

Tourism and Hospitality Management

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Ecotourism in Uganda

A Case Study of the Mgahinga National Park

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Abstract

This is a case study of Mgahinga gorilla national park in Western Uganda. It is an attempt to investigate the importance and relevance of ecotourism and assess the awareness and understanding of ecotourism among the local population.

The purpose of the study are listed below:

1. To assess the awareness and understanding of local community towards ecotourism.
2. To assess the contribution of ecotourism to the local population.
3. To find out whether the local population has been sensitised on ecotourism and environment.
4. To find out whether people with higher education have better understanding of Ecotourism.

The results show that , despite a low number of respondents employed in the tourism industry, the local population supports the idea of conservation of wildlife . All the respondents interviewed unanimously answered that they support the idea of nature conservation.

All 120 respondents asked whether they benefit from ecotourism, answered unanimously that the benefit either directly through employment in the tourism industry or indirectly through the sale of goods and services to the tourists and other employees within the tourism sector.

Illegal activities still go on in the park despite several international interventions. Respondents had mixed opinion some agreed gave various reasons to justify their claims, while others respondents did not agree and justified their opinion. A small number of respondents would not give their opinion by insisting they are not aware of any illegal activities in the park .

KEYWORDS; investigate the importance, relevance of ecotourism, awareness, understanding , local residents.

Dedication

To the love of *Jonathan OLWA*

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Chapter one – Introduction

‘This thesis is an attempt to investigate the importance and relevance of Ecotourism and assess the awareness and understanding of ecotourism among the local residents.’

Uganda is a country of exceptional diversity, containing the zone of overlap between the East African Savannah and West African rainforests. The country has varied habitats, which support a diversity of plant and animal life, making Uganda rank among the top ten countries in the world in terms of animal and plant diversity, and specifically diversity of the mammalian species. More than 18,783 species are known or have been recorded in Uganda. The country is also privileged because of the forest in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, known as the Albertan Rift of Regional Endemism. The environment is the basis for economic and social development. All three aspects must be in balance for economic growth. Wildlife and other biological resources make a significant contribution to the wellbeing of humanity. This is in terms of food, commercial activities, medicine, energy, shelter and social and aesthetic values.

The environment and natural resources sector contribute 54.4% of the total GDP in 1998 and 32% of the monetary and 84% of non monetary. The non monetary contribution accrues to Ugandans rural poor. In economic terms, wildlife conservation has been mainly viewed in the light of tourism and its contribution to GDP. Whenever the national economic situation is being assessed, environmental values such as contribution of wildlife conservation and habitat are excluded. The contribution of the sub sector to economic growth is significantly under valued, leading to low prioritization by the government. In the last 30 years, wildlife has been severely threatened and their population reduced by poaching and habitat degradation. Wildlife is under

increasing pressure of encroachment as a result of the growing human population in the country, estimated at approximately 3% per annum.

Ecotourism conserves the natural environment and improves the well being of the local population. There are many examples in Uganda of this type of tourism contributing not only to the protection of valuable natural resource but also benefiting the local population and national economy. Ecotourism is contributing towards the conservation of mountain gorillas and other species in Uganda as well as improving the well being of the local population who live near the park. Ecotourism can mean different things to different groups involved in the relationship between tourism and environment if it is to be recognized as a legitimate sector of tourism and environment. If it is to be recognized as a legitimate sector of tourism industry, it must be defined to universal satisfaction. Broadly speaking it refers to tourism that is based on nature but that seeks to minimize harmful impact and better still, seeks to promote conservation.

The concept of variation of definition of ecotourism has been presented by Miller and as a variety of ecotourism paradigms where, with no pole, all tourism may be viewed as ecotourism (Orams, 1995). At the high human responsibility pole, all tourism including ecotourism is contradiction itself. At a low human level responsibility pole it is thought that human activity need take no consideration over environment and in this human activity need may be considered as ecotourism.

These two scenarios are the extremes and are, therefore, somewhat unrealistic, however, different definitions may be placed along a continuum. Ecotourism in its purest form is an industry which claims to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping generate money, jobs and helping

to conserve the environment of wild life and vegetation. It provides a way to help educate the community to protect and conserve the environment through travel, and also create and maintain a sustainable environment for both residents and tourists. Therefore the community should be aware of and have a positive attitude towards ecotourism. Lack of community awareness and positive attitude to wards ecotourism and the environment is likely to lead to the depletion of the environment through the type of tourism called mass tourism, logging, hunting for bush meat and large scale farming. To illustrate this lack of awareness towards the environment and ecotourism, people who live around Virunga Mountains, people for whom obtaining sufficient food to survive, clothes to wear and fuel to cook with is a daily struggle asked some harsh questions like: *“How much is a gorilla worth? What is the value of the forest? This demonstrates, to a certain extent, the ignorance of some people towards environment and ecotourism.”*

This thesis is an attempt to investigate the importance and relevance of ecotourism and assess the awareness and understanding of ecotourism among the local residents

Chapter two – Literature review

Ecotourism and Natural Environment

Ecotourism conserves the natural environment and improves the well being of the local population. There are examples in Uganda of this type of tourism contributing not only to the protection of valuable natural resources but also benefiting the local community and national economy. Ecotourism is contributing towards the conservation of mountain gorillas in some areas as well as improving the well being of the local population that live nearby. Ecotourism means different things to different groups involved in the relationship between tourism and environment.

If it is to be recognized as a legitimate sector of the tourism industry, it must be defined to universal satisfaction. Broadly speaking it refers to tourism that is based on the natural environment but that seeks to minimise the harmful impacts and better still, seeks to promote conservation. Many scholars agree that ecotourism requires a two way link between tourism and the environment (Valentine 1993, Carter, 1994).

As the understanding of the close relationships between tourism and environmental conservation increases, researchers are calling on the ecotourism industry to incorporate the economic development as a fundamental element of conservation (West and Breeching, 1991).

These concerns highlight a critical difference between nature tourism and ecotourism. The latter term will be defined here. Nature tourism is based directly on the use of natural resources in a relatively underdeveloped state, including topography, water features, vegetations and wild life (Healy 1998).

Ecotourism expands with the increase in parks . There is now a worldwide nature travel market, with tourists from many countries travelling to destination in many other countries (Zurick, 1992). Ecotourism has an idealistic agenda, defined by Drumms (1991)as progressive, educational travel, which conserves the environment and befits local communities, Few studies assessing the attitude of the community and visitors towards ecotourism travel were found. Past studies have mainly concentrated on the evaluation of ecotourism in different destinations in which achievement of specific conservation and development principles of ecotourism were discussed (Ross and Well 1999), (Wallace and pierce 1996). While some have emphasised the definitions and impacts of ecotourism (Blamery 1997, Walker 1996, Obua and Harding 1997). Others have examined the roles and responsibilities of different players in planning or promotion of ecotourism destinations. Except for a few studies that profile and examine the motivations for ecotourism

(Eagles 1992,) most studies focus on the supply side of ecotourism. Thus, little attention has been paid to the demand side, which seeks insight. Due to its extensive coverage of the various aspects of ecotourism, the definition provided by Honey (1999) will be used to assess the community perception towards it. In 1973, Robert put forward the view that everything seems to suggest that developing countries look upon tourism consumption as “ manna nom heaven “that can provide a solution to all foreign settlement difficulties (1973.:1)

To some degree, this description of tourism as a manna from heaven has gained support, in part because tourism is a highly visible activity.

Critics might argue that the statement is rather absurd, if not over simplistic, given the well recognized weaknesses of tourism as a visible development strategy for less developed countries. Whatever the outcome of this particular debate, Erbes statement and research since then has focused attention on the

far-reaching implications of tourism (for example, its strength and limitations) as being a means of assisting in the process of development. Development in this context is defined as an improvement in both economic opportunity and social life in a country and society. Issues refer to the challenges and opportunities associated with the process of developing tourism.

Policy consideration relates to strategic development scenarios to overcome the area of concern through prioritizing to formulation a tourism policy. With respect to many developing countries, tourism is an important and integral part of the economic development strategy. In many developing societies, tourism is perceived as a panacea for their fragile economies that are characterized by scarcity of development resources such as finances and expertise. These resources are needed to increase economic surplus, without which these countries are forced to rely on international aid to support development efforts.

Therefore, well recognized benefits of tourism are usually reason advanced or government supported. The benefits are usually felt at two levels; one is macro or national level. At the first level, tourism is expected to foster economic growth foreign exchange earnings and an increase in the state revenue and act at a second level, in improvement in population well being in areas of job creation, revenue distribution and balance regional development. In this respect tourism is described as an industry though it has no single production characteristics or defined operational parameter. Tourism is also multi faceted and its economic expansion cannot occur without inputs of social, cultural and environmental nature.

It needs to be stated that as demand for tourism increases, so too will it bring it not only opportunities of a social, cultural and environmental nature. These

consequences, such as crowded airports and urban traffic congestion, affect both public and private sectors. In these areas, where tourism impacts on country and society, there may well be conflicts with competing demands for other sectors of the economy, or with community interests at large. The Ecotourism concept which has been championed by tourist destinations globally with a view to changing the big five mammal and developing other environmentally friendly types of tourism.

Ecotourism is thus an important concept in tourism development. The latter includes a strong commitment to nature and sense of social responsibility. In this respect the present and future are urged to conserve the environment while the government is committed to strengthening and enforcing anti-poaching and nature based conservation policies which will ensure the development of responsible tourism in the country.

It should be noted, however, that ecotourism prefers to use local resources expertise, which in turn translates into environmentally sensitive pattern and local participation in the travel industry. Its emphasis on local resources and employment makes it attractive to developing countries, which though rich in natural resources are afflicted with rural poverty and lack of export earnings. The value of biodiversity is more widely appreciated in the whole world.

However, pressure on wildlife and their natural habitats is increasing due to encroachments of human activities and intensified resource extraction. Accordingly conservation of biodiversity must be seen within the context of natural resources, social goals and aspirations.

Tourism has always been considered a vital medium for widening the scope of human interests. It contributes positively to the maturing and promotion of cultural heritage of nations. It, therefore, serves indirectly to improve individual cultural understanding of both residents and foreigners while at the same time

contributing to gross national products. At the local level domestic tourism creates understanding of attractions, thereby contributing to sustainable development. The strong awareness of conservation of the environment and demand by potential travellers translates into increasing demand by an ever growing number of foreign visitors. Accordingly, there is a need a destinations in Africa to cooperate more closely in areas of product development, research, manpower development and training as well as exchanging of tourism expertise and tourism information.

It is also necessary to harmonise travel formalities within the region so as to encourage free flow of visitors and maximisation of benefits acquired from tourism interactions within the region. Indeed such cooperation can be forged and enhanced within frame the work of existing regional economic groupings such as common market or eastern and southern Africa (comesa), preferential trade area (PTA), saddacc, east Africa cooperation. These economic groupings can play a pivotal role in positioning Africa to be a major player in envisaged tourism growth. Pearce (1992) contend that tourism attractions do not occur evenly or randomly in space. Developers and planners are faced with such practical questions as assessing the feasibility of developing a particular site from a number of alternatives for a specific project, or the broader evaluation of an area in terms of its general tourist potential. He grouped the factors affecting the tourist potential of an area into seven broad categories; climate, physical conditions, attractions, accessibility, existing facilities, land tenure use, and other considerations such as availability of regional development incentives. These factors are interrelated and the categories are not wholly exclusive. Climate, for example, may be an attraction; the attractiveness of an area may depend on its access and certain forms of land tenure may be subject to various forms of constraints. The importance of each of these factors, however, depends on the type of tourism to be developed, the context and stage

of tourism development and the perspectives adopted – that of the developer, the tourist, and the host community.

Ecotourism and the environment

WTO/UNEP (1994), lists the factors that make an area attractive to visitors. Growing numbers of vacationers seek recreational activities in warm tropical countries, They want to see something different, new, spectacular, something to photograph, Sometimes they want to travel in comfort, with minimal effort and often they want to mix their adventure with leisure activities such as sunbathing, swimming and shopping. The most successful tour packages combine a number of interests; wildlife, local customs, sport, historical sites, spectacular scenes, food and dancing, and most of all, water. Tropical rainforests which at first may appear surprisingly devoid of wildlife to many visitors, can be made more attractive with imaginative presentation; aerial walkways, board walks, observation towers, interpretation centres, indigenous people as guides, river running and hides for wildlife viewing. Adopting these ideas would enable them compete with Africa savannahs in terms of wildlife or the Himalayas for spectacular scenery.

Inskeep (1991) noted that not all places have equal potential for developing tourism. According to him, if there are any doubts as to whether an area has sufficient resources and market sources for tourism development or whether the benefits of tourism will outweigh the cost involved, then a pre-feasibility study assessment of the overall potential and relative benefits and costs should be carried out before proceeding with organizing a tourism project. Such a study would examine the resources available for tourism and potential tourism markets of the area, and the likely economic, environmental and social costs

and benefits of developing tourism. It would help in determining whether the benefits would justify the costs.

Tourism development is a problem of matching naturally or historically given resources with the demands and preferences of actual or potential tourists (Pearce 1992). However, variety exists in tourists' demands and preferences and there is no universal measure of tourist attractiveness, planner to reduce phenomena of aesthetic or cultural significance to quantifiable magnitudes for the purpose of comparative evaluation (Pearce 1992). Pearce (1992) argued that the evaluation of the tourist potential of an area is a complex task and one where methodologies could be further developed and refined.

A key problem is the comparison and weight of a wide range of parameters for any attempts to apply mathematical techniques to these multifactor evaluations without a sound basis for factor weighting is bound to fail in principle. But when factors can be logically weighted, then quantitative techniques do assume significance. It should, however, be noted that it is the relative importance of one location to another, rather than the absolute values, which are initially important.

Namasoga (1999) noted that most of the tourist attractions in Uganda are almost exclusively ecologically based and that this has made tourism in Uganda basically ecotourism. The problem of alarming poverty in many rural areas around the world could perhaps be alleviated if the right formulae were reached for involving local communities in the tourism process since they control the ecosystem and can destroy or conserve it.

Tourism being a human activity requires the closest harmony between the attitude and behaviour of tourists and the local people (Inskeep 1991). Tourism growth hinges on a number of delicate parameters which are mostly qualitative in nature, the social professional structures of the local population, their level of education and knowledge, standard of living, opinions and attitudes regarding the tourist phenomenon and its cultural and institutional effects.

The attitude of the local people towards ecotourism is an important factor to consider before carrying out such developments. Inskeep (1991) also contended that although not quantifiable, a very real attraction for many tourists can be the friendly, hospitable character of the local residents and more generally, their tolerance and acceptance of tourists visiting their region. The honesty and reliability of the residents in their dealings with tourists are also important factors to consider in determining the potential attractiveness of an area.

Gunn (1994) notes that an areas tourism attraction potential includes nearby rural areas as well as the cities, within a destination zone. It is likely that the majority of cultural resources will be found within communities, where as most natural resources are located in the surrounding areas. It is, therefore, essential that the developers of tourism communicate with the concerned local communities if tourism is to develop.

Inskeep (1991) contended that the attraction features of a country or region

provide the basis for development tourism; they form the most essential element of the tourist product. Without substantial attraction features, pleasure-oriented tourism would not be able to develop. Tourist attractions and activities can encompass a very wide variety of things, especially because of the great diversity of interests of today's tourist markets. At the same time, some features that residents believe are of great interest, are not so to most tourists. Therefore, imagination, perspective and objectivity are essential in identifying, evaluating and developing attractions. Unusual and interesting flora and fauna can be very important attractions, especially when combined with scenic landscapes. Animal and plant life conservation is a major issue in many parts of the world because of various problems, especially the reduction of wildlife habitat by encroachment of agricultural and urban use and poaching of protected animals (Inskeep 1991).

Mathieson and Wall (1993) agree that the hunting of animals and more recently the viewing of and photographing of wildlife are important tourist activities. The rapid increase in patronage of East African National Parks, the emergence of substitute Safari Parks in North America, Europe and Australia and the economic prosperity of zoos bear witness to this fascination with animals. The quality of observation is of great importance for tourist satisfaction and a high calibre of experience is most likely to be achieved when a wild animal is viewed, undisturbed, in its natural environment. Viewing and experiencing the splendour of African wildlife in a natural setting like KFR, therefore, exceeds the artificial spectacle experienced in city zoos. Vegetation is one of the major attractions of many destination areas. It has a great allure for tourists. According to Mathieson and Wall (1993), vegetation is in fact a primary tourist resource. This means that KFR has the potential to attract the tourist market.

The overall quality of the environment of a country or region and especially of the existing and potential tourism development areas is an important

consideration in attracting tourists. The environment, in most cases, is narrowly defined as the physical environment but in this particular case, the social as well as political environments are also important. The physical environment is considered to include climate, topography, wildlife and vegetation, coastal and marine areas, geology, ecological systems and natural resource areas (Inskeep 1991). Many conservationists believe that until local people can place a value on wildlife and see some direct benefit from it, they will continue to kill and poach it to help raise their income. If people do not see wildlife as a source of income, they will destroy it because they need the space for agriculture, pasture and any other developments that brings direct benefits to them.

There are not many places where benefits have exceeded the costs. Only in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe has positive progress been recorded. In these countries, the law empowers landholders to manage the wildlife on their farms with minimum government interference (Martin, 1993). They are given the incentive to retain and manage wildlife on their lands (Child, 1995). Martin (1999) argued that there is a dispute as to whether the landholder or the state should handle the problem and its cost. Although Spinage (1998) attributed failures in conservation to human population growth, Martin (1999) argued that only when the costs and benefits of protected areas are properly internalized in a single set of accounts, is it likely that the “spaceship community” will result in the necessary homeostatic mechanisms coming into play to limit population growth. According to the international convention for protection of nature held in London in 1933 National Parks are areas in which sport hunting is forbidden, and capture of fauna and collection of flora are prohibited.

Wild animals have lived together with humans on this earth since time began. Humans know that except in isolated cases of self defence or when wounded, rarely do wild animals deliberately attack and kill human beings. They have learned over the years to fear and respect humans. For instance, when

herbivores such as elephants and buffaloes will attack humans in self-defence or when protecting their young.

Ideally; each piece of land should put to its “highest and best use” that is the use that generates the greatest net benefits to society. While some benefits of nature tourism may be relatively easy to evaluate others, such as biodiversity benefits and future values, are more difficult to analyze (Conrad, 1980). Benefits from nature tourism can be divided into either local, regional national or global.

They may include employment opportunities, new markets for locally produced goods and indirect benefits, such as improved infrastructures associated with tourism development. They can also be divided into private or public. Private refer to the financial returns received by those providing tourism services like lodging, operators, food and equipment suppliers or public benefits referring to interaction with different people and their cultures.

Sometimes nature tourism is associated with damage or destruction. 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, livestock. Other materials examples include damages to crops by elephants, and predation of livestock by lions in Africa (Whelan 1990). These indirect costs create local resentment. Not all opportunity costs will be apparent in standard financial analysis. Nature tourism may involve restrictions on local use of resources by the local people. People may not be able to supplement their diet with proteins from wild animals as they had in the past.

In the past, the needs of self-preservation have taken precedence over those of the neighbouring population. Natural resources management decisions have

often been made without consulting those people whose lives are most directly affected. Local communities were generally disregarded or actively agitated by institutions mandated to manage protected areas (Scott1998). Efforts are currently being made to create an awareness of conservation and to disseminate social and economic benefits in an attempt to gain the support of neighbouring populations for local conservation activities. But decision making power still remains in the hands of external bodies, through national governments.

Ideally, local participation focuses on involving people directly or indirectly in all stages of the management and decision making process. There is a need to empower people to mobilize their capacities so that they become social, participants rather than passive subjects, in order to manage the resources, make decisions and control the acts that affect their lives (Well and Brandon 1992). Like any other developing countries Uganda should move away from the conventional isolationist approach of Park management, which seeks to protect parks from the surrounding society. A management approach which aims at putting the management of natural resources and conservation areas under local control may be the most appropriate approach. This approach emphasizes collaboration between Park authorities and local communities. It is argued that a confrontational attitude only sharpens local resentment of wildlife and encourages local people to draw the conclusion that the government places a higher value on the survival of wildlife than on people. This attitude became evident in Lake Mbuoro National Park in the 1980's. (Kamugisha and Stahl 1993).

Although in the past local communities were a problem they are at once a problem and an opportunity for nature tourism. They can, for instance, threaten the viability of the natural resources on which tourism is based. But if ecotourism provides the impetus for community development and benefits

flowed to the local people, they are likely to support tourism by adding a cultural dimension and diversity to the attraction. Therefore the relation of local communities with the protected is important in tourism development.

Covering at least some of the opportunity costs that local communities has the potential to generate spin-off revenue and employment opportunities for local people through setting up restaurants, hotels, and local arts and had handicrafts Revenue can also be obtained from cultural activities such as folk dances, basket weaving, and other handicraft items which tourists buy as souvenirs however, local communities are over looked players in the ecotourism industry. They are largely ignored or treated as secondary. Their potential to do aid or harm the local tourism industry has not been realized in Uganda. Their support is a possibility when these communities are included in the planning for, and in sharing the benefits from tourism. Management of local communities' interaction with protected areas through disincentives and enforcement alone is not likely to be effective nationally, may be even more costly than management that includes local participation. Otherwise as, Wesley, (1991) stressed, Africa's indigenous people often do not control the tourism infrastructure in their region and local communities do not experience true economic benefit of the tourism in their homeland. Most Parks in the developing countries have been economic enclaves that lack consideration of economic needs of the adjacent population.

Tourism and local population

The relationship between protected areas and local communities is a key factor in the long-term conservation of these natural resources in and around these protected areas. But in many cases, the relationship is more one of conflict than one of support. Local communities typically perceive the protected area as

a burden on their land use. However, conservationists view the growing population of local people and their basic needs as a major threat to the conservation of the protected area. This attitude must be changed if protected areas are to be sustained (Urbano 1995).

A number of development and conservation projects around the world have tried to transform this conflict into cooperation. However, this has proven difficult partly because of illiteracy and conflict between traditional and western approaches to the problem (Urbano 1995).

Since colonial times, wildlife has been considered a public good. Local user rights were limited and people were often alienated from their land and resources in the process of setting up of protected areas (infield 1986; Mike 1994). Historically, protected areas imposed high costs rather than high benefits on most rural people (Mike 1994). Most of this cost was borne by the local people through alienation from their land and resources and also through wild animals damaging their crops livestock, and relatives.

Infield (1986), Mc Nelly (1993), Ropetto and Grillis (1988) have all pointed out that the individual farmer living at the periphery of the national park sees the park as a source of land, food and fuel as well as a refuge for crops eating pests. According to McNeely, (1993), the rural people who live closest to the areas with greatest biological diversity are often among the most economically disadvantaged and the poorest of the poor.

People living in the vicinity of protected areas have subsistence needs that are direct opposition to the needs of the park . Not enough attention is paid to the process of involving local people in decision making and park management. Thus, management conflict efforts that deal with only certain dimensions are

not likely to succeed. Infield (1986) noted that the law enforcement has historically been the primary means by which protected area managers resolve conflicts with local people. However, Infield (1986) argued that these laws were inadequate and often inappropriate. Traditional African relationships with wildlife were harmonious and sustainable while European and colonial models were called into question (Hannah, 1992). They were therefore, replaced with traditional coexistence, western style may not give the expected output.

Kingdom (1982), Mackinnon et. al. (1986) emphasized that in order to ensure long term conservation of any natural areas the benefits provided by the conservation areas in terms of income opportunities, water supply and protection of erosion must be realized by the local communities. This is because resources that provided local benefits are likely to be valued and safeguarded by the peripheral communities (Howard 1991; Fitter 1986; Cutter 1985).

Ron Thomson (1992) defines wildlife as all plants and animals that grow undomesticated in the world. He continues to say that, wildlife is the main resource of Uganda's tourism industry. The industry would lose its major attractions if it lost its wildlife. Foreigners come to see the herds of game, the annual migrations of wild beast and zebra and the rare wild animals plus the abundant bird and marine life. The country has ten national parks and many reserves where strict conservation policies are in force. The Uganda forest department with the help of European Union has set up seven forest ecotourism projects. Gwaya (1999) the Government has also gazetted certain areas with the main aim of protecting wildlife, thus, promoting tourism in the country.

Ecotourism and Uganda

Ecotourism has also put Uganda and other central African countries on the world map. Most tourists' attractions in Uganda are almost exclusively ecologically based, making tourism inevitably ecotourism. Ndyakira Amotti (1996) wrote that as an example Uganda is already practicing in Bwindi impenetrable and Mgahinga National parks by limiting the number of tourists visiting gorillas to twelve people per day. In support of Ndyakira, it was reported in the Uganda daily leading paper New Vision, Nature Watch Vol. 1 Dec 26 (1997) that the fastest growing segment of Uganda's tourism industry is ecotourism. According to ecotourism Forum VI Uganda (1994), ecotourism is nature tourism defined as responsible travel that conserves the natural environment and sustains the well being of the local people. Nature based tourism is the economic engine of many tropical countries in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean Islands.

The ecotourism society agrees that ecotourism is not simply a word that needs defining, but a concept in search of content. Nevertheless, it defines ecotourism as purposely traveling to natural areas to understand the culture and natural history of the environment while taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecotourism while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of the natural resources beneficial to the local people. Accepting this definition recognizes the fact that ecotourism includes more than visits to study animals and the cultural history of various areas. However the realization of wildlife and ecotourism has aroused national and international attention.

Uganda today (1996) lists reasons why ecotourism is suitable for Uganda, as Uganda's natural resources are ideal for it. There is a niche for it in the East Africa tourist market, The cash needed to develop it is less and, therefore more

easily obtained. Ecotourism benefits the country socially and economically because it involves local communities plus a larger percentage of the revenue stays in the country. This is because ecotourists and ecotourism operators are there environmentally conscious of what they are selling. Ecotourism is a repeat business; ecotourism also encourages coordinated effort between the public and private sector.

In Uganda ecotourism is based on the special appeal resulting from a mixture of varied wildlife species, beautiful scenery, diverse geographical formations, traditions and customs, rich history, friendly climate and its people. For ecotourism to have high returns from wildlife, there is need a for vigorous advertisement Bovee et al (1986) define advertising as anon personal communications of usually persuasive information about products services or ideas. Here the information is communicated through various media and paid identified persons who help to bring in more tourists and hence high ecotourism earning of the country.

Ecotourism in protected areas should be promoted, encouraged and regulated and be based on long term planning in order to develop a coordinated protected areas system and tourism development plan. The natural environment management policy for Uganda, there is dire need for infrastructure improvement and facilities. Tourist facilities and services and related infrastructure are important, hence in tourism related to environment tourism exhibits two contrasting relationships with the environment. A symbiotic relationship exists when the interacting sets phenomena are mutually supported for example the role of tourism in the creation of wildlife parks and the preservation of historic buildings. In support of the National Environment Management policy for Uganda, Ziffer (1989) emphasizes that with its mix of

business orientation and conservation objectives, ecotourism development should solicit input from government representatives, local and international NGOs, tour operators, tourists and residents. She concluded that there is a strong need for economic analysis for planning of ecotourism projects.

According to Boo (1993) ecotourism will be a successful industry only if natural resources are protected. Natural resources will be protected if there is a management strategy in place and park managers and the local communities take a lead role in the process for both promotion of wildlife and ecotourism. She further outlines the strategy of ecotourism as being in three phases. In the first phase an assessment of the current tourism situation and potential by looking at the natural resources and the level of tourist demand is necessary.

Secondly, determining a desirable tourism situation and identifying steps to reach this situation is needed. The decision as to the best tourism for the area should reflect a balance among the needs of the visitors, the natural resources, surrounding communities and host government.

The third phase calls for a strategy that entails promoting it to potential financiers and provides of technical assistance.

Tourism and Economic development

Both Boo (1993) and Ziffer (1989) underscore the importance of addressing one of the ecotourism issues; is it economically and financially viable from the economic stand point? The argument for ecotourism is based on the importance of tourism as a major source of revenue for developing nations. It generated as much as \$55 million in 1988 (South Magazine 1989). Worldwide tourism generated over \$20 billion in revenues in the same year, making it one of the

largest industries in the world. Edgell (1990) stated that there is also evidence to suggest that the market for nature tourism is growing although it is difficult to separate nature tourism figures from other forms of ecotourism. Ziffer (1989) estimates that \$17 billion per year is spent on the natural travel in developing countries by industrialized countries. In addition, she claims that the number of the nature tourists is growing by around twenty percent per year. Linberg (1991) corroborates the evidence by showing an increase of visitors to Galapagos national park in Ecuador from 7500 in 1975 to 32,595 in 1987.

In support of Boo and Ziffer, Barnes et al (1992) wrote that the most successful African country in wildlife has been Kenya where tourism earns about 400 million pounds in foreign exchange a year, an income exceeded only by that of coffee. It is certainly true that most of Kenya's rural areas as a whole benefit only slightly because the total expenditure by tourists mainly goes to airlines and large companies which are often owned by foreigners. However, Barnes (1992) did not indicate in his research whether the local community also benefit from those earnings, hence a gap.

In addition to Barnes, Myers (1975) claims that, in effect, the local tax payers is subsidizing the rich. He argues that very little if any of the income received from ecotourism goes to people living next to reserves, unless they are employed in the hotel trade or act as guides. Yet they are people who risk their lives and livelihood for wild animals. It is not surprising that the enthusiasm for wildlife areas such as national parks is not shared by the ordinary African. However, Myers (1975) did not show where the income generated from wildlife goes if its not shared by the local people. He ignored the ways in which local people benefit from wildlife, such as getting local medicine, collecting firewood and getting game meat through hunting.

Another economic argument in favour of ecotourism is that it conforms to the

initiatives protecting biological diversity by making non-consumptive use of resources according to Laanoman et al (1987). Using Kenya as an example, Western et al (1979) maintain that the economic motivation for protecting can be traced to its need to maintain tourism revenues. Alderman (1990) in fact, emphasized the need for monetary estimation of conservation benefits (maintenance of biodiversity and ecological processes and watershed protection).

In support of Laanan et al, Etringham (1994) stated that it might seem that non consumptive use of wildlife through game viewing is a proven earner. However, wildlife tourism is a fickle industry easily subject to vagaries in the political climate. Any hint of unrest in the country can lead to massive cancellations. The capital investment necessary to develop the infrastructure for the tourist industry is very costly and some countries, such as Zambia, suffered a net loss when they first attempted to develop tourism. He adds that, sport hunting is a specialized and high cost form of tourism in the tropics but elsewhere wildlife pays its way in terms of the expenditure on guns, clothing and licenses. It is more of an elite pastime in Europe but is usually a lucrative form of land use. Sport hunting in Africa attracts fewer clients than game viewing but it is much more expensive so the profits are greater per unit of investment. It is highly profitable and economically sound of land use for regions lacking scenic attractions or wildlife spectacles which are too dry or infertile for efficient farming or ranching. However, Eltringham (1994) only sighted the positive effects of sport hunting and game viewing but did not look specifically at the negative impacts on wildlife. Hence, a gap is created.

From the surplus for distribution from Zim trust, a local association, each member of the cooperative received a sum of US \$ 29900 which may not seem much but is a substantial amount in rural income Zimbabwe and its addition to

the normal income.

Edhell (1990) proposes the other usual economic argument including generation of foreign exchange, creation of employment and stimulation of local economics. Additionally Alderman (1990) claims that, since nature tourism occurs in rural areas, it can lead to localized economic development in these often neglected areas. However, a question which arises here is not whether tourism generates revenue but what percentage of this revenue stays in the host country? Boo (1993) has expressed concern in this regard saying tourism involves substantial leakages of income outside the host country. Boo quotes a World Bank study that estimates fifty-five percent of gross revenue leaks back to developed countries, thus reducing earning ecotourism and wildlife.

Robert et al (1985) stated the contribution of wildlife to developing country diets, is paradoxically both minor and vital. With the exception of the very few groups which still live by hunting and gathering, people now get enough calories. Stable wildlife can provide welcome flavour, especially to poor diets dominated by starchy staples. An important use of fish and their resulting juices is rich in vitamin B and protein and is an indispensable flavouring, the equivalent of soy sauce. They further argue that wild animals also provide skins. Crocodiles, snakes, lizards monkeys provide nice skins which can be used for business purposes. This implies that, with all the cash revenues earned from cash sources, wildlife is capable of paying its way. Hence its sustainability.

He adds that animals also supply a lot of special products, special in the sense that they have intrinsic value and thus are likely to have buyers irrespective of the availability of substitutes. The horns of Rhinos are greatly priced in West Africa where they are made on ornate dagger handles. They are also valued for

carving in East Asia, where powdered Rhino horn is used in medicine. However, Roberts et al (1985) did not foresee the effects that might arise when local people shift from their original diets to wildlife diets. More so the use of wild animals' skins for business purpose encourages the hunting of wild animals thus reducing their numbers or leading to their extinction thereby discouraging wildlife to pay its way.

In comparison with wild plants and animals, Roberts et al (1985) claims the direct contribution of wild plants for developing countries diet is possibly less dramatic than that of animals. They argue that, indirectly it is at least as great as in many areas. This is because wild and semi wild plants are the major source of food, fodder and forage for domesticated animals. Wild plants also provide the ecological support for most of the animal protein that does not come directly from the wild. Wild greens also provide vitamin A, a nutrient which is particularly important in diets low in milk, eggs or liver.

Ingram and Dust (1989) proposed that ecotourism springs from the increasing market demand for adventure tourism or out door travel. They claim that this market transferred over \$25 billion from developed to developing countries in 1987. They emphasize that ecotourism with its ability to generate foreign exchange and possibly protect resources needed to sustain the tourism industry has been embraced as a new industry in a many developing countries. Unfortunately misconceptions exist about the tourism industry's ability to generate sufficient foreign exchange and provide enough income to sustain an areas economy and governments social programs.

While many authors extol the virtues of ecotourism and wildlife, a number of critics have been pointed out to its negative impacts. Webley (1991) He stressed that in Africa, indigenous people often do not control the tourism

infrastructure in their region and local communities often do not experience the economic benefits from tourism in their homeland. Another often noted criticism is the disparity in earnings between employees of the parks or reserves and the adjacent population. There is a tendency to create parks in developing countries that become economic enclaves that lack consideration of the economic needs of the adjacent population.

Tourism benefits are generally not shared with adjacent populations. Western et al (1979) note that surrounding communities often lose access to resources inside the reserves and are worse off than before. Webley (1991) claims that this is a serious problem in Kenya where the local communities are obligated to co-exist with wildlife, while receiving little of the benefits generated from wildlife based tourism.

The Serengeti ecosystem, for example, spans parts of Kenya and Tanzania and extends beyond the parks boundaries to include communal land where wildlife co-exists with live stock and other land uses. This land, however, cannot be subdivided or used for marginal agriculture for the wildlife option to remain viable. However, this problem can be alleviated if tourism revenues are equitably shared with local people including employment and other forms of income generation which may act as a catalyst for wildlife to pay its way. For example, Mc Neely (1988) states various other incentives such as cash or food for work, providing improved breeds of livestock to vital communities on reducing pressure on marginal land best left to wildlife and land tenure as method to provide compensation to local communities hence paving the way for wildlife and ecotourism to pay its own way.

Youth (1990) notes that little has been done to determine the ecological impacts of ecotourism other than raising the cautionary flag that too many

tourists will ultimately destroy the resources on which the industry depends, known as “*tourism destroying tourism*”. He cited the case of the Galapagos Islands where hikers trample vegetation and erode trails. The reasons for this degradation of Galapagos park was that the original management plan for the park called for a maximum of twelve thousand visitors. Yet when the demand for the park increased, government officials increased the visitor quota to three times the original allotment with no regard for carrying capacity concerns hence discouraging wildlife to pay its way.

Youth (1990) asserts that, the long term sustainability of the resource base of wildlife and Ecotourism hinges on the ability and willingness of the resource owner to limit the number of visitors over a given period to a level that will accommodate the ecological and cultural integrity of the site. Youth, for example, discusses how local communities around the world are having their traditional ways of life changed if not destroyed by tourism. Western et al (1979) how cheetahs and lions have been reported to decrease hunting activity when surrounded by more than six vehicles. The high carrying capacity ends up destroying or damaging the resource, discouraging wildlife from paying its way.

Concluding remarks

According to different authors, Ecotourism has both negative and positive effect on the local population and the state at large. We learn from Western et al (1997) that surrounding communities often lose access to resources inside the park reserves and are worse off than before. Webley (1991) claims that this is a serious problem in Kenya where local communities are obligated to co-exist with wildlife, while receiving little of the benefits generated from wildlife based tourism.

Boo (1993) has expressed concern in this regard, saying tourism involves substantial leakage of income outside the country. Boo quotes a World Bank study that estimates 55% of gross revenue leaks back to the developed world there by reducing earnings from ecotourism and wildlife. Myers (1997) argues that very little of the income received from ecotourism goes to people living next to reserves, unless they are employed in hotels or act as guides. Yet they are people who risk their lives and livelihood for wildlife in the reserve.

Chapter Three - Methodology

Statement of the problem

Lack of community awareness and positive attitudes to Ecotourism and the environment is likely to affect the tourism industry in Uganda. Ecotourism is a new concept and it is the responsibility of tour operators, tourists and wild life authorities to educate the community on Ecotourism and environment. “Poaching is devastating the mountain gorilla population; often poachers must kill the silver back and mother to get a baby Gorilla which is valued because of its appeal, adoptability and ease of care and transport.

How much is a gorilla worth, what is the value of the forest in which mountain Gorilla live and the land upon which the forest grow? These may seem harsh questions but they are asked daily by teeming throngs of people who live around Virunga mountains, people for whom obtaining sufficient food to survive, clothes to wear and fuel (usually wood) to cook is a daily struggle. This demonstrates to a certain extent, the ignorance of some people towards their environment and Ecotourism (Brandon 1993, Koch 1994).

The over selling of Ecotourism has contributed to the backlash among critics, many of whom seem to oppose any kind of development, except very small scale, local, environmentally friendly enterprises.

There is a decry of foreign ownership of tourism facilities. There also worries about loss of culture. The main problem with most of the criticism, in my opinion, is that it ignores what is likely to happen in the absence of tourism.

People need jobs and want to improve their living standards. The question is what will people do instead of working in the tourism industry? Logging, hunting for bush meat and large scale farming, forest and marine habitats are being destroyed in some areas while some of the wildlife they contain is being driven to extinction under pressure of hunting, logging, agriculture and fishing. In areas which have been officially reserved for nature conservation, many developing countries government lack sufficient funds to manage and protect them. These areas are being destroyed because they are not fully valued for their role as the world's biological reserve.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is noted below:

- To assess the awareness and understanding in the local community towards Ecotourism
- To assess the contribution of Eco tourism to the local population
- To find out whether the local population has received any education on Ecotourism and the environment
- To find out whether people with higher education level (senior one to senior four) have a better understanding of Ecotourism

Note: for study questions, please refer to the appendix I

Game Parks and Geographical Area of The Study

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

The Kisoro district is heavily populated with the Bafumbira who lead a simple lifestyle mainly as cultivators. This is a major ethnic group. The Batwa (pygmies), who once lived in caves, and fed on wildlife from caves. As you enter the cave your guide will show you how the Batwa lived and fought out of caves. Being a mountainous area, the park experiences Afro mountain vegetation and a cool climate. The abundant vegetation is the bamboo 60%, which is a delicacy to the mountain gorilla, other flora includes the Lobelia, Haegenia, etc.

Animals found in the park include the mountain gorilla, buffalo, elephants, bushbucks, the threatened golden monkeys and many others. Examples of birds include Rwenzori turaco, fiscal shrike, Crowned hornbill, black kite, Auger buzzard, crowned crane.

Gorilla tracking is the most exciting unforgettable experience, which might take one through a thick jungle. The Tourist group (The Nyakagezi group) consists of nine members, 2 silver bucks, 3 adult females, 2 juveniles and 2 infants (Tracking can take three to eight nights).

Kisoro offers a wide range of accommodation facilities ranging from the basic camp sites to luxurious full board hotels. These include Travellers Rest, Sky Blue, Mt. Gahinga Rest camp, Virunga Hotels, Mgahinga Safari Lodge, Rogigane Composite, Mubano Hotel among others. Kisoro is about 540 km from Kampala (Uganda's capital) a drive which takes 8 hrs via Kabale. Flights can be arranged with Egel Air which has Flights on Mondays to Fridays from Entebbe to Kisoro.

Survey

A survey questionnaire was used to collect the data from randomly selected parents and students neighbouring the national park. The researcher had to hire a person who was well versed in the local language to translate the language since Uganda has over 54 ethnic groups with different dialects. A total of 120 respondents have been interviewed. 100 of them were parents selected from the villages of Rukongi, Gisozi; Gitender and Kisoro town. Twenty were students of Kabinda secondary school to enable the researcher to make comparisons between those who have some knowledge of ecotourism. It took a researcher one week and five days to collect the data. The parents in all the villages mentioned above were very cooperative which made the work of the researcher very easy. Students from Kabinda secondary school were selected randomly from senior four and whoever was interviewed was not allowed to mix with those who were not yet interviewed. During the interview they gave different answers which helped him to analyse the data.

Problems encountered during the study

It would amount to intellectual dishonesty, not to point out the problems encountered, while collecting the data in the field and the subsequent data analysis and presentation; the following were the hurdles during the process of data collection.

- Language barrier, Uganda being a heterogeneous country has over 54 ethnic groups with different dialects. The researcher had to hire somebody at a cost to help him in the translation of the questionnaire. It is also true that the translation errors are likely to affect the quality of the data collected.
- Poaching has been declared illegal by Uganda Wildlife Authority and punishable on conviction. Most of the respondents suspected that the investigator could be part of the spy network to nab those involved in poaching, therefore, the respondents were evasive in answering the questions directly related to their involvement in illegal activities in the park. However, the researcher had a thorough introduction at the start of the interview with the respondents, informing them that he is a student and that the findings of the study shall be used purposely for academic advancement. Nevertheless, despite this thorough introduction, there was still doubt that the introduction was simply “*a window dressing*” to cover spy a network.
- The high cost of transport to western Uganda, accommodation and feeding. All these costs had to be borne by the investigator.

Chapter Four – Empirical Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The data is tabulated and the explanations follow below the tables. It is structured according to the objectives of the study. Namely, a assessment of the awareness and understanding of local community on ecotourism, the contribution of ecotourism to local population, the sensitization of the local community to ecotourism, the relationship between the level of education and understanding of ecotourism and government funding of the tourism industry.

The researcher interviewed 100 respondents in total, The area covered included three parishes namely Rukongi, '*Gisozi*' and Gitender and one Secondary school named Kabindi. All these are places are in the vicinity of the national parks. They were purposely chosen because they were expected to have information pertaining to the study, which indeed they did.

Demographic Characteristics of the respondents interviewed included that most belong to large families typical of African families. The smallest was three family members and the largest was eleven members. This is explained by the fact that African societies still cherish the extended family system.

TABLE 1: RESPONSES ON THE NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS

No of Family Members	No of Respondents	Percentage
3	05	05%
4	10	10%
5	10	10%
7	05	05%
8	10	10%
9	20	20%
11+	40	40%
Total	100	100%

Source: Interview

Employment of the local community in the tourism industry

When the local community was asked interviewed whether they work in the tourism industry, the response revealed that 75% of the people interviewed do not work in the tourism industry. Teachers only 25% of the respondents work in the tourism industry.

TABLE 2: RESPONSES ON THE EMPLOYMENT POTENTIALS OF TOURISM

View	No Respondents	Percentage
Potential	25	25%
No potential	75	75%
Total	100	100%

Source: Interview

Despite the low number of the respondents employed in the tourism industry, the local population support the idea of conservation of wildlife. All respondents interviewed

unanimously answered that they support the idea of nature conservation. This is a step in the right direction. They must be sincerely applauded by the government of Uganda and more specifically, the Ministry of Trade Tourism and Industry and by the Uganda Wild Life Authority.

Sensitisation on Ecotourism

Of all the respondents interviewed, 40% of them confessed that they have not been sensitised to nature conservation in the promotion of the tourism industry in the country. However, 60 respondents which represent 60% admitted that they have been sensitized.

TABLE 3: 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

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 sensitised 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.

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 antique tourists to spend money within their localities.

Sensitisation 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 centres neighbouring the parks.

Organisations that carried out the sensitization

The following organisations were revealed by the respondents as the ones that carried out the sensitization; they are namely;

- Uganda wildlife Authority, The Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Industry (MTTI), an NGO called CARE, forestry students from Makerere University, secondary schools especially during geography lessons, Uganda Community Tourism Association, and Peace Corps volunteers.

Of all the organizations listed above Uganda wildlife Authority received the highest frequency, followed by Kabindi Secondary School, CARE, Trust, and Uganda Community Tourism Association in descending order.

TABLE 4: 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.

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, Mghnga 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 5: 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	04	04%
• Give guidance when ever they get lost	01	01%
Total	100	100%

Source; Interview

One of the most notable places of evidence towards conservation of nature by the local community near Mgohinga 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 emphasising 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, 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.

Fifth, the local population who have relied heavily (solely) on wildlife animals for meat, have now started rearing domestic animals such as cows, goats, chicken, pigs, etc. This has drastically reduced their desire wild animal meat. At the same time poaching has been made riskier than ever before.

Sixthly, the authorities have allowed the local population who are interested in beekeeping to utilize the periphery of the park. This idea has helped the people to earn income after selling honey to the tourists and the local consumers.

Responses as to why the local community do not closely follow the sensitized information

The notable one was that there are rogue elements among the neighbouring population who are still involved in illegal activities such as poaching, setting bush fires, and deforestation; The most notorious has been the Batwa tribe who are in Eastern Congo where there is no authority and no schools. The primitive cannot listen to sensitization. Rather they listen to the fire power of the game wardens who have started shooting on sight anybody found poaching rare Gorilla species which are facing extinction.

Benefits of Eco-tourism to the local population

All the 120 respondents asked whether they benefit from eco-tourism, the answer was unanimous; they benefit either directly through employment in the tourism sector or indirectly through the sale of goods and services to the tourists and other employees within the tourism sector.

TABLE 6: 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

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. 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.

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.

Illegal activities in the park

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 justify 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.(30%)

TABLE 7: RESPONSES ON THE ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES IN THE NATIONAL PARK

View	No of Respondents	Percentage
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poaching goes on especially wild pigs	40	40%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Felling of trees especially bamboo.	20	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Destroying environment	10	10%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No response	30	30%
Total	70	100%

Source: Interview

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 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.

Chapter five – Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study based on the analysis of the findings. The second part contains recommendations that are worth considering based on the analysis.

Conclusions

- The local community neighbouring Mgahinga Gorilla 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 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.
- The local population have benefited so much from ecotourism in Uganda. It's a well know fact that ,wildlife and other resources make significant contributions of food, commercial activities, medicine, energy, 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 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 and Mgahinga.
- 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 through out Uganda both inside and outside the wildlife protected areas (national parks, wildlife reserves and community wildlife areas).

Mgahinga gorilla 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 Rwandas volcano and the democratic Republic of Congos Virunga National parks. Mgahinga gorilla national park experiences two wet seasons , Febuary 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.

Kisoro district is heavily populated with the Bafumbira who lead a simple life style mainly as cultivators, this is a major ethnic group. The Batwa (pygmies) who once lived in caves are fed on wildlife in caves . As you enter the cave your guide will show you how the Batwa lived and fought out of cave.

Being a mountainous area, the park experiences Afro mountain Vegetation and a cool climate. The abundant type of vegetable is the bamboo 60%, which is a delicacy to the mountain gorilla, others of flora include the lobelia, Haegenia etc.

Animals found in the park include the mountain gorilla, buffalo, elephants, bushbucks, the threatened golden monkeys and many others .Examples of birds include Rwenzori turaco, fiscal shrike, Crowned hornbill, black kite, Auger buzzard, crowned crane.

Gorilla tracking is the most exciting unforgettable experience, which might take one through a thick jungle. The Tourist group (The Nyakagezi group) consists of nine members , 2 silverbucks, 3 adult females, 2 juveniles and 2 infants(Tracking can take three to eight nights).

Kisoro offers a wide range of accommodation facilities ranging from the basic

camp sites to luxurious full board hotels, these include, travellers Rest, sky Blue, Mt. Gahinga Rest camp, Virunga Hotels, Mgahinga Safari Lodge, Rugigane Composite, Mubano Hotel among others. Kisoro is about 540 km from Kampala(Uganda capital city) a drive which takes 8 hrs via kabala. Flights can be arranged with Eagle Air which has flights on Mondays and Fridays from Entebbe to kisoro.

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Appendix I

Interview questions

1. How many are you in your family.
2. Does any member of your family work in the tourism industry? Yes or No
3. Do you support the idea of conserving wild animals in the park? Yes or No
4. Have you ever been sensitized about Ecotourism? Yes or No
5. What kind of sensitization did you get?
 - a. Conservation of nature
 - b. Importance of animals to government.
 - c. Reporting those involved in the illegal activities.
6. Which Organization carried out the sensitization exercise?
 - a. Uganda wildlife authority
 - b. Ministry of tourism
 - c. NGO
 - d. Others
7. Do you think the public or local community is following what was discussed in the sensitization meeting? **Yes** or **No**.
8. Please briefly explain your answer to question seven.
9. Is ecotourism helping the local population to improve their welfare? **Yes** or **No**
10. What benefits are they getting from ecotourism?
11. Is the local population involved in the illegal activities in this park? Yes or No

12. What do you think about those involved in illegal activities in the park?

Bad

Do not mind

Good.

13. Do your family members gain anything from the tourism industry? **Yes** or **No**