INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON SUSTAINABLE WILDLIFE TOURISM IN WILDLIFE CONSERVANCIES IN KAJIADO COUNTY, KENYA.

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A Thesis Submitted to Graduate School in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Master of Science in Tourism Management of Tharaka University

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for an award of a diploma or conferment of a degree in any other university or institution.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved family, whose love and sacrifices have been the cornerstone of my academic journey. This includes my late father (Johanna), mother (Jones), and siblings (Joseph, Selfa, Centrine, Kevin, Christine, Kennedy and Caleb). By extension, I thank the entire Mukhwana family and everyone within it. I offer my heartfelt and undying appreciation to them for their persistent prayers, encouragement and support.

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ABSTRACT

One of the primary drivers of tourism is wildlife. In conservancies, the relationship between community engagement and sustainable wildlife tourism is vital for the balance between biodiversity conservation and the socioeconomic benefits derived from wildlife tourism initiatives. This study, therefore, aimed to investigate the influence of community engagement strategies on sustainable wildlife tourism within wildlife conservancies in Kajiado County, Kenya. The study's objectives were to evaluate the influence of the levels and types of community engagement on sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County and to establish the factors that hinder community engagement. This study was grounded on the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Theory and the Stakeholder Theory. A descriptive research design with a mixed-methods approach was adopted. The study employed a census of key stakeholders, including 29 conservancy managers as identified by the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA) (2024), 29 corresponding community leaders, one representative from the KWCA, and representatives from the tourism and wildlife departments at both the national and county government levels. Out of the anticipated 61 respondents, 60 participated in the study. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with representatives from the tourism and wildlife departments of the county and national governments, as well as from the KWCA. Quantitative data was collected through survey questionnaires that were paper-based and closed-ended, administered to conservancy managers and community leaders. All the respondents were selected through purposive sampling. The qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Concurrently, the quantitative data was subjected to descriptive and inferential data analysis. Simple linear regression analysis revealed significant relationships between community engagement and sustainable wildlife tourism. For levels of community engagement, participative engagement demonstrated a positive coefficient of 0.523 for community leaders and 0.487 for conservancy managers. In contrast, directive engagement showed negative coefficients of -0.297 (community leaders) and -0.271 (conservancy managers), while consultative engagement similarly exhibited negative impacts, with coefficients of -0.285 and -0.263 respectively. Regarding types of engagement, both direct and indirect engagement positively influence sustainability. Direct engagement had coefficients of 0.423 (community leaders) and 0.402 (conservancy managers), and indirect engagement followed with coefficients of 0.399 and 0.378 respectively. However, financial engagement had a negative influence on sustainability, with coefficients of -0.295 (community leaders) and -0.276 (conservancy managers). The regression models explained 56.4% of the variance in sustainable wildlife tourism outcomes for community leaders and 47.9% for conservancy managers (R^2), with significant F-values of 14.73 and 11.65, respectively. The findings of this study suggest that participative**,** direct and indirect community engagements are key drivers of sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County, whereas directive, consultative and financial community engagements may hinder it. The study recommends enforcing legislation that mandates community inclusion in wildlife tourism and conservation decision-making at both the national and county government levels, prioritizing local community participation in tourism operations by wildlife conservancies, enhancing community engagement policies through advocacy by the KWCA and investing in capacity-building initiatives to improve effective community engagement.

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CBNRM: Community-Based Natural Resource Management

CECT: Chobe Enclave Community Trust

CNP: Chobe National Park

GBRMPA: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

GCT: Gonarezhou Conservation Trust

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GSENM: Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

HWC: Human-Wildlife Conflict

IPFK: Institute of Public Finance Kenya

KWCA: Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association

MVT: Marine Wildlife Voluntourism

OD: Okavango Delta

PAs: Protected Areas

PN-KBNP: Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SESF: Social-Ecological Systems Framework

SLA: Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UNEP: Unite Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO: United Nations Environmental

USA: United States of America

WCMA Wildlife Conservation Management Act

WMA: Wildlife Management Area

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitations and delimitations, assumptions and finally the operational definition of terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Wildlife tourism has developed into a crucial segment of the global tourism industry, offering significant opportunities for both economic growth and biodiversity conservation. As a form of nature-based tourism, it involves travel to natural areas to observe and experience wildlife in their natural habitats, fostering an appreciation for conservation while providing economic incentives to protect ecosystems. In many African nations, including Kenya, wildlife tourism plays a vital role in national economies, generating revenue and employment while showcasing the region's rich biodiversity. Kenya's tourism sector, particularly wildlife tourism, is central to its identity, contributing significantly to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supporting local livelihoods. With over 160 conservancies covering 6.35 million hectares of land, approximately 11% of Kenya's land area, wildlife conservancies in Kenya, particularly in counties such as Kajiado, are essential in driving sustainable tourism (Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association, 2024). Despite economic benefits and conservation potential, the sustainability of wildlife tourism is challenged by various socio-economic and ecological factors, the most critical of which is the extent and effectiveness of local community engagement (Chepkorir, 2016).

Community engagement is a cornerstone in the sustainable management of wildlife tourism, especially within wildlife conservancies, as it addresses biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development. Involving local communities in the management of tourism and conservation activities ensures that these initiatives align with their livelihoods, cultural values, and economic interests, fostering ownership and stewardship (Mbaiwa, 2018). Globally, successful wildlife tourism models, such as Australia's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, have demonstrated the positive impact of comprehensive community engagement programs.

Indigenous groups, and other stakeholders are involved in conservation decision-making processes (GBRMPA, 2017). This participatory approach has resulted in both environmental conservation and tangible benefits to local communities, showcasing the potential of community-driven conservation efforts. Similarly, in Namibia, community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) has enabled local communities to manage wildlife resources, resulting in improved livelihoods, enhanced biodiversity conservation, and increased revenue from wildlife tourism (Naidoo et al., 2016). These examples illustrate that successful wildlife tourism models are contingent on meaningful and sustained community engagement.

Kenya, renowned for its diverse wildlife and conservation areas, has made strides toward integrating community engagement into wildlife tourism management. Policies such as the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act of 2013, along with various community-based conservation programs, aim to empower local communities by involving them in the governance of conservancies, providing them with a stake in the tourism benefits (Kenya Tourism Board, 2021). In regions like Kajiado County, where conservancies play a critical role in wildlife management and tourism, community engagement is not only necessary but indispensable for the sustainable management of these resources. Kajiado's conservancies, home to iconic species like elephants, lions, and giraffes, attract both local and international tourists. However, despite the policies and frameworks in place, there are persistent gaps in how local communities are engaged in these conservancies.

The community involvement in wildlife tourism in Kajiado County has faced several limitations. Despite the existence of policies designed to empower local populations, the actual participation of communities in the decision-making processes of conservancies remains minimal. Many local residents feel excluded from the governance structures that manage wildlife tourism, leading to disillusionment and weakened support for conservation initiatives (Ogada et al., 2016). Furthermore, there is evidence that benefit-sharing mechanisms are often inequitable, with a significant portion of tourism revenues not reaching the communities that reside in or near conservancies. Ogada et al. 2016, highlight that, while local communities are theoretically involved in management of wildlife resources, in practice, they are often sidelined from decisions that affect their livelihoods.

This lack of meaningful engagement fosters resentment and undermines efforts to cultivate local stewardship of wildlife. Although certain initiatives have attempted to address these issues, such as introducing community trusts or conservancy committees, the impact of these measures has been limited, and there remains an urgent need for more effective community engagement strategies. Current approaches, while well-intentioned, have not fully resolved the disconnection between conservation goals and community needs.

Another challenge to the sustainability of wildlife tourism in Kajiado County is the socio-ecological pressures from human-wildlife conflicts (HWC). Expanding agricultural activities and infrastructural developments have led to significant habitat loss and fragmentation, which in turn heightens the frequency and severity of HWC, such as livestock predation and crop raiding (Kenya National Biodiversity Threat Assessment, 2021). These conflicts not only erode local support for conservation efforts but also perpetuate a cycle of conflicts between wildlife and communities, where wildlife is increasingly viewed as a threat rather than a valuable resource. While human-wildlife conflict mitigation programs have been introduced, such as compensation schemes and fencing projects, these interventions have not fully addressed the root causes of the conflicts. Furthermore, the insufficient engagement of communities in developing and implementing these solutions has limited their success (Ogada et al., 2016).

Despite the challenges, Kajiado has the potential to serve as a model for sustainable wildlife tourism if the existing gaps in community engagement are addressed. Research indicates that community-based conservation programs, which actively involve local communities in the governance and management of wildlife resources, can significantly improve local attitudes toward wildlife conservation, reduce poaching, and enhance socio-economic conditions (Naidoo et al., 2016). However, to achieve such outcomes, there needs to be a more deliberate and comprehensive approach to involving local communities in all aspects of wildlife tourism management. This requires not only improving benefit-sharing mechanisms but also ensuring that communities have a voice in decision-making processes and that their cultural and environmental knowledge is integrated into conservation strategies.

The research gaps concerning the sustainability of wildlife tourism in Kajiado County revolve around the effectiveness of community engagement strategies in addressing both conservation and socio-economic challenges. Although there is a general understanding of the importance of involving communities in wildlife tourism management, specific issues such as equitable benefit distribution, long-term conflict mitigation, and the alignment of conservation strategies with local values remain underexplored. For instance, how current benefit-sharing models can be adjusted to ensure greater equity among community members has not been sufficiently investigated. Without addressing these gaps, efforts to promote the sustainability of wildlife tourism in the region are likely to fall short.

These challenges justify the urgent need for wholesome community engagement strategies to foster stewardship, enhance socio-economic benefits, and mitigate conflicts within wildlife tourism management. Effective engagement can lead to the development of innovative solutions which promote coexistence and sustainable development. Furthermore, integrating local communities into wildlife tourism planning and management can ensure that conservation efforts align with community interests and cultural values, thereby enhancing the overall sustainability of wildlife tourism in Kajiado.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The sustainable management of wildlife tourism in Kenya's conservancies depends on community engagement. In the ideal scenario, community engagement in wildlife conservation and tourism development within conservancies should incorporate a mutually beneficial relationship, fostering conservation efforts while empowering local communities. While wildlife tourism is important for both conservation and economic development, many communities in Kajiado feel excluded from the management of conservancies. This lack of involvement leads to a weak sense of ownership and support for tourism and conservation efforts. As outlined in the 2023 report by the Kenya Wildlife Conservation Association (KWCA), a notable challenge persists wherein local communities have limited substantive voice in critical decision-making processes. Additionally, there are widespread misconceptions among these communities regarding the operations and management of conservancies, leading to misunderstandings about how benefits are derived and shared.

This disagreement poses a significant obstacle to the profitability and sustainability of wildlife conservancies, a concern emphasized by the KWCA report, 2023. The limited engagement and participation of local communities undermine the general management, conservation and tourism efforts within these areas, jeopardizing the long-term viability of wildlife tourism initiatives. While the existing literature predominantly emphasizes the significance of community engagement in sustainable wildlife tourism, there is a notable gap in the exploration of the dimensions, strategies, of community engagement (both levels and types) in Kajiado County. This study therefore sought to investigate the influence of community engagement strategies on sustainable wildlife tourism within wildlife conservancies in Kajiado County, Kenya.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study's purpose was to investigate the influence of community engagement strategies on sustainable wildlife tourism in wildlife conservancies in Kajiado County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Objectives

The study was structured around the following objectives:

i. To evaluate the influence of the levels of community engagement on sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County.
ii. To assess the influence of the types of community engagement on sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County.
iii. To establish the factors that hinder community engagement for sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County.

1.5 Research Questions

The study aimed to answer the following questions:

i. How do the levels of community engagement influence sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County?
ii. How do the types of community engagement influence sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County?
iii. What are the factors that hinder community engagement for sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant both in theory and practice by contributing empirical evidence on the influence of community engagement strategies on sustainable wildlife tourism, particularly within the wildlife conservancies of Kajiado County, Kenya. It informs policymakers and governments on strategies to enhance community participation, promoting socio-economic development and biodiversity conservation while mitigating negative ecological impacts. Aligned with UNEP's Sustainable Development Goals, the study offers insights into fostering cooperative relationships between local communities, tourism stakeholders, and governmental bodies. Enhanced community engagement, particularly within the Maasai community in Kajiado, will increase their involvement in decision-making and operations improving their overall well-being. Furthermore, it equips conservancy managers with strategies for collaborative conservation efforts, while offering tourists and tour operators more sustainable and culturally rich experiences that support both ecological integrity and local livelihoods.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the influence of community engagement strategies on the sustainable management of wildlife tourism within Kajiado County's wildlife conservancies in Southern Kenya, a region that borders Nairobi, extends to the Tanzanian border, and is renowned for its diverse and rich wildlife habitats. The variables examined included independent variables such as the levels (directive, consultative, and participative) and types (direct, indirect, and financial) of community engagement. The dependent variables included human-wildlife conflicts, biodiversity conservation, and community well-being. The study analysed factors such as the community’s involvement in decision-making processes and participation in tourism and conservation activities. Through that, the research sought to identify and examine the factors that hinder community engagement for sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County. The study, scheduled to span one year from September 2023 to August 2024, was completed on time.

1.8 Limitations and Delimitations

The study acknowledges several limitations that could have impacted its findings and generalizability. The reliance on self-reported data from survey participants introduced the potential for response bias, wherein participants might have provided socially desirable or inaccurate responses, affecting the reliability of the results. Logistical constraints, including limited access to remote areas and financial limitations, imposed challenges on the census population and data collection process. Lastly, despite efforts to mitigate researcher bias, subjective interpretations during data analysis could have unintentionally influenced study outcomes, compromising the objectivity and validity of the findings.

To address the limitations encountered during the study, various measures were implemented. To mitigate response bias inherent in self-reported data, participant anonymity was ensured. Validation was conducted on the questionnaires and interview schedules to verify the accuracy of responses. Logistical constraints, including limited access to remote areas and financial limitations, were managed by maximizing available resources, collaborating with local stakeholders, and leveraging technology for remote data collection. To minimize researcher bias, research protocols were established, including intercoder reliability checks and collaborative data analysis, which helped to reduce subjective interpretations and enhance the objectivity and credibility of the study findings.

1.9 Assumptions

This study assumed that a census study would adequately give a clear information about the conservancies within Kajiado County as they would all be encompassed and accurately portrayed. The study also assumed that the instruments employed were valid, implying their capability to correctly measure the intended constructs aligned with the study's objectives, thereby ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the gathered data. Lastly, the study assumed that the participants would provide true and accurate information in their responses without deliberate misrepresentation or bias hence ensuring the credibility and dependability of the study's findings.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms

Biodiversity Conservation:	Initiatives and strategies for preserving and protecting the diverse flora and fauna within the conservancies.
Community Engagement:	The process of actively involving local communities in conservancies, focusing on participation, collaboration, and shared benefits in wildlife tourism.
Community Engagement Strategies:	Approaches used to facilitate community involvement in decision-making and operations related to wildlife tourism and conservation within the conservancies.
Community Well-Being:	The positive impact on the socio-economic and cultural welfare of the local community resulting from sustainable wildlife tourism practices within the conservancies.
Wildlife Conservancies:	Protected areas of land in their natural state, managed for the sustainable use of natural resources, wildlife conservation, and tourism activities.
Consultative Engagement:	A level of engagement where the community provides input, but the ultimate decisions remain with the conservancy management.
Direct Engagement:	Active engagement of the community in the day-to-day operations and decision-making of the conservancy.
Directive Engagement	A level of engagement where the community's role is limited to following conservancy decisions without direct influence.

Financial Engagement:	The community's involvement by the conservancies in the sharing of monetary benefits and resources.
Human-Wildlife Conflicts:	Conflicts arising between human populations and wildlife within the conservancies.
Indirect Engagement:	Supporting activities or contributions made by the community to the conservancy without direct engagement in its operations.
Levels of Engagement:	The extent of community participation in decision-making, categorized as directive, consultative, or participative.
Participative Engagement:	The active community participation in conservancy decision-making processes, indicating a more collaborative and engaged role.
Sustainable wildlife tourism:	Responsible planning and use of wildlife tourism resources for biodiversity conservation, minimizing human-wildlife conflicts, and promoting community wellbeing.
Types of Engagement:	Different ways communities engage in wildlife tourism, including direct, indirect, and financial engagements.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the review of literature by analysing existing scholarly work to provide a comprehensive understanding of the key concepts, sustainable wildlife tourism and community engagement strategies, while revealing the knowledge gaps, theoretical frameworks, and finally the conceptual framework.

2.1 Sustainable Wildlife Tourism

Global tourism, constituting 10.4% of the GDP and employing over 319 million people, is economically significant. In Kenya, with its diverse ecosystems and wildlife, tourism is an important economic contributor, attracting millions of international visitors and generating revenue. Wildlife tourism management involves strategic planning to conserve and sustainably utilize resources. Key attractions like the Maasai Mara and Amboseli significantly contribute to Kenya's GDP and employment. Community engagement is essential for sustainability, providing economic opportunities and linking wildlife conservation to community well-being. Recognizing the impact of community engagement is crucial for sustainable policies in promoting sustainable wildlife tourism in Kenya (Kenya Tourism Board, 2021; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2019; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2021).

2.1.1 Human-Wildlife Conflicts

Human-wildlife conflicts refer to situations where interactions between human and wild animal populations result in negative impacts, often leading to harm or damage to either party (Mekonen, 2020). These conflicts commonly involve issues such as damage to crops, livestock attacks, and threats to human safety, arising as human communities expand into natural habitats. The challenge is to find sustainable solutions that minimize these conflicts, allowing both human and wildlife populations to coexist harmoniously. The interrelation between human-wildlife conflicts and sustainable wildlife tourism is a critical concern in conservation. As human populations expand into natural habitats, conflicts with wildlife have intensified, posing challenges to both biodiversity conservation and community well-being.

Striking a balance between the economic benefits of wildlife tourism and mitigating conflicts from increased human-wildlife interactions requires well-thought strategies (Mekonen, 2020).

Stone et al. (2019), investigated the dynamics of natural resources, conservation, community livelihoods, and sustainable tourism development in Chobe National Park (CNP), Botswana, and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM), USA. Utilizing the sustainable tourism development framework, the study assesses the impact of the Chobe Enclave Community Trust's (CECT) tourism initiative on five villages and compares it to sixteen communities around GSENM. Positive outcomes, including employment and empowerment, are noted in both cases, but human-wildlife encounters pose challenges in CNP, while GSENM faces issues like canyon vandalism. The present study did further research on the need for adaptive management strategies to enhance the relationship between natural resources, conservation, tourism, and community livelihoods, offering valuable insights for addressing human-wildlife conflicts globally.

Mbaiwa (2018), delves into human-wildlife conflicts (HWCs) in Botswana, particularly in the Okavango Delta (OD), emphasizing the critical link between community engagement and conflict mitigation. The study identifies causes such as crop damage by elephants, kudus, and hippos, and livestock predation, highlighting the need for local involvement in wildlife management decisions. By advocating for strategies like land zonation and compensation mechanisms for crop and livestock losses, the study explains the importance of community participation in addressing HWCs. Furthermore, it emphasizes the role of inclusive policymaking processes in tackling biases favouring wildlife-based tourism over agro-pastoralism, ultimately aiming to enhance sustainability and alleviate poverty in the region through community engagement. The present study further explains the levels and types of community engagement and their influence on sustainable wildlife tourism.

Long et al. (2019), conducted a comprehensive assessment of a decade-long monitoring data series spanning from 2005 to 2016. The analysis, comprising 29,647 reported HWC cases, revealed crop raiding as the predominant type (73%), followed by livestock depredation (23%) and infrastructure damage (4%).

The conflicts involved various crops, livestock, and wildlife species, with a notable concentration in 10 out of the 47 counties comprising Kenya, with Taita Taveta County registering the highest number of cases. The study identified seasonal and yearly variations in HWC incidents, noting a decrease in crop raiding, an increase in livestock depredation, and consistent property damage. The findings advocate for prioritizing counties with the highest HWC occurrences in the implementation of mitigation measures. The present study explored community engagement and sustainable wildlife tourism in wildlife conservancies in Kajiado, Kenya.

2.1.2 Biodiversity Conservation

Biodiversity conservation is the deliberate and ethical effort to protect and sustainably manage Earth's diverse life types, ecosystems, and genetic resources. The aim is to preserve ecological balance, enhance adaptability, and ensure the continuity of various species and their functions within ecosystems. This approach involves not only safeguarding endangered species but also restoring and protecting habitats, ecological processes, and entire ecosystems (Global Vision International, 2023). Achieving biodiversity conservation requires incorporating scientific research, policy development, community engagement, and international cooperation. The ultimate goal is to recognize and protect the value of biodiversity, its contribution to ecosystem services, and its crucial role in supporting human well-being, cultural diversity, and sustainable development (Crowley et al., 2020)

Doley and Barman (2023), emphasize the role of biodiversity in sustaining human well-being, serving as a crucial source of livelihood for both urban and rural populations. They highlight the diverse contributions of biodiversity to health, culture, and social behaviour, with a particular focus on the ecological significance of wild animals. Recognizing the global decline in biodiversity, the authors stress the importance of raising public awareness to enhance conservation efforts and involve stakeholders and the public in sustainable management programs. The study concludes that promoting environmental knowledge is necessary for encouraging the sustainable use of natural resources, and sustainable communication and education are important in urging decision-makers and the global public to adopt conservation actions. The present study researched if this too is the case in wildlife conservancies in Kajiado and Kenya.

Truong's (2022), study investigates community awareness and participation in biodiversity conservation at Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park (PN-KBNP), Vietnam, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Results reveal a generally high perception of biodiversity values among locals, driven by daily interactions with the park. While positive attitudes towards conservation prevail, awareness of national park management rules is lacking. Nevertheless, villagers express a willingness to sacrifice income for biodiversity conservation, averaging 297,000 year per household. The study emphasizes the importance of a balanced approach between development and conservation, advocating for community empowerment in planning and implementing conservation activities. This gap from the study highlighted the need for a dedicated study on the specific roles of community members in wildlife tourism management.

Musakwa et al. (2020), investigated the impact of the 2017 partnership between the Frankfurt Zoological Society and the Zimbabwe Parks Management and Wildlife Authority, establishing the Gonarezhou Conservation Trust (GCT) to manage Gonarezhou National Park. The study uncovers past challenges in biodiversity conservation and community relations under state management. Utilizing interviews, satellite imagery, and prior data, positive developments in biodiversity conservation, ecosystem management, and community engagement are noted. Ongoing challenges include governance issues, stakeholder complexities, trust maintenance in community relations, sustainability concerns, climate change impacts, and human-wildlife conflicts. The study endorses the GCT partnership model as a promising strategy for advancing biodiversity management and tourism in national parks across Zimbabwe and Africa. The present study used additional research instruments such as questionnaires to get more responses, from a larger sample size, therefore a more accurate conclusion.

According to El (2022), sustainable ecotourism in East Africa is a key focus in the tourism industry with recent trends including the growth of community-based tourism, empowering local communities and preserving cultural and natural resources. Sustainable accommodations, like eco-lodges, minimize ecological footprints. Interpretation and education foster visitor awareness about destinations' natural and cultural significance. Responsible tour operators prioritize environmental conservation and support local communities, incorporating technology for educational tools.

These trends emphasize the industry's commitment to sustainability, contributing to the protection of natural resources, biodiversity preservation, and community well-being while offering enriching experiences for travelers. Despite the existing literature on biodiversity conservation, participatory models, and sustainable ecotourism trends, there was a noticeable research gap in understanding the specific dynamics of community engagement in wildlife conservation within Kenyan conservancies therefore making this research important.

2.1.3 Community Wellbeing

Community well-being refers to the overall health, prosperity, and quality of life experienced by a group of people within a geographic or social community. It involves various dimensions, including social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors that contribute to the overall welfare and happiness of community members. Community well-being extends beyond individual well-being and emphasizes the collective aspects of a community's health and resilience (Pretty & Smith, 2004). This concept considers factors such as access to basic needs, social cohesion, economic opportunities, environmental sustainability, and cultural vitality. Achieving community well-being involves collaborative efforts, community engagement, and policies that foster inclusivity, equity, and sustainable development for the betterment of the entire community (Haldane et al., 2019).

Araujo et al. (2012), conducted a review of biological resource monitoring systems in Brazilian Amazonia and Namibian Caprivi conservancies, emphasizing local participation. The study evaluates conditions for local empowerment and strategies, considering psychological, social, economic, and political dimensions. While communities were socially and politically empowered, individual empowerment was prevalent. Economic empowerment was linked to resource marketing, contrasting with better information dissemination. The study advocates for conditions to enhance community empowerment, acknowledging potential conflicts with international conservation goals. The present study additionally contributes to understanding the relationship between resource monitoring systems, local empowerment, and conservation in Kenyan conservancies.

According to Oburah et al. (2021), Naibunga Community Conservancy in northern Kenya explored the relationship between local community participation and perceptions of conservancy-related socioeconomic outcomes. A survey of 358 households showed that a significant majority (65–90%) perceive positive changes in overall socioeconomic status, security, income, livestock numbers, and access to resources and services due to community participation. Additionally, over 75% actively engage in conservancy management and conservation activities, with a positive link between engagement and perceived socioeconomic improvements. Demographic factors influence both perceptions and engagement. The findings emphasize the potential of community conservancies, like Naibunga, to improve the well-being of local pastoralists, emphasizing the importance of maximizing benefits and fostering community participation for sustainable and sustainable conservation initiatives. However, there existed a notable gap in understanding how community engagement precisely influences a community's well-being in Kenyan wildlife conservancies therefore making this research important.

Liang et al. (2018), explored the biodiversity conservation goals in Kenya, where over 160 conservancies have been established. These conservancies, viewed as a robust extension of the protected area system, aim to support biodiversity conservation, poverty eradication, and conflict mitigation. The study reviewed the development, implementation, and challenges of community conservancies, emphasizing their potential contribution to sustainable natural resource utilization and community well-being. The present study further addressed the influence of levels and of types community engagement towards achieving community wellbeing.

2.2 Level of Engagement and Sustainable Wildlife Tourism

The level of community engagement in sustainable wildlife tourism is made up of various dimensions, notably directive, consultative, and participative approaches. Directive engagement involves minimal community input, where decisions are made primarily by external authorities, potentially limiting local perspectives and engagement (Turpie & Letley, 2021). Consultative engagement allows communities to provide feedback and opinions, although decision-making authority often remains centralized.

In contrast, participative engagement empowers local stakeholders by engaging them actively in decision-making processes, fostering collaboration and shared responsibility. Embracing participative approaches encourages communities to take ownership of wildlife conservation efforts, fostering a sense of commitment and accountability necessary for sustainable wildlife tourism (Drew, 2023).

2.2.1 Directive Engagement

According to a study by African Development Choices (2020), directive engagement is a mode of engagement in sustainable wildlife tourism where decision-making is within external entities or authorities, significantly limiting local community input. This approach often leads to a top-down structure, where decisions, policies, and resource allocation are made by non-local entities or governing bodies without consultation of community perspectives. As a result, local voices, knowledge, and aspirations regarding wildlife conservation and tourism sustainability might be marginalized or disregarded. This type of engagement can create a disconnect between the communities residing in these areas and the management strategies imposed upon them, potentially hindering the sustainable implementation of sustainable practices (Giampiccoli, 2018). This study explores participatory models and community attitudes, overlooking an in-depth examination of directive engagement's potential influence and limitations in the Kenyan context, a significant gap addressed by the present study.

In their investigation within Kafta Sheraro National Park, Abrehe et al. (2020), employed surveys, focus group discussions, and field observations, engaging 460 household heads from nearby villages. Limited community participation in decision-making and insufficient monitoring emerged as leading causes hindering sustainable conservation efforts. The study emphasizes the need for urgent management intervention, stressing the ongoing impacts of human, livestock, and wildlife interactions. To mitigate these challenges, they advocate for collaborative efforts among stakeholders, emphasizing the need for relocating agricultural activities away from critical wildlife habitats and implementing community-based conservation strategies. The existing studies reveal the critical role of community engagement, participatory approaches and inclusive decision-making in successful wildlife conservation within protected areas.

However, these studies primarily explored participatory models and community attitudes. The present study sought to research the same in Kenyan context.

2.2.2 Consultative Engagement

Coz and Young (2020), in their study titled "Conflicts over Wildlife Conservation: Learning from the Reintroduction of Beavers in Scotland" utilizing a mix of literature review and interviews, explored planned and accidental reintroductions across varied landscapes. The analysis highlighted that conflict levels depend on factors like stakeholder relationships, differing perspectives on nature, and uncertainties around these initiatives. The study emphasizes the need for inclusive discussions among stakeholders to develop long-term conservation plans at a landscape scale, going beyond environmental impacts and public perceptions. A notable gap persisted in comprehending how consultative strategies precisely influence decision-making processes within wildlife tourism structures therefore making this study important.

Steven's (2021), study on Akagera National Park investigated human-wildlife conflicts for their impact on wildlife conservation, outlining various effects such as challenges in information dissemination, high costs for tourists, and a lack of skilled staff. The study recommended engaging local communities in decision-making. The challenges identified encompassed the absence of adequate skills and training among local communities in decision-making and conservation practices. Recommendations emphasized involving communities in park management planning and policy stipulation, advocating collaboration among sectors for sustainable coexistence between communities and wildlife. While this study shows progress, challenges, and the value of community engagement, there existed a notable gap in comprehending how consultative strategies precisely influence decision-making processes within wildlife tourism structures. This significant gap is addressed by the present study.

The study by Nurzaidah Putri Dalimunthe et al. (2022), emphasizes community engagement in addressing conservation challenges, particularly focusing on Bukit Mangkol Forest Park. Their community service initiative aimed to enhance awareness among the younger generation regarding environmental.

The study reveals that improved understanding of wildlife threats, conservation strategies, and active engagement in actions to protect nature for sustainable development. This research emphasizes the significance of community engagement in wildlife conservation decision-making efforts within the Bukit Mangkol Forest Park. There is limited information on the impact of consultative procedures in making decisions or sustainably considering local perspectives. The present study sought to understand the influence of consultative engagement in decision-making within wildlife tourism management contexts in Kenya.

2.2.3 Participative Engagement

In their study, Begum et al. (2022), explored women's engagement in Sundarban mangrove forest co-management, highlighting its impact on both forest conservation and women's livelihoods. Through interviews and discussions across different management levels, the research found that women participate in various co-management institutions, benefiting from increased awareness of conservation regulations and access to income-generating opportunities. The findings of the study revealed that their participation in decision-making contributed to sustainable resource harvesting and compliance with forest directives. However, women's representation in management remains lower than men's, prompting the need for policy interventions to shift attitudes and achieve gender parity in forest management, recognizing and enhancing the value of women's roles for both conservation and livelihoods. The present study had a focus on both men and women.

In their study Htay et al. (2022), focusing on the Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary, researchers interviewed 230 households to gauge community attitudes and engagement in conservation. They found that while most respondents had positive views of the sanctuary, only 43.9% participated in conservation decision making, mainly driven by perceived benefits from the Protected Area (PA). This disparity highlighted that positive attitudes didn't always translate to active conservation actions. The study stresses the importance of collaborative conservation efforts and increased benefit-sharing with local communities for more sustainable PA management strategies. The present study further researched on the influence of community participation on wildlife tourism management in wildlife conservancies in Kenya.

In their study, Oburah et al. (2021), explored perceptions and engagement within the Naibunga Community Conservancy in northern Kenya. Surveying 358 households, they found significant positive perceptions of improved socioeconomic status, income, security, and access to resources. Over 75% of respondents actively participated in conservancy management and decision-making, correlating positively with their perceptions of betterment. The study highlighted the potential for community conservancies to enhance local pastoralists' well-being, advocating for prioritizing socioeconomic benefits and increased community engagement for greater success. This study further gives insights into how the community is engaged in decision-making within the conservancies in Kajiado.

2.3 Type of Engagement and Sustainable Wildlife Tourism

Community engagement in sustainable wildlife tourism is a dynamic concept. Direct participation includes tasks such as guided tours and habitat restoration, highlighted by scholars such as Thompson et al. (2022) and Martínez-López et al. (2019). Indirect engagement, as discussed in studies like Haldane et al. (2019) and Armsworth et al. (2013), involves a supportive role through volunteerism or advocacy efforts. Financial contributions, emphasized in recent works such as Doley and Barman (2023) and Rentschler & Williams (2022), play an important role, comprising of donations and revenue sharing. This type of community participation emphasizes the relationship between local communities and sustainable wildlife tourism, showcasing diverse contributions to wildlife conservation and management.

2.3.1 Direct Engagement

Direct or task-based engagement presents an engagement wherein the community actively participates in assigned activities within the conservancy, specifically in wildlife tourism management. According to Thompson et al. (2022) and Martínez-López et al. (2019), it is made up of activities such as guided tours, habitat restoration, animal monitoring, and specialized tasks related to wildlife management and conservation. They emphasize on the important role played by community members in these task-oriented initiatives, revealing their direct contributions toward sustaining biodiversity, managing wildlife habitats, and supporting conservation efforts within conservancies.

The present study further researched on the influence of direct engagement on community engagement for wildlife tourism management in the Kenyan wildlife conservancies at Kajiado.

Jean Hude et al. (2016), addresses the decline of mangrove stands in Cameroon, specifically Rhizophora racemosa in the Cameroon Estuary, due to over-exploitation. Community-based mangrove replanting efforts in the Douala-Edea Reserve aimed for 10 hectares but achieved only 40% of the target over 14 months, primarily by foreign participants. A questionnaire survey assessed local community perceptions, revealing varying levels of awareness and participation in restoration activities. The study concluded that there are no task-based community engagement initiatives and sanctions for site disturbances. The study recommends that it is important to integrate locals in operations for successful mangrove conservation and restoration in the region. The current study sought to use more research tools including interviews in order to arrive at more informed conclusions.

Asefa (2016), characterized avitourism by responsible birdwatching, as a rapidly growing segment of ecotourism, offering economic potential for local communities globally. This report critically reviews the socio-economic and conservation benefits of avitourism, focusing on its status in Ethiopia. Despite Ethiopia's rich culture, its diverse avifauna positions it as an untapped avitourism hotspot. To unlock this potential, the engagement of local communities, particularly in roles like guides, is crucial. Proposed activities include assigning responsibilities to local organizations, explaining avitourism products, developing information sources, training birding guides, initiating community and conservation programs, and collaborating with national tour operators. These efforts aim to foster a sustainable relationship between avitourism and local communities. This study researched on the types of community engagement beyond avitourism within the conservancies in Kajiado, Kenya as there is limited study in Kenya about the same.

2.3.2 Indirect Engagement

Indirect engagement, highlighted in recent scholarly contributions like Haldane et al. (2019), delineates a more auxiliary role adopted by community stakeholders. Here, while not directly engaged in operational facets, individuals contribute to conservancy initiatives through diversified means, prominently via volunteerism, or advocacy efforts.

This supportive role, acknowledged in contemporary conservation literature, serves as a cornerstone for sustaining conservation endeavours by providing resources and amplifying awareness without direct operational immersion within conservancy activities.

Winch et al. (2020), explored communities' engagement in environmental volunteering, emphasizing its potential benefits for participants and nature. The study, combining a literature review and analysis of Nature Volunteers' online community (n = 2,216), emphasizes the importance of tailoring projects to participants' motivations, promoting them to individuals with relevant interests, and addressing perceived benefits and barriers to participation. The study reveals mismatches between advertised projects and community preferences, suggesting that aligning initiatives with their interests could enhance engagement in wildlife conservation volunteering, fostering a more diverse and extensive community engagement. Unlike this study, the present study collected primary data through questionnaires and interviews and analysed them to draw conclusions.

Nathan and Thorsten (2022), provide reasons for decision-makers to support Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM). Notably, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) recognizes CBNRM as crucial in the forestry and wildlife sectors. CBNRM contributes significantly to rural development and poverty reduction, offering income for social projects, creating jobs, and empowering communities through rights over land and resources. The study emphasizes CBNRM's role in advocacy, capacity building, and empowering women in leadership positions. With widespread engagement in CBNRM across several countries, involving over 6,400 management bodies and benefiting at least 4.4 million people, it emerges as a powerful advocate for sustainable resource management with extensive social and environmental benefits. The present study further researched on the levels and types of community engagement.

Lucrezi et al. (2022), cluster 142 participants in Southern Africa engaged in Marine Wildlife Voluntourism (MVT) and compare them with 211 participants in the international MVT market. The study reveals shared motivations and preferences, driven by economic, personal development, well-being, and social values. Participants express high expectations for program quality, integration, and destination, with these expectations met and resulting in high satisfaction. Positive ethical perceptions towards MVT organizations are noted.

The study identifies four voluntarist clusters: "young enthusiasts," "mature voluntarists," "neutral elders," and "satisfied elders." Findings offer insights into the Southern African MVT market, presenting generalizable information and providing marketing and management recommendations for sustainable industry growth, benefiting various stakeholders. With the natural differences in marine and land wildlife, the present study further researched on the aspects of land and not marine.

2.3.3 Financial Engagement

Financial engagement within conservancy contexts represents the role of community contributions through monetary channels. Recent scholarly works within the last half-decade, exemplified in studies by Doley and Barman (2023) and Rentschler and Williams (2022), emphasize its significance, encompassing diverse types such as donations, membership fees, fundraising events, and revenue sharing. This engagement is necessary for sustaining conservancy initiatives and funding critical aspects like habitat preservation, species conservation, education programs, and infrastructure development. It not only provides resources but also symbolizes a tangible commitment from the community towards conservation goals, ensuring the effectiveness of conservation.

Sabuhoro et al. (2017), explored the impact of mountain gorilla tourism on conservation and community benefit in Rwanda. The study aimed to assess if tourism benefited local communities and supported conservation. Through interviews, it was found that tourism revenue-sharing didn't directly benefit communities or address conservation threats. Challenges included limited access to benefits, high living costs near the park, limited community engagement in management, and exclusion from decision-making. The study stressed the need for improved community participation, fair benefit-sharing, and inclusive park management for sustainable conservation. The present study sought to research further on whether this is applicable in Kenya.

In Namibia's communal conservancies, the study by Turpie and Letley (2021), sheds light on the impact of trust in local institutions on cooperation for conservation efforts. Introducing payments for ecosystem services (PES), the study discovered that households lacked confidence in conservancy management.

However, cooperation increased with external financial oversight, emphasizing the importance of trustworthy external organizations in sustainably incentivizing communal land conservation. The present study researched as well on finances generated by the local communities within conservancies in Kajiado and its influence on wildlife tourism.

Thalut et al. (2020), in their study assessed the impact of financial inclusion on pro-wildlife conservation behaviour in rural households. Surveying 279 households, in Cameroon's Dja Biosphere Reserve, the research finds that both financial inclusion and community capacity building significantly influence pro-wildlife behaviour, emphasizing the importance of policies supporting these factors for sustainable conservation within communities. The present study sought feedback from not only members of the communities in the households but also the conservancy management and government officials to draw more informed conclusions.

Finally, Lekaldero et al. (2022), focus on Northern Kenya's community conservancies, examining their financial sustainability linked to community participation. Using agency theory, the research finds that community engagement significantly positively impacts the financial sustainability of these conservancies. Recommendations highlight the need to consider the community's financial participation in conservancy management, suggesting increased engagement in decision-making, expanding community engagement, and conducting awareness workshops on conservation importance within the East African context. The unique challenges and opportunities in Kenya's conservation landscape with the significance of wildlife tourism to the country's economy needs various studies therefore making this current study important, more so in the context of another region within the same country, Kajiado.

2.4 Factors that Hinder Community Engagement for Sustainable Wildlife Tourism

The effectiveness of community-based tourism initiatives is heavily influenced by governance structures and policy frameworks, which shape how communities can access resources and participate in decision-making processes. Bello and Felix (2021) explore the importance of policy structures that support local engagement, noting that without transparent policies and an inclusive governance framework, community members are often left feeling marginalized and disconnected from tourism benefits.

Their findings suggest that transparent, equitable policies enable a fairer distribution of tourism revenue, which, in turn, helps foster trust and ownership within the community. This sense of ownership is particularly crucial in regions like Kajiado County, where the distribution of tourism benefits and access to resources can be uneven.

Education and capacity-building initiatives represent another key aspect of successful community engagement strategies, as they empower local residents with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate actively in tourism management and operations. Scholars like Snyman and Spenceley (2024) emphasize that inadequate training and limited access to educational resources hinder meaningful engagement in tourism, as communities may lack the competencies required to manage or gainfully benefit from tourism activities independently. By building local expertise, communities can reduce dependency on external actors and gain a greater share of control and revenue within the tourism sector.

Environmental stewardship and resource management are also essential components of community engagement within wildlife conservancies, with studies indicating that conservation outcomes improve substantially when communities are actively involved in managing natural resources. Mbaiwa and Stronza (2021) found that when communities participate in environmental stewardship, they exhibit a stronger commitment to conservation goals, as local residents feel a direct responsibility for maintaining the health and vitality of their ecosystems. This sense of stewardship not only enhances conservation outcomes but also strengthens the community's connection to the land, creating a positive feedback loop between conservation and community welfare. For conservancies in Kajiado County, where environmental degradation and habitat loss pose significant risks, community-driven conservation practices are vital.

Last but not least, addressing power dynamics within conservancy governance is essential to fostering equitable and meaningful community involvement in tourism activities. Manyara and Jones (2018) discuss how imbalanced power relations can be a barrier to community engagement, as decisions are often dominated by external investors or governmental agencies, leaving local voices unheard.

Their research indicates that equitable power-sharing arrangements in tourism governance can foster a more inclusive and empowering framework, allowing communities to influence decisions that directly impact their lives and livelihoods.

2.5 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.5.1 Theoretical Framework

The present study utilized Community-Based Natural Resource Management Theory and Stakeholder Theory to examine the role of community engagement in sustainable wildlife tourism.

i) Community-Based Natural Resource Management Theory

This study was anchored in the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Theory, developed in response to the demand for sustainable and community-driven approaches to natural resource management. Originating in the late 20th century, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, CBNRM emphasizes decentralization, community empowerment, and benefit-sharing. In the context of the present study on sustainable wildlife tourism in conservancies in Kajiado County, Kenya, the CBNRM theory guided the exploration of community engagement. This research focused on CBNRM principles, especially community empowerment, examining the extent of local community engagement in decision-making.

Additionally, the study examined benefit-sharing mechanisms, assessing financial gains, employment opportunities, and capacity-building initiatives from wildlife tourism, aiming to promote sustainable development.

The active participation of communities in conservation efforts, such as anti-poaching measures and habitat restoration, was explored to understand the impact of community engagement. Governance structures and power dynamics within community-based management systems were evaluated to understand influences on decision-making processes and resource allocation. The study also examined social capital within CBNRM, analysing social networks, trust, and cooperation among community members. Adaptive management strategies employed by communities in response to changing circumstances in wildlife tourism were also investigated, ensuring long-term sustainability.

The CBNRM framework provided a comprehensive lens to examine the dynamics of community engagement in sustainable wildlife tourism. CBNRM Theory has several strengths, including its emphasis on decentralization, which empowers local communities to play an active role in natural resource management processes. Additionally, the theory advocates for equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms, ensuring that the dividends of wildlife tourism are fairly distributed among community members. Moreover, CBNRM Theory promotes adaptive management strategies, enabling communities to adapt and respond effectively to evolving circumstances while ensuring the long-term sustainability of wildlife resources. However, it also reveals certain limitations, such as a limited focus on stakeholder relationships, potential implementation challenges related to governance structures and power dynamics within local communities, and a lack of integration with external stakeholders such as governmental bodies.

ii) Stakeholder Theory

The research on community engagement for sustainable wildlife tourism in wildlife conservancies in Kajiado County, Kenya, was strategically anchored in Stakeholder Theory to inform stakeholders in the tourism industry and ways to maintain sustainable relationships. Initially developed by R. Edward Freeman in the 1980s, this theory offers a framework for comprehensively understanding the relationships and dynamics among diverse stakeholders involved in a specific industry or context.

In the case of wildlife tourism management, Stakeholder Theory was important for understanding the key roles played by various actors, including local communities, conservancies, and governmental bodies while also looking into their respective interests, power structures, and interconnections. Moreover, Stakeholder Theory emphasizes the importance of sustainably managing relationships between different groups. This is particularly significant for wildlife tourism management in Kajiado County, where fostering collaboration and synergy among stakeholders is paramount for fostering sustainable conservation practices. Through avenues such as dialogue facilitation, trust-building initiatives, and proactive conflict resolution mechanisms, stakeholders can collaboratively develop and implement community engagement strategies that are in line with the principles of sustainable development.

Therefore, by using the Stakeholder Theory, researchers can understand the details of how stakeholders are involved, what drives them, and how they interact. This helps provide valuable recommendations for making community engagement better. Stakeholder Theory has several strengths, including its comprehensive understanding of stakeholder dynamics, emphasis on relationship management, and potential for proactive conflict resolution. However, it also reveals certain limitations, such as a limited focus on community empowerment, challenges associated with effectively engaging diverse stakeholders with conflicting interests and power dynamics, and a perceived lack of clear prioritization of environmental conservation objectives.

By integrating CBNRM and Stakeholder Theory, the study aimed to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of community engagement strategies in sustainable wildlife tourism. CBNRM's focus on community empowerment and benefit-sharing complemented Stakeholder Theory's emphasis on stakeholder relationships and collaboration. Together, these theories provided insights into the dynamics of community engagement strategies and stakeholder interactions in wildlife tourism management. CBNRM filled the gap in Stakeholder Theory by prioritizing community empowerment and addressing governance challenges, while Stakeholder Theory complemented CBNRM by providing mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and conflict resolution. By complementing the strengths of both theories while addressing their respective limitations, the study sought to generate valuable recommendations.

2.5.2 Conceptual Framework

The independent variables included the level and type of community engagement, categorized into directive, consultative, and participative levels for the level of engagement, and direct, indirect, and financial aspects for the type of engagement. These variables captured the range and nature of community participation in conservancy decisions and operations. Concurrently, the study identified dependent variables like human-wildlife conflicts, biodiversity conservation, and community well-being, signifying the outcomes and implications of community engagement in sustainable wildlife tourism.

Additionally, the moderating variable of community capacity building was acknowledged for its influential role in shaping community engagement effectiveness within the regulatory framework of wildlife conservation and tourism practices.

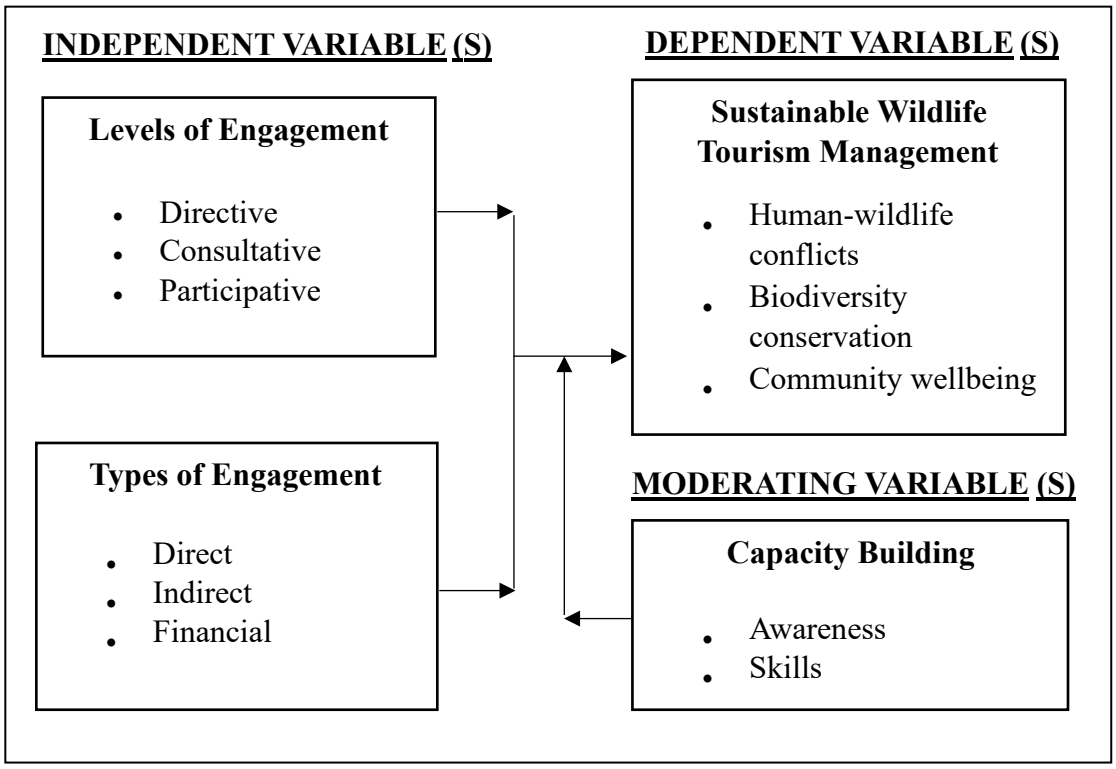

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2024)

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the location of the study, research design, population, sampling procedure and census population, instruments of the study, piloting, reliability, validity, data collection procedure, data analysis techniques and finally the ethical considerations.

3.1 Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Kajiado County, located in southern Kenya between 1.5°S to 2.5°S latitude and 36.5°E to 37.5°E longitude. Kajiado borders Tanzania to the south, creating a transboundary zone significant for ecological and socio-economic exchange. The county's landscape, comprising vast savannahs and acacia woodlands, supports rich biodiversity, making it an essential area for wildlife conservation and tourism. Major attractions include parts of Nairobi National Park and Amboseli Game Reserve, renowned for iconic wildlife and scenic beauty. Kajiado hosts 29 wildlife conservancies, the highest concentration in Kenya (KWCA, 2024), making it an ideal setting to examine community engagement in sustainable wildlife tourism. With a population density of about 48 people per square kilometer (IPFK, 2024), Kajiado's semi-arid climate, marked by sporadic rainfall, influences its ecological and economic conditions. The economy is dominated by pastoralism and small-scale agriculture, vital for local livelihoods and complementary to wildlife tourism. Population density varies across the county, with higher concentrations near urban centers and conservancies, while remote areas remain sparsely populated, reflecting traditional pastoralism. This demographic variability shapes human-wildlife interactions and is key to understanding sustainable tourism management, as it highlights the balance between conservation and the socio-economic needs of the resident population.

3.2 Research Design

A descriptive research design with a mixed-methods approach was employed in this study to determine and report the influence of the community engagement strategies on sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County. This research design was considered since it allows systematic collection and analysis of data to describe the various levels and types of community engagement in sustainable wildlife tourism (Siedlecki, 2020).

It also allows the use of questionnaires and interviews which enabled a detailed examination of the current state of community engagement, including its extent, nature, and effectiveness. Moreover, it also facilitated the identification of factors that hinder community engagement.

3.3 Population

The study population included 29 conservancy managers, 29 community leaders, and one representative each from the national and county tourism and wildlife directors, and the Kenya Wildlife Conservancy Association. The inclusion of conservancy managers was justified by their in-depth understanding of conservancy operations and interactions with the community. Community leaders represented the voice of the local community and provided perspectives on community engagement, priorities, and the impact of conservancy activities on their livelihoods. The national and county directors provided insights on conservancies' roles in national and county conservation strategies as well as policies and regulatory environments. The Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association official offered a sustainability-focused outlook on conservancies nationally, contributing expertise on best practices and capacity-building initiatives.

Table 1

Population Matrix (KWCA 2024)

Category	Population Frequency	Percentage
Community Leaders	29	47.54
Conservancies Managers	29	47.54
National Government Official	1	1.64
County Government Official	1	1.64
KWCA Representative	1	1.64
Total	61	100%

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Census Population

Given the manageable size of this population, a census study, where every individual or element of the population is included in the sample, was considered appropriate (Setchell & Curtis 2003). This approach guarantees responses from each conservancy equally, facilitating the examination of community engagement strategies.

Moreover, a census study eliminates sampling error and enhances the accuracy and reliability of findings, as every conservancy and its associated community members are accounted for (Fowler, 2014). Such an approach is consistent with research methodologies applied in small, well-defined populations, aiming to understand the entire population rather than inferring from a subset. Therefore, a census study ensured the coverage of the population, increasing the validity and applicability of research findings to sustainable wildlife tourism practices in Kajiado County (Creswell, 2009). The study employed a purposive sampling technique for all the respondents.

3.5 Instruments of the Study

The study utilized survey questionnaires to collect quantitative data from conservancy managers and community leaders, focusing on how community engagement strategies (levels and types) related to sustainable wildlife tourism. Interviews with national and county government representatives, as well as the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association, were conducted to provide qualitative insights into policies, institutional arrangements, and sustainability considerations. These instruments were anticipated to give a clear understanding of the influence of community engagement strategies on sustainable wildlife tourism in wildlife conservancies in Kajiado County.

3.6 Piloting

Before the commencement of the main study, a pilot study was conducted in Narok County in Kenya to assess the reliability and validity of the research instruments to identify and rectify any potential issues with the survey questionnaires and interview protocols, ensuring their effectiveness in capturing the intended data accurately and reliably. The pilot study involved survey questionnaires to 3 conservancy managers and 3 community leaders. This method adheres to Stutely's (2003), established practices ensuring the assessment of the instruments before full-scale implementation. The strategic 10 to 20% sample size strikes a balance between obtaining valuable feedback and minimizing disruptions to the main study.

The decision to conduct the pilot study in Narok County was substantiated by its cultural resemblance to Kajiado County, the abundance of conservancies, almost as Kajiado, and the strategic considerations aimed at maximizing the effectiveness of the research instruments while minimizing logistical challenges. Participants were briefed on the purpose of the pilot study and given guidance on completing the survey questionnaires.

Table 2

Piloting Survey Matrix

Category	Population Frequency	10%
Community Leaders	29	3
Conservancies Managers	29	3
National Government Official	1	0
County Government Official	1	0
KWCA Representative	1	0
Total	61	6

3.6.1 Reliability

Measures were implemented to ensure the reliability of the research instruments and the overall research process. To establish internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for the survey questionnaires administered to conservancy managers and community leaders. This statistical analysis evaluated the extent to which the items within each scale consistently measured the same underlying construct. A high Cronbach's alpha value (typically above 0.70) indicates good internal consistency reliability (Howard, 2016). The correlation between the responses obtained at the two-time points indicated the stability of the measurements over time. Research procedures, including sampling, data collection, and analysis methods, were documented to ensure transparency and uniformity.

3.6.2 Validity

Validity, the level to which an instrument or procedure accurately measures what it intends to measure, in this study was achieved through various ways. Content validity was ensured by a review of the survey questionnaires and interview protocols by subject matter experts in the fields of tourism management, wildlife conservation, and community engagement.

Their input helped to ascertain that the questions and topics addressed in the instruments adequately represented the constructs under investigation. Construct validity was established by employing established theoretical frameworks and models relevant to community engagement and wildlife tourism management. Lastly, face validity was ensured by a pilot study testing the research instruments before full-scale implementation.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process began with obtaining ethical approval from the Tharaka University Research Ethics Committee (approval number ISERC04023) and an introductory letter from the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies at Tharaka University. These were required to secure a research permit from the National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) (reference number 720394). After receiving the NACOSTI permit, the researcher distributed closed-ended questionnaires to 29 community leaders and 29 conservancy managers in Kajiado County. Contacts were exchanged with respondents to resolve any issues with the questionnaires, ensuring they had sufficient time to complete them accurately. Subsequently, structured interviews were conducted with county and national government tourism and wildlife directors in Kajiado and Nairobi, respectively, and a KWCA representative in Nairobi.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study combined quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the influence of community engagement on sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County. Quantitative data from questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and frequency distribution. Inferential statistics, specifically simple linear regression through SPSS version 27.0, were employed to explore the relationships between these variables and their impact on sustainable tourism management. Concurrently, qualitative data from interviews was analysed through thematic analysis using NVivo, where transcripts were coded and categorized to identify recurring patterns and themes related to community engagement, institutional arrangements, and sustainability. The integration of these quantitative and qualitative findings through triangulation enabled a comprehensive and validated interpretation of the research outcomes (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

3.8.1 Regression Analysis Model

Simple linear regression analysis was performed using the following regression model;

Model: $y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1/X_2 + \epsilon$

Dependent; y = Predicted value of Sustainable Wildlife Tourism (SWT)

Independent; X_1= Level of Community Engagement (Directive, Consultative, Participative)

X_2 = Type of Community Engagement (e.g., Direct, Indirect, Financial)

B_0 = The intercept representing y when all predictors (X_1/X_2) are zero.

B_1 = Coefficients for the independent variables, indicating the impact of each type and level of community engagement on SWT.

ϵ = Error term, accounting for the variance in SWT not explained by the model.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

This study recognizes the importance of ethical considerations in the data collection process. The researcher ensured voluntary participation and granted individuals the autonomy to opt out without coercion or repercussions. An introductory letter from the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies at Tharaka University and the Tharaka University Research Ethics Committee facilitated the process of obtaining a research permit from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the respective conservancies, ensuring regulatory compliance and demonstrating respect for legal and institutional frameworks. Measures were implemented to uphold confidentiality and privacy while also honouring and respecting the cultural norms, values, and traditions of local communities to prevent any offence or disrespect during the research activities.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected through questionnaires and interview schedules, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods to address the study's research objectives. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to summarize variables and address the research questions revealing patterns and relationships. Qualitative data from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis to identify and explore recurring themes.

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 3

Reliability Test

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Levels of Community Engagement	9	0.79
Types of Community Engagement	9	0.82
Sustainable wildlife tourism	9	0.83

As shown in Table 3, the Cronbach's alpha values for community engagement levels (0.79), community engagement types (0.82), and sustainable wildlife tourism (0.83) all exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating good internal consistency reliability, suggesting that the items within each scale consistently measured the same underlying construct (Howard, 2016).

4.2 Response Rate

The researcher reached out to all 61 targeted respondents including community members, conservancies managers, national and county tourism/wildlife officials as well as an official from the Kenya Wildlife Conservancy Association due to their importance in sustainable wildlife tourism. A total of 60 participants responded giving a response rate of 98.36%. According to Baruch and Holtom (2008), a response rate that is above 50% can be justified, 60% is good and 70% is very good in social research surveys.

In their meta-analysis, Groves and Peytcheva (2008) examined the relationship between nonresponse rates and nonresponse bias, emphasizing that high response rates, such as 98.36%, substantially mitigate the risk of bias and enhance the representativeness of the data. This level of response rate is particularly desirable in census studies, where achieving representativeness is crucial (Groves & Peytcheva, 2008).

Table 4

Response Rate Matrix

Category	Target Population	Response Rate	Response Rate in (%)
Community Leaders	29	29	47.54
Conservancies Managers	29	28	45.90
National Government Official	1	1	1.64
County Government Official	1	1	1.64
KWCA Representative	1	1	1.64
Total	61	60	98.36

4.3 Demographic Information

The study gathered background information from the respondents on gender, educational attainment and years of professional experience to assess their ability to participate.

4.3.1 Gender

Table 5

Gender of Community Leaders and Conservancies Managers

Gender	Community Leaders Frequency	Community Leaders Percentage	Conservancies Managers Frequency	Conservancies Managers Percentage
Male	20	68.97%	19	67.86%
Female	9	31.03%	9	32.14%
Total	29	100%	28	100%

Table 5 highlights a gender distribution among both community leaders and conservancy managers. Among community leaders, males constituted 68.97% of the respondents, while females made up 31.03%, indicating a significant male majority.

Similarly, among conservancy managers, males comprised 67.86% of the sample, with females representing 32.14%.

4.3.2 Levels of Education

Table 6

Educational Levels of Community Leaders and Conservancies Managers

Educational level	Community Leaders Frequency	Community Leaders Percentage	Conservancies Managers Frequency	Conservancies Managers Percentage
Secondary	10	34.48%	0	0%
Certificate	9	31.03%	0	0%
Diploma	7	24.14%	8	28.57%
Degree	3	10.34%	20	71.43%
Total	29	100%	28	100%

The data reveals that all respondents from both the community leaders and conservancy managers groups possessed sufficient literacy levels to effectively read and comprehend the questions presented in the questionnaires, therefore justifying the use of a self-administered format. Among the community leaders, 34.48% had attained secondary education, 31.03% held certificates, 24.14% had diplomas, and a smaller fraction, 10.34%, had earned degrees. In the group of conservancy managers, the educational background was notably higher, with 28.57% holding diplomas and a significant 71.43% possessing degrees. The high literacy level indicated respondents' understanding of community engagement and validated the use of a self-administered questionnaire, as they could respond independently.

4.3.3 Years of Experience

Table 7

Years of Experience of Community Leaders and Conservancies Managers

Years of Experience	Community Leaders Frequency	Community Leaders Percentage	Conservancies Managers Frequency	Conservancies Managers Percentage
Less than 5 years	2	6.90%	0	0.00%
5-10 years	9	31.03%	10	35.71%
11-20 years	10	34.48%	11	39.29%
21 years and above	8	27.59%	7	25.00%
Total	29	100%	28	100%

The distribution of years of experience among both community leaders and conservancy managers shows a diverse and well-qualified respondent groups, enhancing the credibility of the insights gathered through the questionnaires. Among the community leaders, 6.90% had less than 5 years of experience, 31.03% had between 5 and 10 years, 34.48% possessed between 11 and 20 years, and 27.59% had 21 or more years of experience. This range of experience levels reflects a group with adequate understanding of their roles, suggesting that they are well-equipped to provide informed and valuable insights. Similarly, the conservancy managers exhibited a strong professional background, with no respondents having less than 5 years of experience. Instead, 35.71% had between 5 and 10 years, 39.29% had between 11 and 20 years, and 25.00% had 21 or more years of experience. This indicates a high level of expertise within the group, further affirming their capacity to respond to the questionnaires with well-founded and insightful contributions. The variation in years of experience across both groups not only highlights their suitability for participating in the study but also enriches the data with a range of perspectives drawn from varying levels of professional exposure.

4.3.4 Demographic Information from the Interview Guides

Table 8

Interviewees Demographics

Interviewee	Gender	Educational Background	Years of Experience	Role
1	Male	Master's Degree	15-20 years	Directorate of Tourism and Wildlife (National Government)
2	Male	Master's Degree	10-15 years	Directorate of Tourism and Wildlife (County Government)
3	Female	Undergraduate Degree	15-20 years	Kenya Wildlife Conservancy Association

The study targeted 3 key interviewees, each holding strategic roles: one official each from the Directorate of Tourism and Wildlife at the National and County Governments levels, as well as one official from the Kenya Wildlife Conservancy Association. All took part. The demographic information collected from the interviewees included their gender, educational background, and years of experience. The results indicate that two of the interviewees were male and one was female, ensuring a degree of gender representativeness. Regarding educational attainment, the study found that all respondents had completed undergraduate studies. Specifically, one interviewee held a degree, while the other two had advanced to the master's level of education. The education levels assured in-depth responses.

Regarding years of professional experience, the results indicate a varied yet substantial range among the respondents. One interviewee reported having between 10 and 15 years of experience within their department. The other two respondents had a more extensive background, with each possessing between 15 and 20 years of experience. The demographic information of the interviewees indicates that they were all appropriate and reliable sources of information for the study.

4.4 Normality Test

The normality of the variables was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, as recommended for sample sizes of 50 or fewer (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). According to the test, a *p*-value of less than 0.05 indicates that the data deviates significantly from normality at 5% significance level.

Table 9

Normality Test

Group	Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Shapiro-Wilk Test Statistic	p-value
Conservancy Managers	Levels of Community Engagement	28	3.450	0.550	0.975	0.341
	Types of Community Engagement	28	3.420	0.520	0.982	0.456
	Sustainable wildlife tourism	28	3.600	0.600	0.979	0.389
Community Leaders	Levels of Community Engagement	29	3.470	0.560	0.970	0.289
	Types of Community Engagement	29	3.430	0.530	0.975	0.345
	Sustainable wildlife tourism	29	3.590	0.610	0.978	0.397

The results indicate that all *p*-values from the Shapiro-Wilk test are greater than 0.05 for both conservancy managers and community leaders. Specifically, the *p*-values exceed the 0.05 threshold in both groups. This suggests that the data for the variables are normally distributed, validating their suitability for further parametric analysis.

4.5 Levels of Community Engagement

Table 10

Levels of Community Engagement

Statement	Mean	Std Dev
Community Leaders		
Community members receive instructions from conservancy management regarding wildlife tourism management and are expected to comply without input.	2.48	0.51
Conservancy management independently makes decisions, with community leaders and members playing no role in the decision-making process.	2.45	0.51
Community leaders communicate and help enforce conservancy decisions without questioning, influencing, or modifying them.	2.34	0.55
Community members and leaders are consulted for their opinions through surveys and meetings on wildlife tourism management.	2.41	0.57
Community leaders provide recommendations for conservancy projects on behalf of community members, but their input does not decisively influence outcomes.	2.45	0.57
The conservancy management holds discussions with community members and leaders to gather insights, although their opinions do not reflect in the final decisions.	2.48	0.51
Community members are actively involved in every stage of decision-making, contributing equally to shaping policies and strategies.	2.41	0.57
Community members and leaders participate directly in drafting and reviewing conservancy policies, sharing responsibility for decisions and actions.	2.34	0.55
The opinions and suggestions from community members are always integrated and reflected in the final decisions as key stakeholders.	2.52	0.63
Composite Mean	2.43	0.54
Conservancies Managers		
Community members receive information about conservancy decisions only after they have been finalized by the management team.	2.79	1.40
Conservancy guidelines and regulations are established by management, with the community's role being solely to adhere to them.	2.93	1.62

Wildlife tourism management decisions are made exclusively by conservancy managers in collaboration with other stakeholders other than local community members.	2.86	1.25
Community input is sought through surveys and meetings, yet conservancy management ultimately decides on the implementation of wildlife tourism strategies.	3.31	1.42
Community members are invited to participate in discussions about conservancy issues, but their recommendations are not binding on management decisions.	2.90	1.52
Consultative forums are regularly held to gather community views, although the conservancy management has the last word on decisions.	2.27	1.41
Community members actively participate in decision-making processes, contributing equally to the formulation of wildlife tourism management strategies.	2.66	1.40
The conservancy management collaborates with community representatives to co-create policies and action plans for wildlife tourism sustainability.	3.03	1.40
Community members are involved in every stage of decision-making, from initial discussions to final implementation of conservancy initiatives.	3.03	1.18
Composite Mean	2.86	1.45

From table 10, the data indicates that there is limited community engagement in decision making. For instance, the statement, "Community members receive instructions from conservancy management regarding wildlife tourism management and are expected to comply without input," received a mean score of 2.48 (SD = 0.51) among community leaders. This suggests that community engagement is low, with limited opportunities for community members to influence decision-making on matters wildlife tourism.

Such top-down decision-making approaches can undermine the sustainability of conservation efforts as they fail to leverage the local knowledge and commitment of community members (Sterling et al., 2017; Bennett et al., 2017). Similarly, the statement "Conservancy management independently makes decisions, with community leaders and members playing no role in the decision-making process" scored 2.45 (SD = 0.51) among community leaders, supporting the notion that community input is minimal. The low standard deviation among community leaders (0.54) suggests consensus on this issue.

This further reveals the lack of substantial engagement. The marginalization of local communities in decision-making is a well-documented issue in conservation literature, with studies advocating for more decentralized and participatory approaches to enhance the effectiveness of conservation initiatives (Schreckenberg et al., 2016; Bixler et al., 2020).

Conservancy managers' perspectives also indicate limited community involvement in decision-making. For instance, the statement "Wildlife tourism management decisions are made exclusively by conservancy managers in collaboration with other stakeholders other than local community members" received a mean score of 2.86 (SD = 1.25) among conservancy managers. This suggests that while there may be some consultation with external stakeholders, local communities are often excluded from these critical discussions. The variability in practices across conservancies, as indicated by the higher standard deviation (1.45), suggests that while some managers may engage communities more actively, others continue to limit their engagement. The need for more consistent and meaningful community participation in conservation governance has been emphasized in recent studies, which highlight the role of local communities in ensuring the long-term success of conservation initiatives (Reed et al., 2017).

4.6 Types of Community Engagement.

Table 11

Types of Community Engagement

Statement	Mean	Std Dev
Community Leaders		
Community members are directly involved in the daily operations and management activities of the conservancy on matters related to wildlife tourism sustainability.	3.10	0.62
The conservancy facilitates regular training for community members to actively participate in wildlife tourism and conservation activities.	3.00	0.48
Community members are involved in monitoring and reporting wildlife activities as part of the conservancy’s daily operational framework.	3.19	0.63
Community members support conservancy activities through indirect means, such as advocating for conservation and promoting wildlife tourism externally.	3.05	0.60

The conservancy benefits from community contributions in forms like volunteer work and public awareness campaigns rather than direct involvement.	3.14	0.66
Community members participate in conservancy efforts by providing logistical support, such as transportation or accommodation for visitors and staff.	2.95	0.51
Community members are engaged in financial decision making, significantly contributing to the conservancy projects and activities.	2.27	0.74
Community members play a key role in securing financial resources for the conservancy, including fundraising and direct monetary donations.	2.23	0.56
Local community members participate in financial planning and profit sharing from tourism revenue.	2.18	0.60
Composite Mean	2.79	0.58
Conservancies managers		
Community leaders are actively involved in the daily operations of the conservancy, contributing directly to management processes.	3.34	1.49
Community members play a direct role in the implementation of conservancy programs, including planning and executing conservation projects.	3.25	1.27
The conservancy integrates community leaders into daily management tasks, ensuring they have a direct impact on the organization's activities.	3.44	1.58
Community leaders support conservancy goals by promoting conservation efforts within the community, though they are not involved in daily management.	3.29	1.41
The conservancy relies on community leaders to indirectly influence outcomes through advocacy and support rather than direct participation.	3.39	1.37
Community leaders assist the conservancy by facilitating resource mobilization and awareness, without engaging in direct operational activities.	3.20	1.33
Community members are engaged in financial decision making, significantly contributing to the conservancy projects and activities.	2.34	1.32
Community members play a key role in securing financial resources for the conservancy, including fundraising and direct monetary donations.	2.20	1.32
Financial engagement by community members includes participating in budget discussions and profit sharing from tourism revenue.	2.10	1.26
Composite Mean	2.95	1.32

The data from table 11 suggests a moderate level of involvement, particularly in operational roles. The overall mean scores, 2.79 for community leaders and 2.95 for conservancy managers, indicate that community engagement is more common in day-to-day activities. For example, the statement "Community members are directly involved in the daily operations and management activities of the conservancy on matters related to wildlife tourism sustainability" received a mean score of 3.10 (SD = 0.62) among community leaders, indicating that while community involvement exists, it is at the operational level rather than in decision-making. This trend reflects findings from studies which highlight the need for greater community involvement in higher-level decision-making to enhance conservation outcomes (Roe & Booker., 2020; Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2018).

Conservancy managers reported higher levels of engagement, particularly in areas related to direct and indirect engagement. For instance, the statement " The conservancy integrates community leaders into daily management tasks, ensuring they have a direct impact on the organization's activities" received a mean score of 3.44 among conservancy managers. This indicates that direct engagement is recognized and valued although it still does not equate to decision-making power. From the results, financial engagement was low; for example, the statement, 'Financial engagement by community members includes participating in budget discussions and profit sharing from tourism revenue,' received a low mean score of 2.10. According to (Sjöstedt et al., 2022), financial contributions from communities are accompanied by equitable power-sharing to ensure the sustainability of conservation efforts.

4.7 Sustainable Wildlife Tourism

Table 12

Sustainable Wildlife Tourism

Statement	Mean	Std Dev
Community Leaders		
Due to community involvement in managing human-wildlife conflicts, there has been a decrease in incidents, leading to a more harmonious relationship between humans and wildlife.	2.90	0.61
Regular training programs aimed at managing human-wildlife conflicts, have made the community more knowledgeable and prepared, reducing the frequency and severity of such conflicts.	2.95	0.50
Community's efforts to address human-wildlife conflicts have made the conservancy safer, which in turn enhances tourist experiences and improves overall satisfaction.	3.00	0.57
Community engagement in conservation initiatives has contributed to enhancing and maintaining biodiversity, with visible increases in wildlife populations and healthier ecosystems within the conservancy.	2.85	0.68
Active participation in biodiversity conservation has directly supported the restoration and preservation of critical habitats, benefiting the overall environment within the conservancy.	3.10	0.57
Through community collaboration with the conservancy, efforts to protect endangered species have been effective, leading to increased sightings of these species and enhanced visitor satisfaction.	2.80	0.45
Community involvement in conservancy activities has led to noticeable improvements in their living standards, including better access to resources and enhanced economic opportunities.	3.05	0.63
Community's support for local education and healthcare initiatives, in partnership with the conservancy, has improved overall well-being, including better education levels and health outcomes.	3.00	0.57
The revenue generated from wildlife tourism, which community benefits from, has significantly improved their economic well-being, providing stable income and funding for community projects.	2.90	0.63
Composite Mean	2.95	0.58
Conservancies Managers		

Due to active community engagement in managing human-wildlife conflicts, incidents have decreased, creating peaceful coexistence between humans and wildlife.	2.79	1.42
Regular training programs provided to both conservancy staff and local community members on managing human-wildlife conflicts have resulted in a more knowledgeable and prepared community, reducing the frequency and severity of such conflicts.	3.51	1.33
Consistent community efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflicts have made the conservancy safer, enhancing tourist experiences and increasing satisfaction rates.	2.90	1.59
Community engagement in conservation initiatives, has led to significant progress in maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, with noticeable increases in wildlife populations and healthier ecosystems within the conservancy.	2.93	1.36
Active participation by local communities in biodiversity conservation has directly contributed to the restoration and preservation of critical habitats within the conservancy area.	3.45	1.40
Conservancy's activities, driven by collaboration with local communities, have effectively supported the protection and preservation of endangered species, resulting in increased sightings and improved visitor satisfaction.	2.82	1.47
Conservancy and community-managed activities have led to noticeable improvements in living standards for community members, including better access to resources and enhanced economic opportunities.	3.10	1.47
The conservancy's support for local education and healthcare initiatives, in partnership with the community, has contributed to improved overall well-being, including higher education levels and better health outcomes.	3.00	1.41
Revenue generated from wildlife tourism, equitably shared with the local community, has significantly improved their economic well-being, providing stable income and funding for community projects.	3.21	1.54
Composite Mean	3.08	1.45

From table 12, the impact of community engagement on sustainable wildlife tourism is evident, particularly in areas like biodiversity conservation and human-wildlife conflict management. The overall mean scores, 2.95 for community leaders and 3.08 for conservancy managers, suggest that community engagement in tourism operations positively influences sustainability outcomes.

For instance, the statement "Community engagement in conservation initiatives has contributed to enhancing and maintaining biodiversity, with visible increase in wildlife populations and healthier ecosystems within the conservancy" received a mean score of 2.85 (SD = 0.68) among community leaders, indicating a recognition of the community's role in these efforts. Garnett et al. (2018) notes that community-based conservation can lead to improvements in biodiversity.

The statement "Active participation by local communities in biodiversity conservation has directly contributed to the restoration and preservation of critical habitats within the conservancy area" received a higher mean score of 3.45 (SD = 1.40) among conservancy managers, indicating belief in the positive impact of community engagement. However, the higher standard deviation suggests that this impact is not uniformly recognized across all conservancies, reflecting differences in the extent and effectiveness of community engagement. This variability highlights the importance of context in determining the success of community-based conservation efforts (McLain et al., 2021).

4.8 Regression Analysis

The study conducted simple linear regression analysis on quantitative data from community leaders and conservancy managers to examine the relationship between levels and types of community engagement and sustainable wildlife tourism.

4.8.1 Influence of Levels of Community Engagement

Table 13

Model Summary for Levels of Community Engagement

Group	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Community Leaders	0.751	0.564	0.532	0.29524
Conservancies Managers	0.692	0.479	0.442	0.12791

a. Predictors: (Constant), Levels of Community Engagement

Table 13 provides a model summary for the simple linear regression analysis that evaluated the influence of the levels of community engagement (directive, consultative and participative) on sustainable wildlife tourism.

The correlation coefficients (R) for community leaders and conservancy managers are 0.751 and 0.692, respectively, indicating a positive relationship between these levels of engagement and sustainable management outcomes. The R^2 values show that 56.4% of the variance in sustainable wildlife tourism for community leaders, and 47.9% for conservancy managers, can be explained by these engagement levels. After adjusting for the number of predictors, the adjusted R^2 values are 0.532 for community leaders and 0.442 for conservancy managers, suggesting that even when accounting for the complexity of the model, these levels of engagement still explain a substantial portion of the variance in sustainability outcomes. The standard errors of the estimate are relatively low (0.29524 for community leaders and 0.12791 for conservancy managers), which indicates that the models' predictions closely align with the actual data, reflecting the reliability of analysis.

Table 14

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Levels of Community Engagement

Group	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Community Leaders	Regression	3.852	3	1.284	14.73	0.001
	Residual	2.985	26	0.115		
	Total	6.837	29			
Conservancies Managers	Regression	3.568	3	1.189	11.65	0.002
	Residual	3.189	25	0.123		
	Total	6.757	28			

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable wildlife tourism

b. Predictors: (Levels of Community Engagement)

Table 14 presents the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results, which further examine the statistical significance of the regression models used to assess the impact of community engagement levels on sustainable wildlife tourism. For community leaders, the sum of squares due to regression is 3.852, with a mean square of 1.284, indicating that the model explains a substantial portion of the variance in sustainable management. The F-statistic for this model is 14.73, with a *p*-value of 0.001, confirming that the model is significant.

Similarly, for conservancy managers, the regression sum of squares is 3.568, with a mean square of 1.189. The F-statistic here is 11.65, with a *p*-value of 0.002, also demonstrating the model's statistical significance. The residual sums of squares for both groups (2.985 for community leaders and 3.189 for conservancy managers) represent the variance not explained by the model, highlighting the importance of participative engagement while highlighting the negative impact of directive and consultative engagements on sustainable wildlife tourism.

Table 15

Coefficients for Levels of Community Engagement

Group	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Community Leaders	(Constant)	2.921		6.345	0.000
	Directive	-0.297	-0.330	-3.241	0.003
	Consultative	-0.285	-0.310	-3.092	0.004
	Participative	0.523	0.540	5.574	0.001
Conservancies Managers	(Constant)	2.789		6.128	0.000
	Directive	-0.271	-0.290	-3.011	0.005
	Consultative	-0.263	-0.280	-2.984	0.006
	Participative	0.487	0.505	4.801	0.002

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable wildlife tourism

Table 15 provides the coefficients for each predictor variable, indicating the strength and direction of their relationship with sustainable wildlife tourism. It details the coefficients for each level of community engagement, revealing their specific contributions to sustainable wildlife tourism. For community leaders, the unstandardized coefficient for participative engagement is 0.523, meaning that a one-unit increase in participative engagement is associated with a 0.523 increase in sustainable management, making it a significant positive contributor. On the contrary, directive and consultative engagements have unstandardized coefficients of -0.297 and -0.285, respectively, indicating that these forms of engagement negatively impact sustainability. The Beta values confirm these findings, with participative engagement showing the highest positive impact, while directive and consultative engagements negatively affect sustainability.

The statistical significance of these relationships is supported by t-values of 5.574 for participative engagement and negative t-values for directive and consultative engagements, with all *p*-values below 0.05, confirming the significance of the results.

Summary Interpretation

These findings are consistent with Asefa (2016), whose study emphasized the critical role of community engagement in achieving sustainability in tourism management. The statistically significant coefficients, supported by F-statistics, affirm that enhanced community engagement, particularly participative engagement, is crucial for improving sustainable wildlife tourism. This aligns with the studies of Banerjee et al. (2018) and Haldane et al. (2019), which highlight the positive outcomes of participatory approaches in tourism and conservation contexts. On the contrary, directive and consultative engagements have negative impacts, suggesting that these levels of engagement hinder sustainability efforts. Additionally, the standard errors of the estimate suggest that the models' predictions closely align with the observed data, particularly for conservancy managers, which echoes the findings of El (2022) regarding the importance of precise and participatory management strategies in conservation. These findings highlight the critical role of participative engagement in enhancing sustainability, as it positively influences the management of wildlife tourism, while directive and consultative approaches should be minimized to avoid undermining sustainability goals. These results further reflect broader trends in conservation research, as discussed by Almeida (2021) and Palomo et al. (2023).

4.8.2 Influence of Types of Community Engagement

Table 16

Model Summary for Types of Community Engagement

Group	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Community Leaders	0.678	0.459	0.432	0.34212
Conservancies Managers	0.641	0.411	0.383	0.11956

a. Predictors: (Constant), Types of Community Engagement

Table 16 presents a model summary for the simple linear regression analysis exploring the influence of different types of community engagement (direct, indirect and financial) on sustainable wildlife tourism. The correlation coefficients (R) are 0.678 for community leaders and 0.641 for conservancy managers, indicating a positive relationship between direct and indirect engagement types and sustainable management. The R^2 values, which represent the proportion of variance explained by the model, are 45.9% for community leaders and 41.1% for conservancy managers, suggesting that these types of engagement significantly contribute to sustainable wildlife tourism outcomes. The adjusted R^2 values are 0.432 for community leaders and 0.383 for conservancy managers, which show that the models maintain their explanatory power even after accounting for the number of predictors. The standard errors of the estimate (0.34212 for community leaders and 0.11956 for conservancy managers) indicate that the models make reasonably accurate predictions, with lower standard errors reflecting precise estimates.

Table 17

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Types of Community Engagement

Group	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Community Leaders	Regression	3.198	3	1.066	10.73	0.002
	Residual	3.639	26	0.140		
	Total	6.837	29			
Conservancies Managers	Regression	2.889	3	0.963	9.27	0.003
	Residual	3.891	26	0.150		
	Total	6.780	29			

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable wildlife tourism

b. Predictors: (Types of Community Engagement)

Table 17 provides the ANOVA results for the types of community engagement, assessing the significance of the regression models. The regression sum of squares for community leaders is 3.198, with a mean square of 1.066, and an F-statistic of 10.73, which is statistically significant with a *p*-value of 0.002.

This indicates that the types of engagement significantly explain the variance in sustainable wildlife tourism. For conservancy managers, the regression sum of squares is 2.889, with a mean square of 0.963, and an F-statistic of 9.27, with a *p*-value of 0.003, also confirming the model's statistical significance. Residual sums of squares represent the variance not explained by the types of engagement, with 3.639 for community leaders and 3.891 for conservancy managers.

Table 18

Coefficients for Types of Community Engagement

Group	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Community Leaders	(Constant)	2.815		5.992	0.000
	Direct	0.423	0.440	4.276	0.002
	Indirect	0.399	0.415	3.989	0.003
	Financial	-0.295	-0.310	-2.987	0.006
Conservancies Managers	(Constant)	2.732		5.755	0.000
	Direct	0.402	0.415	4.103	0.002
	Indirect	0.378	0.390	3.774	0.004
	Financial	-0.276	-0.285	-2.875	0.008

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable wildlife tourism

Table 18 presents the coefficients for the types of community engagement, revealing the specific impacts of direct, indirect and financial engagement on sustainable wildlife tourism. The unstandardized coefficients show that for community leaders, direct engagement has a coefficient of 0.423, and indirect engagement has a coefficient of 0.399, both of which positively contribute to sustainability. Financial engagement, however, has a negative coefficient of -0.295, indicating that it hinders sustainable wildlife tourism. The standardized coefficients (Beta values) reinforce these findings, with direct and indirect engagement having the strongest positive effects, while financial engagement has a negative impact. The t-values and *p*-values further confirm the statistical significance of these relationships, with direct and indirect engagements showing significant positive t-values, and financial engagement showing a significant negative t-value, highlighting its negative effect on sustainability outcomes.

Summary Interpretation

The simple linear regression analysis demonstrates that direct and indirect forms of community engagement positively impact sustainable wildlife tourism, with significant contributions from both community leaders and conservancy managers. The R^2 values, supported by statistically significant F-statistics, indicate that these models explain a meaningful portion of the variance in sustainable management outcomes (Baruch, 2021; Almeida-García et al., 2021). However, financial engagement negatively affects sustainability, suggesting that it may not be beneficial. This finding is consistent with the results reported by Banerjee et al. (2018) and Ajuaro (2012), which argue that diverse engagement strategies can enhance conservation outcomes by fostering more inclusive and effective management practices. The results highlight the role that types of community engagement play for sustainability of wildlife tourism, reinforcing the need for conservation strategies that are adaptable and responsive to the diverse needs of stakeholders (Kumar, 2019).

4.9 Thematic Analysis

Qualitative data was collected through interviews with representatives from the county and national government's tourism and wildlife departments, as well as from the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association. Table 19 presents the NVivo thematic analysis output.

Table 19

Thematic Analysis

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Summary
Government's Directive Role	Instances of Directive Role	Management Plans (WCMA 2013)	Levels of government create Management Plans. Conservancy management dominates decision-making.
	Government's Criteria for Decision-Making	Limited power-sharing	Community interests are considered during consultations, but decision-making power is not shared.
	Incorporating Community Feedback	Symbolic input	Government seeks community input through bodies like KWCA, but this rarely leads to

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Summary
			meaningful participation in final decisions.
Types of Engagement in Operations	Initiatives for Daily Engagement	Operational roles	Community members are engaged in operational roles (e.g., as tour guides and employees).
	Community Input impact	Tangible impacts	With operational engagement, there is evidence that community input has substantial impacts on wildlife tourism management practices.
	Indirect Input Consideration	Employment roles	Government indirectly engages community through volunteering.
Financial Contributions Sustainability	Financial Contributions from Community	Minimal financial involvement	Community members have limited involvement in financial discussions, especially around tourism revenue.
	Financial Sharing for Long-Term Sustainability	Limited financial engagement	Although some revenues are shared, the community's influence on the financial sustainability of wildlife tourism is minimal.
Sustainable Wildlife Tourism	Strategies for Reducing Human-Wildlife Conflicts	Community engagement as conflict reduction	Community engagement has reduced human-wildlife conflicts, contributing to biodiversity.
	Community Role in Biodiversity Conservation	Community as conservation partners	Communities play a supportive role in biodiversity conservation through direct engagement.
	Assessing Impact on Well-being	Job creation as key metric	The government assesses the socio-economic impact of wildlife tourism on local communities using job creation and participation in the wildlife value chain.

From table 19, the data revealed that while there is community engagement for broader community development initiatives, there is limited community engagement specifically in sustainable wildlife tourism. Interviewees emphasized the need for community members to be engaged beyond mere consultation, as current practices often do not result in meaningful inclusion in final decision-making processes. When discussing government involvement in decision-making within wildlife conservancies, interviewees acknowledged that although community members participate in developing Management Plans as required by the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act of 2013, their influence is often limited. This observation aligns with critiques of participatory approaches in conservation, which argue that without real power-sharing, community involvement can become tokenistic (Stronza, 2019). Interviewees also noted that community representatives are included in conservancy management primarily in community-owned conservancies, but their roles are often symbolic, with decision-making still dominated by conservancy management.

Regarding types of community engagement, interviewees reported that community involvement in financial discussions, particularly concerning tourism revenue, is limited. However, community members are actively engaged in the day-to-day operations of conservancies, often serving as tour guides and employees. Their advocacy roles are supported and empowered by the government, particularly through initiatives led by the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA), which helps amplify their voices and ensure their participation in conservation efforts. Interview responses also highlighted that it is the role of government initiatives to enhance community engagement in conservancies. Interviewees mentioned that the government supports active community participation through infrastructure improvements, such as building access roads and training community rangers. However, recent critiques of participatory conservation efforts have noted that without meaningful changes to governance structures, such initiatives may fail to achieve their intended outcomes (Fletcher & Büscher, 2023).

Engaging community members was reported by the interviewees to help reduce human-wildlife conflicts, which has led to a decrease in such conflicts in the region. This engagement has also played a crucial role in ensuring biodiversity conservation and has contributed to the overall wellbeing of the community.

The involvement of local communities in sustainable wildlife tourism not only fosters harmony between human and wildlife populations but also promotes the long-term sustainability of tourism practices, benefiting both the environment and the local populace. Furthermore, interviewees discussed how the government ensures that wildlife tourism activities contribute to the overall well-being of local communities. They mentioned government efforts to enhance the tourism base by improving access roads, supporting eco-tourism establishments, and encouraging community-based conservancies and cultural tourism showcasing. These initiatives aim to ensure that the economic benefits of wildlife tourism are shared with local communities, thereby improving their living standards. The interviewees also highlighted that the government assesses the impact of wildlife tourism on the social and economic well-being of local communities through metrics such as job creation and participation in the wildlife value chain. This approach aligns with studies advocating for the integration of tourism with community development to maximize socio-economic benefits (Zafra-Calvo et al., 2017; Hill et al., 2021).

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the study's key findings, explaining the key insights gained from the research. It also presents the conclusions based on these findings, showing their importance for both theory and practical applications. Lastly, the chapter provides recommendations for future research and policy interventions, focusing on addressing the gaps identified in the study and enhancing the effectiveness of strategies related to the research topic. This chapter concludes the research process, bridging the gap between empirical evidence and actionable outcomes.

5.1 Summary

The main focus of this study was to investigate the influence of community engagement strategies on sustainable wildlife tourism in wildlife conservancies in Kajiado County, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to evaluate the influence of the levels and types of community engagement on sustainable wildlife tourism and to establish the factors that hinder community engagement for sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County.

The study’s first specific objective was to evaluate the influence of the levels of community engagement on sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County. The indicators included directive, consultative and participative levels of community engagement. From the data analysis results, there was limited community engagement in decision-making on matters wildlife tourism management. The simple linear regression results indicated that engaging the local community in decision making, participative engagement, has a significant positive effect on sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County. They study’s second specific objective was to assess the influence of the types of community engagement on sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County. The indicators included direct, indirect and financial types of engagement. From the results, the community members were engaged through direct and indirect types of community engagement. This helps to achieve sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County.

The simple linear regression results showed that engaging the local community members in operations has a significant effect on sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County. The concluding specific objective of the study was to identify the factors that hinder community engagement in sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County. Majority of the respondents, across various groups, highlighted several key obstacles to effective community engagement. They identified challenges related to directive and consultative engagements, alongside a lack of financial engagement, as the principal barriers hindering community engagement in sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County. These factors significantly hinder efforts to establish effective and collaborative frameworks necessary for the long-term success of wildlife tourism initiatives within wildlife conservancies in Kajiado.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, conservancies in Kajiado County engage the local communities in decision-making through varying levels of community involvement. One common approach is directive engagement, where conservancies impose decisions on local community members without providing them with avenues to question or challenge these decisions, particularly concerning wildlife tourism management. In other cases, consultative engagement is employed, where local community members are asked for their opinions but they are not included in the final decisions. In rare instances, community members are consulted, participative engagement, with their opinions meaningfully incorporated into the final decisions regarding wildlife tourism management. This limited engagement undermines the potential for sustainable wildlife tourism in the region.

In Kajiado County, most conservancies employ direct and indirect types of community engagement; direct engagement which includes creating employment opportunities for locals in roles such as tour guides and conservation rangers, thereby directly involving them in the tourism management and protection of wildlife. Indirect engagement involves fostering volunteerism and supporting advocacy efforts, such as anti-poaching initiatives, which empower communities to take an active role in conservation. By adopting these strategies, conservancies contribute to biodiversity conservation, promote community well-being and reduce human-wildlife conflicts therefore enhancing the sustainability of wildlife tourism, benefiting both the environment and the local communities.

Factors that hinder community engagement for sustainable wildlife tourism in Kajiado County, as reported by the study, are not limited to directive engagement where there is a top-down decision-making authority, consultative engagement where views of the community members though sought, have no influence and don't reflect in the final decisions made by the conservancies. The directive and consultative engagement strategies are under levels of engagement. On types of engagement, financial engagement strategies among wildlife conservancies in Kajiado hinder community engagement for sustainable wildlife tourism as there is no financial transparency and equitable revenue sharing from tourism earnings.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed.

i. Both national and county governments need to develop and enforce legislation mandating the inclusion of community members in decision-making processes related to wildlife tourism and conservation activities. This should include mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing compliance.
ii. The conservancies, through their management, need to prioritize the inclusion of local communities, both in decision-making and operational roles. This includes extending current conservation-focused engagement to include wildlife tourism management, thereby promoting biodiversity conservation, reducing human-wildlife conflicts and enhancing community well-being.
iii. The Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association needs to advocate for stronger policies and regulations governing community engagement in wildlife tourism within conservancies and ensure that community voices are heard and acted upon.
iv. It is necessary to invest in capacity-building initiatives that equip community members with the necessary knowledge and skills to participate effectively in tourism and conservation decision-making processes. This should include training in areas such as conservation management, financial literacy and governance.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

The study recommends conducting research in other wildlife conservancies across Kenya, beyond Kajiado County, to gain broader insights into community engagement strategies. Specifically, it suggests studies the studies to employ a comparative case study analysis to examine the diverse community engagement models across conservancies to determine their effectiveness in promoting sustainable wildlife tourism. It also recommends a particular focus on the moderating role of capacity building, especially the impact of awareness and skills development, on community engagement and sustainable wildlife tourism. Additionally, the study advocates for evaluating the effectiveness of existing policy frameworks in fostering community engagement and their consequent impact on sustainable wildlife tourism.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Introductory Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE.

I trust this finds you well. My name is Collins Watiema, a Master of Science Degree student at Tharaka University, pursuing Tourism Management. This research focuses on understanding the Influence of Community Engagement Strategies on Sustainable wildlife tourism in Wildlife Conservancies in Kajiado County, Kenya.

Attached to this letter is a questionnaire designed to gather insights into this research. The questionnaire is divided into two parts for your convenience. Part 1 seeks background information about you, the respondent, while part 2 explores the levels and types of community engagement strategies. I request that you provide your input by completing all items in the questionnaire to ensure an accurate reflection of your opinions and experiences. Your contribution will significantly help in advancing our understanding of sustainable wildlife tourism. Rest assured, I am committed to handling your responses with the utmost care and confidentiality. Your identity will remain anonymous throughout the study, and all information shared will be used exclusively for research purposes. Permission has been obtained from the relevant institutions to conduct this study, ensuring its legitimacy and ethical standards.

If you have any questions or would like further clarification regarding this study, feel free to reach me through mobile at 0716079981 or email at watiema.collins@gmail.com.

I sincerely thank you in advance for your anticipated participation.

Yours Sincerely,

Mukhwana Collins Watiema.

Appendix II: Questionnaire for Community Leaders

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your insights are crucial for understanding the influence of community engagement on sustainable wildlife tourism in wildlife conservancies in Kajiado County, Kenya**.** Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and experience.

PART 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please tick [√] all that represents you.

- **Gender:**

1. Male [ ] 2. Female [ ] 3. Non-binary [ ]

- **Education Level:**

1. Secondary[ ] 3. Diploma [ ]
2. Certificate[ ] 4. Degree and above [ ]

- **Years as a Community Leader:**

1. Less than 5 years [ ] 3. 11-20 years [ ]
2. 5-10 years [ ] 4. 21+ years [ ]

PART 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND SUSTAINABLE WILDLIFE TOURISM

To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning the Levels and Types of Community Engagement and Sustainable wildlife tourism? Please tick (√) the number that best reflects your opinion, where, 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral| 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree**.**

Levels of Engagement

	Likert scale	1	2	3	4	5
1	Community members receive instructions from conservancy management regarding wildlife tourism management and are expected to comply without input.					
2	Conservancy management independently makes decisions, with community leaders and members playing no role in the decision-making process.					
3	Community leaders communicate and help enforce conservancy decisions without questioning, influencing, or modifying them.					
4	Community members and leaders are consulted for their opinions through surveys and meetings on wildlife tourism management.					

5	Community leaders provide recommendations for conservancy projects on behalf of community members, but their input does not decisively influence outcomes.					
6	The conservancy management holds discussions with community members and leaders to gather insights, although their opinions do not reflect in the final decisions.					
7	Community members are actively involved in every stage of decision-making, contributing equally to shaping policies and strategies.					
8	Community members and leaders participate directly in drafting and reviewing conservancy policies, sharing responsibility for decisions and actions.					
9	The opinions and suggestions from community members are always integrated and reflected in the final decisions as key stakeholders.					

Types of engagement

	Likert scale	1	2	3	4	5
1	Community leaders are actively involved in the daily operations of the conservancy, contributing directly to management processes.					
2	Community members play a direct role in the implementation of conservancy programs, including planning and executing conservation projects.					
3	The conservancy integrates community leaders into daily management tasks, ensuring they have a direct impact on the organization's activities.					
4	Community leaders support conservancy goals by promoting conservation efforts within the community, though they are not involved in daily management.					
5	The conservancy relies on community leaders to indirectly influence outcomes through advocacy and support rather than direct participation.					
6	Community leaders assist the conservancy by facilitating resource mobilization and awareness, without engaging in direct operational activities.					
7	Community members are engaged in financial decision making, significantly contributing to the conservancy projects and activities.					
8	Community members play a key role in securing financial resources for the conservancy, including fundraising and direct monetary donations.					
9	Local community members participate in financial planning and profit sharing from tourism revenue.					

Sustainable wildlife tourism

	Likert scale	1	2	3	4	5
1	Due to community involvement in managing human-wildlife conflicts, there has been a decrease in incidents, leading to a more harmonious relationship between humans and wildlife.					
2	Regular training programs aimed at managing human-wildlife conflicts, have made the community more knowledgeable and prepared, reducing the frequency and severity of such conflicts.					
3	Community's efforts to address human-wildlife conflicts have made the conservancy safer, which in turn enhances tourist experiences and improves overall satisfaction.					
4	Community engagement in conservation initiatives has contributed to enhancing and maintaining biodiversity, with visible increases in wildlife populations and healthier ecosystems within the conservancy.					
5	Active participation in biodiversity conservation has directly supported the restoration and preservation of critical habitats, benefiting the overall environment within the conservancy.					
6	Through community collaboration with the conservancy, efforts to protect endangered species have been effective, leading to increased sightings of these species and enhanced visitor satisfaction.					
7	Community involvement in conservancy activities has led to noticeable improvements in their living standards, including better access to resources and enhanced economic opportunities.					
8	Community's support for local education and healthcare initiatives, in partnership with the conservancy, has improved overall well-being, including better education levels and health outcomes.					
9	The revenue generated from wildlife tourism, which community benefits from, has significantly improved their economic well-being, providing stable income and funding for community projects.					

Appendix III: Questionnaire for Conservancies Managers

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your insights are crucial for understanding the influence of community engagement on sustainable wildlife tourism in wildlife conservancies in Kajiado County, Kenya**.** Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and experience.

PART 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please tick [√] all that represents you.

- **Gender:**

1. Male [ ] 2. Female [ ] 3. Non-binary [ ]

- **Education Level:**

1. Secondary[ ] 3. Diploma [ ]
2. Certificate[ ] 4. Degree and above [ ]

- **Years as a Community Leader:**

3. Less than 5 years [ ] 3. 11-20 years [ ]
4. 5-10 years [ ] 4. 21+ years [ ]

PART 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND SUSTAINABLE WILDLIFE TOURISM

To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning the Levels and Types of Community Engagement and Sustainable wildlife tourism? Please tick (√) the number that best reflects your opinion, where, 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral| 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree.

Levels of Engagement

	Likert scale	1	2	3	4	5
1	Community members receive information about conservancy decisions only after they have been finalized by the management team.					
2	Conservancy guidelines and regulations are established by management, with the community's role being solely to adhere to them.					
3	Wildlife tourism management decisions are made exclusively by conservancy managers in collaboration with other stakeholders other than local community members.					
4	Community input is sought through surveys and meetings, yet conservancy management ultimately decides on the implementation of wildlife tourism strategies.					

5	Community members are invited to participate in discussions about conservancy issues, but their recommendations are not binding on management decisions.					
6	Consultative forums are regularly held to gather community views, although the conservancy management has the last word on decisions.					
7	Community members actively participate in decision-making processes, contributing equally to the formulation of wildlife tourism management strategies.					
8	The conservancy management collaborates with community representatives to co-create policies and action plans for wildlife tourism sustainability.					
9	Community members are involved in every stage of decision-making, from initial discussions to final implementation of conservancy initiatives.					

Types of engagement

	Likert scale	1	2	3	4	5
1	Community members are directly involved in the daily operations and management activities of the conservancy on matters related to wildlife tourism sustainability.					
2	The conservancy facilitates regular training for community members to actively participate in wildlife tourism and conservation activities.					
3	Community members are involved in monitoring and reporting wildlife activities as part of the conservancy's daily operational framework.					
4	Community members support conservancy activities through indirect means, such as advocating for conservation and promoting wildlife tourism externally.					
5	The conservancy benefits from community contributions in forms like volunteer work and public awareness campaigns rather than direct involvement.					
6	Community members participate in conservancy efforts by providing logistical support, such as transportation or accommodation for visitors and staff.					
7	Community members are engaged in financial decision making, significantly contributing to the conservancy projects and activities.					
8	Community members play a key role in securing financial resources for the conservancy, including fundraising and direct monetary donations.					
9	Financial engagement by community members includes participating in budget discussions and profit sharing from tourism revenue.					

Sustainable wildlife tourism

	Likert scale	1	2	3	4	5
1	Due to active community engagement in managing human-wildlife conflicts, incidents have decreased, creating peaceful coexistence between humans and wildlife.					
2	Regular training programs provided to both conservancy staff and local community members on managing human-wildlife conflicts have resulted in a more knowledgeable and prepared community, reducing the frequency and severity of such conflicts.					
3	Consistent community efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflicts have made the conservancy safer, enhancing tourist experiences and increasing satisfaction rates.					
4	Community engagement in conservation initiatives, has led to significant progress in maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, with noticeable increases in wildlife populations and healthier ecosystems within the conservancy.					
5	Active participation by local communities in biodiversity conservation has directly contributed to the restoration and preservation of critical habitats within the conservancy area.					
6	The conservancy's activities, driven by close collaboration with local communities, have effectively supported the protection and preservation of endangered species, resulting in increased sightings and improved visitor satisfaction.					
7	Conservancy and community-managed activities have led to noticeable improvements in living standards for community members, including better access to resources and enhanced economic opportunities.					
8	The conservancy's support for local education and healthcare initiatives, in partnership with the community, has contributed to improved overall well-being, including higher education levels and better health outcomes.					
9	Revenue generated from wildlife tourism, equitably shared with the local community, has significantly improved their economic well-being, providing stable income and funding for community projects.					

Appendix IV: Interview Questions for Tourism Officials

Interview Details:

- **Interviewee Gender:** _____
- **Level of Education:** _____
- **Years of experience:** _____
- **Date:** _____
- **Location:** _____

Interviewer Introduction:

My name is Collins Watiema, a Master of Science Degree student at Tharaka University, pursuing Tourism Management. This research focuses on understanding the 'Influence of Community Engagement Strategies on Sustainable wildlife tourism in Wildlife Conservancies in Kajiado, Kenya.' Your contribution will help in advancing our understanding of sustainable wildlife tourism. Rest assured, I am committed to handling your responses with the utmost care and confidentiality. Permission has been obtained from the relevant institutions to conduct this study, ensuring its legitimacy and ethical standards.

Levels of Community Engagement

1. What are, in the context of wildlife tourism management, specific instances where the government takes a directive role in decision-making processes within the wildlife conservancies in Kajiado County?
2. What is the government's criteria and decision-making process, emphasizing how community interests and needs are considered in this directive approach?
3. How does the government actively seek and incorporate input and feedback from local communities in decision-making processes related to wildlife tourism management within the conservancies?
4. To what extent are public forums, community meetings, or advisory panels utilized by the government to engage with the local community and ensure a consultative approach in wildlife tourism decision-making?
5. How does the government ensure that active participation of community members manifest in the day-to-day decisions of wildlife tourism management within the conservancies?

6. Are there programs where the government supports community participation in the planning and implementation of sustainable wildlife tourism practices?

Types of engagement

1. What are the examples of initiatives where the government actively engages community members in daily operations within the conservancies?
2. How does the government ensure that community input leads to tangible and meaningful impacts on wildlife tourism management practices?
3. How does the government consider and incorporate indirect input from the local community in wildlife tourism management within the conservancies?
4. Are there policies or strategies that are designed to indirectly include community perspectives in the planning and execution of wildlife tourism initiatives?
5. How does the government ensure inclusion of community members in financial decision-making for sustainable wildlife tourism efforts?
6. How does the government ensure equal sharing of revenue with the community by the conservancies?

Sustainable wildlife tourism

1. What specific strategies has the government implemented to reduce human-wildlife conflicts within the conservancies, and how does it measure the effectiveness of these strategies?
2. In what ways does the government involve the community in both preventing and managing human-wildlife conflicts?
3. What policies and initiatives have the government introduced to enhance biodiversity conservation in the conservancies, and how does it monitor and evaluate their success?
4. What role do local communities play in supporting the government's biodiversity conservation efforts within the conservancies?
5. How does the government ensure that wildlife tourism activities contribute to the overall wellbeing of local communities, and what programs or initiatives are in place to improve their living standards?
6. How does the government assess the impact of wildlife tourism on the social and economic wellbeing of local communities?

Appendix V: Interview Guide for KWCA Official

Interview Details:

- **Interviewee Gender:** _____
- **Level of Education:** _____
- **Years of experience:** _____
- **Date:** _____
- **Location:** _____

Interviewer Introduction:

My name is Collins Watiema, a Master of Science Degree student at Tharaka University, pursuing Tourism Management. This research focuses on understanding the 'Influence of Community Engagement Strategies on Sustainable Wildlife Tourism in Wildlife Conservancies in Kajiado, Kenya.' Your contribution will help in advancing our understanding of sustainable wildlife tourism. I am committed to handling your responses with the utmost care and confidentiality. Permission has been obtained from the relevant institutions to conduct this study, ensuring its legitimacy and ethical standards.

Levels of Community Engagement

1. What are, in the context of wildlife tourism management, specific instances where the KWCA takes a directive role in decision-making processes within the wildlife conservancies in Kajiado County?
2. What criteria and decision-making processes do the KWCA employ, particularly in ensuring that community interests and needs are prioritized in its directive approach within the conservancies?
3. How does KWCA actively seek and incorporate feedback from local communities in its decision-making processes related to wildlife tourism management?
4. To what extent does the KWCA utilize public forums, community meetings, or advisory panels to engage with local communities, ensuring a consultative approach in wildlife tourism decision-making?
5. How does KWCA ensure active participation of community members is reflected in day-to-day decisions of wildlife tourism management within conservancies?
6. Are there specific programs where the KWCA supports community participation in the planning and implementation of sustainable wildlife tourism practices?

Types of engagement

1. Can you provide examples of initiatives where the KWCA actively engages community members in the daily operations within the conservancies?
2. How does the KWCA ensure that community input leads to tangible and meaningful impacts on wildlife tourism management practices?
3. In what ways does the KWCA incorporate indirect input from local communities in its wildlife tourism management strategies within the conservancies?
4. Are there policies or strategies developed by the KWCA that indirectly include community perspectives in the execution of wildlife tourism initiatives?
5. How does the KWCA ensure inclusion of community members in financial decision-making for sustainable wildlife tourism efforts?
6. How does the KWCA ensure equal sharing of revenue with the community by the conservancies?

Sustainable wildlife tourism

1. What specific strategies has the KWCA implemented to reduce human-wildlife conflicts within the conservancies?
2. In what ways does the KWCA involve the community in both preventing and managing human-wildlife conflicts?
3. What initiatives have the KWCA introduced to enhance biodiversity conservation in the conservancies, and how does it monitor and evaluate their success?
4. What role do local communities play in supporting the KWCA's biodiversity conservation efforts within the conservancies?
5. How does the KWCA ensure that wildlife tourism activities contribute to the overall wellbeing of local communities, and what programs or initiatives are in place to improve their living standards?
6. How does the KWCA assess the impact of wildlife tourism on the social and economic wellbeing of local communities?

Appendix VI: Consent for participants in the study

Thank you for participating in this research project. I assure you that the data you provide will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research. Your participation in this project will remain anonymous. Your data will never be shared with anyone outside of the research team if you so wish. Kindly respond to the statements below by either affirming or denying:

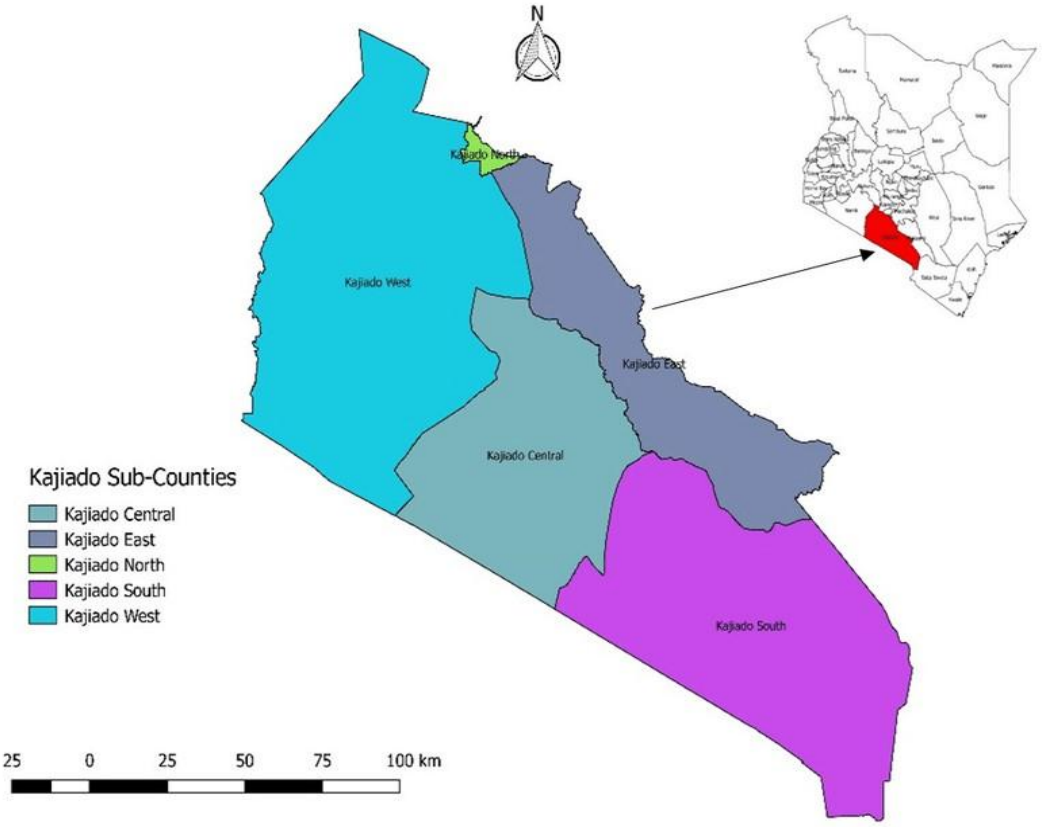
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the debrief sheet regarding the research.
2. I confirm that the purpose and nature of the study have been explained to me in writing and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions. These questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
3. I understand my participation in this study is voluntary and free to withdraw at any time without reason or to refuse to answer any question without any consequences.
4. I understand that I have the right to request that any data collected from my interview be deleted within two weeks of the interview.
5. I will use the interviewee anonymity code provided to me to withdraw permission for my interview data to be used.
6. I am aware that I will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this research.
7. I give my consent for my interview to be recorded by the researcher.
8. I understand that any information I provide will be treated as confidential.
9. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous in the results of this research, and any identifying information will be disguised or changed.
10. I understand that the researcher may use quotes from my interview in his thesis, but he is disguised to protect my identity.
11. I understand that I have the right to access the findings of this research once it is complete.

The study has been fully explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to participate. I understand that I can withdraw at any time.

Participant signature……

Date…….

Appendix VII: Map of Kajiado County in Kenya



https://images.app.goo.gl/jQpk7VjrYxjZyqff6

Figure 2. Map of Kajiado

Appendix VIII: List of Wildlife Conservancies in Kajiado County

Table 20

Conservancies in Kajiado

1.	Tawi-Kilitome
2.	Motikanju Conservancy
3.	Kanzi Conservancy
4.	Sidai Oleng Wildlife Sanctuary (Kimana)
5.	Kitirua Conservancy
6.	Selenkay Conservancy
7.	Satao Elerai Conservancy
8.	Olpusare Conservancy
9.	Kitenden Conservancy
10.	Nalarami Conservancy
11.	Nailepu Conservancy
12.	Oltiyani Conservancy
13.	Olepolos Conservancy
14.	Osupuko Conservancy
15.	Nasaru Olosho Conservancy
16.	Rombo Conservancy
17.	Naretunoi Conservancy
18.	Rimpa Estates Wildlife Conservancy
19.	Olerai Wildlife Community Conservancy
20.	Enkusero Sampu Conservancy
21.	Shompole Community Conservancy
22.	Olkiramatian Conservancy
23.	Empaash Ooloirienito Conservancy
24.	Kisapuk Community Conservancy
25.	Olorgesailie Land Owners Conservancy
26.	Lorbetera Conservancy
27.	Noosikitok Conservancy
28.	Parsilet Conservancy
29.	Kikesen River Conservancy

Source: Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (2024)

Appendix IX: University Introductory Letter

THARAKA UNIVERSITY

P.O BOX 193-60215,
MARIMANTI, KENYA

Telephone: +(254)-0202008549
Website: https://tharaka.ac.ke
Social Media: tharakauni
Email: info@tharaka.ac.ke

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

Ref: TUN/BPGS/PL/06/24 **12th June, 2024**

To Whom it May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: MUKHWANA COLLINS WATIEMA ADMISSION NUMBER NMT13/05885/22

Mr. Mukhwana Collins Watiema is a postgraduate student at Tharaka University undertaking a Master's degree in **Tourism Management**. The student has completed his coursework and expected to proceed for collection of data having successfully defended his proposal at the faculty level. The title of the study is, '***Community Engagement for Effective Wildlife Tourism Management Conservative in Kajiado County, Kenya.***' The proposed study will be carried out in **Kajiado County**.

Any assistance accorded to him will be highly appreciated.

Thank you in advance.

Yours Faithfully,

THARAKA UNIVERSITY BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH 12 JUN 2024 P.O. BOX 193-60215 MARIMANTI

Dr. Marciano Mutiga, Ph.D.
Director
Board of Postgraduate Studies

Appendix X: Research Permit from NACOSTI

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **720394**

Date of Issue: **15/July/2024**

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Mr.. Collins Watiema Mukhwana of Tharaka University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Kajiado on the topic: INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON SUSTAINABLE WILDLIFE TOURISM MANAGEMENT IN WILDLIFE CONSERVANCIES IN KAJIADO COUNTY KENYA for the period ending : 15/July/2025.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/24/37712**

720394

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

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See overleaf for conditions