


Addressing Overtourism in Mombasa County: Perspectives from Residents and Stakeholders

Abstract

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The surge in tourism in Kenya, notably in urban areas like Mombasa County, has fuelled unprecedented economic growth but also triggered overtourism. Overtourism, characterised by an excessive influx of tourists, causes overcrowding, strains resources, and alters the local environment, impacting residents' quality of life. This study employs qualitative research to address overtourism in Mombasa County, exploring residents' attitudes, emotional responses, effects of crowding, and management strategies through interviews. Findings reveal diverse perspectives among residents, highlighting benefits like employment opportunities and infrastructure development, alongside concerns such as cultural erosion and environmental degradation. Respondents perceive overtourism as a local competitor for resources, leading to changes in social dynamics. The study identifies four resident and Stakeholder typologies: Resistant, Concerned, Supportive and Ambivalent. Recommendations include awareness campaigns, co-creation experiences, and dialogue between tourists and residents. Despite limitations like a small sample size, the study underscores the urgency for sustainable management strategies to tackle overtourism's challenges in Mombasa County and beyond.

Keywords: Overtourism, sustainable management, social dynamics, economic growth, emotional responses, environmental degradation

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Introduction

In contemporary times, tourism is increasingly integrated into national, regional, and local planning processes, leading to the emergence of new perspectives and strategies. Urban tourism, specifically, is identified as a potential driver of economic growth and inclusive development in Africa (Gronau, 2017). Overtourism is described by Milano et al. (2019) as the excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas where residents endure the effects of temporary and seasonal tourism surges, which have caused permanent changes to their lifestyles, restricted access to amenities and damaged their general well-being. While acknowledging that research on overtourism has been carried out in Kenya, the focus has been within the parks and this research sought to explore the impacts overtourism has on the coastal communities of Kenya. This research seeks to fill some of the gaps on overtourism and challenges that are very specific to Africa especially issues concerning the psychosocial impact of overtourism such as cultural erosion, social fabric disruption, Resentment and alienation. By filling this research gap, this research will contribute to knowledge for scholars and policymakers to work together to develop holistic and effective strategies to manage the challenges of overtourism in Africa's rapidly growing cities and also provide an approach to understanding residents' emotional response to the psychosocial impacts related to overtourism in Mombasa (Zemla, 2020). This study aims to contribute to this discourse by shedding light on perceived social impacts and exploring the intricate interplay between tourism activities and their effects on host communities (Cheung & Li, 2019). The primary research question guiding this study is to identify the psychosocial factors influencing residents' perception of over-tourism in an African city. The research also aims to achieve two associated objectives: firstly, to differentiate between resident segments' perceptions of overtourism, and secondly, to examine how the perception of overtourism affects residents' attitudes towards tourism and tourists. Through a comprehensive investigation into these interconnected dynamics, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into the complex relationship between residents, stakeholders tourism development, and sustainable management in the context of overtourism pressures in African cities (Santos-Rojo et al., 2023). Striking a balance between the economic, social, and ecological sustainability of tourism resources has emerged as a primary issue for the industry (Kariuki, 2021).

Literature review

Over-tourism and crowding

Overtourism, a multifaceted phenomenon, describes situations where locals or visitors perceive an excessive influx of tourists, leading to a decline in the quality of life and overall experience (Goodwin, 2017; Intrepid, 2018; Milano et al., 2019). Crowding, a psychological response to density, occurs when individuals feel a lack of privacy or unwanted interactions due to overcrowding (Gray, 2001). This phenomenon results in various challenges such as alienation among residents and overloaded infrastructure (McKinsey & Company & World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017). The concepts of saturation and carrying capacity are closely related to overtourism, suggesting that every environment has a threshold of use beyond which negative impacts occur. Globally, overtourism manifests through various dimensions, including physical, environmental, social, economic, psychological, and political capacities, driven by a perception of density among impacted parties (UNWTO, 2018). The impacts of overtourism range from crowding issues to environmental challenges such as pollution and habitat degradation, posing significant threats to destination sustainability (Pechlaner et al., 2020). The vulnerability of a destination to overtourism



is influenced by factors such as its tourism development stage, market dynamics, and unique attributes. (Wang & Tziamalis, 2023). Tourism can greatly impact the quality of life and well-being of local residents. Positive tourism experiences often lead to increased satisfaction among residents, contributing to community pride and economic benefits. On the other hand, negative tourism effects can lower residents' satisfaction and create community challenges (Agboola & Yotsumoto 2024). In recent years, overtourism has emerged as a critical global issue, affecting destinations worldwide, including African cities like Mombasa. Factors contributing to overtourism include enhanced accessibility, aggressive marketing campaigns, geopolitical stability, and the growing middle class in emerging economies (Visentin & Bertocchi, 2019). A critical concern in the face of tourism growth is the psycho-social well-being of host communities. Feelings of alienation, loss of privacy, and frustration may emerge, impacting the quality of life for these communities. Environmental psychology principles play a crucial role in understanding how the physical and sociocultural environment affects the attitudes, behaviours, and well-being of both host communities and tourists. Previous research by Gössling et al. (2018) and Koens et al. (2018) underscores the importance of sustainable tourism practices in mitigating psycho-social impacts. One of the core contributors to psycho-social challenges is the disconnect between tourists and residents, particularly exacerbated by tourism practices such as packaged holidays. These holidays limit authentic interactions, confining tourists to predetermined schedules and designated areas, hindering meaningful engagement with local communities.

Residents' responses to overtourism

Social exchange perspective on overtourism and crowding in Mombasa

Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides insights into the attitudes and emotional responses of tourists and residents in overtourism scenarios. SET posits that human interactions are driven by the principle of reciprocity, where individuals seek rewards while minimising costs (Homans, 1958). In overtourism contexts, residents assess rewards such as economic benefits and cultural exchange against costs like noise and environmental degradation, shaping their attitudes and emotional responses (Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015). While SET has been widely applied in tourism studies, it has faced criticism from alternative frameworks, such as Emotional Solidarity Theory (EST). Critics argue that SET may oversimplify the complexities of human relationships and emotional ties within communities. For instance, Joo et al. (2021) explored how emotional solidarity influences residents' support for tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting that emotional connections can play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards tourism beyond mere economic calculations. The application of Social Exchange Theory in tourism research offers valuable insights into how various factors influence residents' perceptions and support for tourism development. By addressing both the benefits and costs associated with tourism, SET provides a comprehensive framework for understanding community dynamics in tourism contexts. Mombasa's tourism industry has witnessed significant growth due to factors such as improved infrastructure, marketing efforts, and political stability. The city offers a diverse range of attractions, including pristine beaches, wildlife reserves, and cultural sites like Fort Jesus. As a result, tourist arrivals have steadily increased, contributing to the local economy but also straining the city's resources and infrastructure. Tourism development often leads to infrastructure improvements, including roads, airports, accommodation, and public facilities, which enhance accessibility and overall quality of life for residents and visitors. Additionally, tourism allows communities to showcase and preserve their cultural heritage, traditions, arts, and crafts, fostering a sense of pride and identity as highlighted by Chiwawa & Wissink (2023). In Mombasa, the effects of overtourism can be categorised into psychological, physical, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions, as highlighted by Maingi (2019). The psychological impacts may include stress and a sense of loss of community identity among residents, while physical impacts could manifest as overcrowding and degradation of local infrastructure. Economically, while tourism can provide financial benefits, it can also lead to inflation and increased cost of living, which may not be equitably distributed among local populations. Socio-culturally, overtourism can lead to cultural commodification and a dilution of local traditions as communities adapt to meet tourist expectations (Maingi, 2019). Research indicates that sociodemographic factors significantly influence residents' perceptions of tourism. As noted by Swain & Sthapak (2023), younger residents in the Puri region of India were more supportive of tourism development compared to older residents, who expressed concerns about crowding and cultural erosion.

Residents' perceptions of these impacts are crucial in determining their support for tourism initiatives. Research indicates that positive perceptions of tourism's economic benefits can enhance community support, while negative perceptions can lead to resistance against tourism development. For instance, Nunkoo (2016) emphasise that residents who perceive tourism as beneficial are more likely to support its growth, aligning with the principles of SET, which suggest that perceived benefits must outweigh perceived costs for residents to engage positively with tourism. The frequency and quality of interactions between residents and tourists can shape perceptions as positive interactions with tourists enhance residents' support for tourism initiatives, as frequent contact often leads to greater understanding and appreciation of cultural exchanges. On the other hand, residents who experience high levels of crowding may develop negative attitudes towards tourists, as indicated by Frleta & Badurina (2019), where respondents in Zagreb reported discomfort due to overcrowded public spaces. Furthermore, the interplay between local governance and tourism management is vital in addressing over-tourism. Effective local governance can facilitate better management of tourism impacts, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are shared equitably among residents. This is supported by findings from Maingi (2019), which suggest that sustainable tourism practices and local governance structures can mitigate the adverse effects of overtourism. As noted by Türktarhan et al. (2022), local communities can gain social and economic yields from tourism, such as job creation and cultural exchange, which can enhance their overall quality of life. The integration of SET with Doxey's Irridex Model provides a more comprehensive understanding of the host-guest interactions in Mombasa (Bimonte & Punzo, 2016). This multi-faceted approach allows for a nuanced analysis of how residents

perceive tourism and its impacts, facilitating the development of strategies that promote sustainable tourism practices while addressing the challenges posed by overtourism. This holistic approach is essential for fostering a sustainable tourism environment that respects the needs and rights of local communities in Mombasa County.

Study context

The Kenyan government and local tourism authorities in Mombasa have taken significant strides in aggressively marketing the city as a top-tier tourist destination. According to Gursoy et al. (2002), these efforts have successfully drawn large numbers of visitors, although they have simultaneously contributed to overcrowding in popular tourist spots. Additionally, infrastructural enhancements, particularly in transportation with the expansion of airports and the development of new roads, have simplified access to Mombasa. Visentin and Bertocchi (2019) suggest that this increased accessibility is a double-edged sword, boosting tourist arrivals but also intensifying over-tourism issues. In Mombasa, popular tourist spots like Nyali Beach and Old Town frequently grapple with issues of overcrowding, especially during peak tourist seasons, a phenomenon documented by UNWTO in 2018. This surge in visitor numbers not only causes congestion and lengthy queues but also significantly restricts local residents' access to and enjoyment of public spaces. Additionally, this rampant overtourism exerts considerable pressure on the city's natural resources, infrastructure, and public services, as noted by Pechlaner et al. (2020). The increased consumption of water, generation of waste, and usage of energy associated with high tourist numbers lead to environmental degradation, posing a serious threat to Mombasa's sustainability. Concurrently, the commercialisation of cultural experiences in Mombasa has resulted in the dilution of local traditions and customs. Businesses catering primarily to tourists often place a higher priority on generating profit rather than preserving cultural authenticity, which leads to the commodification and gradual erosion of local culture and heritage, transforming unique cultural elements into mere tourist attractions devoid of their original significance and context. The responses shed light on these as indicated by the responses of the varying representatives picked for interviews in Mombasa County as shown in Table 1: Residents Demographic Information.

Overtourism in Mombasa County

From 2012 to 2022, Europe emerged as the primary source market for Kenyan tourism, representing 57.9% of the total international tourist arrivals, followed by Africa at 16.9%, North America at 11.8%, and Asia at 10% (Government of Kenya, 2012). The introduction of the East Africa Community Common Market has enhanced tourism in the region, benefiting individual states and the region as a whole. This initiative envisions international tourists using a single visa to visit all the East Africa Community member states during a single trip (Nakaweesi, 2013; Okello & Novelli, 2014). In the case of Mombasa County, a city receiving a third of Kenya's international and domestic tourists, the surge in tourism has led to overtourism, necessitating stakeholders and local communities to grapple with issues of crowding. Kenya's tourism sector, fuelled by its natural beauty, cultural richness, and diverse wildlife, has witnessed unprecedented growth (Gonzalez-Reverté, 2022). Despite several studies on residents' perception of tourism, there is limited study on the residents' emotional response to overtourism. This study also focuses on addressing psycho-social impacts and attitudes affecting hosts.

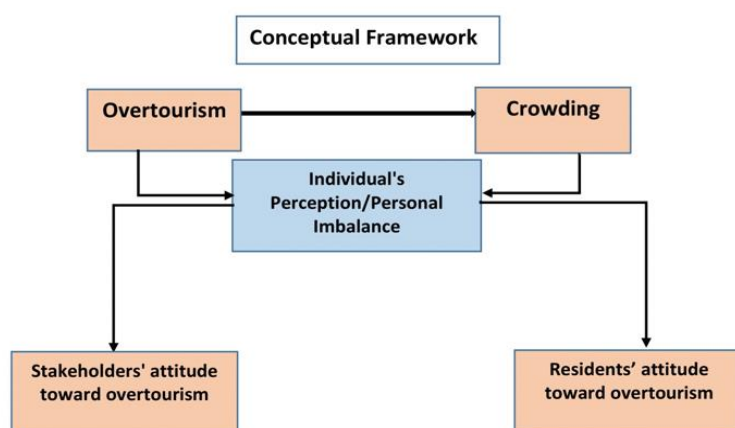


Figure 1: A conceptual framework for stakeholder/resident perspective and over-tourism/crowding

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the phenomenon of over-tourism in Mombasa County comprehensively. Qualitative methods are chosen due to their ability to capture the perspectives and experiences of stakeholders and residents, providing rich insights into the complexities of over-tourism (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The interview schedule was divided into four sections. The first section sought to examine residents' attitudes towards tourism which



comprised of closed and open-ended questions which allowed for the respondents to express their opinions openly. The open section allowed the respondents to bring out other aspects of overtourism that might have escaped previous studies and also the researchers' attention. These sought to address and bolster a study by Gonzalez-Reverte (2022) while addressing research on the perceived effects of tourism, the focus is on perceptions and attitudes towards tourism (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Ap & Crompton, 1993; Draper et al., 2011; Sheldon & Abenoja, 2001). The second segment of the study gathered information on residents' attitudes towards tourists through a series of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. This segment delved into aspects such as tourist behaviour in public spaces, cultural differences, and overall interactions between tourists and residents. The third part examined the impacts of overcrowding, aiming to evaluate the effects of overcrowding and the potential consequences of shared public spaces between tourists and residents. It also covered tourist activities in the streets that could lead to the loss of local identity, the commercialization of culture, and inauthentic experiences (Mordue, 2009) and finally section four on the future management of tourism in the county. The interviews were drawn in English and Swahili. Furthermore, most of the respondents held at least a high school diploma, indicating literacy levels sufficient for understanding and responding to the study questions. To ensure a balanced perspective, input was sought from both individuals working within the tourism industry acknowledging potential bias due to their professional involvement and those outside the industry. Additionally, the majority of those in the tourism industry had worked in the industry for over three years, enhancing the credibility of their opinions by reflecting a substantial period of exposure to both positive and negative aspects of tourism.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both stakeholders and residents to gather qualitative data on their perceptions, experiences, and insights related to over-tourism. The interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions designed to explore key themes such as attitudes towards tourism, effects of crowding, and potential management strategies. Interviews were conducted in English and Swahili to accommodate participants' language preferences. All participants currently reside in Mombasa, providing first-hand experience of the effects of tourism and a comprehensive understanding of the research concerns. Additionally, the majority of respondents have lived in the area for over five years, qualifying them for the study. Semi-structured interview guides were used to facilitate open-ended discussions, allowing for the emergence of diverse viewpoints and insights (Patton, 2015). The responses were tape-recorded and the audio responses were transcribed to written data. The interviews were conducted between July 2022 and August 2023 by the researcher. Interviews were conducted with selected residents and stakeholders to explore nuanced perspectives, experiences, and potential solutions related to over-tourism in Mombasa County. Semi-structured interview guides were used to facilitate open-ended discussions, allowing for the emergence of diverse viewpoints and insights (Patton, 2015). The responses were tape-recorded and the audio responses were transcribed to written data. The interviews were conducted between July and August 2023 by the researcher.

Table 1: Residents demographic information

Respondent Group	Residents	Stakeholders
No. of Participants	20	12
No. of Groups	2	3
	Work in Tourism (WT)	Government (GS)
	Not in Tourism (NWT)	Travel/Tours (TO)
	Hotel (HO)	

No.	Gender	Marital Status	Age	Education	Work Experience-Years	Period of Stay-Years
WT 1	Male	Married	>25	KCSE	<5	>5
WT 2	Male	Married	>25	KCPE	<5	Native
WT 3	Male	Not Married	>25	Deg. Graduate	<10	>10
WT 4	Female	Not Married	>25	Certificate/Diploma	Not worked	<5
WT 5	Female	Married	<25	Deg. Graduate	<5	>5
WT 6	Female	Married	>35	Deg. Graduate	10	>10
WT 7	Female	Married	<35	Certificate/Diploma	<5	Native
WT 8	Male	Married	<35	Certificate/Diploma	>5	Native
WT 9	Male	Married	>55	Deg. Graduate	>10	Native
NWT 1	Female	Married	>35	Certificate/Diploma	<5	Native
NWT 2	Female	Not Married	>25	KCSE	<5	Native
NWT 3	Male	Married	>55	Certificate/Diploma	>10	Native
NWT 4	Male	Not Married	>55	Deg. Graduate	>5	Native
NWT 5	Female	Not Married	>45	Certificate/Diploma	<5	Native
NWT 6	Male	Married	<45	Certificate/Diploma	>10	Native
NWT 7	Male	Not Married	<25	Deg. Graduate	Not worked	Native
NWT 8	Female	Not Married	<25	Deg. Graduate	Not worked	Native
NWT 9	Female	Married	>65	Deg. Graduate	>10	Native
NWT 10	Male	Married	>65	KCPE	>25	Native
NWT 11	Male	Married	<45	High school	>10	Native
GS 1	Male	Married	<35	Postgraduate	>5	Native
GS 2	Male	Married	>45	Deg. Graduate	>10	Native
GS 3	Female	Not Married	<25	Certificate/Diploma	>5	Native
GS 4	Female	Not Married	>35	Certificate/Diploma	>5	Native
GS 5	Male	Married	<55	Postgraduate	>10	Native
TO 1	Female	Married	>45	Postgraduate	>15	Native
TO 2	Male	Not Married	<35	Deg. Graduate	Not worked	Native
TO 3	Female	Not Married	>35	Certificate/Diploma	>5	Native
TO 4	Female	Not Married	> 35	Certificate/Diploma	>10	Native
HO 1	Male	Married	<65	Deg. Graduate	>25	Native
HO 2	Female	Married	>35	Certificate/Diploma	>10	<5
HO 3	Female	Not Married	<55	Certificate/Diploma	>15	>15

Data analysis

The Data Analysis section outlines the approach used to examine qualitative data from interviews and derive meaningful insights regarding stakeholders' perspectives on over-tourism. Two key methods; thematic analysis and narrative analysis were employed to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the data. Thematic Analysis method, as defined by Braun & Clarke (2006), was used to systematically identify, organise, and analyse patterns or themes across the interview data. This method involves



coding the data, where meaningful units or concepts are identified and grouped into themes that reflect significant insights about over-tourism. The process included several key steps including, familiarisation with the data where the researcher immersed in the transcribed data to gain a deep understanding. Secondly, generating initial codes so that segments of the data are tagged with codes that represent key ideas or meanings. Thirdly, searching for themes in which case codes were grouped into broader themes that reflect patterns in the data. Fourthly, reviewing and refining themes where themes were checked for coherence, accuracy, and consistency with the data and finally defining and naming themes which were then given clear definitions that captured their meaning. In addition to thematic analysis, narrative analysis was used to contextualise the relationships between the identified themes. Narrative analysis focuses on understanding how people make sense of their experiences by telling stories. It is often used in qualitative research to explore how individuals or groups perceive and interpret events. In this study, narrative analysis helped reveal how the various stakeholders describe their interactions with overtourism and its impacts, emphasising their personal experiences and social contexts. This approach is particularly useful when analysing first-person accounts from interviews, as it uncovers the deeper meanings and motivations behind participants' responses. For example, narrative analysis highlighted how certain psychosocial factors shape residents' perceptions of over-tourism, drawing connections between personal stories and broader social trends. (Maxwell, 1996). By employing both thematic and narrative analyses, the study gained a well-rounded understanding of stakeholders' and Residents' views. Thematic analysis provided a structured way to identify key themes, while narrative analysis added depth by uncovering how these themes are connected through individual experiences.

Results and findings

Residents' response

Table 2: Summary of residents' responses

Resident Segment	Attributes/ Themes	Social Exchange Theory
<i>Supportive Residents</i>	Economic opportunities job creation infrastructure improvement Positive impact on families	Supportive residents perceive tourism as a means of exchanging economic benefits with tourists. They believe that by providing services and hospitality to tourists, they receive financial rewards and opportunities for growth.
<i>Concerned Residents</i>	Environmental degradation cultural erosion, social problems (drug use, prostitution), social inequalities	Concerned residents weigh the costs and benefits of tourism, considering the negative consequences on the environment, culture, and social dynamics. Their reservations stem from a perceived imbalance in the social exchange, where the negative impacts outweigh the benefits received from tourism.
<i>Ambivalent Residents</i>	Mixed feelings towards tourism, uncertainty about long-term sustainability, recognition of both benefits and drawbacks	Ambivalent residents engage in a dynamic social exchange, oscillating between positive and negative perceptions of tourism based on its evolving impacts and outcomes.
<i>Resistant Residents</i>	Opposition to tourism expansion, infringement on privacy, disruption of traditional way of life, social problems (substance abuse, crime)	Resistant residents perceive tourism as a threat to their social exchange and well-being, viewing it as a force that disrupts their established way of life and community dynamics.

Based on the provided responses from residents, we can identify several distinct segments or groups based on their perception of overtourism and how it influences their attitudes towards well-being, welfare, and tourism development in the city. Supportive Residents perceive over-tourism as a significant opportunity for economic growth and employment. One resident cited the benefits accrued from tourism as immense, expressing that increased tourism has opened channels for business opportunities and employment, thus providing local households with a source of income. They highlighted that the higher the number of tourists, the better, as it also funds orphanages and has led the government to emphasise environmental conservation, despite some degradation caused by the construction of facilities to support the tourism industry. (WT8). Residents believe that tourism brings about infrastructure improvements, job opportunities, and increased income for locals. Some cite examples of how tourism has positively impacted their families, such as providing employment or educational opportunities abroad. Overall, supportive residents express a positive attitude towards tourists, seeing them as a source of economic opportunities and cultural exchange. They generally have a favourable view of tourists, appreciating their kindness, warmth, and willingness to spend money in the community. They prioritise economic benefits over potential negative impacts, such as environmental degradation or cultural changes. (WT13). Concerned residents, on the other hand, acknowledge the benefits of overtourism but express concern about its negative impacts on the environment, culture, and quality of life. They believe that tourism has led to environmental destruction, cultural erosion, and increased social problems like drug use and prostitution. Additionally, they feel that tourism is exacerbating social inequalities, particularly in terms of property prices and access to resources. (WT1) Concerned residents also have reservations about overtourism's sustainability and advocate for more balanced and responsible tourism development. They are cautious about tourists, recognising their economic contributions while expressing concerns about their behaviour and its impact on the community. (NWT2) Some residents exhibit ambivalence towards overtourism, recognising both its benefits and drawbacks. They appreciate the economic opportunities provided by tourism but express reservations about its long-term sustainability and its effects on local culture and way of life. They interact with tourists cautiously, seeking to balance economic benefits with the need to preserve social and cultural integrity. (NWT9), (NWT15). A segment of residents exhibits resistance to overtourism. These individuals are largely opposed to the expansion of tourism, feeling that it infringes upon their privacy, disrupts their traditional way of life, and leads to social issues like substance abuse



and crime. They believe that the government prioritises tourism promotion over the welfare of local residents and advocates for stricter regulations on tourism development. (NWT10), (NWT7) Based on these segments, it's evident that residents' perceptions of overtourism vary widely, influencing their attitudes towards tourism development in the city. While some residents are supportive and see tourism as an economic boon, others are concerned about its negative impacts on the environment, culture, and community well-being. Balancing these divergent perspectives will be crucial for effective tourism management and sustainable development in the future. Resistant residents are largely opposed to the expansion of tourism in the community, viewing it as a threat to their way of life, cultural identity, and well-being. They have a negative view of tourists, perceiving them as intrusive. They may feel alienated or threatened by tourists' presence and may avoid interacting with them whenever possible.

Stakeholders' response

Table 3: Summary of stakeholders'

Stakeholder Segment	Attributes/ Themes	Social Exchange Theory
Supportive Stakeholders	Economic benefits, job creation, foreign exchange earnings	Supportive stakeholders promote tourism as a means of facilitating a positive social exchange between tourists and local businesses. They emphasise the economic benefits derived from increased tourist activity, reinforcing their support for tourism development.
Concerned Stakeholders	Negative impacts on environment, culture, and residents' quality of life	Concerned stakeholders advocate for a balanced social exchange in tourism, recognizing the importance of addressing environmental and social concerns to ensure sustainable development.
Ambivalent Stakeholders	Mixed feelings towards over-tourism, uncertainty about the best course of action	Ambivalent stakeholders navigate conflicting perspectives on tourism, grappling with the complexities of balancing economic benefits with environmental and social considerations.
Resistant Stakeholders	Opposition to over-tourism, prioritisation of residents' well-being and cultural heritage	Stakeholders resist engaging in a social exchange with tourists, prioritising the protection of their local cultural identity and natural resources. They advocate for stricter regulations and controls on tourism development to safeguard residents' interests and preserve local heritage.

Based on stakeholder responses, several distinct groups within the stakeholders involved in the tourism industry in Mombasa can be identified. Supportive stakeholders largely dismiss the concept of over-tourism, viewing it as a media fabrication or an exaggeration by environmental and civil rights activists. They emphasize the economic benefits of tourism, such as job creation and foreign exchange earnings, and argue that there is still ample space for further tourism development. These stakeholders prioritise marketing efforts believing that the region's tourism sector is underutilised. They advocate for increased security measures to protect tourists and promote a positive image of the destination, urging the government to do more to market Mombasa as a tourism destination. (TO1) Concerned stakeholders acknowledge the potential negative impacts of over-tourism on the environment, local culture, and residents' quality of life. They express scepticism about the sustainability of current tourism practices and caution against overdevelopment. These stakeholders advocate for a more balanced approach to tourism management, emphasising the need to address residents' concerns and mitigate environmental and social impacts. (GS 3) Ambivalent stakeholders exhibit mixed feelings toward overtourism and its implications. They recognise both the benefits and drawbacks of tourism but remain uncertain about the best course of action. These stakeholders may lack a clear stance on over-tourism but acknowledge the importance of sustainable tourism practices. They may support initiatives aimed at preserving cultural heritage and minimising environmental degradation while still seeking to capitalise on tourism opportunities. Over-tourism is seen as a conflicting issue for those who do not fully understand the term. (TO2) Resistant stakeholders are largely opposed to the idea of over-tourism and its associated impacts. They express frustration with the prioritisation of tourism development over residents' well-being and cultural heritage. These stakeholders advocate for stricter regulations on tourism development and greater community involvement in decision-making processes. They emphasise the need to protect local resources and cultural identity from the negative effects of over-tourism. For tourists, overtourism results in overcrowded attractions, diminished enjoyment, and the degradation of the natural and cultural environments they come to experience. (ES 10). The stakeholder further explains that overtourism can disrupt local communities, lead to increased living costs, and erode cultural heritage. The strain on infrastructure and public services often reduces the quality of life for residents and creates tension between locals and tourists. (ES 10). The stakeholder responses highlight divergent perspectives within the tourism industry in Mombasa, with varying degrees of support for overtourism and its management. Effective collaboration and communication among stakeholders are essential to address the complex challenges posed by tourism growth while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the destination.

Discussion

The results of the resident and stakeholder responses in Mombasa reveal diverse perspectives on overtourism, reflecting varying levels of social exchange within the community. The social exchange theory offers frameworks for understanding these dynamics and their implications for tourism management. Comprehensive tourism education ensures that stakeholders understand their roles, responsibilities, and the potential impacts of tourism (Acha-Anyi et al., 2021). Supportive residents



emphasise the economic benefits of tourism, perceive tourism as a source of economic growth and prosperity, reinforcing their emotional bonds with the industry and its stakeholders (Sciarelli & Mario, 2013). Concerned residents, on the other hand, express anxieties about the negative impacts of tourism on the environment, culture, and quality of life. Their concerns stem from a sense of belonging with the community's natural and cultural heritage, leading them to advocate for sustainable tourism practices that prioritise environmental conservation and cultural preservation (Andereck & Vogt, 2006). Ambivalent and resistant residents may experience conflicting emotions and loyalties regarding tourism development. While they may recognise the economic benefits of tourism, they also harbour reservations about its potential drawbacks. Social exchange theory posits that individuals engage in social interactions based on the expectation of reciprocity and mutual benefit (Blau, 1964). In the context of Mombasa's tourism industry, stakeholders' attitudes towards overtourism are shaped by their perceptions of the costs and benefits associated with tourism development. Supportive residents perceive tourism as a favourable exchange, where the benefits of economic growth and employment outweigh the costs of environmental degradation and cultural change. They engage in positive interactions with the tourism industry, expecting to receive rewards such as job opportunities and improved infrastructure in return (Gursoy et al., 2002). Concerned residents, however, perceive tourism as a negative exchange, where the costs of environmental degradation and social disruption outweigh the benefits of economic growth. They blame the increased cost of renting houses on increased tourism that has placed more demand for short-stay accommodation. They engage in critical interactions with the tourism industry, seeking to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism development and ensure a fair exchange that prioritises community well-being (Kim et al., 2018). Ambivalent and resistant residents may engage in ambivalent or negative interactions with the tourism industry, depending on their perceptions of the balance between costs and benefits. They may seek to renegotiate the terms of the exchange by advocating for stricter regulations or greater community involvement in decision-making processes (Andereck et al., 2005).

Supportive stakeholders in Kenya typically advocate for tourism development due to its economic benefits, such as job creation and foreign exchange earnings. This perspective aligns with findings that emphasise the importance of economic incentives in fostering stakeholder support for tourism initiatives (Yuningsih et al., 2022). This group underscores the necessity of a balanced social exchange that prioritises sustainable development, advocating for practices that protect local resources and community well-being (Lemy et al., 2019). Their concerns resonate with the broader discourse on overtourism, which has prompted critical discussions about the sustainability of tourism practices and the need for regulatory frameworks to mitigate adverse effects (Fyall & Garrod, 2019). Ambivalent stakeholders represent a more nuanced perspective, grappling with the complexities of tourism's dual nature, and its potential for economic gain versus its environmental and social costs. This group often seeks adaptive strategies that can reconcile conflicting interests, advocating for a more informed understanding of tourism's impacts (Fletcher et al., 2019). The ambivalence of these stakeholders highlights the necessity for ongoing dialogue and education to foster a more cohesive approach to tourism development that considers diverse viewpoints (Burrai et al., 2014). Lastly, resistant stakeholders actively oppose overtourism, prioritising the protection of their cultural heritage and the well-being of local residents. This group often calls for stricter regulations to control tourism growth, reflecting a deep-seated concern for maintaining local identity and environmental integrity (Rachmawati & Anjana, 2021). Their resistance is rooted in the belief that unchecked tourism can lead to irreversible damage to both the community and its cultural resources, necessitating a re-evaluation of tourism policies to ensure they align with the values and needs of local populations (Gutierrez et al., 2020). Stakeholder participation is important in enhancing tourist satisfaction and improving the quality of life for local communities and acts as a key foundation for sustainable tourism development (Pranita et al., 2022).

Recommendations limitations, and future research

The concept of managing overtourism through collaborative governance is crucial, as it incorporates multi-stakeholder platforms that unite local communities, government agencies, tourism businesses, and civil society organisations, ensuring a wide range of perspectives are integrated into tourism planning and management processes, as noted by Gössling et al. (2020). Complementing this approach, visitor management strategies recommended by Hall (2018), such as implementing carrying capacity limits, time-ticketing systems for popular attractions, and zoning regulations, help distribute tourist flows evenly throughout the city. Additionally, cultural preservation activities not only serve to enhance the tourist experience but foster a sense of pride and ownership among local residents through the development of initiatives like heritage trails, cultural festivals, and incentives for traditional craftsmanship, as explored by Richards & Munsters (2018). Engaging stakeholders in the decision-making process can enhance the sustainability of tourism initiatives. Research indicates that stakeholder management significantly contributes to the sustainability of community-based tourism, which is vital in regions like Mombasa where local culture and environment are at stake (Rono et al., 2018). Implementing sustainable tourism practices is paramount to mitigating the negative impacts of overtourism. This includes promoting eco-friendly accommodations, encouraging responsible tourist behaviour, and supporting local businesses that prioritise sustainability. The enhanced Regional Tourism Sustainable Adaptation Framework can be applied to Mombasa to address climate change vulnerabilities and promote sustainable pathways for tourism development (Njoroge et al., 2018). Additionally, integrating sustainability indicators into tourism planning can help monitor and evaluate the environmental, social, and economic impacts of tourism activities. Government agencies ought to take the lead in creating and financing educational programs designed for the local community. These initiatives should encompass basic tourism studies, emphasize its beneficial effects, and offer training on how to launch and operate tourism enterprises. Furthermore, the programs should aim to equip participants with crucial customer service skills to improve their effectiveness in the tourism industry. (Thulile et al., 2018)



Effective crisis management strategies are essential for maintaining the resilience of the tourism sector in Mombasa. This includes developing robust communication strategies to manage public relations and reputation during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Mukolwe et al., 2023). Hotels and tourism operators should invest in crisis communication training and establish protocols that allow for quick responses to emerging challenges. Communities prefer that tourism planners and stakeholders involve them in the development of tourism in order to reap positive economic benefits from tourism activities (Goliath, et al., 2018). Efforts should be made to promote authentic cultural experiences that benefit local communities, such as traditional performances and crafts. However, it is essential to ensure that these cultural expressions are not commodified in ways that undermine their authenticity (Otieno et al., 2021). The local government should develop and enforce regulations that manage tourist numbers and protect sensitive areas from overexploitation. This may include implementing visitor caps in high-traffic areas, promoting off-peak tourism, and enhancing infrastructure to support sustainable tourism practices. A comprehensive tourism policy that aligns with sustainable development goals can guide Mombasa's tourism sector towards a more resilient and equitable future. Establishing a system for monitoring and evaluating tourism impacts is essential for adapting strategies over time. This includes collecting data on visitor numbers, economic contributions, and environmental impacts to inform decision-making. Utilising a participatory approach in monitoring can enhance community involvement and ensure that local voices are heard in the evaluation process (Pyke et al., 2018). Meanwhile, the implementation of environmental conservation measures including waste management programs, the promotion of renewable energy, and sustainable transportation options protects and maintains the long-term viability and allure of natural assets. Community empowerment is also pivotal, investing in capacity building enables local communities to directly benefit from tourism revenues by equipping them with the necessary skills and resources for tourism entrepreneurship. Furthermore, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impacts of tourism are essential. Regular assessments, as discussed by Fredline & Faulkner (2000), help adapt management strategies to remain sensitive to the evolving needs of residents and the environment. Limitations included not being able to gather data from other areas of the wider Mombasa County as well as a small sample size. Future research could focus on conducting rigorous impact assessments to evaluate the socio-economic and cultural effects of overtourism in Mombasa. This could involve measuring indicators such as job creation, income distribution, environmental degradation, and cultural heritage preservation.

Conclusion

The study reveals diverse perspectives among residents and stakeholders in Mombasa regarding overtourism. While some individuals perceive tourism as a significant economic opportunity, others express concerns about its negative impacts on the environment, culture, and community well-being. The study underscores the significance of Social Exchange Theory in shaping residents' and stakeholders' attitudes towards overtourism. The findings will assist in recognising the effects of tourism on local communities and ecosystems and in creating strategies to alleviate these impacts. Moreover, researching overtourism will guide the development of sustainable tourism models that prioritise the well-being of both tourists and local residents. Overall, examining overtourism in Mombasa and other destinations in Africa can enhance our comprehension of the intricate relationship between tourism and sustainable development. The findings highlight the importance of considering the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental context of Mombasa when addressing overtourism. Local factors such as unemployment rates, cultural heritage, and infrastructure development play a crucial role in shaping residents' and stakeholders' responses. Overtourism poses significant challenges to Mombasa, including environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and social inequalities. The study underscores the importance of adopting sustainable tourism management strategies that balance economic interests with environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and community well-being. Collaborative efforts involving residents, stakeholders, and policymakers are essential for addressing overtourism effectively. In conclusion, understanding the complex dynamics of overtourism in Mombasa requires a multifaceted approach that considers diverse perspectives, theoretical frameworks, and contextual factors. By addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities presented by overtourism, Mombasa can strive towards sustainable tourism development that benefits both residents and visitors while preserving its unique cultural and natural heritage.

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