

Sacred Habitats at *Got Ramogi* Cultural Landscape: Opportunities and Strategies for Ecotourism in Siaya County, Kenya

OEDEDE Fredrick Z. Argwenge

Lecturer, Bondo University College, Kenya

HAYOMBE Patrick Odhiambo

Dean, School of Spatial Planning and Natural Resources Management
Bondo University College, Kenya

AGONG' Stephen Gaya

Principal, Bondo University College, Kenya

ANANGA George Ochieng

Research fellow
Bondo University College, Kenya

ABSTRACT

Considering that tourism is one of the World's largest industry, inter and intra-regional competition is unavoidable. The competition has been further worsened by the globalization nature of tourism. As such, tourism business is better realized when efforts are put towards destination as opposed to regional or national tourism promotion. Against this background, developing and making the ecotourism business plan operational will not only unlock the tourism potential but also help in the management, promotion and protection of the sites for future generations and enhance economic growth of Siaya County in Kenya. In the development of this business plan, a participatory approach was adopted. The participation involved stakeholders; namely Community based organizations (CBOs), boat operators, beach leaders, religious leaders, Kenya Forest Research Institute (KEFRI), operators of hospitality services in the region, local community representatives as well as Provincial administration. The stakeholders were put in a workshop setting which was facilitated by 4 consultants from Bondo University College. The plan also used secondary information sources from Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), and web sites among others.

KEY WORDS: Cultural landscape, sacred habitats, ecotourism, cultural tourism, beach tourism, archaeological tourism, health tourism, heritage tourism

Introduction: Background Information

Location and size

Got Ramogi lies between latitudes 0° 01' 20" and 0° 01' 30" and longitudes 34° 02' 30" and 34 04' 30". It comprises two hills, the highest point being 1240 metres above sea level. To the South-West of Got Ramogi lies Lake Sare, and Lake Usigu to the North-East. To the south lies Lake Victoria while the vast Yala swamp lies to the north of the forest. The swamp separates Got Ramogi Forest from the Samia Hills further to the North- West. The sacred Forest covers an area of about 300 ha.

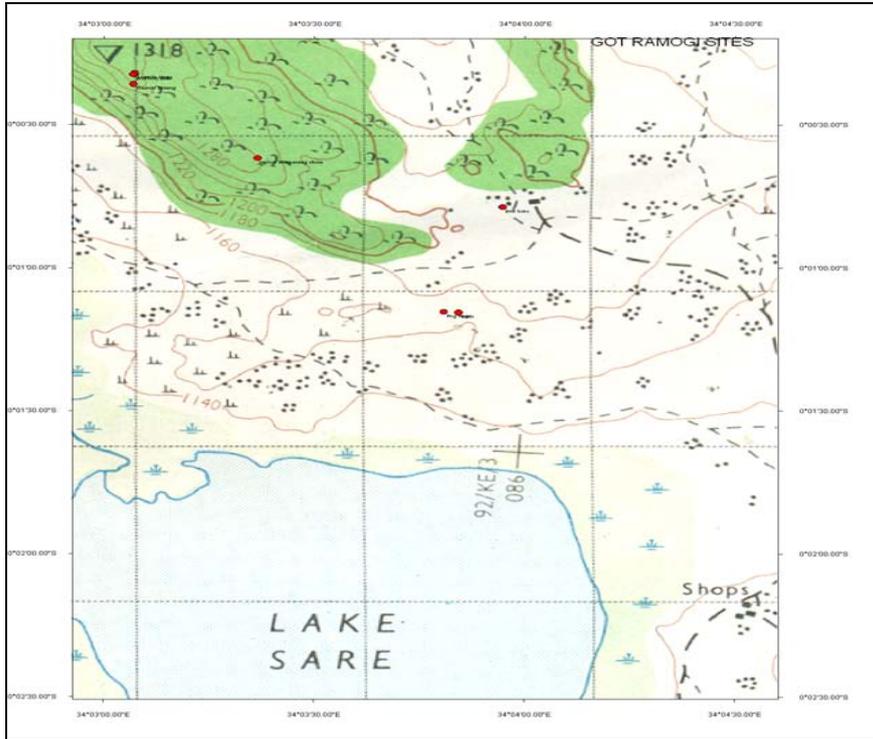


Fig. 1: Location of Sacred sites at Got Ramogi Hill.

Management status

Got Ramogi forest was classified as a county council forest in the 1950s under the Aldev/Swynerton Plan. In 1968, the Siaya District Council ceded the Forest's management to the Central Government under a formal council resolution, to be a National forest reserve. The forest was declared a government land during land adjudication of Usigu Division in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Plans are underway to have a management committee nominated by the local community to manage the forest on behalf of the greater Got Ramogi community

Biodiversity

The biodiversity components and systems of Got Ramogi are influenced by the vast Yala swamp. The swamp is an important cess pit that buffers the littoral and Lake Victoria aquatic biodiversity (LVEMP, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2006). The Forest supports a complex of Guinea-Congolian, Sudanon-Somali-Maasai and the Afro-montane vegetation types. The vegetation of Got Ramogi is characterized by dry upland vegetation, dominated by species *Drypetes*, *Haplocoelum*, *Monankio taxis*, *Strychnos*, and *Teclea*. From the slopes of Got Ramogi, extends a vast savannah plain that covers most of littoral Yimbo, Uyoma, and Sakwa locations.

Got Ramogi supports a diversity of fauna and flora. Over 100 species of plants, 12 species of mammals, 4 species of reptiles, 3 species of amphibians, 64 species of birds, and 22 orders of invertebrates (including a large number of insect species) (Sigu, Omenda, Ongugo, & Opiyo *nd*). Many of these elements of the biota are opportunistic and generalists, having probably existed in the previously more extensive moist forest ecosystem. Many genera of termites that are akin to the coastal termites, butterflies and moths have been recorded.

Climate

This zone experiences a modified equatorial type of climate characterized by very little rain and influenced by winds blowing west-wards into Lake Victoria. The winds are usually dry carrying little rain, with few intervening prominent hills and forests to trap moisture. This biogeography is a manifestation of a semi-arid savannah climate that seems unusual for the littoral zone around Got Ramogi.

Geology and Soils

The geology of the area reveal old *Nyanzian metavolcanics*, ranging in composition from basalts to *andesites*, and *Kavirondian metasediments*, in the Got Ramogi area represented by grits and conglomerates (LVEMP, 2005; Republic of Kenya, 2006). The supracrustal rocks have been intruded by *granites*, *syenites*, and *dolerites*, with the possibility that more than one episode of granitic and *syenitic* intrusion had occurred.

The soils on the hill-tops are sandy clayey that are more clayey in the rock fractures (Jaetzold, 1982). These soils are very shallow, rarely exceeding 20 cm; but good soil profiles exist within the large fractures in the rocks. Such soils remain moist, even during dry seasons. Despite the very poor soil formation on hill tops, the hill-tops support a large population of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants. The root systems of the large trees are such that they follow the rock fractures for long distances and to great depths in search of both moisture and nutrients. But in the palls of the hill tops, where the virgin sacred forest is mostly located, the soils are deep extending to more than 60 cm. Such soils are able to support the growth of a large number of substantial trees. On the steep gently undulating hill slopes, the soils are shallower, varying from sandy clay to sandy loam, generally young, mostly formed elsewhere and then transported to these horizons (Jaetzold, 1982). They appear to be very vulnerable to soil erosion and, as a result, the larger trees are concentrated on the upper horizons of the slopes among the rock fractures. On the foot hills, are gravel- clay soils, with the main clay mineral being montmorillonite, consisting mostly of material that has been washed down from the twin hills above, and form excellent ceramic clays (Jaetzold, 1982). The lower plains embracing Got Ramogi have poorly drained soils which are susceptible to flooding during the rainy seasons and consequently crack during the dry seasons. The effective rooting depth is exceedingly shallow. As a result, the plains have poor vegetative cover.

Cultural beliefs and practices

It was believed that ancestral spirits within the forest provided strength and security for the community members. The sacred sites within the forest were highly revered by community members as it was believed that the sites were under the keen watch of the angels (Herbich, 2002; Miruka, 1994). No major activity could succeed if the spirits in the forest were against it. Major hunting expeditions or aggressions during war were sanctioned after consulting ancestral spirits and conducting special animal sacrifice. These beliefs were taught to and practiced by young people so that they could have a strong orientation towards the values. Women married into the community were taught by elderly local women in order to observe specific codes of conduct. These practices have perpetuated conformity to and observation of traditional and cultural norms within the society up to modern times. The traditional beliefs, sacred shrines and norms associated with Got Ramogi are still verbally expressed through the elders for each sacred site and object. Thus Got Ramogi has cultural, religious and ecological significance (Odhiambo & Odede, 2012).

Pilgrimage tourism

Some African independent churches such as Legio Maria believe that particular sites within the Forest have supernatural powers that help in the intervention of human problems. Followers from various parts of Kenya and other African countries (for example Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria) make religious pilgrimages to pray and experience the powers (Figures 2a and 2b). Religious individuals from other Christian faiths also find the serene and solitude nature of the Forest congenial for prayer and fast.



Figure 2a: A prayer session at Asumbi Rock. "A rain making site which has turned to be an alter for prayers"



Figure 2b: A prayer alter at Asumbi Rock

Cultural tourism based on Luo myths, legends, beliefs and practices

Sacred shrines, traditional beliefs and norms associated with Got Ramogi continue to baffle not only the local people but also other domestic as well as international tourists (Hayombe, Agong', Nystrom, Mossberg, Malbert & Odede, 2012; Odhiambo & Odede, 2012). Visitation has taken the form of research groups (locals and foreigners), group tours (learning institutions), and individuals. The main sacred sites and objects (Figures 3a to 3j) are: "Pong" (grinding stone), "Mwanda" (the sacred tree), "Humba" (the potter's clay mine), "Rapogi" (Sharpening stone), "Luanda Asumbi" (Asumbi Rock), "Dher Lisua" (Ritual cow), "Luanda Alego" (Alego Rock) and "Luanda Laure" (Laure Rock). The myths, legends, beliefs and practices associated with the sites are as follows:

Grinding stone (Pong) – "From a grinding stone to a sacred object"

Owil and *Idhi* were all sons of *Bala* and were all staying with their families within the precincts of the grinding stone. *Owil's* wife had just given birth to a child and one day she went to grind some grain at the grinding stone. When she arrived at the stone, she met *Idhi's* wife who refused her from sharpening the grinding stone in readiness for grinding (Odhiambo & Odede, 2012; Miruka, 1994). A dispute arose among the two and in the process, *Idhi's* wife pushed *Owil's* wife and she fell on her back onto the grinding stone from where she bled and died Owing to the emerging circumstances, *Owil* and the clan members who were sympathetic to his cause were compelled to leave their established home in Got Ramogi and go back to their relatives in Sudan. The grinding stone thereafter became an isolated and sacred site from where people could take oaths incase any dispute arose within the clan. For instance, if something evil had been done within the clan or when two clan members had an argument over an issue, the parties involved would go and swear at the grinding stone. The parties involved in the dispute would each take a hummer stone, *Nyatieng*, and hit the grinding stone. If there is anyone guilty among the warring parties, blood would come out of him or her after hitting the grinding stone. The place was therefore associated with ancestral spirits that would torment anybody who did evil in the society.



Figure 3a: Grinding stone

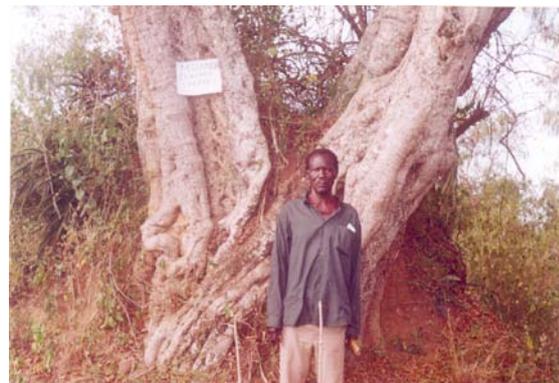


Figure 3b: Loch tree

Loch – "The tethering peg that budded into a tree"

The tethering peg belonged to *Idhi* son of *Bala* and it was used for tethering his cow. With time, the peg budded and became a big tree locally known as *Mwanda*. He thereafter protected the tree and nobody was allowed to cut it. To *Idhi*, the *Loch* became a sign of good cattle husbandry (locally known as 'pith mar dhiang') because the people at that time believed that *Loch* never buds. With this new development cum blessing, every son who was born to *Idhi* was given a scion from the *Mwanda* tree when they were establishing their homes. This was a sign of goodwill from their father (*Idhi*) so that they too could practice good cattle husbandry ("pith mar dhiang"). The leaves from the tree were used as cattle medicine particularly on sick calves. As the popularity of the bud increased among *Idhi's* sons, other people within the village came to get scions from the sons in order to get the goodwill of 'pith mar dhiang'. *Idhi's* home also became significant for men who were going to marry. It was believed that while walking cows to a prospective wife's home and you whip them with twigs obtained from *Mwanda* tree, the woman would stay with the husband even when she was facing difficulties in her marital home.

Asumbi – 'The rain maker'

It was a place considered highly sacred by the community and was consulted whenever there was drought in the land (Odhiambo & Odede, 2012). It is also currently used for prayers during religious pilgrimage by African

Independent Church faithful. In order to bring rain, sacrifices in form of goats (a white he-goat) and a brown cockerel would be slaughtered, roasted and eaten at the site. As this was done, blood from the animals and a local alcoholic brew were poured onto the male and the female holes which are part of the rock. During the sacrificial process, song and dance would be made in praise of the two stone lids that covered the male and female holes. After the ceremony, people left for their homes but while still on their way, the rains would start falling on the land. The lids to the two holes were believed to have powers and this was shown in 1966 when a primary teacher by the name of Okech Adams from Alego in that since the 'spirits' were not happy to be moved away from Lwanda Asumbi, Siaya District took one of the stone lids to his custody. It is believed, they turned on the teacher and he became mad. The teacher brought back the lid and a He-Goat to the rock even though he is still mad to date.



Figure 3c: Asumbi Rock, Male



Figure 3d: Asumbi Rock, Female

Rapogi (Sharpening stone) – 'A medium for consultation during war and hunting'

The stone belonged to Ramogi and was used for sharpening spears when the community wanted to go to war or hunting (Odhiambo & Odede, 2012). Before such activities, the stone would be consulted by the elders and if it 'accepted' a sacrifice, then one would be provided normally consisting of a female goat and a cockerel. The sacrifice would ensure that nobody got hurt in the war or that hunting was successful. The stone like Asumbi Rock were also consulted during times of prolonged droughts. Similar sacrificial systems would follow. In 1964, a *Legio Maria* sect priest from the local area, *Unyejra*, made an attempt to burn the sharpening stone claiming that it had evil spirits. The priest is reported to have been struck dead with lightning that very day.

Dhiang – 'From a living to a petrified ritual cow'

Ramogi had a cow which had a calf and one day in the evening as the cattle were returning home, the cow and the calf started running towards Ramogi's gate at a place called Dudi. Since it was late in the evening, Ramogi ordered that the cow and calf be left and be searched the following day. The following day, Ramogi sent his sons to search for the cow and the calf. After searching, the sons were not able to find the cow and the calf but found when they had turned into a stone. Ramogi and those in his homestead personally went and confirmed that the cow indeed had turned into a stone and he was so amazed. The place was thereafter considered sacred, and provided a sanctuary for herbs and concoctions for cows that showed signs of trouble or became uncontrollable in the community (Hayombe et al, 2012; Odhiambo & Odede, 2012).

Luanda Laure and Luanda Alego (Laure and Alego Rocks) – 'Ramogi's relaxation and sacred water spring'

Luanda Laure was a place where Ramogi would normally bath (as it contained water in a rock crevice). The place would also be used as a meeting ground whenever Ramogi wanted to meet with the greater community. Currently, it is also used for prayers during religious pilgrimage by African Independent Church faithfuls. In front of the *Lwanda Laure* was a tree locally called '*Limbo*'. '*Limbo*' provided a vintage position for citing enemies from *Alego*, *Sakwa* and *Usonga* who were then repelled with ease. *Luanda Alego*- There was an old man called *Alego* whom Ramogi found living in the *Luanda Alego* area. This old man used to bask in the sun while sitting on *Luanda Alego* but with the arrival of Ramogi, he was compelled to leave the area and Ramogi used the rock for relaxation. It was also believed that there was a sacred water spring under the rock.

Umba (Pot clay mine)

Pottery in the area dates back from times of Ramogi till present and reflects the past and present cultural art of the people living in the Got Ramogi area. A noticeable activity that transverses the times is that whenever any community member goes to mine the clay, some token of appreciation for the existence value of the clay is demonstrated. In the past, grain that fills up “ondong’ (a dish made of thin wooden stems that carries about half Kilogram of grain) was given to a person nominated within the community. The person was usually an old woman quite advanced in years and who the community considered as not being able to adequately fend for herself. Currently, a blind person from the community has been nominated to receive Kenya Shillings 100 for every 100 kilogram sack of clay mined.



Figure 3e: Pot clay mine



Figure 3f: Pots made from clay mine

Health tourism

This is possible since Got Ramogi Forest is a repository of varied medicinal plants used by traditional healers within and across the borders of Kenya (Northern Tanzania, Southern Angola, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Mozambique and Malawi among others), tapping on and enhancing this market segment would greatly boost the number of visitors to Got Ramogi Forest (Republic of Kenya, 2010; Hayombe et al, 2012).

Archaeological tourism

The region surrounding Got Ramogi and beyond is a melting pot of rich and varied archeological site depicting the lives and migration patterns of the Nilotes, dating to thousands of years back (Odede, 2000; Ochieng', 1985; Ogot, 1967). One such site is exemplified in the area of Ulowa, at the foot of Got Ramogi. In addition to Ulowa, there are several naturally sheltered settlements having shrines in the region of Got Ramogi and beyond, for example, Gunda Pudha (Figures 4a-4b) and Bur Gangu which is famous for iron artefacts. These sites provide excellent opportunities for archeological tourism.



Figure 4a: An archaeological site in Ulowa

Beach tourism

The area with sands in Goye (Figure 4b) beach has a high potential for beach hotels, sun and sand bathing (Hayombe et al, 2012; Hayombe, 2011; Kairu, 2001). Usenge beach on the other hand is a hive of fishing activities. The varieties of fish caught and the various fish-related activities have a high tourist attraction potential. The reeds at Yala Swamp (Figure 4c), Goye and Ulowa beaches are the only ones in their original state within Lake Victoria. Most of the reeds that used to occur in other parts of the Lake have rapidly been harvested for their value in thatch and mat making. Underneath the reeds are found fish such as Lung and mud fish, which are increasing becoming extinct in Lake Victoria (Kairu, 2001). Boat racing and cultural troupes' festivities along the beaches would complement beach related activities that have been proposed.



Figure 4b: Goye Beach – Potential for sun and sand bathing as well as tourist hotels



Figure 4c: Reeds in the Yala swamp - provide a habitat for rare fish

Home stays and low cost accommodation facilities

The local people will be expected to accommodate tourists in their homes for them to experience the local lifestyle (Republic of Kenya, 2010). This will require training on hospitality management to enhance the hospitality skills of the people. Low cost accommodation facilities will be owned and managed by the local people. The tourist earnings from the home stays and accommodation facilities will be directed to improving the livelihoods of the people. Part of the earnings will also be invested in conservation of Got Ramogi

Heritage tourism

Jaramogi mausoleum and museum, a gazetted heritage site is less than 20 km away from Got Ramogi. The mausoleum contains the burial site of Kenya's first vice president and 'father' of opposition politics, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. Housed in the museum is a rich collection of Jaramogi's regalia as well as various Luo artifacts that have become extinct in most parts of Nyanza (Figures 5a-5b).



Figure 5a: Part of Jaramogi's regalia



Figure 5b: Some of the artifacts in the museum

Competitive comparison

This explores the competitive edge the current and planned products will have over other products and services already being offered within the Western tourist circuit. Important tourist attractions in the Western tourism circuit include Huma Hills in Karachuonyo that is known for its potential hot springs. Luanda Magere near Awasi town on the outskirts of Kisumu City is famous for myths and legends about the wars fought by Luanda Magere (Hayombe et al, 2012). Nyamgondho wuod Ombare in Gwassi shows the story of Nyamgondho who got lack and lost it later due pride, arrogance and abuse of an old woman who visited the village. Simbi Nyaima in Karachuonyo known for the story of an old woman who visited simbi and brought with her torrential rains, a reminiscent of which is the Simbi Nyaima water body. Kakamega Forest is the only tropical rainforest and a remarkable sanctuary of endemic plants and animals. Mount Elgon National Park is famous for game viewing and elephant caves. Ndere Island National Park in Lake Victoria is a site for game viewing. Ruma National Park in Lambwe Valley popularly known for endangered species of Roan antelope and Rothschild giraffe. "Crying Stone"- *Ikhonga Murwe* along the Kisumu – Kakamega road in which water flows from the stone depicting tears flowing from the human eyes. *Kit Mikayi* in Seme, along Kisumu - Bondo road and is a fascination of two stones that defy the natural laws of science, with the larger stone being supported by the smaller one. Despite the attractions that are being offered within the Western tourism circuit, Got Ramogi still is a preferred destination in the following aspects:

"Got Ramogi is the only origin of Luo dispersal in the Western region. Unlike most of the competing destinations, Got Ramogi is the only destination having several sacred sites and objects associated with Luo cultural beliefs and practices. The forest has a rich biodiversity of plants - some of which cannot be found elsewhere except in Guinea, West Africa. Got Ramogi has the equator passing across it at the top of the hill. The greater area surrounding Got Ramogi has a rich archaeological history having later holocene multiple component archaeological sites with a pre-historic cultural sequence spanning from the Late Stone Age through Pastoral Neolithic to the Iron Age, for example, Iron smelting and blacksmithing at Ulowa (Odede, 2000; Robertshaw, 1993). Multiple linkages to other tourist attractions - the fact that Got Ramogi Hil; is adjacent to Lake Victoria means that other tourist products associated with the Lake can be linked to the hill. For example, the white sand at Goye beach has the potential for sun and sand bathing while the beaches within the area can be used for boat rides and competition (Hayombe et al, 2012)."

The area surrounding Got Ramogi Forest is characterised by inland lakes (i.e. Sare, Kanyaboli and Nyambolo) and Swamps all of which are habitats for traditional fish (such as lung fish and mud fish) that are no longer found in the expansive Lake Victoria (Kairu, 2001).

Strategic positioning

This section discusses the strategies necessary to operationalise the planned products and some these have been proposed (Mayaka & Prasad, 2012; Republic of Kenya, 2010). Prior to commencing any of the activities, an environmental impact assessment study is required to provide appropriate mitigative measures.

Erect a fence around Got Ramogi clearly delineating the Hill's boundaries with the local community. Put gate entrances to Got Ramogi. Improve and strengthen the rural livelihoods of the Got Ramogi community through benefits that accrue from tourism (Honey, 2008; Goma, 2007). Open up and develop a trail network leading to sacred sites and objects within Got Ramogi Forest. Put up fences around tourist attraction features such as sacred sites and objects. Set up a sight seeing point on the lower plains leading to the ritual cow so that visitors can have a better view of the site. Construct rest places and toilets at tourist attraction sites. Develop trail and site signage in Got Ramogi. Acquire land in Goye beach and make the beach appealing for tourism. Establish a locally managed sports committee to revive boat racing competitions and cultural troupe dances. Reconstruct Ramogi homestead and cultural exhibition centre on the basis of information given by elders knowledgeable on Ramogi tradition and cultural history. Train CBOs members on basic hospitality management, governance, project management and entrepreneurial skills. Identify and train local youths to be naturalist and tour guides. Identify nature based enterprises (NBE) for community based organizations (CBOs) i.e. bee keeping, extraction and processing of medicinal plants, butterfly rearing, tree farming, souvenir making and sale, and low cost accommodation units among others. Work out a tourist benefit sharing arrangement between the local community and the management committee of Got Ramogi. Using elders who have rich and in-depth historical information about Got Ramogi, pass information on taboos, beliefs and sacred sites to younger generation. Harvest medicinal plants sustainably. Construct a demonstration fish pond containing traditional fish found in the inland lakes (Sare and Kanyaboli) and the swampy papyrus reeds. Construct low cost accommodation facilities – this will be facilitated at a later stage from tourism earnings. Conserve papyrus reeds and archaeological sites. Design and print brochures depicting the ancient cultural landscape of Got Ramogi as well as important tourist attraction features in the greater Got Ramogi region (Hayombe et al, 2012). Build a World Wide Web page in which important tourist attraction features of Got Ramogi will be displayed

Marketing

Ecotourism in Got Ramogi will be targeting both domestic and international tourists motivated to experience a blend of cultural, religious, beach, boat racing and archaeological tourism products (Republic of Kenya, 2010).

Market segmentation

The segmentation of the market will be on the basis of visitor motivation, visitor budget, and whether visitors come as individuals or in group (Republic of Kenya, 2010). The ecotourism market in Got Ramogi will therefore be divided into:

Cultural and Nature learners – will consist of pupils and students from learning institutions (locally and abroad) and visitors who are non-students interested in learning about cultural landscape and biodiversity in Got Ramogi.

Researchers - Individual or group researchers within and outside Kenya. This segment will be interested in Got Ramogi's vast biodiversity and culture ranging from insects, plants (especially medicinal plants), and archaeology to cultural practices, beliefs and taboos as depicted in the sacred sites and objects.

Health tourists –This segment targets local community members who visit the Forest to get medicinal plants to cure their ailments as well as traditional healers who practice herbal medicine for commercial gain. As the forest is famous for medicinal plants within and across the Kenyan borders, this segment will also target international health tourists.

Pilgrimage tourists – Consists of individuals and groups worshipping in various African independent churches and who visit the various sacred sites and objects in Got Ramogi for religious purposes. Individual faithfuls from the mainstream evangelical churches will also be considered in this category as the forest is conducive for solitude especially during fasts and prayers. Followers come from within and without Kenya as far as West Africa.

Individual tourists–The market segment will consist of those from the local community of Got Ramogi, other parts of Kenya and the rest of the world interested in the various cultural and biodiversity attractions in Got Ramogi.

Low budget travellers–These are visitors willing to spend less in terms of their travel and hospitality services within Got Ramogi and the surrounding areas High budget travellers–visitors at the high income spectrum willing to spend more in terms of their travel and hospitality services and also visit several places within the Got Ramogi region.

Business analysis¹ of products offered in the Western tourism circuit

The purpose of this section is to provide a brief overview of the structure of ecotourism business in terms of products offered in the Western tourism circuit. The tourism business level (small, medium or large scale operators) of other important competing tourist destinations in Kenya are mentioned. Several tourist attraction features within the Western Kenya tourism circuit are not all in active tourism business. The following areas form major tourist destinations within the circuit: Kakamega Forest, Kisumu Impala Sanctuary, Mount Elgon National Park, Ndere Island National Park and Ruma National Park.

Kakamega Forest

Provides general forest experience (Figure 6a and 6b), bird and butterfly watching as well as research opportunities. The Forest has two resource centres whereby visitors are provided with environmental education and interpretative services (Kenya Wildlife Service, 2004). The local CBOs in the Forest operate nature based enterprises ranging from tree farming, butterfly farming, extraction and sale of medicinal plants to tour guiding services, operation of curio shops and low cost accommodation services.



Figure 6a: Weeping stone
Inadequate tourism facilities and aggressive marketing limit the potential of such attractions



Figure 6b: Kakamega Forest A tourist visiting the tropical Rainforest

Kisumu Impala Sanctuary

The majority of animals in the sanctuary are impalas. Nevertheless, Lions, Antelopes, Hyenas, Ostrich, and Leopards are also hosted within the sanctuary. The impala sanctuary meets the high demand of wildlife viewing exerted by the urbanite population of Kisumu and other towns in Western Kenya.

Mount Elgon National Park

The major attraction include Kitum 'Underground' Elephant caves, Wide variety of game to view, bird and primate watching , Nature Trails, hiking, picnics, fishing , Cave exploration and geological safaris.

Ndere Island National Park

It is home to a variety of birds including fish eagles and a dense population of swifts. Hippo and crocodiles, including the lesser known Spotted Crocodiles, are a familiar sight. 50 impala have been introduced to the woodland which fringes the shores. Attractions include hiking, walking, traditional fishing, boat safaris and picnics.

¹ Visitor numbers to destinations is used to give insight into level of tourism business volume. Due to logistics and time required to get latest financial figures, the plan used figures for the period 2010-2012. The assumption taken in the plan is that the trend of visitor numbers has not changed significantly in the last three years.

Ruma National Park

Its main attractions are game viewing, bird watching, hiking and walking and fishing in the rivers. Game to view include: Bohor Reedbuck, Rothschild's Giraffe, Jackson's Hartebeest, Roan Antelope, buffalo, leopard, several cat and hyena, as well as diverse birdlife.

Strategy, Implementation, Organization and Management of the Ecotourism Venture at Got Ramogi and its Environs

Strategy and Implementation

This section continues marketing plan information and outlines how strategies explained in the previous section will be implemented.

Bush clearing and Fencing strategy—consultation will be made with the primary stakeholders of Got Ramogi regarding the fence line. Negotiations will be initiated with land owners in Goye beach so as to acquire, clear and fence the beach.

Strategy for improving and strengthening rural livelihoods—part of tourism benefits from nature based enterprises, tour guiding and interpretation, and low cost accommodation facilities will be directed to improving the livelihoods of the local community. Capacities of local community groups such as Youths, CBOs will be enhanced through skill based training.

Strategy for developing tourism infrastructure requires discussions with local community members and other key stakeholders to map out and clear trail paths and sight seeing points. Consult with religious groups regarding the location of rest shelters and toilet facilities at the sites. Erect signage along the trails taking into account the concerns of key users of Got Ramogi for example, religious groups, firewood gatherers among others. Tender for a strategic hospitality investor is required to build along the beach, hospitality facilities such as hotels, restaurants, and shelters for sitting.

Sports committee strategy to liaise with community members who have previously participated in boat racing and cultural troupe dance in order to form and operationalise the sports events committee.

Strategy for reconstructing Ramogi homestead and artefacts—Identify and initiate discussions with elders having in-depth knowledge on Ramogi tradition and cultural history so as to work together with the architect in coming up with structures and settings that reflect to a greater extent the initial Ramogi homestead. Collect traditional artefacts such as clay pots, spears and hoes owned by the local community of Got Ramogi that bear a closer architectural design with the ancient Ramogi artefacts. Engage existing potters to mould clay pots following the design that existed in the times of Ramogi.

Strategy for sustainable harvesting of medicinal plants—identify and conduct inventory of medicinal plants; establish a tree nursery for medicinal plants; sensitise medicinal plant users on good harvesting practices.

Strategy for training tour guides, naturalist and nature based entrepreneurs—undertake a training needs assessment; advertise for potential guides and naturalist from the local community; Identify CBOs from Got Ramogi region capable of operating nature based enterprises; Liaise with Ecotourism Kenya, National Museums of Kenya in order to get trainers; liaise with small-scale microfinance organisations such as K-Rep for entrepreneurial skills training.

Strategy for coming up with community owned and operated low cost tourist accommodation units—liaise with the Got Ramogi management authority to have land close to or within Got Ramogi set aside for the accommodation units; In consultation with the architect and elders having in-depth cultural information about Got Ramogi, come up with accommodation units that largely exhibit Ramogi architecture.

Benefit sharing arrangement strategy to involve key stakeholders namely the Local community adjacent to Got Ramogi (within 3 km from the hill), Management authority of Got Ramogi, Kenya Forestry Research Institute, Kenya Wildlife Service and representatives from other areas that have shown successful tourist benefit sharing arrangement such as Lewa Conservancy, Arabuko Sokoke Forest, Kakamega Forest, and Maasai Mara National Reserve group ranches (Goma, 2007).

Strategy for passing cultural beliefs and practices to younger generation—Organise meetings between the elders and the younger generation in which Ramogi cultural practices and beliefs would be taught and passed to the latter; Hold cultural days within the year to sensitise the locals about Ramogi cultural practices and beliefs.

Strategy for constructing a demonstration fish pond that has traditional fish which is found in the surrounding lakes and the swamp—In liaison with the architect, have one of the fish ponds proposed for the precincts of Ramogi's traditional huts set aside for this purpose.

Conservation of Got Ramogi and the environs—Part of tourism revenue earned from nature based enterprises and low cost accommodation facilities will be directed to conservation of Got Ramogi and the surrounding tourism attraction features such as the papyrus reeds, archaeological sites among others. The farmers will also be sensitised on the need to conserve the papyrus reeds and important archaeological sites through chief's meeting and agricultural extension services; Fences will also be put up around important archaeological sites.

Strategy for developing tools for promoting the destination such as brochures, pamphlets, web pages, radio and television advertisements—Identify important tourist features of Got Ramogi and the surrounding areas that should be used in promoting the destination; Tender for a competent printer and web designer; Identify local, national and international radio and television stations to market touristic features in Got Ramogi and the surrounding areas.

Conclusion

Got Ramogi has diverse ecotourism products that if well managed, and promoted according to this development plan can enhance local livelihood through revenue generation from local, regional and international visitors who will come to enjoy these scenic attractions. The local people should also be empowered to be able to manage their natural and cultural products.

REFERENCES

- Goma, J.K., (2007). *National Inventory of Ecotourism Projects in Kenya, Ford Foundation Office for Eastern Africa (2003-2005)*. Nairobi: Ecotourism Society of Kenya.
- Jaetzold, R. (1982). *Farm management handbook of Kenya: natural conditions and farm management information*. Vol.II/A. Ministry of Agriculture, Nairobi
- Hayombe, P.O.; Agong', S.G.; Nystrom, M., Mossberg, L.; Malbert, B., Odede, F. (2012). Upscaling ecotourism in Kisumu city and its environs: Local community perspective. *International Journal of Business and Social Research (IJBSR)* 2, 7, 158-174.
- Hayombe, P.O. (2011). Environmental implications within a city-lake interface: Planning and management of Kisumu Municipality. Germany: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Herbich, I. (2002). The Luo. In C. Ember, M., Ember & I. Skoggard (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of World Cultures Supplement* (pp. 189–194). New York: Macmillan.
- Honey, M. (2008). *Ecotourism and sustainable development: Who own paradise? 2nd ed.* Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Kairu, J. K. (2001). Wetland use and impact on Lake Victoria, Kenya Region. *Lakes & Reservoirs and Management*, 6, 117-125.
- Kenya Wildlife Service (2004). *Visitor numbers to Kakamega Forest Reserve 2000-2004*, Kakamega office.

- Lake Victoria Environmental Management Project (LVEMP) (2005). *Lake victoria environment report on water quality and ecosystem status: Winam Gulf and river basins in Kenya*. Kisumu: LVEMP.
- Mayaka, M. A.; & Prasad, H. (2012). Tourism in Kenya: An analysis of strategic issues and challenges. *Elsevier, Tourism Management Perspectives, 1*, 48-56.
- Miruka, O. (1994). *Encounter with oral literature*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Ochieng', W.R. (1985). *A History of Kenya*. Nairobi: Macmillan.
- Ogot, B. A. (1967). *History of the southern Luo: Migration and settlement, 1500-1900*, Series: *peoples of East Africa (Vol.1)*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
- Odede, A. Z.F. (2000). *An Investigation into stone structures and earthworks in Bondo Division, Lake Victoria Basin, Kenya*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi.
- Odhiambo, A. E., & Odede, F.Z.A., (2012). Cultural Heritage and the Socialization Process: A Study of Ramogi Hill. *International Journal of Business and Social Research (IJBSR) 2, 4*, 87-96.
- Republic of Kenya (2010). *Sessional paper no.1 of 2010 on enhancing sustainable tourism in Kenya*. Ministry of Tourism, Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Republic of Kenya (2006). World Resource Institute and International Livestock Research (2006). *Nature's benefit to Kenya: An atlas of Ecosystem and Human well-being*.
- Robertshaw, P.T. (1993). Gogo Falls excavation at a complex archaeological site, east of Lake Victoria. *Azania 26*, 65-195.
- Sigu, G.O., Omenda. T.O., Ongugo, P.O. & Opiyo, A., (nd). "Sacred Groves Institutions, Rule Enforcement and Impact on Forest Condition: The Case of Ramogi Hill Forest Reserve' Kenya. Retrieved from www.cbd.in/doc/case-studies/for/cs

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper was developed as a result of Kisumu Location Interation (KLIP) research project of MISTRA URBAN FUTURES global programme with funds from Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in collaboration with Chalmers University of Technology and Gothenburg University in Sweden, Bondo University College, Maseno University and Kisumu City Council under the Kisumu Action Team (KAT). The agenda of fair, green and dense in urban areas, which is a pro-poor with a focus for just cities, green cities and growing cities framework to involve the local population and leverage them from poverty. Policy making for ecotourism transformation must embrace local participation and be able to upscale immediate benefits as a positive motivating factor.