

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INFLUENCER MARKETING IN PROMOTING  
ECOTOURISM IN UGANDA: A CASE STUDY OF BWINDI IMPENETRABLE  
NATIONAL PARK**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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## DECLARATION

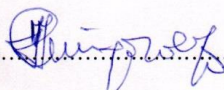
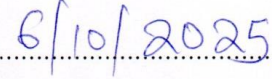
I Rukundo Phillip hereby declare that this dissertation entitled the effectiveness of influencer marketing in promoting ecotourism in Uganda a case study of Bwindi impenetrable park is my original work and has never been submitted in any institution for any award. I have read the regulations of the university and declare that i abided by them all.

Signature..........Date..... 6 October 2025 .....

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## APPROVAL

This dissertation entitled "The effect of influencer marketing in promoting ecotourism in Uganda A casa study of Bwindi impenetrable national park has been carried out under my supervision and is now ready for submission to the Faculty of Business at Uganda Christian University.

Signature..........Date..........

Dr. David Nyamuyonjo

Supervisor

## **Abstract**

Influencer marketing has increasingly been used to shape travel decisions and promote ecotourism. In Uganda the Uganda tourism board has partnered with both local and international influencers to market Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, yet little evidence exists regarding the effectiveness of these campaigns. This study evaluated the role of influencer marketing in promoting ecotourism at Bwindi, with a focus on campaign strategies, content formats, audience engagement, and community impact. A qualitative cross-sectional design was used supported by descriptive statistics using interviews, focus groups discussions, social media content analysis and document reviews. Results show that local influencers such as Fabiola Anita, engaged domestic audiences while international influencers like Khalid al Almeri helped expand global visibility. Short form videos on tiktok and instagram have gained more engagement than the photos. Stakeholders reported modest increases in the inquiries and visitor arrivals during the campaign periods although weak tracking systems made it difficult to attribution to them to bookings. Communities around Bwindi have benefited from greater visibility and craft sales but expressed concerns about unequal advantages and the risk of over tourism. While influencer marketing effectively raises awareness and engagement it requires stronger tracking mechanisms, fair community involvement to maximize sustainable ecotourism outcomes in Uganda.

The study examined the relationship between influencer marketing and tourism promotion in Bwindi impenetrable Forest. The objectives were to examine how influencer marketing is used to promote Bwindi, to examine the relationship between influencer campaigns and tourism, to identify the most effective influencer campaigns. The study used the social influencer and source credibility theories. A qualitative design was used to collect data from 24 tour operators. Findings revealed that influencer marketing is promoted through content on the online pages of the influencers. Influencers marketing improve tourism and short videos and reels are the most effective. In conclusion influencer marketing improves tourism. It's recommended that influencers use short videos and reels as they are most effective

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

Influencer marketing has rapidly evolved into one of the most influential tools used for shaping consumer perceptions and encouraging purchasing decisions in the modern digital era. Influencers act as mediators between destinations and audiences using credibility, approachability and storytelling to guide and shape travel choices. Ecotourism defines as travelling to natural areas that conserve the environment and support local communities. Influencers play unique roles in promoting ecotourism practices that raise awareness about conservation efforts.

All over the world eco conscious travelers are increasingly relying on digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok for travel ideas and inspiration. Influencers combine authenticity with narrative strategies to not only highlight the attractions but to also encourage environmentally responsible travel behaviors amongst the tourists (kilipiri et al 2023). Their content contributes to evidence of social proof which inspires followers to replicate ecofriendly travel behaviors (Cialdini, 2007).

In Uganda ecotourism has become one of the major cornerstones of the national tourism sector with Bwindi Impenetrable National Park a United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Site and home to nearly half of the world's mountain gorillas stands out as a flagship tourist destination. By recognizing the growing role of influencer marketing the Uganda Tourism Board has partnered with local and international influencers like Khalid Al Ameri, Anita Fabiola and Derrick Ssentongo under campaigns like Tulambule, Explore Uganda and Timeless frames. FAM trips have further invited European and regional influencers to promote Uganda's attractions including Bwindi to millions of followers around the world but despite these initiatives there remains limited empirical evidence that measures the effectiveness of the influencer campaigns that translate awareness into ecotourism growth.

## **1.1 Background of the Study**

Global expenditures on influencer marketing has reached over USD 21.1 billion in 2023 which represents a 43% year to year increase according to (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2023). The tourism industry in the post-COVID recovery period 2022 to 2024 has been a key motivator for growth with destination marketing organizations starting allocating about 40 to 60% of their budgets to digital influencer campaigns. Studies have also shown that short form video content, authentic storytelling and Eco specialist endorsements generate higher engagement compared to traditional advertising methods. (Chishan Chen 2025).

In Uganda, UTB has embraced influencer marketing to boost tourism competitiveness in the country. The Tulambule and Explore Uganda campaigns generated millions of impressions globally while FAM trips in 2024 like Timeless frames showcased Bwindi and other destinations to international audiences. Unlike Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park that uses influencer led campaigns to sustain higher tourist inflows, Uganda lacks strong performance tracking frameworks to link influencer campaigns to bookings, revenue and conservation funding according to some tourism operators and agencies.

Gap highlights the importance of evaluating influencer marketing in promoting ecotourism at Bwindi mainly focusing on which influencer types both local and international and content formats like videos, photos, and stories to see which are most effective in the campaigns.

## **1.2 Purpose of the study**

To find out the effectiveness of influencer marketing in promoting ecotourism in Uganda

## **1.3 problem statement**

Uganda's ecotourism sector increasingly relies on influencer marketing to boost destination visibility particularly for Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. Campaigns such as Tulambule, explore Uganda, timeless frames and influencer familiarization trips have sought to showcase Bwindi's wildlife, culture heritage, and conservation efforts. Local influencers like Anita Fabiola and Derrick Ssenyonyi engage domestic audience while international influencers like Khalid al Ameri reach global audiences. These initiatives have generated millions of impressions and modest increases in visitor inquiries but the effectiveness still remains unclear. Uganda still lacks strong monitoring system to link influencer driven awareness to tangible outcomes like tourist's arrivals and booking. Communities report uneven benefits while gorilla trekking lodges attract attention smaller enterprises remain underrepresented. Concerns about

over tourism and superficial marketing highlight the need for campaigns that align with ecotourism and equitable community participation.

This study seeks to evaluate the level of effectiveness of influencer marketing in promoting ecotourism in Uganda, focusing on Bwindi impenetrable national park. It will analyze which influence types and content formats are most effective examine the relationship between influencer campaigns and tourism outcomes while assessing campaigns contribute to sustainable ecotourism and local community development.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

- i. To determine how influencer marketing is currently used to promote Bwindi.
- ii. What levels of engagement and awareness do these campaigns generate?
- iii. What is the relationship between influencer marketing on visitor awareness and engagement?
- iv. To identify the most effective influencer types and content formats for ecotourism promotion?

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

- i. How is influencer marketing currently used to promote Bwindi?
- ii. Which content formats and influencer types yield the highest influence on audiences?
- iii. What is the relationship between influencer marketing and tourism promotion?
- iv. What levels of engagement and awareness do these campaigns generate?

#### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

Content scope: Focused on influencer marketing and its impact on ecotourism awareness and visitation.

Geographical scope: Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda.

Time scope: Campaigns conducted between 2022 and 2024.

#### **1.7 Significance of the Study.**

- i. Communities around Bwindi enhance conservation visibility and promote local livelihoods.
- ii. Tour operators Clarify which influencer types and content formats yield strongest returns.
- iii. Tourism authorities provide evidence to justify optimize influencer campaigns.

iv. Policy makers Offer insights into digital strategies to boost Uganda's competitiveness.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

The growth of digital marketing has changed how brands communicate with consumers. Influencer marketing has become a more effective strategy in that in the tourism sector influencer marketing helps destinations to connect authentically with travelers. Ecotourism promotes responsible travel to protected natural areas in the environment and support local communities (Honey. 2008). This has increasingly leveraged influencer marketing to engage tourists' audiences.

### **2.1 Evolution of Influencer Marketing**

Influencer marketing has grown from relying solely on celebrity endorsements to include micro influencers who maintain closer connections and more genuine relationships with their followers (Taner Turkmen, 2022). Its success comes from building personal connections between influencers and their followers through shared experiences and opinions. Research has shown that influencer marketing can increase brands awareness, improve brand perception and influence consumer behavior (Brian j Taillon 29(6) (2020)). In eco-tourism consumers increasingly seek experiences that are aligned with their environmental values. Influencers can communicate the benefits of many destinations which in turn affects travel choices and while many global studies have measured influencer effectiveness through engagement metrics like likes and shares, fewer studies examine how tourism stakeholders view influencer campaigns in terms of rising awareness, visitor interest and community development. This shows the need for qualitative research that captures the real experiences from the communities and tourism operators involved.

### **2.2 Influencer Marketing and Eco-Tourism**

Ecotourism is characterized as the travelling to natural areas that conserve the environment and improve the wellbeing of the locals. Influencer marketing has gained popularity in ecotourism as influencers can now share their unique experiences while emphasizing sustainability. Studies show that social media influencers can significantly shape travel decisions especially amongst eco conscious tourists Kilipiri et al (2023) this demonstrates how influencers promote sustainability at these destinations. Influencers often highlight the conservation efforts, the importance of protecting natural resources and the local community engagements. They also boost visibility lesser known destinations, such as Bwindi National Park by showcasing biodiversity and cultural. Influencers generate awareness and interest but the extent to which this translates into booking is unclear.

### 2.3 The Context of Uganda's Tourism Sector

Uganda which is known as the “Pearl of Africa,” has a diverse ecosystem and rich biodiversity which makes it a prime ecotourism destination for tourists. Bwindi National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site is home to mountain gorillas and offers a unique ecotourism experience. The park contributes to local economies and supports conservation efforts. Despite its potential Uganda's ecotourism sector faces challenges like limited marketing resources, inadequate infrastructure and competition from other African destinations like Rwanda and Kenya. Although influencer campaigns like Tulambule, timeless frames Uganda have boosted visibility of Bwindi. Uganda lacks systematic ways to study how different tour operators and influencers see the effectiveness of these initiatives. Rwanda has strategically leveraged its influencers and invested in performance monitoring frameworks which highlights Uganda's gap in evidence based influencer marketing. Influencer marketing presents an opportunity whereby we can address these challenges by leveraging social media to reach wider audiences of tourists and create compelling narratives around Uganda's natural attractions. Research also shows that influencers generated content that significantly influences travelers view and intentions to visit a destination particularly among younger travellers (Tuzunkan, D, & Yilmaz y. (2021))

### 2.4 Theoretical Review

**Social Influence Theory** This explains how followers imitate influencer behaviors; creating social proof and influencing travel decisions according to Herbert C. Kelman (1958) but also acknowledging that you can capture this through stakeholder's perceptions.

**Source Credibility Theory** This is the extent to which messages impact heavily depends on the credibility and trustworthiness of the communicator or source (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Content from verified institutions such as tourist agencies and famous influencers tends to be persuasive in influencing visits to a site.

**AIDA Model (Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action)** This provides an outline of the framework for understanding how influencer content moves the audiences from awareness to stimulating desire then booking actions, according to (Michaelon & stacks, 2011).

**Influencer Marketing Engagement Theory:** This theory measures interaction with content as indicators of influence and potential travel behavior for example likes comments and saves acting as a signal involvement under an influencer post.

## **2.5 Implications for Sustainable Tourism**

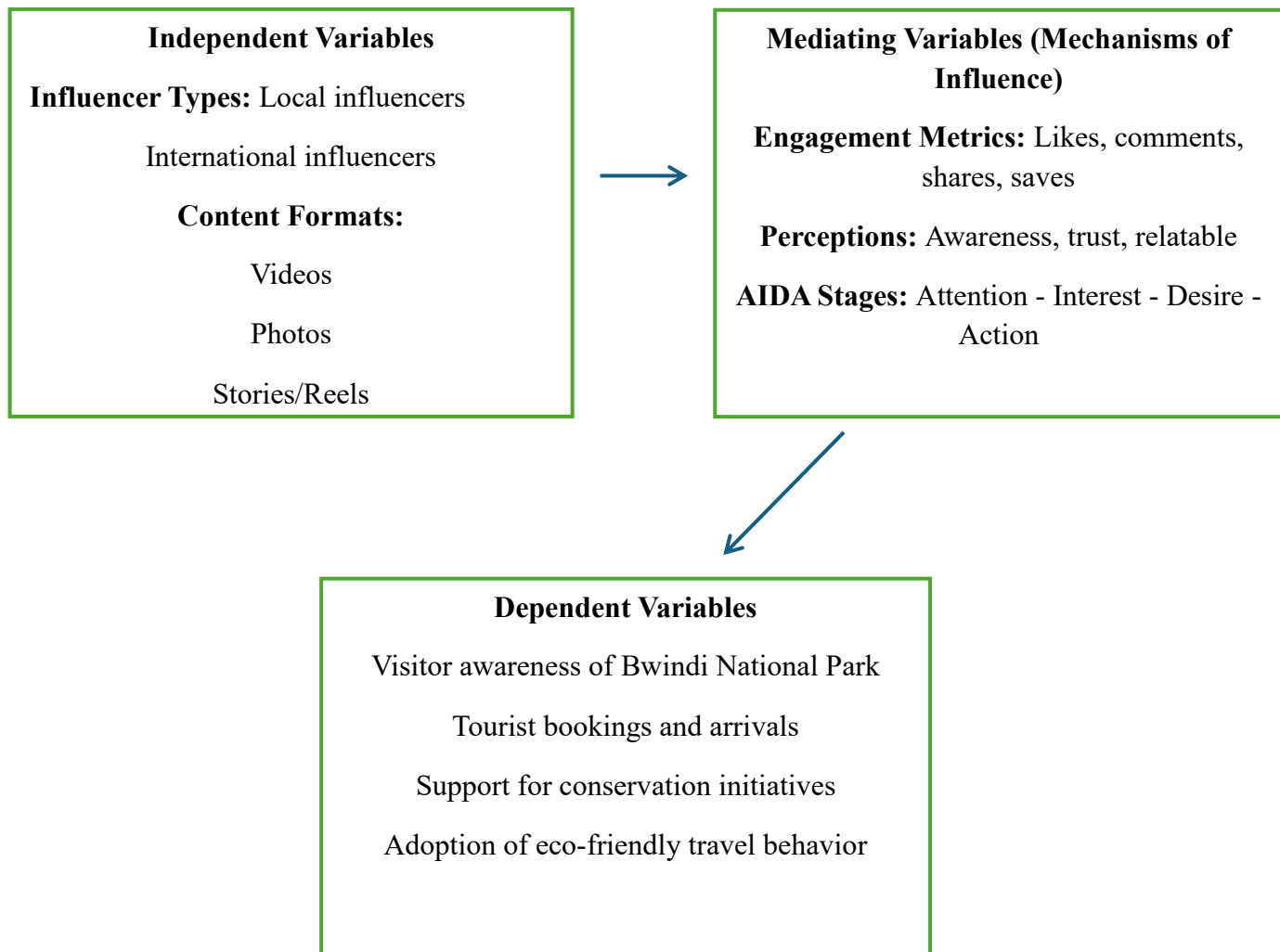
Influencer marketing promotes conservation and responsible travel which aligns with sustainable tourism principles in that by engaging local communities and conservation focused influencers stakeholders can ensure the equal distribution of tourism benefits and amplify local voices. Although influencer marketing has potential for ecotourism stakeholders worry about poorly designed campaigns that risk promoting misrepresentations and superficial messaging. It is therefore important to evaluate stakeholder perspectives to determine how influencer strategies can be aligned with ecotourism goals in a qualitative approach

## **2.6 Summary**

This shows that influencer marketing is a powerful tool for promoting ecotourism in Uganda. However, challenges still remain:

- i. Limited evidence for stakeholders that's links engagement to any tangible ecotourism outcomes such as bookings visits and conservation support.
- ii. Inadequate systematic integration of theoretical frameworks in African ecotourism research
- iii. Few comparative analyses of local and international influencers
- iv. Scarcity in the qualitative studies to capture stakeholder perceptions and strategies.

## 2.7 Conceptual Framework for Influencer Marketing and Eco-Tourism



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodologies used to evaluate the effectiveness of influencer marketing in promoting ecotourism at Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. It presents the research design, study population, sampling methods, data collection methods and ethical considerations.

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopts a cross-sectional and qualitative research design which is complemented with light descriptive statistics to enhance interpretation. The qualitative focus allows for an exploration into how tourism companies promote ecotourism in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. The light statistics such as simple engagement metrics like number of saves and tourist arrival snapshots during campaign periods provide context without turning the study into a quantitative approach. Although I didn't physically visit the site all the data related to its influencer marketing activities was studied through online platforms and communication with stakeholders involved in tourism around Bwindi.

### **3.2 Study Area**

This research was conducted at Bwindi Impenetrable National Park located in southern Uganda. Bwindi is a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for having half of the world's mountain gorillas and its prominence in Uganda's influencer tourism campaigns made it the ideal study.

### **3.3 Target Population**

The targeted stakeholders included those individuals directly involved with influencer marketing campaigns like.

Local tour operators and agencies

Social media influencers creating content about Bwindi

Representatives from park management

Community members that are involved in ecotourism activities around Bwindi

### **3.4 Sampling Procedure**

A purposive sampling technique was used for selecting the respondents with relevant knowledge and experience in ecotourism and influencer marketing of Bwindi. This approach ensured that the study captured insights from individuals who were directly involved or impacted by the influencer tourism promotions.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

#### **3.5.1 Interviews**

Structured interviews were conducted with carefully selected stakeholders, including

- i. Local tour operators
- ii. Representatives from Park management
- iii. Social media influencers
- iv. The community members that were engaged in the ecotourism activities.

. The interview guide focused on:

- i. Their experiences from working with influencers
- ii. Their view on influencer marketing
- iii. Community involvement during the influencer campaigns
- iv. Challenges they faced during the campaigns

Each interview conducted lasted about 45 minutes and was carried out in person or online, recorded with consent and later transcribed.

#### **3.5.2 Focus Group Discussions**

To enhance individual perspectives focus group discussions were held with 6 to 8 participants per group these including tour guides, local community representatives and ecotourism organization staff. Questions were centered on:

How social media influencers shapes perception of Bwindi

The role of the communities in influencer led campaigns

The effectiveness of influencer marketing in attracting visitors

### **3.5.4 Light Descriptive Statistics**

To support the qualitative findings simple descriptive statistics were added to provide context such as

Snapshots of tourists arrival and activities during the campaign periods on social media

Basic social media figures such as percentages of likes, comments, shares and saves made on an influencer post.

### **3.5.5 Document Review**

We reviewed relevant documents to provide background and facts including:

Marketing content provided by tour operators and Eco lodges

Reports from NGO and conservation on ecotourism

Policy and strategy papers related to ecotourism

This review provides context to the stakeholder perspectives and support the interpretation of our findings.

### **3.5.6 Data Analysis**

We analyzed qualitative data from interviews, focus group discussions, and documents. The thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6 step framework of familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, definition, and reporting. The content analysis involved categorizes posts into themes like conservation, wildlife and community engagement while comparing different levels of interaction. Light descriptive statistics were also used to summarize engagement trends.

### **3.5.7 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics were a priority throughout the research process. Consent was obtained from all participants ensuring their right of confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any stage of the interview. Transcripts were anonymized and kept safely while the study also received approval from the relevant institutional review board.

### **3.5.8 Limitations of the Study**

- i. Physically travelling to Bwindi was not done due to the logistical issues.
- ii. Response rates from the online surveys were both low and delayed.
- iii. Influencer content data is often limited by access restrictions as well as content availability from influencers and tourism agencies.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study presents the findings on how effective influencer marketing is in promoting ecotourism at Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. The data was collected from interviews, focus group discussions, content analysis of influencer campaigns and document reviews.

### **4.0 Influencer Campaigns Used to Promote Bwindi**

The findings revealed that both local and international influencers have played a key role in campaigns such as Timeless Frames, Tulambule, and Explore Uganda. Local influencers like Anita Fabiola and Ssenyonyi Derrick generated strong engagement among Ugandan youth due to cultural similarities on the other hand international influencers like Khalid Al Ameri a European travel blogger, helped increase Bwindi's visibility to global audiences. Content from these campaigns often emphasized mountain gorillas trekking conservation and cultural immersion. A local tour operator said “We participate in campaigns that showcase gorillas and local culture. This helps people understand what Bwindi is about,”. The findings align with (Kilipiri, E, Papaionnou, A, & Kotzaivazoglou, I(2023) which emphasizes the role of influencer marketing in shaping ecotourism consumer travel behaviors. However there is still a lack of effective tracking to see if increased visibility actually leads to actual bookings.

### **4.1 Levels of Engagement and Awareness**

An analysis of social media content showed that short form videos on social media like TikTok and Instagram achieved the highest engagement rates compared to static photos (Chishan Chen (2025). The posts that featured gorilla trekking and community stories received the most of the engagement like comments, shares, and saves. For example, campaign reels averaged a rate of 12 to 15% engagement compared to the 5 to 7% rate for photo posts on the influencer social accounts. The campaign Awareness was further boosted by hash tags such as #Explore Uganda and #Timeless Frames, which were attached to posts boosting awareness. These findings support that dynamic content formats are more effective for capturing audience attention and interest demonstrating the AIDA model, as content that captured attention example videos builds interest. A noticeable increase was noted by ecotourism stakeholders who reported in inquiries and bookings during the influencer campaign periods although direct attribution to these campaigns is a challenge.

### **4.3 Most Effective Influencer Types and Content Formats**

From these interviews and focus group discussions it was noted that international influencers like wildlife photographers and conservation advocates were seen as effective and credible for reaching global markets. Local influencers on the other hand created a strong domestic tourism interests among the local communities engaging through formats like videos and reels on platforms like tiktok which proved most impactful followed by stories and photos which had less influence. “When we create reels and videos showing local dances and gorilla's interactions, people are more likely to comment and save the content,” said a local influencer. This suggested that a strategic approach to influencer selection is important in leveraging both local and international influencers in order to maximize reach and engagement with tourists. Being relatable is very important in influencer marketing effectiveness as customers tend to follow influencers who have similar lifestyle behaviors and choices these findings align with (Freberg, K, graham, Mcgaughey, k & Freberg, L.A 2011).

### **4.4 Community Perspectives on Influencer Marketing**

Discussions in the focus groups indicated that influencer campaigns improved the visibility of Bwindi impenetrable and highlighted some of the local crafts and cultural tourism as one of interviewed said “sales usual increase when influencer come around and display their products on their sites” said peter a crafts man. However, participants explained that the benefits were still unequal as gorilla tracking lodges gained more attention than other smaller community projects. Over tourism is also a fear in the Bwindi area if influencer campaigns are not being managed sustainably one tour administrator said “if too many come our forests and culture may suffer promotion is good but it must not destroy what we are protecting”. This stresses the need to balance promotion with ecotourism sustainability while also showing the risk of superficial influencer messaging if community participation is not adequately integrated. It's important for stakeholders to ensure that community participation is integrated into influencer marketing strategies to promote a more inclusive and sustainable approach to ecotourism. These findings indicated the need for fairness in community participation and ecotourism promotion.

### **4.5 challenges and opportunities**

Respondents identified several challenges in influencer marketing

Limited access to certain sites for content creation

Need for coordination with communities to ensure accurate representation

Varying levels of digital literacy amongst stake holders

While Opportunities include

Strategically using both the international and local influencers to reach diverse audiences

Focusing on story telling content to enhance awareness about conservation

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.0 Summary of Key Findings**

#### **Influencer Marketing Campaigns**

Both local and international influencers actively promote Bwindi through campaigns such as timeless frames, Tulambule and Explore Uganda. Local influencers, such as Anita Fabiola, engaged domestic audiences due to cultural similarities and shared language, while international influencers like European travel Bloggers, Khalid Ameri, increased global visibility. These campaigns emphasized wildlife conservation, cultural immersion.

#### **Levels of Engagement and Awareness**

The short form videos on TikTok and Instagram generated higher engagement than photos, with campaign reels averaging about 12 to 15% compared to 5 to 7% for photos engagements. Mostly posts emphasizing gorilla trekking, local culture and community stories attracted the most interaction. Hash tag campaigns like #TimelessFrames, #ExploreUganda, and #Tulambule reinforce destination branding and shape narratives that promote community participation.

#### **Most Effective Influencer Types and Content Formats**

Influencers like wildlife photographers and conservation advocates were viewed as the most credible. International influencers effectively reached global audiences while local influencers stimulated domestic tourism. Among content formats videos and reels have proved the most impactful forms then stories and photos followed with the least influence. Engagement levels are also influenced by content quality and authenticity and relevance of the content.

#### **Community Perspectives on Influencer Marketing**

Communities have reported the increase in visibility for local craft and cultural tourism. However benefits were not balanced with gorilla trekking lodges still receiving the majority of attention. There are concerns about potential over tourism which emphasizes the need for ecotourism management and equal participation.

## **5.1 Conclusions**

The following conclusions were made basing on the findings

The study concludes influencer marketing serves as an effective method for promoting ecotourism increasing awareness and interest amongst both local and international audiences about Bwindi. However effectiveness heavily relies on the type of content influencer credibility and values aligning with local cultural and conservation.

The study also states that influencer campaigns when planned right effectively highlight conservation and local initiatives without causing any effects if ecotourism practices are followed effectively.

Credibility and authenticity of influencers plays a crucial role in the effectiveness. Eco specialist influencers enhance the authenticity of ecotourism promotion, while local and international influencers enhance local and global respectively reach which correlates with the Source Credibility theory.

Community involvement is as important for ecotourism promotion. While influencer campaigns increase visibility the unequal distribution of benefits and the risk of over tourism show the need for equal and environmentally responsible methods.

The short form contents like videos and reels prove to be more impactful than static images which align with the AIDA model where attention and interest create desire and action.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

### **For Uganda Wildlife Authority:**

Encourage influencers to produce authentic educational content about wildlife protection and responsible tourism.

Monitor influencer the campaigns to document their visibility reach and communities involvement

By partnering with eco influencers both local and international to produce authentic conservation based content for marketing.

.

### **For Tour Operators and Hospitality Providers:**

Collaborate with local and international influencers to target domestic and global markets with their marketing campaigns.

Prioritize storytelling through short form videos that showcase community initiatives like crafts, wildlife, and cultural experiences around Bwindi.

Ensuring equal community representation that supports smaller local enterprises alongside with the established lodges.

### **For Influencers:**

Must maintain credibility and authenticity in content creation

Include educational content about conservation, cultural sensitivity and responsible tourism practices in the content about ecotourism.

Influencers should engage meaningfully with communities to ensure fair representation.

### **For Marketing Policymakers:**

Incorporate influencer marketing into national tourism campaigns.

Developing guidelines for measuring campaign effectiveness including quantitative benchmarks for engagement, conversions and community impacts.

By promoting more ethical marketing standards that ensure cultural is respected and environmental responsibility of the area.

### **5.3 Policy and Managerial Implications**

#### **Policy Implications:**

There should be formal recognition of influencer marketing as an important marketing tool for ecotourism promotion.

Integrating measurement frameworks that assess awareness engagement and conversion of the audience.

Policies should be adopted to balance economic growth and environmental sustainability thus preventing threats like over tourism in the protected areas.

#### **Managerial Implications**

Managers should always use data based decision making to select their influencers, content formats and target markets.

By developing feedback channels with tourists and communities who can improve campaign relevance and sustainability in the area.

#### **Community implications**

Increased visibility “when influencers came and recorded by products sales increased in that period”. Crafts man in Bwindi

Risk of over tourism

One said “if too many tourists come our forests and culture may suffer promotion is good but must not destroy what we are promoting” tour administrator.

Unequal benefits

“The influencers mostly show the lodges and gorillas our community projects are not mentioned” a key informant at Bwindi community tourism association”

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

Methodological Scope: Qualitative with light descriptive statistics limiting interpretation.

Sample Representativeness: Focused on Bwindi restricting generalization with other parks.

Bias: Social desirability and interviewer effects may have influenced qualitative responses.

#### **5.5 Areas for Further Research**

Further study should be conducted on quantitative studies using regression analysis or correlation studies to assess the direct impacts of influencer campaigns on bookings and revenue.

Further comparative study should be undertaken across multiple national parks to evaluate variations in influencer effectiveness on a larger scale.

Explore the long term impacts of influencer campaigns on ecotourism awareness, community participation and the conservation outcomes.

More time should be given to investigate emerging digital platforms like AI driven content, virtual influencers and their effects on ecotourism marketing and their consumer behavior.

Community perspectives should be examined over time to assess equity, ecotourism and the social impact of influencer campaign

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## Appendix A: Interview and Focus Group Responses

### a. Local tour operators

Questions	respondent	response
Which campaign have you participated in to promote Bwindi	Tour operator 1	We hosted influencers for tulambule and explore Uganda campaigns
Which campaign have you participated in to promote Bwindi	Tour operator 2	Timeless frames is the main we support mostly for videos and reels about gorilla trekking
How do tourists engage with this content	Tour operator 2	Videos and reels gets lots of comments and shares; photos get less engagement
How are local communities involved in influencer campaigns	Tour operator 1	Communities provide crafts but often lodges get most attention
What challenges or opportunities have you observed	Tour operator 2	Scheduling influencers and ensuring they highlight conservation and coordinate with local communities

### b. Social media influencers

Questions	respondent	response
What campaign have you participated in to promote Bwindi?	Influencer 1	I participated in tulambule and timeless frames mainly focusing on wildlife and local communities
What type of content do you usually create?	Influencer 2	Mostly short form videos and reels photos are less effective
How do you choose what aspects of Bwindi to showcase	Influencer 1	I focus on gorilla trekking, bio diversity and cultural activities

How do you engage with local community duty campaigns	Influencer 2	We interview local artisans, showcase their crafts
What challenges have you faced creating content for Bwindi	Influencer 1	Access restrictions in the park, coordinating schedules with guides and ensuring accurate messaging about conservation

c. Park management representatives

Questions	respondents'	response
What influencer campaigns have been supported by the park	Park manager 1	We have supported Tulambule, Explore Uganda and Timeless frames.
What content formats have been most effective	Park manager 2	Reels and short videos work best. They get the most engagement
How does the park collaborate with influencers and communities	Park manager 1	We connect influencers with local guides and community groups but sometimes smaller groups are overlooked

d. Community members

Questions	respondent	response
How have influencer campaigns affected your visibility	Member 1	Our crafts get more attention when influencers come
Are local crafts and activities featured in influencer campaigns	Member 2	Yes sometimes but gorilla trekking is more highlighted than our projects
How do you engage with influencers during campaigns	Member 1	We provide crafts and performances some videos are taken
What benefits or challenges have risen from campaigns	Member 2	Sales increase when influencers feature us but participation is limited.

		Over tourism is also a concern
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