

## **The Development of Coastal Tourism in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Assessing Awareness and Adherence to Principles of Ecotourism**

*Swai, Ombeni\* & Shubira Kalugila<sup>§</sup>*

### **Abstract**

The development of coastal tourism in Dar es Salaam presents a strategic opportunity for economic diversification, but risks significant environmental and socio-cultural footprints if unguided. This paper critically assesses the adherence to ecotourism principles in this rapid development. Using a mixed-methods and a multiple-case study approach, it evaluated eleven facilities across three sites (Ununio, Kunduchi, and Mbezi Beach) against parameters of beach management, architectural form/technology, and local community involvement. Key findings reveal an overall low level of adherence to ecotourism principles. While professional awareness was high among architects (85%), it was inconsistent among other stakeholders. Benefits to local communities were unevenly distributed: 60.5% of connected fishermen reported gains, yet 75% of non-involved residents felt excluded. Facility types influenced outcomes, with resorts being more community-accessible than restrictive hotels. Foreign tourists (84%) strongly preferred pristine and nature-integrated developments over modern constructions. The study concludes that current development patterns are not aligned with sustainable paradigms. It recommends an integrated policy framework enforcing ecotourism guidelines, mandatory stakeholder education, and inclusive planning to ensure coastal tourism balances economic growth with environmental conservation and equitable community benefits.

**Keywords:** *architecture, community, ecotourism, footprint, coastal tourism*

### **1. Introduction**

Over the past decade, tourism industry has undergone a significant paradigm shift that is characterized by its transformation into new forms and approaches. A notable development in this transformation is the emergence of ecotourism, which integrates socio-cultural, economic, environmental, and ecological considerations into tourism practices. While traditional tourism has historically contributed to economic development—particularly through foreign currency earnings—it has been criticized for its limited ability to engage stakeholders, professionals, residents, and local communities effectively (Malleo & Mtengwa, 2018; Honey & Gilpin, 2010) Furthermore, the benefits of tourism products and

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packages often fail to reach grassroots communities, resulting in a lack of ownership and participation among these populations. This disconnect represents a significant challenge for the tourism industry, as it undermines the potential for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Coastal tourism, one of the most prevalent forms of tourism, is particularly prominent in urban areas, where its immediate impacts are most visible to urban residents and coastal communities. The strategic location of coastal regions has established them as key tourist attractions globally. According to the World Tourism Organisation, tourism is the world's largest industry in terms of employment and economic impact (UNWTO, 2018). This has prompted many nations to prioritize the development of coastal areas as a means of expanding their tourism sectors and generating increased revenue. Consequently, coastal and marine tourism has emerged as a distinct category, encompassing recreational activities that involve travel to marine environments or coastal zones (Orams, 2018)

Beyond tourism, coastal areas are home to highly productive ecosystems that support rich biodiversity, fishery resources, and valuable seabed minerals. These regions are also hubs of economic activity, hosting industries such as fishing, shipping, and oil and gas extraction. However, the concentration of these activities has led to densely populated coastal areas, placing significant stress on limited coastal resources and ecosystems. The resulting socio-economic pressures have contributed to numerous challenges, including beach and marine pollution, biodiversity loss, erosion of local cultures and identities, and degradation of spatial qualities. In response to these issues, ecotourism has been promoted as a sustainable development tool, aiming to balance economic growth with environmental preservation and community well-being in coastal tourism practices. This approach seeks to address the dual imperatives of economic development and ecological sustainability, ensuring the long-term viability of coastal tourism industries.

### ***1.1 Conceptualizing Ecotourism***

Ecotourism is perceived as a form of nature-based tourism within the marketplace, and has been extensively studied by researchers since the 1990s. As a result, it has been recognized as a tool for achieving sustainable development (TIES, 2015). The term encompasses two key dimensions: first, it refers to a conceptual framework guided by a set of principles; and second, it represents a specific market segment that analyses tourists based on demographic factors, geographic destinations, socioeconomic implications, and psychographic characteristics (Meghdeep, 2021). Ecotourism is also described as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and enhances the well-being of local communities. This description highlights three critical aspects: responsible travel, which emphasizes accountability and balance in

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natural settings; environmental conservation, which focuses on preserving ecological integrity; and the promotion of local welfare, encompassing economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Thus, ecotourism is not merely a means of facilitating travel, but also a mechanism for ensuring environmental sustainability. This perspective is further reinforced by the World Conservation Union, which defines ecotourism as environmentally responsible travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas (WCU, 2015). Such travel aims to appreciate nature and cultural features, both past and present; while promoting conservation, minimizing negative impacts, and fostering active socio-economic participation of local populations (ibid.).

In Tanzania, waterfront tourism development began gradually three decades ago when the government owned most of the prominent tourist hotels, including Bahari Beach, Kunduchi Beach, and Silversands hotels. The privatization of these hotels marked a turning point, encouraging private investors to develop tourist facilities along the coastline (Nditi, 2025). This rapid development has raised concerns about the awareness and application of ecotourism principles among developers, users, and local communities.

This paper presents the results of a study investigating ecotourism adherence among stakeholders, and the extent to which investors adhere to measures aimed at minimizing the cultural, ecological, and spatial footprints of waterfront development in Dar es Salaam. The study focused on three beach sites—Ununio, Kunduchi, and Mbezi—where tourist facilities are heavily concentrated.

The study posits that the accelerated expansion of tourism infrastructure along Dar es Salaam's coastline has the potential to generate more sustainable environmental, socio-cultural, and economic outcomes if the full spectrum of development stakeholders demonstrates adequate awareness of, and adherence to, established ecotourism principles. These principles—encompassing the use of locally appropriate and natural materials, meaningful participation of local communities, respect for ecological systems, and the conservation of biodiversity—are advanced as a guiding framework for physical development. Their systematic integration into tourism planning and implementation is expected to substantially mitigate the adverse environmental and social impacts commonly associated with coastal tourism development. Anchored in this premise, the study empirically assesses both the level of stakeholder awareness of ecotourism principles, and the extent to which these principles are operationalized across the three selected beach sites.

### ***1.2 Socio-economic and Environmental Benefits of Ecotourism***

Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that involves the movement of people to countries or locations outside their usual environment for personal, business, or professional purposes. Individuals who engage in such travels are referred to as visitors; and categorized as either tourists or

excursionists. These visitors can be residents or non-residents. Coastal tourism specifically pertains to activities related to travel and extended stays in coastal zones. Tourism activities are considered coastal-based when they utilize marine resources—whether natural or artificial—or are situated within a coastal strip. Over the past two decades, global tourism has experienced significant growth. In 2012, international arrivals exceeded one billion, more than doubling the figures recorded in 1990. Also, the tourism sector has demonstrated resilience in recovering from short-term economic downturns. For example, despite a decline in global arrivals in 2009 due to economic recession, the UNWTO (2007) recorded a substantial growth in the industry by 2010 and 2012. Further, the UNWTO has projected an average annual increase in international tourist arrivals of 3.3% by 2030, with Africa expected to experience an even higher growth rate of approximately 5% per annum (*ibid.*).

Consequently, this projected growth necessitates a careful balance between tourism activities, environmental conservation, and the preservation of local cultures. In many urban areas, the rapid expansion of the tourism industry has significantly impacted local cultural heritages and the natural environment. In developing countries, in particular, the implementation of robust policies is crucial to ensuring that tourism growth aligns with sustainability goals (TCMPSU, 2001). For instance, coastal tourism in California represents the state's largest 'ocean industry', contributing US\$9.9bn to the economy; compared to US\$6bn generated from ports, US\$860m from offshore oil and gas, and US\$550m from fisheries and mariculture, combined (Gössling & Stefan, 2015). Additionally, travel and tourism have contributed approximately US\$746bn to the US domestic product, accounting for nearly 10% of its total economic output. Therefore, tourism and travel are collectively the second-largest contributors to the US GDP, trailing only the wholesale and retail trade sectors (UNWTO, 2012).

Globally, tourism is increasingly being recognized as a key driver of sustainability by policymakers and global leaders. At major summits such as the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the G20, stakeholders acknowledged the potential of tourism to address some of the world's most pressing challenges (Wilson & Wheeler, 1997). However, this recognition has led to pressure on countries to develop additional tourism infrastructure for economic gain. Nevertheless, if not carefully managed, such expansion may pose threats to local climates, cultures, and environments (Houston, 1995). Therefore, top-down tourism development strategies must be complemented by country- and city-level frameworks to ensure sustainable investment in the industry. Moreover, the UNEP's (2012) Green Economy Report identifies tourism as one of the ten sectors critical to achieving a greener global economy (*ibid.*).

In many nations, coastal regions serve as primary tourism resources, attracting significant investment and infrastructure development due to their appeal.

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Coastal environments—including beaches, coral reefs, marine mammals, and culturally significant sites such as historic towns, fishing ports, and traditional markets—are particularly attractive to visitors. However, these ecosystems are highly sensitive and vulnerable to environmental degradation. Coastal areas often experience resource scarcity due to the concentrated pressure of tourism-related activities. Hence, sustainable management of land, water, and other natural resources in these regions is essential to preserving biodiversity and mitigating adverse environmental impacts (NBS, 2014).

Tanzania's tourism sector continues to thrive, remaining one of the country's primary sources of foreign exchange. Following a decline due to the 2009 global financial crisis, the industry rebounded significantly. Tourist arrivals increased by 24.1%, from 867,994 in 2010 to approximately 1,077,058 in 2011. Thus, tourism revenue rose by 26%, reaching US\$1.71bn in 2012 (Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, 2003). Also, the country is globally renowned for its coastal and marine attractions, which boast high biodiversity and rich natural resources. The country's coastal and marine ecosystems include estuaries, mangrove forests, coral reefs, sandy beaches, cliffs, seagrass beds, and tidal mudflats. These ecosystems interact to sustain a vast diversity of marine life that is vital to local coastal communities. However, species such as mangroves are highly susceptible to environmental degradation resulting from socio-economic activities. Therefore, effective conservation strategies are imperative to ensure the long-term sustainability of Tanzania's coastal tourism industry.

### ***1.3 Tourism Paradigm Shift in Tanzania***

#### *1.3.1 Coastal Tourism and Ecotourism Integration in Tanzania: A Critical Analysis*

Tanzania Mainland features an extensive coastline exceeding 800km, which plays a crucial role in the nation's development by contributing to tourism, marine biodiversity conservation, community enrichment, and nature reserve management. Despite the immense potential of this coastal resource, Tanzania has not fully capitalized on its inherent richness. Coastal tourism remains underdeveloped along the Mainland due to inadequate infrastructure, and an excessive reliance on wildlife tourism—particularly within the northern circuit (Arusha and Kilimanjaro). This focus has consequently marginalized the region's diverse cultural and natural assets, which could otherwise be harnessed to diversify tourism activities. With tourist numbers in the northern circuit approaching capacity, policymakers and industry leaders are increasingly exploring diversification away from wildlife-based tourism. The revised National Integrated Tourism Master Plan (2001) identifies coastal areas as having significant potential for tourism diversification. This paradigm shift—from a narrow focus on wildlife tourism to broader coastal development—aims to attract a larger visitor base, extend visitor stays, and ultimately enhance revenues for the government, private sector, and local communities.

The extant literature attests to both global and local potentials for tourism development, and the substantial economic gains the industry has realized. Numerous studies have contributed to our understanding of ecotourism. For instance, Melita and Mendlinger (2013) examined tourism's impact on revenue generation within local communities, demonstrating that well-integrated tourism initiatives can yield significant economic benefits. Similarly, Timothy and Suchi (n.d.) researched ecotourism and environmental awareness, emphasizing the need for tourism investors to possess environmental knowledge to safeguard local biodiversity. Additionally, investigations by Pu, Tian and Cheng (2018) and Diamantis (1999) have explored ecotourism development and its evolution and trends, respectively. Further research on ecotourism planning and nature conservation has identified ecotourism as a crucial market niche within the global tourism industry, and a popular alternative to mass tourism. Miller (2017) also highlighted the challenges and potentials of ecotourism, proposing it as an alternative strategy to mitigate issues such as overfishing and environmental degradation at tourist sites.

Despite the extensive research on ecotourism, there is a notable gap concerning the integration of architectural perspectives with ecotourism principles. This study addresses that gap by examining how a shift in investment priorities toward coastal tourism in developing countries and urban centres—such as Dar es Salaam—might lead to the depletion of natural ecosystems, local culture, and the environment, if not managed sustainably. It is, therefore, imperative to disseminate knowledge regarding ecotourism principles among stakeholders, thereby ensuring that the spatial expansion of tourism facilities harmonizes with environmental protection, cultural preservation, and community welfare. The primary objective of this paper is to correlate the spatial (architectural) realities of tourism facilities and localities with ecotourism principles. In doing so, it aims to inform the public about existing gaps, and underscore the need for an integrated policy framework to govern sustainable tourism development in Tanzania's coastal areas, particularly along the Indian Ocean and in Dar es Salaam.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### ***2.1 Theoretical Concepts Underpinning Ecotourism***

Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena, and—in many cases—to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the confines of critically bounded assumptions or behavioural predictions (Abend & Gabriel, 2008). A theoretical framework serves as a structural foundation that supports the theory underpinning a research study. It provides organized sets of concepts, principles, and relationships that assist researchers in interpreting empirical observations and data. Although this study is underpinned by several theories, three have been identified as the most appropriate lenses upon which the concepts pertaining to the study can be investigated. These are the theories

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of sustainable tourism (Butler, 1980), ecotourism paradigm (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996), and triple bottom line (Elkington, 1997). These theories were selected for their direct relevance to the key concepts of the study, and are described below in relation to the research. The sustainable tourism theory asserts that tourism evolves through several stages: exploration, stagnation, and potential decline. According to this theory, rapid tourist expansion may lead to environmental degradation, a loss of cultural integrity, and diminished economic benefits, if not managed carefully. Hence, by promoting sustainable development practices that ensure long-term viability, sustainable tourism seeks to balance environmental, social, and economic considerations. This approach aims to support local communities and ecosystems while preserving tourist destinations for future generations. The theory emphasizes that unchecked tourism growth is linked to adverse impacts, particularly for local residents, and advocates for the development and promotion of sustainable ecotourism practices to mitigate these risks.

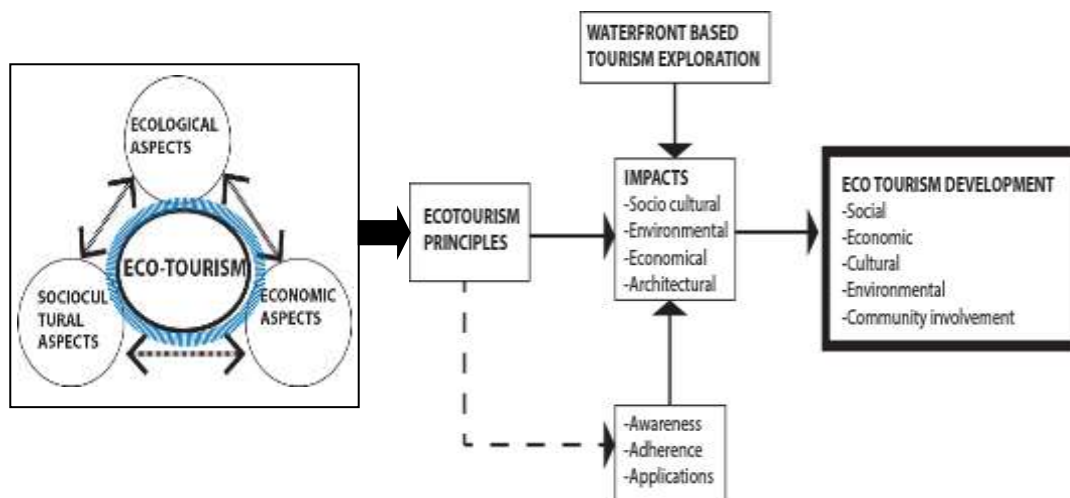
The ecotourism paradigm, as articulated by Ceballos-Lascurain (1996), defines ecotourism as ecologically responsible travel to natural regions that prioritizes ecosystem conservation, respects local cultures, and delivers economic benefits to host communities. This philosophy emphasizes minimizing environmental impacts while actively contributing to conservation efforts. Ceballos-Lascurain highlights the importance of tourist education and awareness, and the adoption of sustainable practices that enhance biodiversity, protect cultural heritage, and benefit local communities (ibid.). This paradigm has served as a foundation for the development of environmentally friendly travel policies and procedures worldwide, underscoring the necessity of minimizing disturbances to nature; while maximizing conservation efforts to maintain biodiversity, cultural legacy, and local livelihoods.

The triple bottom line (TBL) theory evaluates sustainable development by integrating three primary dimensions: environmental, social, and economic. This approach aligns with ecotourism principles by advocating for the reduction of environmental damage, the promotion of social and cultural respect, and the assurance of economic benefits for local populations. By assessing tourism initiatives through these three lenses, ecotourism can facilitate long-term and responsible development that preserves natural resources, sustains local livelihoods, and ensures economic sustainability.

In a nutshell, these three theories converge on three core tenets: providing economic benefits to local areas, fulfilling cultural and social responsibilities, and preserving the environment. These foundational concepts represent the essential principles of ecotourism, which this research evaluates by exploring the extent to which the development of the Dar es Salaam coastline adheres to these guidelines.

### 3. Conceptual Framework

The analysis of waterfront development based on tourism expansion along with the coastal areas of Dar es Salaam and its impacts on the local communities, ecological setting, and economic aspects examined the extent to which the application of the ecotourism principles can influence the architecture that will sustain and balance the welfare of the local communities, keep the identity, and serve the environment while economically benefiting investors and the surrounding communities (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework.  
Source: Author's construct, 2023

### 4. Materials and Methods

#### 4.1 Description of the Study Area

In alignment with the criteria for selecting a suitable case study, the Kunduchi Beach waterfront stretch, which hosts a variety of tourism facilities and stakeholders, was chosen for this research. Specifically, the study focused on three key beach tourism facilities: Ununio, Kunduchi, and Mbezi (Figure 2). These sites were selected due to their significant ecological potential, coastal cultural qualities, and the presence of tourism-based architectural developments that provide relevant and substantial information pertinent to the study. The selected area represents an information-rich case, making it highly relevant to the aspects under investigation. The criteria for selecting the case study area are further supported by Yin (2018) and Patton (1987), who emphasize the importance of information-richness, as elaborated by Flyvbjerg (1999). According to Patton's postulations, information-rich cases enable researchers to explore critical issues central to the research objectives; as opposed to representative cases, which rely on statistical sampling to select random and representative samples from a larger population. Patton argues

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that the strength of purposeful sampling lies in its ability to select information-rich cases that offer deep insights into the phenomenon under study. Additionally, the selection of a case study area should be guided by its relevance to the research goals, its ability to address the study's objectives, and its accessibility in terms of location and data availability.



**Figure 2: Study Area and Coastline Development in Dar es Salaam.**

Source: Author's construct, 2023

Based on these principles, the Dar es Salaam city was chosen as the case study area because it represents an information-rich case, and serves as an example of both success and challenges. Specifically, the city exemplifies the complexities of rampant development along its coastal landscape, particularly in relation to the adherence (or lack thereof) to ecotourism principles. This makes Dar es Salaam an ideal location for examining the interplay between tourism development and sustainability, as it provides a unique context for analysing both the opportunities and challenges associated with coastal tourism.

### **3.2 Methodological Framework**

The multiple-case strategy employed in this study was selected based on the research problem, objectives, and questions. This empirical investigation incorporated the experiences and observations of various stakeholders; including architects, investors, tourists, and other key informants (Yin, 2009). The data collection focused on three carefully selected coastal sites featuring tourist facilities such as beaches and hotels. Information on tourism-related physical spaces was gathered through photography, mapping, and in-depth interviews with professionals (investors, architects, urban planners, engineers, and contractors); as well as with fishermen and coastal residents. In addition to these groups, interviews were conducted with tourists (both foreign and domestic) traveling for leisure.

Four major parameters—beach management, architectural form, materials and technology, and local community involvement—were analysed as the research variables that underpin the principles of ecotourism. A sample of 40 respondents—including building consultants, tourists, fishermen, and coastal dwellers—participated as key informants. These were selected randomly as far as they had affiliation with coastal tourism (visiting, investing, developing, constructing, designing, fishing, or leaving nearby). Their responses were triangulated using both quantitative and qualitative methods, ensuring alignment with established ecotourism principles. The findings, consistent with the literature, form the basis of the study's main discourse, leading to the conclusions and recommendations presented in Nguluma (2003). Respondents' testimonials and narratives were marked as follows:

(RNLM)

Where: R means respondent

N means number in sequential order

L means Location (MB=Mbezi Beach; U=Ununio; KB=Kunduchi Beach)

M means of data collection- Interview

### **4.2 Site Exploration**

The study that generated the data for this paper employed an exploratory approach to assess stakeholder awareness and adherence to ecotourism

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principles in the development of coastal tourist facilities in Dar es Salaam. A total of eleven (11) tourist facilities were selected for in-depth analysis, with evaluations based on architectural form, construction materials, adherence to ecotourism principles, service offerings, and the level of local community involvement and accessibility. Each facility was rated using a predetermined scale—A (maximum, 5 points), B (medium, 4 points), C (average, 3 points), and D (poor, 2 points)—with the scores converted into percentages to quantify the level of ecotourism compliance.

In addition to facility assessments, stakeholder perspectives were examined through structured interviews with 40 participants, including building consultants, developers, local and international tourists, fishermen, and coastal residents. The interviews provided qualitative insights into stakeholder awareness and the practical application of ecotourism principles. As mentioned earlier, the study focused on three distinct coastal sites—Ununio Beach, Kunduchi Beach, and Mbezi Beach—chosen for their varying levels of development and tourism activity. At each site, three primary variables were assessed: beach management, architectural form and construction technology, and local community involvement in tourism-related activities.

Beach management was analysed based on factors such as garbage disposal, mangrove protection, and erosion control. Architectural form and technology were examined by documenting building styles, construction materials, and the overall layout of tourist facilities. Local community involvement was assessed by evaluating participation in economic activities such as fishing, beach sports, marine tourism, and employment within the tourism sector.

The Ununio Beach site, located approximately 0.6km from Mbweni Road, is characterized by dispersed tourist facilities and significant interaction between tourists and local community members. The economic activities include fish trading, handicrafts, and food sales, contributing to both social and financial benefits for residents. The Kunduchi Beach site, situated 0.3km from the main road, features a mix of modern and Arabic architectural styles, with hotels integrating local fishing activities. Fishermen supply seafood to hotels, and local boat operators transport tourists to Mbudya Island. Various erosion control measures, including sand replenishment and vegetation planting, have been implemented to mitigate coastal degradation. Mbezi Beach, located along the Whitesands Hotel road, is home to several high-end hotels that primarily utilize industrial materials in construction. The facilities offer a range of amenities, but access is restricted for local community members, resulting in minimal interaction between hotels and residents.

Through the evaluation of these sites, this study provides a systematic analysis of ecotourism adherence in coastal development, offering insights into best practices and areas requiring improvement. Details of the extracted information from each site was tableted as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Analysis of Adherence of the Principles of Ecotourism in the Selected Sites**

Ecotourism Principles	Beach and waste Management Protection of Mangrove and Garbage disposal	Architecture and Construction Technology (Form, Building Materials and Construction)	Involvement of Local Community
<b>Site</b>			
<b>Ununio Beach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No clear boundaries to protect mangroves,(2)</li> <li>Beach erosion, (2)</li> <li>Beach is not properly managed. (3)</li> <li>Many plastic bottles were scattered along the beach (0)</li> <li>A large area is left undeveloped where local people use for various enjoyment activities (5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structures construct withed by natural materials including coral stones, poles, coconut leaves and sticks.(5)</li> <li>Building forms are simple and rectangular, most of them temporary (4)</li> <li>The layout and the form of the building are guided by simplicity (4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The local community is involved due to the presence of fishing activities, clubs and resorts.(5)</li> <li>Lack of boundary wall allowing local people to access the beach (5)</li> <li>Employed personnel are not from the local area due to a lack of required skill (2)</li> <li>A good network between the tourists and the local community (5)</li> </ul> <p><b>(Total 40 points)</b></p>
<b>Kunduchi Beach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is proper garbage management and waste materials.(5)</li> <li>Some buildings are constructed very close to the sea (within the line) limiting local people to freely move within the beach.(2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The architectural style is modern with Arabic elements such as dome, decorations, pointed sharp windows (4)</li> <li>Interior design based on African styles (color and decorations) (5)</li> <li>Few extensions constructed of tents and cables denoting a contemporary style (3)</li> <li>The site is flat and curvilinear (2)</li> <li>The construction contains both traditional and industrial materials (5)</li> </ul> <p><b>(Total points 41)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People from local communities are involved in fishing activities (5)</li> <li>Ferrying tourists to Mbudya Island Selling fish near the hotel (5)</li> <li>No restrictions for the local members to enter the hotel (5)</li> </ul>
<b>Mbezi Beach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction is located within a restricted distance from the shoreline (2)</li> <li>Sea erosion is contained by massive walls built along with these hotels (5)</li> <li>Beaches are clean and well maintained (5)</li> <li>Mangroves are well reserved (5)</li> </ul> <p><b>(Total Points 43 )</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combination of modern and local architecture.(5)</li> <li>3 hotels are traditional architecture styles (5)</li> <li>Outdoor facilities are constructed of traditional materials while main buildings are built of industrial materials (5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People from local communities are involved in marine activities to ferry tourists to Mbudya Island (5)</li> <li>Limited access to local people (2)</li> <li>Facilities are more beneficial to high-income earners (2)</li> </ul>

## **5. Results**

### **5.1 Adherence to the Principles of Ecotourism**

The analysis of the three sites indicates that, beyond the three primary variables, the type of tourist facility—whether a resort, hotel, or a combination of both—plays a crucial role in achieving eco-friendly outcomes. In particular, the nature of activities that engage local community members is a significant factor. For instance, the study demonstrates that resort facilities tend to be more accommodating to local communities, whereas hotels often impose restrictions due to their sophisticated and technical requirements, which demand skilled personnel that may not be available locally. Specifically, based on Table 1, each factor of adherence was given a unit, and based on the summation of units, the level of adherence were determined and found to vary from one facility to the other. For example, Mbezi Beach facilities had a higher level of adherence (43 points), followed by Kunduchi Beach (41 points), and lastly Ununio Beach (40 points). In overall, the assessment indicates that the level of adherence to the selected principles of ecotourism was low due to various factors, including the level of awareness across the board that manifests in other factors.

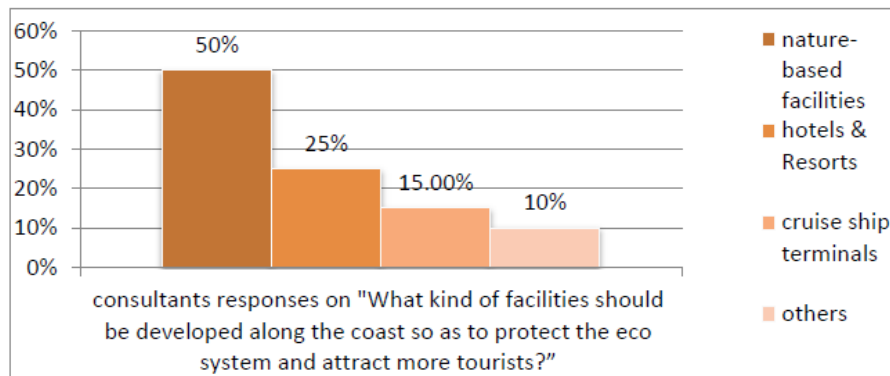
### **5.2 Professional Awareness and Adherence to Eco-principles**

An assessment of the extent of awareness regarding ecotourism concepts among consultants, engineers, and developers in coastal development was essential. The majority of respondents (85%) indicated familiarity with the ecotourism concept, while 15% admitted to having no knowledge of it. This suggests that although many architects are conversant with ecotourism, other professionals—such as engineers and developers—appear less informed. One architect remarked:

*Ecotourism specializes in taking care of ecology (natural environments such as water sources, plants, and breeding places) from the macro- to the micro-level, whether on land or underwater... ecotourism as a concept must prioritize nature above all (RIMBI).*

This perspective aligns with Patton (1987), who associated ecotourism with travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas for the purpose of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery, wildlife, and cultural manifestations.

Furthermore, consultants were queried about how they advise their developers or clients on the type and quality of tourist facilities to be developed along the coastline. Approximately 50% of the respondents reported sufficient awareness of projects that promote environmental sustainability (see Figure 4). One respondent noted that: "... new projects would complement existing facilities, thereby enhancing the overall coastal experience (R2KBI)." Additionally, 25% of the respondents favoured the development of hotels and resorts; 15% advocated for cruise ship terminals; and the remaining 10% suggested other unspecified facilities.

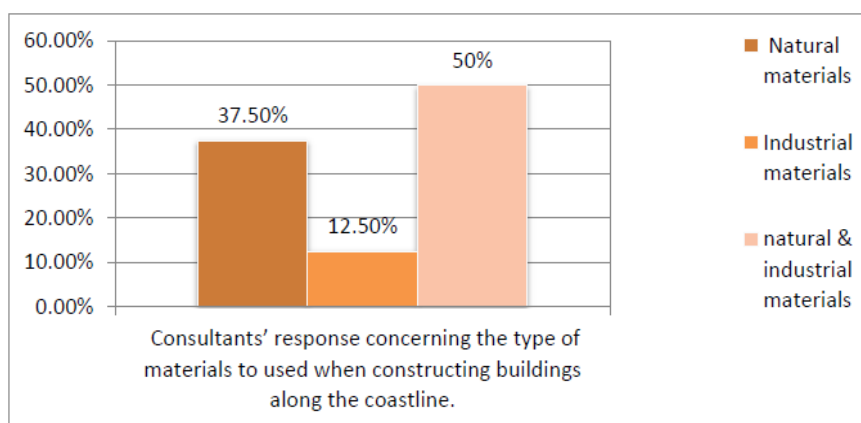


**Figure 4. Awareness of Consultants on the Types of Facilities to be Developed on the Coastal Areas**

In this context of the development of tourist facilities, one architect commented:

*It would be prudent for developers to engage consultants who can ensure that projects are executed with a strong emphasis on environmental consciousness and eco-friendly attributes, particularly given the rapid expansion of coastal projects (R3UI).*

The study also investigated consultants’ knowledge regarding materials suitable for constructing eco-friendly facilities. In this regard, 50% of the respondents advocated for a combination of industrial and natural materials, 37.5% recommended the exclusive use of natural materials, and 12.5% preferred solely industrial materials (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5: Knowledge of Consultants towards Materials for Ecotourism Design**

This finding (as shown in Figure 5) is consistent with observations from most study sites, where the majority of tourist facilities are constructed using a

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blend of industrial and natural materials to enhance their eco-friendly image. With a thorough understanding of eco-tourism principles, building materials, and design, consultants are well-positioned to advise developers on creating projects that are environmentally sustainable along the coast.

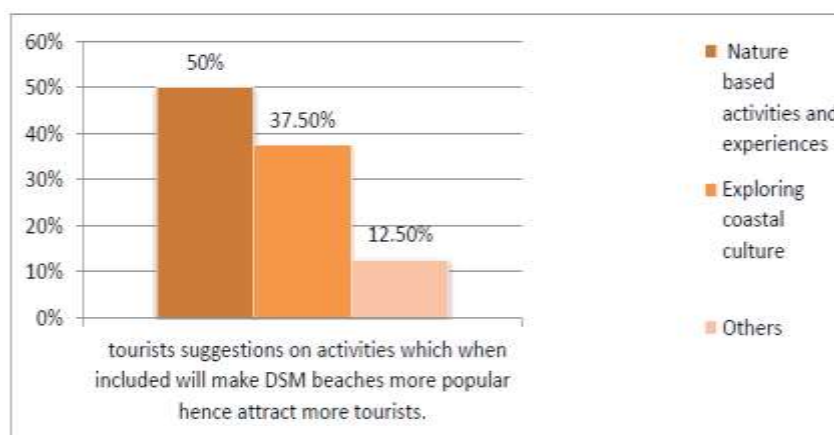
### **5.3 Tourists' Preferences for Coastal Development**

The study evidenced that the concept of 'eco-friendly' appears to be more familiar to foreign tourists than to Tanzanian nationals. When interviewed regarding their preferences for coastal development, 84% of the foreign respondents indicated that they are attracted to beaches for their spectacular ocean views, opportunities for swimming, and pristine natural environments. Specifically, these tourists emphasized the importance of natural materials, authentic architectural forms, preserved ecosystems, and a lifestyle that embraces living close to nature. For example, one tourist from the USA stated:

*I have come from America to experience nature; I am not much impressed by the modern hotels being constructed here because I left the same stuff in my home country (R4UI).*

This suggests that if the coastal areas are developed in accordance with ecotourism principles, they will likely attract more foreign visitors compared to developments that rely predominantly on industrial materials.

In contrast, a local tourist commented that "... beach hotels are good for vacation and enjoyment, but these hotels need to maintain the natural environment (R5MBI)," highlighting the importance of clean beaches and modern, yet environmentally integrated, structures. A comparative analysis of these responses indicates that foreign tourists are generally more interested in the natural environment—which includes natural materials, open spaces, and traditional cultural activities such as dancing and handmade crafts—whereas local tourists tend to prefer modern hotel environments (Figure 6).



**Figure 6: Activities Ought to Improve Beaches**

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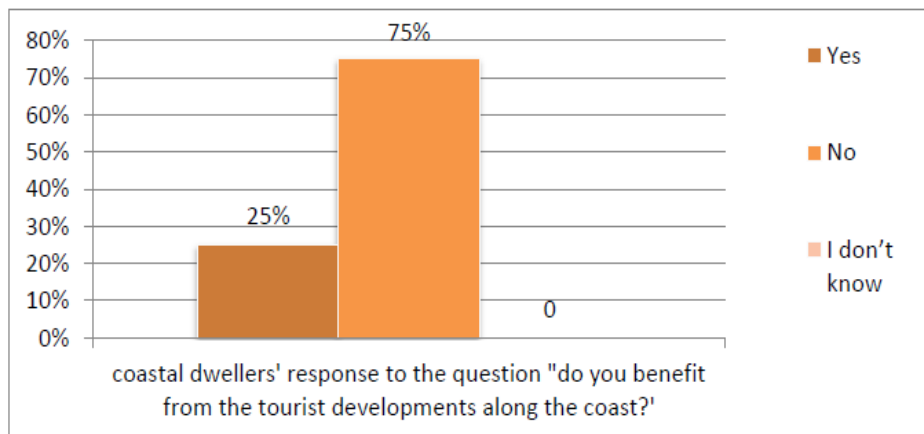
Regarding activities that could enhance the vibrancy and popularity of the beaches, one tourist remarked:

*I have visited almost all beach hotels and resorts along the Dar es Salaam coastline, and what they miss is an appreciation of nature; many developments do not consider the importance of nature. I wish there were a botanical garden displaying the natural tree species found in the area (R6UI).*

Overall, the major activities suggested by tourists were categorized into nature-based activities (50%), and experiences centred on exploring coastal culture (37%).

***5.4 Involvement of the Local Community in Tourist Facilities***

One of the fundamental principles of ecotourism is the active inclusion of local communities, ensuring that the industry reciprocates benefits to the grassroots level through direct employment, symbiotic trading, participation in local activities, and community ownership of facilities. To assess the extent of local community involvement and benefits, we conducted interviews with fishermen and other individuals working in tourist facilities. Figure 7 shows the results.



**Figure 7: Perception of Fishermen Towards Benefits from Tourist Development Along the Coast**

As per Figure 7, over half of the fishermen (60.5%) acknowledged that they benefited from coastal tourism developments. For instance, one fisherman operating an engine boat at Kunduchi stated:

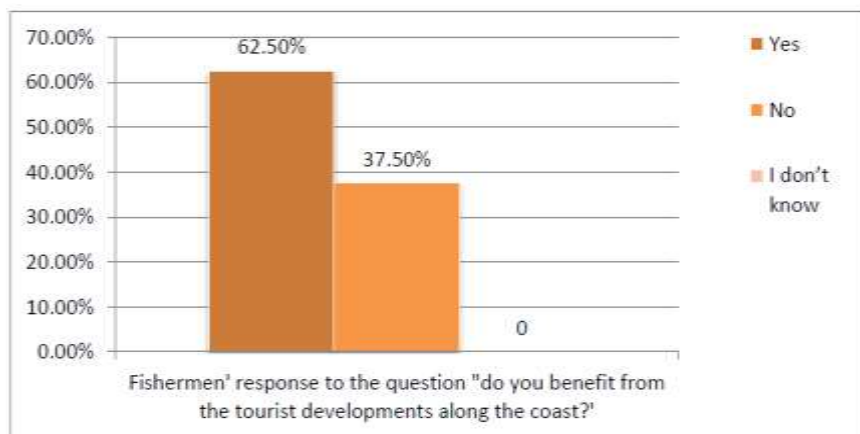
*This hotel facility is very helpful to me because I ferry tourists from the hotel to Mbudya Island and earn up to TZS50,000 (approximately USD 22) per day, depending on the season. Fish is scarce nowadays, but the presence of this hotel has provided me with an alternative source of income (R7KBI).*

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However, fishermen using canoes expressed contrasting views. One canoe operator lamented:

*This hotel primarily benefits those with engine boats and connections to the hotel management. For newcomers like us, it is very difficult to attract tourists. The hotel is beneficial to some, but not all of us (R8MBI).*

The authors also interviewed members of the local community who were not directly involved in boat operations. Their perspectives differed significantly from those of the fishermen. Three-quarters (75%) of these respondents reported that they did not benefit from coastal tourism developments (see Figure 8).



**Figure 8: Perception of Local Communities towards Benefits from Tourist Development along the Coast**

For example, a resident of Mbezi Beach expressed this frustration:

*Who can afford the expensive services offered by these hotels? If I want to swim, I am required to pay TZS5,000 (approximately USD 2.2) as an entry fee. I cannot afford this amount (R9MBI).*

Similarly, a kiosk vendor commented:

*Soon, I will be forced out of business because this area is owned by an Asian investor. We locals are living like refugees on our own land, and the government remains silent about it (R10UI).*

When asked how local communities could be more effectively involved in tourism development, the respondents offered varied suggestions. One resident remarked:

*It would be more beneficial if the government prioritized the development of facilities that provide employment opportunities for less educated locals. These hotels were built in areas where we have lived for years, yet we now have to pay to access beaches that were once free (R11 KBI).*

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Over two-thirds (68%) of the respondents emphasized the need for developments that foster interaction between locals and tourists. Many believed that such initiatives would enable them to sell local products—such as crafts and seafood—directly to tourists. Additionally, it was observed that many local residents lacked awareness of environmental protection laws and policies, particularly those related to protected areas. Despite warning signs erected by government authorities, coastal residents frequently engaged in activities that polluted and degraded the environment.

In conclusion, while coastal tourism developments have provided economic opportunities for some members of the local community, such as fishermen with engine boats, significant disparities exist in the distribution of benefits. Many locals, particularly those without direct connections to tourist facilities, feel excluded and marginalized. To align with the ecotourism principles, there is a need for more inclusive development strategies that ensure broader community participation, equitable economic benefits, and enhanced environmental awareness. Strengthening the interaction between tourists and local communities, as well as promoting education on environmental conservation, could help bridge these gaps and foster sustainable tourism practices.

### **6. Discussion**

The study found that although many ecotourism principles exist, the assessment of the three tourist facilities based on the above principles demonstrated a low level of adherence. Notably, hotels demonstrated greater adherence due to their frequent interaction with local communities and openness to community members. However, several authors have criticized this adherence. For instance, Vaan der Laat (2015) argues that the absence of a universally accepted definition and corresponding principles is a primary shortcoming impeding ecotourism as a concept. This disparity in understanding leads to varied results when assessing adherence; and the lack of a universally accepted definition not only hampers the evolution of ecotourism, but also creates managerial and operational challenges from multiple perspectives. The inconsistent application of ecotourism principles can be attributed to the lack of holistic initiatives involving all stakeholders, including government, investors/developers, professionals, and established development guidelines.

Furthermore, Melita and Mendlinger (2013) contended that the inherent purpose of ecotourism in any community is diluted when stakeholders locally adapt the concept by selectively adopting tenets that suit their immediate needs, thereby resulting in varying levels of adherence. The disparities observed in the three cases examined in this study reflect the arguments by Fennell (2003) and Honey (2008): that ecotourism has become a vague catchall buzzword that fosters loosely defined affiliated terms, thereby adding to the overall conceptual confusion (Fennell, 2003; Honey, 2008). Another study by Kyessi (2002) demonstrated that

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various strategies—such as enhancing community infrastructure, improving access to loans, creating jobs, and expanding social services— can effectively increase local awareness of ecotourism. These strategies may also be applied to the cases examined in this study.

Regarding professional awareness, the study revealed that consultants, engineers, and developers exhibited varying levels of familiarity with the ecotourism concept in coastal development. While 85% of the architects reported being aware of the concept, 15% admitted to having no knowledge of it: this suggesting that awareness among engineers and developers was comparatively lower. One architect remarked, “Ecotourism specializes in taking care of ecology (natural environments such as water sources, plants, and breeding places) from the macro- to the micro-level, whether on land or underwater... [further adding] ... ecotourism as a concept must prioritize nature above all.” This perspective aligns with the understanding that ecotourism involves traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery, its wildlife, and any existing cultural manifestations. Moreover, this discourse implies that the design of ecotourism facilities should focus on minimizing environmental impacts, and that architecture has a productive role to play, particularly in advancing the educational imperative of ecotourism.

### **6. Conclusion**

This study set out to investigate a critical juncture in Tanzania’s tourism trajectory: the shift toward coastal development in Dar es Salaam, and its alignment with the foundational principles of ecotourism. Anchored in the theoretical frameworks of sustainable tourism, the ecotourism paradigm, and the triple bottom line, the study sought to move beyond abstract principles and empirically examine their tangible manifestations in the built environment, and stakeholder practices. The findings paint a complex and cautionary picture of a development pathway at risk of replicating the unsustainable models it seeks to replace, while also illuminating potential avenues for corrective action.

This study concludes that coastal tourism development in Dar es Salaam is at a critical juncture, characterized by a profound dissonance between the articulated principles of ecotourism and on-ground realities. An empirical assessment across three key sites revealed an overall low and fragmented adherence to sustainability principles, indicating that current practices risk replicating unsustainable models. The analysis identifies three interlocking systemic gaps driving this failure. First, an architectural and planning gap exists where physical developments—through designs prioritizing exclusivity and restrictive structures—actively fabricate spatial marginalization of local communities. Second, a severe equity and inclusion gap manifests in starkly uneven benefit distribution, where a privileged minority gains economic

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rewards while the majority faces alienation, financial barriers, and cultural disenfranchisement. Third, an awareness and governance gap is evident in asymmetrical stakeholder knowledge and the absence of an enforceable policy framework; thereby allowing a short-term investment model to dominate.

Consequently, unregulated development threatens to trade one form of unsustainable tourism for another; leading to coastal degradation, cultural erosion, and social inequity. To forge a coherent ecotourism future, a transformative, multi-level intervention is imperative. This requires the urgent development and strict enforcement of a mandatory *coastal ecotourism development code*, sustained capacity building and inclusive planning through education and legally binding *community benefit agreements*, and an architectural paradigm shift towards permeable, connective design that facilitates community integration. Ultimately, sustainable coastal tourism must be consciously architected through deliberate policy, inclusive governance, and ethical design.

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