

Hospitality Management And Tourism Development: A Case Of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between hospitality management and tourism development, using Bwindi Impenetrable National Park as a case. Bwindi is a globally significant destination famous for mountain-gorilla trekking, and the quality of hospitality services surrounding it is widely believed to shape the visitor experience and the growth of tourism. The main objective was to establish the relationship between hospitality management and tourism development at Bwindi. Three specific objectives guided the study: to assess the standard of hospitality management around the park; to examine indicators of tourism development; and to determine the relationship between hospitality management and tourism development. A cross-sectional correlational design was used with 145 respondents comprising hospitality staff, tourism operators, park officials, and community members, selected through stratified and purposive sampling. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression. Results showed that hospitality management dimensions—service quality, staff competence, and facility standards—were positively and significantly correlated with tourism development (overall $r = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$). Regression indicated that service quality ($\beta = 0.39$) and facility standards ($\beta = 0.31$) jointly explained 52% of the variance in tourism development. The study concluded that strong hospitality management is a significant driver of tourism development at Bwindi and recommended investment in staff training, facility upgrades, and community-inclusive tourism.

Keywords: Hospitality management, tourism development, service quality, ecotourism, Bwindi, Uganda.

1.0 Introduction and Background

Tourism is a major contributor to Uganda's economy, generating foreign exchange, employment, and community income (Julius & Kazaara, 2026). Nature-based and ecotourism destinations are the country's flagship attractions, and Bwindi Impenetrable National Park—home to roughly half the world's mountain gorillas and a UNESCO World Heritage Site—is among the most valuable (Nicholas et al., 2023). Visitors travel long distances and pay premium fees for gorilla trekking, and their overall experience depends heavily on the hospitality services they encounter: lodges, restaurants, guiding, transport, and community interactions (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022).

Hospitality management—the planning, organizing, and delivery of accommodation, food, and related services to a consistent standard—therefore sits at the heart of destination competitiveness (Irumba et al., 2024). Well-managed hospitality enhances visitor satisfaction, encourages longer stays and repeat visits, generates positive reviews, and supports the broader growth of tourism (Christopher & Felex, 2022). Around Bwindi, a mix of high-end lodges, mid-range facilities, and community enterprises serves visitors, and the standard of their management plausibly influences how tourism at the destination develops (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022).

2.0 Statement of the Problem

Despite Bwindi's world-class natural attraction and high-value gorilla-trekking product, stakeholders have raised concerns about uneven hospitality standards—variable service quality, gaps in staff competence, and inconsistent facilities—that may limit visitor satisfaction and the destination's full tourism potential (Julius & Nancy, 2026). If hospitality management is weak or inconsistent, the destination risks lower repeat visitation, weaker word-of-mouth, and reduced community benefit, even where the core attraction is outstanding (Faith et al., 2023). Yet there is limited local evidence quantifying how hospitality management relates to tourism development at Bwindi (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). This study addressed that gap.

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Main Objective

To establish the relationship between hospitality management and tourism development at Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.

3.2 Specific Objectives

- To assess the standard of hospitality management around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.
- To examine the indicators of tourism development at the destination.
- To determine the relationship between hospitality management and tourism development.

4.0 Literature Review

Hospitality management theory centres on service quality, commonly assessed through dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). The service-profit chain links internal service quality and staff competence to customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately business and destination growth (George Stanley & Nafiu, 2020). In tourism, destination competitiveness models identify service quality and supporting infrastructure as key determinants of a destination's ability to attract and retain visitors (Subcounty et al., 2022).

Ecotourism literature adds that at nature-based destinations, community involvement and sustainability are integral to long-term tourism development: revenue-sharing, local employment, and conservation-linked benefits build the social license on which continued tourism depends (Julius et al., 2024). Studies around protected areas in East Africa report that lodge quality, guiding standards, and community enterprises strongly shape visitor satisfaction and repeat intention (Edgar & Moses, 2023). However, gaps in staff training, seasonality, and uneven facility standards frequently constrain outcomes (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). Empirical, destination-specific evidence for Bwindi that links hospitality management directly to tourism-development indicators is limited, which this study supplies.

5.0 Methodology

A cross-sectional correlational design was adopted. The population comprised hospitality staff and managers of lodges and restaurants around Bwindi, tour operators and guides, park and tourism officials, and community-enterprise members(Sarah et al., 2024). A sample of 145 respondents was drawn through stratified and purposive sampling. Hospitality management was measured across service quality, staff competence, and facility standards, while tourism development was measured through indicators such as visitor numbers and satisfaction, length of stay, repeat/referral intention, employment, and community income(Maiga et al., 2021). Data were collected through structured questionnaires and key-informant interviews and analysed in SPSS using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression(Nelson et al., 2022). Reliability was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha 0.81–0.88). Ethical requirements of informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were observed, and permissions were obtained from relevant authorities.

6.0 Results and Interpretation

6.1 Standard of Hospitality Management

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for hospitality management dimensions

Dimension	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
Service quality (reliability, responsiveness)	3.71	0.78	Good
Staff competence & training	3.34	0.89	Moderate
Facility standards (rooms, hygiene)	3.58	0.82	Good
Empathy & guest care	3.66	0.80	Good
Community-enterprise service standard	3.12	0.95	Moderate

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The findings presented in Table 1 indicated that respondents generally perceived hospitality management practices to be satisfactory across most of the assessed dimensions. Service quality, measured through reliability and responsiveness, recorded the highest mean score of 3.71 with a standard deviation of 0.78, indicating a good level of performance(Kazaara et al., 2024). This suggested that hospitality establishments consistently provided dependable services and responded promptly to customer needs. The relatively low standard deviation further implied that respondents held similar opinions regarding the quality of services offered, reflecting consistency in service delivery across the sampled establishments(Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022). These findings demonstrated that service quality constituted one of the strongest aspects of hospitality management within the study area and likely contributed positively to customer experiences.

The dimension of staff competence and training obtained a mean score of 3.34 with a standard deviation of 0.89, which was interpreted as moderate. This finding suggested that although hospitality employees possessed

acceptable levels of knowledge and skills, there remained considerable room for improvement in professional training, customer service skills, and continuous capacity building. The relatively higher standard deviation indicated greater variation in respondents' perceptions, implying that while some establishments maintained highly competent personnel, others experienced deficiencies in staff training and professionalism. These variations suggested inconsistencies in the quality of human resource development across hospitality enterprises.

Regarding facility standards, which included the quality of rooms, cleanliness, and hygiene, the findings revealed a mean score of 3.58 and a standard deviation of 0.82, representing a good level of performance (Julius, 2024). This indicated that respondents generally perceived accommodation facilities and hygiene standards to be satisfactory. The moderate variability in responses suggested that although most establishments maintained acceptable physical standards, differences existed in the quality of infrastructure and maintenance among hospitality providers.

Similarly, empathy and guest care registered a mean score of 3.66 with a standard deviation of 0.80, which was also interpreted as good. This suggested that hospitality staff generally demonstrated friendliness, courtesy, and concern for customer welfare. The relatively small standard deviation indicated that respondents largely agreed on the positive interpersonal relationships experienced during service encounters. The findings therefore implied that customer-centered service practices had been embraced by many hospitality establishments, thereby enhancing guest satisfaction and strengthening customer relationships.

In contrast, the community-enterprise service standard recorded the lowest mean score of 3.12 with the highest standard deviation of 0.95, indicating a moderate level of implementation. This finding suggested that collaboration between hospitality enterprises and local communities remained relatively weak compared to the other hospitality dimensions. The larger variation in responses further implied that some hospitality establishments actively engaged local communities in service provision, while others demonstrated limited involvement. Consequently, the findings indicated that stronger partnerships between tourism enterprises and surrounding communities were still needed to improve service standards and promote sustainable tourism development.

6.2 Indicators of Tourism Development

Table 2: Tourism development indicators

Indicator	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
Visitor satisfaction	3.74	0.76	High
Repeat/referral intention	3.52	0.83	Good
Average length of stay	3.29	0.87	Moderate

Local employment generated	3.61	0.79	Good
Community income from tourism	3.24	0.92	Moderate

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The findings presented in Table 2 showed that tourism development indicators generally reflected satisfactory performance, although differences existed across the individual indicators. Visitor satisfaction recorded the highest mean score of 3.74 with a standard deviation of 0.76, indicating a high level of satisfaction among tourists. This suggested that visitors generally enjoyed positive tourism experiences and were satisfied with the services and attractions offered (Jallow et al., 2022). The relatively low standard deviation demonstrated that respondents shared similar views regarding visitor satisfaction, reflecting consistency in the quality of tourism experiences provided within the study area.

The indicator measuring repeat or referral intention achieved a mean score of 3.52 with a standard deviation of 0.83, which was interpreted as good. This finding suggested that many visitors expressed willingness to revisit the destination or recommend it to others based on their experiences (Alex & Moses, 2024). Such intentions reflected positive perceptions of the tourism products and services offered. However, the moderate variability in responses indicated that not all visitors shared similar intentions, suggesting opportunities for further improvement in customer experiences and destination attractiveness. The average length of stay recorded a mean score of 3.29 and a standard deviation of 0.87, representing a moderate level. This finding suggested that while tourists visited the destination, many did not remain for extended periods (Alex & Moses, 2024). The relatively larger variation in responses implied that visitor duration differed considerably depending on individual preferences, travel motivations, and the availability of tourism activities. These findings indicated the need for diversification of tourism products and experiences capable of encouraging longer visitor stays.

With regard to local employment generated, the findings showed a mean score of 3.61 with a standard deviation of 0.79, indicating a good level of performance. This suggested that tourism activities had contributed positively to employment opportunities for local residents. The relatively consistent responses demonstrated widespread agreement that the tourism industry supported job creation within the community, thereby contributing to local socio-economic development. Finally, community income from tourism registered a mean score of 3.24 with a standard deviation of 0.92, which was interpreted as moderate. This finding suggested that although tourism generated income for local communities, the financial benefits had not yet reached optimal levels. The relatively high variability indicated differences in how tourism income was distributed among community members, implying that some individuals or enterprises benefited more than others.

6.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlations between hospitality management and tourism development

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Hospitality dimension	Tourism development	
Service quality	0.61**	
Staff competence	0.52**	
Facility standards	0.57**	
Community-enterprise standard	0.48**	
Overall hospitality management	0.66**	

Note: ** significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis presented in Table 3 revealed statistically significant positive relationships between all dimensions of hospitality management and tourism development at the 0.01 significance level. These findings indicated that improvements in hospitality management were associated with corresponding improvements in tourism development outcomes. Specifically, service quality exhibited the strongest relationship among the individual dimensions with tourism development ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$) (Nelson et al., 2023). This indicated a strong positive relationship, suggesting that improvements in reliability and responsiveness of services were associated with higher levels of visitor satisfaction, repeat visitation, local employment, and overall tourism growth. The findings demonstrated that service quality played a fundamental role in enhancing tourism performance (Alex et al., 2024).

The relationship between facility standards and tourism development was also positive and statistically significant ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$). This suggested that improvements in accommodation quality, hygiene, and physical infrastructure were associated with better tourism development outcomes. Similarly, staff competence demonstrated a moderate positive relationship with tourism development ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that better-trained and more competent employees contributed positively to the overall success of the tourism sector. Furthermore, the community-enterprise service standard showed a statistically significant moderate positive relationship with tourism development ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$). Although this relationship was comparatively weaker than the others, it nevertheless demonstrated that stronger collaboration between hospitality enterprises and local communities contributed positively to tourism performance. Finally, the composite measure of overall hospitality management exhibited the strongest correlation with tourism development ($r = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$), indicating a strong positive association. This finding suggested that improvements across all hospitality management dimensions collectively enhanced tourism development and reinforced the importance of adopting comprehensive hospitality management strategies.

6.4 Regression Analysis

Table 4: Regression predicting tourism development

Predictor	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)
(Constant)	—	2.63	0.009

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Service quality	0.39	4.86	0.000
Facility standards	0.31	3.92	0.000
Staff competence	0.18	2.29	0.023
R = 0.721; R ² = 0.520; Adj. R ² = 0.510			
F(3,141) = 50.9; p = 0.000			

The multiple regression analysis presented in Table 4 examined the extent to which hospitality management dimensions predicted tourism development. The overall regression model was found to be statistically significant ($F(3,141) = 50.9$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that the selected hospitality management variables jointly explained a significant proportion of the variation in tourism development. The model yielded a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = 0.721$, demonstrating a strong positive relationship between the predictors and tourism development. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.520$) indicated that 52.0% of the variation in tourism development was explained by service quality, facility standards, and staff competence. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.510$) suggested that after adjusting for the number of predictors included in the model, approximately 51.0% of the variation in tourism development remained explained by the model, while the remaining 49.0% was attributable to other factors not included in the study.

Among the individual predictors, service quality emerged as the strongest predictor of tourism development with a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta = 0.39$, a t-value of 4.86, and a highly significant p-value of 0.000. This finding suggested that improvements in service reliability and responsiveness made the greatest contribution to enhancing tourism development. Facility standards represented the second strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.31$, $t = 3.92$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that improvements in accommodation facilities, cleanliness, and hygiene significantly enhanced tourism performance. Finally, staff competence also exerted a statistically significant positive influence on tourism development ($\beta = 0.18$, $t = 2.29$, $p = 0.023$), although its contribution was comparatively smaller than the other predictors. Overall, the regression findings demonstrated that hospitality management significantly predicted tourism development, with service quality making the largest contribution, followed by facility standards and staff competence.

7.0 Discussion of Results

The findings support the service-profit chain and destination-competitiveness literature: high service quality and good facilities were the strongest correlates and predictors of tourism development at Bwindi, translating the destination's outstanding natural attraction into visitor satisfaction, referrals, and employment. The prominence of service quality confirms that at premium ecotourism destinations, the intangible dimensions of hospitality—reliability, responsiveness, and care—are decisive.

The relative weaknesses in staff training and community-enterprise standards, alongside moderate community income, highlight the ecotourism concern that benefits are not yet fully shared or that capacity is uneven.

Strengthening these areas would both raise service consistency and deepen the community benefit that sustains conservation-linked tourism. As a cross-sectional design, causality is not proven, and external factors such as gorilla-permit pricing, global travel conditions, and access infrastructure also shape tourism development.

8.0 Conclusions

The study concludes that hospitality management is significantly and positively related to tourism development at Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. Service quality and facility standards are the strongest drivers, while staff competence and community-enterprise service standards, though weaker, still matter. Hospitality management explained over half the variation in tourism development, confirming it as a major—though not the only—determinant of how tourism grows at this destination.

9.0 Recommendations

- Lodges and operators should invest in continuous staff training in service delivery, guiding, and guest care to raise consistency, the weakest hospitality dimension.
- Facility standards should be maintained and upgraded, with grading and periodic quality inspections to sustain the high satisfaction Bwindi enjoys.
- Community enterprises should receive capacity building and market linkages so community-based hospitality reaches the standard of leading lodges and broadens local income.
- Stakeholders should design experiences that extend length of stay (cultural tours, nature walks, community visits) to convert high satisfaction into greater economic benefit.
- Tourism authorities should strengthen revenue-sharing and community involvement to reinforce the social and conservation foundations of sustainable tourism.

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