



Contribution of Local Governments in Conservation and Preservation of Tourism Destinations in Rwanda: Case of Volcanoes National Park, Musanze District, Rwanda

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Received June 19, 2020; Revised July 3, 2020; Accepted July 7, 2020

Abstract: *This study sought to examine the contribution of Local Governments in Conservation and Preservation of Tourism Destination in Rwanda. It adopted mixed research design of quantitative and qualitative techniques. The study used a sample size of 97 respondents mainly from District authorities and local communities. Focus discussion groups, Interviews and questionnaires were the data collecting tools the study used to collect information from respondents. The study found out that Local Government contributes a lot to the Conservation and Preservation of Tourism Destination through community conservation enforcement, Institutional structure for conservation, establishment of active partners in conservation mechanism and adopting a holistic approach to tourism destination planning. However, conservation and preservation experience some challenges such as Inadequacy of financial resource, illegal use of forest resources, overpopulation and over-exploitation of resources and inability to utilize modern government techniques of participation. Among the strategies aired out by respondents were to increase revenues shared by tourists, adopt measures in line with appropriate use of resources and fight against illegal use of forest resources. The study concludes that Local governments have played a very vital role in conservation and preservation of tourism development. The study recommends that local governments should establish appropriate measures to the use of resources, there must be wider participation of institutions in tourism destination conservation activities and that revenue from tourism activities should be shared among communities around tourism destination for the sake of conservation.*

Keywords: *Local Governments, Conservation and Preservation, Tourism Destination, Community Development*

How to reference this article (APA):

Tushabe, E. & Kabera, C. (2020). Conservation and preservation of tourism destinations in Rwanda: Case of Volcanoes National Park, Musanze District, Rwanda. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 4(3), 1-8.

1. Introduction

Tourism destination has recently emerged as a key issue in the development agenda for the tourism industry in many developing countries (Del Rosso, 2017). It is also one of the most effective drivers of the sustainable development of regional economies. Many developing countries promote tourism destination as it offers the potential for creating jobs, improving community incomes, and increasing both foreign exchange earnings and government revenues (Willard et al, 2017). Local and national authorities are increasingly taking the measures of protecting tourism destinations and placing

it on their agendas because of its shared contribution to local economy (Bush et al, 2014).

According to (WTO, 2016), local governments around the world are increasingly recognizing the power of tourism destinations conservation and preservation because it leads to the nation's development and prosperity. As more tourism destinations emerge and competition for visitors become more intense, a destination's ability to project itself on the world stage and differentiate itself from others is ever more important. This can only be found by conservation and preservation of tourism destinations done by local governments. Recent statistical information indicates

that tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world (RDB, 2018).

According to Azizan (2012), local governments play a key role in promoting tourism destinations in numerous ways. For instance, local governments put in place different marketing strategies that enable tourists and visitors from different corners of the world come to visit different tourism attractions. This makes a number of tourism destinations to be popular and known at the world level thus attracting large numbers of tourists, at the same time improving the image of tourism destinations.

As global tourism competition rises, countries and local governments have invested much in conservation and preservation of tourism destinations to rebrand tourism destinations, create positive image in the eyes of visitors and be able to compete with other countries offering the same tourism products and stand a competitive advantage. This is in relation to a startling fact that 70% of all tourists are visitors attracted by destination image from 2005 to 2010 to only 10 major cities devoted to conserve their destinations (Hall, 2010). This makes conducting effective tourism destination preservation and conservation extremely important in receiving repeat visitors than new customers. For instance, it is estimated that 90 percent of the visitors to Sydney, Australia, during the Olympic Games would return for another visit because of their local conservation and preservation of destination areas (Cevat, 2011).

In 2009, for example, most African states in general but Central Africa Republic, in particular, established new tourism destination map as a strategy to preserve the destinations to build globalized competitive tourism market so destinations provided facilities and tactics to increase satisfaction and loyalty of their customers. Central Africa Republic's local governments initiated improvements of historical buildings, cave, lakeshore, forests, increasing infrastructure including roads, establishment of recycling, renewing and re-using biodegradable materials causing environmental degradation and hindering tourism destinations. This tourism destinations conservation and preservation applied by Central Africa Republic local governments increased the value of successfully building and managing a destination's brand promoted Central Africa Tourism sector to USD 764.3 billion in 2011 (4.7%) (Stipanuk et al, 2016).

According to RDB (2018), Rwanda Local government has put endless effort in the conservation and preservation of tourism destinations since 2005. Rwanda, as landlocked country in central Africa, also known as the land of a thousand hills, has 5 volcanoes, 23 lakes and numerous rivers as well as many other tourism destinations. The districts, sectors, cells and villages cooperated with central government devoted in 2005 to conserve the Rwanda tourism destinations. The following are the tourism destinations in Rwanda: mountain gorilla, museums, three resort towns of Rubavu, Rusizi and Karongi were established to

unifying lake shores, protecting the sites from citizens' damages etc. Of these, mountain gorillas have played a major role in the promotion of the Rwanda tourism industry (Woodring et al, 2014). The Rwanda Local government, in collaboration with Rwanda Development Board, has established gorilla trekking guidelines. In addition to this, she has promoted mass education to the local communities and permitted their participation in the preservation and conservation of species from mountain gorillas. For the sake of conservation, Rwanda government doubled gorilla permit fees from \$750 to \$1,500 in 2017 for both local and foreign tourists. This intended to preserve these species estimated to about 880 individuals remaining in the world surviving only in Uganda, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo as indicated by the Worldwide Fund for nature (WWF) (Dianne et al, 2016).

Despite conservation and preservation policies that African governments have put in place, most tourism destinations are not yet developed since a lot of illegal activities like poaching, deforestation, bush burning, among many others are still a challenge. This study therefore set out to investigate whether there was sufficient contribution from local governments to the conservation and preservation of tourism destinations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Conservation and Preservation

According to Walle (2017), conservation is the protection of natural things such as animals, plants, forests to prevent them from being spoiled or destroyed. Also conservation is careful preservation and protection of something, especially planned management of natural resources to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect. It is the protection, preservation, management or restoration of natural environments and the ecological communities that inhabit them. Conservation is generally held to include the management of human use of natural resources for current public benefit and sustainable, social and economic utilization (Stipanuk et al, 2016).

2.2. The role of Local Government in Conservation and Preservation of Tourism Destinations

Local governments legislate and make decisions on areas to be visited by tourists and how they should be treated (Carol, 2013). This idea is supported by the study carried out by (Kalulu, 2020), which confirms that indeed local governments in Rwanda make key decisions and policies on conservation and preservation of tourism destinations. The enforcement made by local governments are called local enforcement and cover issues such as the activities permitted on public land, animal management, and use of infrastructure like lakes, rivers, industries, roads, forests, historical buildings, etc.

Local governments have a vital responsibility of enforcing local laws, especially governing tourism destinations and other legislation over which they have authority. These legislations are guided by policies. Developing and implementing these policies are key functions in the conservation and preservation of tourism destinations by local governments (Carter, 2011).

Local governments always promote and establish partners in conservation of tourism destination that are likely to attract more tourists. According to Solley (2017), when local governments engage in effective partnerships in conservation of tourism, tourists are likely to benefit from tourism destinations in different ways, such as quality assurance of areas; like international hotels, tourists will expect high quality services and customer services and premium memberships will reduce risks and promote a destinations image. The establishment of active Partnership Program by local governments is to provide communities with positive economic and social benefits from the national park, thereby encouraging them to support conservation (Sidles et al, 2017).

According to Hall (2010), local governments strengthen conservation education and awareness in the communities around tourism destinations as well as all citizens in the areas. Studies agree that educating the locals about conservation and preservation promotes awareness to the residents on how to make destination conservation. While the success of the Revenue Sharing Programmed may be mixed, concern has often been expressed that the current process used to identify and select projects tends to favour infrastructural projects that benefit the district rather than the community members that are most directly impacted by the park. This does mean that the programme fails to address the aims of reducing illegal activities by providing alternatives for park resources, and reducing human wildlife conflicts. It will therefore be vital to re-orientate the focus of revenue sharing towards more sustainable natural resource management and conflict reduction priorities (Bosselman, 2015). This means that local governments promote greater participation of grassroots community members in the identification and implementation of conservation projects. This purpose places emphasis to ensuring that communities will gain positive environmental and socioeconomic benefits from the tourism destination. This will be achieved both by increasing the benefits to the community as well as reducing costs, such as those from crop damage. In turn, benefits will serve as incentives that encourage communities to support the conservation and preservation of the tourism destination (Chmura, 2018).

According to Del Rosso (2017), enabling visitor growth and tourism development have not been traditional functions of local government, who have often seen their role as limited to providing the utilities and amenities required and administering necessary planning and development processes (Cessford,2017). Local authorities support for tourism brings economic, social

and biophysical benefits to host communities. Tourism is also seen as an area of investment that allows councils to fulfill their dual responsibilities of economic development and the provision of facilities and services for local communities, as well as for visitors and the industry itself (Carol, 2011).

WTO (2018) has identified that local governments and authorities as playing an important role in regional economic development, especially when it comes to sectors above-average growth potential. This is achieved through local governments providing several types of tourism facilities and tourism attractions to develop potential tourism destinations and lure visitors to come and visit the developed tourism destination. In relation to the above, local governments develop potential tourism attractions ranging from natural reserves, game reserves, aquatic attractions and zoos.

2.3. The challenges faced by local Government in Conservation and Preservation of Tourism destinations

According to UNEP (2016), tourism destinations face challenges of over population and over exploitation of resources. This is attributed to by the fact that human population keeps enlarging, thus there is a lot of pressure on the utilization of natural resources. Other challenges like poaching, deforestation, over grazing and bush burning lead to destruction of tourism destinations and the environment at large thus impacting the eco-systems within the environment and causing environmental erosion. Furthermore, (UNEP, 2016) states that much human consumption of the naturally occurring non-renewable resources can outstrip available resources in the near future and to a big extent impact negatively the environment during extraction and utilization of resources. Overpopulation simply means more pollution and fast extraction of natural resources compared to how they are being replaced (Hall et al, 2010).

According to (Dianne et al, 2016), Tourism destination conservation and preservation is facing the challenge of illegal use of forest resources which is killing the destination branding and image thus making tourists to choose or buy other tourism destinations to visit though local governments struggle to fight these illegal activities by putting in place policy measures for conservation and preservation. Studies conducted by different scholars including Hudson and Ritchie (2009) state that many challenges like deforestation, illegal hunting of wildlife, grazing in tourism destinations like national parks and bush burning existing at destinations are too excessive and need to be mitigated if indeed conservation and preservation are to be achieved. More so, local governments involved in preservation of tourism destination sometimes have insufficient funds and destinations may face political influences impacting on these destinations negatively (Walle, 2017). More often there is a challenge of poor planning, which leads to conversion of lands, especially in urban settings, parking areas, mining areas, housing

development projects, shopping malls, industrial sites, office spaces, road networks, forests and so on and so forth. All these lead to destination degradation (Helmy, 2014). Mining and oil exploration, for instance, renders land unusable for habitation and causes other forms of destinations conservation by releasing toxic materials into the environment and this improper land use has led to the loss and destruction of millions of acres of natural environments across the globe affecting destinations. Note that landfills discharge several types of chemicals on the land adjacent to forest reserves. Ecosystems, natural habitats, and aquatic systems such as underground and surface water also make the environment unappealing to the survival of trees, vegetation, animal and humans (Helmy, 2014). This further makes it to interfere with the animals' interactive food chains due to the chemicals contaminating plants, and waters which are consumed by the animals. Besides, the foul smell from the landfills and periodic burning of the wastes make living in such environments unbearable. This leads to a couple of problems facing local governments which as a result affects conservation and preservation of tourism destination (David et al., 2016).

A study conducted by Solley and Wayne (2017) cites a challenge of natural disasters like earthquakes, soil erosion and climate change. They pin to the fact that despite environmental degradation, there is normal circumstances associated with anthropogenic activities and that natural causes are also contributing to environmental degradation of most tourism destinations and this makes conservation and preservation difficult to attain. Schulz et al. (2017) argues that besides occurrences of hurricanes and flooding, which wash or force the migration of invasive species into foreign environments, there is eventual degradation and most of the planet's natural environments has been destroyed. In addition, a large portion is under huge threat due to the toxic substances and chemicals emitted from fossil fuel combustions, industrial wastes, and homemade utilities from industries processing materials which make land, air, and water pollution to pose long-term cumulative impacts on the quality of the tourism destination.

2.4. Strategies for effective conservation and preservation of tourism destinations

According to Chinura (2018), local governments should ensure appropriate measures to the use of resources. Chinura emphasizes that local governments have to launch different strategies that can be used to limit over-exploitation of resources for the sake of tourism destinations' preservation. Tourism destinations and local governments should adopt the best measures to protect tourism destinations, which lead to eco-tourism and sustainability like installing solar panels on the roof of houses if the environment is to be saved. Chinura also encourages the use of several strategies and methods like recycling, reducing power consumption through

switching electronic devices off instead of using standby, pedestrian movement instead of using the bus to protect and conserve the environment. Lee (2020) advocates that if local governments are to have sustainability of the environment, commercial enterprises must be regulated and controlled to avoid pollution and to lower carbon emissions.

Berno et al. (2015) agree that local governments should or have invested in technology and biotechnology as one of the strategies to ensure environmental protection and sustainability. Investing in technology and biotechnology enables local government and destinations to protect the environment from future and potential destruction and damage. Furthermore, Bosselman proposes aforestation as a strategy for conservation and preservation of tourism destination. Planting trees and putting in place laws about afforestation, forest protection and environmental protection awareness will equip the masses to advocate the importance of conservation and preservation of tourism destinations. In addition, planting trees improves the air quality of the tourism destination by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen. They also give us food and shade (Bosselman, 2015).

Local government has launched community Forest Programme as one of the strategies for conservation programmes that help to protect the land, water and other components of the environment. Important to note is that soil conservation is a good measure if the environment is to be sustained and protected (Alvia et al., 2009). Further, Carlos et al (2009) argue that pollution must be controlled to keep the environment healthy for the sake of maintaining destination conservation and preservation. Local governments should make efforts to control the pollution. He argues that industries and vehicles emit smoke to the surrounding environment, dust and harmful gases that pollute the tourism resources and destination plus chemical fertilizer and chemical poisons like insecticides, herbicides, pesticides, also pollute the environment and all these should be mitigated.

Michael, et al. (2013) say that every single individual is actually able to participate in protecting this planet from pollution and suffocation caused by all kinds of residues and waste "produced" by the world's population. It is actually quite easy to go green. Protecting the environment requires that the environment should be every individual's responsibility and seen as privilege and honour at the same time; the honour and privilege to protect and conserve the earth for the sake of our future generations. According to (UNEP, 2016), adopting a cleaner production technique is a vital tool for planning, protecting and operating tourism facilities in a way that reduces environmental negative impacts. For instance, green building (using energy-efficient and non-polluting, construction materials), energy sources and sewage systems is an increasingly important way for the tourism industry to decrease its impact on the environment.

3. Methodology

The study used mixed research design employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Both primary and secondary sources were used to obtain data from respondents. Primary sources included two focus discussion groups, interviews from key informants and self-administered structured and semi-structured questionnaires. The secondary sources included document review of the reports and other related documents from Rwanda Development Board, Tourism Associations and the chamber of tourism. The results of this exercise guided the subsequent phase which involved a series of key informant interviews of the management and staff of Rwanda Development Board and the Musanze district authorities. The study respondents were selected from the administrative district of Musanze in northern Rwanda. They comprised of the local communities around the park, park managers and employees of Rwanda Development Board, tourists visiting Volcanoes national park and the surrounding park community leaders. The study adopted a purposive sampling method, especially from key informants to enable the study get vivid information from the field. The total population of the study was 130

but the study sampled only 97 key figures, including respondents considered adequate to provide reliable data determined using (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The sample included: 30 park staff, 27 District staff, 20 Rwanda Development Board staff, and 20 community leaders. The study also employed a focus group discussion with district leaders and Rwanda Development Board authorities and staff. The researchers used excel as well as SPSS to analyze data into meaningful information. However, the data gathering faced hardships such as the terrain of the park with rugged landscape that made the data collection burdensome, communicating with the local communities was not easy as they did not understand English.

4. Results and Discussion

The study investigated the role of local government in conservation and preservation of tourism destinations, the challenges faced by local government in conservation and preservation of tourism destinations and the strategies for effective conservation and preservation of tourism destinations. Literature was reviewed, data was collected and analyzed and presented in tables, figures and narrative.

Table 1: Contribution of local government in conservation and preservation of tourism destinations

Contribution	Frequency	Percentage
Adopt a holistic approach to tourism destination planning	32	32.9
Community conservation enforcement	30	30.9
Institutional structure for conservation	20	20.6
Establishment of active partners in conservation mechanisms	15	15.4
Total	97	100

Source: Field data, 2019

Findings from respondents reveal 32.9% of respondents saying that adoption of a holistic approach to tourism destination planning is one of contribution of local governments, with multi-stakeholder engagement, to cover the multi-faceted impacts of tourism growth and that local governments should put emphasis on the social and cultural fabric by creating a balance between real and staged experiences, managing tourism flow to acceptable levels, and building local capacity to appreciate the long-term value of conserving their tangible and intangible cultural assets for future generations to celebrate. This finding echoes the study by Bush (2014), which confirmed that indeed adoption of a holistic approach to tourism destination planning is one way destinations should adopt if tourism destinations are to be conserved and preserved for a long period of time and yield benefits. As can be seen, 30.9% answered that local governments ensure community conservation enforcement as a contribution. According to respondents, local governments enforce the people to maintain destination conservation and preservation, especially those who live around the tourism destinations, each tourism destination should identify

and sustain an acceptable level of visitation as a management tool for tourism planning and development. Identifying a carrying capacity threshold is particularly important to manage tourists' flow and ultimately prevent compromising the environmental and cultural integrity or negatively affecting the visitors' experience. This finding is in agreement with the study carried out by (Cessford, 2017), which supports the assertion that due to community conservation enforcement, most tourism destinations have integrated the policy of carry capacity of tourism destinations to avoid destruction of tourism destinations. 20.6% of the respondents said local governments ensure institutional structure for conservation. For example, the Rwanda Ministry of Culture and Sport is the main authority responsible for conservation of cultural and historical values, thus determining the cultural and historical buildings and areas for conservation, making the official registration, preparing the conservation and development plans and programs, putting these plans into practice, carrying out and supervising the archaeological digs and managing the museums are duties and responsibilities that Ministry handed to local

government. 15.4 % of respondents revealed that local governments support establishment of active partners in conservation mechanisms, conservation and preservation which requires strong relationship with

active organizations and institutions in the region and that local government establishes strong partnership for the sake of conservation of tourism destination.

Table 2: Challenges faced by local government in conservation and preservation of tourism destinations

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequacy of financial resource	35	36
Overpopulation and Over-exploitation of Resources	35	36
Inability to utilize modern government techniques of participation	20	20.6
Illegal use of forest resources	7	7.2
Total	97	100

Source: Field data, 2019

Findings reveal that 36% of respondents said that inadequacy of financial resources is a challenge. Tourism destination conservation and preservation need huge amount of money to get to the same standards of the competitive regions in tourism that local government can't afford because of other important program needing strong budget. This finding can be supported by the study done by (Harris et al., 2017) which confirmed that most local governments have insufficient funds to develop and support tourism destinations renders potential tourism destination to be developed. 36% of respondents revealed that there is a challenge of over population and over exploitation of resources. Respondents revealed that as long as the population increases, there will be need to use too many resources. Other challenges include overpopulation, illegal activities of killing animals in the parks, cutting down trees and so forth. In agreement with the above finding, (WTO, 2016) asserts that as the population of the world increases, tourism resources and destinations are at stake, conflicts between people and tourism resources will increase, leading to destruction of tourism destinations thus making conservation and preservation difficult to achieve.

Further, 20.6% of respondents revealed that there is a challenge of inability to utilize modern government techniques of participation. According to respondents, to maintain effective tourism destination conservation and preservation by local government, there is need for active partnerships with different institutions in the country, but there has been incompetence, mostly by local governor in collaboration with other institutions to promote modern government conservation techniques of participation. According to Del Rosso, (2017), there is need for governments to utilize modern techniques. 7.2% of respondents revealed that there is a challenge of illegal use of forest resources. Respondents revealed that developing countries, including Rwanda, have many unemployed citizens living in the forest area, who depend on forest resources, for example, some are cutting down the trees, killing animals and birds and grazing from the forest, all leading to environmental degradation thus hindering tourism destination and causing desertification.

Table 3: The strategies for effective conservation and preservation of tourism destinations

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Increased revenues shared by tourists	40	41
Measures to appropriate use of resources	30	30.9
Wider participation of institutions in conservation activities	15	15.4
Fight against illegal use of tourism destination resources	12	12
Total	97	100

Source: Primary data, 2019

Findings from respondents reveal 41% of respondents said that increasing revenues shared by tourists is one of the strategies local governments should adopt.

Respondents observed that for better conservation and preservation of tourism destinations, local communities have to be engaged and involved, which can be done by

10% revenue sharing and other indirect benefits of tourism to the local people to boost their morale in conserving and protecting resources. This finding agrees with the study by Lee (2020), who confirmed that indeed for better conservation and preservation of tourism resources, the local people have to be brought on board through several ways; one way being through 10% of tourism revenue sharing. 30.9% answered that local governments should stick to measures of appropriate use of resources as a strategy. Respondents emphasized that in order for local governments to manage the overpopulation leading to over-exploitation of resources, measures like helping communities around Volcano national park as well as other tourism destination should be taken to create employment opportunities.

This finding is in agreement with the study carried out by (Kalulu et al, 2018), which observes that tourism destinations should not put in place only measures to conserve and preserve tourism destination but also measures to lure the local people to protect tourism destinations like employing them. 15.4% of the respondents said local governments should focus on wider participation of institutions in conservation activities. Respondents revealed that since local government nowadays are facing the challenge of inability to utilize modern government techniques of participation, one of the strategies is wider participation of different organizations and communities in tourism destination conservation activities. 12% of respondents revealed that local governments should fight against illegal use of tourism destination resources. According to some respondents, environmental degradation is one of major challenges Rwanda tourism destination faces and this tragedy makes it hard for conservation and preservation. This finding is supported by the study done by (Kalulu, 2020), who makes similar finding that tourism destinations cannot develop while there is still high levels of illegal activities like poaching,

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deforestation among many others in tourism destinations.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that local governments have put in place several conservation and preservation efforts to protect tourism destinations like adopting a holistic approach to tourism destination planning, community conservation enforcement, institutional structure for conservation and establishing active partners in conservation mechanisms to flourish tourism destination. However, despite the above efforts put in place by local governments, tourism destinations still face challenges like illegal use of forest resources, over population and over exploitation of resources, inadequacy of financial resources and inability to utilize government modern techniques of participation. These challenges mentioned hamper conservation and preservation and development of tourism destinations. Local governments however have come up with strategies to mitigate the challenges faced by tourism destinations like increased revenue sharing, measures to appropriate use of resources and fighting illegal use of tourism destination resources. All in all, local governments play a vital role in flourishing tourism destination and attracting more tourists.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. Local government should establish appropriate measures to the use of resources.
2. There should be wider participation of institutions in tourism destination conservation activities.
3. Revenue from tourism activities must be shared among communities around tourism destination for the sake of conservation.

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