



The impact of mountain gorilla tourism: A residents' perspective

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Abstract

The critically endangered mountain gorilla, *Gorilla beringei beringei*, found in only three countries, Uganda, Democratic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda is inextricably linked to tourism. Governments in these countries work tirelessly ensuring protection of these great apes so that future generations would also get a chance to benefit from their conservation. The study investigated how local residents living close to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP) perceives the impact of mountain gorilla tourism in order to establish the overall value of the attraction. To achieve this, a quantitative research approach was adopted. Data was collected through a survey instrument (n=394) with mostly close-ended questions. The results show that gorilla tourism has contributed positively to their area through the creation of job opportunities as well as unlocking several entrepreneurial opportunities. The study also revealed that residents of the Butogota Town Council have gained from this niche tourism area. Meanwhile, socially, the study's findings suggest that gorilla-related activities had negatively affected the lives of the locals around the park resulting in residents becoming resentful to the impact of this niche tourism. Some of the issues related to gorilla tourism were highlighted and included corruption, limited infrastructure, and land squabbles. The study notes the importance of improving the management of the attraction to guarantee long-term sustainability.

Keywords: Gorilla tourism, mountain gorilla, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, tourism impact, sustainable tourism



Introduction

The area most critical to mountain gorilla habitats has been identified to lie at the heart of the Great Lakes region of Africa (Maekawa et al., 2013). This area is shared by three African countries; Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda. Maekawa et al. (2013) indicate that these three countries share boundaries and a national park that extends into each country's own protected area, the *Parc National des Virunga* (PNVi) in the DRC, *Parc National des Volcans* (PNV) in Rwanda, and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP) in Uganda. It is further stated that the shared park bordered by the aforementioned countries contains about half of the region's mountain gorilla population (Maekawa et al., 2013). Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (BINP) is home to the other half of mountain gorilla populations (Virunga National Park, 2017). The Ugandan Government has realised the impacts (economic, social and environmental) of mountain gorilla tourism and has imbedded these into the Ugandan tourism product offering (Moyini & Uwimbabazi, 2000). To make this more sustainable, some conservative efforts have been directed to this niche tourism field resulting in the elevation of the conservation status of the Bwindi Forest, which became known as the BINP close to three decades ago (Ahebwa, van der Duim & Sandbrook, 2012a). Raising the conservation status of Bwindi meant that the management and operational systems had to be adjusted to meet national objectives, such as promotion and growing tourism (Batte, 2017). With the new system in place, it meant that no human habitation could be allowed to continue in the park, resulting in resentment amongst community members living around the park area (Ahebwa et al., 2012a).

The BINP, found in the south-western part of Uganda covering a total area of 331 square kilometres, is one of the oldest and most biologically rich systems on earth and protects one of the most diverse Afro-Montane Forests of the world (Laudati, 2010). van der Duim, Ampumuza and Ahebwa (2014) explain that Bwindi is a thick forest on a hilly landscape embracing both montane and lowland forest and is a natural haven of mountain gorillas. Montane ecosystems are found in mountainous areas and are strongly affected by climate, which gets colder as elevation increases. They are stratified according to elevation and are highly dense forests (Montane Forests, 2018).

The area is of international importance; is rich in fauna, with extensive lowland-montane forest and several Albertine Rift endemics, and harbours the globally threatened species - the mountain gorillas. van der Duim et al. (2014) further mention that this forest is home to more than 340 (43.0%) of the world's known global population (786) of mountain gorillas and the rest (446) are spread in the Mgahinga Gorilla National Park in the Virunga Mountain region. According to the World-Wide Fund (WWF) [WWF, 2018], there has been an increase in the number of the mountain gorilla surpassing one thousand. The global population of mountain gorillas was estimated to be at 1,004 when combined with the published figures from BINP (WWF, 2018). This has come as a result of the unified conservation efforts by the three countries, the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda. Despite this increase in mountain gorilla population, rope and wire snares continue to directly threaten the growth of the great ape.

Gorilla trekking-tourism started in 1993 and has grown progressively since then (Sandbrook, 2010). This is a touristic activity involving tourists (both local and international) coming out to trek and observe the gorillas in their natural habitations. For Uganda, gorilla tourism is the only main asset which the country has compared to other tourist attractions in the neighbouring Kenya and Tanzania (Moyini & Uwimbabazi, 2000). Maekawa et al. (2013) also note that gorilla tourism is the only unique tourism attraction that Uganda and Rwanda are offering which is not found in any of the other East-African countries and therefore giving them a competitive advantage. The tourist numbers to



track gorillas is however limited by a permit quota, designed to ensure that gorillas are not exposed to too many tourists at the same time. As a result, permit prices have risen over time; from US\$275 per person in 2004 (Sandbrook, 2010) to US\$600 per person in 2017 (Matooke Tours, 2017). However, the Republic of Rwanda Development Board Chief Executive, Clare Akamanzi, announced in May 2017 an increase in the rates for trekking gorillas in Rwanda from US\$750 to US\$1,500 for all visitors effective immediately (Rwanda Development Board, 2017); which was an increment of more than 100% overnight. The Uganda Tourist Board (UTB), on a Facebook post, responded immediately to the price rise indicating, "... remember; our gorilla trekking permits still go for US\$600, this would guarantee you an experience like you have never had anywhere before..." (Uganda Tourism Board, 2017). Goldstein, a spokesperson for the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA), noted that giving tourists a chance to achieve lifetime dreams to track mountain gorillas is crucial to their maintenance, and therefore hundreds of tour operators are quickly re-arranging their programmes to switch countries (The Independent, 2017).

Maekawa et al. (2013) state that mountain gorillas are currently considered critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The gorilla population has continuously suffered from habitat degradation and poaching by the local communities. Maekawa et al. (2013) further note the key conservation programmes and initiatives which were put in place by the end of the 1970s and these concentrated on three broad issues which included; development of sustainable and economically viable gorilla-based tourism, supporting of anti-poaching programs as well as conservation education which targets resident populations especially those around the parks.

Uganda, Rwanda and the DRC are among the poorest countries in the world, and population densities, especially surrounding the parks, were among the highest in the world with up to 700 people per square kilometre (Plumptre et al., 2004). Ahebwa et al. (2012a) indicate that direct community involvement in the tourism business was introduced in Bwindi in Buhoma in 1993, with the foundation of the Buhoma Community Rest Camp which was collectively owned by all adult residents of the Mukono parish. Ahebwa et al. (2012a) continue by stating that this was the first direct policy involvement mediated and facilitated by a number of boards and programs including the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). These were aimed at ensuring that communities benefit from tourism with the hope that it would address livelihood and conservation concerns.

One of the policies enacted to try and distribute the proceeds from the management of mountain gorilla tourism was the tourism revenue sharing (Archabald & Naughton-Treves, 2001). Ahebwa et al. (2012b) explain that tourism revenue-sharing has become a common policy intervention in Africa, and especially in Uganda where captivating populations of wildlife remain. Despite the participatory rhetoric of policy reforms, the UWA remains the most powerful body controlling resources and consequently determining how everything should be handled (Twinamatsiko et al. 2018). It is however distressing that most community members feel disconnected from the management of tourism activities in their area and to them the compensation from park's activities are viewed inadequate (Ahebwa et al. 2012b; Twinamatsiko et al. 2018). This issue is worsened by the poor communications of local people, problems of unfair income distribution locally and nationally, corruption claims, and powerful local elites (Ahebwa et al., 2012b).



It is apparent that mountain gorilla tourism is the most important tourist activity that has branded Uganda as a popular tourist destination. Therefore, the opinions and perceptions of stakeholders particularly locals who resides in close proximity to the park are a fundamental element to consider and evaluate. Understanding local residents' perceptions is central to the growth and development of mountain gorilla tourism at the destination where the attraction sits, as this contributes to better planning, organisation and management of tourism not only in the present but also for the future. The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of mountain gorilla tourism on residents of Butogota area near the BINP in south western Uganda, so as to offer solutions to continued gorilla tourism activities to benefit the community, tourists and the economy of the area. The study also highlights some of the issues associated with gorilla tourism as this would assist in the identification of solutions for the better management of the attraction.

Limited research appears to have been conducted that focuses on the management of gorilla tourism, and on local residents' perspectives regarding the impact of mountain gorilla tourism, and in the Butogota Town Council area particularly, therefore making this study unique and very helpful to Uganda Tourism Board. This study could lead to further improvement of tourism in more rural areas, hence promoting rural tourism. According to Liu (2006), tourism has become an alternative for improving rural existence creating favourable changes in the allocation of income. Usually when a rural community considers tourism as a development tool, unspoilt environments and rurality are advantaged. Therefore, as a result, this study should play a basic role in the improvement of tourism in more rural areas such as the Butogota Town Council and this can contribute to positive growth and sustainability of the tourism industry in the area.

Materials and methods

Bwindi Impenetrable National Park

According to Baker et al. (2012), BINP is a dense forest with a rugged topography of narrow valleys, steep hills and elevations ranging from 1,200 metres to 2,600 metres and is bordered by 21 densely populated parishes. Baker et al. (2013) indicate that when Bwindi was gazetted as a national park, the average population density was 125 people per square kilometre in the central and northern areas, 256 per square kilometre in the eastern areas, and 275 per square kilometre in the southern and western areas. Plumptre et al. (2004) argue that this is one of poorest and most densely populated regions in Africa, where the rural communities depend on natural resources for their well-being. Baker et al. (2012) report that villagers around Bwindi rely on agriculture and perennial crops such as bananas, grown lower than 1,800 metres above sea level, and annual crops like sorghum and millet, grown higher than 1,800 metres above sea level. Farming is mainly for subsistence but provides an income from cash crops that include tea and sales of surplus subsistence crops at the local markets.

Baker et al. (2013) further indicate that BINP comprises two blocks of forests connected by a small corridor approximately 115 kilometres long. Bwindi was first gazetted as a forest reserve by the colonial Government in 1932. In 1961 it became a game sanctuary under the joint management of the Forestry and Game Department until 1991, when it was gazetted as a national park, which is currently under the management of the UWA (Baker et al., 2013).

According to United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2017), BINP is believed to be a mere remnant of a very large forest which once covered much of western Uganda, Burundi, the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)



and Rwanda. UNESCO reports that Bwindi is the most significant area in Uganda for species due to an extraordinary diversity that comprises many Albertine Rift endemics. Bwindi rain forest has a variety of tree species, which include over 200 types, as well as 10 endemics and ferns (some 104 species) in the East Africa region, making it one of the most important forests in Africa. In Bwindi, one finds montane forest butterflies with 202 species (constituting 84.0% of the Uganda's total), including eight Albertine endemics (UNESCO, 2017). BINP is important as it is home to nearly half of the population of the critically endangered mountain gorillas. In terms of bird, BINP has over 347 species of forest birds, and hosts abundant of globally disappearing species, including high-profile mammals such as mountain gorillas and chimpanzees (UNESCO, 2017).

The study area

According to Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS] (2014), the Butogota Town Council is located in the Kanungu District which is found in south western Uganda between 290 05'E and 0045'S of the Equator, bordering the districts of Rukungiri in the north and east, Kabale in southeast, Kisoro in the south and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the west. The administrative headquarters are located in Kanungu Town. The district has a population of approximately 257,300 people and 19,000 of those live in the Butogota area. UBOS (2014:8) states that the district has a total area of 1,228.28 sq. km and comprises 15% high tropical forest, 60% small-scale farmland, 9% grassland, 11% woodland, 2% bush land, 2% miscellaneous mosaics and 1% open water. The vegetation comprises high tropical forests of the BINP, which is located in the Butogota Town Council area and provides a habitat for the endemic mountain gorillas. The other tourist attractions in BINP include birds and reptiles. The Butogota Town Council is very important to the Kanungu District as it hosts not only one of the most important tourist attractions in the country but the most unique attraction and a world heritage site.

About 37.3% of the people that live in the Butogota Town Council area are subsistence farmers, 3.4% are involved in trade, 1.2% are involved in manufacturing, 10.3% provide services and 46.3% do other things (UBOS, 2014). The Butogota area is remote with poor infrastructural development that requires Government intervention. The majority of the population live in rural settlements with no tap water and electricity (Donnelly et al., 2016; Tsimpo et al., 2019).

The study investigated the impact of mountain gorilla tourism, mainly focusing on the management of the attraction. This was undertaken to investigate the positive, negative, social, economic, and environmental impact of mountain gorilla tourism, as well as highlighting the problems which are associated with the management of mountain gorilla tourism. Knowledge of this would UWA and Uganda Tourist Board (UTB) with strategies and policies are needed for future mountain gorilla tourism development in the Butogota Town Council in the Kanungu District of Uganda.

Data collection and analysis

The survey data used for the current study was collected as part of a larger study to assess the impact of mountain gorilla tourism with focus on multi-stakeholder perspectives regarding the management of the attraction in Uganda. A quantitative survey design was used whereby data was collected using a structured survey instrument from local residents living close to BINP was collected in Butogota area. The survey included questions on demographic profiles of the respondents, whether respondents had trekked gorillas (visited these great apes in their natural habitat) or not,



trekking permit price, encounter with the mountain gorilla, interaction with tourists, impact of mountain gorilla tourism (socio-economic and environmental) and the problems associated with gorilla tourism.

Experienced fieldworkers (including trained Fieldwork Assistants facilitated the data collection process by helping to administer the surveys and clarify the questions for the respondents. In total 394 local residents completed the surveys using a spatially-based, systematic sampling approach. Using this approach, at each household, only one member of the family (a representative) participated in the study.

The first respondent (household rep) was purposively selected by the fieldworkers. In trying to limit bias with the approach, every third dwelling was approached to participate in the study. Where the approached household members declined participation or were not available at the time of interview, the next dwelling was approached. The Fieldwork Assistants made the interview process easier since they had a better understanding of the local languages and could explain the questions better to enable interaction.

The collected data obtained from the questionnaires was captured and analysed on IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 25). Frequency tables were generated and presented to illustrate the findings which were analysed and interpreted. The relevant data in relation to the key themes of this study are discussed.

Ethical aspects of the study

In ensuring the integrity of the study and in line with research ethics, the researchers sought permission from Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) (Approved on 8th Nov 2017 with UWA Ref No. FOD/96/02). UWA is one of the national bodies that manage wildlife conservation and natural resources in Uganda. In addition, ethical clearance was granted by the Cape Peninsula University of Technology's Faculty of Business and Management Sciences Ethical Committee. The respondents were assured of their rights in the study which included right to withdraw at any point during the interview, confidentiality of the information they provided, and assured that the findings will be only be used for the intended purpose as explained to them.

Results and discussion

This section presents the study's findings and provides a discussion of the responses obtained from Butogota Town Council residents, where the data that was collected. The findings presented in this section include data regarding the demographic profiles of the respondents and perceptions in relation to the impact of mountain gorilla tourism in the study area.

Demographic profiles of respondents

The demographic profile presented for this study covered various aspects which were thought to bring an understanding of how residents of the Butogota area perceive the impact of mountain gorilla tourism. These included variables such as if respondent was Ugandan or not, length of stay in the study area, gender, marital status, level of education attained, age, monthly net income, and occupation. As presented in Table 1, almost all the study participants (98.5%) were Ugandans with the remaining 1.5% being foreign nationals but residing in the Butogota area. They were also asked to indicate their length of stay in Butogota and the findings revealed that on average the residents had stayed for 11.9 years which ranged from 1 year to 66 years in study area. In terms of gender, males outnumbered females by 5.6%. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 76

years with an average of 38 years, suggesting a middle population group in the study area. The respondents were requested to indicate their marital status as it was thought that this could reveal the trekking patterns of those living alone, and for couples. The findings showed that the majority of the respondents (46.4%) were single, which was expected as most were young students, compared with the 38.6% who were married. A smaller proportion (10.2%) of the respondents indicated that they had lost their partners through death, while the remaining 4.8% stated that they were divorced.

Table 1. The demographic profile of the respondents (in %, n = 394)

Variable	Frequency	Percent (in %, n=394)
Ugandan		
Yes	388	98.5
No	6	1.5
Length of stay in Butogota area (Average length of stay: 11.9 Years, Range 1 – 66 Years)		
1 Year	22	5.6
1 – 2 Years	40	10.2
3 – 5 Years	94	23.9
6 – 10 Years	91	23.1
11 – 15 Years	88	22.3
15+ (Specify)	59	15.0
Gender		
Male	208	52.8
Female	186	47.2
Marital status		
Single	183	46.4
Married	152	38.6
Divorced	19	4.8
Widowed	40	10.2
Level of education		
No formal education	51	12.9
Primary completed (7 years of schooling)	47	11.9
Matric/secondary completed (> 7 years of schooling)	76	19.3
Certificate/diploma	104	26.4
Undergraduate degree	91	23.1
Postgraduate degree	25	6.4
Age (Average age of respondents: 38 Years, Age Range: 18 - 76 Years)		
18 – 20 Years	63	16.0
21 – 30 Years	72	18.3
31 – 40 Years	89	22.6
41 – 50 Years	88	22.3
51 – 60 Years	60	15.2
61+ (Specify)	22	5.6
Monthly net income range of respondents (Average monthly income: US\$19.22)		
None	162	41.1
US\$1 -US\$140	70	17.8
US\$141– US\$211	60	15.2
US\$212 –US\$352	26	6.6
US\$353 – US\$704	12	3.0
Confidential	64	16.2
Occupation		
Student	78	19.8
Employed	166	42.2
Unemployed	75	19.0
Entrepreneurs	56	14.2
Retired	19	4.8

The researchers also wanted to understand the occupations of the respondents. This information would help in determining how many of them were employed and therefore could afford gorilla trekking permits and if their jobs were flexible enough to allow them to engage in gorilla tourism activities. The results of the study showed that most of the



respondents (42.2%) were employed, while 19.0% were unemployed. Almost 20% of the respondents (19.8%) were students pursuing studies in different academic institutions in the Kanungu District and beyond. Some respondents (14.2%) indicated that they were entrepreneurs running small businesses, which included arts and crafts, carpentry, sewing, mechanic shops, and small-scale poultry farming, whilst 4.8% were retired. The study also revealed that the majority of the respondents (55.9%) had at least a certificate/diploma in some area of study, which could be an indication of progress in the Ugandan Government’s effort in supporting education for all at various levels (Ayorekire & Twinomuhangi, 2012; Uganda Ministry of Education & Sports, 2015).

In terms of net monthly income, a large proportion of the respondents (41.1%) had no income at all. This finding was not surprising, noting that a number of respondents were unemployed (19.0%) including students (19.8%) who did not earn any income. Those earning between US\$1–US\$140 per month accounted for 17.8% of the total, whereas those earning between US\$141–US\$211 per month accounted for 15.2% of all respondents. The respondents who earned between US\$212–US\$352 constituted 6.6% of the total whereas those earning between US\$353–US\$704 represented only 3.0% of the total respondents. The remaining 16.2% of the respondents were not comfortable to disclose their monthly income and selected the confidential response to the question. The average monthly income for the respondents was very low, a mere US\$19.22. This result was not surprising, noting that the study was conducted in a remote area of Uganda where poverty levels are generally high. In Uganda, particularly within rural areas, the majority of the population live below the poverty datum-line and mostly under US\$2 per day (World Bank, 2016). It is clear from the findings that most people’s income levels were so low that they could not afford trekking permits for the mountain gorillas.

Seen and trekked a mountain gorilla before

The respondents were asked to indicate if they had seen or trekked a mountain gorilla before. This question was important since it allowed the researchers to gauge respondents’ level of understanding of mountain gorilla in relation to the impact it has on tourism. As shown in Table 2, 36.5% of the respondents indicated that they had not seen a gorilla before and the majority (72.3%) had not trekked a mountain gorilla. Gorilla permit prices being very high, the researchers needed to find out how many respondents had actually trekked.

Table 2. If respondent had seen or trekked a gorilla before (in %, n=394)

Seen a gorilla	Frequency	%		Trekked a gorilla	Frequency	%
Yes	250	63.5		Yes	109	27.7
No	144	36.5		No	285	72.3

The findings show that the majority (63.5%) had seen a gorilla, but only 27.7% of these indicated that they had trekked them. This could mean that respondents had seen stray gorillas that had escaped out of the park. The fact that close to 75% of the residents had not trekked mountain gorillas could be due to the price of the trekking permits being too high.

Observe or talk to tourists about mountain gorilla tourism

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they observed or interacted with tourists who come to their area to trek mountain gorillas. This question was important because it assisted the researchers to understand whether the locals interacted with tourists who came to the area. At times, tourists interacted with locals to gain more knowledge and information regarding the area, and to learn the local cultures. The



findings reveal that more than half (55.3%) of the respondents observed and talked to tourists about mountain gorillas. This was followed by 106 respondents, constituting 26.9%, who indicated that they have never observed or interacted with tourists. Forty-four respondents (11.2%) stated that they had observed tourists and spoken to them frequently. These could be participants who work in the park, local entrepreneurs, or tourist guides who have constant contact with the tourists. Finally, 6.6%, of the respondents revealed that they observed and talked to tourists about the mountain gorillas every day.

Understanding the impact of mountain gorilla tourism

To determine local community members' perceptions and attitudes on the impact of mountain gorilla tourism, a series of impact statements were designed, which covered the triple bottom-line (economic, socio-cultural and environmental) aspects. A five point Likert-type scale was used with options and responses from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). Because of the close association between SA and Agree (A), as well as SD and Disagree (D), the results were grouped together for greater clarity. In short, SA and A were combined to generally indicate an agreement result, whereas SD and D would reflect a disagree result.

Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of the responses to the statements which were asked in relation to economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts respectively. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement to statements on impact of mountain gorilla tourism as presented in the survey instrument. The advantage of presenting the responses in a table is that it is easier for the reader to see which statement in each grouping respondents felt most strongly.

Perspectives regarding economic impact

The positive impact of tourism development, as well as touristic activities, is the most preferred type of impact and hence garner support from various stakeholders. However, the negative impact is perceived negatively by stakeholders, such as residents, resulting to limited support given to tourism development and related activities. Andereck et al. (2005) note that stakeholders, especially residents of a tourist destination, usually support tourism development that brings benefits to them. Tourism that is beneficial is therefore in most cases perceived positively. From the findings, a high level of agreement was evident among the respondents pertaining to some of the positive economic impact of mountain gorilla tourism in the Butogota Council area. Such impact included the creation of various types of employment (direct and indirect) (55.6%), and the unlocking of many entrepreneurial opportunities for the residents (53.1%). The result supports previous claims in literature, for example, Swarbrooke (2002), who contended that tourism development results in employment opportunities for locals. However, the respondents perceived some of the positive impact of gorilla tourism negatively. In trying to find out whether tourism boosted development in terms of infrastructure, the respondents were asked for their reaction to the statement that 'money generated from gorilla tourism has been used to improve the infrastructure in the Butogota'.

The findings show that more is still expected in terms of developing Butogota's infrastructure since the majority (58.6%) generally disagreed with the statement although 25.9% agreed that tourism had led to infrastructure development in their area. A smaller 15.5% of the study participants remained neutral on the statement. With regards to tourism improving the standards of living of locals, there was a general disagreement (Mean 2.41). Since the majority of the respondents felt that living standards were not improved by mountain gorilla tourism, it might be indicative that they had not directly

benefitted from tourism. The respondents also felt that tourism was not doing enough in terms of helping to supply new services to the community (Mean 2.33). It seems that respondents are receiving only limited benefits from tourist activities in their areas, hence the high disagreement level with the statement. The study also revealed a general disagreement with the view that the revenue from tourism spending is being used for the development of the study area. This finding suggests that residents felt that money spent by tourists was not being used to develop Butogota and other surrounding areas of the park.

Table 3. Residents' perspectives of the impact of gorilla tourism in Butogota (in %, n=394)

STATEMENT	Level of agreement				
	D	N	A	Mean	Std.D
Economic impact statements					
Gorilla tourism has created employment for local people	22.1	22.3	55.6	3.41	1.100
Tourism has unlocked many entrepreneurial opportunities for Butogota residents	24.5	22.4	53.1	3.36	1.100
Prices of goods and services have increased due to tourists activities	53.0	16.0	31.0	2.68	1.386
Revenue generated from tourists spending is used to develop the area.	62.2	17.8	20.0	2.35	1.231
Tourism helps to supply new services to the communities	61.4	15.5	23.1	2.33	1.283
Standards of living have been improved through gorilla tourism	57.0	17.3	25.7	2.41	1.360
Money generated from gorilla tourism has been used to improve the infrastructure in the Butogota.	58.6	15.5	25.9	2.47	1.306
Social impact statements					
Gorilla tourism has promoted unity and cultural appreciation	26.4	16.2	57.4	3.39	1.161
Local people change their behaviour in an attempt to emulate tourists	28.9	16.0	55.1	3.39	1.208
Tourism has improved the image of Butogota by improving quality of services such as restaurants, cafes, bars and art and crafts	27.1	13.2	59.7	3.51	1.318
Crime has increased due to tourist-activities in the area	67.0	7.9	25.1	2.28	1.401
Local youth have adopted the western cultures and lifestyles due to tourist activities	28.9	12.9	58.2	3.51	1.350
Gorilla tourism has caused commodification of cultures in Butogota	25.4	11.9	62.7	3.53	1.217
Butogota Town Council area has become a popular destination because of mountain gorilla tourism	26.6	8.9	64.5	3.55	1.292
The locals have been made aware of tourism development plans relating to their area	64.7	12.4	22.9	2.29	1.249
Residents have been involved in all tourism activities that are happening in the area	62.9	12.2	24.9	2.25	1.273
Residents are resentful of the impacts of mountain gorilla tourism	40.7	13.2	46.1	3.10	1.386
Environmental impact statements					
Gorilla tourism has created opportunities for environmental education and awareness	24.3	18.8	56.9	3.52	1.228
Conservation policies/programmes have developed due to this kind of tourism	23.1	18.3	58.6	3.54	1.244
People have come to appreciate the importance of nature	27.2	15.2	57.6	3.49	1.345
Locals have stopped poaching and killing of stray gorillas	30.2	15.7	54.1	3.35	1.317

KEY: D – Disagree; N – Neutral; A – Agree; Std.D – Standard Deviation

To determine whether tourism caused price increases at a destination, the respondents were requested to indicate levels of agreement or disagreement with the statement 'prices of goods and services have increased due to tourist activities.' The results indicate that 31.0% of the respondents agreed, whereas a significant 53.0% indicated that they did not perceive that prices had increased because of mountain gorilla tourism. Usually tourism activities result in price increases as many businesses target tourists whose spending patterns are higher than locals are (Kreag, 2001). However, for this study, the respondents indicated that price increases were probably not linked to gorilla tourism. The remaining 16% were undecided and remained neutral when they were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement about the price increase statement.



Perspectives regarding socio-cultural impact

Researchers such as Mthembu (2009) show that the social impact of tourism occur because of the interactions and contact between hosts and visitors. With this view in mind, it was necessary to understand residents' attitudes towards social impact. When asked to indicate levels of agreement or disagreement to the statement 'gorilla tourism has promoted unity and cultural appreciation', more than half (57.4%) of the respondents agreed. However, a lesser 26.4% of the study participants generally disagreed with the statement and felt that gorilla tourism had not promoted unity and cultural appreciation. The remaining 16.2% of the respondents remained neutral on the statement. The respondents were also of the view that generally local people tend to change their behaviour in an attempt to emulate tourists (Mean 3.39). This finding showed the power of tourism in influencing local behaviours and supports researchers like Keyser (2002) who investigated the social impact of tourism. In terms of tourism improving destination image, the majority of the respondents (59.7%) agreed that the image of Butogota has been improved because of gorilla tourism. Hall and Lew (2009) assert that tourism helps to improve the image of a tourist destination, especially when the quality of goods and services supplied at the destination are of a high quality. This was reflected in this study where the majority of the respondents agreed that the image of Butogota residents improved by supplying improved services and facilities, including restaurants, cafes, bars, arts, and craft.

High crime rates are generally associated with tourism with tourists becoming the victims (Hall & Lew, 2009). In trying to find out whether tourist activities in the Butogota area had suffered from increased crime, the study participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement to the statement that crime had increased due to tourist activities in the area. The findings showed 67.9% of residents indicating a negative association between crime and tourism. The study also revealed that local youth have adopted the western cultures and lifestyles due to tourist activities (Mean 3.51). Most local people in the Butogota area dance for tourists and from this they get money which they can use to buy basic commodities. Some products are manufactured with the tourist in mind, and as such, some businesses no longer supply authentically original products as focus is on making more to sell to visitors. The study's findings further found out that most residents (62.7%) agreed with the view that gorilla tourism has caused commodification of the local culture.

The respondents were asked whether they felt that they were involved in tourism activities happening in their area. A considerable number (62.9%) of the study participants felt that they were not involved in tourism activities in their area. This finding cautions the UWA and the Government to develop strategies to encourage more local people to become involved in mountain gorilla tourism, for example, by creating more job opportunities. The above result clearly indicates that much needs to be done to encourage residents to participate more in tourism planning. Gutierrez et al. (2005) note that the success of tourism depends on the involvement of residents in the planning of any tourist attraction or destination. It is therefore imperative to involve residents to build positive perceptions about tourism impact.

To determine whether mountain gorilla tourism is well supported by community members, the respondents were requested to react to the statement that 'residents are resentful of the impact of mountain gorilla tourism'. The findings revealed a smaller percentage (13.2%) assuming a neutral position while most (46.1%) of respondents were not pleased with mountain gorilla tourism while 40.7% were happy and thus supported the tourist activities in the Butogota area.



Perspectives regarding environmental impact

Respondents were asked to show levels of agreement or disagreement with the statement that mountain gorilla tourism has created opportunities for environmental education and awareness. The findings show the majority (56.9%) of the respondents generally agreeing, whilst a smaller 24.3% disagreed with the statement. The remaining 18.8% of the participants remained neutral on the statement. Furthermore, when asked whether conservation policies/programmes were developed because of mountain gorilla tourism, more than half (58.6%) of the residents who participated in the study agreed with 23.1% disagreeing. The UWA is generally in charge of conservation programmes and projects, which includes dealing with the conservation of the country's natural heritage (UWA, 2018). In addition, the UWA implements a variety of strategies aimed at sustainably conserving and managing of the country's wildlife. These strategies, amongst others, include involvement through local participation in wildlife management, collaborative management, sharing of revenue, joint management of problematic wildlife, wildlife use rights, and conservation education and awareness (UWA, 2018).

Amongst other strategies employed by the UWA to address challenges, including poaching, are the policing patrols which are placed within all the protected areas, as well as arresting those who access the protected areas without permission (UWA, 2018). There are notable efforts by the UWA authorities to partner and work with community members in and around the protected areas to assist in addressing other challenges between humans and wildlife. As seen from the study, wildlife conservation and management brings benefits to locals through the benefit-sharing programmes, which are aimed at achieving Government's major objective of poverty alleviation and improving the lives of community members (UWA, 2018).

A question was posed regarding the statement 'people have come to appreciate the importance of nature'. The majority (57.6%) of the study participants generally agreed whilst a smaller 27.2% disagreed. The rare mountain gorillas of Eastern Africa have suffered disturbing attacks, particularly in the 20th century (Explore Rwanda Tours, 2018). The illegal hunting and poaching of the mountain gorilla remains a major threat to the great apes and other primates of Africa. In addition, gorillas have been injured and killed by traps and snares, which are set for other wild animals, such as antelope. The study survey had a question where respondents had to indicate levels of agreement or disagreement regarding whether locals had stopped the killing and poaching of mountain gorillas, including the strays.

More than half (54.1%) of the respondents generally agreed that locals had stopped the hunting and poaching of stray gorillas, whilst 30.2% disagreed with the statement. However, the remaining 15.7% of the study participants remained neutral on the statement. According to the findings, it is noticeable that these activities have definitely created opportunities for environmental education and awareness. The conservation policies/programmes have been developed and as a result, people have come to appreciate the importance of nature. Poaching and killing of stray gorillas has been minimised, which is a big achievement by the UWA and the UTB.

Local residents' involvement in gorilla tourism planning

It was of great importance to establish whether the Ugandan Government considered the residents in key decision-making processes around the park activities. This information would assist in gaining a better understanding of whether the local residents felt gorilla tourism was of any importance in their area.

Tourism development can be maximised when communities living in areas where the tourist attraction is located are involved in decisions regarding use and management of the attraction. Local communities' participation in decision-making is viewed as key for the success of tourism in any destination. To establish whether the Ugandan Government, and more specifically the UWA, considered local residents in the planning for gorilla tourism, the respondents were asked to indicate whether there is involvement. The study's findings showed almost half (45.2%) of the respondents revealing that they were never involved by the Ugandan Government in the planning for gorilla tourism. To them, they see the Government and UWA as one organisation and detached from community members, and feel that they are being neglected. However, 41.4% indicated that the Government did involve them occasionally. This finding suggests that there may be a need for more community involvement by the Government to garner more support on most of the planning, thus helping to minimise hostile action by community members. The study findings showed that the planning of mountain gorilla tourism did involve community members and 13.5% stated that they are frequently consulted by the Government. The result therefore clearly shows that the Government and UWA have not sufficiently involved local residents and this may need to be changed. In addition, for the success of tourism, more local residents need to be involved in the decision-making processes.

Gained anything from mountain gorilla tourism

The study respondents were asked if they or the community had gained anything from mountain gorilla tourism. This was asked to gauge how the local residents were benefitting from gorilla tourism and the level of support of the tourism activities in the area. Their responses were captured and analysed in four different categories. The results of the study showed 38.1% of respondents agreeing that they had gained from mountain gorilla tourism. The gains referred included opportunities for jobs, business expansion, infrastructural development, income generation, increased customer base (and market for products i.e. art and craft), and many others (see Table 4 highlighting some of the gains from gorilla tourism). Those that stated that they had not gained anything from this tourism niche constituted 35.5%, while 26.1% of the respondents were not sure if they had gained or not gained anything at all. A few of the respondents (0.3%) did not respond to the question.

Table 4. Excerpts from residents interviews regarding opportunities from gorilla tourism

<p><i>"Been able to open up my African shop and tourists buy from me ..."</i></p> <p><i>"I have opened up my business in less than one year, but I have already got so many customers"</i></p> <p><i>"Income generation through selling of my art pieces."</i></p> <p><i>"... major opportunity emanating from gorilla tourism was employment and the rural electrification programme ..."</i></p> <p><i>"Improved on the infrastructure."</i></p> <p><i>"We have been able to open up a new branch in this area and therefore expanding."</i></p> <p><i>"I have made friends with some of the tourists and we communicate on social media."</i></p> <p><i>"Tourism has boosted my business."</i></p> <p><i>"Employment opportunities, Urbanisation of the area, rural electrification around the area."</i></p> <p><i>"Increase in my customer numbers ..."</i></p> <p><i>"... I was able to open up my shop."</i></p> <p><i>"I have been able to construct my guest house and expand it ..."</i></p> <p><i>"Supplied new services to the community."</i></p>
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The respondents revealed that mountain gorilla tourism activities presented ready markets for their products and this increased business profitability, as shown in the following excerpts from residents who also owns businesses, "*... markets have been created, thus development of the business*", and "*(M)ore revenue has been realised from the tourists purchasing from our business.*" The entrepreneurial opportunities that



tourism activities have brought to locals have made it possible for them to afford basic commodities and experience a better life. Infrastructure has been improved in the area, for example, road networks leading to tourist products, and this benefits local businesses which make use of the infrastructure. Government programmes, such as rural electrification, have been extended to the Butogota Town area. Most residents who participated in this study link this to the active tourism activities within the area.

Problems associated with gorilla tourism

Even though gorilla tourism is an important and constructive activity that takes place in the Butogota area, residents, specifically those who live adjacent to the BINP, expressed various challenges or problems that they faced that were associated with this tourism niche. This section presents the problems associated with gorilla tourism in the Butogota Town Council area. The results are elaborated upon and discussed in the following sub-sections.

Land issues

It should be noted that some residents criticised the Government for displacing them from their original land to give the land to accommodate gorillas. Some of the respondents pointed out that they were evicted from their land, left homeless and that they wanted their land back, as evidenced in some of the responses from participants, such as “*evicting and displacing us from our land...*”, “*we want our land back*”, “*...this left us homeless and without land*”, “*...give us back our land*”. What is clear is that respondents are not happy with the Government removing them from the forest where they used to get wood and food (i.e. honey and animal hunting), and not properly relocating them. Because of the removals from ‘their land’, respondents expressed their disappointment, including increased poverty levels “*...Government has left us in poverty after taking our land*”. Other respondents considered Government’s move of taking ‘their land’ and designating it for gorilla tourism as “*theft*”, as seen in the response from one respondent, “*...Government stole our land*”. Displacement of the locals from the forest area affected their social life styles, for example, how they lived and related with each other in terms of food.

High corruption levels

Respondents responded strongly regarding the high corruption tendencies perceived among some of the Government officials and the BINP staff members. For example, one respondent clearly indicated that corruption is one of the reasons why there are few investors in the area and he said, “*Corruption is the reason there are very few investors here, they don’t want to invest their money that officials will steal*”. Respondents further specified that there is a need to fight nepotism and corruption among the leaders. Corruption in the sharing of tourism revenue was reported to have been witnessed by some respondents with some indicating a serious need to fight corruption, for example, as stated by the respondents, “*Fight nepotism and corruption in the Government*”, “*Government officials are very corrupt ...*”, “*Reduce on the corruption in the Government*”. Respondents hoped that the Government would fight these high corruption levels if mountain gorilla tourism was to flourish in Uganda. By doing this, there would be improved management of the attraction, as well as guarantee for maximised positive impact from this niche tourism.

Underdeveloped infrastructure



The Butogota Town Council area is one of the most underdeveloped sub-counties in the Kanungu District, with many poor people in the area living under poor conditions (Plumptre et al., 2004). Tumusiime and Vedeld (2012:16) mention that communities living around national parks suffer from massive poverty and therefore it is the role of the government to share tourism benefits with the poor people living adjacent to the parks. This was reflected in some of the responses obtained during data collection, confirming the need for authorities to improve infrastructure. Road networks needed to be improved to all areas, not only maintaining those leading to where tourism activities take place. In addition to improving road networks is the need for authorities to ensure that telephone signals reach all areas since some lack connectivity. Improved roads facilitate accessibility, thus making the tourist destination more competitive with developed areas. Responses to support this view include, "... *the reason why Rwanda receives more tourists is that they have better infrastructural development specifically the road networks, this makes them compete more effectively*", "... *build better roads and more 5-star hotels which will accommodate highly paying tourists to our area*". Some respondents pointed out the need to improve schooling within the area by "*giving books and computers for students to learn*", which highlights the need to modernise the schools through the adoption of computers and technology. Health facilities needed to be improved in the area. This supports the need for Government, in partnership with various stakeholders, to improve infrastructure in the area.

Conclusion

The current study sought to examine the impacts of mountain gorilla tourism activities on the people living in the Butogota area. The study confirmed that gorilla tourism activities have impacted the Butogota area both positively and negatively for instance, it was revealed that both positive and negative impacts are realised. Some local community members benefited through the revenue sharing scheme, job creation, and the entrepreneurial opportunities which were created from gorilla tourism activities. Although some of the locals had been employed by UWA, others had gained nothing from it. This could be because they do not have the start-up capital for small-scale businesses, or they are not trained and do not have any skills, therefore could not be employed by the park management.

Since the study has shown that only a few locals had trekked mountain gorillas in their area, calls are made for the Ugandan Government to consider reducing the price of gorilla trekking permits to allow more locals to enjoy this touristic attraction which resides in their area. This will grow local tourism and boost the support of locals regarding tourism development in the area, and specifically the conservation of the mountain gorilla. In addition, regulating the permit price for locals would generate support for the conservation initiatives which may be in place. To facilitate more locals to experience the attraction in their area, it is recommended that Government implements programmes which allow locals, especially schoolchildren and the youth, to have a gorilla-trekking experience. This would enable them to develop full knowledge of the attraction, thereby encouraging them to appreciate the beauty of their country, which in turn would promote the effective management and preservation of the mountain gorillas. In addition, there is a need for the Government to concentrate on the infrastructural development in the Butogota area. Many of the stakeholders in the study, specifically the businesses owners, the local leaders and the residents, indicated that infrastructure like the road network needs to be upgraded. When it rains some of the roads flood and they become impassable. Once better roads and bridges are put in place, more tourists will be attracted to the area since it will be more easily accessible.



For mountain gorilla tourism to be sustainable, improved and upgraded, much research is required into how to gain a competitive advantage over Rwanda and the Congo, which boast gorilla tourism. This study's findings and recommendations play a meaningful role in the future of mountain gorilla tourism in the Butogota Town Council area.

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