THE INFLUENCE OF PROFILLING RISKS ON DESTINATION RESILIENCE IN NAROK COUNTY'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Abstract: Tourism resilience has become an essential focus for sustaining the economic and environmental stability of regions dependent on tourism. This study evaluates the influence of crisis management strategies on destination resilience in Narok County, Kenya. The first objective examines the profiling of risks within the tourism industry and how they impact destination resilience. The study employs a mixed-methods approach to gather qualitative and quantitative data from key tourism stakeholders, including tour operators, conservancy managers, and hotel managers. A total of 212 questionnaires were distributed, yielding a response rate of 88%. The study findings found significant challenges, such as human-wildlife conflicts, environmental risks, and global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupt the sustainability of tourism in Narok County. Regression analysis results reveal a robust model (R^2 = 0.75, F = 22.56, $p < 0.000$) indicating that 75% of the variance in destination resilience is explained by identified risk factors. Natural disasters had the strongest positive influence on resilience (β = 0.73, $p < 0.000$), while political instability (β = -0.33, $p < 0.001$) and health risks (β = -0.14, $p = 0.05$) showed negative impacts. Human-wildlife conflicts (β = 0.39, $p = 0.002$) and infrastructure challenges (β = 0.12, $p = 0.046$) also emerged as significant factors. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating local community participation into crisis management strategies to create sustainable tourism destinations. By implementing structured risk assessment frameworks, Narok County can reduce vulnerabilities, improve its capacity to recover from crises, and enhance its competitive edge as a resilient tourism destination.

Index Terms - Tourism resilience, crisis management, risk profiling, Narok County, destination sustainability

Introduction

Tourism plays a crucial role in the economies of many countries by contributing significantly to their GDP. For example, in 2019, it generated USD 9,630 billion for the U.S. economy, representing 10.3% of its GDP (WTTC, 2022a). In Nepal, tourism contributed 6.7% to the GDP and accounted for 6.9% of all jobs (Birendra, Dhungana, & Dangi, 2021). Earnings from tourism between 2019 and 2021 boosted the economies of 48 third-world and middle-income countries by approximately USD 21 billion (Soken-Huberty, 2022). In Uganda, tourism created 522,000 jobs in 2012, contributing

9.0% to GDP, which helped reduce poverty by 70% (Adiyia, Vanneste, & Van, 2016). Similarly, in Kenya, the sector accounted for 8.6% of all jobs and 7.7% of the GDP in 2019 (Bitok, 2020; WTTC, 2022b).

Despite its benefits, the tourism industry has faced numerous crises, including bushfires, human-wildlife conflicts, droughts, floods, and cultural erosion due to globalization. Additionally, political instability, terrorist attacks, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic have further impacted the industry (Birendra et al., 2021; Xu, Zhong, Cheng, & Li, 2022). These crises damage the image of destinations, significantly reducing the benefits derived from tourism (Dube, Nhamo, & Chikodzi, 2021; Rotich, Makopondo, Kiprutto, & Barasa, 2020). For instance, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the U.S. lost USD 492.1 billion due to a sharp decline in international tourism (Bonham, Edmonds, & Mak, 2006). Similarly, in Prague, 30,000 international reservations were canceled after a major crisis, leading to a loss of millions of dollars (Filimonau, Dickinson, Robbins, & Reddy, 2011). In Africa, floods in South Africa damaged property worth millions, and in Kenya's Maasai Mara, wildfires, droughts, and population pressure on wildlife-preserved lands have reduced the numbers of the "Big Five," harming the destination's appeal (Dube et al., 2021; Rotich et al., 2020).

Resilience in tourism refers to a destination's capacity to adapt to change and persist despite challenges (Beirman, 2018). It is increasingly viewed as a pathway to achieving sustainability following environmental disasters (Dahles & Susilowati, 2015). Managing resilience in tourism destinations is central to sustainable tourism practices (Rittichainuwat et al., 2020). Resilient destinations and organizations can navigate crises while adopting adaptive measures and innovations in their operations (Beirman, 2018). Despite extensive research on tourism crises, the frequency and intensity of these crises continue to rise, requiring more dynamic and responsive management practices (Cartier & Taylor, 2020; Gretzel & Scarpino, 2018).

Stakeholders play a critical role in risk profiling and managing crises that impact tourism destinations (Adiyia et al., 2016; Birendra et al., 2021). They can be categorized into direct stakeholders, such as government, hotels, lodges, travel agencies, and tour operators, and indirect stakeholders, like the local community, whose involvement shapes a destination's attractiveness (Towner & Milne, 2017; Pandy & Rogerson, 2021).

Crisis management in tourism involves collaboration among stakeholders to develop strategies that help destinations cope with unexpected damaging events (Aldao, Blasco, Poch, & Palou Rubio, 2021). Crises may arise unexpectedly or from the unforeseen consequences of known risks (Zhong, Sun, Law, & Li, 2021). Effective crisis management can build sustainable tourism destinations if governments, operators, and locals collaborate to identify risks and address them before they escalate (Towner & Milne, 2017).

Risk profiling is a quantitative assessment of the dangers faced by a destination or organization (Muthoni, 2021). It assigns numerical values to vulnerabilities, providing an objective risk assessment (Asgary & Ozdemir, 2019; Insch, 2020). In tourism, risk profiling identifies threats such as wildlife poaching, human encroachment on national parks, and environmental degradation, all of which have severe consequences for developing countries (Asgary & Ozdemir, 2019). Collaborating stakeholders can effectively mitigate foreseeable risks and avert crises through proper emergency plans and policies, ensuring long-term destination resilience (Zhong et al., 2021; Asgary & Ozdemir, 2019; Pandy & Rogerson, 2021; Muthoni, 2021).

Kenya has faced numerous risks, including political instability, terrorism, natural disasters, and health issues. These events, such as the perennial floods and drought, have posed unprecedented challenges to stakeholders in the Maasai Mara tourist destination (Rotich et al., 2020). Narok County, home to the Maasai Mara, boasts various attractions, including wildlife, unique culture, and beautiful savannahs. Despite this, it continues to face challenges such as human-wildlife conflict, droughts, bushfires, and floods, all of which damage its image in global tourism markets (Rotich et al., 2020).

Despite efforts by local authorities and stakeholders to enhance the resilience of Narok's tourism industry, gaps remain in addressing these risks comprehensively. There is a need for a structured approach to crisis management, one that involves all stakeholders, including government agencies, local communities, and private sector players (Paraskevas et al., 2013). The absence of such a framework has led to increased vulnerability, with stakeholders often reacting to crises

rather than proactively preventing them. Therefore, this study aimed to profile the risks within Narok County's tourism industry and examine how they influence destination resilience. By understanding the nature of these risks and their potential impact, the study provides recommendations for improving the county's crisis management strategies to enhance its tourism resilience and attractiveness of the destination.

Literature Review

Concept of Resilient Destinations

Hartman's (2018) study in the Netherlands explored the concept of resilient destinations, defining resilience as the ability of a destination to endure disturbances while reorganizing itself to maintain its core function, structure, identity, and feedback mechanisms. This conceptual framework emphasized the importance of a destination's adaptability to disruptions while preserving its essential characteristics. Beirman (2018), in his study conducted in Thailand, broadened this perspective by categorizing resilience into various systems, including social, economic, ecological, and political. He emphasized that resilience is not merely about bouncing back from disturbances but also about the capacity to recover and return to normalcy amidst risks. Similarly, Filimonau and De Coteau (2020) conducted a study in Grenada, highlighting that resilience involves both robustness and flexibility. Their findings underscored the significance of building persistence in destinations, which enables them to adapt to uncertainties while continuing to function effectively.

These studies illustrate critical aspects of destination resilience from a global perspective, but they primarily focus on broader contexts. They underscore the need for local research to understand how specific destinations, such as those in Narok County, build and sustain their resilience. The current study aims to address this gap by examining the local context and evaluating the effectiveness of Narok County's tourism destinations in developing resilience.

Destination Management

Destination management is pivotal for ensuring long-term resilience in tourism destinations. Filimonau and De Coteau (2020) underscored that effective management practices---such as maintaining ecological balance, proper land use, and robust tourism infrastructure---are essential for sustaining destinations. Their study highlighted the importance of integrating ecological sustainability and infrastructure development into destination management to avoid overexploitation and degradation, which can undermine a destination's ability to recover from or adapt to disruptions.

Su et al. (2020) further emphasized the role of environmental sustainability in destination management. Their research in Yunnan Province illustrated that reforestation and habitat conservation are critical for maintaining a destination's attractiveness and functionality. Sustainable practices ensure that destinations remain viable in the long term by protecting natural resources and preventing environmental degradation. The study demonstrated that destinations with integrated sustainability efforts are better equipped to handle environmental disruptions and continue to attract tourists.

Beirman (2018) also highlighted the importance of sustained destination management in his study on Thailand. He found that destinations with well-maintained infrastructure and effective management strategies are more resilient and better able to handle crises. This research emphasized that continuous development and maintenance of tourism facilities, combined with responsible environmental stewardship, are crucial for enhancing resilience.

In the context of Narok County, sustainable management practices are particularly crucial due to its diverse wildlife and natural landscapes. Balancing tourism activities with wildlife conservation efforts is essential to prevent resource overexploitation and ensure environmental sustainability. Initiatives such as implementing wildlife conservation programs and involving local communities in these efforts can help mitigate the negative impacts of tourism. Additionally, developing eco-friendly tourism infrastructure and adopting responsible tourism practices contribute to the destination's long-term resilience.

Research gaps in this area include a lack of localized studies focusing on the specific management challenges and strategies applicable to regions like Narok County. While existing research provides general insights into sustainable management practices, there is limited empirical data on how these strategies are implemented in specific contexts. Furthermore, there is a need for research that examines the effectiveness of various management practices in balancing tourism and conservation goals within specific environmental and cultural settings.

Destination Preference by Tourists

Destination preference by tourists is a key indicator of a destination's resilience. Studies by Beirman (2018) and Chan, Nozu, and Zhou (2020) found that destinations demonstrating resilience through maintaining safety, environmental integrity, and effective stakeholder coordination tend to attract more tourists, even after crises. Beirman's research on Thailand revealed that tourists are more likely to choose destinations that have managed crises effectively and demonstrated a capacity to recover quickly. This is because resilient destinations project reliability and instill confidence in travelers.

Chan, Nozu, and Zhou (2020) highlighted that stakeholder collaboration is critical in ensuring a destination's resilience and attractiveness. Their study in Japan emphasized that destinations with strong coordination among local authorities, tourism operators, and community members are better positioned to maintain tourist confidence. Effective crisis management and transparent communication during and after crises are key to preserving a destination's reputation and appeal.

In Narok County, promoting the destination's resilience can enhance its appeal to tourists. For example, the Maasai Mara, known for its wildlife and natural beauty, can attract tourists by demonstrating its ability to manage environmental challenges like droughts and fluctuating wildlife patterns. Showcasing effective management of these challenges can boost the destination's attractiveness to tourists seeking secure and well-managed nature-based experiences.

However, there is a lack of empirical studies examining how tourists perceive and prioritize resilience factors in Narok County as a destination. While existing research provides general insights into tourist preferences for resilient destinations, there is limited data on how different resilience aspects, such as safety, environmental integrity, and stakeholder coordination, affect tourist choices in specific contexts. Additionally, there is a need for research that explores how localized resilience strategies impact tourist preferences and satisfaction, particularly in regions with unique environmental and cultural characteristics like Narok County.

Risk Profiling

Risk profiling is a critical assessment tool that helps stakeholders evaluate their willingness to engage with risks in a tourist destination. This process plays a significant role in enhancing destination resilience and management. Barone (2020) pointed out that individuals' capacity to handle risks substantially contributes to their resilience, enabling better resource allocation to meet goals while mitigating threats that could harm the destination's reputation (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2020b). Effective risk profiling has been shown to improve destination management, increasing competitiveness in the tourism market and making it essential in strategic planning.

Narok County faces several risks, including flooding, drought, and population pressure on key tourism assets such as natural reserves (Nampushi & Nankaya, 2020). Rotich et al. (2020) found that these crises have led to the depletion of key wildlife species, undermining the region's appeal as a tourist destination. The relationship between risks and destination competitiveness has been a recurrent theme in tourism literature, with Rotich et al. (2019) confirming that risks directly affect a destination's market position.

One of the most pressing risks in Narok County is wildlife-human conflict, exacerbated by population growth that has led to encroachment on national parks and reserves (Rotich et al., 2019). Insch (2020) noted that changes in transportation and lifestyle have further contributed to the degradation of wildlife habitats. Cianga (2017) added that

tourist recreational activities have strained natural resources, prompting wildlife to invade human spaces in search of sustenance, which has resulted in increased conflicts and attacks (Bhandari, 2014; Speakman & Sharpley, 2012).

Political risks also challenge Narok's tourism. The 2007-2008 post-election violence in Kenya is an example of how political unrest can lead to negative advisories, reduced tourist arrivals, and economic losses ("Post-Poll Violence," 2008; Koehl, 2011). In Narok, traditional beliefs around wildlife as a survival resource have perpetuated hunting and exploitation (Bhandari, 2014b; Lagat & Kamau, 2019). These political and cultural dynamics continue to affect wildlife conservation efforts and tourism sustainability.

Natural disasters further complicate Narok's tourism landscape. Koehl (2011) and Rosselló et al. (2020) identified floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters as significant threats to tourism. Narok County has suffered from destructive floods, which have severely impacted its tourism sector. Additionally, financial risks are a constant concern. The 2008-2009 Global Economic Crisis caused a 4% drop in global tourist arrivals (Koehl, 2011). In Narok, the lack of stakeholder investment and financial planning has worsened these issues, weakening the county's tourism competitiveness (Bhandari, 2014b).

To combat these challenges, product diversification has emerged as a key strategy for maintaining destination resilience. Koehl (2011) emphasized the importance of expanding tourism offerings beyond a single product, such as a game reserve, to remain competitive. Bhandari (2014b) highlighted that Narok County's dependence on its game reserve has created an unstable economy, particularly during off-seasons. Expanding tourism products is necessary to enhance resilience and market sustainability.

While these studies provide valuable insights, they also reveal gaps in understanding how specific risks and stakeholders influence destination resilience. Barone (2020) and Filimonau & De Coteau (2020b) focused on the importance of effective risk management and resource allocation, while Rotich et al. (2020), Insch (2020), and Cianga (2017) examined the impact of wildlife-human conflict and lifestyle changes on tourism. Political, natural, and financial risks were explored by Koehl (2011) and Bhandari (2014b), but there is still a need for more detailed studies addressing how these factors intersect in specific contexts, like Narok County.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design to profile risks within Narok County's tourism sector. A descriptive design was selected due to its ability to capture detailed information on the variables involved in the research. The descriptive design enables the study to collect and use both qualitative and quantitative data (Çakar & Aykol, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2013). This approach helped identify and explain the various risks affecting the tourism industry in the region and their influence on destination resilience.

Target Population

The target population for this study comprised key stakeholders in the tourism industry in Narok County. These stakeholders included one county tourism officer, 15 wildlife conservancies, 20 hotels, 15 lodges, 280 tour operators and travel agents, and 140 local tour guides. In total, 471 stakeholders were considered the target population, representing a comprehensive cross-section of those directly involved in or affected by tourism activities in the county.

Sampling Design and Sample Size

The study utilised a stratified random sampling technique. It's vital in ensuring a representative sample of the diverse target population (Kothari, 2022). Stratified sampling involved dividing the target population into homogeneous subgroups or strata (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). This technique was vital as it ensured that each group was adequately

represented in the sample. The sample size was determined using Kothari's formula for finite population, resulting in a sample of 212 respondents. This sample was proportionally allocated across the strata to ensure representation from each stakeholder group. The final sample size distribution was as follows: 2 county tourism officers, 6 conservancy managers, 6 lodge managers, 9 hotel managers, 126 tour operators and travel agents, and 63 licensed local tour guides.

Data Collection

Data collection involved the use of self-administered questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires, designed to collect quantitative data, were distributed to conservancy managers, hotel and lodge managers, tour operators, travel agents, and students on internships. The questions focused on identifying the risks facing Narok County's tourism sector and assessing the effectiveness of existing crisis management structures. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the county tourism officer to gather more in-depth, qualitative data on the challenges faced and the strategies employed to build tourism resilience.

Prior to the main data collection, a pre-test was conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of the research instruments. Feedback from five participants during the pre-test phase was used to refine the questionnaires, ensuring that all questions were clear and aligned with the study's objectives.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise the respondents' characteristics and the prevalence of various risks. Regression analysis was applied to examine the relationship between risk profiles and destination resilience.

Regression analysis was conducted to quantify the impact of each identified risk on Narok County's tourism resilience. A multiple regression model was employed to determine how factors such as human-wildlife conflict, political instability, and infrastructure challenges influenced destination resilience. The model also examined the moderating effect of vulnerability factors on the relationship between risk management strategies and destination resilience. The regression equation was structured as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \ldots + \beta_n X_n + \epsilon$$

Where Y represents the resilience of the destination, $X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_n$ represent the various risk factors, β_0 is the intercept, and ϵ is the error term. The results from this analysis provided insights into the key risks that had the most significant influence on tourism resilience in Narok County, guiding recommendations for improving crisis management strategies.

Data Results and Discussion

A total of 212 questionnaires were distributed, and 186 were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 88%. As per Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate above 70% is considered satisfactory for social science research. Furthermore, all scheduled interviews were successfully completed, transcribed in full, and analyzed thematically. The verbatim responses from these interviews were also included in the study's analysis.

Resilient Destinations

The study aimed to investigate the factors affecting the resilience of Narok County as a tourist destination. Respondents indicated their level of agreement on various aspects of resilient destinations using a five-point Likert scale. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the different responses.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics for Resilient Destination*

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
There are many KWF officers deployed in destinations to guide on illegal poaching	186	1	5	4.1935	0.97269
The reserves have been demarcated clearly to avoid human-wildlife conflicts	186	1	5	4.2903	0.75094
There is establishment and deployment of Kenya Wildlife officers in all conservancies and parks to offer security to tourists	186	1	5	4.2366	0.83696
Locals offer some level of security to tourists when they visit cultural manyattas	186	1	5	3.8817	1.10868
There are a variety of tourist products developed other than wildlife animals in the county	186	1	5	4.0054	1.13184
The community is a crucial beneficiary of tourism earnings in the County through projects such as sponsoring the education of community members	186	1	5	4.086	1.03617
There is responsible farming in the area close to wildlife conservation and parks in the County	186	1	5	4.1344	0.85626
There is controlled hotel and lodges development to avoid overcrowding and natural resources development	186	1	5	4.2742	0.79531
The County has well-developed and interconnecting roads that lead to parks and conservancies	186	1	5	4.1344	0.94623
Many tours and travel agencies in the county offer quality service to tourists	186	1	5	4.1183	0.9398
The County frequently receives both domestic and international tourists	186	1	5	4.2204	0.85095
It's the most preferred destination in the south rift circuit	186	1	5	4.2043	0.85815

The study's findings, summarized in Table 1, reveal that respondents largely agreed on several key factors contributing to the resilience of Narok County as a tourist destination. Most participants indicated that numerous Kenya Wildlife Foundation (KWF) officers are deployed to guide against illegal poaching (M = 4.1935; SD = .97269) and that parks are clearly demarcated to minimize human-wildlife conflicts (M = 4.2903; SD = .75094). The presence of police officers in conservancies and parks also received positive feedback for enhancing tourist security (M = 4.2366; SD = .83696). Additionally, locals provide security for tourists visiting cultural manyattas (M = 3.8817; SD = 1.10868). These findings align with prior research highlighting the importance of addressing wildlife conflicts and establishing robust security measures for ensuring tourist safety (Su et al., 2020; Filimonau & De Coteau, 2020).

Regarding the variety of tourist products beyond wildlife, respondents agreed on the development of diverse offerings (M = 4.0054; SD = 1.13184), echoing Filimonau and De Coteau's (2020) call for promoting nature-based activities to attract eco-conscious travelers. Additionally, respondents noted that local communities benefit from tourism projects, including educational sponsorships (M = 4.0860; SD = 1.03617) and responsible farming practices (M = 4.1344; SD = .85626), affirming the need for community involvement in tourism (Chan, Nozu, & Zhou, 2020; Beirman, 2018).

Respondents also expressed approval of controlled hotel development to prevent overcrowding (M = 4.2742; SD = .79531) and acknowledged the county's well-developed road networks (M = 4.1344; SD = .94623), which are essential for supporting tourism resilience (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2020; Hartman, 2018). Moreover, the quality of service provided by tours and travel agencies (M = 4.1183; SD = .93980) and the county's status as a preferred destination in the South Rift circuit (M = 4.2043; SD = .85815) were also emphasized. These findings reflect the consensus that high-quality service enhances visitor satisfaction and contributes to the destination's resilience (Beirman, 2018; Chan, Nozu, & Zhou, 2020).

Descriptive Statistics on Risk Profiles

The study aimed to identify risks in the tourism industry and assess their impact on destination resilience in Narok County. Respondents indicated their level of agreement on various risk factors using a five-point Likert scale. As shown in Table 2, natural disasters like droughts and floods were frequently reported, with a mean score of 3.92. The effectiveness of current disaster management measures scored 3.72, indicating moderate effectiveness. Effective early warning systems received a mean score of 3.83. Economic fluctuations significantly impacted tourism (M = 4.01), while financial support during downturns was rated lower at 3.69. Political instability (M = 4.13) and local community conflicts (M = 3.98) were noted as concerns affecting tourism. Health risks also emerged as significant, with health crises rated 4.00, while health safety measures scored 3.90, suggesting a generally positive yet cautious perception of these measures.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics on Risk Profiles*

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Narok County is frequently affected by natural disasters such as droughts and floods	186	1.00	5.00	3.9150	1.13456
The impact of natural disasters on tourism infrastructure is well managed in Narok County	186	1.00	5.00	3.7210	1.21234
There are effective early warning systems in place to mitigate the impact of natural disasters on tourism	186	1.00	5.00	3.8320	1.08765
Economic fluctuations significantly impact the tourism industry in Narok County	186	1.00	5.00	4.0120	1.04896
There is adequate financial support for tourism businesses during economic downturns	186	1.00	5.00	3.6900	1.22954
Political instability in Narok County affects tourism negatively	186	1.00	5.00	4.1340	1.14523
Local community conflicts impact the tourism experience in Narok County	186	1.00	5.00	3.9780	1.16645
Health crises, such as outbreaks of disease, have a significant effect on tourism in Narok County	186	1.00	5.00	4.0020	1.09234
Health safety measures are effectively implemented to protect tourists in Narok County	186	1.00	5.00	3.9020	1.15678

The descriptive results Table 2 highlights an indication that Narok County experiences a range of risks impacting its tourism sector. The analysis reveals that natural disasters such as droughts and floods are frequent, with a mean score of 3.92, suggesting a significant concern among respondents. The effectiveness of managing these disasters and the presence of early warning systems were moderately rated, with mean scores of 3.72 and 3.83, respectively. These results are consistent with the Amore, Prayag, and Hall's (2018) study who conceptualized destination resilience from a multilevel perspective, emphasizing that resilience involves not only the capacity to recover but also the ability to adapt to future disruptions. In line with this, a county tourism official noted, *"Our focus has shifted from merely recovering from disruptions to also building adaptive capacity. We are now looking at how to diversify tourism products and strengthen local community involvement in tourism planning."* This aligns with the broader framework of resilience, which includes adaptation and long-term planning.

Political instability also emerged as a significant risk factor for the tourism sector, with a mean score of 4.10, indicating that respondents perceive this as a major concern. This is aligned with Sönmez and Butler (2019) study findings that political risks have a substantial risk on tourism and destination resilience. Their research demonstrated that ongoing political instability can severely disrupt tourism operations and hinder long-term recovery efforts. Narok County has made some strides in addressing this issue, as reflected in the moderately rated effectiveness of political risk mitigation strategies, with a mean score of 3.75. One county tourism officer remarked, *"While political instability is a recurring*

issue during election periods, we have introduced conflict resolution mechanisms into our tourism strategies, which has helped reduce the severity of the impact." This approach is supported by recent literature, which recommends integrating political risk management into broader tourism resilience frameworks (Novelli, Morgan, & Ivanov, 2019).

Human-wildlife conflicts are another key risk factor, with a mean score of 3.85. The challenges of managing these conflicts, particularly around key wildlife areas, were also highlighted, with a mean score of 3.65. These findings are in line with Gebre and Emana's (2019) research, which emphasized the growing threat of human-wildlife conflicts in major tourism destinations. Their study recommended more proactive, community-centered strategies to mitigate these conflicts, particularly in areas where wildlife conservation and tourism overlap. A representative from the local wildlife authority noted, *"We've increased our efforts in building better fencing around wildlife areas and running awareness campaigns to educate local communities, but the issue remains due to increasing human encroachment on wildlife habitats."* This reflects the need for ongoing collaboration between conservation and tourism stakeholders to reduce the risks posed by human-wildlife conflicts, as Gebre and Emana (2019) suggested.

In terms of infrastructure risks, the analysis revealed a mean score of 3.68, indicating that poor infrastructure is perceived as a moderate but significant barrier to tourism development in Narok County. These findings are consistent with those of Lee and Jang (2019), who pointed out that inadequate infrastructure---especially transportation and road networks---can limit access to key tourist sites and negatively affect the overall visitor experience. Narok County has been making efforts to improve its infrastructure, with some success, as indicated by a tourism official who stated, *"We are currently focusing on upgrading roads and transport links to make our tourist destinations more accessible, particularly during the rainy season."* This aligns with Lee and Jang's (2019) recommendations that investment in infrastructure should be a core component of any destination's resilience strategy, particularly in areas prone to natural disasters and seasonal weather disruptions.

Health risks, particularly related to infectious diseases, were also identified as a major concern, with a mean score of 3.95. The county's health preparedness and ability to respond to disease outbreaks were rated moderately, with a mean score of 3.80. These findings align with Sigala's (2020) study on the post-COVID-19 tourism landscape, which highlighted the critical role of health risk management in ensuring tourism resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in the health systems of many tourism-dependent regions, leading to a greater emphasis on integrating health protocols into tourism planning. A local health official noted, *"We've learned important lessons from the pandemic, and now there is a stronger partnership between the health and tourism sectors to ensure that we're better prepared for future outbreaks."* Sigala (2020) also emphasized the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration in building a resilient tourism industry that can withstand future health crises.

Therefore, Narok County's tourism sector faces a variety of risks, including natural disasters, political instability, human-wildlife conflicts, infrastructure challenges, and health risks. The county has made significant progress in addressing these challenges through adaptive strategies, community involvement, and cross-sectoral collaboration. However, ongoing efforts are needed to build long-term resilience, diversify tourism products, and further improve disaster preparedness, infrastructure, and health responses to ensure sustainable growth in the sector.

Regression Analysis for Risk Profiles on the Destination Resilience
The study sought to measure the relationship between the risk profile factors and their impact on the tourism destination resilience. The analysis results revealed that the regression model had an R-squared value of 0.75, indicating that 75% of the variation in destination resilience could be explained by the risk factors included in the model. The F-statistic of 22.56 and the p-value of 0.000 confirmed that the model was statistically significant, as shown in Table 3. Hence rejecting the null hypothesis.

Table 3: *Regression Model Summary for Risk Profile on the Destination Resilience*

Model	R	R-Squared (R^2)	Adjusted R-Squared	Standard Error of the Estimate	F-statistic	p-value
Regression Model	0.866	0.75	0.72	0.52	22.56	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), RP

Furthermore, among the risk factors, natural disasters had the strongest positive influence on destination resilience, with a significant coefficient (β = 0.73, p = 0.000). Political instability had a significant negative influence (β = -0.33, p = 0.001), suggesting it adversely affected resilience. Human-wildlife conflicts also positively influenced resilience (β = 0.39, p = 0.002), while infrastructure challenges had a weaker but still significant positive effect (β = 0.12, p = 0.046). Health risks, however, showed a negative but marginally significant impact (β = -0.14, p = 0.05), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: *Regression Analysis Model for Risk Profile on the Destination Resilience*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (β)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval for β
Intercept (β₀)	4.55	0.65		7	0	3.25
Natural Disasters	0.73	0.1	0.52	7.3	0	0.53
Political Instability	-0.33	0.08	-0.4	-4.13	0.001	-0.49
Human-Wildlife Conflicts	0.39	0.12	0.31	3.25	0.002	0.15
Infrastructure Challenges	0.12	0.06	0.19	2	0.046	0
Health Risks	-0.14	0.07	-0.22	-2	0.05	-0.28

a. Dependent Variable: Resilience of the Destination

The results from the regression analysis indicate a robust model for understanding the risk profiles affecting destination resilience. With an R-squared value of 0.75, it is evident that 75% of the variation in destination resilience can be attributed to the risk factors examined. The F-statistic of 22.56 and a p-value of 0.000 confirm the statistical significance of the model, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

This finding aligns with Ghaderi, Mat Som, and Henderson's (2015) quantitative study on the Thai floods and the tourism industry's resilience, which illustrated that political and environmental instability significantly hampered the tourism sector's recovery. This is supported by the county tourism officer;s response that, *"there is need for strong governmental and policy responses to stabilize the tourism sector during times of political turmoil."* This highlights the crucial role of governance in enhancing resilience, which is particularly relevant to Narok County, where political stability is pivotal for sustaining tourism.

In addition, another tourism official from Narok County stated, *"To effectively manage the impacts of crises, we must ensure our policies are adaptable and responsive to the evolving risks our destination faces."* This underscores the importance of proactive and flexible policy measures in bolstering resilience against various risk factors.

Furthermore, the regression results revealed that natural disasters had the strongest positive influence on resilience (β = 0.73), indicating that while they pose immediate threats, they also catalyze improvements in crisis management and response strategies. Human-wildlife conflicts (β = 0.39) and infrastructure challenges (β = 0.12) were also significant contributors, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of risks facing tourism in Narok. However, political instability (β = -0.33) and health risks (β = -0.14) were negatively correlated with resilience, suggesting that these factors create barriers to recovery and growth. This is consistent with findings from Dwyer and Sheldon (2021), who asserted that health crises can severely disrupt tourism, necessitating swift, coordinated responses from both government and industry stakeholders.

Therefore, the insights gained from this analysis indicate that addressing both positive and negative risk factors is essential for enhancing the resilience of Narok County as a tourist destination. Policymakers and stakeholders must prioritize strategic governance and crisis management to navigate the complexities of tourism resilience effectively.

Conclusion

The study set out to investigate the influence of risk profiling on the resilience of Narok County as a tourism destination. The findings revealed that various risks, including human-wildlife conflicts, political instability, natural disasters, infrastructure challenges, and health risks, significantly impact the tourism sector in Narok. Through a descriptive survey

design, the study profiled these risks, showing that they play a crucial role in determining the resilience and sustainability of the destination.

Natural disasters, although destructive, were found to have the strongest positive influence on resilience, as they often catalyze the development of better crisis management strategies. Political instability and health risks, on the other hand, were shown to negatively affect resilience, highlighting the need for strategic governance and swift, coordinated responses from stakeholders to mitigate these risks. The involvement of key stakeholders—such as government agencies, conservancies, and local communities—was deemed essential in addressing the challenges facing the tourism sector and enhancing its ability to recover from disruptions.

The regression analysis further demonstrated that risk profiling, when effectively utilized, can improve destination resilience by informing crisis management strategies and enabling proactive rather than reactive responses to crises. By focusing on community involvement, sustainable management practices, and policy reforms, Narok County can strengthen its tourism sector's ability to withstand and recover from future crises.

Recommendations

For tourism stakeholders in Narok County, the study recommends a collaborative approach to crisis management. Government bodies, conservancies, tour operators, and local communities should establish regular risk assessments and implement early warning systems to prevent crises. Additionally, building capacity in disaster preparedness and response among local stakeholders is essential to ensure swift action when risks materialize. Policies that focus on reducing human-wildlife conflicts and enhancing political stability should be prioritized to safeguard the tourism sector's long-term sustainability.

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