

Infrastructure needs to expand past transport for sustainability

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In keeping with World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO's) priority of promoting sustainable tourism, it is no doubt that proper infrastructure is a key metric in measuring the environmental, social, and economic impacts at destinations.



image by Volodymyr Burdiak

It can either be a stimulant of tourism growth if prudently developed and maintained, or a deterrent if neglected. Appropriate infrastructure including high quality accommodation, unbeatable tour packages and attractions; and primarily transport infrastructure such as roads, rails, air and sea ports.

In Kenya, tourism is a vital cog to growth, contributing \$2.9bn to the country's economy in 2017. This represents approximately 3.7% of the total GDP, which by end of 2018 is expected rise by 5.2%.

Over the years, Kenya has made progress in sustainable infrastructure. For example, the network expansion of a standard gauge railway makes it possible to connect destinations more efficiently..

Synergies between the government (especially local governments) and the private stakeholders in refining the country road networks, will go a long way in growing not only the popular but also the less explored destinations.

Beyond transport

So, the transport networks are all developed to get the tourists to their preferred destinations. But how do the visitors find their vacation homes for the period of their stay? Are the amenities in good shape? Is there uninterrupted supply of power and clean water? Is drainage in the properties well maintained and hygiene observed by the service providers? Is there trained first aid personnel in case of emergencies? Are health facilities available in the locality with quick accessibility when illness strikes?

These are just some of the questions that must be addressed when developing tourism infrastructure meant to drive the growth of destinations. If well-handled and by the right people at the helm, then no doubt that even investors will be willing to put their money in destinations possessing greater potential.

The travelling patterns and dynamics in Kenya are progressively being redesigned. Domestic tourism is growing at a high rate with an international expenditure of 38% and a local expenditure of 62%; especially among the younger Kenyan generation. Proper infrastructure is therefore certainly a top priority, if Kenya is to continue resonating with tourists as the most preferred travel destination.

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