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Towards a Deeper Understanding of the Meaning of Male Beach Worker-Female Tourist Relationships on the Kenyan Coast

Njeri Chege¹

ABSTRACT

Knowledge and research on sexual-economic relationships between local men and Western female tourists in different touristic locations around the world has grown, as has public interest and awareness of the phenomenon. However, the direct perspectives of the men whose lives constitute the focus of such studies remain scarce. This has resulted in the phenomenon being understood mainly and inadequately through the concepts of 'romance tourism' and 'female sex tourism'. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted in Kenya's South Coast region, this article foregrounds the voices of male beach workers and the meanings they assign to these relationships, against a backdrop of the historical, social, economic and political dynamics within which these relationships are pursued. The men attest to socio-economic hardships and marginalization, against which they seek to establish long-term intimate relationships with foreign female tourists, as well as non-sexual economically motivated friendships with foreign tourists, termed family friends. The narratives and analyses show that the pursuit of these relationships as livelihood strategies also flows from the men's struggles to fulfil traditional and contemporary ethno-societal gender expectations, through which men are generally construed as the expected breadwinners and providers.

Keywords: Beach Boys, Beach Tourism, Family Friends, Female Sex Tourism, Male Beach Worker-Female Tourist Relationships, Romance Tourism.

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1. Introduction

We come here on the beach to deal with tourists, because as you yourself may know, in our country there are no employment opportunities. And tourism here in our region brings in a lot of money that neither benefits you nor me. Some areas benefit in a very small way from it. Those who benefit from tourists' money, are those who have invested in tourism, like the hotels

¹ Institute for Education, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany; E-mail: nchege@uni-mainz.de

here. When a tourist leaves her country she leaves thinking "Oh, I am going to promote people in Kenya" she comes to the hotel and with every cent spent in the hotel, they think that they are promoting Kenyans. If I were to get that money directly from the tourist, then I would buy something or invest in something that would benefit many more people besides myself. And that would be because I got it directly. But those benefiting from tourists' money, take as an example this hotel here, that is owned by a Mhindi [man of Indian descent]; that money does not help anyone because the Mhindi takes it and invests it in his other businesses in India. How does that help us? That is why you see we decided to go to the beach and to deal with the tourists directly. That is why we decided to set up associations, communities so that when that money comes in, we can make collective projects for a better future, so that it will benefit you, me, my children, grand children, and your great grand children. That is why we are on the beach [...] (Bilal, Registered Safari Seller, aged 39²).

Daylight was slipping away when Bilal finally became available to interview with me. We sat under a makeshift beach shelter watching men make their way home along a beach access path, adjacent the high perimeter wall fence of a five-star tourist resort. We were on Galu beach in Kenya's touristic South Coast region, where I had come to carry out research among male beach workers³, with regard to the intimate relationships many of them seek to establish with foreign white female tourists.

Rather than focus on himself, Bilal had chosen to respond to my usual kick-off prompt ('Please give me an idea of what it is that you do here', whose starting point was meant to be the individual) by spreading out to represent the entire male beach worker community. In Kenya, the presence of male beach workers like Bilal is generally associated with insecurity and moral decline, viewed through some men's involvement in tourist-oriented petty crime and sexual-economic exchanges with white female tourists. By the state, investors and managers of tourist-oriented businesses, and employees of large formal tourist-oriented hospitality establishments, male beach workers (popularly referred to as 'beach boys') are considered a threat to the viability of the country's coastal tourism. Hence, Bilal's account in the opening excerpt needs to be understood as a counter-narrative to these representations and to the more popular representation of male beach workers as persons who are out to take advantage of the sexual longings of older white female tourists, as a means to gaining access to material displays of moving up the socio-economic ladder.

From the start, he wanted to acquaint me with their side of the story and to ensure that I was aware of the significant issues concerning the politics of beach tourism (notably, social inequalities in the region arising from the unequal distribution of the benefits reaped from tourism, and local inhabitants' position as a marginalized, exploited yet resourceful category of persons). He viewed the presence of men like himself on the beach as both economically and politically motivated, as can be seen through the links he establishes between tourism, social inequalities, social injustices, notions of citizenship and ethnicity. Indeed, it is well known that in Kenya's South Coast region foreigners as well as Kenyan economic elite (among whom some are of Indian decent) are the main investors and the greatest beneficiaries of beach tourism.

This excerpt sets the stage for the argument I develop in this article about the importance of generating deeper knowledge on relationships between western visiting women⁴ and local men,

² Safari sellers propose game viewing excursions to tourists.

³ In the region, male beach workers are for the most adult men who are self-employed in a range of tourist-oriented jobs. Some sell artisan items, organize game viewing safaris to national parks and reserves or boat trips for viewing of marine life, while others perform dances for guests in hotels. Some act as local culture and tour guides who offer tourists visits of their home villages and shopping centres; others manage simple beach bars where tourists come for drinks and shade; numerous are ready to prepare coconut drinks or a meal of fresh sea food; act as shopping proxies for foreign visitors in need of items that may range from typically Kenyan souvenirs like popular Kenyan music CDs to drugs, as well as establish sexual-economic relationships with visiting western women or non-sexual economically motivated friendships with foreign tourists (Chege 2015: 468).

⁴ I use 'Western women' in a wide sense to generally designate 'white' women from European or North American countries

through approaches that accord weight to the combination of the men's direct perspectives and analyses of the historical, social, economic and political contexts within which these relationships are pursued. This article is a sequel and companion to my previous article 'What's in it for me?': *Negotiations of asymmetries, concerns and interests between the researcher and research subjects* (Chege, 2015). In that article I reflect on my pre-interview fieldwork encounters on Kenya's South Coast with male beach workers who pursue a range of tourism-related livelihoods. I demonstrate how my intended interviewees presented and negotiated their concerns and interests during the pre-interview phase. I do so by analyzing our pre-interview interactions, drawing links between my assigned identities, asymmetries between myself and the men, and the risks and gains identified by them for their participation or non-participation in the research. Conversely, the focus of this article is on the substantive findings emanating from those field work exchanges.

1.1 Background

Over the last two decades, the knowledge base on sexual-economic relationships between local men and Western female tourists in different touristic locations has expanded. Research carried out in the Caribbean region has contributed significantly to the literature (see Pruitt & Lafonte, 1995; De Albuquerque, 1998; Oppermann, 1999; Kempadoo, 2001; Sanchez Taylor, 2001; De Moya, Garcia, & Herold, 2001). Other global studies include those carried out in South America (Puccia, 2009; Meisch, 1995), Asia (Dahles and Bras, 1999), East Africa (Kibicho 2004, 2009; Tami, 2008; Eid Bergan, 2011; Hoogenraad, 2012) and West Africa (Venables, 2009; Odunlami, 2009; Nyanzi, Rosenberg-Jallow, Bah & Nyanzi, 2005). Despite this geographical diversity within the literature, it is voices and views from the West, that to date, make up the bulk of what is known about these relationships. Conversely, the voices of the men whose lives constitute the focus of such studies remain scarce (Odunlami, 2009; Nyanzi et al., 2005). Knowledge on this phenomenon has principally been conveyed through Western female tourists' autobiographies⁵, scholarly literature and global press and entertainment media productions⁶, whose points of focus tend to be on Western women's quest for pleasure, myths about the sexuality of the black male, transnational sexuality, sexual expression, and exploitation of the *Other*.

Debates among scholars have mainly been concerned with finding a conceptual fit for this phenomenon. Western women's-local men's relationships and practices have been compared and contrasted to intimate holiday encounters involving western men and local women in poorer regions. The resultant definitions and distinctions have raised controversy: holiday sexual relations involving Western women and local men have been termed 'romance tourism' (Pruitt and Lafont, 1995), and have been distinguished from 'female sex tourism', and opposed to the masculine variant denominated 'sex tourism' (Sanchez Taylor, 2001; Kempadoo, 2001, Oppermann, 1999; Dahles and Bras, 1999; De Moya, Garcia & Herold, 2001 and Jeffreys, 2003). Consequently, and as this paper shows, the phenomenon has been understood mainly and inadequately through the concepts of 'romance tourism' and 'female sex tourism'.

In Kenya, this phenomenon is conspicuously present in the touristic coastal region but has not garnered much attention from local scholars. In the country, where a general conservative attitude towards public discussion of sexuality prevails (Kibicho, 2004; Chege, 2014), the subject is avoided on the basis of social actors' socio-cultural ideologies, as well as political and economic considerations. Consequently, public understandings of the phenomenon tend to be shaped and heard through the moral views and discourses of a few social actors. Among them are the discourses of those who have significant economic stakes in the formal coastal tourism structures and who tend to qualify these relationships as deviant, unnatural or unhealthy⁷.

who tend to be the main counterparts of local men or at least their preferred choice. I am not overlooking the cultural and geographical heterogeneity of European or North American countries and regions, from which these women are from.

⁵ See Mason 1996; Hofmann 2004.

⁶ See Mc Combs 2007; Cruey 2007; Clarke 2007; Pohl 2002; Metropolis 2012.

⁷ See Clark 2007.

The tendency to subscribe to moral viewpoints has been enhanced by growing national and global media coverage, through which, the image of the Kenyan male participants has come to oscillate between two morally charged images that stand at poles: on the one hand that of the exploited (poor young black men, who are victims of relatively well-off, older white women who are taking advantage of their socio-economic misery); on the other hand, that of opportunists (young black men, who are ready to take advantage of the sexual longings of old(er) white women, as a means of gaining access to ostentatious displays of social mobility) (Chege, 2014, 2015). These poles do not adequately describe the complexity of experiences. Hence, my contribution is to propose other dimensions and factors that add more nuance to the understanding of the practice, and scope to the literature.

My aim here is to offer a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon, based on ethnographic research I conducted on Kenya's South Coast. My focus is on foregrounding male beach workers voices and the meanings they ascribe to their quest for, or involvement in these relationships, contextually - that is to say, against a backdrop of the historical, social, economic and political dynamics within which they pursue or seek to establish these relationships. I argue that in the face of prodigious national and global inequalities, these men are active, creative and strategic in their quest for livelihoods, social support and inclusion. I posit that men engaging in relationships with tourist women cannot be considered in isolation; the roles of their families, their social, economic and political contexts require consideration. The following observations shape this paper: first, to date discussions on these relationships have for the most been exclusive; second, sexual-economic work involving women as compensators is often trivialized and/or viewed through a moral lens; third, understanding these men's lives and motivations involves challenging vested interests within the country's tourist industry.

1.2 Literature review

In the debate and research on female sex tourism-romance tourism (Sanchez Taylor, 2001; Kempadoo, 2001, Oppermann, 1999; Dahles and Bras, 1999; De Moya, Garcia & Herold, 2001, Jeffrey, 2003, Pruitt and Lafont, 1995) little effort has been made to consider the intersecting roles of individual choice, social ties and structural constraints in shaping men's involvement and actions in these relationships. These considerations have been central to this research. From the naming debate of the 1990s, some studies, though few, have sought to generate understandings of these relationships by focusing on the perspectives and/or the specific socio-economic conditions of the host population. This is notable through research conducted by Meisch, 1995; Dahles and Bras, 1999; Kibicho, 2004; Nyanzi et al., 2005; Odunlami, 2009; Puccia, 2009; Tami, 2008; Eid Bergan, 2011.

In the Gambia Nyanzi et al. (2005) explored the sub-theme of 'sex in tourism', through their ethnographic study of contemporary youth subcultures, sexuality and reproductive health. As I do, they identify an imbalance in the body of literature on relationships between locals and foreign tourists, where they too note that most studies principally focus on Western tourists' viewpoints, while little is available on the perspectives of the host populations in the visited destinations. The scarcity of studies that focus on male participants' perspectives is reiterated by Odunlami (2009), who studied the phenomenon in Ghana.

A review of the relevant literature also shows that few studies have thus far shed light on the ways in which other social actors, who interact closely with the local men and tourist women, contribute towards shaping the phenomenon. For example, in the Dominican Republic, Kenya and Indonesia, (Sanchez Taylor, 2001; Kempadoo, 2001, Dahles and Bras, 1999; Kibicho, 2004; Omondi, 2003) little or no reference is made to the two main participants' social ties beyond their interactions with each other. As I show in the following pages, beach worker's quest for, or involvement in sexual-economic exchanges with western female tourists is undoubtedly shaped by their social connections (family ties, social networks) as well as by the economic and political dynamics within their contexts.

The importance of considering the specificities of local men's socio-economic locations is exemplified

by Meisch (1995) and Dahles and Bras (1999). Through her research among 'Gringas and Otavelaños'⁸, Meisch underscores the limitations of studying these relationships through 'one size fits all' concepts and approaches. She argues that these relationships as observed in Ecuador, cannot be understood as representations of first world persons' dominance over those of the third world (Meisch, 1995; p.443). The Ecuadorian men whose lives she sought to understand were neither a marginalized, nor an economically needy category of persons: they owned land, houses and had businesses in Otavalo, (Ecuador). They were thus able to independently apply for visas and travel abroad to European or North American countries, where many of them sold artisan items and performed street music. Also, although the men could reap economic advantages (free accommodation, meals or personal loans) from white female counterparts while abroad, they could also be led to economically support their foreign white girlfriends who run out of money, or who settled (often temporarily) in Otavalo without economic resources (Meisch, 1995; p.441).

Comparably, Dahles and Bras (1999) focused on street guides and 'beach boys' in two different parts of Indonesia. They argue that Indonesian men's sexual pursuits of lone foreign women travellers need to be understood contextually - in relation to their involvement in small-scale entrepreneurship in the informal sector (p 268). The authors acknowledge the Indonesian men's socio-economic marginal status, noting that the men's "romantic and sexual behaviour has to be understood as part of their entrepreneurial strategy, that is geared towards making a living and securing their futures" (Dahles and Bras, 1999: 281). My approach is similar to that of the authors in as far as I view South Coast male beach workers as a socio-economically marginalized category of citizens; I situate their involvement in these relationships within the informal sector small-scale entrepreneurship, and view it as a survival strategy that is a characteristic adaptation to the dynamics of the Kenyan economy.

1.3 Theoretical inspirations and contributions

This paper draws inspiration from, and is also a contribution to the literature on gender and livelihood transformations, masculinity and poverty, and tourism and inequality. There is a tendency for studies focusing on relationships between visiting western women and local men to narrowly situate them within the paradigms of prostitution, commercial sex work or sex tourism (Nyanzi et al., 2005; Dahles and Bras, 1999; Chege, 2014). My approach distinguishes itself through my application of the concept of 'sexual-economic exchanges', as conceptualized by Tabet (2004) (in her analysis of sexual-economical exchanges involving women as receivers of compensation for their sexualities globally).

Applied to the relationships under study, it is more nuanced compared to 'prostitution' or 'commercial sex work'. Unlike the latter two, that are morally charged and conjure images of predefined sexual acts traded for money, the notion of sexual-economic exchanges best reflects the complexities and subtleties within these relationships that are based on exchanges of companionship, sexuality, economic and incorporeal gain. It also captures the non-contractual and the non pre-defined character of the exchanges. The reality of men exchanging companionship and sexuality for compensation runs against the grain of dominant practices and discourses. Hence, an added value of this work lies in its contribution to the growing body of literature on sexual-economic exchanges, and in particular, through its focus on this much less explored form of sexual-economic exchange.

My adoption of a human development approach to understanding the phenomenon is equally distinctive. As elsewhere in the global south, in Kenya, economic structural changes have come with new or changing constraints for individuals and groups, that include changing livelihood conditions that are pursued within contexts of increasing inequalities, poverty and social exclusion. There is consensus among development-oriented scholars and organizations on the fact that inequalities of opportunities (related to people's access to basic life necessities such as water and sanitation, health care, education, and factors of production such as land) and inequalities of outcomes (level of education and income) are highly interdependent: when there are disparities in people's access to life's basic necessities, their

⁸ White European and /or American women's relationships with indigenous Ecuadorian men.

access and enjoyment of economic, social and political participation, it results in limitations in terms of the levels of income and education they are able to attain and their overall well-being (UNDP, 2014; Bourguignon et al., 2003; Pistoiesi, Lefranc & Trannoy, 2008; Sen, 1992; Phillips, 2004, Chege, 2014). Education is a resource; yet, access to it in Kenya is unequally distributed. Hence educational inequality (as a contributing factor and as an outcome) stands as a salient theme in this paper.

My analysis of South coast male beach workers experiences is also a contribution to the literature on studies from East Africa and the global South that provide evidence showing that masculinity, masculine identity and gender roles are dynamic products of a person's or people's active adaptation to life processes, more so during periods of challenging economic conditions and socio-economic change. As the studies have shown, changes in livelihood conditions brought about by economic and political dynamics impact gender roles and gender relations within households (Silberschmidt, 2001, 2004; Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis, 2006; Padilla, 2007; Stefansky Huisman, 2011; Izugbara, 2015a, 2015b). Critical reflections in the gender literature provide insights into understanding the (re-)construction of gender roles and gender relations. Gender is viewed as something that one does within social interaction as opposed to something that one is (Butler, 1988). Hence, my findings reiterate the argument that gender roles and relations, femininities and masculinities are neither rigid nor solely attained through socialization processes, but rather are dynamic adaptations to social contexts and social change (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

1.4 Structure and scope

In the following pages I start by giving a short description of the fieldwork with regard to the research context, participants and the methodology adopted. This is followed by a description and analysis of socio-economic and political dynamics of the context, through a historical lens. I then present the men's experiences and perspectives thematically. Finally, I conclude that the men's quest for and involvement in long-term intimate relationships with foreign tourists is shaped through the complex intersection of structural constraints and individual choice. They use these transnational relationships to improve their own and their dependants' standards of living, and as a means to reclaiming resources and opportunities that they have been denied through unequal structures in both the national and global economies. Their pursuit of these relationships flows from their struggles to fulfil traditional and contemporary ethno-societal gender expectations, through which men are generally construed as the expected breadwinners and providers. Parallel to these, they seek non-sexual economically motivated friendships with visiting foreign tourists termed *family friends*, which is a salient finding that serves to reinforce the affirmation that the sexual-economic relationships are above all, livelihood strategies.

2. Sources and Methods

Between December 2009 and April 2011, I conducted field research in Galu and Diani, two adjacent areas situated on the touristic Kenyan South Coast⁹. I had in-depth interviews with twenty-one male beach workers, aged between 26 and 39 years. The interviews were carried out in Kiswahili, Sheng¹⁰ and English, with some code mixing. The men were not a homogeneous group and could be distinguished in relation to their ethnic identification, religious affiliation, geographical origin and their level of formal education. Among them there were men of Mijikenda ethnicities¹¹ who were born and brought up on the South Coast (predominantly of Digo ethnicity); or North Coasters (from other Mijikenda as well as non-Mijikenda coastal communities) who were born and brought up in North Coast and later moved to the South Coast; or long range migrants (predominantly of Samburu and Maasai ethnicities) from other Kenyan provinces. The local men were Muslim, while the migrants were

⁹ As part of my PhD research project.

¹⁰ A slang-based language that is mostly spoken by youth in urban areas and has influences from Kiswahili, English and other Kenyan languages.

¹¹ Mijikenda refers to the 9 ethnic communities considered to be the indigenous inhabitants of the Kenyan coastal region, namely, Digo, Chonyi, Duruma, Giriama, Jibana, Kauma, Kambe, Rabai and Ribe.

Christian. Both adhered to animist beliefs and practices, which were strongest among the Mijikenda men. My initial contact with beach workers was facilitated by Muza¹², a man in his mid twenties, who was himself a beach worker.

The level of formal education attained by the larger majority of the beach workers was low: among the 15 local men I interviewed, only one had completed secondary school. Among the remaining 14, some had completed primary school education but did not attend secondary school, while some had received little or no primary school education. This stood as an impediment to them finding employment in hotels or other formal tourism-related businesses in the region (that predominantly employ highly-educated Kenyans from other regions of the country). The men thus earned their living from a range of tourist-oriented informal jobs, that among others brought them into contact with female tourists.

Out of the 21 interviewees, 12 men were married and/or living maritally (with wives, girlfriends and their children); 2 men were planning to get married in the near future and 19 out of the 21 were supporting children, parents, younger siblings, among other family relations. From their narratives, all the men I interviewed indicated that they were heterosexual. However, from two local interviewees' narratives, I understood that when faced with hard times, more so during the low tourist season, a very small minority of beach workers who generally identify as heterosexual tend to be open to pursuing other socially proscribed forms of gender and sexual relations, notably homosexual sexual relations, if the compensation offered came up to their expectations.

I also generated data on the context through what are considered to be 'naturally occurring' sources, namely documentary analysis (press and entertainment media productions), discourse analysis (written statements of government officials on the subject of beach tourism and beach workers) and conversation analysis (informal conversations) (Ritchie, 2003). In view of enriching the data on the context in which participants' experiences and perspectives are shaped, I had interviews and informal conversations with other beach workers, hotel personnel - animators, managers, officials of beach workers' associations, and Western women. Equally valuable were other ethnographic sources, notably my fieldnotes (Sanjek, 1990), participant observations and spontaneous conversations I had with a range of social actors during my field stays.

Data generation and analysis were done through an iterative process, in terms of these being reflexive, exploratory and dynamic processes and not simply repetitive procedures. Relations of power between me and researched intertwined around class, gender and ethnicity, were also reflected upon during the research process (Chege, 2015)¹³. After the field stays, I transcribed and made summaries of the audio recorded interviews. I then carried out inductive analyses, identifying themes and patterns in the transcribed interviews, as well as in my detailed diary-like field notes.

3. Socio-economic and political dynamics

As in numerous other African countries, there is popular general consensus in Kenya, that states of poverty, inequalities and general social-economic malaise are greater today than they were sixty years ago. Most African communities inhabiting the region that later became Kenya under British colonialism, had relatively simple needs and social support systems. Communities engaged in subsistence agriculture and/or hunting and gathering. The Mijikenda were agriculturalists who grew food crops for their own consumption, which they traded along the coastal region (Brantley, 1981). In contrast, the Maasai and Samburu were nomadic pastoralists, who moved around their chosen pastoral Rift Valley region with relative freedom. For them, cattle ownership symbolized wealth, through which men acquired multiple wives, who bore and socialized children, and who in turn provided labour, intergenerational support, and kept the family line alive.

¹² All participants names are pseudonyms or are omitted.

¹³ I have discussed my research relations and identities in a related article (Chege 2015).

While the Maasai and Samburu first experienced social-cultural and political exclusion and land alienation through the 19th British colonization of inland Kenya, for the Mijikenda, British colonialism was preceded by that of the Portuguese and Oman Arabs in the late 15th and 17th century respectively. On the Portuguese's arrival at the coast, there was an already well established trading center whose participants included the Swahili, Arab, and surrounding Bantu who were situated further inland (Barbosa, 2010: 12 [1866]; Gona & Willis, 2013; Mwaruvie, 2011). Large scale farming and chattel slavery were introduced in the region by Omans; African slave labour was the backbone of their plantation farming and Indian merchants the stimulants of trade in the region (Cooper, 1997; Ochieng, 1992).

With the advent of British colonialism, existent socio-economic structures changed further. The replacement of the Oman 'slave intensive economy' by the 'British native wage labour economy' produced the first generation of squatters comprised of ex-slaves and members of the coastal Mijikenda communities (Brantley, 1981; Kanyinga, 2000; Cooper, 1997). Further inland, Maasai and Samburu livestock economy began to fail as new needs were created (the need to work for wages, pay a range of taxes, consume industrially produced goods). As part of British colonial administration's restriction on Africans' movement, land use, trade and labour (Maxon, 1992; Berman & Lonsdale, 1980; Kanyinga, 2000; Syagga, 2011; Brennan 2008), Mijikenda's agricultural production and trading was curtailed and their men forcibly recruited to serve as unskilled farm workers on European settler farms or at the coastal port. Non-Mijikenda male migrants from other parts of the country were also brought in to supplement the inadequate and often unwilling Mijikenda labour force (Brantley, 1981).

Where education policy is concerned, it is worth noting that formal education was introduced in Kenya by Christian missionaries in the 19th century. Their initial educational activities began along the coastal region in the mid 1800s, and only progressed into the Kenyan interior following the construction of the Kenya-Uganda Railway, which began in 1896 through to 1901 (Alwy & Schech, 2004). Under British colonial rule, a system of separate schools and educational system was put in place in relation to three racial groups: European, Asian and African. Christian missionaries had by this time already established schools in other parts of the country, notably Nairobi, Central highlands, the Rift Valley and Western Kenya, benefiting mainly the Kikuyu, Luhya and Luo. In contrast, since the coastal region had had centuries of Islamic influence, education introduced by Christian missionaries in the region was initially actively resisted by the dominant coastal Afro-Arab communities during British colonialism (Eisemon, 2000: p.251). After independence, through policy reforms and state support, many schools in upcountry Kenya became good highly ranked national and provincial public schools, while the coastal region lagged behind. Allocation and development of educational resources and opportunities was hinged on the ethno-regional origins and economic interests of the ruling political elite, which, coupled with the aforementioned dynamics resulted in significant disparities in the availability and state of public schools and education opportunities regionally (Mghanga, 2010: p.69; Alwy & Schech, 2004).

After decolonization, the Mijikenda progressively witnessed the transformation of their region into a wealthy international tourist destination. In the early post-colonial phase, as industries grew (goods and service industry notably tourism), more skilled male migrants from up country regions found work in the coastal region, resulting in fewer job opportunities for the (by then lesser skilled) Mijikenda. As the proverbial heads of their future households young Maasai and Samburu men also begun to seasonally migrate to urban areas in search of unskilled employment.

Such rural-urban migration, was exacerbated by neo-liberal policies, notably those that focused on economic structural adjustments. Kenya was among the first group of African countries to receive a structural adjustment loan from the World Bank in the 1980s, under the Structural Adjustment Programme. Imposed reforms included reducing public spending, improving the foreign investment climate through the elimination of regulations governing trade and encouraging investments and foreign exchange earnings through the promotion of exportation (Campbell, 2008). All over Kenya, public spending cuts were greatly felt by poorer and low income households (Campbell, 2008) that were users of public health care facilities, those whose children attended public primary schools (who are a majority in Kenya) and those whose members were part of the massively laid off civil servants. For

poor households, such as those within which my interviewees are from, this meant aggravated economic hardships for their families.

Such neo-liberal economic policies also resulted in the acquisition of land by external investors on the coastal strip, where previous acquisition by non-locals (notably Omani Arabs and Indian merchants) and later irregular acquisition by political and economic Kenyan elite had already left the local populations virtually or actually landless (Kanyinga, 2000; Syagga, 2011; Mghanga, 2010; O'Brien & Kenya Land Alliance, 2011; Mwaruvie, 2011). Like elsewhere in the country, social inequalities in the coastal region are today aggravated by inequities in land distribution: large tracts of land are owned by foreign investors, prominent politicians and absentee Arab landlords, while large numbers of coastal households are considered squatters on land that has been occupied by them and their families for several generations (Kanyinga 2000; Chege, 2015).

The privatization of communal land and demarcation of wildlife reserves which impede nomadism, pastoralism and availability of sufficient land for cattle herding in (semi-) arid areas have also transformed Maasai and Samburu livelihoods (Fratkin, 1994). Given that the national labour market does not absorb the large numbers of both skilled and unskilled youth, young men (both single and married), have continued to seasonally migrate to (peri-) urban regions, where they seek to accumulate wealth through self-employment or wage labour (Meiu, 2011; Chege, 2014: 178)

It is with this background that one could understand the general view held by Bilal and South Coast beach workers and their communities, that tourism in the region principally benefits private foreign investors, politicians, state coffers and migrants from other parts of the country, while side-lining indigenous inhabitants of the region.

4. Findings

4.1 Childhood experiences of school, poverty and hardships

I'm twenty five years old, and in my family we were nine children; same mother same father, nine children. I mean my family was poor. We went to school but it was with a lot of problems. So I went to school with those problems, lack of food and the like. So I'd also go to the beach and got into mischief, and that kind of thing. In my head, I liked studying, but those problems...One day my father called us, the five brothers and the four sisters and asked us who would like to attend school and who would not. I said I did not, as long as they would help me find a plan for myself. I was in standard five. My father said OK, if you don't want to go to school, then find a plan. So I decided to go to the beach (Ijara, unregistered beach worker, aged 25).

Like Ijara, the large majority of interviewees (18 out of 21) gave narratives of growing up in dire need of basic life necessities; starting and leaving primary school at advanced ages and generally struggling to attend school. Their backgrounds were characterized by large, extended and/or polygamous families.

The local men attributed their beginnings on the beach to the combination of parents' or guardians' lack of money to put them through primary school, their childhood proximity and attraction to the beach and to tourists, as well as a growing consciousness that formal education was a luxury that their parents could not afford and that they needed to contribute to their households' incomes. Willi, a registered, Digo, safari-seller in his early thirties, struggled through primary school and even worked to finance it. After his eighth year of primary school, he did not move on to secondary school and instead went to work on the beach. As the eldest child among eleven brothers and sisters, he said, he had quickly understood that he "could not sit back and become a burden for the family".

Comparably, as sons of practising nomadic pastoralists, the men of Maasai and Samburu ethnicities

traced their migration to the region as young adults to three factors. First, to recurrent natural catastrophes (notably drought and crop failure) that resulted in their parent's lack of money. Second, to their families' need to periodically migrate within their home regions (which in turn deprived them of opportunities to continue with primary and secondary school education). Third, to a lack of moral and financial support from parents (absence of parental involvement) among whom some did not understand the significance of formal education. This is captured in Kesoi's story:

My parents took me to school until class eight. I was called to join ~ high school and ~ secondary school, but unfortunately that year there was drought and in my family we are pastoralists and we needed to move. At the time people moved their livestock to the national park. Because of the drought, the prices [of livestock] were very low, and nobody was selling their cows. My parents refused to sell their cows [to cover school fees and school related expenses]. So I had to stay home and I moved the cows. I stayed home for a year. Then it rained. After two years at home, in 1990, I said there was no use for me to be sitting at home, it was better I go find myself work. So I left and went to Malindi. I was 23 or 22 years old (Kesoi, unregistered curio seller, aged 38).

The more educated Maasai and Samburu migrants attributed their presence in the region to lack of employment opportunities within the national labour market. The narratives and socio-economic success of friends or neighbours who seasonally migrated to the coastal region served as a strong pull factor for them.

4.2 Varieties of livelihood strategies and seeking to fulfil the male provider ideal

Simultaneous involvement in a range of tourist-oriented income-generating activities proved to be most common among the men. Individual local men said they were always ready to offer a wide range of goods and services to any tourist who came along the beach. These included but are not limited to, making and selling fashion accessories, organizing excursions, procuring and preparing freshly caught fish and sea food for tourists or foreign residents, preparing coconut drinks as well as procuring drugs and acting as culture guides and shopping proxies for visitors who wished to shop at the popular Ukunda market.

Migrant and local men who actively or passively, also sought sexual-economic relationships with tourist women appended them to their descriptions of the multiple jobs they performed. During our interview, Hudson, a twenty-six year old, unregistered, migrant Samburu beach worker, who had completed both primary and secondary school, followed by white-collar work experience, begun by talking extensively about his work in the area as an “askari” security guard. He then talked about how he accepted tourists' spontaneous requests for photographs for a fee. Then he related his experiences of “hawking” hand-made jewellery on the beach, before adding,

And also we're looking for white ladies if we are able to get them we can also call it good luck. We have seen some of our friends, not even friends, some of them I men who have *wazungu* partners I are even relatives in one way or another. And they have been successful. They have succeeded in their lives, some of them are working in Germany, some in France, others in Switzerland.

Positioning the search for sexual-economic relationships with Western female tourists as a collective livelihood strategy among young Samburu migrants (through his consistent use of “we”), Hudson explained that they were in search of these relationships as a means to providing for themselves and their current or future dependants, the overall aim being to improve their lives. His reference to “good luck” with regard to finding foreign women underscores the fact that although both non-sexual and sexual, tourist-oriented activities are understood as possible sources of income for the men, sexual-economic work is distinctively understood as a much faster way (relative to non-sexual work) through which the local and migrant men can satisfy their overall material needs and fulfil their moral or socio-cultural obligations. He for instance, intended to marry a young Samburu woman he already knew in his

home region, and said that he hoped that he could establish a relationship with a visiting foreign woman, through whom he would be able to raise the bride price he would need to marry back home. He also hoped that his future “white lady” would be willing to finance the construction of a house for him and his handicapped mother, in his remotely situated home region.

While his reference to friends and relatives living in Europe may give the impression that he conceives being successful in life as simply the capacity to emigrate to European countries, it is important to note that, for him and generally for beach workers, relationships with foreign women and emigration to European or North American destinations are often understood as means to an end, the end being attaining “success”. Success is conceptualized as the state of having made good use of one's relationship's with foreign female partners, resulting in better standards of living for oneself, certainly, but even more importantly for one's dependants. Such may involve building a permanent house for one's parents, spouse and children, financing the education of one's children, siblings or other needy younger relatives, as well as starting income generating activities (grocery stores, pubs, restaurants, commercial or residential rentals), as a more reliable way of providing for one's family. Hence, the contributions made by the very few men who manage to emigrate with their foreign partners abroad are equally seen through the investments men make for their families back home, and the resultant improved standards of living for their dependants¹⁴. The same is used as a benchmark to gauge the success of beach workers who settle with their foreign partners in Kenya.

Among the twenty-one interviewees, only five local men had travelled to European countries in their younger years. Two of them and most of those who had not, spontaneously explained that when they were younger they had yearned to visit or to emigrate to Europe. However, their priorities changed as they matured, gained experience and responsibilities related to marriage and fatherhood. Issa, a thirty-eight year old father of five, who had travelled to Germany thrice to visit his foreign companions when he was in his early twenties explained, “ When I was younger, yes, I hoped to travel to Europe. Then I was alone, I had no family. Today, I have a family that depends on me and I cannot afford to let them down”.

Declining opportunities for travel and residence abroad for dependants' well-being was not unusual. Alpha, a registered boat operator in his late twenties had visited his companion in Germany for three months and although he had the possibility of returning to Germany to pursue a vehicle repair and maintenance apprenticeship, he opted out. He explained:

[...] I was to go back to Germany. But when I looked at my family... I found my two younger brothers had been left on their own; there was also my child; and there was me jobless...If I went back to Germany, I would have to go back to school first, in order to later on get a job that would pay. When I considered all that, I found it very difficult I to emigrate to Germany] .

Several men explained that declining a holiday invitation had to be done tactfully, so as to ensure that although one would not travel, the money would still be sent and could be used to improve life for oneself and one's family. Hence, with a few exceptions, participants (men who were single, married or in marital unions) preferred to support their dependants and improve their lives, while living locally: “I started building a house”, “I prefer to have the money that I would spend on the ticket to improve my life here” was said about travel related money that was sent or was to be sent by white companions. Since numerous men had missed out on schooling opportunities and had come to understand the value of education for their children's futures, as fathers, some made considerable efforts to ensure that their children were not only getting an education, but that they were getting good quality education. Past and on-going relationships with foreign white women were cited as the key to high quality education opportunities for their children.

¹⁴ The absence of a universal national system of social security, makes kinship support systems the main form of social solidarity in Kenya.

4.3 Preference for long-term economically beneficial relationships

Relating with tourists and developing relationships with tourists is part of a very wide range of informal jobs that local and migrant men perform as self-employed workers seeking to fulfil their breadwinner and provider roles. Generally, men seek or are seasonally involved in one, two, or all three of the following kinds of relationships with tourists: short-term sexual-economic relations with female tourists (“holiday sex” is the emic term used by my interviewees); long-term sexual-economic relationships with female tourists (“*mama mzungu*” relationships¹⁵) or long-term non-sexual economically motivated friendships with foreign women or heterosexual couples (“family friends”)¹⁶.

“Holiday sex” alternatively called “wasters” (who generally come for one time sexual-economic holiday encounters while on a two week holiday), were distinguished from other foreign white women in whom the men see a potential for establishing more economically rewarding, long-term sexual-economic relationships. Evidently, for most men, the former are not a first choice. They cited health risks as a main reason for avoiding such short-term encounters. Some men expressed strong misgivings with regard to impromptu and/or unprotected sexual relations with *wazungu* women. Majibu, a local, thirty nine year-old, unregistered beach worker who had had several seasonal long-term relationships with visiting women, observed: “Aaaah! someone you meet and who insists on doing it without [a condom] or who offers you a huge sum of money so that you can do without, that one has a problem. It may be someone who's sick and who wants to infect you”. Comparably, Willi, the safari-seller who in his younger years had been involved in sexual-economic relationships with foreign women, emphasized that since he became a family man with a child and a spouse who counted on his support, he could not afford to engage in carefree sexual encounters through which he risked HIV/AIDS infections.

Additionally, participants spontaneously discussed existent asymmetries between them and the *wazungu* women. Several pointed out that what was a source of livelihood for them was often but a casual distraction for holiday sex-oriented visiting women. They insisted they did not want to be foreign white women's holiday distractions and consequently defined their presence on the beach in relation to their work. Willi, held a particularly critical no-nonsense stance:

When I am there, [at the beach] I am at work. I am a safari seller. So if someone comes along and wants to have a relationship with me, then she should be ready to comply with my conditions. It's not about someone coming over wanting to have a relationship with me, taking me out here and there and wasting my time. And then when we're done, she returns to her country and I am left there [...].

When I asked Willi what he meant by “she should be ready to comply with my conditions”, he emphasized that he neither wanted to be in relationships that lasted as long as a tourist's holiday stay (generally two weeks), nor to be at female tourists' beck and call. From first-hand experience he was aware that socio-economic asymmetries between him and the visiting women would always work to his disadvantage, if he did not let the visiting women know his work-family status and his expectations right from the beginning. He needed to provide for his family, and aimed to maintain control over his work and time. He therefore wanted the women who expressed interest in him, to understand his life. This last point recurred among the interviewees and is captured in the expressions “*Nataka anielewe*”, I want her to understand me and “*Ningependa aelewe maisha yangu*”, I would like her to understand my life. Concretely, understanding a beach worker's life means a white woman acquaintance has to see where the man comes from, how he and his family live, and be ready to help him improve his life, so that he in turn, could improve those of his dependants. Such is considered unlikely with women identified as “holiday sex”.

¹⁵ *Mzungu* (plural *wazungu*) loosely means 'white person'. The literal meaning of *mama* is mother. It is equally used to respectfully refer to any woman who is not one's mother.

¹⁶ The men I interacted with do not consider themselves sex workers. Similarly not all beach workers are involved or are looking for relationships where sexuality is a component. I therefore do not think of them as sex workers.

4.4 Ambivalent acceptance surrounding intergenerational relationships

Among the interviewees there was a general preference for older white women, who were a generation or two older than the men. Whether single, married, widowed or divorced, *Wazungu* women in this category were considered much more likely to commit to the more desirable long-term relationships. They were in particular perceived as financially independent and therefore much more likely to spend generously compared to younger white women. Notwithstanding most men's preference and determination to establish relationships with older white women, the latter's ages and/or corpulence stand as a source of tension for individual men and for their families. Several interviewees related their difficulties with intergenerational companionship and sexual relations. Emphasis was laid on the impossibility of these intergenerational relationships being based on love. For the men, "It is older white women who love younger black men". The reverse, they said, was not possible: "You cannot love her, she has been loved by many others before you" and "She is sixty and you are thirty, and she loves you, but you are not in love with her because normally an old woman will be in love with you but you cannot be in love with her" Willi had stated emphatically. Keen to ensure that I understood beach workers' involvement with older foreign female tourists as purely economic, as opposed to being motivated by sentiment and/or physical attraction, Willi chose to spell it out: "But I don't know whether you are getting what I mean. Do you understand what I mean? Men here are not with these women because of love. It is because of poverty."

While the 'inverted' character of gender roles and/or intergenerational relations in these relationships is incompatible with the dominant ideology of men as providers for their women and families, none of the men explicitly spoke of the tendency to rely on foreign white women as unmanly. Instead, the relationships were said to be generally accepted by wives, girlfriends, family and community members because they were "only for the money". Some local wives and girlfriends were said to facilitate the encounters by acquiescing to being introduced to their men's foreign acquaintances as sisters or sisters-in-law, and their children become the men's nephews and nieces. Others were said to actively encourage their men into the relationships. Comparably, some of the local male beach workers I interviewed recounted their experiences and their openness to "*Tit for Tat*" (partner swapping), or to having their Kenyan wife or female life companion being involved in a sexual-economic relationship with a visiting Western man.

Other interviewees' accounts did nonetheless show that acceptance surrounding these relationships is ambivalent and varies across life partners, family and community members. For example, through their relationships with much older women, local men become subjects of humour, irony and social ridicule. Prior to our meeting, Majibu had been in a long-term seasonal relationship with Inga, an "eighty-something" year old German woman for whom he seemed to above all, play the role of nurse and sex toy. He looked after her in much the same way that a nurse would look after an elderly, partially handicapped woman, while providing her with regular sexual services, for which he needed to be very intoxicated. When I questioned Majibu about people's reactions to his relationship with Inga, he laughingly role-played a typical stroll with Inga, who being, elderly, overweight and struggling to walk, resulted in the two of them becoming a form of public spectacle. His neighbours and acquaintances would call out to him, encouraging her and him to "*jikaze!*" (Hang in there!). It is important to note that Majibu was not relating this with shame, but rather with humour. He explained that community members understood that being with such an elderly *mzungu* woman (socially and intimately) was "*kazi ngumu*" hard work, and that men like him were respected for undertaking the challenge.

4.5 Family friends: The safer option

Parallel to their quest for sexual-economic relationships with *Wazungu* women, male beach workers also seek to establish non-sexual, economically motivated friendships with foreign tourists. 'Family friends', as they are known locally, are generally foreign white women, or white heterosexual couples, who are expected to enable the men and their dependants improve their lives. To better understand

the social place and meaning assigned to *family friends* by beach workers, it would be useful to consider other characteristics of these non-sexual friendships.

First, among male beach workers, a friend is generally viewed as a person with whom one shares no kinship ties, no sexual relations, and with whom there is a shared degree of affinity, that grows through reciprocated acts of solidarity. By extension *family friends* are friends, certainly, but they are above all special friends who are expected to hold a special place within beach workers' social networks. Their support is expected to be life-changing, and may come in the form of (ir)regular remittances, help with acquiring land, building of a permanent house, help with financing a man's vocational training and/or his children or siblings education, among numerous possibilities. Second, *family friend* relationships are grounded on stereotypes that male beach workers and their communities hold in relation to *wazungu*, who are considered to be essentially wealthy, understanding and generous. This was reflected in recurrent essentialist statements like: “*Ukimwelezea mzungu mambo yako vizuri, na akuelewe, atakusaidia*” If you explain your issues well to a *mzungu*, and s/he understands you, s/he will help you. As such, familiarity with a foreigner is not a consideration that goes into defining him or her as a *family friend*.

Among the men who defined their presence on the beach in terms of the multiplicity of jobs they performed, beach work was said to be devoid of hope and aspirations, were it not for the potential it holds for them to better their lives through relationships with foreign women and/or *family friends*. Some of the more senior migrant and local beach workers (like Bilal) emphasized that they were not on the beach to entice foreign female tourists. They rather linked their presence on the beaches to a quest for *family friends*. James, a Samburu father of three, in his early thirties had a long-term plan for a borehole water project in his arid home region. He said he was certain it would change the lives of his family and village members, and explained that this could only happen through a *family friend's* kindness, since his earnings from selling beaded accessories and sandals on the beach were just enough for him and his family to live on and could never enable him turn his intended project to reality.

Most men seeking to benefit from long-term relationships with tourists (both sexual-economic and *family friend* relationships) did not have a fixed choice between the two kinds of relationships. In theory they remained open to the possibility of either or both. However, some men, when confronted with the reality and complexities of pursuing sexual-economic relationships (notably loss of “*uhuru*” - freedom to do as one pleases, and oral sex), cultivated a much stronger preference for *family friend* relationships, which was nonetheless not exclusive.

Disappointment in *family friends* was also not uncommon. “*Hawanipi usaidizi*” They are not helping me, Bilal had explained somewhat discontentedly that although his *family friends* from Germany saw what his life was like (his unmet needs), they did not support him in any other way, apart from allowing him to earn money on their return visits (he organized tours and safari for them). It is worth considering that beach workers' expectations of solidarity and *wazungu's* expressions of support may not have the same underpinnings. For tourists invited to beach workers' homes and villages, the manifestations of poverty that they witness arouse feelings of generosity, that may be underpinned by moral, spiritual or Christian values of kindness to the poor or those in need (charity). Conversely, the men's expectations of solidarity from foreigners can best be understood through the Kiswahili (and Bantu) concept of *Utu*. Included in the semantic field of *Utu* is humanity, human kindness, generosity and sensitivity, all of which refer to desirable social human qualities. In its strict sense therefore, the men's *Utu* philosophy is not about charity but solidarity. It is a horizontal relation between two parties who in spite of any socio-economic asymmetries between them, are considered equals.

5. Discussion and conclusion

I have presented the viewpoints of some male beach workers situated on Kenya's South Coast region and the meanings they ascribe to their quest for, or involvement in intimate relationships with foreign white women. I have done so against a backdrop of the historical, social, economic and political

contextual particularities that shape these meanings. As the expected proverbial providers, and in the face of economic structural changes, inequalities and economic hardships, men view these relationships as livelihood strategies and as a means to improved standards of living. While these relationships are considered livelihood strategies among numerous other non-sexual entrepreneurial or wage activities, it is nonetheless important to underscore the fact that the two are not situated on the same scale. Their distinctiveness lies in the sexual component of the exchanges and its articulation with the men's sense of self, moral values, as well as with local conceptions of gender roles, gender relations, femininity and masculinity.

Male beach workers have a hierarchical ranking of sexual-economic relationships: they have a strong preference (albeit conflictual) for long-term sexual-economic relationships with foreign (often older) white women, over ephemeral holiday encounters. Migrant and local men's outlook on tourist relationships as livelihood sources is neither fixed nor limited to the quest for intimate relationships. While some men are openly or covertly in search of sexual-economic relationships with foreign white women, others consider non-sexual economically motivated friendships with visiting *Wazungu* complementary, equally valuable, and perhaps more importantly, a safer option. These relationships are viewed as a means to reclaiming resources and opportunities that they have been denied through unequal structures in both the national and global economies. Preference for *family friend* relationships over sexual-economic relationships can be explained by the absence of numerous risks that the sexual component in the latter relationships pose to individual men. The parallel quest for non-sexual, economically motivated friendships strongly indicates that sexual-economic relationships formed or sought between local men and visiting Western women on the South Coast beaches are fundamentally livelihood strategies for the visited.

The men's quest for long-term sexual economic-relationships as livelihood strategies flows from gender differentiated ethno-socialization patterns, that shape their contemporary motivations and efforts to live up to the socially constructed traditional male provider ideal. In this context, a man is considered *successful*, when he is fulfilling his social obligations as a father, son or spouse and is going the extra mile, to ensure a better quality of life for his family and dependants. In other words, and in line with what other researchers have found on masculinities in other East African contexts, a man's contribution is expected to have social value (Silberschmidt, 2001, 2004; Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis, 2006; Izugbara, 2015a, 2015b). Additionally, while men think traditionally about their role as providers, they still consider sexual-economic relationships with foreign women a surer way to their attainment of breadwinnerhood, providerhood, wealth accumulation and self-reliance. To do so entails struggling with one's sense of self as well as with the gender-race related expectations white women place on them as companions.

This study has its limitations: Since I could not interview local and migrant male beach workers' life partners (wives and girlfriends), parents and other family members, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which relationships between foreign Western women and Kenyan men are accepted, accommodated or challenged in homes and communities, both in the South Coast and in the migrants' home areas. Similarly, from this research I cannot determine whether, and the extent to which, sexual-economic exchanges actually enable the men to fulfil their manly responsibilities vis à vis their families, and the frequency with which sexual-economic relationships generate tension within families (emanating from the gap between the expected fulfilment of traditional provider role within the family and the sexual-economic means used). New research could therefore seek to generate knowledge on beach workers' relationships with foreign Western women by specifically focusing on the experiences and perspectives of local life partners, parents, other family members or community members at large.

My findings speak of a need to review the generally accepted theoretical construct of a simplified 'beach boy' population: on the South Coast male beach workers are far from being a homogeneous group. The local South Coast Mijikenda inhabitants who are a majority cohabit with those from the North Coast, as well as with long range migrants of Maasai and Samburu ethnicities. While all the men from the different geographical and ethnic backgrounds share some experiences related to their

marginalised statuses and their economic, social and cultural motivations for pursuing tourist-related livelihoods, their contemporary presence on the beaches has been shaped by historical, economic and socio-cultural developments that unfolded and continue to unfold differently in their regions of origin. These different backgrounds afford the migrant and local male beach workers unequal opportunities within the competitive tourist-oriented South Coast.

What is particular about contemporary Maasai and Samburu migration to the South Coast is the intertwining of the economic and the rite of passage character of their migration. During the young men's initiation period (alternatively known as the *moran* period¹⁷, which can range from ten to fifteen years), they seasonally migrate to the touristic coastal region, where they typically expect that they will earn money through tourist related jobs, accumulate wealth and then return to marry and settle in their rural homes¹⁸. However, for many, this temporary phase evolves into a permanent one, as the men opt to continue working in the coastal region on a seasonal basis, even after marrying and starting families, since the money earned through tourist-related jobs represents a significant source of income for their households (Chege, 2014).

These findings are a contribution to the debate on tourism and inequality. Intersections of individual choice and structural constraints have shaped men's involvement and actions in their pursuit of tourist-oriented livelihoods, which indicates a need to deepen how research and policy address the presence of local and migrant youth on the beaches. The historical analysis performed in this paper highlights how the disadvantages accumulated from inequalities of opportunities have been passed on from one generation to the next, in the form of limited educational attainment, limited employment opportunities and low/ no incomes. The usefulness of these findings for policy spans from the effective implementation of the country's universal primary education policy and subsidized secondary education policy, to that of the socio-economic and political integration of indigenous inhabitants of highly touristic regions.

Globally, what has been termed 'female sex tourism', considered 'unhealthy' or 'unnatural' visitor-visited relationships by the press or other social actors, when viewed from the inside, are efforts by categories of marginalized developing country nationals at navigating local and global structural inequalities and power relations. As is the case of many other developing and developed country citizens who struggle to subsist on uncertain income sources, male beach workers are active agents certainly, but equally casualties of national and global inequalities and unequal power relations. With regard to this, their opportunism, which is a survival skill, need not be morally connoted but rather understood as a capacity to skilfully adapt oneself to situations or circumstances that appear potentially beneficial in resolving combinations of personal challenges and structural constraints.

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¹⁷ Among the Maasai and Samburu, an '*Ilmurani*' anglicized into *moran* (young warrior) is a young man who has gone through a traditional circumcision ceremony with members of his age set.

¹⁸ For more on the Samburu and Maasai rites of passage see Hodgson 1999 and Meiu 2011.

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