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

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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. From the findings, 80% of the respondents said they were following what they have learned. This answer raised 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. 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

Keywords: Eco-Tourism, Development and Local Industries

Background of the study

According to Burkley, R.C. and Morison, C & Castley, JG (2016). 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 activities that are all focused on learning about nature (Christopher & Felex, 2022). 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, a body that governs the development and activities of ecotourism (Christopher & Felex, 2022). As a result, ecotourism helps in environmental protection, job creation and infrastructure development and improves cultural preservation for host communities (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022).

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

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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 (Christopher et al., 2022). Jobs created for local communities range from technical, manual and menial jobs. Ecotourism destinations employ tourist 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 by this job helps in eradicating poverty, especially in third world countries where many ecotourism destinations are located (Shamim et al., 2023).

Lawton, L.J., 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 (Ramadhan et al., 2023). Ecotourism as an alternative tourism involves visiting natural areas to learn, study or perform environmentally friendly activities, i.e. tourism based on natural experiences that enables the economic and social development of local communities (Annet et al., 2023). It focuses primarily on experiencing and getting to know nature, its landscape, flora, fauna and their habitats, as well as cultural artifacts from the locality.

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 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 (Collins 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 conservation of this unique site (Christopher & Felex, 2022).

Baxter, L. (2016). Criterion (vii): As a key biodiversity site on the continent, the species richness found in this site, also recognized under criteria (x) below, can be considered a superlative natural phenomenon. Criterion (x): With its diverse habitats ranging from 1,160 to 2,706 m above sea level, its position at the crossroads of the Albertine, Congo and

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East African ecological zones, and its probable role as a Pleistocene refugia, Bwindi is the most important area in Uganda for species due to the exceptional diversity that includes many Albertine Rift endemics. This forest is believed to be a mere remnant of a very extensive forest that once covered much of western Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The property had the greatest diversity of tree species (over 200 species including 10 endemics) and ferns (about 104 species) in East Africa and perhaps the most important forest in Africa for montane forest butterflies with 202 species (84% of the country's total), including eight Albertine endemics. The forest is very important as home to almost half of the population (about 340) of the

critically endangered mountain gorilla.

With more than 347 species of forest birds recorded in the park, at least 70 of the 78 species of montane forest birds found in the Albertine Rift region are found in the forest and 22 of the 36 are endemic. Overall, Bwindi is host to many globally threatened species, including high-profile mammals such as the mountain gorilla, chimpanzee, 'Hoest's monkey and African elephant; birds such as the African Green Broadbill, Grauer's Swamp Warbler, Turner's Eremomela, Chapin's Flycatcher and Shelley's Kestrel; and butterflies such as the African swallowtail and the cream swallowtail.

Statement of the Problem

According to Helzer, he used the term ecotourism for the first time in 2017. He described the four pillars of ecotourism, or environmentally friendly tourism. These reduce the extent of environmental impacts of ecotourism, respect host cultures, improve benefits for local communities and accelerate traveler satisfaction. In 2018, Miller worked on ecological development in Latin America, which gives us another reference for ecotourism. The document was also created on a road set Environment Canada's "eco-tours" from mid-2007 to 2016 (Ivan & Kazaara, 2023). Several developing countries realized why ecotourism is important and started sustainable tourism programs to protect and develop our environment by the mid-2000s. Also, the first definition of ecotourism was given by Ceballos-Lascurain in 2018. According to him, "Traveling 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 and present) in these areas." The possible displacement of local residents as ecotourism inevitably led to the development (Christopher & Michael, 2022). Ecotourism on a large scale means hotels will be built, especially as visitor areas become a big part of tourism. 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 (Florence & Sarah, 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 the animals as this could disrupt their daily life

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or interrupt someone else's intentions on the same animal (Phionah et al., 2023). With respect to the local people, do not disrupt their lives. 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.

1. To determine the mode of eco-tourism used in tourism industry in Uganda
2. To analyze the role of eco-tourism to the tourism industry in Uganda.
3. To examine the challenges associated with eco-tourism in Uganda.

Methodology

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. Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is located in Kanungu District Uganda. The Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP) is in southwestern Uganda. The park is part of the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and is situated along the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) border next to the Virunga national Park and on the edge of the Albertine Rift. Composed of 321 square kilometers (124 sq. mi) of both montane and lowland forest, it is accessible only on foot. BINP is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization designated World Heritage Site.

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. Purposive sampling technique used to select the key informants in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park who are deemed to be knowledgeable about the topic under study so as to avoid bias. This technique used to attain information about ERMS from top management, middle, lower management employees of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. 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. 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
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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.

The filled in questionnaires checked for uniformity and errors was detected for the omitted questions. Coding involved processing of classified answers to questions into meaningful categories to develop an essential pattern. Data was analyzed in form of tables, frequencies and percentages using SPSS & STATA (Nelson et al., 2022).

RESULTS

Table 2: 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 Visitors (tourists).	22	22%
Importance of animals. Benefits of tourism	08	08%
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. 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 (Faridah et al., 2023).

Handling of tourists; 8% percentage of respondents said that they attended workshops conducted in the country in

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relation to developing community tourism products. Here by the locals were trained in setting up tourism craft shops and producing other products which can antique tourists to spend money within their localities. Sensitization on the importance of animals have also been done. This is according to six respondents interviewed. Finally, 4 representing 4% said that they have been sensitized to the benefits of ecotourism. This is evidenced by the mushrooming of craft shops in the trading centers neighboring the parks (Shakilah & Kazaara, 2023).

Organisations that carried out the sensitization

Table 3: 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%
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 (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022). 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.

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Table 4: 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		
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 (Faridah et al., 2023). Another point that shows the local population have heeded the teachings of those organization, 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 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 6: Responses on the benefits of ecotourism to the local population

Benefits	No of Respondents	Percentage
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Employment.	20	20%
Boom in hotel business. Foreign exchange earner. Development	42	42%
road networks. Urbanization •		
Provision of water. Education.	08	08%
Keeping domestic animals		
	07	07%
Local markets Improve Security Forestations		
Control of soil erosion • Improve rainfall pattern. Beekeeping.	06	06%
Improve Health Care system		
	04	04%
Medicinal		
	04	04%
Sponsorship of further education.		
	03	03%
	02	02%
	01	01%
	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 (Benjamin Badeji & Olufunsho Abayomi, 2011). 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.

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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.

Table 7: Responses on the illegal activities in the National Park

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

The organizations that carry out sensitization awareness campaigns in the descending order are namely, Uganda

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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 still involved in illegal activities are the Batwa tribe who are primitive. They are located in the Eastern Congo. Indeed, the local population on the Uganda side are not happy with the acts of the Batwa. The Batwa could be doing this because nature tourism is associated with damages (Whelan 1990). The best example is the damage inflicted by wildlife, as crop raiders. This may involve crops trampled or eaten as well as harm to people on livestock. Other material examples include damages to crops by elephants, killing of livestock by lions in Africa. These indirect costs create local resentment.

Recommendations

The Batwa-pygmyies 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).

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