

Tourism Enterprises as a Strategy for Poverty Alleviation in Areas Around Protected Areas. A Case of VNP, Kinigi sector, Musanze District

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.12030026>

Received: 24 February 2025; Accepted: 27 February 2025; Published: 01 April 2025

ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the methods used to ensure tourism enterprises are implemented in alleviating poverty and investigated the motivating factors that drove the local community to own tourism enterprises in kinigi sector, Rwanda. A descriptive research design involving use of qualitative and quantitative approaches was adopted to obtain data using primary and secondary sources from a target population of 132 local community members used Slovin's formula giving a sample of 60 to get clear meaning of the results. The findings highlighted that community enterprise ownership enabled the local community to access natural and financial resources, political influence, indigenous ownership and management opportunities. Training improved tourism awareness, skills and knowledge as a community empowerment method which was highly valued by the community and led to growth of tourism enterprise ownership. It was concluded that the tourism enterprises played a crucial role in alleviating poverty, methods such as trainings, micro-credit and income distribution support played a crucial role in enterprise development.

Keywords: Tourism enterprises, Poverty alleviation, Protected area, Community based tourism, Empowerment methods.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism enterprises use tourism resources in poverty-stricken, rural areas to obtain development opportunities as an impetus for the economic growth of poor areas and poverty reduction. However, investing heavily in building new structures and renovating and converting existing ones relies on tourism-related businesses and their main activities. Tourism can play a significant part in many countries' economies and livelihoods. In many developing countries, tourism is one of the fundamental pillars (Boonsiritomachai and Phonthanukitithaworn, 2019). Tourism is a major contributor to economic development in many small island developing states, often making it the only industry in these regions to consistently demonstrate growth in recent years (Scheyvens and Hamsen 2008). It has long been recognized that tourism can contribute significantly to poverty reduction (Scheyvens, and Momsen, 2020).

The importance of tourism for poverty reduction is attracting substantial interest from multilateral institutions, tourism bodies, donors, and other organizations world over. Tourism is used as a strategy to promote poverty reduction by both international organizations and financially underdeveloped countries because it has the potential to create employment opportunities and foster local economic development (Binns and Nel, 2002; Hall, 2007; Li et al., 2018; Liu and Wu, 2019). The past decade has witnessed a remarkable number of studies demonstrating that tourism can assist low-income people with food, housing, medical expenses, and other costs (Binns and Nel, 2002; Hall, 2007).

Community based tourism has become a universal call to action to reduce poverty (Sofield et al., 2004). At the local level, pro-poor tourism can play a significant role in livelihood security and poverty reduction. However,

it is often difficult to identify specifically what contributions pro-poor tourism makes, or could make, to accelerate national poverty reduction efforts (Oviedo-García et al., 2019). There is a growing interest in tourism that aids economic growth via pro-poor tourism in developing countries (Truong et al., 2014). Although China is the world's second largest economy and has significantly contributed to global economic growth, the size of poverty-stricken areas in rural China is substantial, and residents' income levels are below the national poverty line

That tourism can be used as a tool to reduce poverty in developing countries is a commonly accepted notion (Luo and Bao, 2019). Most previous studies have demonstrated that strong engagement and cooperation among stakeholders should be an integral part of any destination's tourism development plan to achieve the best results (Rendón and Bidwell, 2015; Zhao and Ritchie, 2007). It has been argued that stakeholders in poverty alleviation through tourism can be divided into governments, private sectors, the poor, tourists, civil society, and aid donors. (Ashley and Jones, 2001; Roe and Urquhart, 2001). To achieve a successful outcome, effective communication with stakeholders on pro-poor tourism is essential (Tolkach et al., 2012). Role of stakeholders in tourism development depends on their interests, views, opinions, and knowledge, and each stakeholder has a role in defining and determining pro-poor tourism's success (Borodako et al., 2015).

A successful strategy of poverty reduction must have core measures to promote rapid and sustained economic growth that enhances the ability of the poor to participate in and enjoy the benefits from growth (Ranasinghe and Nawarathna, 2019). Community based tourism is highly dependent on the degree of participation by the poor in tourism activities by acquiring the right and power to gather resources to meet their needs (Ashley et al., 2001; Telfer and Sharpley, 2007). Pro-poor tourism improves the livelihoods of local communities and can generate considerable economic opportunities for local people (Mogradi and Rogerson, 2007; Soliman, 2015). Yang and Hung (2014) indicated that pro-poor tourism plays an important role in balanced sustainable development and generates benefits for the poor.

A sustainable livelihood approach (SLA) was reviewed and tourism enterprises could not be singled out as sustainable tool while wellbeing on the other hand would not be singled as a parameter to single out tourism as a tool for community wellbeing improving barometer (Shen et al 2008). A comprehensive cocktail of tourism projects, community development projects and multilevel household community levels and individual levels and community development projects would be involved in wellbeing improvement. Aquino et al, (2018), developed a framework that involved incorporating community development concepts, social enterprises and community capital as tools for improving community wellbeing. These frameworks significantly indicate that tourism enterprises can be used together with other projects, government proposals and other development projects in improving community wellbeing in rural areas. In this paper the address mainly looked at the tourism enterprises not as a stand-alone tool in improving the community wellbeing in Rwanda.

Tourism has been identified as a priority sector to achieve Rwanda's development goals as set out in Vision 2020. With the application of previous tourism policies, the country has been able to make significant progress in developing and managing its tourism sector in recent years. In 2008, the number of foreign visitors to Rwanda reached just under one million from about 826,000 in 2007, an increase of 30 per cent. Estimates indicate that tourism revenues significantly increased between 2007 and 2008, from \$138 million to \$209 million. However, this notable development of the sector has necessitated a review of the existing tourism policy as well as the creation of an aligned sustainable tourism master plan. Together these documents aim to bring order to the industry with new legislations and improved coordination, as well as to stimulate investment and increase private sector involvement.

Rwanda has recognized tourism as a priority pillar to enable the economy to achieve development goals that were identified in vision 2020. Through its implementation of the tourism policies, significant progress has been made in managing and growth of the tourism sector. It has been observed that in 2008, tourist numbers to Rwanda were less than one million approximately 826, 000 fetching about 209 million dollars. Nevertheless, the sector with this progressive development, has led to the review of the current tourism policy and the conception of the sustainable tourism master plan. The objective of these two documents combined is to re-organise the sector with new laws and better coordination aimed at stimulating investment and increase engagement of the private sector through community-based tourism enterprises.

Rwanda's Tourism Policy (2009:5), specifically, aim to address a number of constraints and issues that face the tourism industry. They include: Over-reliance on a single tourism product ;International awareness and perceptions of Rwanda not widely based on tourism ;Low capacity and under-skilled human resources; Little involvement of communities and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the sector; Expensive and difficult to access from key tourism source markets as a destination; Under-developed regulatory framework for the tourism sector; Constraints due to quality and quantity of infrastructure; Difficulty of accessing land for tourism investments; Little focus on the environment and sustainability and Low availability of finance and partnership for private sector investment in the sector

It has been acknowledged that tourism as a priority industry to attain developmental goals of a country as set out in Vision 2020 strategy cited by spenceley et al 2010(Government of Rwanda Report, 2009). Rwanda has made significant progress in the tourism sector development and management in the recent past increasing revenue from 26 million dollars in 2005 to 200 million dollars in 2008 (Ministry of Trade and Industry MINICOM, 2009). The local community benefit from the tourism industry in six main ways and these include; the local community getting employment and wages from the protected areas, accommodation, restaurant businesses, agricultural businesses, direct income from joint ventures, cultural tourism expeditions, shopping, art crafts and donations.

The government of Rwanda and other developing countries have of recent and explicit policy statements asserting the role of tourism as strategy for reduction of poverty. Nearly 80% of poverty reduction strategy in African include a reference to encouraging tourism (Gerosa, 2003). Even though tourism advocates usually jump to this evidence that countries in Africa appreciate the potentially positive role of tourism. The priority afforded to tourism in important policies is very much less than more traditional pre-occupations such as agriculture, rural development and infrastructure. At local level a good number of local governments, non-governmental organisations and local society embrace tool as a strategy to facilitate local economic development.

Poverty is a multidimensional and complex concept that cannot be reduced to a single dimension of human life. Poverty includes inadequate income and human development, but also embraces deprivation of a longer life span, access to safe water, lack of health, acceptable housing, knowledge, creative life, freedom, voice, participation, dignity, self-esteem, power, representation, personal security and respect of others (Zhao and Ritchie, 2007). Several approaches to international development assistance emerged in the recent decades in which tourism is considered the main tool for poverty alleviation. Nevertheless, a gap is evident in the scientific literature as little emphasis has been given to the impact of tourism on poverty alleviation through international development cooperation programs. Bearing in mind that the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is the leading international organisation with a decisive and central role in the world tourism and on the ability to influence national and international development policies, it was considered relevant to analyse its role in the overall discussion around the international cooperation for development in tourism.

Besides, studies by Mutapuri, Camelleri and Dluzewska (2022) highlighted that community-based tourism enterprises have potential to alleviate poverty within communities, supporting economically disadvantaged members of the society and enhancing income opportunities for small businesses as well as entrepreneurs. The success of the community-based tourism enterprise management depends on several crucial factors such as strong community engagement, local governance, sustainable management of resources, service provision plus available infrastructure. That aside, there are the main nonfinancial impacts that include social projects from the national park revenue sharing process and access to land and land natural resources (SNV-Rwanda, 2009). Currently, there is a local community run art-crafts shop at the park head office to enable them get Kinigi community empowered (Spenceley et al 2010). In Rwanda, the government has a policy that states five percent of the tourism revenue from protected areas is used to fund local community projects to empower them and reduce poverty especially those adjacent to the parks. To ensure the funding trickles down to the local community, Rwanda Development Board ensures that project proposals and selection is done at the sector and district levels so that projects benefit the local community in reducing poverty (Tusabe and Habyalimana, 2009).

All these factors are supported by development policies and partnership with various networks, yet the main responsibility for tourism management must remain within the community. This argument is emphasized by the studies by Karacaoglu and Birdir (2017), Wijaya et al. (2020), Mtapuri et al, (2022), Dolezal and Novelli (2022).

These authors highlighted that the importance of community ownership, active participation in management, operations, supervision, and decision-making processes for successful CBT enterprises. Therefore, it is crucial that tourism enterprises are owned by local entrepreneurs who are key part of the community. To enhance significant advancements in community-based enterprises sustainable activities should facilitate the establishment of robust relationships with diverse stakeholders that may include government, policy makers, suppliers, creditors, employees and customers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Volcanoes National Park is located on 1°30'5, 29°0'E or 1°21'-1°35' South, 29°22'-29°44' East, depending on the source is situated in the North of Rwanda bordering Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda and covers medium and high altitudes towards the south of Virunga Chain (Plumptre et al., 2004). Its length is around 40km and its width varies from 8km to 1km. The interface of Volcanoes National Park with its local population is around 60km; the surface area of the park is about 160km². The altitude varies from 2400 m to 4500 m, the highest point being the top of Karisimbi (4507 m). The park is located in a chain of dormant volcanoes called Ibirunga. The volcanoes include Muhabura, Gahinga, Sabyinyo, Bisoke, and Karisimbi. The park lies within the Provinces of Gisenyi (15%) and Musanze (85%) along the border of the DRC and Uganda (Plumptre et al., 2004). Its length is 40km and its width varies from 8km to 1km and the interface with the local population is 60km; and it covers 160km². The average population density is 690.1 persons per km², exerting a lot of stress on the resource base for food production, settlement and fuel wood.

The methodology comprised of the research design which was the plan of how the study was to be carried out. In this study the research design was descriptive and involved use of qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain data. The study also used primary and secondary sources of data to get clear meaning of the results. In this study the target population was 60 local communities (Sabyinyo Community Livelihood Association (SACOLA) adjacent to the park and Volcanoes National Park staff. The sample was obtained through purposive sampling especially the staff of Volcanoes National Park and members of the local community association (SACOLA) close to the boundary of the park using slovin's formula $n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$. Where N is the target population (132), n refers to the sample (60) and the estimated error which was 10% or 0.1. The tools used for obtaining data and included; interviews, questionnaires and observation. The researcher used self-administered questionnaire which had both open ended and closed ended questionnaires. A ten point interval scale (1-10) was used to rank the respondents opinions on innovated products. Analysis of data involved editing, coding, processing and in this study used content analysis. The objectives of the study were two fold. i) To determine the methods used to ensure tourism enterprises are implemented to alleviate poverty in kinigi sector around Volcanoes National Park. ii) To investigate the motivating factors that drove the local community to own tourism enterprises in kinigi sector.

Results

This section started by presenting the biodata of the respondents and it composed of the age, education level and length of stay in the study area as indicated below;

Table 1: Age groups of respondents

Age groups (years)	Frequency	percentage
0-19	0	0
20-29	12	20
30-39	25	42
40-49	13	22

Above 50	10	16
Total	60	100

Source: primary source,2024

The results in Table 1 indicated that majority of the respondents 42% were in the age range of 30-39 followed by age range of 40-49 which implies that they had responsibilities and needed a source of income through tourism enterprises. While those of 20-29 had finished school and were interested in employment and those above 50 also wanted to own their businesses.

Table 2: Length of stay in that study area

Length of stay in years	Frequency	percentage
0-1	5	8
2-3	10	17
3- 5	16	27
4-5	20	33
Above 5	9	15
Total	60	100

Source: primary source,2024

The results in Table 2. revealed that majority of the respondents had live in the area for 4-5 years and so wanted improved income similarly with the second-high number for 3-4 years and those above 5 years that wanted improved well-being and income

Table 3: Level of education of respondents

Level of education	Frequency	percentage
Primary and below	15	25
Secondary	23	38
Diploma	12	20
Degree	7	12
Above	3	5
Total	60	100

Source: Primary source 2024

The findings in Table 3. showed that majority of the respondents had not acquired better education. The results indicated that majority 38% were secondary school dropouts and also 25% were primary level dropouts. These

findings confirm the fact that with low level among the community, they cannot get white collar jobs and so need to be empowered. That is why empowering the local community through tourism enterprises has the potential to alleviate poverty.

Methods used to implement tourism enterprise

The findings indicated that the main methods used to empower the local community through tourism enterprise to alleviate poverty included the following;

Through tourism projects as the one of the core methods and results revealed that most the local community agreed that they played a crucial role to empower them to reduce poverty and improve their wellbeing. Using the Linkert five point scale the results indicated that 0.5% of the respondents disagreed strongly, while 3.7% disagreed and 10.7% were undecided. On the other hand, 32.2% respondents agreed that projects was a method that played a crucial role to empower them and 52.8% strongly agreed to the fact that through projects poverty alleviation was achieved. Additionally, results from the key informants indicated that the leaders fully supported projects for community tourism enterprises They mentioned that incase of any project faced challenges, they were addressed immediately through community tourism enterprises concerned and tourism officers under Rwanda development board (RDB).

Another method emphasized by the results was the provision of micro-credit for community development projects which was highlighted as a way through local community empowerment. The results revealed that 2.8% of the respondents disagreed strongly about this method, whereas 4.7% disagreed that the method was not suitable and 13.1% were undecided. However, results indicated that 36.0% of the respondents agreed that the method was able to empower them and alleviate poverty while 43.5% strongly agreed that micro-credit was the best method. Further, the findings from the focus group discussion revealed that community empowerment through micro-credit was a good strategy since it contributed to community tourism enterprise ownership, start and take part in tourism enterprises in Kinigi sector. The respondents mentioned that if the local community were aided, skilled, trained and provided with financial support, accessed information easily then then it was possible to start, own and even diversify tourism enterprises.

Results further indicated that increased community enterprise ownership through tourism income distribution was strongly supported as a preferred method for community empowerment for poverty alleviation. In line with ownership of tourism enterprise, findings showed that 29.9% of the respondents agreed and majority 59.3% strongly agreed. This indicated that increased community capacity for tourism income distribution was a suitable method. Community enterprise ownership empowerment method enabled the local community to access natural and financial resources, political influence, indigenous ownership and management opportunities. The respondents argued that in addition to all cyphers of economic empowerment therefore, equitable distribution of economic benefits and improved access to local facilities and has been observed around protected areas.

The findings indicated that through training of the local community improved tourism enterprise awareness, skills and knowledge. This was one of the most preferred method of community empowerment. The findings indicated that the lowest number 0.9% of respondents strongly disagreed about trainings while 1.4% of respondents disagreed and 8.9% were not decided. On the hand, 35.0% of respondents agreed that training and creating awareness was key and the majority of respondents 53.7% strongly agreed. Results showed that training improved tourism awareness, skills and knowledge as a community empowerment method which was highly valued by the community and led to growth of tourism enterprise ownership.

The focus group discussion findings the majority 85% of respondents emphasized that local community required facilitating policies to guide the process of community empowerment, encourage the social, economic, psychological and political aspects of empowerment as well as creating an environment conducive for the community to own tourism enterprises. The rationale behind community empowerment in Kinigi sector adjacent to VNP was to enhance local community awareness and thus community empowerment and poverty alleviation

Results indicated that another method was through employment in tourism and revenue generating activities namely accommodation facilities, the park, trail maintenance, guiding, entertainment and art-crafts which

resulted in ownership of tourism enterprises. The findings indicated that few of respondents 0.9% strongly disagreed while the lowest number, 0.5% of respondents disagreed about employment but 15.4% of respondents were neutral. Besides the results revealed that 34.6% of respondents agreed and the majority 48.6% strongly agreed that this method led to empowerment and thus poverty alleviation.

Motivation of local community to own tourism enterprises

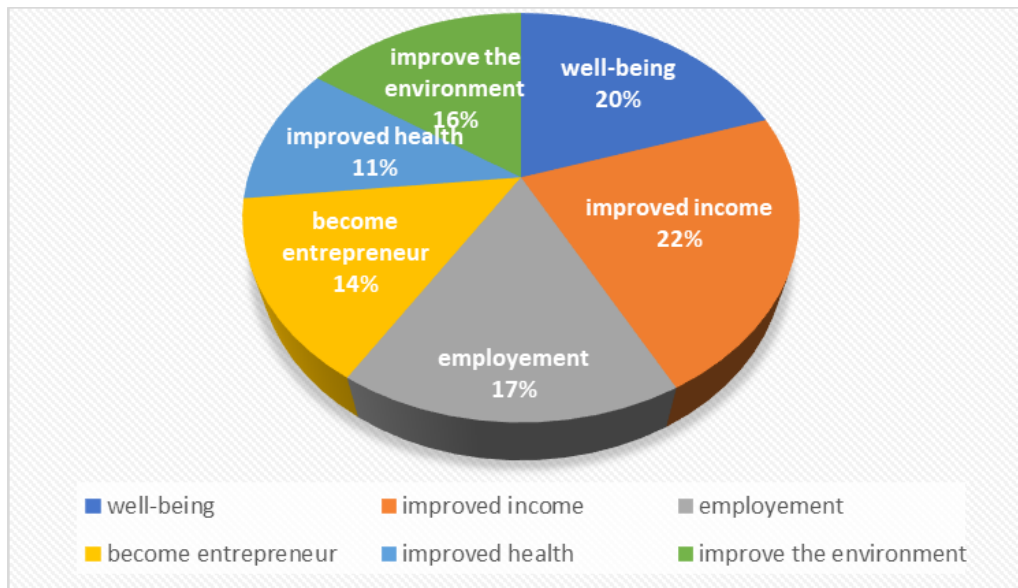


Figure 1 Motivation of local community to own tourism enterprises

The results in Figure 1 indicated that the local community were motivated to own their own tourism enterprises which resulted in improved well-being and income. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents 22% strongly agreed that what motivated them was improved income. Whereas the findings also showed that well-being 20% was another key motivating factor to own tourism enterprise and employment with 17% was also mentioned. Some of the respondents were motivated by improving the environment 16% particularly in tree planting. The results also showed that some of the respondents 14% were motivated to become entrepreneurs. Finally, the smallest number 13% agreed that they wanted their enterprises to improve their health through charges collected, funds provided by NGOs, and grants besides donations from well-wishers.

DISCUSSION

This section discussed the findings and highlighted that community enterprise ownership empowerment method enabled the local community to access natural and financial resources, political influence, indigenous ownership and management opportunities. These findings concurred with studies by Coria and Calfucura (2012) and Strzelecka (2015). Furthermore, Mtapuri, Camilleri and Dłużewska (2022) found that community tourism enterprises have the potential to alleviate poverty within communities, supporting economically disadvantaged members and enhancing income opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs. According to the results through tourism projects as one of the core methods majority of the local community agreed that played a crucial role to empower them to reduce poverty and improve their wellbeing, strong agreement also was the fact that through projects poverty alleviation was achieved. Additionally, results from the key informants indicated that the leaders fully supported projects for community tourism enterprises. This was supported by authors who said that tourism poverty alleviation relies mainly on government aid, which increases pressure on government and government finances in many developing countries (Butler et al., 2013; Liu and Wu, 2019).

Results showed that training improved tourism awareness, skills and knowledge as a community empowerment method which was highly valued by the community and led to growth of tourism enterprise ownership. Tourism awareness, skills and knowledge opened community enterprise opportunities that were not thought of to the general public, as initially insinuated by Shen et al (2018), Aquino et al (2018) and Mayaka & Akama (2007) respectively. Findings from studies by Wijaya et al. (2020), Mtapuri et al. (2022), emphasizing the importance

of community ownership, active participation in management, operations, supervision, and decision-making processes for successful tourism enterprise management. Results emphasized that local community required facilitating policies to guide the process of community empowerment, encourage the social, economic, psychological and political aspects of empowerment as well as creating an environment conducive for the community to own tourism enterprises. Through its implementation of the tourism policies, significant progress has been made in managing and growth of the tourism enterprises, community based tourism and the tourism sector (Rwanda Tourism Policy, 2009). The local community were motivated to own their own tourism enterprises which resulted in improved well-being and income

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that the tourism enterprises played a crucial role as one tool in alleviating poverty in kinigi sector. Tourism enterprise engage community members besides other businesses and agriculture in meeting the household expenses such as house hold medical insurance (Mitweele) payments which are settled annually, school fees settlements for the school going children rather than depending on agricultural products sale that are seasonal as a source of revenue. A number of methods were applied to ensure tourism enterprises were implemented and these consisted of the tourism project method that involved community members getting engaged in starting their own enterprises besides house gardens to improve household nutrition besides tree planting nurseries for reforestation. Also methods such as trainings, micro-credit and income distribution support played a crucial role in enterprise development and monitor their performance. Additionally, revenue generating activities and enabling policies were highlighted as key methods to tourism enterprise development. Finally, the main motivating factors included mainly improved income and well-being among the local community.

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