

Assessment of Marketing Strategies for Ecotourism Promotion: A Case of RDB/Tourism and Conservation in Rwanda

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This study aimed at assessing the marketing strategies for Promoting Ecotourism in Rwanda. The study involved desk and field research and convenience sampling was also used for tourists, while simple random sampling was used for the local people and RDB/T&C staff. We used SPSS for analysis of data and hypotheses were tested using Kolmogorov-Smirnov to investigate differences in the level of tourists' satisfaction, level of importance, degree of agreement/disagreement on tourism product, price, promotion, place, people, process and physical evidence. Tourists were generally satisfied with tourism offering and lack of infrastructure is still a challenge of ecotourism in Rwanda.

INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism prevents problems resulting from mass tourism and overlaps with other forms of tourism such as scientific and education tourisms (Mieczkowski, 1995). Started from developing world regions, ecotourism offers opportunities for local communities (Wearing and Neil, 1999; Wearing and McDonald, 2002). Ecotourism also promotes and contributes to the development of local areas (Orams, 1995; Buckley, 2000; and Weaver, 2001). Wallace and Pierce (1996), Wearing and Neil (1999), Bjork (2000), Epler Wood (2002), Fennell (2002) and Ceballos-Lascura (1987) all have provided definition of ecotourism, but we will quote the one given by Wikipedia: "Ecotourism is a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural areas, intended as a low-impact and often small scale alternative to standard commercial (mass) tourism. Its purpose may be to educate the traveler to provide funds for ecological conservation, to directly benefit the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, or to foster respect for different cultures and for human rights".

Studies conducted worldwide in 2000's, after the serious environmental degradation where high temperatures started heating the globe, showed that ecotourism is considered the fastest growing market in the tourism industry with an annual growth rate of 5% worldwide and representing 6% of the world gross domestic product and 11.4% of all consumer spending (UNWTO, 2009). Tourism is changing rapidly as nature, heritage, and recreational destinations become more important, and as conventional tourism is forced to meet tougher environmental requirements. This presents a challenge to governments

and private enterprise to develop new approaches to the tourism market. Successful tourism must benefit local population economically and culturally to give them incentives to protect the natural resources which create the attractions.

For the case of Rwanda through RDB/T&C marketing strategies for promoting ecotourism are not properly implemented due to the following reasons: For example, product strategy was not successfully implemented due to over dependent on the single iconic product (mountain gorillas) and this hampered the growth of tourism as the iconic product has reached full capacity. Due to lack of product diversification, Rwanda has limited product offerings on which tourists can spend money. Prices for tourism products have to take into account the complexity created by seasonality of demand and inherent perishability of the product (Cooper et al., 2008). There is also a need to influence trade contacts such as retail agents and suppliers, as well as opinion formers such as journalists and travel writers (Cooper et al., 2008). Marketers argue that a distribution system is the mix of channels used to gain access, or means by which a tourism service is made available to the potential buyers of the product. In addition to traditional four P's, Victor et al., (2009) insisted that the extra three-P framework is particularly useful for tourism which is typically the people component, the process component and the physical evidence component.

The special characteristics of the tourism product have led to specific forms of distribution. The tourism product is one where no transfer of ownership takes place and service is simply rented or consumed (Cooper et al., 2008).

Services were affected by limited skills of staff in hospitality and tourism industry where the provider becomes part and passel of the service provision. Well-being of the local people was affected by insufficient projects and lack of marketing their products. Environmental conservation was also affected by the ex-poachers in the parks who used to kill some animals in the parks, and destroy some flora by fire for their benefits. It is easy to recognize that most of the variability of the tourism product stems from the substantial human interactions inherent in the experience. It is a useful exercise to categorize the participants for marketing purposes (Victor et al., 2009). The travel and tourism experience consists of both process and outcome. For travel and tourism, perhaps more than for any other service products, the outcome is highly dependent on the quality of service delivery as perceived by the user (Victor et al., 2009).

Physical evidence can be rooted in the five senses of sight (especially color and aesthetics), sound, scent, touch and taste. Because tourism products are characterized by the inseparability, visitors are present in the production premises and the design of the physical setting for the delivery process is a vital part of the product experience (Victor et al., 2009).

Ecotourism

According to Lascurain (1987) ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations. The involvement of the local communities not only benefits the community and the environment but also improves the quality of the tourist experience. Local communities can become involved in ecotourism operations and in the provision of knowledge, services, facilities and products (David et al., 2002). It is well understood that in Africa that the process usually employed in establishing parks was to alienate people living on the newly protected land. Local people have developed a distrust of both the wildlife management authorities and the concept of protected areas and species conservation in general. Sound environment of tourism facilities highlighted by Chawla (2006) and especially hotels can increase the benefits to natural areas. Cleaner production techniques can be important tools for planning and operating tourism facilities in a way that minimizes their environmental impacts. Tourism has the potential to increase public appreciation of the environmental and to spread awareness of environmental problems when it brings people into closer contact with nature and the environment Chawla (2006). Tourism can significantly contribute to environmental protection, conservation and restoration of biological diversity and sustainable use of natural resources. Because of their attractiveness, pristine sites

and natural areas are identified as valuable and the need to keep the attraction alive can lead to creation of national parks and wildlife parks (ibid).

Ecotourism in Rwanda

Tourism is identified as a priority sector to achieve the country's development goals as set out in the Vision 2020 strategy. Rwanda has made a significant progress in developing and managing its tourism sector in recent years having increased tourism revenue from US\$26million in 2005 to US\$210million in 2008 (TMPR, 2009). According to (TMPR, 2009) Rwanda has six dormant volcanoes, twenty-three lakes and numerous rivers. These spectacular volcanoes and dense natural forests dominate the north of the country. The presence of the mountain gorillas makes the Volcanoes National Park the most popular visitor attraction in Rwanda. In 2009, there were just 18,900 gorilla tracking visitors representing 92 per cent of the tourists that have visited this place and a total of just under 20,000 visits to the park of which 95 per cent were foreign visitors (Rwanda Tourism statistics, 2009). According to RDB/T&C (2009) and (TMPR, 2009), NNP contains one of the largest tracts of mountain forest in East or Central Africa. This Park is rich in biodiversity with over a thousand plant species, birds, butterflies and primates. There are a number of guided walks and chimpanzee tracking available. RDB/T&C specifies that the activity is an extra charge and even accommodation in the Park is acceptable for tourists.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Ecotourism is today a promising branch of tourism that refers to the responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. It also requires a two way link between tourism and the environment (Valentine, 1993). In the recent years, tourism researchers show that ecotourism is becoming a branch of tourism where countries should put much emphasis to earn more foreign currencies and attract many ecotourists with much consideration on protecting the environment and improving the well being of the local people. This is evidenced by the statistics in Rwanda which show the current trend of tourism in the country (RDB/T&C, 2009). For all these efforts made in protecting biodiversity and promoting ecotourism towards changing Rwanda as a safe destination to visit, there are some problems that keep hindering ecotourism in the country such as limited control to local people surrounding the natural areas, destruction of culture of the natural areas, lack of facilities and services, product gaps, insufficient marketing, inadequate marketing of the sector, skills deficiencies, limited flights to Rwanda, Rwanda's invisibility in the international market place, limited product offer in terms of variety, quantity and quality and inadequate information dissemination and documentation to tourists (RDB/T&C 2009) and (TMPR, 2009).

These problems can be mitigated by designing the appropriate marketing strategies such as product strategy, price strategy, promotion strategy, place (distribution) strategy, the people component strategy, the service delivery process strategy and managing physical evidence and design strategy in the pursuit of providing better services to tourists and meeting or sometimes exceeding their expectations. A lot needs to be done in promoting the ecotourism in Rwanda and for that, this study was undertaken to focus on product strategy, price strategy, promotion strategy, place (distribution) strategy, the people component strategy, the service delivery process strategy and managing physical evidence and design strategy as these marketing strategies in a case they are well implemented give an impression to accelerate the ecotourism development and finally the study focused on the factors that affect the duration of stay for tourists in the country and the factors that have lead to improve the well being of the local people and the environmental conservation.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

First, the main objective of this study was to assess the marketing strategies which are most suitable for both RDB/T&C and its partners in the same industry in promoting ecotourism in Rwanda. Second, to find out how various tourism products offered by NNP/VNP, satisfy tourists visiting Rwanda. Third, to

evaluate how prices set by RDB/T&C are affordable to tourists visiting NNP/VNP; to assess the promotional tools used by RDB/T&C to position ecotourism attractions available in NNP/VNP. Last, to examine the way RDB/T&C makes its tourism products available and accessible to the tourists visiting NNP/VNP; to find out how RDB employees and the local people are well prepared and informed to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting NNP/VNP; to examine the way RDB employees participate in the service delivery process to satisfy the tourists visiting NNP/VNP; to investigate the extent that NNP/VNP are environmentally friendly to the tourists' satisfaction; and to find out the factors that contribute to the improvement of the well being of the local people and the environmental conservation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The paper seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How various tourism products offered by Nyungwe /Volcanoes National Parks satisfy tourists visiting Rwanda? (2) Are the prices set by RDB/T&C for their products affordable to tourists visiting Nyungwe /Volcanoes National Parks? (3) What promotional tools used by RDB/T&C to position ecotourism attractions available in Nyungwe /Volcanoes National Parks? (4) How RDB/T&C makes its tourism products available and accessible to the tourists visiting Nyungwe / Volcanoes National Parks? (5) How RDB employees and the local people are well prepared and informed to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting Nyungwe /Volcanoes National Parks? (6) How RDB employees participate in the service delivery process to satisfy the tourists visiting Nyungwe/ Volcanoes National Parks? (7) How Nyungwe /Volcanoes National Parks are environmentally friendly to the tourists' satisfaction? (8) What are the factors that contribute to the improvement of the well being of the local people and the environmental conservation?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study were significant to government, tourism service providers, and local people in a variety of ways. For the government policy makers, the results help them to make informed decisions, formulate and implement the appropriate policies and legislations all to improve the ecotourism sector. For RDB/T&C this study helped in understanding means that they can utilize the available resources to attract many tourists and hence compete well in providing convincing information to tourists. For the local people, the results of this study help them to know the role to play first and the associated benefits of ecotourism for them in return.

METHODOLOGY

This part covered the research design methods and techniques that used in the data collection, the various sources of data and types of data that were collected, the main research instruments that were used in data collection as well as the techniques that were used to analyze data and test the hypotheses. The researcher approached the study using descriptive research design to describe the suitable marketing strategies and tourists' reactions on these strategies. The areas covered by this study were NNP/VNP. These two places were preferred because many tourists prefer to visit them as they are rich in biodiversity of fauna as well as their easy accessibility. In this study the target population was RDB/T&C staff, local people surrounding the two national parks and the tourists visiting ecotourism attractions in Nyungwe and Volcanoes National Parks.

Sample and Sampling Design

This study used simple random sampling technique for RDB/T&C staff and the local people and convenience sampling technique for tourists visiting Nyungwe and Volcanoes national parks. The researcher selected the sample based on the fact that the sample was most likely to provide the desired information and was a reasonable one in order to represent the true situation.

Sample Size

This study had three kinds of sample, the first category contained 60 international tourists, and the second category contained 20 people from RDB/T&C staff and 40 from the local people that surround Nyungwe/Volcanoes National Parks.

Types and Sources of Data

Primary data were gathered from international tourists, RDB/T&C as well as the local people that surround Nyungwe/Volcanoes National Parks. Secondary data were obtained from published and unpublished materials such as journals, articles, text books, thesis and dissertations as well as websites to access the information concerning marketing strategies and tourism in general.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis

Under this study questionnaires were used to collect data from respondents. Questionnaires were prepared in such a way that the following were observed, anonymity, being as short as possible, key information were covered, logical and user friendly questions were also taken into consideration. The researcher also decided to use an interview to supplement the information collected using the questionnaire. We used SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) and hypotheses were tested using Kolmogorov-Smirnov.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This section presents an analysis of the data collected from the distributed questionnaires to 60 tourists, 20 RDB/T&C staff and 40 local people around these two parks and from interviews and the findings derived from the analysis. Out of the 120 distributed questionnaires the researcher recovered 102 which represents a percentage of 85%. The first part contains a descriptive analysis while the second part deals with testing the hypotheses that guided the study. The collected data were analyzed using quantitative techniques. Data describing different marketing strategies were analyzed through descriptive analysis. Quantitative data that were collected to test hypotheses that guided the study in order to draw conclusions and were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Reliability was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Mitchell, V., 1996). The reliability of the tourists' instrument was 0.768 that for RDB / T&C staff was 0.712, while the reliability for the local people's instrument was 0.732. To ensure validity before adjusting the research instruments, the researcher conducted the pilot study to check the accuracy and made the necessary corrections accordingly. Raw data were edited to detect various errors, omissions, ambiguities of responses as well as irregularities.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS FOR TOURISTS

Responses of Tourists Toward Different Products Offered by NNP/VNP

Table 1 indicates responses of tourists toward different products offered by NNP/VNP these products satisfy them. With regard to how the majority of tourists who visited these places were either very satisfied or satisfied with their visits to these places as it is evidenced by the level of satisfaction on each product as follows: For mountain gorilla trekking, 88.9% were very satisfied while 11.1% were satisfied. For those, whose their visits was mountain climbing 80% were very satisfied, 6% satisfied, 7.1% were dissatisfied and 6.9% very dissatisfied. With regard to Golden monkey, 72.7% of them were very satisfied, 11.1% satisfied, 11.1% dissatisfied, 5% very dissatisfied and. About nature walk, 45.7% of them were very satisfied, 34.6% satisfied, 7.1% neutral, 12.6%. During their visit to the two natural areas, 43.4% of tourists were very satisfied by camping, 19.7% were satisfied with it, 12.8% were neutral, 13.3% were dissatisfied, 10.8% were very dissatisfied. For those whose main target was birding, 49.4% of them were very satisfied, 29.6% were satisfied, 11.1% were dissatisfied, and 7.4% were very dissatisfied. In short the majority of tourists who visited different products in these two National Parks were at least satisfied with the products they visited and this should be viewed by RDB/T&C as a good achievement

and keeps upgrading the services in connection to these products so that it captures even those few who were not satisfied with their visits and tries to make them at least satisfied.

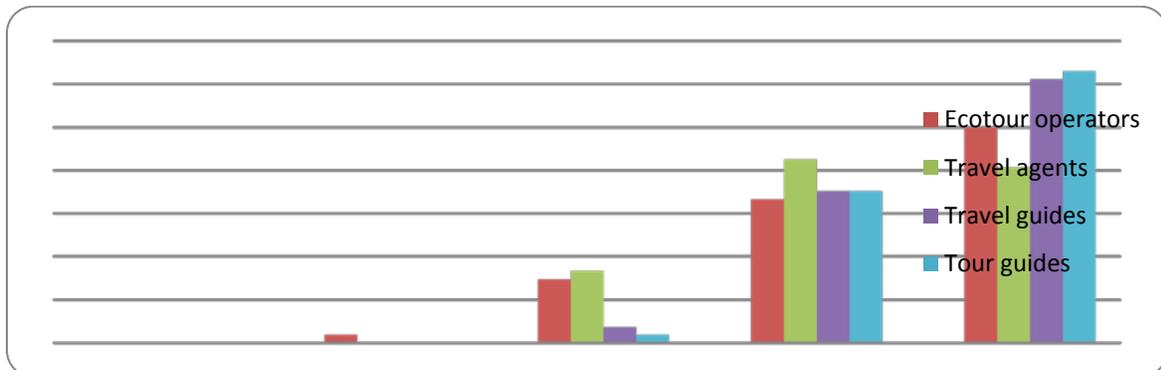
TABLE 1
RESPONSES TO THE WAY VARIOUS TOURISM PRODUCTS OFFERED BY NNP/VNP
SATISFY TOURISTS VISITING RWANDA

Products offered	Very satisfied in %	Satisfied in %	Neutral in %	Dissatisfied in %	Very dissatisfied in %
Mountain Gorilla trekking	88.9	11.1	0	0	0
Mountain climbing	80	6	0	7.1	6.9
Golden monkey	72.7	11.1	0	11.3	5
Nature walk	45.7	34.6	7.1	12.6	0
Camping	43.4	19.7	12.8	13.3	10.8
Birding	49.4	29.6	2.4	11.1	7.4

Accessing the Tourism Products in Both NNP and VNP

It was found that in availing and accessing the tourism products in both NNP and VNP, the tourists rated the importance of the following intermediaries as follows: 1.9% of the contacted tourists rated ecotourism operators as unimportant, 14.8% were neutral, 33.3% of them said that they are important intermediaries in the availability and accessibility of NNP / VNP tourism products, while the remaining 50% said that these intermediaries are very important. Out of these tourists, 16.7% were neutral to express their stands on the importance of travel agents, 42.6% of them said that they are important while the remaining 40.7% said that they are very important. Concerning the travel guides, 3.7% of the contacted tourists were neutral, 35.2% said that they are important while 61.1% said that they are very important. Finally, 1.9% of these tourists were neutral on how tour guides are important intermediaries in the availability and accessibility of NNP / VNP tourism products. 35.2% said that they are important while the remaining 63% said that they are very important. This simply explains how important these four intermediaries are to tourists visiting these two places and how prepared they are in terms of hospitality and communications skills in order to make tourists coming to Rwanda highly delighted.

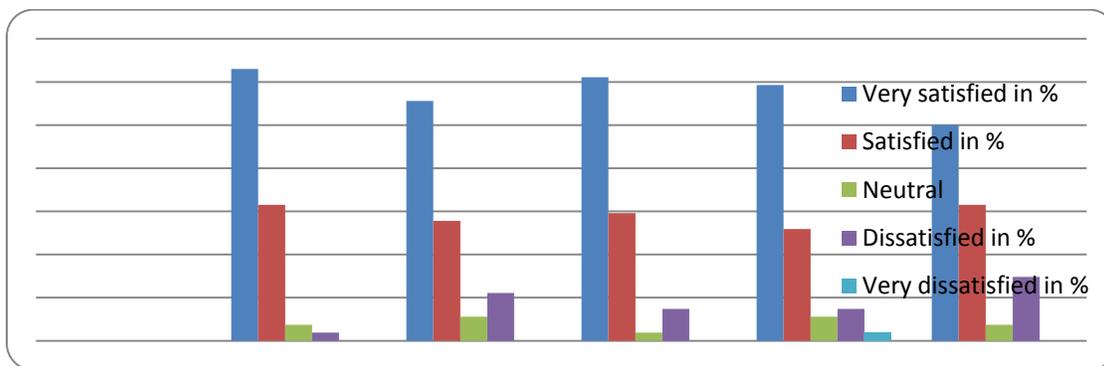
FIGURE 1
RESPONSES OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTERMEDIARIES USED IN THE
AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF NNP/VNP TOURISM PRODUCTS



Tourists' Level of Satisfaction

It was found that 63% of the tourists were very satisfied on the way RDB employees participate in the service delivery process in terms of courtesy, 31.5% were satisfied, 3.7% were neutral while 1.9% were dissatisfied. Regarding reliability, 55.6% of the contacted tourists said that they were very satisfied, 27.8% were satisfied, 5.6% were neutral on that, while 11.1% of them were dissatisfied. Concerning responsiveness, 61.1% of the contacted tourists said that they were very satisfied, 29.6% were satisfied, 1.9% of them were neutral on that while 7.4% of them were dissatisfied. In as far as assurance is concerned, 59.3% of the tourists said that they were very satisfied, 25.9% were satisfied, 5.6% were neutral on that, 7.4% were dissatisfied, while 1.9% were very dissatisfied. In terms of empathy 50% of the contacted tourists were very satisfied, 31.5% were satisfied, 3.7% were neutral, while 14.8% were dissatisfied with this attribute. In short, we conclude that at least 80% of the most contacted tourists on the way RDB employees participate in service delivery process were at least satisfied with all the attributes displayed by these employees and this is seen as a good thing for the service provider as a satisfied tourist can tell others in his or her place of origin about the tourism products and services delivery process in Rwanda and the outcome is the increase in the number of tourists visiting Rwanda.

FIGURE 2
RESPONSES TO THE TOURISTS' LEVEL OF SATISFACTION ON THE WAY RDB EMPLOYEES PARTICIPATE IN THE SERVICE DELIVERY PROCESS

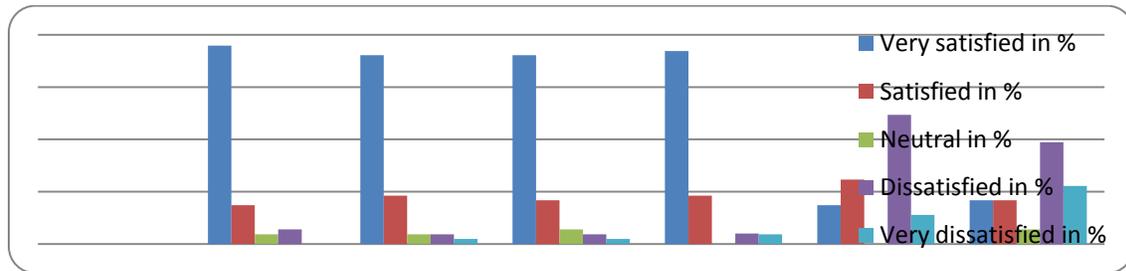


Tourists' Satisfaction on the Environmentally Friendly

Figure 3 shows that the tourists' satisfaction of the environmentally friendly represented by NNP / VNP along the following attributes were as follows: 75.9% of them were very satisfied with the landscape of these two national parks, 14.8% were satisfied with it, 3.7% were neutral while 5.6% were dissatisfied with this attribute. In terms of vegetation, 72.2% of these tourists were very satisfied with the vegetation they have seen in these two parks, 18.5% were satisfied with vegetation found in NNP / VNP, 3.7% were neutral on that, 3.7% were dissatisfied with that while 1.9% were very dissatisfied. Regarding weather 72.2% of the contacted tourists said that they were very satisfied with the weather represented by NNP / VNP, 16.7% said that they were satisfied with it, 5.6% were neutral on that, while 3.7% and 1.9% were dissatisfied and very dissatisfied by the weather represented by NNP / VNP respectively. Concerning wildlife, 73.8% of the tourists reached by the researcher said that they were very satisfied with wildlife available in NNP / VNP, 18.5% of them said that they were satisfied, 4% were dissatisfied while 3.7% were very dissatisfied. Regarding the infrastructure around NNP / VNP, 14.8% of the contacted tourists were very satisfied, 24.6% of them were satisfied, 49.4% were dissatisfied while the remaining 11.1% were very dissatisfied. In as far as games are concerned, 16.7% of them said that they were very satisfied, 16.7% were satisfied, 5.6% were neutral while the remaining 38.9% were dissatisfied and 22.2% were very dissatisfied respectively. This explains that landscape, vegetation, weather and wildlife were at least 89% satisfying the tourists but infrastructure, and games were at least 60% not satisfying the tourists

coming to visit NNP / VNP. This is a challenge for RDB/T&C and it needs to update the existing infrastructure (Roads, Hotels, and Lodges) around these National Parks and construct the other ones with high technology as well as introducing games in recreational centers around these two parks towards meeting and sometimes exceeding the expectations of the tourists visiting Rwanda.

**FIGURE 3
RESPONSES TO THE TOURISTS' SATISFACTION ON THE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY REPRESENTED BY NNP/VNP**



DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS FOR RDB/TC STAFF

Table 2 shows that 31.2% of the selected RDB/T&C staff said that international print media are unimportant in positioning the ecotourism attractions available in NNP / VNP, 6.2% of them were neutral, 31.2% said that they are important, while the remaining 31.2% said that they are very important. Concerning the international TV stations, 18.8% of them were neutral, 37.5% said that they are important while the remaining 43.8% said that they are very important. About international Radio stations, 18.8% of them said that they are unimportant, 18.8% were neutral, 6.2% of them said that they important while the remaining 56.2% of them said that they are very important. Regarding internet/website, 6.2 % said that it is important while the remaining 93.8 % said that it is very important in positioning the ecotourism attractions available in NNP / VNP. Trade shows and exhibitions were not left behind, 100% of the selected staff said that they are very important in positioning the ecotourism attractions available in NNP / VNP. From the above analysis it is very important for RDB/T&C to focus on the internet/website, trade shows and exhibitions as well as the international TV as these promotional media can attract a lot of people in different parts of the world in short time. For the internet/website it is easier for RDB/T&C to make some of its products and services accessible 24 hours a day.

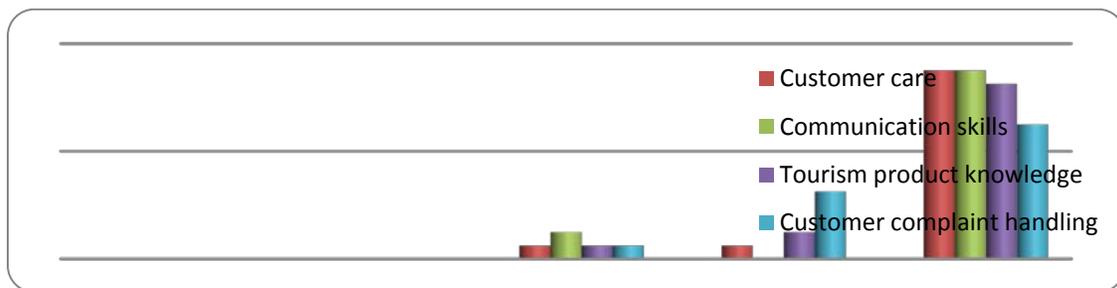
**TABLE 2
RESPONSES TO THE IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTIONAL TOOLS USED BY RDB/T& C TO POSITION ECOTOURISM ATTRACTION AVAILABLE IN NNP/VNP (%)**

Promotional Tools	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important
International print media	0	31.2	6.2	31.2	31.2
International TV stations	0	0	18.8	37.5	43.8
International Radio stations	0	18.8	18.8	6.2	56.2
Internet/website	0	0	0	6.2	93.8
Trade shows and exhibitions	0	0	0	0	100

RDB Employees

Figure 4 shows that the majority of RDB/T&C staff contacted during data collection, 6.2% of them were neutral to reveal the reality about training in customer care, 6.2% said that they were trained in that while 87.5% of them said that they were highly trained in customer care in order to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting NNP / VNP. Concerning communication skills, 12.5% of the contacted respondents were neutral to reveal that they were neither trained nor untrained in these fields while the majority represented by 87.5% of them said that they were highly trained in communication skills in order to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting NNP / VNP. With regard to tourism product knowledge, 6.2% of them were neutral, 12.5% revealed that they were trained in that while 81.2% confirmed that they were highly trained in tourism product knowledge in order to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting NNP / VNP. Finally, in as far as customer complaint handling is concerned, 6.2% were neutral on that, 31.2% revealed that they were trained and 62.5% said that they were highly trained in that area. From the above analysis, it is clear that RDB employees are well prepared to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting NNP / VNP as it is evidenced by at least 87.5% of those who were contacted that they were at least trained in customer care, communication skills, tourism product knowledge and customer complaint handling. This explains that a well trained employees especially in tourism industry is likely to provide quality service to tourists and motivate them to revisit NNP / VNP and other tourist attractions available countrywide.

FIGURE 4
RESPONSES TO WHETHER RDB EMPLOYEES ARE WELL PREPARED TO PROVIDE BETTER HOSPITALITY O TOURISTS VISITING NNP/VNP



DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS FOR THE LOCAL PEOPLE

Figure 5 shows that for the local people to be able to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting NNP / VNP need first to be informed and it was found that, 10% of the local people said that they were uninformed by the opinion leaders, 30% said that they were informed by opinion leaders while the remaining 60% confirmed that they were highly informed by the opinion leaders on the best way to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting NNP / VNP. Concerning the print media 20% of them, said that they were highly uninformed by these media, 30% said that they were uninformed by these media too, 30% said that they were informed by print media, while 20% said that they were highly informed by these media. In as far as broadcast media are concerned, 15% of the contacted local people said that they were uninformed by neither radio nor television, 25% said that they were informed by either radio or television on how to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting NNP / VNP while 60% confirmed that they were informed by these media on how to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting NNP / VNP. Lastly 35% of the contacted local people said that they were informed by event sponsorship specifically “Naming Ceremony” (Annual ceremony to name young mountain gorilla babies) while the event sponsorship like this one highly informed 65% of the local people surrounding NNP / VNP on how to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting these two national parks. This means that, the focus should

be put on opinion leaders, broadcast media and event sponsorship as these channels seem to be effective in informing the local people on how to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting NNP / VNP as it is evidenced by at least 85% of the contacted local people who confirmed that these channels make them to be at least informed on how to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting their surrounding natural areas. Print media even if they are in moderate use they can be used to complement these three in full use to make those who can read newspapers and magazines to be aware that providing better hospitality to tourists can boost up the ecotourism in Rwanda.

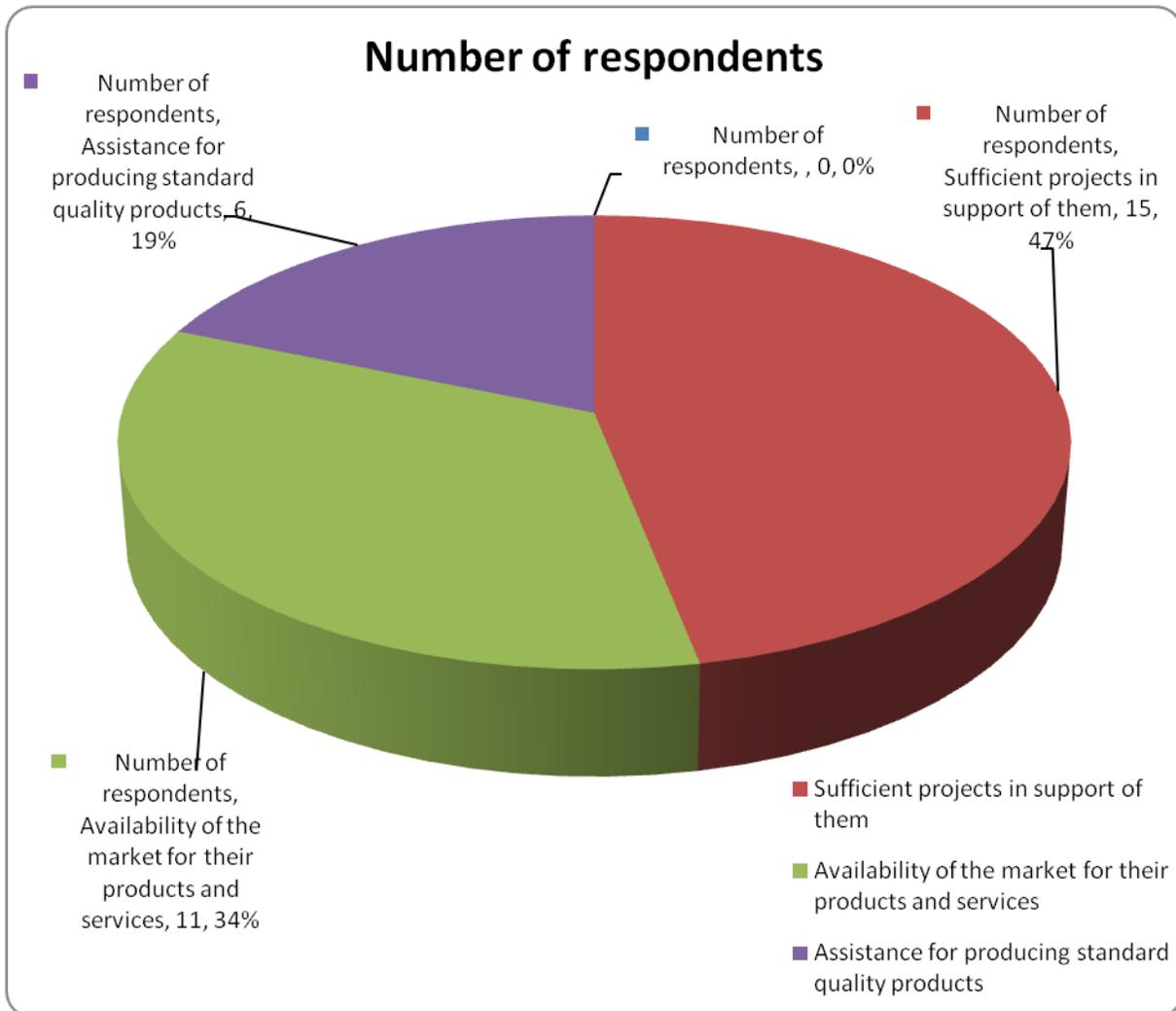
FIGURE 5
HOW LOCAL PEOPLE ARE INFORMED TO PROVIDE BETTER HOSPITALITY TO TOURISTS VISITING NNP/VNP



Factors that Contribute to the Improvement of Well Being of the Local People

Figure 6 reveals that 47% of the contacted local people that living in the boundaries of NNP / VNP revealed that sufficient projects in support to the local people is the major factor that contributes to the improvement of well being of the local people and the environment conservation. This is because when these people have projects in support of them, they get involved in income generating activities that make them more beneficial towards improving their well being and finally be motivated in participating fully in the activities aimed at conserving an environment. Apart from that, 34% of these local people said that availability of the market for their products is another factor that contributes to the improvement of well being of them because in these boundaries of the national parks (Nyungwe/Volcanoes) you find a lot of people in the projects that are fully funded by RDB/T&C to improve their well being. The major projects available there include Basket making project, bee keeping project, mushroom planting project, tailoring projects, Artist project, fruit planting project, livestock projects for cows, rabbits, goats, sheep and chickens. The remaining 19% said that the assistance for producing standard quality products can contribute to the improvement of the well being of the local people and conservation of an environment. This means that when these people are in a position to produce standard quality products can produce in targeting not only the domestic market but also the international one and the received cash help them to improve their well being and protecting an environment.

FIGURE 6
FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF WELL BEING OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION



HYPOTHESES TESTING

This section presents the analytical part of the study. It encompasses seven hypotheses which arose out of nine research questions. Kothari (2008) has defined hypothesis as proposition (s) set forth as an explanation for the occurrence of some specific group of phenomena either asserted merely as a provisional conjuncture to guide some investigations or acceptable as highly probable in the light of established facts. Therefore, in this section, the researcher wanted to test the level of satisfaction among respondents towards tourist products offered by NNP / VNP, degree of agreement or disagreement among respondents towards price affordability of tourist products offered by NNP / VNP, importance of promotional tools by RDB/T&C to position ecotourism in Rwanda, importance of intermediaries in making tourist products available and accessible to tourists. Level of training and information for both RDB employees and local people to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting NNP / VNP, level of satisfaction of tourists on the way RDB employees participate in the service delivery process and the level of satisfaction on environmentally friendly represented by NNP / VNP.

Hypothesis One

The researcher hypothesized that the level of tourist's satisfaction towards tourism products offered NNP / VNP can be greatly differ depending on the type of products visited by tourists and the place visited too. Therefore, Null Hypothesis states that there is no difference in the level of satisfaction with tourist products offered by NNP / VNP, while Alternative Hypothesis states that there is a difference in the level of satisfaction with tourist products offered by NNP/ VNP. The statistical table below shows that the observed level of significance is less than 0.05 that is the observed significance level 0.000 and $0.001 < \text{critical significance level } 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The conclusion is therefore that there is a difference in the level of satisfaction with tourist products offered by NNP / VNP. This means that for mountain gorilla trekking the satisfaction for tourists differ as some were very satisfied and others satisfied with visiting this tourism product. For mountain climbing, there is also a difference in satisfaction level for visiting this product because 80% were very satisfied, 6% were satisfied, 7.1% dissatisfied and 6.9% were very dissatisfied. Concerning golden monkey, 72.7% were very satisfied, 11.1% were satisfied, 11.3% were dissatisfied and 5% very dissatisfied. With regard to nature walk, satisfaction level differs as 45.7% were very satisfied, 34% satisfied, 7.1 neutral on that and 12.6% dissatisfied. As far as camping is concerned, 43.4% were very satisfied with it, 19.7% satisfied with it, 12.8% were neutral, 11.3% dissatisfied and 10.8% very dissatisfied. Finally, 49.4% were very satisfied with birding, 29.6% satisfied, 2.4% neutral, 11.1% dissatisfied and 7.4% very dissatisfied.

TABLE 3
TESTING THE DIFFERENCE IN THE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH TOURIST PRODUCTS OFFERED BY NYUNGWE AND VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARKS

Descriptive Statistics

Test variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Level of satisfaction offered by mountain gorilla trekking	54	1.91	1.866	1	6
Level of satisfaction offered by mountain climbing	54	2.80	2.122	1	6
Level of satisfaction offered by golden monkey	54	2.00	1.705	1	6
Level of satisfaction offered by nature walk	54	2.61	1.975	1	6
Level of satisfaction offered by camping	54	2.85	2.123	1	6
Level of satisfaction offered by birding	54	2.30	1.644	1	6

One –Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Level of satisfaction offered by mountain gorilla trekking	Level of satisfaction offered by mountain climbing	Level of satisfaction offered by golden monkey	Level of satisfaction offered by nature walk	Level of satisfaction offered by camping	Level of satisfaction offered by birding
N	54	54	54	54	54	54
Normal Parameters	1.91	2.80	2.00	2.61	2.85	2.30
Mean	1.866	2.122	1.705	1.975	2.123	1.644
Std. Deviation	.446	.294	.388	.325	.267	.312
Most Extreme Differences	-.313	-.199	-.279	-.207	-.191	-.215
Absolute	3.277	2.163	2.851	2.390	1.962	2.295
Positive	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.000
Negative						
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z						
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)						

- a. Test distribution is Normal
b. Calculated from data

Hypothesis Two

The aim of hypothesis two was to test whether or not the promotional tools commonly used by RDB/T&C staff equally differ in their importance in positioning ecotourism attractions available in NNP / VNP. Null Hypothesis: There is no difference in the importance of promotional tools used by RDB/T&C to position ecotourism attractions available in NNP / VNP. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a difference in the importance of promotional tools used by RDB/T&C to position ecotourism attractions available in NNP / VNP. The next table (table 4) shows that the observed significance level is less than 0.05 that is observed significance level 0.000 and 0.002 are all less than the critical significance level 0.05. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and the conclusion is that there is a difference in the importance of promotional tools used by RDB/T&C to position ecotourism attractions available in NNP / VNP. This is evidenced by the findings from table 4 whereby the internet/website, trade shows and exhibitions as well as the international TV stations play bigger role in positioning ecotourism attractions available in NNP / VNP than the way international print media and international radio stations do. The internet/ website, trade shows and exhibitions as well as the international TV stations can attract a lot of people in different parts of the world at immediate time.

TABLE 4
TESTING THE DIFFERENCE IN THE IMPORTANCE OF PROMO TOOLS USED TO
POSITION ECOTOURISM ATTRACTIONS AVAILABLE IN NNP/VNP

Descriptive Statistics

Test variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Importance of international print media in promoting Rwanda's ecotourism attractions	16	2.50	.894	2	4
Importance of international TV stations in promoting Rwanda's ecotourism attractions	16	1.94	.250	1	2
Importance of international Radio stations in promoting Rwanda's ecotourism attractions	16	1.88	.342	1	2
Importance of internet/website in promoting Rwanda's ecotourism attractions	16	1.25	.447	1	2
Importance of trade shows and exhibitions in promoting Rwanda's ecotourism attractions	16	1.06	.250	1	2

One sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Importance of international print media in promoting Rwanda's ecotourism attractions	Importance of international TV stations in promoting Rwanda's ecotourism attractions	Importance of international Radio stations in promoting Rwanda's ecotourism attractions	Importance of internet /website in promoting Rwanda's ecotourism attractions	Importance of trade shows and exhibitions in promoting Rwanda's ecotourism attractions	
N	16	16	16	16	16	
Normal Parameters ^a	Mean	2.50	1.94	1.88	1.25	1.06
	Std. Deviation	.894	.250	.342	.447	.250
	Most extreme differences	Absolute	.462	.536	.518	.462
Positive		.462	.401	.357	.462	.536
Negative		-.288	-.536	-.518	-.288	-.401
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	1.848	2.145	2.071	1.848	2.145	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.000	.002	.000	

Test distribution is Normal.

Calculated from data

Hypothesis Three

Satisfaction for tourists means that they are happy with the way they enjoyed the tourism products and the surrounding environment of the natural areas. The aim of this hypothesis is to test the difference in the level of satisfaction for tourists with the environmentally friendly of Nyungwe/ Volcanoes National Parks. Null Hypothesis: There is no difference in the level of satisfaction for tourists with environmentally friendly of Nyungwe/ Volcanoes National Parks. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a difference in the level of satisfaction for tourists with environmentally friendly of Nyungwe/ Volcanoes National Parks.

TABLE 5
TESTING THE DIFFERENCE IN THE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH
ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY OF NNP/VNP

Descriptive Statistics

Test variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Level of satisfaction on landscape along environmentally friendly to tourists	54	1.15	.359	1	2
Level of satisfaction on vegetation along environmentally friendly to tourists	54	1.26	.650	1	5
Level of satisfaction on weather along environmentally friendly to tourists	54	1.24	.642	1	5
Level of satisfaction on wildlife along environmentally friendly to tourists	54	1.48	.966	1	5
Level of satisfaction on infrastructure along environmentally friendly to tourists	54	2.72	1.338	1	5
Level of satisfaction on games along environmentally friendly to tourists	54	2.46	1.437	1	5

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Level of satisfaction on landscape along environmentally friendly to tourists	Level of satisfaction on vegetation along environmentally friendly to tourists	Level of satisfaction on weather along environmentally friendly to tourists	L Level of satisfaction on wildlife along environmentally friendly to tourists	Level of satisfaction on infrastructure along Rwanda tourist services staff in delivery	Level of satisfaction on games along Rwanda tourist services staff in delivery
N	54	54	54	54	54	54
Normal Parameters	1.15	1.26	1.24	1.48	2.72	2.46
Mean	.359	.650	.642	.966	1.338	1.437
Std. Deviation	.512	.451	.461	.413	.279	.256
Deviation	.512	.451	.461	.413	.279	.256
Most Extreme Differences	-.340	-.345	-.354	-.309	-.256	-.209
Absolute	3.763	3.317	3.387	3.036	2.054	1.881
Positive	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.002
Negative						
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z						
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)						

- a. Test distribution is Normal
b. Calculated from data

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test in the above table shows that the observed significance for the all attributes used to rate the environmentally friendly represented by NNP / VNP is less than 0.05 that is the observed significance level $0.002 < \text{critical significance level } 0.05$. Therefore we reject the null hypothesis and the conclusion is that there is difference in the level of satisfaction for tourists with environmentally friendly of Nyungwe/ Volcanoes National Parks. This means that the level of satisfaction in all these attributes used to rate the environmentally friendly of the natural areas differs in terms landscape, vegetation, weather, wildlife, infrastructure and games whereby some tourist in each attribute were very satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied. This means may explain that tourists cannot get the same level of satisfaction because of their countries of origin. For example, if the tourist is from the country where the landscape is different from that of Rwanda, it is obvious that him or her will not get the same level of satisfaction with another from the country with the same landscape of Rwanda, In terms of weather if tourists are from the countries with the hot weather like the Arabs countries in the Middle East, they cannot get the same level of satisfaction with other from let say Scandinavia in the Northern Europe. The same for tourists from developed countries where the infrastructures are in good conditions will differ in satisfaction with their colleagues from some African countries where the infrastructure is still a challenge.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research findings were made in line with the objectives and research questions of the study. The chapter ends up with conclusions and recommendations for RDB/T&C, local people and government as well as suggested areas for further research. The study found that a big percentage of the tourists who were in visits in either NNP / VNP were at least satisfied with tourist products they managed to visit even if this big percentage of them was at least satisfied but there is a small percentage of them who were not satisfied at all. The findings in VNP showed that Mountain Gorilla trekking is the most tourist products that attract many tourists in that park this has to tell RDB/T&C that tourists visit this products because, there is no other attractive diversified product which can attract their attention and spend their time enjoying it too. The researcher found that most of the tourists visiting NNP prefer Nature work and birding as their products of choice and this means that RDB/T&C has to target and position other products to the tourists as other best alternative to spend their money for while they are visiting Rwanda.

The researcher found that at least 70% of the tourists who visited either NNP / VNP were at least agree with the price charged on the tourist products they came to visit. The study findings shows that the most promotional tool used by RDB to position ecotourism attractions available in NNP / VNP is trade shows and exhibitions, followed by internet/website and international TV stations respectively. This means that for trade shows and exhibitions RDB in participating to tourism related exhibitions has to keep adding value to what it used to offer in the previous exhibitions in order to position Rwanda's ecotourism to many people. Trade shows and exhibitions were found to have more direct influence as these exhibitions are visited by a huge number of people from worldwide. Concerning its website, the study found that it is providing the helpful information to the tourists who want to visit Rwanda, but cannot facilitate some transactions to tourists like booking their visit online and paying for the services online.

International TV stations were found to be one of the media which can help Rwanda to position its ecotourism attractions worldwide but the cost of it is too high and even the number of viewers to them are not many but to make them more effective they have to be supplemented by international print media as these can deliver the message even for those who cannot see and capture wide coverage of the listeners.

The research findings shows that RDB/T&C makes its tourism products available and accessible through the use different intermediaries, such as ecotour operators, travel agents, travel guides and tour guides, but these intermediaries have to know that as they are the ones to be in much interactions with the tourists have to show good cooperation to them and build good relationship with them towards encouraging them to do more businesses with tourism players in the country.

The study findings revealed that at least 87.5% of RDB employees are at least trained in customer care, communication skills, product knowledge and tourism handling complaints. These are to ensure that

they provide quality service to tourists and meet or sometimes exceed tourists' expectations. The study findings revealed that, local people rated highly the event sponsorship to be the most channels to get them informed, followed by the opinion leaders and broadcast media respectively. Print media is not of much use to inform them because they are not interested in the culture of reading.

The research findings showed that the attributes such as landscape, vegetation, weather and wildlife were at least 89% satisfying the tourists this is because the landscape of Rwanda is that of special nature as it makes them to easily control vast areas of the country. The findings from tourists showed that they were not even happy with games as they did not enjoy it contrary to the case of Akagera National Park where they have a variety of games to enjoy. This means that in these two national parks, tourists do not enjoy this services which can in the end affect their duration of stay in the country.

The study findings show that, the well being of the people was improved somehow as there are lots of projects in support to this local community. These projects assist people to improve their well being whereby projects like Basket making project, bee keeping project, mushroom planting project, tailoring projects, Artist project, fruit planting project, livestock projects for cows, rabbits, goats, sheep and chickens. The majority of these projects' members used to be poachers bee keepers, farmers, who used to kill animals in the parks, land searchers for their family and their cattle. The study found that market availability for the products/services of the local community also helped to improve their well being and as a result they cooperate in all activities aimed at protecting an environment as they are the ones to benefit from it first.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We observed that fencing the boundaries of National Parks is not yet started and it is recommended that the whole Parks' boundaries should be fenced to avoid animals which can damage people's lives and properties. Since product diversification is still limited to few tourist products it is therefore recommended that RDB/T&C should focus on diversifying tourist products in order to give tourists a wide variety of tourist products and services to spend their money for. RDB/T&C should assist the local people in market study for their products since they produce good and quality products but with limited market to serve. RDB/T&C should accomplish its already started project of fencing the boundaries of both National Parks to protect the local people from the danger of the wild animals that sometimes threaten the lives of people living in the boundaries of parks RDB/T&C should bring many projects to keep supporting the local people in order for them to enjoy the benefits of not being far from these parks. RDB/T&C should keep sensitizing the local people to participate in various conservations programs/activities to enable them to protect the surrounding natural areas. RDB/T&C should keep upgrading its website as it is not helping tourists to perform their transactions on line.

Government of Rwanda

Tourism facilities around NNP / VNP are still in poor conditions. These tourism facilities are roads, hotels, and lodges. Therefore we proposed that the Government of Rwanda should invest heavily in these infrastructures or create good climate for foreign investors since in a case they are not in a good condition, affect the tourists' satisfaction and the result is to hinder the promotion of Ecotourism, in the country. More efforts are still needed by the Government to sell Rwanda as a tourist destination. A lot of opportunities still exist for public sector to market Rwanda internationally. The use of foreign embassies present in Rwanda, Rwandan Commissioners abroad, official tours by government authorities abroad, international conferences taking place in Kigali have not yet been effectively implemented.

Local People

We also found that some tourists are not happy with local people calling them the word "MUZUNGU" and recommends that instead of using this word they should use the word "Friend" in order to build good relationship with them. Some local people around these two natural areas have the

habit of begging tourists and this affect negatively the good image of Rwanda as an international touristic destination.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The major limitation during this study was the respondents' willingness to provide all the information requested. Apart from respondents' willingness, time and resource (financial) constraints compelled the study to use a very small sample from the whole population of RDB/T&C staff, tourists visiting Nyungwe/ Volcanoes National Parks and the local people living in the boundaries of these two parks. Lastly, few empirical researches have been done in the same area of study and hence intensive review of past studies was limited. For an intensive and comprehensive understanding of the area of study, we suggest that further research on assessment of the marketing strategies for promoting the cultural tourism in Rwanda should be conducted. Also, an assessment of marketing strategies for promoting e-tourism in Rwanda would be a valuable addition to this study.

CONCLUSION

Although the Government of Rwanda through its RDB/T&C has made efforts to make sure that ecotourism in Rwanda becomes one of the key sector where the country can focus on to generate much foreign currencies that can be used for the country's foreign transactions such as imports for both consumer and capital goods. In achieving these RDB/T&C has decided to apply different marketing strategies such as product strategy with the main focus on product diversification. Pricing strategy should focus on offering offer good value for money. The researcher found that promotional tools such as trade shows and exhibitions, internet /website and international TV stations to be of much use for their wide coverage and immediate message delivery. Distribution of these tourist products is undertaken by tour guides, travel guides, travel agents and ecotourism operators. RDB employees and local people were trained and informed to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting Rwanda's Ecotourist Products and the areas of training found to be customer care, communication skills, tourist product knowledge and tourist complaint handling for RDB staff and opinion leaders, broadcast media as well as event sponsorship such as Naming ceremony for mountain gorilla's young babies to inform the local people on how to provide better hospitality to tourists visiting Rwanda. Satisfied tourists with courtesy, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy displayed by Rwanda's tourist service staff in delivery is promising good results. Finally the environment which is friendly to tourists motivates them to enjoy their visit in NNP / VNP as varieties of vegetation, conducive weather and wonderful wildlife make them to really enjoy the beauty of the country of thousands hills.

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