send shades of colors they want online, but because of manually mixing the colors, customers do complain the colors are different and then they will refuse to pay. Majority of the respondents (63%) stated that lack of customers was their main challenge, which was caused by low visitation compared to some years back when they used to get tourists from the United Kingdom as well as the United State of America. The problems are as dynamic as members in FGD H stated that:

Sometimes we get little orders; we weave and wait for few days then stay doing nothing. While in other instance we get orders and the customer don't come to collect the basket they ordered.

4.2.2 Lack of market for their finished products

The challenge of the market was the most dominant of the respondents. Thirteen percent of the respondents cited that the products have no market and that there is no ready market for their products mostly the carvings. This was reinforced by 1% of the cooperative weavers' respondents that the products they were having don't have a ready market. This was affirmed by the fact that the bulk customer who used to come twice in a year now comes once. Respondent CO 12 mentioned that:

Another disturbing aspect was lack of market due to lack of good training to show us how to sell up to 100%. The store is full of rejected products which can be attributed to lack of meeting specifications and deadlines during delivery.

However other respondents attributed this challenge due to the way they receive few tourists as compared to the years before the post-election violence of 2008. One respondent noted that currently they are getting domestic tourists but foreigners are very few. Respondent in FGD B noted that:

Sometimes back the business used to be good but according to the way the business is going we are going to close. If we get other jobs which we can do and if the pay is better we will leave this job but in case the wages end will come back here.

It worth to note that, respondents from Muli Kyondo stated that their problem was different from what others were facing. The interviewee affirmed that the demand was so high that they couldn't manage to meet the market demand. This could be attributed to the high demand for baskets in the hospitality industry as they are used in laundry department as laundry baskets and as planting baskets for both indoor and outdoor. The problem of the handicraft market is very dynamic and hence the stakeholders need to come together to come up with new strategies.

4.2.3 Lack of training

All respondents stated that there is no training by local government (Table 4.1). This was also confirmed by respondent in FGD A who noted that:



We are under Ministry of Co-operative, they no longer care and there is no more education to the group members since we have not been trained recently. Sometimes back they used to train our members but currently, we are forgotten.

It was also further reiterated by a respondent who said that lack of training was also a problem to them since they no longer get to learn how to manage projects. Training was taken as an important aspect by the majority of the respondents in the management of a community project. It is evident that government used to train them sometimes back as it was confirmed by respondent CO 9:

The Ministry of commerce came here and we were given an opportunity for those who wanted to display their wares. Before that, there was a time they would pick two people from each organization to go to Tanzania, Dar-salaam for training.

4.2.4 Lack of raw materials

Both the weavers and woodcarver confirmed that they didn't have raw materials for their carvings. This was attributed to several factors as one of them further argued that lack of raw materials particularly the sisal given that they buy them from Kitui. In addition, she mentioned that if they don't buy them from a neighboring county (Kitui County) they stay without weaving and these people from Kitui sells to them at a higher price than market price. Respondent CO 8 also argued that:

We also lack materials during dry seasons, you could also have ordered but you find materials are not ready because during the rainy season when the rain starts the (weavers) work on their gardens to plant you find there is no time to prepare materials.

Another respondent stated that lack of raw materials; particularly sisal threads and the dye color are the biggest challenges. Majority of the weavers don't have money to buy them since they are sold at higher prices. On the other hand, woodcarvers had the greatest challenge of accessing tree species for wood carving since they are not readily available due to a government ban. respondent (woodcarver) CO 4 claimed that:

We usually prefer three tree species for carving which are Ebony (*Biabergia, Melanoxylon*), Mahogany (*Afzelia Quenzensus*) and Baobab (*Adanzoadigitata*) which are not easily available and on the other hand they are also expensive.

While respondent CO12 stated:

Before we were making carving from Mahogany which is good wood in carving due to the texture and color but the government banned Mahogany. While currently, we use Jacaranda which is not good for carving.

Respondent CO 1 added that:

Jacaranda tree is hardwood but it has pest which affects them. The woodcarvers have been using different types of wood including softwood but Ebony was the main tree which they have been using. Today it is very hard to get the hardwood and the ones available are gotten from far (Ngong and Karura forest(s)).

4.2.5 High inflation by brokers

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Respondent CO1 stated:

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The respondent also stated that:

Jacaranda tree is hardwood but it has pest which affects them. The woodcarvers have been using different types of wood including softwood but Ebony was the main tree which they have been using. Today it is very hard to get the hardwood and the ones available are gotten from far (Ngong and Karura forest) (CO 1).

4.2.6 Financial problem

Financial problem was stated by the majority of the respondents (63%) as a challenge to the production of cultural products. Indeed one of the respondents (weavers) had this to say:

We lack enough money to buy raw material, in cases where you don't have capital you rely on the down payment from the customers. We have been told that there is some money which has been set aside to assist the women but we have never been given any financial assistance (CO 8).

Respondents in FGD H said:

The money we are supposed to get (loan), if we fail to pay, the financier will pick everything we have, including goats and chickens.

Thus the respondents argued that they don't want to have loans they want grants since they don't want their houses to be sold to recover the loans. Lack of funds is another important problem that results in lack of protection, interpretation and adequate visitor management the study further noted that this has been found to be a common problem throughout the world, but it is more serious in developing countries where public funds are scarce (Irindu & Shah, 2016). There is also an aspect of ignorance from the practitioners regarding the source of finances on how to finance and also improve their business

4.2.7 Politics of the day

Respondent attributes politics to a challenge rather to a blessing in disguise. They mentioned that the effect of politics on the business is immense, for example during election period the weavers and woodcarvers are called for meetings because they think they are going to be given some money. The woodcarvers and weavers don't have time to make carvings and baskets when customer come for their orders they get there is nothing to be delivered as they wasted all their time in the political meetings. In addition respondents in FGD E noted that politician keeps on claiming that weavers are paid little money:

There was a case when one of the buyers bought baskets from Yatta South Women Co-operative Society and he failed to pay. The Co-operative was almost closed until it was intervened by the District Commissioner. Local politicians insisted that the officials took the money and since then most of the weavers have stopped weaving.

Respondents in FGD D had very interesting statements on side of politics as they mentioned that:

Our Kenyan leaders have spoiled our work, for example, the current government has put efforts on the decline in performances of our business given that they don't work closely with Europe and America. The tourists from the Middle East have little economic impacts on our businesses, instead of buying they take photographs then they replicate our production using machines in their home countries. They have an upper hand since their production is predetermined and of quality.

These findings agree with a study carried out by [Mayaka \(2012\)](#) as these markets are seen as alternatives to the traditional European and American markets. These countries, along with other emerging markets in South America and Eastern Europe are relative newcomers as their middle-class populations expand and globalized consumption patterns emerge.

4.2.8 Human-wildlife conflict

Another problem which was cited by one of the respondents was on monkeys, though the numbers of the monkeys declining monkeys are shifting from eating sisal to maize. The respondent also mentioned that it is only during the dry spell when monkeys eat sisal. Respondents CO 9 stated that:

Something funny about these monkeys is that they are not traditionally from here suspicion has it that they are dumped here by people from Kenya Wildlife Service from other areas. The other day they were dropped near here (Yatta) while the other time they were dropped across the river and the community were not happy about it ().



4.2.9 Environmental issues

Contrary to basket weaving the wood carving is seen as a destruction of the environment since it involves cutting down of trees. However, some of the carvers disagree with this as one of them argued the government to understand that they get their daily bread from these businesses. Respondent FGD C stated that:

It is very important if you look at our work, and the type of wood we are using. Most of the hardwood is mostly dead since it gives the best quality and they are obtained easily from the forest floor.

However, basket weavers from Wamunyu being an extractive industry is dependent on the natural resources from the forest hence it is directly affected by the Kenya forest Act 2005 which provides guidelines and framework for tree exploitation in Kenya. This also affects the woodcarvers as they are dependent on forest dead wood. This was confirmed by one of the carvers, he argued the government to review the ban they imposed on some hardwood trees which are Mahogany, Olive, and Ebony trees.

The study observed that while most wood carvers were aware of the negative environmental impact of their activities, the majority were taking the initiative to reverse the trend. This was more so because they were aware of the disappearance of certain tree species from their farms and their suppliers. Therefore the effort of re-forestation in the area was an evidence from a number of nursery seedlings which were being made at Wamunyu Co-operative Society by replacing the extinct tree species with fast-growing species like Jacaranda which are in use currently.

4.2.10 Social issues

The biggest challenge which was cited by most respondents is that they don't see people, who are willing to take over from the aging members, this is very critical in the sustainable development of the handicraft industry (Table 4.2). This can be attributed to lack of enthusiasm from the young generation due to poor paying of the sector. Another respondent who is in the younger generation also mentioned that culturally handicraft is declining because he doesn't think after 10 years it will be there, they are not ready to weave and take over from the aging people (Table 4.2). He further argued that when there are crops to be tendered to women don't want to weave as they work in their gardens. One respondent reported that the educated people don't want to see their mothers' weaving since weaving is associated with poverty. In addition, the same respondent reported that young ladies are running away from weaving preferring to work in the newly opened ECD schools which have been put up by the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) as cooks so they don't have time to weave. This was supported respondent CO 9 who stated:

Because of modernization, nobody wants to be seen making baskets while for the woodcarvers they are saying there is no money as it is a waste of time. This is because the government is not tolerating anybody who is cutting down trees for carving.

4.2.11 Lack of value addition and Innovation

A major challenge on the value of the respondents was lack of value addition and innovation. Majorly respondents stated that they face a lot of competition from brokers, while other respondents added that due to poor value addition and lack of innovation, both the basket weavers and woodcarvers have been making the same artifacts over the years. This is due to the production of the same items which used to be produced 30 years ago they failed to come up with new products, for example, the wood carvers have been carving the big five meaning that even if the tourist makes a repeat purchase to the exhibition they can't get something new to buy.

This study reveals that competition was highly due to poor value addition by handicraft practitioners as well as lack of creativity which definitely affect the price of their products as well as poor marketing. This was due to the high level of illiteracy as the industry does not require any skilled labor hence this leads to the operational obstacle as they can't produce superior quality handicrafts which can service the global market. The stiff competition and inability of Machakos handicraft practitioners to compete effectively in the global market is a major setback in tourism Industry ([Mutinda, 2014](#)).

4.2.12 Terrorism and Political Instability in Kenya

Terrorism is another disaster to the handicraft business whenever there is an attack in a major town in the Country. Tourists fear to visit Wamunyu given they are located further from Nairobi as they feel vulnerable to attacks. A woodcarver's respondent noted that politics plays a major role in the development of handicraft industry. For example, tourists fear destination that is not politically stable. Respondent FGD B mentioned that:

The politics of 2007 has made us suffer from that year to date. Our handicraft industry has been declining since then.



The respondent further argued that the government keeps on promising them that the handicraft industry will improve but since the year 2007 the industry has been on its knees.

In 2007 wood carvers were many but in 2016 the handicraft business has been down very badly with very low earnings (FGD B).

On the other hand respondents, CO 2 claimed that:

The threat of armed insurgents from the neighboring Somalia, as well as the potential of terrorism, has also affected the business thus the business has been very low.

The study also agreed with this research that insecurity is rampant in the cultural sites destinations, 2007 and 2008 post-election violence, there has been a lot of insecurity in Northern Kenya, Turkana, and Samburu which are areas rich in cultural tourism activities but these areas are prone to cattle rustling among others ([Dorothy, 2012](#)).

4.2.13 Poor Marketing Strategies

From the finding of the study, it was noted that majority of the handicraft practitioners do marketing of their products through word of mouth, hence inadequate marketing strategy due to inadequate finance for marketing as well as marketing knowledge which also challenge their products from foreign markets. This obvious dictates the size of the market for their products.

From the study it was noted that the marketing of the handicraft was very poor, direct access to the market was actually attributed to the high infiltration by brokers as the cooperatives are not organized as there is no standardization of prices. In addition, products are also vulnerable to the side effect of recession as consumers in most cases focus on purchasing only necessities ([Mayaka, 2012](#)).

Furthermore, Kenyan handicraft practitioners are not competitive as they do produce traditional designs at the same time they come up with copyrights rather than coming up with new products which are competitive in the markets. These findings generally agree with other reports notably the report by [Rogerson \(2015\)](#) which identified, that the increasing interest and utilization of local cultures and people in the development of tourism does not come without associated risks and challenges. While [Mayaka \(2012\)](#) on his finding noted that social issues affecting the country have a bearing on the sustainability of the tourism industry further noted that key among these, are the issues of poverty, famine, drought, and disease the prevailing drought and hunger situations. On the other hand, [Doris \(2012\)](#) identified that the effective marketing and promotion of cultural tourism products is a challenge, and there is the absence of widespread marketing skills further added that the developing countries do not have market access of their quality goods and services.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND OPPORTUNITIES

From the study the production and supply of the handicrafts have become an important part of the industrialization process in Machakos County, therefore it is important because it not only represents an important source of livelihood but also because it can be understood as a barometer for grassroots growth, development and self-sustaining. Hence in order for Machakos County to improve its sustainability of its handicraft resources in the County the following are recommended for both the county in policy planning and implementing while forecasting and the national government to legislate policies for the county and national.

5.1 Training

Training is the basis of the success and failure of tourism development hence the Government should work on training of handicraft practitioners as it is essential in cultural resource production and supply a majority of wood carvers and basket weavers have only basic education since there is some evidence that the government used to train them sometimes back.

When it comes to sustainable tourism approach to planning for tourism development the County Government should put initiative that empowers basket weavers as well as woodcarvers with required range of skills and knowledge that is necessary to ensure efficient resource management and ensure high-quality tourism product. Training on value addition is also of importance, this will assist the woodcarvers and basket makers to be innovative and produce items that are of importance to the tourists. Training will assist the local community to overcome the problem of illiteracy and poverty that are associated with low levels of education. This could be done through Women and men “chamas”, seminars, and empowerment programmes. On the other hand, while artifacts and craft making skills, rules and regulations are passed to family apprentices during production. This limits opportunities for other members of the society to learn. This strategy also extends the learning period over years. Therefore, as a conservation strategy, craft making could be introduced as an extracurricular activity in schools, where teachers could invite practitioners to talk to students an offer practical lessons on the technology during school club days.



5.4.2 Creating Framework between co-operative and County Government

From the study, the destination is missing a framework between the co-operatives and the County Government. Hence the Local community, as well as the County Government, should create a framework which shows how they can collaborate to share knowledge and create innovative tourism products so that they can increase the competitiveness of Machakos County through the handicraft industry. This will assist the local community and County Government in finding a solution to specific issues in affecting sustainable cultural resource development.

5.3 Product Integration

The County government should create festivals and events. Most of the respondent stated that some of the cultural resources are wood carvings, basketry, while other resources include cultural dances and sisal fibers. This could help handicraft industry production and supply which can be used to raise awareness of Machakos County as a destination which can assist in extending tourist season. Given that Machakos has potential and a competitive advantage in the delivery of cultural tourism through its proximity to the capital city. Thus, Machakos County Government should work together with other tourism stakeholders and with Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) to develop and market the handicraft product in tandem with other cultural resources such as dances, cuisine, and music. Machakos has beautiful hilly scenery that is perfect for camping and hiking this consists of tricky terrain that would challenge any camper. Aloleni near Ngelani is famous for “water flowing against gravity” which is located on Kituluni Hill, 12 kilometers East of Machakos town. These sites would form the Eco-tourism and Cultural tourism circuits in the County.

5.4 Improvement of Security

The National government should improve the state of security especially in the major cities like Nairobi and Mombasa to enable tourists visit different destination as they participate in cultural activities. Thus the ministry of tourism and the County Government need to assure international and domestic tourists that Machakos is a safe destination.

5.5 Product Development

From the study it was discovered that there were no innovation mostly in wood woodcarving. The woodcarvers were producing the same products consisting of the big five to the same market, the market has since been saturated by such monotonous products. Thus, there is need for the woodcarvers to produce alternative and movable products for both the local and international markets. The wood carvers should ensure that product must be in line with tastes and trends of the market which can be influenced by promotional and marketing campaigns.

Tour companies, managers, and guides should sell the handicraft product in Machakos County. They need to incorporate the cultural product in their itineraries to improve their product range that will also open and market the county to the outside world. This would spur economic development while reducing the levels of poverty.

5.6 Marketing and promotion

The Ministry of Tourism, Kenya Tourism Board and the Tourism department in Machakos County Government should come up with a proper vision of the handicraft industry. A respondent stated that currently, they don't have any plan as the county is very young it is only now three years from the time when it was established and since it was developed nothing has been going on in the County. Another respondent mentioned that Agricultural Extension Officer has been advising them to plant sisal plant instead of outsourcing them from Kitui of which indeed it is a good idea as it will help the local communities in reducing the cost of production. This could be done through, mapping the potential handicraft areas, develop basic existing infrastructure, develop community empowerment programmes, involve the community in deciding the most important projects to be developed by the County Government, create a marketing plan with community involvement, and develop a marketing strategy to attract domestic tourist as well as international tourists as a niche market.

5.7 Financial Support

Through community education and training, the county government through the collaboration of nongovernmental organization should provide financial support to the local community. Financial problem was stated by the majority of respondents as a challenge to the production of cultural products. This could be done through such initiatives such as table banking, “chamas” and grants from donors like world banks and other financial aid donors. Alternatively, the County Government should provide financial support through a revolving fund as well as basic skills on financial planning and access to the small amount of finances through microcredit as well as loan guarantee programs as SMEs in tourism. This could create the foundation for sustainable tourism sector across the County as it aims will be to reduce poverty, improve the livelihoods and promote resources efficiency through sustainable tourism management practices.



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