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Abstract

In the 21st century, sports events hosting has emerged as a strategic tool for enhancing tourism sectors in various destinations, including Kenya. Despite this, academic research on the viability of sports events hosting as a tourism product in Kenya has been limited. Therefore, this study aims to explore the influence of local community involvement in sports events hosting on tourism development in Uasin Gishu County, with a specific focus on the urban area of Eldoret and its metropolitan regions. The study's theoretical foundation is based on social exchange theory. The research design adopts a cross-sectional approach, with 552 respondents. The sample includes 384 locals, 152 sports tourists, six event managers, eight hotel managers, and two tourism county officials. Data collection involves questionnaires and interview schedules. Quantitative data is analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), employing descriptive and inferential analyses. Qualitative data undergoes text/content analysis, and its integration with quantitative findings is presented during the discussion. The study's findings reveal a positive and statistically significant relationship between local community involvement in hosting sports events and tourism development ($r=0.723$, $p=0.000$). Impressively, local community involvement accounts for 52.2% of the variability in tourism development. Based on these results, the study concludes that local community involvement significantly influences hosting sports events and is associated with regional tourism development. To optimize the benefits derived from hosting sports events, the study recommends adopting a local community-centered approach in managerial, policy, and marketing aspects. By incorporating macro-level involvement through community groups and individual participation, a more equitable distribution of benefits can be achieved, fostering tourism development.

Keywords: *Local community involvement, Sports events, Hosting, Tourism Development, Uasin Gishu County.*

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1.0 Introduction

Tourism development, often linked to an increase in capita GDP, well-being, and prosperity (Jackson, 2016), has been advocated since Truman's 1949 speech, which saw tourism as a catalyst for supporting underdeveloped areas in the economy (Potter et al., 2018, p.8). Agencies like the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and World Bank further promoted the concept of tourism as a "passport to development" to mitigate adverse effects on socio-cultural, economic, and environmental aspects (Sharpley, 2022). Nevertheless, the interlink between tourism and development remains a critical challenge, and is still considered a relatively young and emerging paradigm in the field of tourism (Andriotis, 2018; Torkington et al., 2020).

In the 21st century, sports events have significantly increased demand as tourist attractions worldwide. Events like the world cups, championships, and Olympic Games, have become powerful drivers of tourism, attracting various groups of people, including athletes, coaches, journalists, and spectators (WTO, 2019). These events generate substantial tourism businesses, such as transportation, accommodation, food services, and souvenir items. Several countries have successfully leveraged sports events hosting to attain tourism benefits, such as raising their profile, attracting long-term investment, and creating employment opportunities (Mulei & Muchemi, 2021). For instance, South Africa's hosting of the 2010 soccer World Cup significantly impacted its economic development, generating millions in GDP and benefiting low-income households through job creation (Aragao, 2015; Sport & Recreation South Africa, 2012).

Similarly, countries like Tunisia, Nigeria, and Egypt have hosted FIFA tournaments, leading to significant economic impacts and global visibility through media coverage (WTO, 2019). Kenya, known for its prowess in middle and long-distance running, has hosted various significant sporting events, and its athletes have achieved remarkable success in international competitions, such as the Tokyo Olympics (International Olympics Committee, 2020). The region of Uasin Gishu County, known for its high-altitude training facilities, has been a hub for athletes from Kenya and other countries, hosting events like the Eldoret City Marathon and The Kass Marathon.

The success of sports tourism development hinges on the cooperation of the local community, as active participation helps uphold local culture while decreasing negative impacts associated with event development (Zhou et al., 2017). Supporting sports events becomes more likely for the community when it brings socio-cultural, economic, and environmental benefits (Boonsiritomachai & Phonthanukitithaworn, 2019). Each sporting event is highly valued, as the residents participate actively or passively (Herbold et al., 2020). However, hosting sports events also comes with challenges, including political issues, corruption allegations, security concerns, and financial uncertainties (Bason & Grix, 2018). Events like the COVID-19 pandemic have also disrupted sports events worldwide. For example, the Kenya Table Tennis Association (KTTA) postponed the 2020 International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) Africa Top 16 Championships calendar in fear of the spread of COVID-19 (Kenya Table Tennis Association, 2020). Despite Kenya hosting several sports events (Magical Kenya, 2021), there is a lack of documentation on the impact of such events on the development of Kenya's tourism sector. Therefore, this paper explores how sports events, as a branding-identity tool involving locals, and overcoming challenges, shape tourism development in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. By understanding these aspects, sports events hosting can be effectively packaged as a viable tourism product, benefiting the local community and the tourism industry.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Tourism in Kenya is a promising economic sector. However, its volatility nature, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, insecurity, corruption, negative travel advisories, and internal conflicts, has forced the Kenyan government, through the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, to always be on the lookout as the industry is "a shy goose" (Kelleher, 2019). The Kenyan government has therefore devised measures, institutional frameworks, and policy documents to foster the industry's stability, development, and diversification of its products (Government of Kenya, 2017). For example, through the Revised 2021 Kenyan Tourism Strategy (2022), the advent of sports events hosting is at the heart of the product diversification strategy. Anchored on The Sports Act (2013), the government envisioned a Kenya where sports events are "for recreation, drug-free, managed properly, accommodative, pampered with fully-equipped facilities, and to be used for branding Kenya as a signature destination" (Sports Act, 2013). However, in a 2018 government report titled *Sector Plan for Sports, Culture and The Arts*, sports events were found to be marred by inadequate budgetary allocations, doping risks, neglected local community stakeholders' involvement, and expensive doping tests due to the nation lacking an accredited World Anti-doping Agency (WADA) laboratory (Government of Kenya, 2018).

Despite being ignored as a viable tourism product, various studies have examined how sports events hosting can harness tourism development (Chen et al., 2021; Martin Gannon et al., 2021; Rastrollo-Horrillo & Navarrete, 2020). For example, a case study in Korea by Li et al. (2021) finds Chuncheon locals as catalysts for tourism development, discouraging the government's predefined roles as they make locals passively involved. Mikkonen and Lahovuuo (2020) found that organized sporting events are a potential branding technique, although destination managers do not fully advocate for them. The above studies show the potential of sports events and hosting in promoting tourism development, despite narrowing their focus on developed states using mega or organized events as case studies, which cannot be generalized in Kenya. Therefore, the current paper sought to close these gaps by examining how local community is involved in the hosting of sports events and the subsequent influence on tourism development in Uasin Gishu County.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Concepts: Tourism Development and Sports Events Hosting

The relationship between sports events, hosting, and tourism has a long history, dating back to ancient times with events like the Olympic Games (Wickramaratne & Kumari, 2016). However, this connection is still in its early stages as people increasingly recognize sports and tourism's health and recreational benefits (Gitari, 2016). Sports events have become a significant and growing part of the tourism industry, encompassing various individual and multi-sport events (Njoroge et al., 2017). Leveraging these events can catalyze tourism development, primarily when focusing on destination branding, infrastructure development, and other economic and social advantages (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2019).

Modern sports events can be classified into two main categories. The first comprises complex mega/significant sports events, such as the FIFA World Cup, Paralympics Games, Olympic Games, IAAF World Championships, and Rugby World Cup. The second category includes smaller-scale sports events like regular-seasonal tournaments, domestic competitions, international sporting fixtures, soccer, inter-university games, marathons, and swimming (Margaritis et al., 2017). Sports events are crucial in rejuvenating and strategically positioning destinations to boost tourism development through their event portfolios (Ziakas, 2023). Mega sports events, in particular, hold

significant potential in the sports tourism market, generating economic opportunities when destination branding, and infrastructure development are effectively utilized. Nevertheless, it is essential to consider that while sports events can bring numerous benefits to a destination in terms of tourism, they may also lead to over-tourism, causing negative impacts like environmental pollution, economic challenges, and overpopulation, for small businesses facing competition from larger enterprises (Milano et al., 2019). Therefore, leveraging these events can be advantageous for destinations, but addressing potential drawbacks, such as over-tourism, is essential to ensure sustainable and balanced tourism growth.

2.2 Local Community and Their Involvement in Sports Events Hosting and Tourism

Sports tourism development has been extensively examined concerning its impact on the community. For example, González-García et al. (2018) studied residents' perceptions of sports tourism effects. They found that positive attitudes towards tourism development, particularly in the sports sector, contributed to favorable perceptions. Boonsiritomachai and Phonthanukitithaworn (2019) focused on residents' support for sports events tourism in Chonburi's Beach City. They used structural equation modeling and recommended employing a triple-bottom-line framework involving locals to achieve local support for sports tourism development. However, while these studies shed light on local perceptions and support for sports tourism, they do not comprehensively understand the specific roles locals can play in hosting sports events.

Further, in a study by Li et al. (2021) on the Chuncheon Puppet Festivals in Korea, it was found that prioritizing locals during event planning enhances the event experience due to cultural exchanges facilitated by their involvement. These findings align with previous research by Thetsane (2019), who emphasized the importance of involving the local community in tourism policy development to avoid top-down approaches. Nonetheless, a notable gap in the literature is the lack of precise analysis regarding the extent of local involvement and their specific roles in decision-making processes related to hosting sports events, including the bidding process, especially in developing countries like Kenya (Herbold et al., 2020). Therefore, further research is needed, employing qualitative and quantitative methods, to address this gap and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the community's involvement in hosting sports events.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Social exchange theory, proposed by Homans in 1958, is a comprehensive framework that integrates behavioral, sociological, and psychological perspectives to explain the dynamics of stability and social change through negotiated exchanges (Homans, 1958). This theory has been applied to understand the objectives and implications of tourism development (Abujamous et al., 2019). Specifically, in sports events, the theory explores the mutual relationships between sports events and tourism development, highlighting the potential for significant benefits. Nicolaides (2015) suggests that when the various components of sports events are well-organized and coordinated, the anticipated value for tourism development can be substantial. Notably, this theory does not assume self-profit maximization or place individual behavior as the central focus of attention (Thomas & Gupta, 2021). Instead, the emphasis lies on the analysis of exchanges, which illustrates the behavior and participation of tourists and locals in the sports tourism exchanges.

3.0 Methodology

The study took place in Uasing Gishu County, focusing on the urban and peri-urban areas of Eldoret town. This location was selected due to its high altitude, making it an ideal environment for training

long and middle-distance runners. Furthermore, the presence of the Kipchoge Keino Stadium, sports clubs, and training grounds at the University of Eldoret, hosting both local and international events like football, rugby (Sepetuka Sevens), and the prestigious Eldoret City Marathon, provided ample opportunities for sports-related research (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019). With a population of 1,163,186 people and covering an area of 2955 km², Uasing Gishu County is divided into six sub-counties, namely Turbo, Kapseret, Soy, Kesses, and Moiben (KNBS, 2019).

The study employed a cross-sectional research design, effectively gathering large volumes of data for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. This design proved suitable as it ensured unbiased data collection from all cases, minimizing potential manipulation of variables and offering an accurate assessment of relationships (Bryman et al., 2015). Qualitative data was obtained through interviews (N=14) with County tourism officials, hotel managers, and event organizers. At the same time, content analysis helped identify relevant themes and provided in-depth insights into the study's variables. Additionally, quantitative data analysis allowed for the triangulation of two data collection and analysis methods, mitigating potential research biases associated with relying solely on one technique (Askarian et al., 2015).

Sample Size Determination and Sampling Procedures

The study targeted various groups of respondents, including locals residing in Eldoret's urban area [378,000] (KNBS, 2019), sports tourists who visited the sports events during the field study (248), key informants from county tourism officials (2), event organizers (8), and hotel managers (6) (Government of Uasin Gishu County, 2022) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Target Population

Target Group	Targeted Population
Locals	378, 000
Sports tourists	248
County tourism officials	2
Event organizers	8
Hotel managers	6

This study employed Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula to determine the appropriate sample sizes for residents and sports tourists. The formula, as presented below, aided in calculating the required sample size.

$$s = (X^2 NP(1 - P)) / (d^2 (N - 10 + X^2P(1 - P)))$$

Where s= required sample size, X²=table value for Chi-square for 1 degree of freedom as a desired confidence level (3.841), N= the population size, P= the population proportion (assumed to be 0.050 providing maximum population, d= the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (0.05).

Therefore $s = \frac{3.841^2 \cdot 378000 \cdot 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2(378000-1)+3.841^2 \cdot 0.5(1-0.5)} = 384$ local community members

$$s = \frac{3.841^2 \cdot 248 \cdot 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2(248-1)+3.841^2 \cdot 0.5(1-0.5)} = 152 \text{ sports tourists}$$

For the quantitative data collection, a sample size of $n=536$ was considered, consisting of 384 residents and 152 sports tourists. Additionally, input was obtained from all key informants ($n=16$) for the qualitative data collection. Consequently, the overall sample size for the study encompassed 552 respondents, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample size

Target group	Targeted Population	Sample size	Sampling Method
Locals	378, 000	384	Krejcie and Morgan Table
Sport athletes	248	152	
Totals	378248	536	
Key informants			Census
County tourism officials	2	2	
Event organizers	8	8	
Hotel Managers	6	6	
Totals	16	16	

This study employed a combination of sampling techniques to gather data from various respondent groups. The sampling approach for locals and sports tourists involved using a simple random sampling technique, wherein every third tourist or local member encountered during the field study was selected (Rono et al., 2018). This method ensured that all respondents had an equal chance of being selected, contributing to the representativeness of the data. A census and simple random sampling were deemed appropriate for county tourism officials, event organizers, and hotel managers, who constituted a smaller population (Saunders et al., 2016). The census approach allowed for the inclusion of all members within these groups, while simple random sampling ensured unbiased representation.

Moreover, purposive sampling was utilized to select critical informants from event organizers and sports facility managers. This targeted sampling method was employed because these individuals possess specialized knowledge and insights crucial to the study's objectives. By employing a combination of sampling techniques tailored to the characteristics of each respondent group, the study aimed to obtain comprehensive and well-rounded data, enhancing the reliability and validity of the research findings.

Pretesting, Validity, and Reliability

In this study, a pretesting process was conducted to ascertain the accuracy and reliability of the research instruments. The pretesting involved twenty respondents, ten locals and ten athletes, who participated in the questionnaire pretesting. Additionally, six respondents were engaged in the interview schedule pretesting: one county official, three event organizers, and two hotel managers. The pretesting was conducted in person to observe the participants' reactions and identify potential instrument errors (Hilton, 2017). It is important to note that the pretesting respondents were not included in the study sample.

To establish the validity of the research instruments, content, and internal validity tests were utilized. Furthermore, the study employed participatory research, where the input of study supervisors was sought to shape the tone and selection of appropriate questionnaire questions,

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enhancing the study's validity (Zohrabi, 2013). The questionnaire and interview variables were adapted from previously validated measures used in published studies. Regarding the reliability tests, internal consistency reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha to assess the study's constructs. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), a Cronbach's alpha value of at least 0.7 is recommended as a reliable level of consistency. The study's findings, as presented in Table 3, indicated that all local community involvement ($\alpha=0.706$) and tourism development ($\alpha=0.722$) variables were reliable, with an overall reliability of 0.894 for the 16 sub-variables used, thus confirming their reliability.

Table 3: Reliability Results

Construct	No. of sub-variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Verdict
Local community involvement	8	.706	Reliable
Tourism development	8	.722	Reliable
Overall Reliability	16	.894	Reliable

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process for this study followed several steps. First, the study proposal was approved by the Graduate School of Kenyatta University, and a research license was obtained from National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), allowing for field study within 12 months. Two research assistants were then recruited and trained in ethical data collection procedures. Before administering questionnaires, the researcher obtained respondents' consent to ensure their participation agreement. The data collection period occurred from April 27th to May 3rd, 2023. In addition to questionnaires, interviews were conducted with the key informants. These interviews took place through face-to-face interactions and Zoom calls, providing flexibility for both the researcher and interviewees, considering their busy schedules. Detailed notes were taken during the interviews to capture qualitative data, which were later organized thematically and integrated with the quantitative findings. Quantitative data collected from tourists and local community members were cleaned and coded using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). This process aimed to facilitate easy analysis. After ensuring missing data was absent, descriptive analyses were performed (encompassing standard deviations, frequencies, percentages, and means). The inferential analysis examines relationships and correlations between variables, such as correlation and simple regression. Qualitative data from interviews with key informants were carefully recorded and transcribed for analysis. A content analysis was conducted to identify and integrate thematic elements with the quantitative results before reporting the findings.

In summary, the study utilized a regression model with the formula: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1\chi_1 + \epsilon \dots$ (Eq.1). Here, Y represents tourism development, β_0 denotes the constant term, β_1 signifies the coefficients (from the regression model), χ_1 refers to local community involvement, and ϵ represents the error term.

Test of Assumptions

After cleaning and coding the data, diagnostic tests were conducted as a prerequisite for regression analysis. The first test focused on data normality, which is crucial for parametric analyses like linear regressions. In this study, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to assess normality, with a significance value of 0.05 indicating data normality. Table 4 shows that the predictor and predicted variables in the study had significance values exceeding 0.05, confirming data normality.

Table 4: Normality Test Results

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Local community involvement	0.041	375	.183	.982	375	.311
Tourism development	0.045	375	.069	.988	375	.671

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The second test examined multicollinearity, which assesses the correlation among independent variables. Tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values are commonly used indicators to identify multicollinearity. In this study, values greater than 0.1 (for tolerance) and 10 (for VIF) suggest the presence of multicollinearity. Table 5 indicates that the independent variable (Local community involvement) had tolerance values of 0.636>0.1 and a VIF value of 1.571<10, indicating the absence of multicollinearity.

Table 5: Collinearity Statistics

Independent Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Local community involvement	.636	1.571

The last test, linearity, compared the means of the dependent and independent variables. Table 6 shows a significant deviation (0.157 > 0.05) between tourism development and local community involvement, suggesting a linear relationship between these variables.

Table 6: Linearity Test

ANOVA Table				Sig.
Tourism development * local community involvement	Between Groups	(Combined)		.000
		Linearity		.000
		Deviation ifrom iLinearity		.157

These results confirm the presence of linearity, supporting the use of a linear regression model to examine the direct impact of local community involvement in sports events hosting on tourism development. Therefore, a linear regression model was employed, considering eight (8) sub-variables associated with the independent variable.

Logistical and Ethical Considerations

In conducting this study, the data collection process involved recruiting and training research assistants on April 26th, 2023. The training encompassed essential aspects, including ensuring participant confidentiality, obtaining informed consent, and employing appropriate data collection techniques. To facilitate the research process, a comprehensive budget schedule was prepared to outline anticipated expenses, while a well-structured research schedule was established to determine the timeframe for data collection. Adhering to ethical guidelines, the field data collection occurred from May 5th to June 18th, 2023. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Participants were provided with a clear and thorough explanation of the research's purpose and significance. Furthermore, measures were put in place to prevent any misconduct, such as data falsification or fabrication, ensuring the credibility of the findings. To safeguard participant anonymity, responses were anonymized using study codes instead of personal information, thereby maintaining confidentiality. Additionally, participants were assured that the research was solely conducted for academic purposes, devoid of any financial interests. Proper approval and authorization were obtained from the university's graduate school and the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), aligning with established ethical guidelines for data collection).

4.0 Findings and Discussions

This study evaluated respondents' agreement regarding different facets of local community involvement in sports event hosting using a 5-Likert scale comprising eight statements denoted as LCI-1 to LCI-8. Detailed descriptive statistics, encompassing standard deviation, means, and percentages, are presented in Table 7 to understand the respondents' perspectives on the matter comprehensively.

The findings presented in Table 7 indicate that a significant percentage of respondents (94.4%) agreed with the notion that local community members are actively involved in sports event hosting within Uasin Gishu County, while only 2.1% disagreed and 3.5% remained neutral (mean=1.31, standard deviation=0.680). Furthermore, 90.1% of the participants acknowledged the involvement of locals in decision-making processes related to sports event hosting, with 4.8% expressing disagreement and 5.1% remaining neutral (mean=1.49, standard deviation=0.820). In terms of local participation in sporting activities, 89.3% of respondents agreed, 4.1% disagreed, and 6.4% were neutral (mean=1.49, standard deviation=0.846). A majority of the respondents (93.3%) also acknowledged that locals actively participate in hosting through staycations and Airbnb, while 2.4% disagreed, and 4.3% were unsure (mean=1.45, standard deviation=0.725).

Moreover, it was observed that 95.2% of respondents agreed that locals are utilized as advertisement agents during sports events hosting, while 3.5% disagreed, and 1.3% were uncertain (mean=1.39, standard deviation=0.760). The respondents also positively evaluated the locals' hospitality during sports events, with 95% expressing agreement (mean=1.39, standard deviation=0.759). Regarding economic opportunities, 77.6% of respondents agreed that locals are allowed to sell their products and services during sports events (mean=1.77, standard deviation=1.080). Additionally, a substantial proportion (93.6%) agreed that the community actively participates in policy formulation concerning sports event standards in Uasin Gishu County (mean=1.34, standard deviation=0.777).

Overall, the computed mean of 1.70 indicates a prevailing agreement among respondents regarding the role of local community involvement in hosting sports events. However, the overall standard deviation of 0.40 suggests variations in responses, as participants held diverse opinions on each statement. These findings underscore the significance of local community engagement in sports event hosting, indicating its positive impact on tourism development in Uasin Gishu County.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Local Community Involvement

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	$\bar{\chi}$	σ
LCI-1	77.1%	17.3%	3.5%	1.3%	0.8%	1.31	0.980
LCI-2	66.4%	23.7%	5.1%	4.3%	0.5%	1.49	.820
LCI-3	66.9%	22.4%	6.4%	2.9%	1.3%	1.49	0.846
LCI-4	65.3%	28.0%	4.3%	1.6%	0.8%	1.45	0.725
LCI-5	66.1%	29.1%	1.3%	1.9%	1.6%	1.44	0.760
LCI-6	70.7%	24.3%	1.6%	1.9%	1.6%	1.39	0.759
LCI-7	57.1%	20.5%	14.1%	4.8%	3.5%	1.77	1.080
LCI-8	78.1%	15.5%	2.1%	2.9%	1.3%	1.34	0.777
Average						1.6998	0.396

KEY: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, $\bar{\chi}$ =Mean, σ =Standard Deviation.

After conducting a descriptive analysis, the researchers proceeded with content analysis, employing a thematic approach to analyze the responses of hotel managers, county tourism officials, and event organizers. To maintain respondent anonymity, the individuals' names were coded as R01 to R14, corresponding to respondents one through fourteen. The analysis resulted in the identification of four key themes, as presented in Table 8. The study results indicated that local community involvement in sports events and hosting significantly impacted various aspects. Firstly, the local community played an active role in managerial functions and participated in essential policy formulations, ranking as the most prominent theme with six occurrences. Secondly, community members were actively engaged in the actual sports events and hosted tourists, highlighting the importance of their participation and interaction, as evidenced by four occurrences. Thirdly, the local community acted as valuable agents in marketing sports events and benefited through selling their services and products, with this theme appearing twice in the analysis. Lastly, the essence of the local community's hospitality towards tourists emerged as another noteworthy theme, appearing twice in the responses.

Table 8: Locals’ Involvement Themes from Interviews

Local Community Involvement Themes	County (N=14)
Decision-making and policy formulation	6
Sporting activities and hosting	4
Marketing and Selling products/services	2
Hospitality	2

These themes collectively emphasize the significance of local community involvement in sports events and hosting. It underscores their crucial role in decision-making, event participation,

marketing endeavors, and the overall impression of hospitality extended to tourists visiting the region. This level of involvement highlights the potential benefits and positive impacts that can be harnessed when communities actively participate in sports event hosting and tourism-related activities.

A tourism official from the County (R01) noted that:

“the tourism model in the county considers the local community hugely because they are key stakeholders in the whole process....majority have family members as athletes hence we can not ignore them.”

The observations align with the principles of 'social representation theory' (Höijer, 2011), wherein the local community perceives their involvement in such events as yielding more benefits, such as pride, rather than viewing it as opportunity costs. Consequently, community members engage in the event-hosting process actively or passively (Herbold et al., 2020). For instance, a notable illustration of this active involvement can be seen in the extensive participation of local communities during the bidding process for the 2022 Commonwealth Games. To optimize local community participation in sports event hosting, especially in the context of games, Johnston et al. (2021) propose utilizing targeted communication strategies to effectively engage as many locals as possible.

A hotel manager (R08) commented about locals being hospitable:

“...the hospitality of the locals has extended into hosting those attending games in their homes at a fee or the Airbnb. This is now competing with the same services offered in our hotels...”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Airbnb had already established its presence; however, its popularity among sports tourists surged as they combined the marketing flexibility of Airbnb with staycations following the resumption of major sporting events. Examples of such events include the Spanish Football League and the English Premier League, which were previously postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions (Buldú et al., 2020; Schumacher et al., 2021; Staley et al., 2021).

Inferential Statistics: Local Community Involvement and Tourism Development

This study employed a regression model to investigate the connection between local community involvement in sports event hosting and tourism development in Uasin Gishu County. The results, as presented in Table 9, reveal a positive correlation between local community involvement in sports event hosting and overall tourism development ($r=0.723$). This underscores the significance of engaging local communities in the planning and execution of tourism development initiatives, particularly in hosting sports events, as each destination possesses unique development frameworks. Notably, the emotional attachment of local community members to supporting sports event hosting emerges as a crucial factor contributing to the success of such events. Given this emotional investment, it is recommended that both the County government and National government prioritize the inclusion of local community perspectives in the planning and organization of sports events to ensure tremendous success and positive outcomes (Giango et al., 2022).

The regression model demonstrates that local community involvement in sports event hosting accounts for 52.2% of the variation in tourism development ($R^2=0.522$) within Uasin Gishu County. However, it is essential to recognize that other factors, beyond the scope of this study, contribute to the remaining 47.8% of variations in tourism development in the county.

Table 9: Model Summary

Std. ErrorChange Statistics									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change in R Square	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. Change
1	.723 ^a	.522	.521	.27174	.522	407.655	1	373	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Local Community Involvement									
b. Dependent Variable: Tourism Development									

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results presented in Table 10 reveals a statistically significant relationship between local community involvement in hosting sports events and tourism development in Uasin Gishu County. The obtained F-statistic of 407.655 and the associated probability value of 0.00 ($p < 0.05$) indicate the significance of the model. Consequently, the null hypothesis proposing that local community involvement in sports events hosting has no significant influence on tourism development in Uasin Gishu County was rejected.

Table 10: ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.103	1	30.103	407.655	.000 ^b
	Residual	27.544	373	.074		
	Total	57.647	374			
a. Dependent Variable: Tourism Development						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Local Community Involvement						

Furthermore, the analysis conducted in Table 11 showcases the regression coefficients for the model, revealing a noteworthy relationship between local community involvement in hosting sports events and tourism development in Uasin Gishu County ($\beta = 0.723$, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$). The results suggest a positive and statistically significant association, indicating that an increase in local community involvement by one-unit results in a corresponding 0.715-unit rise in tourism development within the county. Moreover, the t-test value of 20.2 signifies that the standard error related to the parameter exceeds 20.2 times the associated error, underscoring the substantial impact of local community involvement in the given context.

Table 11: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 (Constant)	.752	.062		12.149	.000	.630	.873
Local community involvement	.715	.035	.723	20.190	.000	.646	.785
a. Dependent Variable: Tourism development							

Therefore, the specific model for local community involvement in sports event hosting and the development of tourism is illustrated as follows:

$$Y=0.752+0.715 (\text{local community involvement in sports events hosting}) + \varepsilon_i. (Eq..2)$$

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the active involvement of the local community in hosting sports events has a positive impact on tourism development in Uasin Gishu County. These findings align with previous studies by Chang et al. (2020) and Rich et al. (2022), which also demonstrated that locals engage in sports events proactively, assuming roles as both "carriers of identity" for the destination and members of governance committees. Their active participation is instrumental in driving the achievement of tourism goals within the destination. Consequently, sports event hosting should be approached as an economic stimulus, wherein a diverse portfolio of events is created, incorporating the perspectives and insights of the local community to enhance and promote the destination's sports tourism experiences and offerings (Ziakas, 2023).

Test of Hypothesis

The study's primary objective was to examine the impact of local community involvement in hosting sports events on tourism development in Uasin Gishu County. This research sought to test the null hypothesis, positing that such involvement does not significantly influence regional tourism development. To investigate this, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted, and the decision to reject or accept the null hypothesis was based on a comparison between the calculated t-value and the critical value of 1.96. As presented in Table 11, the results indicated that the calculated t-value of 20.190 exceeded the critical value of 1.96, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Consequently, the study supported the alternative hypothesis, providing evidence of a positive association between local community involvement in hosting sports events and tourism development in Uasin Gishu County.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The development of tourism is crucial for economic growth in any destination. One significant factor contributing to tourism development is the active involvement of the local community in hosting sports events. The study findings suggest that the local community's participation in decision-making, policy formulation, hospitality towards tourists, and active engagement in event-related activities positively impact tourism development in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. To

enhance tourism development, it is recommended that a community-centered approach be adopted in sports event hosting. This entails actively involving the local community in event management, marketing, and policy implementation. Such inclusive involvement ensures a fair distribution of benefits from hosting sports events, particularly within the sports tourism subsector.

Looking to the future, research should explore the influence of technology on sports event hosting, specifically investigating event organizers' and hoteliers' perspectives on technology adoption in event management in Kenya. Additionally, further studies should delve into the specific aspects of local community involvement to better understand their impact on various facets of tourism development. The current study utilized a cross-sectional descriptive survey approach to examine the relationship between sports event hosting and tourism development in Uasin Gishu County. However, for a more comprehensive analysis of the study variables, future research could employ pure qualitative methodologies to gain deeper insights into the nuances of local community involvement and its implications for tourism development.

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