Challenges Facing the Development of Cultural Tourism in Tanzania: A Case of Mto Wa Mbu, Monduli Council

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Cultural tourism in Tanzania, particularly in Mto wa Mbu Ward within the Monduli Council, presents significant opportunities for community engagement and economic development. However, various challenges hinder the effective growth of this sector. This study aims to identify and analyze the key obstacles that are facing development of cultural tourism in Mto wa Mbu, which including inadequate infrastructure, limited marketing efforts, cultural commodification, and environmental concerns. By examining these challenges, the study underscores the need for strategic interventions that can enhance the sustainability and authenticity of cultural tourism experiences in the Monduli council. The study employed the interview method as the primary qualitative tool, complemented by questionnaires to gather quantitative data. This dual approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand. The researcher utilized purposive sampling as the main

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technique to select respondents directly affected by the study, supplemented by simple random sampling to ensure a broader representation. The findings emphasize the importance of collaboration among local communities, government authorities, and tourism operators to develop a more robust cultural tourism framework. Furthermore, the study highlights the necessity for capacity building, improved resource allocation, and promoting responsible tourism practices that respect local cultures and ecosystems. Addressing these challenges will not only enhance the viability of cultural tourism in Mto wa Mbu but also contribute to the preservation of its rich cultural heritage, benefiting both residents and visitors alike. The study concludes with actionable recommendations and suggestions for further research to foster the development of cultural tourism in Monduli and Tanzania as a whole.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism, a growing sector in the global tourism industry, provides a unique opportunity for travellers to engage with the history, traditions, and customs of a particular destination, offering meaningful, authentic experiences. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2015), cultural tourism accounts for approximately 37% of all tourist trips worldwide. Cultural tourists may be partially or incidentally interested in cultural experiences or primarily motivated by them, often combining these cultural activities with wildlife safaris. Recent trends reflect a shift in travellers' preferences toward immersive and culturally diverse experiences, moving away from conventional mass tourism (Alawi et al., 2018; Howlader, 2016). The global cultural tourism market has shown steady growth, valued at USD 556.96 billion in 2021, with significant expansion expected over the next decade (Starčević et al., 2022). This increased interest in cultural experiences has amplified the importance of cultural tourism as a tool for promoting regional development and economic growth in various countries.

In Africa, cultural tourism is viewed as a critical asset that promotes local development and supports the conservation of cultural heritage. Many African nations, including Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, and Uganda, are increasingly utilizing cultural tourism to stimulate both rural and urban economies. However, African countries face unique challenges in developing this sector, such as inadequate infrastructure, limited financial support, and the need for greater training and exposure for local communities involved in tourism (Rotich, 2012; Martine, 2018) In Tanzania, cultural tourism has grown significantly since the 1990s, with community-based programs enabling local communities to manage and benefit from cultural tourism (Ichumbaki, 2017; Mgonja et al., 2015). Organizations like the Tanzania Tourist Board (TTB) and international partners have supported these initiatives, providing platforms for local enterprises to showcase their heritage through traditional dances, handicrafts, and community-led tours.

In Monduli Council in Tanzania, particularly Mto wa Mbu Ward represents a focal area for cultural and community-based tourism (CBT). This Council offers visitors a chance to experience local heritage through sites such as historical buildings, ethnic heritage sites, and traditional villages. The cultural tourism enterprises in Monduli council such as Mto wa Mbu cultural enterprise, along with other cultural enterprises like Monduli Juu cultural enterprises and Moivaro cultural enterprises, highlight the potential for cultural tourism to generate income, create jobs, and reduce poverty within local communities. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited financial resources, and lack of skilled manpower continue to hinder full development. Overcoming these challenges will require coordinated efforts among local communities, policymakers, and development partners to ensure sustainable growth in the cultural tourism sector, thereby safeguarding Monduli's rich cultural heritage and providing sustainable economic benefits for the community (Borowiecki & Castiglione, 2014; Giampiccoli & Mtapuri, 2020).

1.1 Destination Life Cycle Theory and Cultural Tourism Development

Raymond Vernon first introduced the theory in 1966, later expanded by Butler in 1980, who proposed a seven-stage model for destination

development: Exploration, Involvement, Development, Consolidation, Stagnation, Decline, and Rejuvenation. This model, also known as the Destination Life Cycle or Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC), describes how tourist destinations evolve through these phases based on visitor volume, destination capacity, and the interaction between hosts and guests (Stylidis, 2012).

In the early exploration stage, tourist numbers are low and tourists travel independently to destinations without established facilities, often having close interactions with residents (Butler, 1980; Choy, 1992). As the destination progresses to the involvement and development stages, local services expand, promotional efforts increase, and visitation rises, although the local role in tourism diminishes as larger businesses and foreign investments enter (Bittar, 2017). The consolidation phase sees the destination's economy becoming reliant on tourism as large hotels and businesses dominate, while in the stagnation stage, tourist numbers peak, leading to economic, social, and environmental issues. At this point, the destination may experience shifts in tourist types and popularity, choosing paths like rejuvenation or decline to reshape its tourism appeal (Cooper & Jackson, 1989; Butler, 1980).

This theory relates to cultural tourism as it highlights that, like any tourist destination, cultural tourism sites undergo multiple phases from initial discovery to possible decline, stressing the need for managed growth and the likelihood of encountering challenges without continuous innovation and investment. Cultural tourism, therefore, needs to advance through these stages to maintain sustainability and appeal (Butler, 1980; Plog, 1974).

1.2 The Development of the Cultural Tourism

The World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2015) reports that cultural tourism is on the rise globally, accounting for about 37% of all tourist journeys. This type of tourism allows travellers to engage with cultural experiences as either the primary reason for their trip or as a complementary activity. Many cultural tourists combine these experiences with other recreational pursuits, such as wildlife safaris, creating a multifaceted travel experience. Howlader (2016) observes that the current trend in tourism centers on an immersive exploration of a destination's culture, customs, and traditions.

Cultural tourism is uniquely positioned to attract visitors by showcasing a destination's cultural heritage, artistic expressions, and traditional practices, with the overarching goal of fostering sustainable economic growth (Richards, 2011). This form of tourism highlights the importance of creating avenues for tourists to experience a destination's distinctive cultural aspects. Strategies often focus on preserving and restoring historical sites, monuments, and artefacts and developing museums and cultural centers that authentically interpret the destination's heritage.

In this way, cultural tourism not only stimulates economic benefits but also serves an educational purpose, offering tourists insights into the history, artistry, and cultural values. The experience enriches visitors' understanding and appreciation of the local culture, while also emphasizing the significance of cultural preservation and sustainable tourism practices. Through these interactions, cultural tourism supports both the preservation of cultural identity and the economic vitality of local communities.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Monduli Council in Arusha Region, Tanzania, a location known for its rich cultural tourism potential. The Councilt's population, as of the 2022 census, stands at 227,585, comprising a balanced demographic of 104,742 males and 122,843 females (NBS, 2022). The focus is on three key cultural tourism enterprises: Mto wa Mbu Cultural Tourism Enterprises, Moivaro Cultural Tourism Enterprises, and Monduli Juu Cultural Tourism Enterprises, all contributing significantly to the region's cultural tourism appeal. These enterprises showcase Maasai cultural bomas, traditional age-set practices, and cultural artefacts, attracting both domestic and international tourists.

The study's population consists of 200 individuals, including local communities, tour guides, and cultural tourism coordinators. A sample size of 50 respondents was chosen, representing 25% of this population, which aligns with the sample size determination table by Krejcie and Morgan 1970 for a population range of 200 to 250. The sample was categorized into 30 community members, 15 tour guides, and 5 enterprise directors, selected through a combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling

ensured that specific roles like tourism directors and guides, crucial to the study's context, were included, while simple random sampling was used for community members to achieve a balanced representation of local perspectives.

The research approach was a mixed-methods design, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Quantitative data, analyzed using SPSS, provided numerical descriptions and were presented in charts and tables, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic coding, producing narratives that explained findings about the study's objectives. The research design, a case study approach, facilitated a focused examination of cultural tourism in Monduli, enabling a coherent sequence of data collection through questionnaires and interviews.

Ethical considerations were rigorously applied throughout the study. Permission was obtained from the University of Iringa (U.o.I) and local authorities, ensuring transparency and adherence to research regulations. Confidentiality and participant anonymity were maintained, and respondents were assured that the data collected was solely for research purposes. Additionally, the researcher acknowledged all sources to avoid plagiarism and engaged respondents respectfully, building rapport and fostering an environment of trust. This approach emphasized the researcher's commitment to ethical standards, ensuring the reliability and credibility of the research process and findings.

3. RESULTS

3.1 The Challenges Facing the Development of Cultural Tourism in Monduli Council

The study sheds light on the challenges impeding the development of cultural tourism in Monduli Council, with findings that underscore the importance of addressing management shortcomings, enhancing community knowledge, and securing financial stability. Tour guides, as essential stakeholders, point to specific issues, including poor management, limited awareness of cultural tourism, inadequate infrastructure, and language barriers. They reveal that local tourism enterprises struggle due to a lack of strategic planning and limited training, which hinders their ability to appeal to tourists and sustain operations.

Tour guides, primarily of limited educational backgrounds, emphasize the lack of skills and knowledge necessary for effective cultural tourism management. This aligns with studies by Wickes (2004) and Cole (2006), which highlight that insufficient local capacity and inadequate funding hamper community involvement in sustainable tourism. Respondents widely noted infrastructural inadequacies, such as poor internet connectivity and road conditions, which restrict access and connectivity crucial for tourism growth.

Language barriers emerged as another significant hurdle, as most tour guides lack proficiency in languages beyond English, affecting service quality for tourists who speak other languages. The seasonal nature of Tanzanian tourism compounds these challenges, with low visitor numbers during off-peak periods leading to revenue declines that restrict the sector's growth potential. Additionally, financial limitations prevent cultural tourism enterprises from scaling and investing in their operations, as emphasized by respondents who recognized the difficulty in obtaining sufficient capital for development.

Community members corroborated these findings, highlighting financial viability and skill deficiencies as central barriers. A lack of competitive differentiation among tourism products further heightens internal competition and undermines market growth. Management inefficiencies were also pointed out, where the absence of modern technology and insufficient stakeholder engagement restrict innovation. Moreover, limited community involvement in tourism-related activities points to an awareness gap that weakens local engagement and decision-making in tourism development, as supported by Gebeyaw's (2018) findings on community participation.

Interviews with Cultural Tourism Coordinators echo these points, emphasizing the pressing need for financial resources, international partnerships, and a diversified tourism product. Such diversity is critical in addressing competition from wildlife tourism and maintaining visitor interest. Addressing these challenges will require a multifaceted approach that includes management training, investment in infrastructure, and increased community involvement to harness the Council's cultural tourism potential.

*We are offering the same products, and there is no variation of products, hence it increases competition among ourselves, the issue of capital also is a challenge because what we get is not sufficient to invest in our initiatives, sometimes we have good plans of running big community-based projects but we fail to afford the prices due to shortage of capitals, also another thing is the highest interest of visitors in wildlife tourism than cultural tourism (*Cultural Tourism Director, 2024).

In summary, the study identified several key challenges to the development of cultural tourism in Monduli Council. A majority of community members (63.3%) cited financial viability issues, noting that many cultural tourism enterprises lack the stability required for growth and investment. Additionally, 66.7% of respondents highlighted inadequate skills among local tour guides, stemming from policies that prioritize ethnicity and language skills over comprehensive training. Poor management practices, including a lack of technology integration and stakeholder involvement, were also raised by 50% of participants. Furthermore, 60% felt that the local community's engagement in cultural tourism was insufficient, likely due to limited awareness and knowledge about the industry. These findings support prior research, such as that by Gebeyaw (2018), which also underscores financial limitations, skill deficits, and poor planning as significant obstacles to cultural tourism success.

4. DISCUSSION

The study's discussion centers on the development, challenges, and improvement strategies of cultural tourism in Monduli Council, focusing on three selected cultural tourism enterprises: Mto wa Mbu cultural tourism enterprise, Moivaro, cultural tourism enterprise and Monduli Juu cultural tourism enterprise that found in Monduli Council. Guided by three primary objectives, the study evaluated the growth of these enterprises in terms of commodification, conservation, and sustainability, assessed the challenges they face, and analyzed potential solutions for enhancing cultural tourism development in the Council.

The findings indicate that cultural tourism in Monduli Council has made considerable progress, particularly in commodification, conservation, and sustainability. Various cultural tourism products, such as agro-tourism, culinary activities, eco-tourism programs, handicraft workshops, volunteer opportunities, and tree-planting initiatives, reflect a diverse offering that meets both tourist interests and conservation efforts. These elements support the commodification of local culture while also fostering sustainable practices that help preserve cultural heritage and the environment. On the other hand, commodification has been presented as a threat to cultural authenticity. It seems that cultural tourism products, such as traditional performances, handicrafts, or even sacred rituals, risk becoming commodified to the point where they lose their original meaning and significance. From the cultural authenticity angle, it can be worried that cultural practices instead of being a source of pride and identity, are reduced to mere commercial transactions designed to satisfy tourist's expectations. This dilution of authenticity could result in a loss of cultural integrity, as traditions are altered, shortened, or simplified to fit within the demands of the tourism industry.

Despite these positive developments, the study identified several challenges that hinder the growth of cultural tourism in the study area. Poor management strategies emerged as a significant issue, compounded by limited knowledge of cultural tourism among stakeholders, language barriers, insufficient capital, and inadequate involvement of local community members. The lack of effective management affects operational efficiency, while limited cultural tourism knowledge and language barriers restrict communication and engagement with international tourists. Moreover, financial constraints prevent expansion and innovation within cultural tourism enterprises, and minimal community involvement limits the local impact and benefits of cultural tourism.

To address these challenges and promote sustainable growth in cultural tourism, the study suggests several key measures. Hiring more tourism experts could strengthen operational quality and guide the strategic development of cultural tourism activities In these cultural tourism enterprises, mostly they hire workers who are not well trained, and most of them have low education, currently, there are many tourism expertise with high tourism skills and are highly educated in tourism fields, hiring these tourism expertise from higher tourism institutes, highly qualified university and all tourism institutions will help to boost the development of these cultural tourism enterprises in managerial level to service providing level. Full participation of local communities is essential for fostering ownership and ensuring that cultural tourism benefits are

equitably shared. Providing job training to employees would enhance service quality, while government funding for young entrepreneurs interested in cultural tourism could stimulate new business ventures and local investment.

Infrastructure improvements, particularly in roads and internet connectivity, are essential for enhancing access and communication within Monduli Council. However, policy recommendations should be thoughtfully framed to address the varied stakeholders involved in cultural tourism development. Recommendations to state authorities could encompass policies fostering investment in education, culture, and infrastructure to create an enabling environment for tourism. Regional and district authorities might focus on integrating tourism into local development strategies and ensuring that resources are allocated effectively. Private enterprises should be encouraged to invest in sustainable tourism initiatives and partner with local communities to promote inclusive growth. At the community level, associations and interest groups could be empowered to preserve cultural heritage and engage actively in tourism activities, ensuring that the benefits are shared equitably. A coordinated effort among these stakeholders, including local businesses, government entities, and international partners, would significantly enhance the development and sustainability of cultural tourism in Monduli Council.

> *The challenges we face are insufficient capital, insufficient guides who can speak other international languages apart from English, and the reduction of cultural tourism demand especially in the Slow season, when variations of visitors; interests become a challenge, especially in service delivery (Cultural Tourism Director, 2024).*

Although tourism seasonality poses challenges, operators are advised to focus on product development and promotion during low seasons, as well as on staff training to prepare for peak periods. To strengthen management, CTEs should consider learning from more established tourism enterprises and seeking guidance from tourism experts to improve planning and operational efficiency. Involving community members in decision-making and benefit-sharing processes will also promote a more inclusive and sustainable approach to cultural tourism.

Overall, these recommendations highlight the importance of collaboration, education, and investment in infrastructure to address current limitations and foster a thriving cultural tourism sector in Monduli Council.

5. CONCLUSION

Consequently, the study has revealed that while cultural tourism development in Monduli Council shows promise, the performance levels of cultural tourism enterprises do not fully align with their plans and expectations. This discrepancy arises due to multiple challenges that affect the growth of these enterprises. Key issues include poor management strategies, limited knowledge of cultural tourism, and language barriers as the local community of Monduli Council speaks Swahili as their mother tongue language, this becomes the prominent challenge between the host-guest encounters, as they meet with different languages. insufficient capital, and a lack of active involvement from local community members. Addressing these challenges is essential for the growth and sustainability of cultural tourism in the Monduli Council these challenges can be addressed by the CTE management to be ready to learn from other CTEs that are a bit more developed. They should also hire tourism experts to help them in planning and managing their CTEs. Besides, the Management of CTEs should ensure that the local community members are well involved not only in terms of employment opportunities but also in decision-making and benefit sharing, this will increase positive perceptions of the local community members toward cultural tourism development. Furthermore, the local tour guides should learn different languages to create good communication skills and environments with the tourists. Multilingual skills are currently considered a very important element in tourism development; hence the local tour guide of these cultural enterprises should run with these diversifications to meet the tourist's satisfaction.

For practical action, it is recommended that cultural tourism enterprises (CTEs) make optimal use of their available resources while seeking diverse funding sources to enhance their operations.

For further research, it is suggested that similar studies be conducted in other regions to deepen understanding of cultural tourism challenges in different contexts. Future studies could investigate specific areas, such as the role of local communities in cultural tourism, the extent of community involvement, and the challenges faced by local tour guides. These insights would contribute to more effective strategies for

enhancing cultural tourism across diverse settings.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/127234