

Eco-Tourism and Economic Development of People Surrounding Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Kanungu District

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Abstract: *The study was about the effect of Ecotourism to the economic development of people surrounding Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Kayonza Subcounty, Kanungu district and was guided by the following objectives: To examine the role of ecotourism in Poverty reduction in Kayonza Subcounty in Kanungu district, To investigate the challenges affecting ecotourism in Kayonza Subcounty, Kanungu district and To propose the possible solutions to the challenges affecting ecotourism in Kayonza Subcounty, Kanungu district. 100 individuals were used as a study population who comprised of Transport companies, Tour operators, tourism officials and the community members from whom a sample of 80 respondents was selected. The descriptive design was used that consisted of both Qualitative and quantitative approaches. The interviews, questionnaires and observation methods were used in data collection. Findings show that Ecotourism tries to raise environmental consciousness and supports the work of conservation groups preserving the natural area and this was represented by 30(37.5%) of the respondents, 5(6.5%) said that it has a low impact upon a protected area's natural resources and recreation techniques, 10(12.5%) recognizes that nature is a central element to the tourist experience and 5(6.5%) of the respondents agreed that ecotourism incorporates environmental and cultural education. This implies that the majority of the respondents were of the view that ecotourism rises environmental consciousness and supports the work of conservation groups. Findings from the study also indicates that 40(50%) builds environmental and cultural awareness and respect, 20(25%) stated that there should be the provision of economic benefits and empowerment of the local people, 10(12.5%) said that there should be the provision of direct financial benefits for conservation and sustainability and that there is a need to minimize waste and avoid plastic respectively. The National Park should quickly gather data on the organization, its products, its industry and its marketplace. High quality research is often a key difference between strong earns and weaker teams. Good research provides the team with better insights into the organization, get buy-in from in-market teams on these targets. Share these metrics early and share them all.*

Keywords: Eco -Tourism, Economic Development

Background:

The Study focuses on Bwindi Impenetrable National Park which is known to have had severe conservation threats when it was gazetted. Bwindi is situated in South-Western Uganda within the Kigezi highlands. It borders with Kanungu District in the north, Kisoro in the South and Kabale District in the East. The current study will be conducted in the park and the three frontline parishes where policy interventions are being operationalized. The parishes are Nteko and Rubuguri in Kisoro district and Mukono in Kanungu district. Bwindi covers approximately 331 square kilometers (33,092 ha) of thick forests on a hilly landscape and contains both montane and lowland forest (Nowak, 1995). The park lies about 540 km from Kampala (Uganda's Capital City) and overlooks the western arm of the great East African rift valley bordering the DRC to the West. Bwindi is richly endowed with biodiversity, varied landscapes and complex ecological systems (UWA, 2006). It is a conservation area of international importance and the richest in Uganda in terms of ecosystem resources including exceptional diversity of biodiversity (IGCP, 2008). It is rich in fauna, with extensive lowland-montane forest and possesses several Albertine Rift endemics and globally threatened species, particularly the mountain gorillas (UWA, 2006). It is a home for more than 380 (48%) of the total population (786) of the world's remaining mountain gorillas (AWF, 2010a).

In Uganda (UWA, 2004a). Until 2004, all Forest Reserves were administered by the Forest Department under the Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment. However, from 2004, a semi-autonomous body called the National Forestry Authority (NFA) was created to manage Forest Reserves in the country. To date, the number of protected areas has grown to over 40 (including National Parks, Game Reserves and Forest Reserves) and Western governments, conservation as well as development organizations such as International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP), USAID, WWF, and AWF have been very instrumental in supporting the sub-state entities named above to conserve protected areas. The threats were associated with confrontational occurrences, high population densities characterized by limited livelihood options and poverty as well as negative attitudes. It is also an interesting case because it was gazetted in early 1990s when the tourism-conservation and development discourses were increasingly attracting the attention of conservationists in Africa. Bwindi happens to be among the National Parks in Uganda where a wide range of different policy interventions are being implemented in one National Park. In addition, it is the top tourism-revenue generating National Park

in Uganda and therefore it is important to establish the implication of this on the conservation-development nexus. Bwindi is also home to the rare mountain gorillas, an important biodiversity site and hence of great international and national significance as far as tourism and biodiversity conservation are concerned. The rich, rare and endemic biodiversity and the associated threats therefore make Bwindi an area that deserves scientific attention. Bwindi is located in South-Western Uganda within the Kigezi highlands. In the North of the park is Kanungu District, Kisoro in the South and Kabale District in the East. The current study was conducted in the park and the three frontline parishes where policy interventions are being operationalized. The park lies about 540 km from Kampala (Uganda's Capital City) and overlooks the western arm of the great East African rift valley bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo to the West. Bwindi is richly endowed with biodiversity, varied landscapes and complex ecological systems (UWA, 2006). It is a conservation area of international importance and the richest in Uganda in terms of ecosystem resources including exceptional diversity of biodiversity (IGCP, 2008). It is rich in fauna, with extensive lowland-montane forest and possesses several Albertine Rift endemics and globally threatened species, particularly the mountain gorillas (UWA, 2006). It is a home for more than 380 (48%) of the total population (786) of the world's remaining mountain gorillas (AWF, 2010a). The rest (406) being spread in Mgahinga National Park (Uganda), Parc National Virunga's (DRC) and Parc National des Volcans (Rwanda).

It should be noted that since Bwindi was gazetted a National Park and later a World Heritage site, the new rules of the game decimated external threats. There was a general shift from external commercial activities to subsistence agriculture. As a consequence, the main threats for the National Park were local livelihood strains and general negative attitudes (Blomley et al., 2010, unpublished report). Tourism-related interventions ultimately aimed at making use of tourism to link community livelihoods and conservation so as to mitigate internal threats. Reflecting a framework advanced by Salafsky et al. (2001) the logic behind the introduction of tourism-related policy interventions was that they could provide a direct link between biodiversity conservation and livelihoods through initiation of development-related projects.

On 30th July 2019 the Minister of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities visited Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and found out that Ecotourism was contributing a lot to the Gross Domestic Product of the country and improving the livelihoods of people around the park despite facing a lot of challenges like killing of wildlife by the locals and the encroachment by the neighbors on to the national park. Ecotourism conserves the natural environment and improves the wellbeing of the local population.

Statement of the problem

The problem seeks to establish whether there has been an impact of Ecotourism on the economic development of people of Kanungu district. Ecotourism has both negative and positive effect on the indigenous population and the state at large. We learn from Western et al (1997) that surrounding communities often lose access to resources worse off than before. Webley (1991) claims that it is a great problem in Uganda where local communities are obligated to coexist with wildlife, while receiving little of the benefits generated from wildlife-based tourism.

Specific objectives

1. To examine the contribution of ecotourism to the indigenous communities.
2. To investigate the challenges affecting tourism development in Kanungu district

Ecotourism.

3. To suggest the possible solutions to the challenges affecting ecotourism

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Design

A case study design was used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of complex issues in its real-life context.

Study population

The study used a population of 100 respondents comprising of staff and tourists.

Sampling Size

The researcher used a sample of 80 respondents out of the study population. The distribution of the sample was shown in the table below;

$$\text{Sample size } S = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where;

N = target population

e = margin of error = 0.05

1 is a constant

Therefore,

$$S = \frac{100}{1+100(0.05)^2}$$

$$S = 80$$

Table 1: Distribution of Sample Size

Categories	Study population	Sample size	Sampling strategies
Tourism site Staff	20	16	Purposive sampling
Residents	80	64	Simple random sampling
Total	100	80	

Data Collection Methods

The methods for data collection included questionnaire, interviews and documentary review.

PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Table 2: showing the role of tourism in poverty reduction

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Ecotourism tries to raise environmental consciousness	30	37.5
Have a low impact upon a protected area's natural resources and recreation techniques.	5	6.25
Supports the work of conservation groups preserving the natural area	30	37.5
Recognizes that nature is a central element to the tourist experience.	10	12.5
Ecotourism incorporates environmental and cultural education	5	6.25
Total	80	100

Findings from the study in table 1 above stated that Ecotourism tries to raise environmental consciousness and supports conservation groups preserving the natural area and this was represented by 30(37.5%),5(6.5%) of the respondents said that it has a low impact upon a protected area's natural resources and recreation techniques,10(12.5%) recognizes that nature is a central element to the tourist experience and 5(6.5%) agreed that ecotourism incorporates environmental and cultural education. This implies that the majority of the respondents were of the view that ecotourism rises environmental consciousness and supports the work of conservation groups.

Challenges affecting ecotourism development

Table 3: Challenges affecting ecotourism development in Kanungu district

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Concentrated use around facilities has a negative effect on vegetation	30	37.5
Soil compaction can occur in certain well-used areas. Soil removal and erosion also occurs, and may continue after the disturbance is gone	20	25
Release of oil and fuel from ships and smaller craft. Propeller-driven watercraft	15	18.75

may affect certain aquatic plants and species		
Disturbance by visitors can occur for all species, including that are not attracting visitors. Disturbance can be of several kinds: noise, visual or harassing behaviour.	15	18.75
Total	80	100

Findings from the study indicates that 30(37.5%) of the respondents concentrated use around facilities has a negative effect on vegetation,20(25%) said that Soil compaction can occur in certain well-used areas and Soil removal and erosion also occurs, and may continue after the disturbance is gone and 15(18.5%) talked of the release of oil and fuel from ships and smaller craft. Propeller-driven watercraft may affect certain aquatic plants and species and 15(18.5%) stated that disturbance by visitors can occur for all species, including that are not attracting visitors.

Solutions to the challenges affecting ecotourism development in Kanungu district

Table 4:

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect	40	50
Provide economic benefits and empower local people	20	25
Provide direct financial benefits for conservation and sustainability	10	12.5
Minimize waste and avoid plastic	10	12.5
Total	80	100

Findings from table 4 above indicates that 40(50%) of the respondents builds environmental and cultural awareness and respect,20(25%) stated that there should be the provision of economic benefits and empowerment of the local people,10(12.5%) said that there should be the provision of direct financial benefits for conservation and sustainability and that there is a need to minimize waste and avoid plastic respectively.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Ecotourism is an environmentally friendly activity that conserves the environment, improves the well-being of the local people, empowers the host communities, generates employment opportunities and generates income opportunities. There is a need to conserve destinations for ecotourists.

Recommendations

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park should quickly gather data on the organization, its products, its industry, its industry and its marketplace. High quality research is often a key difference between strong earns and weaker teams. Good research provides the team with better insights into the organization,

Get buy-in from in-market teams on these targets. Share these metrics early and share them all. Seeing how each market contributes to the overall success of the campaign might help drive a bit of healthy competition

Keep a centralized shared template where market metrics are updated every week/day/any other relevant frequency.

There is a need to sensitize the masses to know about the role played by ecotourism in their communities.