

Eco-Tourism And Its Role On The Development Of Local Industries. A Case Study Of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.

Kobusinge Juliet¹, Nakimbugwe Sophie²

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

Abstract

The role of ecotourism as a means of influencing the path of local development or encouraging conservation activities was not unproblematic. Indeed, an increasing body of literature not only challenges the assumed benevolence of ecotourism but critically questions the role of ecotourism in contributing to the greater social and economic justice so often assumed under these programs. This paper sought to contribute to this growing body of critical literature through an analysis of the impact of ecotourism on the everyday lives of rural villagers adjacent to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda, paying particular attention to the social forms of access to and control over the process through which decisions about ecotourism take place. Drawing on a year of ethnographic-based fieldwork, this paper focused on how the commodification of Bwindi as a product of wilderness, a wild and un-spoilt destination marketed to foreign visitors, promotes the external control of conservation spaces by international organizations that ultimately contribute to, rather than alleviate, poverty and dependency in local communities. Beyond providing just another case study, however, this analysis argues that the 'new' relations between people and parks created under ecotourism in Bwindi have in actuality created new forms of control and vulnerabilities. The most frequently mentioned benefit to the local population is the boom in the hotel business as a result of the thriving ecotourism in the area. Big hotels have been constructed recently to respond to the pressures of the increase in visitors to the park. The second benefit is, employment in those businesses related to tourism. Most people are employed in these hotels or they track the gorillas in the park. In this way the local population is benefiting very much from the industry. The Government of Uganda should consider promoting private sector investment in ecotourism. The professional tourism institution of learning should be expanded if possible and the private sector should be encouraged to operate with concessions from the government of Uganda. Uganda Wildlife Authority should be adequately funded to fulfil its objectives of conservation of wildlife throughout Uganda both inside and outside the wildlife protected areas (national parks, wildlife reserves and community wildlife areas).

Keywords: Eco-Tourism, Development and Local Industries

Background of the study

Ecotourism as a sub-branch of tourism that included traveling to explore nature. Ecotourism includes several sets of activities such as nature trail walking, wildlife viewing, zip-lining, and cultural tourism, among other nature-enhancing activities (Ivan & Kazaara, 2023). The concept of ecotourism was

proposed in the mid-1980s by Hector Ceballos, a Mexican ecologist. Ecotourism has grown so much, especially after the creation of the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) in 1990, the body that governs the development and activities of ecotourism.

As a result, ecotourism helps in environmental

Received: 14.04.2024

Accepted: 19.04.2024

Published on: 29.04.2024

protection, job creation and infrastructure development, and improves cultural preservation for host communities (Abdi et al., 2020). However, ecotourism has brought a number of disadvantages to the environment and the host community. Ecotourism can be understood through the approach of considering the advantages and disadvantages of having it. For many years, ecotourism has been a source of employment for many people around the world. This therefore brings many economic boosts to the host communities where ecotourism is practiced. Jobs created for local communities range from technical, manual and menial jobs (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022). Ecotourism destinations employ tour guides, language translators, drivers, game wardens, ecological researchers and field workers, among other forms of employment created by hospitality facilities built in ecotourism destinations. The money generated from this employment helps to eradicate poverty, especially in third world countries where many ecotourism destinations are located (Godfrey et al., 2023).

Lawton, LJ, Alexander C (2002). Ecotourism is a part of sustainable tourism. The perceived potential of ecotourism as an effective tool for sustainable development is the main reason why developing countries are now using it and incorporating it into their economic development and conservation strategies (Faridah et al., 2023). Ecotourism as an alternative tourism involves visiting natural areas for the purpose of learning, studying or doing environmentally friendly activities, i.e. tourism based on nature experiences that enable the economic and social development of local communities. It focuses

primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, its landscape, flora, fauna and their habitats, as well as cultural artefacts from the given locality (Nicholas et al., 2023). Abala D.O (2012). A symbiotic and complex relationship between the environment and tourism activities is possible if this philosophy can be translated into appropriate policy, careful planning and tactical practices. Carefully planned and operated ecotourism sites, especially if they are village-based and involve local participation, are able to provide direct benefits that can offset pressure from other less sustainable activities that use natural and cultural resources. Ecotourism, natural resources, cultural heritage, rural lifestyle and integrated tourism are types of local economic activities (Christopher & Felex, 2022). Therefore, ecotourism in natural and cultural areas was realized with a number of elements in their natural landscape and cultural landscape (water, view, topography, vegetation, clean air) and also in the diversity of recreational activities suitable for all kinds of environments. Therefore, ecotourism and its natural wealth and raw materials to be created, as well as directing people to travel, is an attractive force.

Kennedy, R, & Beeton, S. (2018). Ecotourism has helped in community development by providing the local community with an alternative source of livelihood that is more sustainable. It aims to protect resources, especially biodiversity, and maintain sustainable use of resources that bring travelers ecological experiences, save the environment and gain economic Bwindi Impenetrable National Park with an area of 32,092 ha is one of the largest areas in East Africa. which still has Afromontane lowland forest

Received: 14.04.2024

Accepted: 19.04.2024

Published on: 29.04.2024

extending into the montane forest belt (Nicholas et al., 2023).

Located on the eastern edge of the Albertine Trench, and considered a Pleistocene refuge, the property is a biodiversity hotspot with probably the highest number of tree species for its altitude in East Africa. It is also host to a rich fauna including a number of endemic butterflies and one of the richest mammals in Africa (Ashiraf et al., 2023). Home to almost half of the

world's population of mountain gorillas, the property represents the front line of conservation as an isolated forest of exceptional biological richness surrounded by an agricultural landscape supporting one of the highest rural population densities in tropical Africa. Community benefits from mountain gorillas and other ecotourism may be the only hope for the future preservation of this unique site.

Statement of the Problem

These reduce the extent of the environmental effects of ecotourism, respect host cultures, improve the benefits of local communities and accelerate traveler satisfaction (Faith et al., 2023). In 2018, Miller worked on ecological development in Latin America, which gives us another reference for ecotourism. The documentary was also created on a series of road "eco-trips" by Environment Canada from mid-2007 to 2016. Several developing countries have realized why ecotourism is important and have launched sustainable tourism programs in the middle of the year to protect and develop our environment. -2000 (Winny et al., 2023). Also, the first definition of ecotourism was given by Ceballos-Lascurain in 2018. According to him, "Travel to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific aim of studying, admiring and enjoying the landscape and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural expression (past even contemporary) in these areas." The possible resettlement of locals as ecotourism inevitably led to development. Ecotourism on a large scale means that hotels will be built, especially when visitor areas become a large part of tourism (Phionah et al., 2023). When this happens, expansions occur and sometimes excavations can occur. In such cases, local residents may be forced to move out of their native countries. For example, about 70% of all national parks and game reserves in East Africa are located on land that once belonged to the Maasai. Indigenous peoples have never been compensated, and the resulting job opportunities favor elites over indigenous people (Derrick et al., 2023). Be part of the solution. It is possible to disrupt their lives while wandering through new ecosystems. If possible, avoid disrupting such life. Do not frighten animals, as this may interfere with their daily lives or interrupt the intentions of someone else on the same animal. With respect to the local people, do not disturb their lives (Ivan & Kazaara, 2023). Let them continue to interact with the ecosystem as before you got there. Remember that the next person and even future generations will want to visit the place after you. Let them find it better than you.

Objectives of the study.

To determine the mode of eco-tourism used in tourism industry in Uganda

To analyze the role of eco-tourism to the tourism industry in Uganda.

To examine the challenges associated with eco-tourism in Uganda.

Received: 14.04.2024

Accepted: 19.04.2024

Published on: 29.04.2024

Methodology

A research design described as a plan or a means or an approach of obtaining data for a specific study (Davies and Dodd, 2002). The researcher used a descriptive research design with quantitative methods, so as to statistically control the extraneous variables and focus her study to the analysis of complex issues into smaller components for better understanding and control of study proceedings (Olanrewaju & Abiodun, 2021). According to Seale (2009) a population study described as a study of a group of individuals taken from the general population who share a common characteristic, such as age, sex, or health condition. Bwindi Impenetrable National Park has an estimated population of 150 employees. The researcher will use both male and female respondents from Bwindi Impenetrable National Park from the top management, middle, and lower management of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park management because the records management function of SDLG is stained with reports of loss of data, poor accountability and failure to guarantee satisfactory access to required information especially where digital systems are not used to create and keep records (Olanrewaju et al., 2021). Due to the large population of employees in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, the researcher took a representative sample of 25 respondents purposively using the sample size determination Table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) which states that for a population of 25 people was 24 respondents, therefore the researcher used a population sample size of 25 respondents (Olanrewaju et al., 2021). Therefore, the sample size will include; 10 respondents from Top management, 10 respondents from Middle management and 5 respondents from Lower managements (Bwindi Impenetrable National Park Planning Unit, 2015; Appendix c).

Table 1: Showing the Distribution of the Sample

Respondent	Sample Population
Top management	10
Middle management	10
Lower management	5
Total	25

The researcher used self-administered questionnaires of both open ended and close ended questionnaires in which written questions are presented and answered by the respondents in written form. The use of questionnaires ensured that there was wide coverage in terms of scope; they included consultations where it was due and responses are checked in case of doubt (Nafiu et al., 2013). Davies and Dodd (2002) defined data processing and analysis as a process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modeling data with the goal of discovering useful information, informing conclusions, and supporting decision-making. After collecting the data, it processed to manageable proportions for better presentation and analysis. This involved editing, coding and presentation of quantitative data (Nafiu, 2012). Editing concerned with detecting and correcting errors and ensuring completion of question answering. Field editing employed to ensure that questionnaires are fully answered in respect to all relevant questions to the

respondents. The filled in questionnaires checked for uniformity and errors was detected for the omitted questions. Data was analyzed in form of tables, frequencies and percentages using SPSS & STATA (Nelson et al., 2022).

RESULTS

TABLE 1: Responses on the kind of sensitization given to the local population

No of Family Members	No of Respondents	Percentage
Conservation of nature	60	60%
Avoid poaching	22	22%
Visitors (tourists).	08	08%
Importance of animals.	06	06%
Benefits of tourism	04	04%
Total	100	100%

Source: Interview (2023)

Conservation of nature was the most common type of sensitization given to the local population. This is important because tourist make Uganda their destination because of its beauty which should be guarded seriously by all Ugandans. Any sensitization devoid of nature conservation would be unfortunate, almost like to tea without sugar. Illegal activities (poaching); 22 respondents representing 22% interviewed said that they were sensitized and warned against illegal activities in the parks (Journal et al., 2023). Of course, Uganda is known internationally for its gorilla tourism. Anybody threatening their existence is considered a criminal. The chairman of Uganda Wildlife termed them terrorists who are killing our rare species of wildlife. Handling of tourists; 8% percentage of respondents said that they attended workshops conducted in the country in relation to developing community tourism products. Here by the locals were trained in setting up tourism craft shops and producing other products which can entice tourists to spend money within their localities.

TABLE 2: Responses on efficiency of the sensitization and awareness campaign to promote ecotourism

View	No of Respondents	Percentage
Not effective	02	02%
Not Very effective	18	18%
Effective	80	80%
Total	100	100%

Source: Interview

80% of the respondents said they are following what they have learned. This answer raises doubt. Most of the respondents thought the investigator was a spy to nab those involved in illegal activities. 18% respondents could not

commit themselves as to whether the local population really abide by what they have been told. That is why they used very measured language “*not very sure*”.

Two respondents, one of which is an employee said that the local community have not heeded the sensitization and awareness campaign which is why they are still acting contrary to the laws on protection of the environment (Faith et al., 2023). On a good note, all respondents agreed that gorillas are not interfered with these days. Even poachers have given up because the game wardens have been tough on them. This excludes the Batwa tribe who are on the eastern Congo.

Indeed, Bwindi national park retains an image of instability due to the conflicts within and in the surrounding countries which have been covered by the foreign press. These, in conjunction with the current terrorist threats have negatively affected Uganda’s International image to the detriment of the thriving tourism industry.

Table 3: Reasons given to justify that community members follow what they are sensitized to

View	No of Respondents	Percentage
Demarcate	18	18%
Enormous benefits	52	52%
Planting trees	20	20%
Breeding domestic animals	05	05%
Beekeeping allowed		
Give guidance when ever they get lost	04 01	04% 01%
Total	100	100%

Source; Interview (2023)

One of the most notable places of evidence towards conservation of nature by the local community near Bwindi National Park is that there are enormous benefits according to the local population either directly through employment in the tourism sector, or indirectly by selling goods and services to tourists. Because those benefits, the local population have decided to heed to the advice of the organizations which have been emphasizing the importance of conservation of wildlife as a prerequisite for promoting eco-tourism in Uganda. Another point that shows the local population have heeded the teachings of those organization (Christopher & Felex, 2022), is that people are now used to the practice of planting trees culture, a culture which was previously absent. Indeed, the community members have been planting their own trees especially bamboo species. This is a positive step in the right direction. The fourth reason is that the authorities of the park have decided to demarcate the area to prevent poachers and those involved in illegal activities from entering the park. Although this implies that authorities failed in the sensitization to persuade community

Received: 14.04.2024

Accepted: 19.04.2024

Published on: 29.04.2024

members from entering the park illegally, it shows the wall is supplementing sensitization campaign as we cannot rule at that there are no rogue elements amidst the population.

Table 4: Responses on the benefits of ecotourism to the local population

Benefits	No of Respondents	Percentage
Employment.	20	20%
Boom in hotel business.	42	42%
Foreign exchange earner.	08	08%
Development road networks.	07	07%
Urbanization •	06	06%
Provision of water.	04	04%
Education.	04	04%
Keeping domestic animals	03	03%
Local markets	02	02%
Improve Security	01	01%
Forestations	01	01%
Control of soil erosion •	01	01%
Improve rainfall pattern.	01	01%
Beekeeping.	01	01%
Improve Health Care system	01	01%
Medicinal	01	01%
Sponsorship of further education.	01	01%
Total	100	100%

Source: Interview (2023)

The most frequently mentioned benefit to the local population is the boom in The hotel business as a result of the thriving ecotourism in the area. Big hotels have been constructed recently to respond to the pressures of the increase in visitors to the park. The second benefit is, employment in those businesses related to tourism. Most people are employed in these hotels or they track the gorillas in the park. In this way the local population is benefiting very much from the industry.

The third benefit is the foreign exchange earnings (Frank et al., 2023). This was mostly mentioned by students of Kabindi S.S, as it is well known that the tourism industry is a topic in geography syllabus. In class they are taught that tourists bring with them foreign currencies, which first of all helps to stabilize Uganda's foreign market as well as financing imports. This is true, because Uganda imports all equipment, ranging small machines like bicycles to complex equipment such as machines used in road constructions.

Fourthly, eco-tourism leads to the development of rural areas to urban centres. Places which were previously inhabitable now have facilities like electricity, water, roads. Fifthly, the government efforts to attract tourists to Uganda's tourism site, have formed it to supply towns neighbouring Mgahriga with piped clean safe drinking water. Indeed the percentage of people with limited access to safe drinking water has been tremendously reduced. The local population attribute such success to the presence of a tourism site in their midst. Sixthly; the education sector got a boost from the tourism sector. Most of the students interviewed said that their school fees are directly earned from sources related to tourism industry. Others said that some tourists are generous and extend sponsorship to bright but poor children to pursue their education. Also the, government has constructed good schools for the children of those who are employed in the tourism industry. At the same time the local people are also benefiting from those schools. Therefore, the linkages between the tourism industry and education sector should be noted (Victoria et al., 2023). Keeping of domestic animals; the creation of awareness and sensitization campaigns made the local population turn to keeping animals. One of the arguments the poachers were raising was that, they want to eat meat. Now the authorities gave them alternatives to wildlife meat. Today, through observation you are able to see domestic animals on people's compounds, which according to the resident of Kisoro town was very rare before the Uganda Wildlife Authority had a firm grip on the poachers.

Emergence of the local markets; As the Uganda Wildlife Authority intensify its awareness campaigns to make local community responsive to the demands of the tourism; small scale commercial enterprises are springing up to the advantage of the local population.

The following group of benefits receive a 1% response from the respondents. These are improved security in the park in response to the Bwindi massacre of eight foreign tourists, forestation, control of soil erosion, a reliable rainfall pattern, Beekeeping, improved health care system, varied species of trees as sources of medicinal herbs and an improved relationship between the local population with the park authority on the one hand and with the tourists on the other hand. Some tourists describe the hospitality of the local population as very encouraging for the future of Uganda's tourism industry. The respondents when asked whether illegal activities still go in the park despite several interventions noted above. They had a mixed reaction. Some said yes and gave various reasons to justified their claims, while other respondents answered no and justify their opinion. However, a lesser number of the respondents could not give an opinion by insisting they are not aware of any illegal activities in the national park.

TABLE 5: Responses on the illegal activities in the National Park

Received: 14.04.2024

Accepted: 19.04.2024

Published on: 29.04.2024

View	No of Respondents	Percentage
Poaching goes on especially wild pigs	40	40%
Felling of trees especially bamboo.		
Destroying environment	20	20%
No response	10	10%
	30	30%
Total	70	100%

Source: Interview (2023)

The illegal activities in the park include poaching, felling of trees, more specifically bamboo species. Those who said no, explained that recently they have not heard of cases of poaching gorillas and buffaloes, only wild pigs. It is thanks to the goodwill and maturity of the local population that the mountain gorillas, the world's most endangered ape, are being spared. They are found only in small portions of protected forests in northwestern Rwanda, southwestern Uganda and Eastern democratic Republic of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Finally, those who said that they are not sure, are very busy people who have time to keep track of what takes place in the national parks. However, some of them could be victims of illegal activities, therefore, fear giving information to the investigator by mistaking him for a spy to nab those engaged in the illegal activities.

Conclusions

The local community neighboring Bwindi National Parks have large families as noted from the interviews with the respondent. 25% of the community work directly in the tourism industry.

Community members support the idea of conservation of wildlife with a view towards ecotourism in Uganda. A greater percentage of the respondents have received sensitization and awareness on the value of conservation of nature, desisting from participating in illegal activities, and the importance of domestic animals.

The organizations that carry out sensitization awareness campaigns in the descending order are namely, Uganda Wildlife Authority, Care, Peace Corps volunteers, and the Uganda community tourism association.

Most members who attended sensitization and awareness campaign tend to follow the instructions they were given. This is demonstrated by the fact that, they are now planting trees such as bamboo, breeding domestic animals and beekeeping.

The local population have benefited so much from ecotourism in Uganda. It's a well-known fact that, wildlife and other resources make significant contributions of food, commercial activities, medicine, energy, and shelter, social and aesthetic values. On timber forest products are key subsistence and small scale commercial enterprises. Honey (1999) confirms that ecotourism benefits both local people and governments in different ways. According to him

Received: 14.04.2024

Accepted: 19.04.2024

Published on: 29.04.2024

benefits are usually felt at two levels, the first being macro or national level. At this level, tourism is expected to foster economic growth, foreign exchange earnings and increase the state revenue distribution and balancing regional development. At the second level, an improvement in the peoples well-being in areas of job creation, revenue distribution and balancing regional development.

Recommendations

The Batwa-pygmes who are a menace to the national park should be evacuated from the boundary of the park and resettled elsewhere preferably far away from the park. They should also be invited to the local council meetings, so that they are sensitized to nature conservation and its associated benefits. And finally, some of them should be employed as game wardens to crack down on their colleagues found poaching.

The Government of Uganda should improve on the security in the major tourist areas with a view to correct Uganda's tarnished image after the massacre of eight foreign tourists in the Bwindi by the Rwandese (Hutu) Interhamwe. The Government of Uganda should embark on and promote Uganda's unique tourist features, these where it has a higher competitive advantage. An example would be the mountain gorillas in Bwindi.

The Government of Uganda should consider promoting private sector investment in ecotourism. The professional tourism institution of learning should be expanded if possible and the private sector should be encouraged to operate with concessions from the government of Uganda.

Uganda Wildlife Authority should be adequately funded to fulfil its objectives of conservation of wildlife throughout Uganda both inside and outside the wildlife protected areas (national parks, wildlife reserves and community wildlife areas).

Bwindi National park, although the smallest in the country (about 33.7 km) is very important, as it is one of the only two parks in Uganda that offer habitat for endangered mountain gorilla. Situated in Kisoro District, South Western Uganda, this park was gazetted in 1991 and is a part of the great Virunga conservation area, which is 434 km. It adjoins Rwanda's volcano and the democratic Republic of Congos Virunga National parks. Bwindi national park experiences two wet seasons, February to May and September to December of each year. Maximum amount of rainfall in a year is 250 mm (October) and minimum is 10 mm in July.

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