The Role of Maasai Culture in Tourism Industry Development in Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania

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Abstract
The tourism industry is the world's largest industry and is being utilized for economic development and rapid growth in many developing countries. In Tanzania the tourism industry is growing at an annual rate of almost 5% and contributes 17% to GDP. Tanzanian tourism is based on wildlife tourism which requires not only programs for the conservation and protection of flora, fauna and the environment but also for job and wealth creation for the indigenous population who often pay a cost in lost land usage for conservation and tourism. The analysis encompasses a comprehensive examination of the myriad ways in which the vibrant tapestry of Maasai culture is artfully woven into the fabric of tourism activities. From immersive cultural encounters to the vibrant portrayal of traditions, this article scrutinized the techniques through which Maasai culture has become an integral facet of the visitor experience. The manifold benefits that this cultural fusion bestows upon the local community, catalyzing positive economic and social change within the Maasai population. Balancing the imperative of safeguarding Maasai culture's integrity with the necessity of meeting the ever-evolving demands of the tourism market represents an intricate and continuous endeavor in the dynamic landscape of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

Keywords: *Maasai Culture, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Cultural Tourism, Cultural Preservation, Tourism Industry*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is widely recognized as one of the most progressive industries that helps guide global sustainable development. The inter-relationships between tourism, culture, and heritage have been the center of discussion among scholars and researchers at both national and international levels. Culture, environment, and heritage are regarded as one of the most important factors that successfully attract tourists to destinations (Olmo, 2022).

Many countries rely on tourism as a crucial source of income and jobs (Bishar&Robertine, 2022). In Europe specifically, there has been an increased focus on sustainable approaches to promote destinations by emphasizing local cultures rather than mass-marketing techniques employed elsewhere around the world (Bishar&Robertine, 2022).

Africa's tourism industry has a long history dating back to the colonial era when Europeans explored and hunted in the continent. However, it was only in the mid-20th century that tourism became a significant industry in Africa. Several African countries have developed successful branding, and promotion strategies to attract tourists. At first, countries like Kenya, Tanzania, and Egypt embraced tourism due to their diverse natural and cultural resources that attracted visitors The Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA), situated in northern Tanzania, is renowned for its extraordinary natural beauty and biodiversity. According to (NCA, 2022), data shows that, in 2018/2019 NCA received 725,535 tourists and generated Tshs.143.9 billion becoming the highest revenue earner per unit area of any conservation site in the country. This track record performance testifies that the naturalness of the facility (NCA) is in a good shape thereby disqualifying the unfounded claims that the area is degraded due to presence of Maasai and hence, losing international recognition.

However, beyond its stunning landscapes and diverse wildlife, the Maasai culture, an indigenous ethnic group that has inhabited the area for centuries, plays a significant role in the development of the tourism industry in the region. This article discusses how the integration of Maasai culture into the NCA's tourism offerings has contributed to the sustainable development of the tourism sector and the local Maasai community.

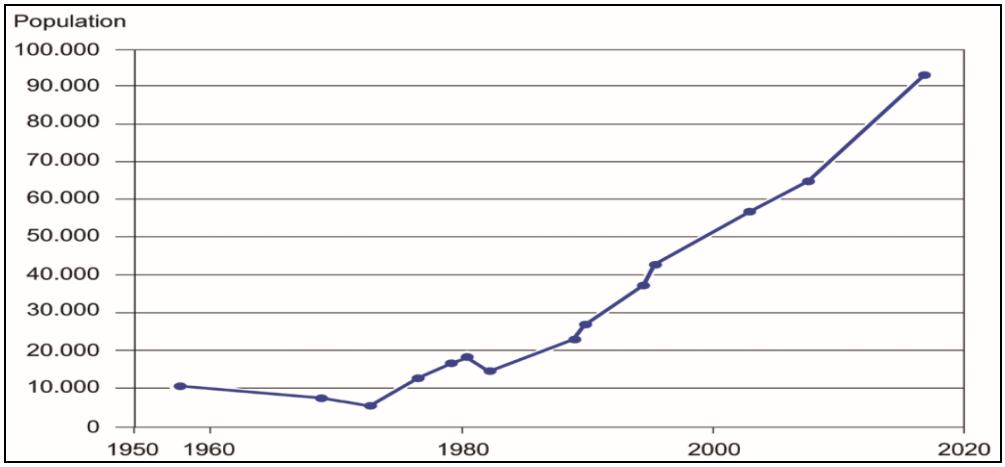


Figure 1: Population trend of Ngorongoro Conservation Area (1954–2017)
Source: Botha et al., (2021)

Theoretical Literature Review

This theoretical study establishes that the Maasai culture plays a pivotal role in the development of the tourism industry in Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania. The incorporation of Maasai traditions and customs into tourism activities not only provides economic benefits to the local community but also fosters cultural preservation and appreciation. However, it is essential to address the challenges associated with cultural tourism to ensure that the Maasai culture continues to thrive while contributing to the sustainable development of the region's tourism sector. Balancing cultural authenticity with market demands is a delicate but necessary task to ensure the long-term success of this unique and mutually beneficial partnership.

According to Krittayaruangroj et al., (2023) employing a community-based approach to tourism development, based on a social learning/mobilization framework, can aid the implementation and sustainability of the development as often such projects have greater community support and buy in from an inclusive. Social mobilization theory fails to explain social movement communities, which are large networks of individuals and other groups surrounding social movement organizations, and providing them with various services Critics also argue that it fails to explain how groups with limited resources can succeed in bringing social change and that it does not assign sufficient weight to grievances, identity and culture as well as many macro-sociological issues.

Citizen participation theory stipulates that local people should take part in planning, execution, utilization and assessment of social amenities or facilities designed to improve their welfare(Correia *et al.*, 2023) Citizen participatory theory is deeply rooted in the very concept of community development which enjoys that whatever is done to improve the welfare of a people must endeavour to elicit the enthusiasm and participation of such a people. Participatory theory is said to improve implementation process, rather than delaying implementation of completed plans while decision are reviewed through appeal and adjudication(Azaria et al., 2023).

Empirical Review

The Maasai people are known for their distinctive customs, clothing, and traditions (Semwaiko et al., 2023). They are a pastoralist community, primarily relying on cattle herding and subsistence farming. The Maasai are famous for their colorful attire, intricate beadwork, and unique housing structures known as bomas, which are circular, thorn-fenced settlements. Their rich cultural heritage is a valuable asset for the tourism industry in Ngorongoro (TANAPA, 2019). We have attempted to provide some salient

features of the Maasai community. TheMaasai people are renowned for their distinct customs and traditions that have been passed down through generations (URT, 2023). These traditions encompass various aspects of daily life, from social hierarchies and rituals to communal decision-making processes. The Maasai's strong sense of identity is rooted in their customs and traditions, which have been integral to their resilience and cultural preservation (Bergman & Olausson, 2023). The Maasai are primarily a pastoralist community, relying heavily on cattle herding for their sustenance and livelihoods. Cattle are not only a source of food but also a symbol of wealth and social status among the Maasai. This pastoralist lifestyle has shaped their identity and cultural practices for centuries (Unks*et al*., 2023).

In addition to cattle herding, many Maasai communities engage in subsistence farming, cultivating crops such as maize, millet, and beans. Farming complements their pastoralist activities and provides a buffer against periods of drought or livestock-related challenges (URT, 2022b). Maasai beadwork is another hallmark of their culture (Wijngaarden, 2018). Beads hold profound symbolism and are incorporated into jewelry, accessories, and clothing. Beadwork patterns and colors convey different meanings and play a vital role in Maasai self-expression and storytelling. These exquisite bead creations are highly sought after by tourists and have become an important source of income for the Maasai (Frankema&Hillbom, 2020).

According to URT, (2019) Cultural tourism in NCA involves showcasing the Maasai way of life to tourists. Visitors have the opportunity to interact with the Maasai, participate in cultural activities, and gain insights into their daily lives. Cultural tourism activities include traditional dance performances, visits to Maasai villages, and witnessing rituals like weddings and ceremonies. Interactions with the Maasai: Visitors are given the opportunity to interact with the Maasai people, fostering cultural exchange and cross-cultural understanding. These interactions enable tourists to engage in conversations, ask questions, and share experiences with the Maasai, bridging cultural divides and promoting mutual learning (Wijngaarden, 2016).

Participation in Cultural Activities: Cultural tourism activities in the NCA extend far beyond mere observation. Tourists can actively participate in a range of cultural activities that showcase the essence of Maasai life. These activities may include learning traditional skills, like beadwork or herding, and participating in rituals and ceremonies. One of the primary goals of cultural tourism is to provide visitors with insights into the daily lives of the Maasai. This involves experiencing the routines, chores, and responsibilities

that define Maasai existence (Koto, 2015). Tourists gain a deeper appreciation for the challenges and triumphs of Maasai life within the NCA.

In a nutshell, cultural tourism in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area offers a multi-faceted and interactive experience that not only allows tourists to witness Maasai culture but also actively participate in and engage with it. These immersive encounters are instrumental in promoting cross cultural understanding and appreciation while supporting the economic development of the Maasai community.

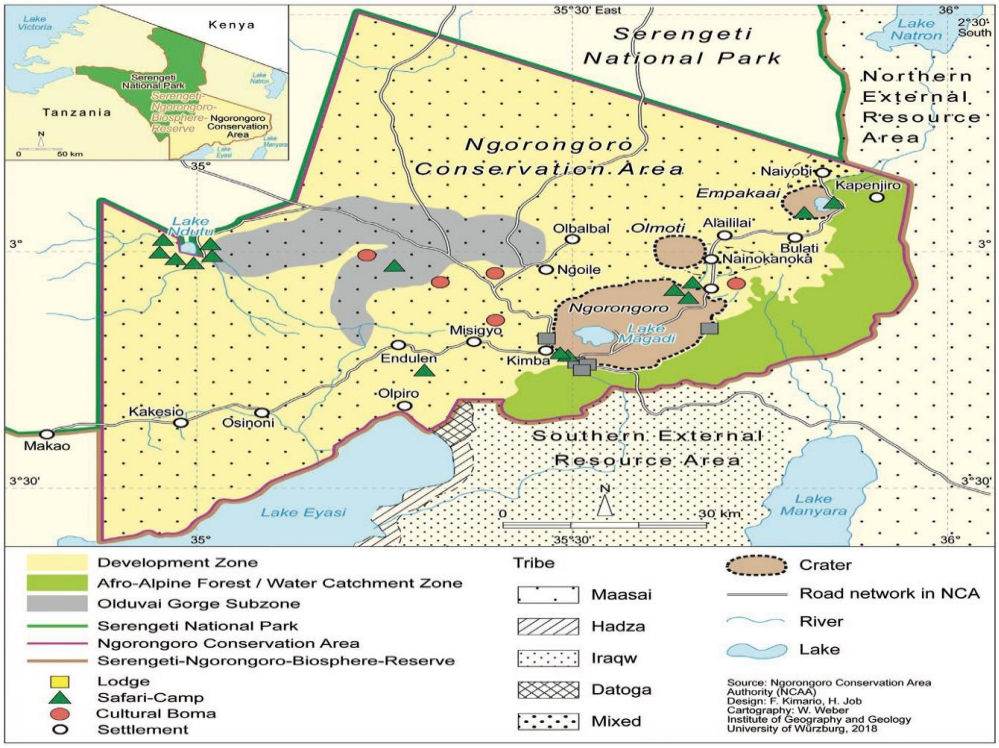


Figure 2: The Ngorongoro Conservation Area where the review exercise targeted

This place where the pastoralist population close to 90,000 individuals are threatened by the looming evictions

Source: Botha et al., (2021)

Economic Benefits for the Maasai Community

According to UNDP, (2022) explains the integration of Maasai culture into the tourism industry has generated significant economic benefits for the local community. Maasai individuals and communities earn income by selling traditional crafts, guiding tourists, and hosting cultural experiences. This economic empowerment has improved the standard of living among the Maasai and reduced their reliance on traditional livelihoods, such as cattle herding. Cultural tourism activities have become a reliable source of income

for many Maasai individuals and communities. Maasai artisans, both men and women, create traditional crafts such as beadwork, jewelry, and handicrafts, which are highly sought after by tourists. These crafts are not only beautiful and intricate but also unique to Maasai culture. Tourists purchase these items as souvenirs, providing a sustainable source of income for the artisans and their families (Zhu et al., 2023).

Many Maasai individuals have become certified tourist guides, offering their expertise to visitors who wish to explore the NCA. These guides are not only knowledgeable about the wildlife and landscape but also provide valuable insights into Maasai culture, history, and traditions. Guiding services allow the Maasai to earn a livelihood by sharing their cultural knowledge and facilitating authentic experiences for tourists (Olemong'I, 2023). The Maasai offer tourists the opportunity to engage in cultural experiences that are both educational and entertaining (Fiske, 2023). Visitors can participate in traditional Maasai dance performances, witness important ceremonies such as weddings or initiation rites, and even spend time in Maasai villages, learning about daily life, rituals, and practices. These experiences are not only enriching for tourists but also generate income for the Maasai hosts.

In some cases, revenue generated from cultural tourism is shared with the broader Maasai community (Malleo&Mtengwa, 2018). This approach ensures that the economic benefits are distributed more equitably, benefiting a wider group of Maasai people rather than just a few individuals. Revenue sharing model often involve community-based tourism initiatives, where a portion of the proceeds goes toward community development projects, such as building schools, healthcare facilities, or infrastructure improvements. Cultural tourism has allowed the Maasai to diversify their sources of income. In the past, the Maasai were heavily reliant on cattle herding and subsistence farming (Xu et al., 2022). While these traditional livelihoods are still important, cultural tourism has provided an additional stream of income, reducing the community's vulnerability to fluctuations in livestock markets or environmental factors that can impact agriculture (UNDP, 2022a) and (Makwindi, 2022).

Preservation of Traditions

According to Njau&Losaru, (2017), by engaging in cultural tourism activities, the Maasai have a vested interest in preserving their cultural heritage. This preservation is crucial for the continued vitality of their traditions and customs in the face of modernization and outside influences. Moreover, it helps educate both local and international visitors about the importance of cultural diversity and the need for its protection.

According to ILO, (2023), the preservation of Maasai traditions through cultural tourism in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area is of paramount significance, as it not only safeguards their rich cultural heritage but also imparts valuable lessons in cultural diversity and preservation. Here's a deeper exploration of the preservation of traditions. Cultural tourism activities serve as a means of cultural resilience for the Maasai. In the face of modernization and external pressures, the participation of Maasai individuals in these activities provides a platform for the continuation and safeguarding of their age-old traditions (UNESCO, 2020). It helps the Maasai community remain connected to their roots and cultural identity.

Many Maasai customs and knowledge are passed down orally from one generation to the next. Cultural tourism allows for the preservation and transmission of this invaluable cultural knowledge (ILO, 2019). Elders and cultural experts within the community have the opportunity to share their wisdom and experiences with younger generations and interested tourists, ensuring the continuity of oral traditions. Engaging with tourists in cultural activities often revitalizes customs and practices that may have been fading or evolving due to external influences. The need to present authentic and meaningful cultural experiences often encourages the Maasai to revisit and rejuvenate aspects of their traditions (Ahmed, 2023).

Cultural tourism serves as a mutual learning experience (Sukanen, 2022). While the Maasai share their culture with visitors, they also gain insights into other cultures and perspectives. This exchange fosters an appreciation for cultural diversity and underscores the importance of preserving indigenous traditions worldwide (Hiswara et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the preservation of Maasai traditions through cultural tourism not only fortifies the Maasai cultural identity but also exemplifies the broader importance of safeguarding indigenous cultures worldwide. This form of cultural preservation is not a static endeavor but a dynamic and evolving process that enables the Maasai people to adapt their traditions to the modern world while retaining their core cultural values and practices.

Materials and Methods

This study used a qualitative approach to understand the role of Maasai culture in Tourism Industry Development in Ngorongoro Conservation Area, in Tanzania on secondary data approach through of use of literature revies studies. Thus, this research was an exploratory and descriptive in nature, based on qualitative inquiry, a powerful source of grounded theory that is

inductively generated through the researcher's observations, and interviews in the field (TB, 2018).

Documentary literature review provided secondary data or second-hand information. The researcher employed documentary sources of data so as to have a thorough understanding of the past, present and predict the future trends the role of tourism sector on the livelihoods of local communities. These data were collected from various sources like scholarly journals, thesis, books, documents and reports from Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, Bank of Tanzania, Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute, (TAWIRI), newspapers and other website sources.

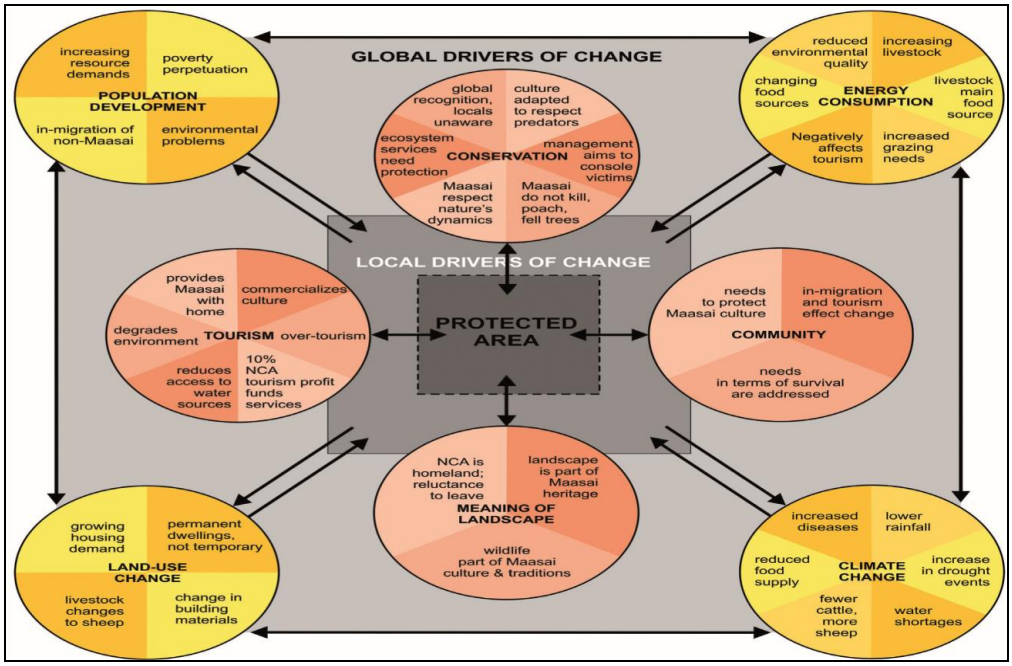


Figure 3: Summary of NCA's role in the Global-Local Drivers of Change framework
Source: Botha et al., (2021)

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

According to Botha et al., (2021) explains the challenges and considerations in the integration of Maasai culture into the tourism industry in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area are integral to sustaining the cultural and economic benefits. These challenges highlight the importance of careful planning and ongoing dialogue: One of the central challenges is the risk of cultural commodification (Nurhadi et al., 2022). When Maasai culture is portrayed as a commodity for profit, it can lead to the trivialization of sacred traditions and practices. The over-commercialization of cultural experiences

can erode the authenticity of these traditions and compromise their cultural significance.

Simon et al., (2023) Explains, striking a balance between preserving cultural authenticity and meeting the demands of the tourism market is a continuous challenge. As cultural tourism evolves, there may be pressures to adapt or modify cultural practices to meet tourists' expectations. This balance requires ongoing community engagement and a commitment to protecting the integrity of Maasai traditions. The economic success of cultural tourism cansometimes shift the focus away from traditional Maasai livelihoods, such as cattle herding and subsistence farming. It is crucial to ensure that these economic alternatives do not undermine the core activities that define the Maasai way of life (Flamand, et al. 2020).

In conclusion, while the integration of Maasai culture into the tourism industry has brought about numerous benefits, it is essential to recognize and address the challenges that may emerge. A balanced and inclusive approach that prioritizes cultural authenticity, equitable distribution of benefits, and environmental sustainability is key to ensuring the long-term success of cultural tourism in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area while respecting and preserving the Maasai culture. Ongoing dialogue, collaboration, and responsible management are essential components of addressing these challenges effectively (Melubo& Lovelock, 2019).

FINDINGS

Tourism Attraction, Facilities, and Visitors Traffic in NCA

Tourism wise, Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) is of great importance to the National and Global community. In the 2018/2019 financial year, NCA generated TZS 143.9billion and contributed TZS 23 billion as dividends to the government. With that amount, NCA was the only protected area that generated more revenue per unit area than any other protected area in East Africa.

The findings revealed that, the volume of visitors to the NCA has been growing over time with some fluctuations because of economic and social influences withing and outside the country (Figure 1).

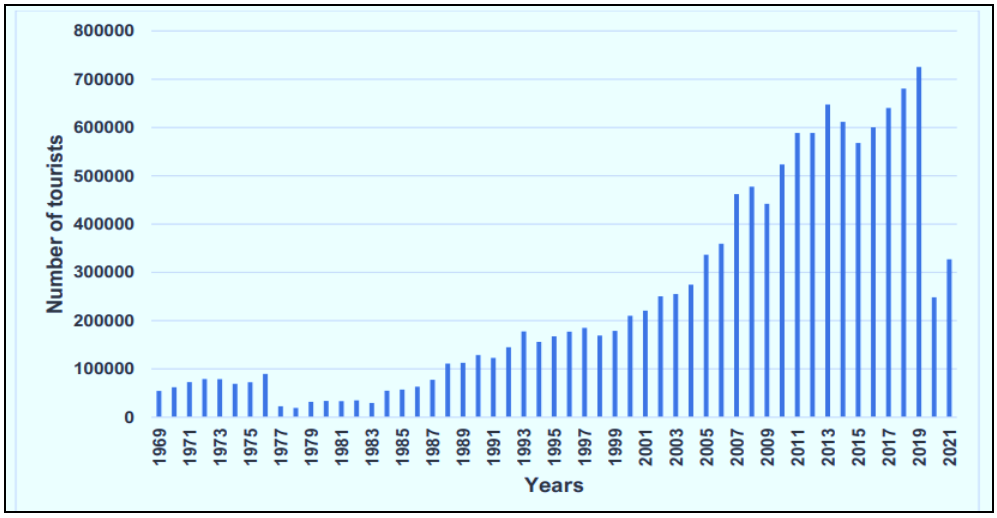


Figure 1: Tourist trends in NCA from 1969 to 2021

Source:NCA, (2022)

Livestock Population Trends in Ngorongoro

The figure 2 shows that, the livestock census recorded 461,588 to 831,563, accordingly. In 2013 cattle count was 131,509 and332,079 (for sheep and goats); and in 2017 the cattle mounted to 238,826 and smallstocks summed 570,636 (Fig. 13). DANIDA carried out the human and livestock censusin NCA in 1994 and the total animal counted was 308,762. Out of this number, cattlewere 115,468, and sheep and goats count were 193,294. The application of the Dejure approach caused an increase of 44.49%, in 2017.

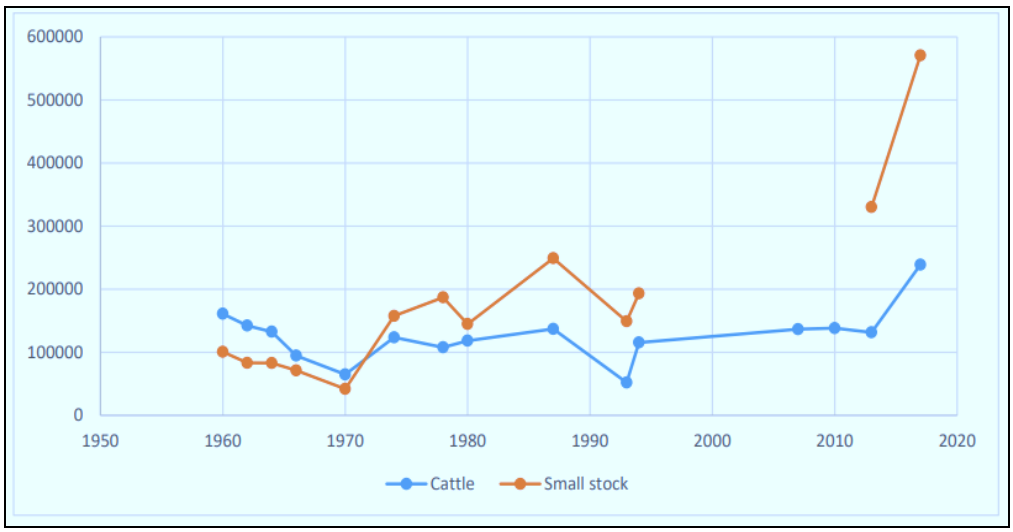


Figure 2: Livestock population counts for over 60 years
Source: NBS (2021)

Cultural Tourism Activities

Cultural tourism activities practiced in NCA include traditional dance, Maasaibomas, arts and crafts and practice of real traditional way of living such as eatingtheir food and testing their drinks. Also, observation made by researcher showed that cultural tourism activities undertaken in NCA are arts and crafts, practice of Maasai way of living.



Figure 3: Crafts Made by Local People in NCA
Source: NCA (2022)

CONCLUSION

Cultural tourism, in the NCA, offers a gateway for visitors to immerse themselves in Maasai culture. It transcends passive observation, encouraging active participation, cross-cultural interaction, and profound learning. Traditional dance performances, visits to Maasai villages, and the witness of significant rituals provide a dynamic and immersive experience for tourists. It is a living canvas where Maasai culture comes to life, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation.

Nevertheless, the integration of Maasai culture into the tourism industry is not without its challenges. Issues of cultural commodification, misrepresentation, equitable revenue sharing, and maintaining cultural authenticity require careful consideration and management. Striking a balance between preserving the integrity of Maasai traditions and meeting the dynamic demands of the tourism market remains an ongoing endeavor (IUCN, 2023).

In essence, the integration of Maasai culture into the tourism industry in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area is a remarkable story of cultural preservation,

economic empowerment, and cross-cultural exchange. It showcases the ability of a community to embrace its cultural heritage as a valuable asset and a means of sustaining economic prosperity. It is a model of harmonious coexistence, highlighting the imperative of preserving cultural authenticity while embracing the challenges that come with it.

As the Ngorongoro Conservation Area continues to evolve, so does its relationship with the Maasai culture (Penrod et al., 2022). The success of this partnership hinges on responsible management, ongoing dialogue, and a commitment to maintaining the delicate balance between tradition and modernity. Ultimately, the story of the Maasai culture in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area is a testament to the enduring power of cultural heritage and its role in fostering a sustainable and harmonious coexistence. It is a reminder that cultural diversity is not only a source of enrichment but a shared responsibility that we must protect and celebrate.

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