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Original paper

The Role of Community Participation in Tourism Growth around Lake Bunyonyi in Uganda

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ABSTRACT: The increase in tourism activities has increased community participation and involvement in the achievement of tourism growth. This study assessed the role of community participation in tourism growth around Lake Bunyonyi with Kitumba and Bufundi as selected areas of the study. This study was guided by two specific objectives of the study that were to; determine the tourism products offered by the local community around Lake Bunyonyi, and determine the challenges local communities face in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi. A cross-sectional study collecting qualitative and quantitative data was conducted from 378 study participants including; Tour guides, hotel, restaurant, and guest house employees, small businessmen, farmers, local leaders, fishermen, and some government officials responsible for the tourism industry. The quantitative data were assigned numerical codes before being edited and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. (Armonk, New York, USA). Frequencies and percentages were used to achieve the objectives. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. Results indicated that of the 378 respondents, 256 (67.7%) were males, 139 (36.8%) were aged 31-40, 219 (57.8%) were married, 152 (40.2%), 378 (100.0%) were Ugandans, and 158 (41.8%) of the respondents come from the families with more than 6 people. 372 (98.4%) of the respondents agree that there are tourism activities around Lake Bunyonyi, and the main tourist attraction is Lake Bunyonyi, and the major activity around Lake Bunyonyi is the Boat ride 98 (25.9%). The major challenges faced by the local communities in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi Include; Inadequate capital for investment 102 (27.0%), Natural calamities 51 (11.1%), Language barrier, and Poor government policy in implementing its policies relating to tourism issues respectively 42 (11.1%), Lack of support from the government as well as lack of funding 34 (9.0%). It is recommended that the government fulfill its pledge to construct tarmac roads around the lake and provide a ferry for inland transportation, provision of equal opportunities to the locals around Lake Bunyonyi, More investments are needed especially in accommodation and recreation highly recommended as well as improved standards of living.

Keywords: Community Participation, Tourism Growth, Lake Bunyonyi

INTRODUCTION

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic that brought the entire world to a standstill by establishing pandemic boundaries that prohibited the usual movement of tourists to various areas, tourism activities have continued to be one of the major contributors to the global economy (Kumar and Preethi, 2021). Tourism activity in destination areas has increased employment and decreased unemployment in both developing and developed economies (Perles-Ribes et al., 2017). Aside from employment, countries that have recognized the importance of tourism have earned foreign currency, which has expanded consumer markets and promoted trade export and overall economic growth (Matthew et al., 2018). The increase in tourism activities has increased community participation and involvement in the achievement of tourism growth. According to (Brondino, 2021), the World Travel and Tourism Council estimated that 3.8 million jobs could be created in Sub-Saharan Africa over the next ten years. However, this will be determined by the government tourism policy of any participating country as well as the level of participation

desired by the community. Communities, according to (Qiong, 2019), can participate in the supply of local consumables and services such as lodging and recreational facilities, food, transportation, handicrafts, performing arts, and light manufacturing. Uganda primarily relies on ecotourism, one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry, which is based on key flagship products like mountain gorilla tracking and chimpanzee viewing.

Different species of flora and fauna can be found in various national parks, tropical forest reserves, and protected areas. Some of these activities are popular around Lake Bunyonyi. Lake Bunyonyi is an intriguing body of water known for its depth and numerous islands scattered throughout. It has a depth ranging from 44m to 900m, a length of 25km, and a width of 7km. Swimming, nature walks, bird watching, boat riding, canoeing, Batwa visits, mountain biking, zip lining, and blacksmithing are some of the major tourism activities around the lake. There has been significant progress in the participation of local communities in tourism (Khalid et al., 2019).

Tourism development is managed through interactions between local communities and tourists in the provision of tourism products or services that can provide experiences and knowledge exchange (Purnomo et al., 2020; Wahyuningtyas et al., 2020). Local communities, on the other hand, are not actively participating in tourism development processes due to poor representation and a lack of government commitment to promoting community participation through a community-based tourism approach (Mayaka et al., 2017). To encourage community participation in tourism and bridge the gap between the community and the tourism industry, this study sought to assess the role of community participation in tourism growth around Lake Bunyonyi.

The general objective of the study

The general objective of the study's primary goal is to evaluate how community involvement affects tourism growth in the area of Lake Bunyonyi in Uganda.

Specific objectives of the study

1. To determine the tourism products offered by the local community around Lake Bunyonyi.
2. To determine the challenges local communities face in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study used a cross-sectional research design in which surveys were taken throughout the study area and statistical techniques were used to test the study's Data. The study participants were selected from the Sub Counties of Kitumba in Kabale district and Bufundi in Rubanda District which is close to the Lake. These sub-counties were purposefully chosen for sampling because there is where real tourism occurs. Local communities from the Lake Bunyonyi area, tour guides, hotels, restaurants, guest house employees, small businessmen, farmers, local leaders, fishermen, and some government officials responsible for the tourism industry were the study's target population.

The respondents in the area study were chosen on purpose because they represented the greatest number of communities (individuals) living near Lake Bunyonyi. The Slovins formula was used to select a sample of 400 respondents for the study.

Additionally, the study collected data from respondents using a questionnaire, whilst key informants were interviewed using a guide. To correct any inaccuracies or errors, the data collected from the respondents were sorted, edited, organized, and coded following the study objectives.

Quantitative data was adjusted and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 with the help of numerical codes (Armonk, New York, USA). Field notes were created from the interview data and utilized to support the presentation of the findings.

Data analysis

In the study, qualitative content analysis was used because the researcher's goal is to systematically describe the meaning of materials in a specific way that is specified by research questions.

The data was coded using data from a variety of sources, including tour operators, tour guides, local communities, tourism officers, farmers, business owners, and professionals, among others. The study established themes as a means of categorizing the underlying meaning.

The concept of themes can be interpreted in several ways, first as a way to describe a structural unit of meaning necessary for presenting qualitative results, and second as a recurring regularity identified within or across categories and an impression of the text's latent content (Aurini et al., 2022). The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) was used to analyze quantitative data, and the results were presented in frequencies, percentages, cumulative percentages, tables, and Pie-chats, which made statistical tests and proper interpretation easier, as was also used by (Stott et al., 2017). Furthermore, qualitative data from interviews were analyzed qualitatively.

According to the study objectives, data was sorted, edited, arranged, and coded. The data was analyzed thematically. Themes were generated based on the study variables and objectives, and narrative interpretations and conclusions were made, as explained by (Schlachter et al., 2017).

Table 1: Demographic background of the participants

Variable	Variable option	n (%)
Gender of the respondent	Male	**256 (67.7**)
	Female	122 (32.3)
Age of the respondents	20-30	108(28.6)
	31-40	**139 (36.8)**
	41-50	74 (19.6)
	51 above	57 (15.1)
Marital status	Single	103 (27.2)
	Married	**219 (57.8)**
	Divorce	29 (7.7)
	Widow	27 (7.1)
Level of education	None	34(9.0)
	Primary	100 (26.5)
	Secondary	**152 (40.2)**
	Diploma	56 (15.0)
	Bachelors	35(9.5)
Nationality	Ugandans	**378 (100.0**)
Family members in the homestead	1-3	103 (27.2)
	4-5	117 (31.0)
	6 above	158 (41.8)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic background of the respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were considered in this study to ascertain the nature of respondents aimed at determining the basement for community participation and tourism growth. Results indicate 67.7% of the respondents were males while 32.3% were females. The majority of the respondents were aged 31-40 36.8%, married 57.8%, divorced 7.1% and widows 7.1% (Table 1). In line with the study conducted by (Liu and Nah, 2020) participants aged 31-40 formed the large majority and were found to be more sensitive to the issues of social participation and the development of tourism.

Regarding the education level of the respondents, 40.2% had a secondary level, a primary level 26.5%, a diploma level 15.0%, and a bachelor's level 9.5%. This is in line with the study conducted by (Eshun and Tichaawa, 2020) who stated that 46% of the respondents were holding only secondary school education certificates which have an impact on community participation in conservation. Furthermore, all respondents were Ugandans 100% and about family members in a homestead, 6 and above members in a family were 41.8% 4-5 were 31.0%, and 1-3 were 27.2%.

Singles were found to be active and not so inquisitive. They always responded to the study and the majorities participate in tourism-related activities and some of them have relatives who work in tourism around the area of study. Married participants highly participated in the study mainly because they were available and the majority of them have businesses linked to tourism for example most of them have craft shops, while others have canoes on the lake. According to Tamir (2015), married people participate in tourism because tourism is situational and can easily be adopted by married people. Therefore this makes them a vast understanding of the importance of local participation in the promotion of tourism growth. Few widows participated in the study because there existed few widows in the area of the study.

This is in line with the study conducted by (Eshun and Tichaawa, 2020) who stated that 46% of the respondents were holding only secondary school education certificates which have an impact on community participation in conservation.

Tourism products are offered by the local communities around Lake Bunyonyi.

About tourism attractions around Lake Bunyonyi, yes, there are tourist attractions around Lake Bunyonyi 372 (98.4%), Lake Bunyonyi is the major tourist attraction in Area 226 (59.8%), the major tourism activity around the lake is boat riding 98 (25.9%). From the findings, the major tourist attraction around Bunyonyi is the Lake (Table 2). These findings are in line with Saturday et al. (2022) who stated that Lake Bunyonyi is a popular tourist destination where tourists mainly visit the lake though there may be other reasons why they visit Lake Bunyonyi such as cultural tourism area, nature walking, bird watching bike riding, zip lining among others.

Moreover, on the knowledge about the accommodation facilities around lake Bunyonyi, most of

Table 2: Tourism products offered by the local communities around Lake Bunyonyi.

Variable	Variable option	n (%)
Do you have tourist attractions around lake Bunyonyi?	No	6 (1.6)
	Yes	372 (98.4)
If yes, what are some of the tourist attractions around Lake Bunyonyi?	Lake	226 (59.8)
	Batwa	83 (22.0)
	Birds	49 (13.0)
	Crayfish	20 (5.3)
Are there tourism activities?	Yes	378 (100.0)
If yes, what are some of the tourism activities around Lake Bunyonyi?	Boat ride	98 (25.9%)
	Canoeing	84(22.2%)
	Nature walk	30(7.9%)
	Swimming	29(7.7%)
	Batwa visit	52(13.8%)
Knowledge about the accommodation facilities around lake Bunyonyi	Yes	365 (96.6)
	No	13 (3.4)
	Holiday cottages	66 (18.3%)
	Lodges	78 (21.4%)
	Hostels	41 (11.1%)
	Resorts	53 (41.5%)
	Guest house	24 (6.6%)
	Apartments	4 (1.1%)
Do you have Accessibility to Lake Bunyonyi	Yes	370 (97.9)
	No	8 (2.1)
How do you access the lake?	Boat	186 (50.3)
	Canoe	153 (41.5)
	Vehicle	23 (6.1)
	Inland water	8 (2.1)

the respondents know accommodation facilities around lake Bunyonyi 365 (96.6%). Okumus et al., (2020) stated that resorts inclusive of all amenities are more popular in most tourist destinations.

On accessibility, 370 (97.9%) of the respondents have accessibility to the Lake, and means of accessibility to the Lake is by use of boats 186 (50.3%) (Table 2). From the above results, the majority of the respondents agree that they access the shores of the lake by boat. This is in line with the study conducted by (Kizza et al., 2017) who stated that the project Officer used the boat to transport items for NRM to the shores of the lake from the island in Lake Bunyonyi

Challenges local communities face in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi

The study wanted to find out if the community faced some challenges in an attempt to promote tourism. 100% of the respondents stated that they had experienced challenges in promoting tourism growth. But during the study, it was found that the challenges faced by respondents rotated on two things that are, inadequate capital for investments and poor government policies in implementing tourism activities (Table 3).

Examples of challenges faced by local communities in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi

The major challenges faced by the local communities in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi include; Inadequate capital for investment 102 (27.0%), Natural calamities 51 (11.1%), Language barrier, and Poor government policy in implementing its policies relating to tourism issues respectively 42 (11.1%), Lack of support from the government as well as lack of funding 34 (9.0%) (Table 4).

Inadequate capital for investment (lack of access to land and financing) or in any of the forms of capital can be detrimental to the sustainability of tourism, wealth creation, and poverty reduction among the communities around Bunyonyi. Most people living around Lake Bunyonyi depend on subsistence farming which does not favor them having the capital for investments in tourism. According to (Rodríguez-Hernández, 2019; Scheyvens, 2002), communities usually lack resources, information, and power concerning other stakeholders in the tourism process, hence they are vulnerable to exploitation. Furthermore, if finance is not available locally, there will be a loss of control over outside interests. Language barriers as hindrances have four sub-categories that are communicating with local people, public transportation,

Table 3: Challenges local communities face in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	378	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Primary Data 2022

Table 4: Examples of Challenges faced by local communities in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi

Variable	Variable option	n (%)	Mean	Std. deviation
Challenges faced by local communities in the promotion of tourism around Lake Bunyonyi.	Poor accessibility	17 (4.5%)		
	Inadequate supply of skilled manpower	19 (5.0%)		
	Corruption	22 (8.5%)		
	Leadership conflicts	25 (6.6%)		2.52044
	Language barrier	42 (11.1%)		
	Inadequate capital for investment	102(27.0%)	6.2725	
	Lack of capacity to participate in tourism development	24 (6.3%)		
	Lack of support from the government as well as lack of funding	34 (9.0%)		
	Poor government policy in implementing its policies relating to tourism issues	42 (11.1%)		
	Natural calamities	51 (11.1%)		

Source: Primary Data 2022

and eating places. In line with these findings, (Mishra and Farooqi, 2013) stated that the communities face a challenge of communication with the community which hindered their participation in community-based enterprises. There is very little chance to find people living in around Lake Bunyonyi farther away from the main town, who were unable to speak English. For example, people in Kashashah, Kashambya, Habukoome, and Mugyera could not speak English. Owners of the accommodation facilities could only communicate the basic check-in and payment process. Every further question regarding directions was getting too difficult. Some visitors complained and wondered if it is a national policy to use only Rukiga or if it is a matter of national pride. For example, in one of the hotels in In Bunyonyi, there were no English words on the bidet toilet seat, bedside master control for all power and clock, and light switches. The mean for the examples of challenges faced by the local communities in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi is 6.2725 while, the standard deviation error is 2.52044. This shows a sparse response rate among the respondents.

One respondent stated:

"*…..there is limited capital for tourism investments, lack of support from the government, poor infrastructural development like roads, and inadequate skilled manpower in hospitality facilities."*

Furthermore, findings show that poor government policy implementation relating to tourism issues has also hampered local communities in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi. For example, the construction of the Kabale-Bunyonyi road was supposed to have started way back but up to now, it has not been worked upon. Moreover, regarding transport, the government promised the ferry in 2015 which has not been implemented until now (Muhereza, 2020).

Relatedly, other findings show that corruption is still challenging in promoting local participation in tourism growth. Much of the tourism incentives meant for local communities do not reach the due to corrupt supervisors and officers who demand a token before they execute services to the locals. According to (Antošová et al., 2020) corruption in tourism remain prominent and not properly prosecuted. Furthermore, findings still show with the nature of Lake Bunyonyi, natural calamities remain a challenge that has to a larger extent affected the local communities in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi. Examples include; rainfall runoff from the hills. Tornados, and landslides (Kyomugisha, 2019).

Recommendations

The study would recommend the government to fulfill its promises to the local community such as the Ferry project on Lake Bunyonyi as means of transport at Lake Bunyonyi and the construction of the Kabale-Bunyonyi road.

Equal employment opportunities are highly recommended to be provided to local people. Proper training for the local staff should be provided so that they become capable to work in managerial roles as well as

manual roles.

There is a need for more investments around Lake Bunyonyi.

All stakeholders in tourism should be accorded equal opportunities and ground for fair treatment should be given to all participants in tourism. Local communities and staff working in hospitality facilities do a recommendable job in promoting tourism around Lake Bunyonyi.

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