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Unlocking Rural Prosperity: The Role of Adventure Recreation Facilities in Enhancing Livelihoods in Nyeri County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary governance increasingly acknowledges adventure tourism as a strategic imperative for responsible and sustainable economic growth, yielding multifaceted societal benefits. This recognition stems from empirical evidence demonstrating the positive impact of adventure tourism on environmental conservation, community well-being, and regional economic prosperity. Given the pervasive influence of tourism on modern society, rigorous scholarly inquiry is essential to maximize its potential benefits. This study aimed to evaluate the contribution of adventure recreation facilities to rural livelihoods in Nyeri County. Specifically, the objectives were twofold: to assess the extent to which the development of adventure recreation facilities has increased household income among rural communities in Nyeri County, and to analyze how this development has diversified employment opportunities for rural residents within the same geographical area. The theoretical framework for this research was underpinned by the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (Ashley & Carney, 1999) and the Growth Pole Theory (Perroux, 1955; Homans, 1961). An exploratory research design was adopted. The target population comprised 248,050 household heads in Nyeri County, as per the 2019 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) census. A sample size of 384 respondents, consisting of rural household heads, was determined using Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1977). Cluster sampling was employed to divide the sample into the eight sub-counties of Nyeri County, followed by simple random sampling for proportional allocation of respondents within each sub-county. Data were collected via a survey method utilizing close-ended questionnaires. The collected data were coded and subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Results were presented through tables and figures. The findings unequivocally indicate a significant contribution of adventure recreation facilities to rural livelihoods. Quantitatively, it was revealed that adventure recreation facilities accounted for a 20.8% change in rural livelihoods. The study concluded adventure recreation facilities exerted a demonstrable impact on rural livelihoods in Nyeri County. To enhance rural livelihoods in Nyeri County, the study recommends collaborative initiatives between national and county governments and local residents. These initiatives should focus on imparting knowledge and skills pertinent to tourism development, providing investment incentives to foster further development of adventure recreation facilities, and intensifying the marketing of domestic tourism.

Key Terms:

Tourism, adventure recreation, rural livelihoods, local communities, sustainability

