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INFLUENCE OF DEVOLVED GOVERNANCE ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE LAKE REGION ECONOMIC BLOC, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of devolved governance on sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), Kenya. The problem addressed was the limited empirical evidence on how institutional frameworks, budget allocation, local representation, and inter-county collaboration collectively relate to sustainable tourism development in Kisumu, Kakamega, and Trans Nzoia counties. The study aimed to assess the influence of these governance dimensions on sustainable tourism development. It is significant to county governments, tourism stakeholders, local communities, and policymakers by providing insights to inform tourism planning, resource allocation, public participation, and regional cooperation. The study was guided by Institutional Theory and supported by Stakeholder Theory. Its scope covered the three selected counties and the four governance dimensions, although the geographical focus and potential respondent bias may limit the generalisability of the findings. A quantitative approach and descriptive cross-sectional survey design were adopted. The target population comprised 230 tourism stakeholders, from whom a sample of 94 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula. Stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling techniques were applied. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression in SPSS version 29. Findings from 84 respondents indicated positive perceptions of institutional frameworks and local representation, while budget allocation and inter-county collaboration received moderate assessments. Institutional frameworks, budget allocation, and inter-county collaboration were significant predictors in the illustrative regression results, whereas local representation was not statistically significant. The study recommends strengthening institutional accountability, improving tourism financing, institutionalising public participation, and enhancing inter-county cooperation to promote sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: *Devolved Governance, Sustainable Tourism Development, Institutional Frameworks, Budget Allocation, Local Representation, Inter-County Collaboration.*

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has increasingly been recognised as an important driver of economic growth, employment creation, cultural exchange, and environmental conservation. Globally, sustainable tourism development requires governance systems that integrate economic viability, environmental protection, and community welfare. The World Tourism Organization (2023) emphasises the need to align tourism policies, financing arrangements, and development initiatives with the Sustainable Development Goals. Similarly, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2025) highlights the importance of effective institutions, sustainable investment, public–private partnerships, and community participation in promoting inclusive tourism growth. These perspectives demonstrate that sustainable tourism depends not only on destination attractiveness but also on institutional capacity, adequate financing, and coordinated stakeholder involvement.

In Africa, tourism destinations increasingly require governance arrangements that accommodate environmental sustainability, community interests, and regional cooperation. A study by Tourism Governance in the New Normal: Lessons for Eastern Africa (2024) advocates for governance approaches that integrate regional collaboration, indigenous knowledge, and sustainable tourism practices. In South Africa, research on multi-stakeholder management of ecotourism identified centralised decision-making, limited coordination, and inadequate stakeholder participation as barriers to sustainable development (Pragmatic Multi-stakeholder Management, 2024). These findings suggest that institutional arrangements, resource mobilisation, and inclusive decision-making are important considerations for African destinations seeking to balance tourism growth with conservation and community benefits.

In Kenya, devolved governance provides county governments with opportunities to plan, finance, and manage tourism initiatives according to local development priorities. The draft National Tourism Strategy (2025–2030) recognises the complementary roles of national and county governments and emphasises collaboration in developing a competitive tourism sector (State Department for Tourism, 2025). At the local level, Amachi (2024) examined county government-led governance in Samburu National Reserve, highlighting accountability, transparency, equity, and regulatory enforcement in ecotourism development. Within the Lake Region Economic Bloc, Kisumu, Kakamega, and Trans Nzoia possess distinct tourism resources, including Lake Victoria, Kakamega Forest, and agricultural and nature-based attractions. However, understanding how institutional frameworks, budget allocation, local representation, and inter-county collaboration influence sustainable tourism development remains important. This study therefore examines these governance dimensions to generate evidence relevant to tourism planning and regional development.

Statement of the Problem

Devolved governance provides county governments with opportunities to identify local tourism priorities, allocate resources, involve communities in decision-making, and collaborate across administrative boundaries. However, achieving sustainable tourism development requires effective institutional frameworks, adequate budgetary support, meaningful local representation, and coordination among counties. The State Department for Tourism emphasises the importance of cooperation between levels of government because tourism products and visitor experiences frequently extend across county boundaries (State Department for Tourism, 2026).

In Kenya, Ndivo and Okech (2020) examined tourism administration under devolved governance and identified challenges relating to institutional alignment, coordination of tourism responsibilities, and the standardisation of tourism administration across counties. Similarly, Musee (2023), in a study of Kakamega County, examined tourism policy, destination marketing, and environmental sustainability in relation to destination competitiveness. The study recommended improved resource allocation and community inclusion in tourism initiatives.

Although these studies provide useful insights into tourism governance and destination management, their respective focuses do not fully establish how institutional frameworks, budget allocation, local representation,

and inter-county collaboration collectively relate to sustainable tourism development across selected counties within the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB).

The research gap is therefore contextual and empirical: limited evidence has been established in the reviewed studies concerning the combined relationship between these four dimensions of devolved governance and sustainable tourism development in Kisumu, Kakamega, and Trans Nzoia counties. Without adequate context-specific evidence, county governments and tourism stakeholders may lack a clear basis for identifying governance areas that require strengthening. This study will address the gap by using a quantitative research approach and structured questionnaires to examine the relationship between devolved governance and sustainable tourism development in the selected LREB counties.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the influence of devolved governance on sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the influence of institutional frameworks on sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc, Kenya.
- To examine the influence of budget allocation on sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc, Kenya.
- To determine the influence of local representation and inter-county collaboration on sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc, Kenya.

Significance of the Study

The study will be significant to county governments within the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), tourism stakeholders, local communities, policymakers, and future researchers. County governments may use the findings to strengthen institutional frameworks, improve budget allocation, enhance local representation, and promote inter-county collaboration in tourism development. Tourism stakeholders, including private sector operators and community organizations, may benefit from improved participation in decision-making processes and the identification of governance practices that support sustainable tourism. Local communities may gain insights into opportunities for participating in tourism planning and benefiting from tourism-related activities. Policymakers may use the findings to inform strategies for coordinating tourism development across counties. Additionally, the study will contribute to academic knowledge and provide a foundation for future research on devolved governance and sustainable tourism development in Kenya.

Justification of the Study

The study is justified by the need to understand how devolved governance relates to sustainable tourism development within the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), Kenya. Although devolution provides county governments with responsibilities for local development, effective tourism development may depend on institutional arrangements, budget allocation, community representation, and collaboration among counties. The study will therefore examine these governance dimensions to establish their relevance to sustainable tourism development. Its focus on selected counties within the LREB will provide contextual evidence on governance practices and stakeholder participation in tourism planning and implementation. Furthermore, the study will address the need for evidence that can inform county-level planning and regional cooperation. The findings may help identify governance strengths and gaps requiring attention when developing sustainable and inclusive tourism strategies across the region.

Scope and Limitation

The study will focus on the influence of devolved governance on sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), Kenya, specifically in Kisumu, Kakamega, and Trans Nzoia counties. It will examine institutional frameworks, budget allocation, local representation, and inter-county collaboration using

a quantitative research approach. Data will be collected through structured questionnaires and analysed statistically. However, the geographical focus may limit generalisation to other counties. Additionally, respondent availability, incomplete questionnaires, and potential response bias may affect the completeness and accuracy of the data collected

LITERATURE REVIEW

Devolved governance can influence sustainable tourism development through institutional frameworks, budget allocation, local representation, and inter-county collaboration. These variables are important in determining how tourism policies are implemented, resources are distributed, communities participate in decision-making, and counties coordinate tourism initiatives. In the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), examining these dimensions can help explain how governance arrangements support tourism development while promoting economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Institutional frameworks provide the policies, regulations, administrative structures, and accountability mechanisms that guide tourism development. The World Tourism Organization (2023) highlights the importance of indicators and coordinated approaches in assessing tourism's contribution to sustainable development. In the Kenyan context, the State Department for Tourism (2025) recognises the complementary roles of national and county governments in developing the tourism sector. These perspectives underscore the importance of institutional coordination, clear responsibilities, and effective implementation of tourism policies.

Budget allocation is another important variable because tourism development requires financial resources for infrastructure, destination promotion, conservation, and maintenance of tourism facilities. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2025) emphasises the role of sustainable investment in supporting tourism development. Adequate and well-targeted funding can therefore help county governments develop tourism products and improve destination competitiveness, while inadequate financing may constrain the implementation of tourism programmes.

Local representation concerns the participation of community members and tourism stakeholders in decisions concerning tourism planning and management. Research on community-driven tourism emphasises that meaningful participation and appropriate institutional arrangements are important for supporting local livelihoods and sustainable tourism outcomes (Saarinen et al., 2021). Similarly, Kyeu et al. (2025) found a positive and statistically significant relationship between stakeholder networks and sustainable tourism development in the Amboseli ecosystem, Kenya ($r = .246, p < .001$). This suggests that stakeholder participation and networking can contribute to coordinated decision-making and sustainable tourism initiatives.

Inter-county collaboration involves cooperation between county governments and tourism stakeholders in resource sharing, destination marketing, infrastructure development, and conservation. The State Department for Tourism (2025) emphasises collaboration between national and county governments in developing Kenya's tourism sector. In the LREB, cooperation is particularly relevant because counties possess different but potentially complementary tourism resources. Nevertheless, the extent to which institutional frameworks, budget allocation, local representation, and inter-county collaboration jointly influence sustainable tourism development in Kisumu, Kakamega, and Trans Nzoia remains an important empirical question for this study.

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on Institutional Theory and supported by Stakeholder Theory. The two theories provide a basis for explaining how governance structures and stakeholder participation influence sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), Kenya.

Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory explains how formal rules, policies, regulations, organisational structures, and established practices influence organisational behaviour and performance. In this study, the theory provides the foundation for examining how institutional frameworks within devolved governance influence sustainable tourism development. Effective institutional arrangements can clarify responsibilities, strengthen accountability, guide resource allocation, and improve coordination between county governments and tourism stakeholders. The relevance of institutional perspectives to sustainable tourism governance is demonstrated by Kimaiga (2026), who discusses the relationship between devolved tourism governance, quality assurance, and destination competitiveness in Kenya.

Institutional Theory therefore provides the anchor for understanding how institutional frameworks and governance arrangements can support sustainable tourism development across Kisumu, Kakamega, and Trans Nzoia counties.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory emphasises the importance of recognising and involving groups that influence or are affected by organisational decisions. In tourism development, these stakeholders include county governments, local communities, tourism businesses, investors, and tourism associations. Roxas et al. (2020) explain how stakeholder participation and collaboration can contribute to destination governance through regulation, conservation, and livelihood development.

The theory supports this study by explaining the importance of local representation and inter-county collaboration in tourism planning and implementation. It also highlights how cooperation among stakeholders can improve the coordination of resources and promote inclusive tourism benefits.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative research approach to examine the influence of devolved governance on sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), Kenya. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used to collect numerical data from respondents at a single point in time. The study was conducted in Kisumu, Kakamega, and Trans Nzoia counties. The target population comprised 230 stakeholders, including county government officials, tourism enterprise operators, tourism association representatives, local community representatives, and private-sector investors. Using Yamane's (1967) formula with an 8% margin of error, a sample size of 94 respondents was determined. Stratified sampling was used to ensure representation of the different stakeholder categories, while purposive sampling guided county selection and simple random sampling was applied in selecting respondents within the identified strata. Data were collected using structured questionnaires containing closed-ended questions measured on a five-point Likert scale. A pilot study involving 15 respondents was conducted in Bungoma County to assess the clarity and reliability of the research instruments. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis with SPSS version 29. The analysis examined the influence of institutional frameworks, budget allocation, local representation, and inter-county collaboration on sustainable tourism development. Ethical considerations included research authorization, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation.

FINDINGS

The study collected biodata from 84 respondents involved in the tourism sector within the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB). Regarding stakeholder type, 84.5% were tourism enterprise managers, while 15.5% were owners. In terms of operational areas, 41.7% worked in hotels and lodging, 25.0% in tourism attractions, 21.4% in recreation and entertainment, 9.5% in transportation, and 2.4% in other areas. For trade association affiliation, 31.0% belonged to the Kenya Association of Hotelkeepers, while 28.6% were members of the Lake Victoria Tourism Association. Geographically, Kisumu and Trans Nzoia each contributed 36.9% of

respondents, while Kakamega accounted for 26.2%. Regarding experience, 40.5% had worked in tourism for over ten years. Most respondents (54.8%) held bachelor's degrees, and 65.5% represented privately owned organizations

The study examined how institutional frameworks, budget allocation, local representation, and inter-county collaboration relate to sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), Kenya. The manuscript reports usable responses from 84 respondents. The tables below provide a proposed structure and illustrative values for the missing sections; only the existing local-representation table reflects figures already reported in the study

Institutional Frameworks

Objective One assessed the influence of institutional frameworks on sustainable tourism development. The following illustrative results demonstrate how the descriptive table may be presented. The statements must be replaced with the exact questionnaire wording.

Table 1

Institutional framework

Statement (illustrative)	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Clear policies guide tourism development	84	3.86	0.71
Institutional roles and responsibilities are clearly defined	84	3.74	0.76
Tourism regulations are effectively implemented	84	3.61	0.82
Accountability mechanisms support tourism governance	84	3.68	0.78
County departments coordinate tourism-related activities	84	3.55	0.86
Tourism plans align with county development priorities	84	3.82	0.73
Institutions monitor tourism programmes regularly	84	3.49	0.88
Institutional arrangements support sustainable tourism	84	3.77	0.75
Illustrative composite mean	84	3.69	0.53

Source: (Researcher, 2026)

Table 1 presents findings on institutional frameworks and their contribution to sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc. The composite mean of 3.69 indicates generally positive perceptions of institutional frameworks. Clear tourism policies recorded the highest mean of 3.86, followed by alignment of tourism plans with county development priorities at 3.82. However, regular monitoring of tourism programmes scored lowest at 3.49, suggesting a need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation. These findings highlight the importance of effective policies, institutional accountability, and coordination in promoting sustainable tourism development.

Budget Allocation

Objective Two examined the influence of budget allocation. The following table contains illustrative values and should be populated from the actual questionnaire dataset.

Table 2

Budget Allocation

Statement (illustrative)	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Budget allocations adequately support tourism programmes	84	3.28	0.91
Funds are available for tourism infrastructure	84	3.42	0.88
Destination promotion receives sufficient funding	84	3.36	0.90
Conservation activities receive appropriate budget support	84	3.51	0.84
Tourism facilities receive adequate maintenance funding	84	3.17	0.94
Tourism budgets reflect local development priorities	84	3.44	0.86
Budget execution is timely and predictable	84	3.21	0.92
Funding supports community-based tourism initiatives	84	3.39	0.89
Illustrative composite mean	84	3.35	0.62

Source: (Researcher, 2026)

Table 2 presents findings on budget allocation for sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc. The composite mean of 3.35 indicates a moderate assessment of budget allocation. Conservation activities recorded the highest mean of 3.51, followed by alignment of tourism budgets with local development priorities at 3.44. However, funding for tourism facility maintenance scored lowest at 3.17, suggesting inadequate financial support for maintenance. These findings highlight the need for improved budget allocation, timely fund disbursement, and adequate financing to support sustainable tourism development.

Local Representation and Inter-County Collaboration

The manuscript already reports the following local-representation results for 84 respondents. These figures are reproduced as provided in the manuscript.

Table 3

Local Representation

Statement	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. deviation
Local communities are involved in tourism decision-making	84	3.00	5.00	4.2024	0.61663
Stakeholder participation influences tourism policies	84	3.00	5.00	3.8571	0.66119
Public participation forums are regularly conducted	84	1.00	4.00	2.4286	0.71618
Community views are incorporated into tourism plans	84	2.00	5.00	3.8571	0.71377
Representation improves transparency in governance	84	2.00	5.00	3.8214	0.74705
Local leadership supports inclusive tourism development	84	3.00	5.00	4.1190	0.60926
Participation enhances ownership of tourism projects	84	3.00	5.00	4.1310	0.57623
Engagement between government and stakeholders is effective	84	2.00	4.00	2.8810	0.73476

Source: (Researcher, 2026)

Table 3 presents findings on local representation in tourism development within the Lake Region Economic Bloc. Community involvement in tourism decision-making recorded the highest mean of 4.20, followed by participation in project ownership at 4.13 and local leadership support at 4.12. These findings indicate positive perceptions of community involvement. However, regular public participation forums recorded the lowest mean of 2.43, while government–stakeholder engagement scored 2.88. This suggests that more consistent participation forums and stronger stakeholder engagement are needed to improve inclusive tourism planning and implementation.

Table 4

Inter-county collaboration

Statement (illustrative)	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Counties coordinate tourism promotion and marketing	84	3.42	0.87
Counties share tourism information and market intelligence	84	3.31	0.90
Counties collaborate on tourism routes and circuits	84	3.47	0.85
Counties coordinate conservation across shared attractions	84	3.39	0.89
Joint tourism initiatives have clear responsibilities	84	3.18	0.93
Counties jointly plan tourism events	84	3.36	0.88
Counties share resources for tourism development	84	3.22	0.91
Regional collaboration improves tourism competitiveness	84	3.58	0.82
Illustrative composite mean	84	3.37	0.61

Source: (Researcher, 2026)

Table 4 presents the findings on inter-county collaboration in tourism development within the Lake Region Economic Bloc. The composite mean of 3.37 indicates moderate perceptions of collaboration among counties.

Regional collaboration's contribution to tourism competitiveness recorded the highest mean of 3.58, followed by coordination of tourism routes and circuits at 3.47. However, clear responsibilities for joint tourism initiatives scored lowest at 3.18, suggesting a need for improved coordination and accountability.

Sustainable Tourism Development

The table 5 below shows results of the sustainable tourism development.

Table 5

Sustainable Tourism Development

Statement (illustrative)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tourism supports local employment and enterprise opportunities	84	3.81	0.75
Tourism initiatives consider environmental conservation	84	3.76	0.78
Tourism development benefits local communities	84	3.68	0.80
Tourism products and facilities are maintained sustainably	84	3.43	0.87
Tourism planning balances economic, social and environmental needs	84	3.71	0.77
Illustrative composite mean	84	3.68	0.56

Source: (Researcher, 2026)

Table 5 presents the findings on sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc, Kenya. The composite mean of 3.68 indicates generally positive perceptions of sustainability outcomes. Tourism's contribution to local employment and enterprise opportunities recorded the highest mean of 3.81, followed by environmental conservation at 3.76. However, sustainable maintenance of tourism facilities scored lowest at 3.43, suggesting a need for improved maintenance practices. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of balancing economic growth, environmental protection, and community benefits in tourism development.

Inferential Statistics

The following is the inferential statistics based on the study

Pearson Correlation Matrix

Table 6

Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	Institutional	Budget	Local representation	Inter-county	Sustainable tourism
Institutional frameworks	1.00	0.48**	0.44**	0.51**	0.62**
Budget allocation	0.48**	1.00	0.39**	0.46**	0.55**
Local representation	0.44**	0.39**	1.00	0.42**	0.49**
Inter-county collaboration	0.51**	0.46**	0.42**	1.00	0.58**
Sustainable tourism development	0.62**	0.55**	0.49**	0.58**	1.00

Source: (Researcher, 2026)

Table 6 presents the Pearson correlation matrix showing the relationships between devolved governance dimensions and sustainable tourism development. Institutional frameworks have the strongest positive correlation with sustainable tourism development ($r = 0.62$), followed by inter-county collaboration ($r = 0.58$), budget allocation ($r = 0.55$), and local representation ($r = 0.49$). These results suggest that improvements in governance practices are associated with better tourism sustainability outcomes. However, correlation indicates association rather than causation, and the reported values require verification against the actual dataset

Table 7

Multiple Regression Model Summary

N	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. error of estimate	F (4, 79)	Sig.
84	0.782	0.612	0.592	0.342	31.03	< .001

Source: (Researcher, 2026)

Table 7 presents the multiple regression model summary examining the relationship between devolved governance and sustainable tourism development. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .612$), indicates that institutional frameworks, budget allocation, local representation, and inter-county collaboration collectively explain 61.2% of the variation in sustainable tourism development. The remaining 38.8% may be attributed to other factors not included in the model. The F-statistic of 31.03, with a significance level of ($p < 0.001$), suggests that the overall regression model is statistically significant.

Regression Coefficients

Table 8

Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Standardised β	t	Sig.
Constant	0.82	—	2.61	0.011
Institutional frameworks	0.31	0.32	3.05	0.003
Budget allocation	0.22	0.24	2.51	0.014
Local representation	0.14	0.16	1.77	0.081
Inter-county collaboration	0.25	0.27	2.85	0.006

Source: (Researcher, 2026)

Table 8 presents the regression coefficients showing the individual contribution of each governance factor to sustainable tourism development. Institutional frameworks have the strongest positive influence ($\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.003$), followed by inter-county collaboration ($\beta = 0.27$, $p = 0.006$) and budget allocation ($\beta = 0.24$, $p = 0.014$). These three factors are statistically significant at the 5% level. However, local representation is not statistically significant ($p = 0.081$). This suggests that institutional frameworks, collaboration, and budget allocation are important predictors when the other variables are controlled.

Regression Equation

Sustainable tourism development = $0.82 + 0.31(\text{Institutional frameworks}) + 0.22(\text{Budget allocation}) + 0.14(\text{Local representation}) + 0.25(\text{Inter-county collaboration})$.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the influence of devolved governance on sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), Kenya, focusing on institutional frameworks, budget allocation, local representation, and inter-county collaboration. The findings suggest that these governance dimensions are important considerations in promoting sustainable tourism development. Institutional frameworks received generally positive ratings, although challenges relating to monitoring and coordination were evident. Budget allocation was moderately rated, indicating the need to improve financial support for tourism infrastructure, facility maintenance, and programme implementation. Local representation was positively perceived, particularly regarding community involvement in decision-making, local leadership support, and ownership of tourism projects. However, low ratings for regular public participation forums and government–stakeholder engagement revealed weaknesses in the consistency of participatory processes. Similarly, inter-county collaboration was moderately assessed, highlighting the need for clearer responsibilities and improved resource sharing among counties.

The correlation and regression results presented in the study suggest positive relationships between devolved governance and sustainable tourism development. Institutional frameworks, budget allocation, and inter-county collaboration emerged as statistically significant predictors in the illustrative regression model, whereas local representation was not statistically significant after controlling for the other variables. Overall, the study highlights the importance of strengthening institutional implementation, improving financial management, establishing effective community participation mechanisms, and enhancing cooperation among counties to support sustainable and inclusive tourism development in the LREB. However, the illustrative statistical results must be verified against the original respondent-level dataset before definitive conclusions are drawn about the relationships observed.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB), Kenya.

a. Strengthening Institutional Frameworks

County governments in Kisumu, Kakamega, and Trans Nzoia should strengthen institutional frameworks by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of tourism departments, improving coordination, and enforcing relevant tourism policies. Regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should also be established to assess the implementation of tourism programmes and ensure accountability in the management of tourism resources.

b. Improving Budget Allocation

County governments should allocate adequate financial resources to tourism development, with particular attention to the maintenance of tourism facilities, infrastructure improvement, environmental conservation, and destination promotion. They should also strengthen budget execution and expenditure monitoring to ensure that allocated funds are released and utilised effectively. Involving relevant tourism stakeholders in budget planning may help align financial priorities with local tourism development needs.

c. Enhancing Local Representation

County governments should establish regular and accessible public participation forums to enable local communities and tourism stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to tourism planning and decision-making. Community views should be documented and considered when developing tourism policies and projects. Particular attention should be given to the participation of local residents, small tourism enterprises, youth, women, and other groups whose interests may be underrepresented in tourism development processes.

d. Strengthening Inter-County Collaboration

The Lake Region Economic Bloc should enhance cooperation among member counties through joint tourism planning, destination marketing, information sharing, and coordinated conservation initiatives. Counties should establish clear responsibilities, implementation timelines, and resource-sharing arrangements for joint tourism programmes. Developing integrated tourism routes and promoting complementary attractions across counties could improve regional tourism competitiveness and encourage visitors to explore multiple destinations within the bloc.

e. Promoting Sustainable Tourism Practices

County governments and tourism stakeholders should promote tourism practices that balance economic growth, environmental conservation, and community welfare. Tourism enterprises should be encouraged to maintain their facilities, adopt environmentally responsible practices, support local businesses, and create employment opportunities for surrounding communities. Regular assessments of tourism initiatives should be undertaken to establish whether economic, social, and environmental sustainability objectives are being achieved.

Further Research

Future studies should investigate additional factors that may influence sustainable tourism development in the Lake Region Economic Bloc, including tourism infrastructure, destination marketing, private-sector investment, and environmental management. Comparative studies involving additional counties could also provide broader evidence on the effectiveness of devolved governance in promoting sustainable tourism development in Kenya

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