

Analysis of a Tourism Destination as a ground for brand building strategies
Case: Rwanda Volcanoes National Park

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<p>This research is carried out with the aim of analyzing a tourism destination as a first step in building a long-term brand strategy.</p> <p>The destination, Rwanda Volcanoes National Park (VNP) is a touristic region, with focus on inbound nature tourism. The Rwandan National Development Strategy outlines inbound tourism to be developed and the level of services designed to high quality.</p> <p>The objective of this bachelor research is to contribute to the first step in designing a branding strategy for Rwanda VNP to fulfill the needs and expectations of its desired international markets in the United States, Western Europe and Nordic countries.</p> <p>To achieve the above objective, the research includes analysis and uses different theoretic models of destination analysis and brand building.</p> <p>The empirical part of the research focuses on the commissioner and destination analysis and on the analysis of a group of service providers. The research aims to map the key activities and services at the destination and links these activities to the expectations of potential customers.</p> <p>The research concentrates on the destination and commissioner's self-analysis The empirical research was carried out in Rwanda during the period of June 2011 and December 2011.</p> <p>The research approach and methods applied are both qualitative and quantitative. The findings of the destination analysis will lay grounds for further process of branding the Volcanoes National Park to attract more tourists from Western Europe.</p> <p>The commissioner's long-term goal is to create the Rwanda VNP's extended brand identity, value proposition and brand position to attract Nordic customers as well.</p>	
<p>Key words Branding a destination, Brand Identity, Brand Equity, Volcanoes National Park</p>	

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1 Introduction

This research is carried out with the aim to enhance the understanding of the branding process of Volcanoes National Park, the best known and most popular tourist destination in Rwanda. The research discusses the importance of brands and how they can bring value to organizations, destinations and customers. Various models of brand building are analyzed and applied in this research.

The key findings of this analysis will bring an added value to the destination's brand strategy. It also lays a foundation for further studies of this specific topic. The theoretical framework of the study is based on David Aaker's model *Building Strong Brands*. He presents three stages, starting with *destination analysis*. This is followed by *competitor analysis*, second and *customer analysis*, third. This research focuses on the first stage only. The key findings of this analysis should lead to further research on competition and customers, in order to execute the primary goal of the entire study. Stage two and three have not been included, as they would have broadened the work beyond the requirements set forth for Bachelor's Thesis.

This research is conducted in close cooperation with Rwanda National Office of Tourism and National Parks and Rwanda Tourism & Conservation. The Head Office is located in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. The actual destination, Rwanda Volcanoes National Park, is located in the northwestern part of the country. The Volcanoes National Park is on the border of Rwanda and Uganda, touching the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (RDB 2011).

Rwanda is a relatively small landlocked country in East Africa, with Uganda in North, Tanzania in East, Burundi in South and Congo DRC in West as neighbors.

Due to political turmoil, which has prevailed in Rwanda especially in the first half of the 1990s, Rwanda had not been able to reach its potential in attracting a high number of tourists. The inbound tourism was further gravely affected by the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

The Rwandan Office of Tourism & Conservation was re-launched year 2003, nine years after the genocide. A reform of the office took place in 2009. The Office's vision is to be a provider of good quality and hospitality in all sectors of tourism and especially within the natural touristic resources and ECO-tourism. The ultimate goal is to put less pressure on resources and to conserve environment. It also addresses the importance that benefits of tourism, income, is and will be visible (CIA, The World Fact Book).

The Rwanda 2020-vision sets inbound tourism as one of the key pillars for its development. A quick look at the economic statistics explains why; tourism accounts for 54% of the GDP. Apart from coffee & tea export and tourism, there are no other major sources of income.

The reason for reforming the Office of Rwanda Tourism & Conservation to lead the tourism strategy was not a coincidence. It is a conscious way of allocating resources to develop a clear strategy and develop Rwandan tourism to reach international standards. Several researches conducted elsewhere are revealing that nature tourism and adventure tours and eco-tourism are among the fastest growing markets in the tourism sector (ITB 2011). With the national parks, forests, lakes, mountains, wild life, birds, historical sites and landmarks and given the fast economic growth and security, Rwanda has the potential to grow as a tourism destination. This potential requires a good branding strategy.

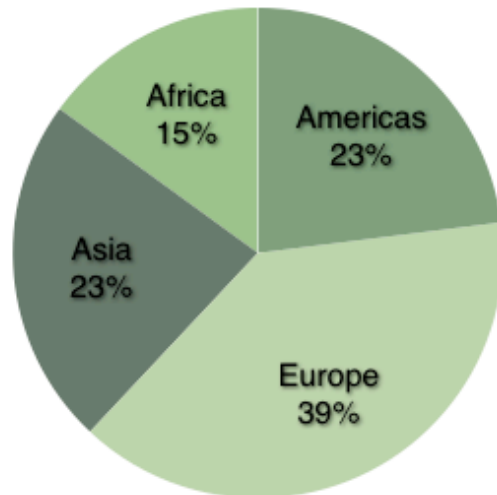
A brand building process is not separate from the general marketing strategy of an organization. Previous market researches carried out elsewhere have revealed that a promising business environment, such as a destination, has to decide strategically about its mission and vision, its target markets, and products. However, the organization and the destination must communicate to its potential consumers what it stands for, not only what kind of product is offering, but also which are its values, and what makes the destination special and different from others especially in the same regions. This raises the importance of building the destination's brand (Riley 2012).

Identity is the key word and the basis for starting a brand building process. According to Franzen and Moriarty (2009, 6) branding is the process of creating a unique identity for a product and the system that makes it recognizable to its customers. In this research, one of the models that will be used as theoretical framework is David Aaker's Brand Identity Planning Model (Aaker 2010, 79). In this model, the development of a Brand Identity starts with a Strategic Analysis of three components: the company's self-analysis, the company's actual or potential consumer's analysis, and the firm competitor's analysis. Along this research, David Aaker's Brand Identity Planning System is used as a systematic model to create the Brand Identity for Rwanda Volcanoes National Park, define its Value Proposition, and the desired Position that destination wishes to occupy in the customers' minds. Since a destination is not a company as such, the researcher intends to deal mostly with national tourism office, Rwanda Tourism & Conservation and other actors in charge of managing the Rwanda Volcanoes National Park, including the context of offered services for tourists visiting the park.

This research focuses on Rwanda Volcanoes National Park and the design of brand identity according to the needs and possible expectations of Nordic (Finland, Sweden and Norway) customers. Nature tourism is a growing trend worldwide and Nordic customers have proven to appreciate nature tourism. There is a potential in trying to attract Nordic customers, and yet there is a lack of supporting research focused on marketing Rwanda Volcanoes National Park in these countries. It is believed that the picture could be slightly different if there were service providers in Rwanda including the Nordic countries in their marketing strategies. The same applies to Nordic travel agents and tour organizers. Rwanda is not on their list of destinations. In general there is a lack of knowledge about Rwandan exciting nature and attractions in Nordic tourist's mind. However, given the limited time and resources to conduct this research, the empirical part of this bachelor thesis focuses only on destination analysis. This limitation had to be made as to keep this bachelor thesis within a manageable scope.

A brief look at the market environment shows that the main inbound ECO-tourist markets and its variations are USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy and Spain (World Tourism Organization 2002).

Graph 1: Inbound tourism from key international markets (Rwanda Tourism statistics 2010)



(Rwanda Tourism and Conservation office statistics, 2010)

Ultimately, every brand strategist aspires to reach a positive Brand Equity. According to Keller, Aperia and Georgson (2010, 43), this occurs when the customer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and has strong, favorable and unique associations with it. People fall in love with brands, trust them, develop strong loyalties to them, buy them, and believe in their superiority. A brand stands for something (Wheeler 2006, 4).

1.1 Research Problem

Building a consistent brand is important for companies and organizations of any size. According to Franzen and Moriarty (2009, 492) a strong brand is an important corporate asset whose value should be reflected on the company's balance sheet. Therefore, this research aims at answering one fundamental question: **What is the current Brand Identity of the Rwanda Volcanoes National Park?**

The two models used in this research; Customer Based Brand Equity (Keller et al. 2008) and Brand Identity Planning Model (Aaker 2010), agree that the first step for building a strong brand, is to have a clear and effective specification of the brand identity and position. It is the goal of this research to provide answers to the following questions:

1. **What are the product and services associated with Rwanda Volcanoes National Park?**
2. **What are the key actors and stakeholders and their contribution in developing Rwanda Volcano National Park**
3. **What are the values of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park**
4. **How can Rwanda tourism actors work together to build a strong brand identity to attract potential Nordic customers?**

For the answers, and following the previously mentioned models, this study is limited to *Destination analysis* also known as *Self-analysis*.

Graphic 2: The research in the broader picture

Inquiry	Analysis	Outcome
Who is the Commissioner? Who is Rwanda Volcanoes National Park? Who are the key actors? What kind of products and services?	Destination Analysis Self-Analysis Analysis of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park	Bachelor thesis in Tourism and Hospitality Management by John Ntaganda
Who are Volcanoes National Park's key competitors?	Key competitor analysis	Subject (s) for bachelor degree studies at the HH UAS
Who are Volcanoes National Park's actual/potential customers?	Customer analysis Behaviour analysis	

1.2 Objectives of the research

According to Franzen and Moriarty (2009, 426), the reason why brands are important to companies is that they add value for their owners as well as for their customers. A brand affects the demand side by making it possible to charge a premium price for the product. A well-known brand also establishes a huge barrier for other companies wanting to enter the same market. Brands add an intangible value, what it represents to its customers, its suppliers and distributors, its employees, its shareholders, and others that have some reason to value it.

The objective of this research is to contribute in designing the Identity and Position of the brand for Rwanda Volcanoes National Park, according to the needs and expectations of its selected markets, potential consumers and businesses from Finland, Sweden and Norway. Rwanda Tourism & Conservation would be able to design an identity and a position that will bring out brand awareness for the Volcanoes National Park.

This research looks for providing information about RVNP to the Rwanda Development Board and the management of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. The information will act as a ground for building a strong brand, which will add value to the park's products and ultimately generate a good relationship between the brand and its consumers. The end result of a successful creation of a relationship between brand and customer is brand loyalty (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 79).

1.3 Benefits of this study

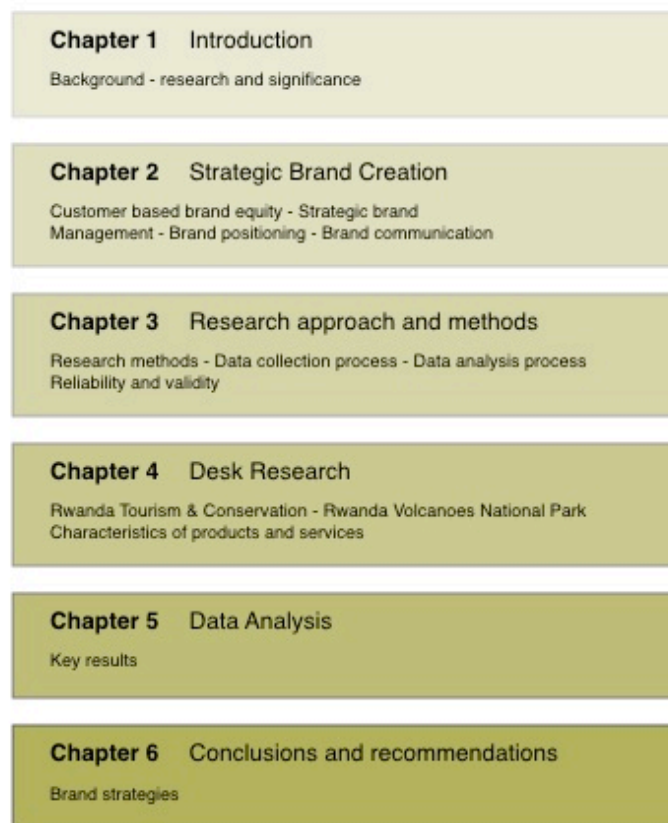
The office of Rwanda Tourism & Conservation will benefit by acquiring useful information after a deep analysis of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park's soul and the characteristics of service providers. This research will provide Rwandan tourism office and the park Management with the grounds for building a brand, which will make this destination recognizable, different from others, provide it with a unique identity,

suitable for its desired markets. As stated by Franzen and Moriarty (2009), branding is not only a science but also an art.

1.4 The structure of the research

This research is comprised of six chapters, as shown below.

Graphic 3: Thesis structure



Chapter one is an introductory part of the research, which will give an overview of the destination background. Chapter two will discuss the commissioner, Rwanda Tourism and Conservation and its goals as well as its role in the country's overall tourism activities. It is also in this chapter two that we will look at the destination and present its product range and other services the destination provides.

Chapter three will look closely at the theory part of this thesis and connect the case study of the thesis to the academic literatures to guide and execute the main objective

of this study. Chapter four will concentrate on the approach of the research and its methods, data collection process, data analysis process as well as reliability and validity of the study. Chapter five will lead to the analysis and key results of the destination analysis as well as results from service providers in the country in regard to the destination.

Chapter six, which discusses the final touches of this thesis will lead to conclusions and recommendations for the Commissioner and the management of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. Chapter six will conclude with suggestions for further studies to execute the branding of RVNP in a broader project.

2 Theoretical Approach to Brand Building Strategies

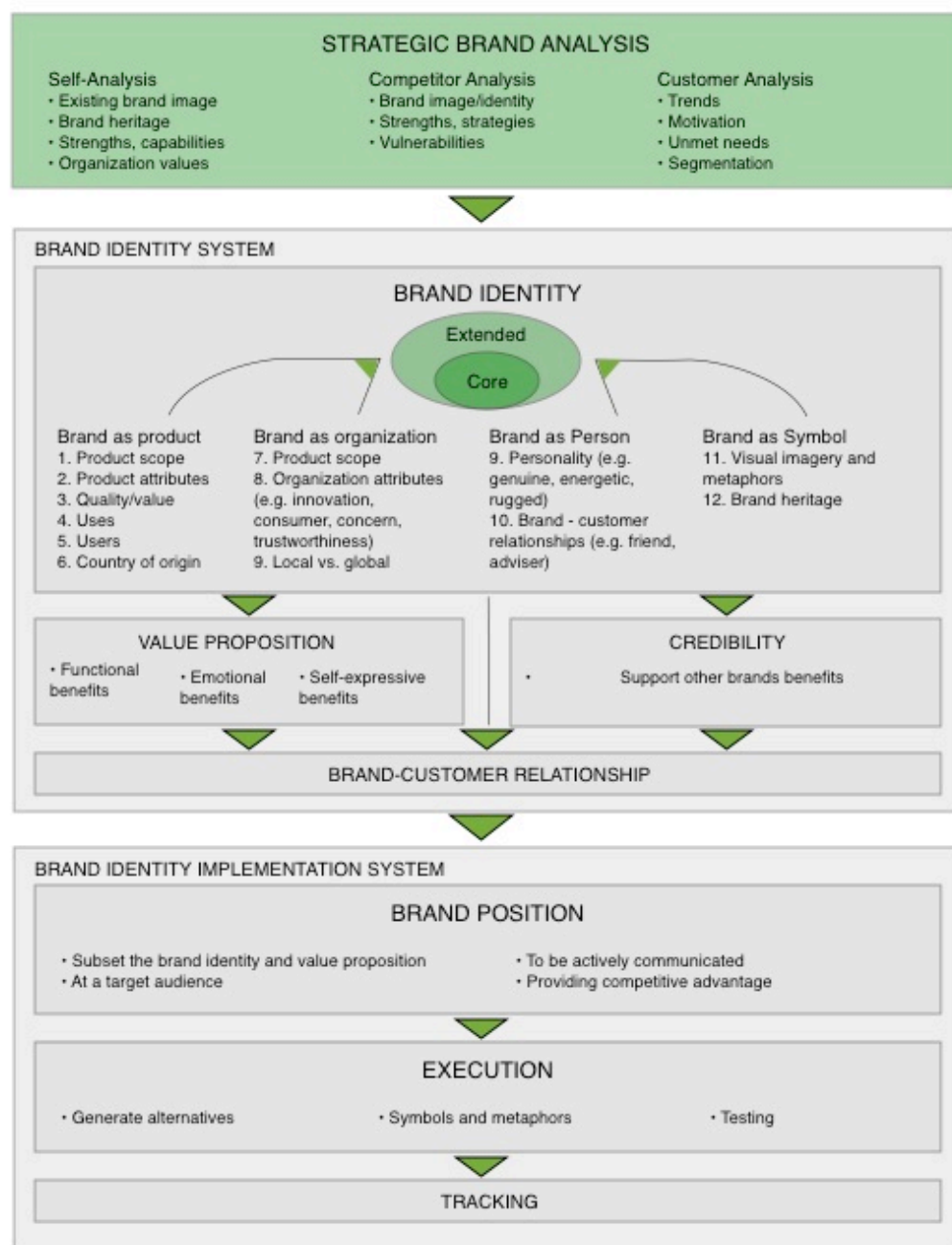
This theoretical part discusses the characteristics and importance of brands. It also presents various structured models to be followed in the systematic buildup of brands.

The Customer Based Brand Equity Model is one of the frameworks that have been chosen for guidance. The needs and expectations of the customers and organizations, and devising products and campaigns to satisfy them are at the heart of successful marketing (Keller et al. 2008, 42). Brand Equity is the point in which the company objectives converge with the customer's interest (graph 4), creating value for both parts of the system: organization and consumers (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 79). Achieving a positive Brand Equity is the ultimate goal of any Brand Strategy. This will be discussed later on in brand equity section of this theory.

This chapter will look closely at brand analysis. It is imperative for brands to be analyzed and identified during the course of strategic planning. This research aims to define an Identity for Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. In the context of the Identity, one cannot and should not ignore the Rwanda Tourism & Conservation and the Volcanoes National Park management and their perception of the message they like to communicate to their customers through the brand.

A systematic model, which contemplates the self-analysis and the consumer's needs and expectations when building a brand, prove to be a strong theoretical tool for this purpose. Therefore David Aaker's *Brand Identity Planning Model* is applied (2010, 79), and followed with detailed explanations.

Graphic 4: David Aaker's Brand Identity Planning Model 2010



(“Brand Identity Planning Model” David Aaker 2010, 79)

The model mapped above by Aaker, draws a heart in center, which has developed a four-fold perspective on the concept of brands. It has been argued that in order for strategists to ensure their brands have a deep meaning, they need to identify them. Aaker suggests that brands should be identified as products, organizations, persons or even symbols. The main reason of this system is to guide brands and brand strategists

to keep in mind different brand elements that can help make the process less confusing, enrich and manage to differentiate these identities (David Aaker, 2010 82-85).

Aaker argues that not every brand identity has to involve all of these perspectives, and for some brands only one could be viable and suitable. He however, suggests that each organization should consider all the perspectives and applies the ones considered helpful and goes in line with what the brand should stand for in the mind of a customer. The process, according to Aaker, if carried out in a fashionable manner will lead to the understanding of the relationship between customers and the brand. The implementation process as shown above involves positioning of the brand into customer's mind and brand value proposition.

In regard to the main objective of this research we aim at exploring the concept behind the first stage of this model's strategic brand analysis, which is "*Self-analysis*". The self-analysis of this study, as mentioned earlier, (graphic 1) will focus on the Rwanda Volcanoes National Park's analysis. Self-analysis or brand analysis in case of brands and branding, pins down the current state of the brand (existing brand image). It looks at the status of the brand in detail and analyzes its customers and their needs and wants. Self-analysis will study the competitors and what they are doing. It is important for the organization to know its values, capabilities or strength and believe in its own existence.

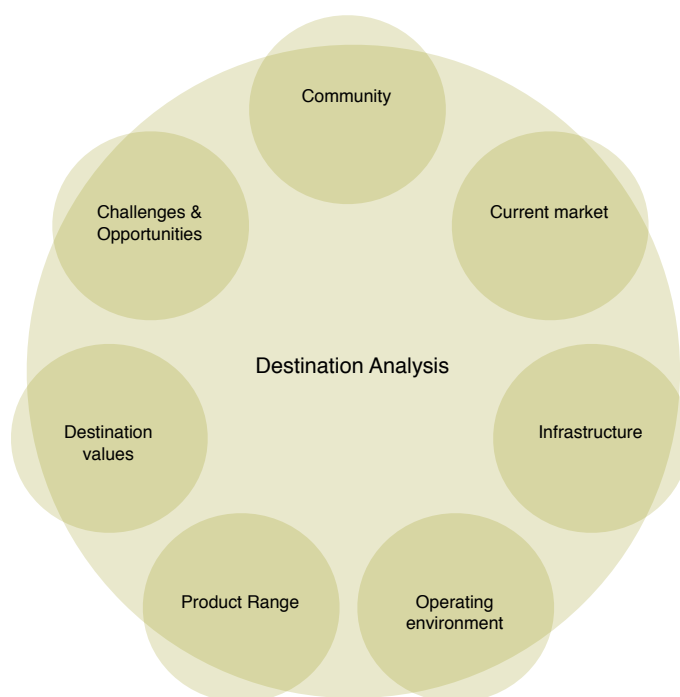
2.1 Destination analysis

This review will discuss the strategic plan for a tourism destination from theory's point of view. The development of a strategic tourism plan for a destination is an action of putting strategic priorities and directions, which have been established by stakeholders to plan, manage, develop and market the destination. Strategic plans for destinations have different names such as Management Plan, Tourism Action Plans or Sustainable Tourism Plans and this depends on the region across the world. The analysis of a destination image is a very recent phenomenon but for the last three decades it has

become one of the most popular term and study in tourism research academics.
(Sustainable Tourism Online 2010)

The strategic plan for a destination management is necessary for the long-term success and sustainability of a destination. These strategic plans, however, are not considered to put all the destination's challenges to an end but rather to limit them, reduce them. It is argued that having no strategic plan and direction of the destination will definitely bring more issues to the destination in future. The destination analysis phase of destination management is all about analyzing and understanding the environment in which a destination operates. The idea is to help a destination's managers to identify its key issues that influence how that destination can be developed, managed and be marketed over time.

Graphic 5: Variables of a destination analysis



(Wray et al, 2010)

The above model gives an overview of the variables to be considered during an analysis of a destination's image. Previous researches have shown that by analyzing a

destination's image managers will be able to draw a line towards successful destination strategic planning.

The model tells that an understanding of the destination and its community's aspirations as well as values is the key variables to be considered during a destination's analysis. It is imperative that the current market of the destination is analyzed and identified. The market analysis will tell the managers of destinations to develop their strategy with an understanding of the market situation and be able to implement it towards the potential customers. The infrastructure and environment of a destination should both be studied as well and analyzed to give an understanding of the destination's image and condition. It is important that the review of operating environment of a destination include internal and external issues that may affect and influence the planning and development of a destination.

The analysis of a destination should also focus on its product range; attractions within and other services that a destination has to offer. A review of important issues, opportunities and difficulties of a destination are key variables to be looked at during the analysis. It is during a destination's analysis process that a destination's values are to be studied and understood in order to help its development plans. The above variables will be discussed later on in this thesis in reflection to a real life of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park.

2.2 What is a brand?

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA 2011), a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition.

Wheeler (2006, 4), states that a brand is the promise, the big idea, and the expectations that reside in each customer's mind about a product, service or company. People fall in

love with brands, trust them, develop strong loyalties to them, buy them, and believe in their superiority. A brand stands for something.

Franzen and Moriarty (2009, 6) see the brand as a complex system of interrelated management decisions and consumer reactions that create awareness, visibility, and meaning, as well as distinguishing a product from its competitors. Branding is, for the authors, the strategic process that manages the presentation and influences the perception of a brand. Wheeler (2009, 6) defines Branding as the disciplined process used to build awareness and extend customer loyalty. Branding is about seizing every opportunity to express why people should choose one brand over another.

Brand and product are not the same. Achembaum (in Keller et al 2008, 5) stated that what distinguishes a brand from its unbranded commodity and gives its equity, is the sum total of consumers' perceptions and feelings about the product's attributes and how they perform, about the brand name and what it stands for, and about the company associated with the brand.

Another definition of branding by De Chernatony & McDonald (1998, 20) describes that a successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs more closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition.

It is possible to reflect about all the previous definitions and state that there are two sides on the brand phenomena, one side is represented by the management decisions and the organization's identity, product, name, logos, symbols, promises, etc., and on the other side we find the perceptions, feelings and associations (image) consumers develop about the brands. Through the brand, a relationship is established between the producers and the consumers. Another reflection extracted from the definitions, is that a brand makes an organization different from others, different from its competitors.

According to Franzen and Moriarty (2009,7-8) in the brand system, there are components that can be managed by the marketers and components that cannot be managed by them, but can otherwise be influenced. Affirmed by the same authors, the components that marketers can manage are, i.e., the Brand Strategy Formulation, the Brand Core Concept, the Brand Identity and the Market Segmentation. The other half of the brand system is the consumer.

The values of consumers affect the perceptions of a brand, as well as the construction of other customer-focused perceptions such as the Brand Position, the Brand Meaning and the Brand Personality. Those components cannot be managed by the firms, but can be influenced (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 7-8). In this point Franzen and Moriarty disagree with Keller et al. (2008) and Aaker (2010), which consider Positioning and Personality as components of the brand to be managed and defined from the company's side.

2.3 Customer Based Brand Equity

Brand Equity is the point in which the company objectives converge with the customer interests, creating value for both parts of the system: organization and consumer (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 79). According to Duncan and Moriarty, brand equity is determined by the quality of the brand relationships with its customer and other key stakeholders (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 298).

Customer Based Brand Equity is defined like the differential effect that brand knowledge (awareness and image) has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand. A brand has a positive Customer Based Brand Equity when customers react more favorably to a product and the way it is marketed when the brand is identified than when it is not (Keller et al. 2008, 43). According to Keller, CBBE occurs when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and has strong, favorable and unique brand associations.

For David Aaker (2010, 7) Brand Equity is defined as a set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds (or subtracts from) the value provided

by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customer. The major asset categories in Aaker's brand equity theory are Brand Name Awareness, Brand Loyalty, Perceived Quality and Brand Associations.

Brand awareness is related to the strength of the brand trace in memory, as reflected by consumers' ability to recall or recognize the brand under different conditions. Brand image is defined as consumer perceptions of a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumers' memory (Keller et al. 2008, 47).

The difference between brand image and brand identity is that the latest is aspirational, meaning how the brand would like to be perceived (Aaker, 2010). The firms can manage brand identity but not the associations held in consumer's minds.

Brand image is defined by Franzen & Moriarty (2009, 19) as the ideas, feelings, and attitudes that consumers have about brands. It is an image in customer's minds that reflect what they think and feel about a brand and how they value it. Brand personality is an important part of brand image and both could be just as important as the product performance or price. The representation of a brand that consumers carry in their minds also exists as a brand concept in the strategy of its managers. Ideally, the customer's brand representation and the manager's brand concept match. Effective brand strategy could be defined as achieving this match, when the meaning of both brand perspectives is the same. Franzen & Moriarty (2009, 113)

Brand Equity is a measure of the strength of a brand that impacts the financial contribution the brand makes to the parent company's balance sheet. Brand equity represents the point at which company objectives converge with customer interests. (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 79)

2.4 How to build a strong brand

Building Strong Brands, those that will create customer interest and loyalty by providing a value proposition and a basis for a relationship, requires a clear, effective specification of the brand identity and position (Aaker 2010, 357).

The theoretical framework for this research is Customer Based Brand Equity CBBE (Keller 2008, 42), and the Brand Identity System model (Aaker, 2010, 68). The basic premise of the CBBE model is that the power of a brand resides in the minds of customers, therefore, the challenge of a marketer in building a strong brand is ensuring that customers have the right type of experiences with products and services and their accompanying marketing campaigns so that the desired thoughts, feelings, images, beliefs, perceptions and opinions become linked to the brand (Keller et al 2008,43).

For building a strong brand, the Customer Based Brand Equity model lays out a series of steps

1. Establishing the proper brand identity
2. Create the appropriate brand meaning
3. Elicit (bring out) positive brand responses
4. Forge strong brand relationship with customers

A brand with the right identity and meaning can result in a customer believing that the brand is relevant and “my kind of product” (Keller et al 2008, 56). In Keller’s model, we could say that companies can manage the two first steps, but the consumers play the other part of the relationship when trying to achieve positive responses and forge a strong relationship with them.

- Establishing breadth and depth of brand awareness (strength of the brand trace in memory),
- Creating strong, favorable and unique brand associations,
- Bringing out positive, accessible brand responses
- Forging intense, active brand relationships

These four steps address four fundamental questions that customers ask about brands

1. Who are you? (Brand Identity)
2. What are you? (Brand Meaning)
3. What about you? What do I think or feel about you? (Brand responses)
4. What about you and me? What kind of association and how much of a connection would I like to have with you? (Brand relationships)

2.5 Brand Identity planning and Strategic Brand Management

To create brand identity, Wheeler, 2009 suggests four sets of questions to be asked:

- Who are you?
- Who needs to know?
- How will they find out?
- Why should they care?

According to David Aaker (2010, 68), brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members. Brand identity should help to establish a relationship between the brand and the customer by generating a value proposition involving functional, emotional or self-expressive benefits. In the Identity Planning Model, in their book, *The Science and Art of Branding*, Franzen and Moriarty (2009, 89-96) introduce a concept, which could be compared with Aaker's Core Identity. *The Brand Core Concept*, also called essence, soul and DNA, tells the consumer what the brand stands for. The mental representation of the most basic defining characteristics of a brand is what we call a brand concept. A company's brand or corporate mission statement sums up the core concept and expresses the values that guide the company's business operations.

Brand vision and values are the ideological platform upon which the identity of the brand and its social posture can be constructed. The identification of the brand's

values and the statement of its vision relative to competing brands is a central responsibility of top management and something over which a company has complete control. A vision statement, which puts into words what a brand wants to be in the future, consists of the brand's core purposes and values. What is our place in the world? The answer will define the purpose of existence of the company. A brand mission contains the concrete task for the organization behind the brand regarding the contribution to be made in the short term toward the realization of the vision (Franzen & Moriarty 2009, 88-108).

Strategic Brand Management involves the design and implementation of marketing activities in order to build, measure and manage brand equity. As per Keller's text the Strategic Brand Management process involves four main steps (Keller et al 2008, 35)

1. Identifying and establishing brand positioning
2. Planning and implementing brand marketing campaigns
3. Measuring and interpreting brand performance
4. Growing and sustaining brand equity

In this approaches we can say that there are four basic steps in the strategic brand management process (graphic 6): the first is *research*. Research allows the manager to set objectives and *define a position* (second step). The Position must be implemented and communicated through marketing campaigns (third step). Finally the manager measures the results of the marketing campaign and evaluates brand equity (fourth step).

Graphic 6: Stages of the Brand Management Process.



(Keller et al 2008, 35)

2.6 Positioning

Brand positioning can be defined as the act of designing the company's offer and image so that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target customer's mind (Keller et al 2008, 95). The goal of positioning is to locate the brand in the minds of consumers in a way that the potential benefit to the firm is maximized, by convincing them of the advantages of the brand towards its competitors (points of difference) while alleviating concerns about possible disadvantages (establishing points of parity).

In Aaker's building Strong Brands (2010, 176) the Position is defined as the part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target audience and demonstrate an advantage over competing brands. The position guides the communication programs. When a brand positioning exists, the brand identity and value proposition can be developed fully, with texture and depth.

For Franzen & Moriarty (2009, 163), the concept of positioning refers to the strategy companies that follow to reach a favorable, competitive position in the market.

Positioning of a brand by companies refers to the choice of the customer groups to be served, the structure of the activities necessary to answer to their needs and desires, and the competitive advantages a brand has over its competitors.

3 Research approach and Methods

The empirical part of this research focuses on analyzing the destination only. The findings of this analysis will facilitate future studies, namely the analysis of competitors and the analysis of customer segmentation. In order to reach the main objective of this thesis, we will not need the analysis of competitors and customers. The researcher's aim is to analyze the destination and evaluate its image in detailed description.

3.1 Research Approach and Methods

The research approach for this research includes both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Graphic 7: Research approaches and methods



3.2 Destination analysis: Who am I?

Following the Strategic Planning Model by David Aaker, (graphic 4), we look to discuss in this chapter the destination analysis, which was referred to as "*Self-analysis*" in Aaker's model of the third stage of his perspectives on concept of brands and branding. The destination analysis, which is the ultimate goal of this study, will be analyzed as Rwanda Volcanoes National Park.

This analysis will focus on variables to be considered when analyzing a destination. This chapter will indicate the imperative variables to be addressed during analysis of a destination such as brand image of the destination, strength, capabilities and organizational values as well as vulnerabilities of the brand as illustrated in Aaker's Strategic Brand Analysis, (graphic 4), and it is within this chapter that we will discuss methods applied to collect this information.

Graphic 8: Data sources of destination analysis



Destination image: Following a thorough discussion from the interview conducted on 6th December 2011 with the Chief Warden of the park, Mr. Prosper Uwingeri, he explains that Rwanda Volcanoes National Park is a unique destination providing a lifetime experience amongst the Mountain Gorillas up in Northwest Volcanic Mountains. The soul of this destination holds values that make it the only destination where tourists flock in throughout the year to have an unforgettable experience with these endangered species. This national park provides with deep passion and emotional features that maintains tourists' flow and ensures its repeat customers.

The Rwandan government has continued effort to conserve the natural resources for gorillas with particular emphasis in reaction to the national structures towards this move – particularly, the recent reform of the office of Rwanda Tourism Board has helped to work closely and consistently in achieving this goal and this has maintained the destination profile with the promise to deliver the service according to the wants and needs of its customers. In addition, non-government organizations have been

dedicated and involved in conservation work and most of the information available about the destination today has been as a result of this dedication.

“Unfortunately, these efforts put together with government’s have not yet put a complete halt to the threats that these endangered species still face”. (Uwingeri, 06.12.2011).

Rwandan government has an ongoing tourism event in its strategy that sees newborn gorillas get named every year. This has attracted so much attention, as people flock in to Rwanda in June of every year since 2005 for this gorilla naming ceremony. Rwanda government invites and encourages the rest of the world to join in the celebration to honor these gorillas. The event is held every year with different themes.

3.2.1 Data collection process and procedure

The process of data collecting was done with a technique to develop an interview questions and survey questionnaires. After determining the main research problem and objectives, a statement relating to this research was sent to the office of the commissioner – office of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation by e-mail. This letter was sent a month before along with research proposal that included the key objectives of the research. The proposal was convincing enough, which led the commissioner to support the research undoubtedly. The interview questions and survey questionnaires played a great role in collecting information needed for the successful execution of the primary objective of this research question. Data collecting also aimed at identifying key stakeholders and their views on the branding of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. The data was collected between the period of June and December 2011.

The data was collected using both research methods qualitative and quantitative, as well as researcher’s self-observation, as stipulated in (graphic 7). The interview was conducted on 6th December 2011 at the office of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park with Mr. Prosper Uwingeri, the Chief Warden of the park. The discussion mainly focused on the destination and its products, as well as the services it offers to its esteemed customers. The interview also aimed at finding the role of the office of Rwandan tourism and Rwanda Volcanoes National Park in developing the destination.

Data collection of this research also involved the quantitative part, which showed 20 questionnaires being distributed to about 20 tourism service providers in Rwanda who shared their opinion since they have a day-to-day experience with the overall tourists' activities within the Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. Since organized tourism related services are recent phenomenon in Rwanda there were not so many actors to include in this research. As most of tourists visiting the Volcano National get their services from Kigali, most of the respondent had their offices in the City Capital of Kigali. The questionnaires were distributed by means of face-to-face meetings and were filled out manually. The questionnaires were made of questions that their main focus was to get satisfactory answers to reach the primary objective of this thesis, which is answering one fundamental question in a broad picture – how to analyze and identify the image of Volcanoes National Park and provide ground information to build a strong brand for Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. Identifying and analyzing the destination are considered the primary objectives this thesis aims to execute, again following the area of inquiry that guides this thesis, (graphic 2).

3.2.2 Data analysis process

The interviews conducted for the purpose of this research were recorded. The analysis of data collected by means of a sophisticated computer program called SPSS – translated as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences used in case of questionnaires. The interview that was conducted by means of voice recorder with the Chief Warden of the park Mr. Prosper was later on transcribed and the researcher had to do some editing to ensure the consistency with the research questions as well as the possibility of the main focus towards analysis.

The analysis of the quantitative data started by filling in all the questions from the questionnaires and their responses from all respondents into the SPSS computer program. This software provides with user-friendly options, fast, clear and simple ways to analyze data. This computer program helps to narrow down the information and

provides the results in both, frequencies and charts, which were studied and applied in reaching the main target of this thesis.

3.3 Reliability and validity of data collection

This chapter will discuss the reliability and validity of the information and the process as well instruments used to gather the data. Existing literatures and academic theories define reliability and validity as the extent to which the obtained scores can be generally applicable to various measuring occasions and measurements. It is therefore, in this discussion that we present the consistency of the measurements.

The methods used in collecting information for this research were interview questions, survey questionnaires, desk research based on information collected through magazines, internet, brochures, emails, telephones etc. This research also applied researcher's personal observation. It was the researcher's interest to go and take gorilla trekking in order to taste this experience in Rwandan Volcanoes. It was during this trekking that the researcher observed the level of service in this destination.

4 Desk research

This research also applied desk research in its methods to collect data as illustrated in (graphic 8) for its secondary qualitative research method. This approach helped in collecting general information using Internet, magazines, brochures, existing literatures, telephones, emails etc. It is within this section that we will discuss the role of the office of Rwanda tourism and conservation and more importantly, we will aim at the relationship of the office and the destination – Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. It is the duty of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation to manage the overall tourism activities in the country. This office has also acted as the commissioner of the entire research. This study was done in collaboration with the Office of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation. The office helped the researcher with access to the information needed to execute the main objective behind this research.

Rwanda Tourism and Conservation management aims at developing the most ecotourism destinations in the entire African continent. The goals are to promote Rwanda as a high quality tourism destination and serve as a regional meetings hub for both Central and Eastern Africa. It is the aim of the office to enhance the diverse of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park and plan to provide unique tourism products and services in the destination in order to attract more tourists to the volcanoes to witness the an unforgettable experience with these endangered species. (RT&C office)

4.1 Rwanda Tourism & Conservation

The following scrip will discuss the role of the office of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation in Rwandan tourism industry. The office of tourism also played a big part in helping the researcher with necessary information for this study as discussed above. This office acted as the commissioner through data collection process as will be discussed later in this thesis.

Tourism is one of the most fast growing sectors and has now been the country's leading foreign earner for the last ten years, generating USD 214 million in 2008, which is up by 54% on the previous year. The mandate of Tourism and Conservation department of RDB-Rwanda Development Board is to conserve the rich biodiversity of the protected areas and to develop, sustainable tourism in collaboration with stakeholders for the benefit of all the Rwandan people. (Office of Tourism and Conservation - Rwanda, 2011)

The goal of the tourism division under the Tourism and Conservation department is to change Rwanda to a major tourism destination and regional conference center for Central and Eastern Africa with high quality of products that will contribute to the whole country's social economic development. In addition to the above, the office of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation is maintaining, enhancing and sustaining the ecological integrity as well as health and productivity of Rwanda's ecosystems. In doing so, these are considered to be the pillars of environmental responsibilities and sustainable development. (Rwanda Development Board 2010)

4.2 Rwanda Volcanoes National Park

"In the heart of Central Africa, so high up that you shiver more than you sweat" (Dian Fossey 1988) are great, old volcanoes towering up almost 15,000 feet and nearly covered with rich and green forest "The Virunga" situated in the far Northwest of Rwanda. The volcanoes protect the steep slopes of this magnificent mountain range, which happens to be the home of rare mountain gorillas associated with ecosystems, which holds evergreen and bamboo forests, open grassland, swamp and health.

Graphic 9: Map of Rwanda and Rwanda Volcanoes National Park



(Self-Tours, Gorilla excursions 2000)

This park controls the “gorillas in the mist” a story that Dian Fossey a scientist, who came to Africa in 1988 to study the vanishing mountain gorillas, lost her life for, as she was trying to protect them. Only 355 mountain gorillas still alive on the slopes of these volcanic mountains and ecosystem is one way to assist them to survive. These mountains lie in the Northeast of Rwanda. The mountain range flows over into the neighboring countries of Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) and Uganda where mountain gorillas may also be visited. This range of mountains covers an area of about 300 km². (Eyes on Africa – Travel & Safaris 2002)

Having a close reach with mountain gorillas is a warm experience that you would never forget. Strict protocols have been put in place to visit the endangered species and each of the habituated Gorilla groups receives a maximum of eight people in one visit a day.

4.2.1 Actual product and service description

Rwanda's iconic tourism attraction, the Rwandan Mountain Gorillas has been the major tourism attraction destination among others and has contributed to the Rwandan economy a great growth for past recent years. The gorilla trekking involves a walk through the forest and this gives tourists an opportunity to enjoy a real connection with the environment. In addition to the increasing information and documentaries about Rwanda mountain gorillas, the country has been receiving high profile guests including Bill Clinton in 2005, Bill Gates in 2006 and Ted Turner in 2009 (National Geographic 2008)

Graphic 10: Gorillas in Rwanda Volcanoes National Park



(Observational picture)

The additional introduction of a ceremony known as “Kwita Izina” that kicked off in 2005 and takes place every year in June, since then has seen Rwanda getting an incredible tourists visits participating in the naming ceremony like Hollywood actors Don Cheadle in 2010, Natalie Portman in 2007 to name a few. Only a maximum of one hour is allowed to stay with the gorillas and it is urged that a distance of seven meters be left between gorillas and trekkers/tourists. The Gorilla permit costs USD500 for a foreign tourist but according to Mr. Prosper, the chief warden of the park, the fee is expected to go higher up to USD750 for foreign tourists, foreigners residing in

Rwanda will be charged USD375 and Rwandan nationals will be charged USD50 from USD33 respectively. (Tourism Issues and Developments 2012)

The park consists of eight gorilla families available for tourists with eight tourists allowed per each family or group. Below lists the gorilla families and their names:

Graphic 11: The gorilla families in Rwanda

	Susa The largest with 41 gorillas	Known to be hardest to trek as it tends to range high up the mountains
	Sabyinyo Fewest number of members	Easily accessible group, led by the powerful Silverback Guhonda
	Amahoro 17 members	Led by the calm and easy going Ubumwe, meaning Unit
	Group 13 Named after its initial number of group members. Now it has 25.	A visible result of efforts by the Rwanda Tourism and Conservation
	Kwitonda 18 members	Led by Kwitonda, meaning humble. The group has two Silverbacks and one Blackbuck
	Umubano 11 members	Led by young Silverback Charles after it challenged the dominant Silverback and formed his own family
	Hirwa New family	Members from Group 13 and Sabyinyo formed this group
	Karisimbi New family	Most recent family

(Adventure trails Ltd, 2006)

A close look at the graphic above, which presents the gorilla families, their names, and number of each group – It is revealed that the number of gorillas in these volcanic mountains of Rwanda is increasing at a fast pace. This can be seen as a positive sign that the Rwandan tourism authorities are putting much effort in to protecting and preserving the survival of these endangered species. The last two groups “Hirwa & Karisimbi” have been formed recently and the number of their members are growing rapidly. (The office of Rwanda tourism and conservation board)

The permits are available everyday to visit the eight habituated families of gorillas living in the park and only 56 permits are available each day and cost USD500 per person. Gorilla permits can be arranged by a travel operator or can be purchased directly through the office of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation either at the headquarters in Kigali capital or at the park offices in Musanze. (The office of Rwanda tourism and conservation board)

Very early in the morning at 03:30 AM, tourists start driving from Kigali capital towards the Volcanoes National Park in Musanze town, passing through the beautiful view of the hilly-Rwanda side. Tourists will report at the park headquarters by 06:00 for briefing before proceeding with the park rangers for the memorable gorilla trekking. The trek may take 2-3 hours depending on the movement of these giant gorillas in their natural environment. Tourists have to be prepared with necessary gear and packed lunch as they begin this great exertion but exciting one. A maximum of one hour is allowed to be with the gorillas to avoid disturbance with them. After that, tourists are expected to descend the forest and head back to Kigali and reach in late evening.

Trekking is however, associated with the rules and these rules have to be obeyed for the safety of gorillas and tourists themselves. Tourists have to obey the local guides instructions at all times. The following is a range of trekking rules that have to be kept in consideration by tourists:

- Do not touch the gorillas, as they are wild animals.
- Do not remove anything from the park for example; flowers, fruits, porcupine quills and many more...
- If you are feeling ill, or are carrying a contagious disease, please volunteer to stay behind. An alternative visit will be arranged for you or you will be refunded your permit cost.
- No flash photography is allowed
- Do not eat or drink when close to the gorillas – this is a disease risk.
- One hour is the maximum time supposed to be spent with the gorillas, but if gorillas become restless or tense the guide will end the visit earlier than expected.
- Keep a minimum of seven meters away from gorillas, thus limiting them from being infected by diseases
- Do not spit in the park and go to the bathroom only as instructed by your guide
- Do not leave, anything in the park, if you pack it in, pack it out!
- Keep your voices down at all times. (Rwanda Gorilla Tours 2012)

4.3 Rwanda Tourism & Conservation and Rwanda Volcanoes National Park

Rwanda Tourism Office has established a clear tourism policy, which is supported by the government to establish a tourism friendly environment. Rwanda has participated in major tourism affairs, which has developed its profile as a recognized tourism destination particularly Volcanoes National Park. The overall strategic goal of the office of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation is to show strong commitment to reform. Different strategies are being implemented and the government is demonstrating its strong commitment to execute these reforms and the overall improvement of the performance of tourism sector.

The office of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation has been absorbed into the Rwanda Development Board in 2009 in order to bring institutional problems to solution. This

was due to the fact that, the tourism agency had been through hard financial situations and has not been receiving government financial support.

Rwanda has been learning from other countries' experiences and still is. The country has been sending students out of the country for study tours and this policy is still going on to develop the country's know-how in all sectors including tourism.

According to a source from the office of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation, Rwanda has developed a 10-year Sustainable Tourism Master Plan in collaboration with United Nations World Tourism Organization. This master plan strengthens existing strategies and policies and gives clear and detailed suggestions to set ambitious targets. (RT&C 2011)

The office of Volcanoes National Park is committed to improve its marketing across the borders. The target customers are especially those who still lack the destination's information. Since Rwanda is considered one of the safest countries, the office's goal is therefore to strive to attract even more international tour groups as well as international conferences.

The gorilla naming ceremony, a new strategy to the country's tourism marketing is to be developed to increase the attraction of international celebrities to increase the awareness of potential customers of Volcanoes National Park across the globe. In addition to that, the government is now engaged in strong public private discussions to bring in tourism working groups to reach private and public stakeholders in the tourism industry. The Gorilla tourism has benefited Rwanda in many ways; first of all, the office of Rwandan Tourism has established a strategy to put the gorilla tourism in its agenda as the general Rwandan Tourism Promotion of the country. The conservation of natural environment that will lead to sustainable tourism development and poverty reduction of the local community has been placed on the same agenda. (Rwanda Tourism and Conservation report 2011)

4.4 Other actors in the Rwanda Volcanoes National Park

Since Rwanda Volcanoes National Park as a destination has been for the past ten and more years, attracting a record number tourists, many private individuals have set up businesses providing services to tourists visiting the destination. Tour operators have been established to help to sell gorilla permits, transport tourists from airport to the park, booking accommodations for them and also offer tourists opportunities to take community tours. These operators help communities to set up associations with community individual members who all together work hard to provide services to tourists and help boost revenues for the destination. (Uwingeri, 06.12.2011)

The Rwandan government has been very supportive of gorilla conservation, especially in allocation of more land around the park for cultivation. Today, there is a process underway to evaluate feasibility of a park expansion program. (Uwingeri, 06.12.2011). In addition to above, there has been an increased collaboration between the park's staff and the community to work together to protect the gorillas from the poachers.

For instance,

Some ex-poachers that consist of a number of 400 local community members who stopped poaching in the park do patrols with the park's staff. They are also involved in many other activities such as local education, putting together information and speak about human-wildlife conflict to the community. (Uwingeri, 06.12.2011).

According to the Chief park Warden Prosper, during the interview conducted with him by the researcher at the park's office on 6th December 2011, the destination Rwanda Volcanoes National Park has more other key players involved in protecting and developing the destination. These include several government institutions, NGOs; researchers also play a great role in this regard. Prosper tells that,

“The park management has in its structure to create strong relationship with the neighboring other parks especially those in Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo, which also happen to be competitors. The agreement would include among others, working together to protect the wellbeing of gorillas in general.”

4.5 Tourism and hospitality services

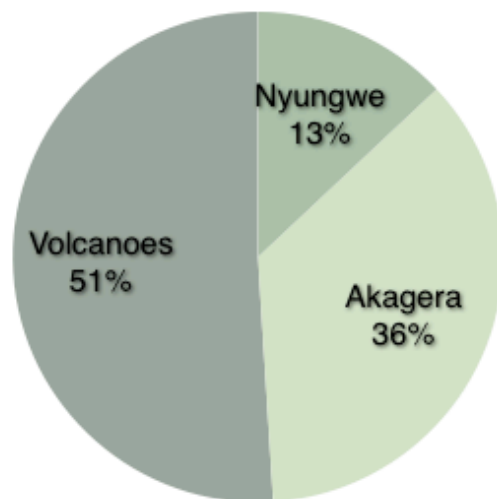
Apart from Gorillas up in Northwest Rwanda, the country has other excellent tourism attractions, which create a larger body for tourism sector. Rwanda has three national parks that cover around 10% of the country's area, and one of them is Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. The Nyungwe Forest National Park has a vast area of mountain forests and is rich in environment. This park offers guided walks and chimpanzee tracking. It is known for its rich diversity of flora with over 200 types of trees, a canopy that is high up in 50 to 60 meters. The canopy walk in Nyungwe was launched in 2010 by Rwanda Development board. This is the first of its kind in East African region, and only third in entire Africa after Ghana and South Africa.

Graphic 12: illustrates the canopy walk in Nyungwe National Park – Rwanda.



The lake Kivu, which borders Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo has recreational facilities as well, but there are still potentials to be developed. Furthermore, Rwanda is engaged in business opportunities and especially with travellers from Eastern DR of Congo and other neighboring countries. Rwanda has again been successful with pulling in national, regional and international conferences. Rwanda has been welcomed by ICTP – International Council of Tourism Partners due to the country's enormous success in tourism industry over the past few years. (Rwanda Tourism Guide 2010/11, 13)

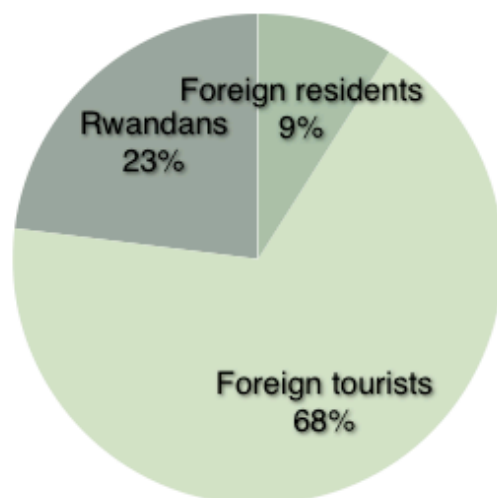
Graphic 13: Park activities sold by park, 2010



(Office of Rwanda Tourism & Conservations statistics 2010)

According to statistics of 2010 from the office of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation, Rwanda Volcanoes national Park has been the busiest of the three parks, recording 52% of the total with about 23,400 park activities. While Akagera National Park accounted for 35% or 16,200 park activities and Nyungwe National Park accounted 13% or almost 5,800 activities recorded. (Rwanda tourism & Conservation statistics 2010)

Graphic 14: Represents the total park activities sold by visitor group, 2010.



(Rwanda office of Tourism and Conservation, statistics 2010)

The chart above tells us that, of the total number of sold park activities in 2010, foreign tourists accounted for 68% with about 30,800 paid activities in the national parks. Rwandan residents accounted for around 23% or over 10,300 while as foreign residents accounted for 9% or a total of 4,300 of all activities recorded in 2010. In total Rwandan residents, foreign residents and foreign tourists increased by 30%, 20% and 14% respectively. (RT&C statistics 2010)

In addition to the above, Akagera National Park offers a range of wildlife, such as hippos, giraffes, zebras, elephants, etc.... Akagera National Park is located in the Eastern Rwanda. The park is on the boarder of Rwanda and Tanzania about two hours from Kigali capital. Akagera is the largest of Rwanda's National Parks and comprises of three distinctive ecosystems: the lakes, the swamps and the classic African savannah as well as hilly landscapes. In former times, Akagera was one of the great East African national parks, but war and the consequent poaching of game meat have taken their toll. However, the park is well managed now and animal numbers are slowly recovering. The park management has also plans to restock the park to regain its greatness and now would be a good time to visit. It's unfortunate however, that the only accommodation close to the park is provided by the 60-room Akagera Game Lodge, which has been rebuilt recently. (Rwanda Tourism Guide: 2010/2011).

The country's National Aerial Excursions has also been introduced recently and has increased its popularity with tourists. Akagera Aviation is based at Kigali International Airport and is a Rwandan-owned helicopter company, which is known as one of the most efficient aerial service providers in the region. The aerial excursion is most popular with photographers, businessmen and tourists. There is no better way to experience the beautiful landscape of Rwanda than Akagera Aviation tour by helicopter. Akagera Aviation is also recognized in the region as a first class training school for people learning to fly for pleasure and for those beginning a career in the aviation industry. (Rwanda Tourism Guide: 2010/2011).

The promotion of domestic tourism: In order to have a clear understanding of the present situation of Rwanda's domestic tourism, questionnaires were distributed to

participants involved in developing Rwanda's tourism. Travel agencies, tour operators, restaurants and hotels shared their views and gave an insight picture of tourism situation in Rwanda today through their responses in questionnaires. According to responses about the current situation, the country has introduced a new strategy of promoting domestic tourism. The respondents had a mutual belief that there is a strong need for domestic tourism in Rwanda, that can help promote tourism awareness and a culture based tourism. This is very important for the growth of the country's economy. This fact has capability to sustain the general tourism industry. (Survey Respondent, Kristofer Zachrisson, Country Director JK Safaris Rwanda 2011).

“Rwanda's cultural heritage, especially the museums, has a huge potential but remains largely not yet exploited.” (Umulisa – the head of museums in Rwanda narrated, 2011).

He mentioned however, that the number of visitors to the national museums had slightly increased in 2011. Tourism sector, as we discussed earlier, is the key pillar of Rwanda's national economy and the country has put so much effort to promoting hospitality sector. The promotion of hospitality sector in particular has been focused on increased training and standardization in accordance with the East African community guidelines. This focus has seen Rwanda work towards classification and grading of hotels and restaurants as well as related service providers. Rwanda Development Board's Tourism department is leading the way by providing trainings to owners and staff of hotels to improve customer satisfaction and generate repeat revenues, noted out the Chief Warden of the Park, Mr. Prosper during the interview at his office. The sector has an association “Rwanda Hotels Association” whose goal is to call smaller and more localized associations to join hands with the main national body to reach a greater ability to shape the sector's future. The Chief Warden, Mr. Prosper revealed.

The country has 130 hotels, of which, two of them fulfill the criteria set to be five-star hotels and four of the remaining are four-star hotels. Regardless of the global financial crisis, revenues from tourism industry continue to increase. Tourism industry recovered quickly to reach 200 millions USD in 2010 and expected an increase of 47% in 2012 to generate around 350 millions USD. (Statistics Rwanda T&C Office 2011)

5 Key results and analysis

This chapter will discuss the key results from analysis and interpretation of information collected for this study. The analysis of the data of this research started with preparing the data, which involved checking the data for accuracy, then it was transformed, developed and documented into a database-structure that integrated various measures. The data was then described in basic features by means of descriptive statistics in order to turn it into a study.

As discussed earlier, this study is looking at providing ground information about RVNP, which will help in branding process of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park in a broader picture. We saw from the theoretical part of this thesis (graphic 4), that the whole process of branding is strategically composed of three steps; Self-analysis, Competitor analysis and Consumer analysis, (David Aaker 2010).

This thesis is focused only on the first step, which is Self-analysis. Therefore, the results and analysis were done based on data collected for the self-analysis part of the branding process alone. This thesis will discuss the key results of the destination analysis based on data collected from all the methods applied in collecting the data, which are qualitative methods, quantitative methods as well as desk research method as discussed earlier in research approach and methods chapter, (graphic 7). This analysis will start with looking at the key results from the desk research part then goes on with the qualitative and quantitative data analysis in an orderly fashion manner and stage by stage as carried out during the research process.

5.1 Key results from desk research and interview

The information collected during the desk research and interview will be analyzed to reach the key findings that will develop our next step for further studies in order to follow a thorough strategic branding plan of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park as this thesis observes in its introductory part.

This study will not only analyze this information but will outline suggestions to the management of the destination and to the government of Rwanda as well as tourism service providers in Rwanda. If these suggestions are kept under consideration will lead to development of the destination and bring awareness of Nordic tourists to the destination – Rwanda Volcanoes National Park and its offers to potential customers.

5.1.1 Destination values

This section will focus on the destination and its image with the current operating environment. Destination analysis as we discussed earlier focuses mostly on the variables of a destination and other key issues as well as the its current image, (graphic 5), in order to give a clear understanding to managers of a destination and strategists, (Wray Et al, 2010). Therefore, the results of the destination analysis are again analyzed based on data collected about Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. The main focus in case of Volcanoes National Park was mostly about the infrastructure, the community living around the park, other services offered in the park, and the destination's current market and its customers as well as its challenges and opportunities.

5.1.2 Community

The SWOT analysis chapter of this thesis tells the challenges and threats that Volcanoes National Park faces. It is said that the community is among the key threats to conservation and development of this park. The government of Rwanda with the park's management has tried to work in collaboration with the community to put these human threats against gorillas down. Issues regarding social economic opportunities are restrictions and the use of resources. (The park Warden Uwingeri, observed). The poachers have been turned into advisors. This move has brought much attention and appreciation in understanding the importance of conservation and survival of gorillas in these volcanoes of Northwest Rwanda.

The government has established an increased positive relationship between the community and the park. Areas where operating projects have been going on for the last 15 years have changed the image and brought good signs and appreciation of the community towards their involvement in conservation. It has been noted that, the highest risk group of people to the park is the poor majority with no land and economic assets. It is important to understand the income impacts of the community in regard to sustaining conservation.

International NGOs with their conservational program together with the national strategic plans that started in early 1979 to protect, conserve and sustain the survival of these gorillas in Volcanoes National Park has brought community's involvement and interest in conservation.

5.1.3 Product range

The mountain gorilla trekking is done at the volcanoes national park, which forms a range of the eight massive chains of volcanoes in Rwanda, Uganda and DR of Congo. Meeting these endangered species is a world unique experience that everyone should have a privilege to taste. The scenery here itself will delight you and before you realize the trail, which enters the national park, you start to see amazingly beautiful birds and golden monkeys welcome you to the park. In order to protect these endangered species from being disturbed, there has been a strict protocol on permits granted to see them. (Science in Africa, 2001)

In addition to see the gorillas, visitors make elated trek through the cultivated foothills of the Virungas before entering the park with its thick rainforest. The forest canopy is alive with colorful birds while the peaks of volcanoes make an impressive backdrop. Surprisingly, the park is also home to populations of hard-to-spot buffalos and elephants as well as black fronted duikers, spotted hyenas and bushbucks.

The park has other activities and things to-do, which make the trip worth taking. The following, describes other products allocated in the park. These other attractions are

found in different locations depending on which gorilla group or family you have been chosen to visit.

Dian Fossey Tomb and Nature Walk on Ngezi Lake. These are located in the same park and it takes one hour and half to drive for both and one-hour back. Karisimbi climbing tour is among activities in the park. This involves hiking up mountain Karisimbi.

Other activities include mountain biking, forest and savannah experience, bird watching, local heritage and community tours etc. The porter costs about USD20 or 10000RWF – local francs. (Rwanda Vol. Nat. Park Office 2011)

5.1.4 Operating environment

The existence of Gorillas up in these volcanoes of Northwest part of Rwanda was discovered in early 1902 by a German researcher where he found two gorillas in these mountains of Rwanda. Since then Gorillas have faced so much of challenges such as destruction of forests as well as poachers where the plan was to not to leave any animal existing on this earth planet. (Sights of Rwanda, 2012)

Tourism is largely the reason why this destination and its products still exist. The community has however, with its collaboration helped in maintaining the survival of gorillas up in these volcanoes. The operating environment of this park holds much more to offer to tourists. The park will welcome you with golden monkeys as you enter the park before tourists start trekking gorillas. The destination is mountainous and one has to endure stiff hills while walking towards the park's activities. It is noted, however, that the park's guides are well experienced and will know the convenient paths in order to cut the trip short and less exhausting.

5.1.5 Infrastructure

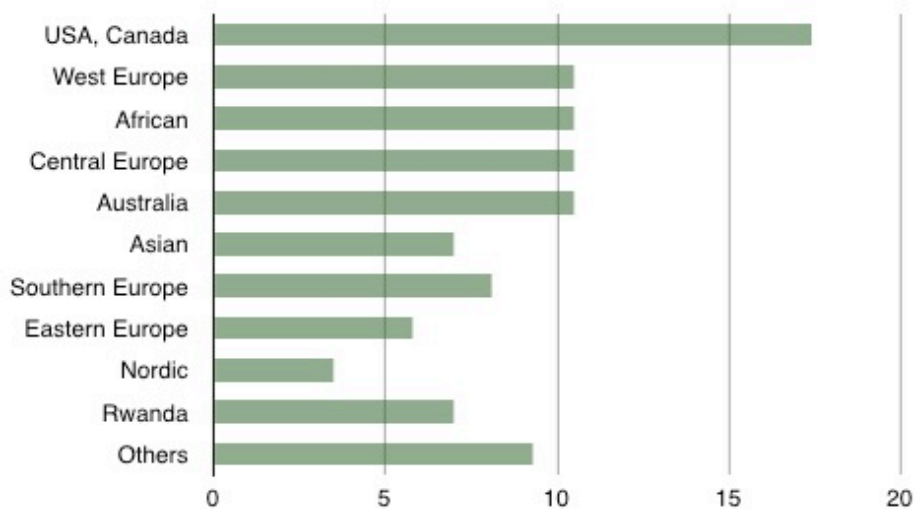
A lot is changing in terms of infrastructure. Various studies showing the image of Volcanoes National Park for the last 10 years show a big difference in comparison to what the destination looks like today. The government and other interest groups have showed much interest in developing the destination by establishing different projects in order to help conserving the park and survival of Gorillas. The infrastructure has improved from road network to hospitals, electricity, accommodation, different international cuisines as well as transportation availabilities.

5.1.6 Climate

The climate in these volcanoes is slightly wet with temperatures of 10 degrees. Dry season ranges from June to September with January and February the driest months and considered the best time for trekking gorillas. It is urged however, that during noon hours thunderstorms may strike at anytime. Rainy season is said to be from mid March to mid May and roads tend to be impassible. The rain is usually expected again in October and November. (Eyes on Africa 2002-2012)

5.1.7 Current market

Graphic 15: Key results for current market



(Survey results, 2011)

Graphic 15 displays that 17,4% of the total respondents ranked USA and Canada as the most visitors of Volcanoes National Park, followed by both Western Europe and African countries as a whole with the same rank representing a total of 10,5% each. Central Europe and Australia also have the same rank as West Europe and African countries with 10,5% each. It is revealed that Southern Europe has a record of 8,1% of visiting these endangered species in Northwest part of Rwanda. These statistics give us a clear picture and reasons why the researcher dedicated this study to branding and creating the awareness of this destination in Nordic customers.

A brief look at the table above, it is discovered that, Volcanoes National Park is lacking Nordic customers. It is therefore, the aim of this study to create the destination's image in Nordic customer mind. The table tells us that, the Nordic countries rank 3,5%, which turns out to be the lowest of all the current market. It is the purpose of this study to analyze this destination and later, will plan and market the destination to Nordic countries for more future visits.

5.1.8 SWOT Analysis of the destination

Existing literature and academic theories describe SWOT as – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This analysis is seen, as the most known tool for inspecting and analyzing the overall strategic position of the business and its environment. By defining SWOT, its criteria vary in factors. Strengths and weaknesses are known to be internal factors that a manager has some measure of control. Opportunities and threats are however, known to be external factors over which a manager of a business does not hold control of. (Management Study Guide 2008)

Graphic 16: SWOT analysis of the destination – Rwanda Volcanoes National Park



(Management studies, 2008)

Strengths

Following the SWOT analysis model mapped above, the strength factors are considered to be internal factors. These are the factors that drive the success of the destination and help to keep its position against its competitors. As we discussed earlier in the introductory part of this thesis, the location of the Rwanda Volcanoes National Park – Northeast of Rwanda, gives this destination the strength to attract more tourists, due to the fact that it's the only park that provides an opportunity to have an unforgettable experience with these endangered species living in volcanoes. (Interview with the Chief Warden, Mr. Prosper)

The park's Management structure, according to Chief Warden Prosper, during the interview conducted on 6th December, has been reformed in order to meet the required the successful strategic management plan established by the government in regard to survival of these gorillas. The national park's management is located in Kinigi and reports directly to the office of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation working under Rwanda Development Board, a body that was set up to bring all the government

agencies responsible for investor experience under one roof, (See chapter 4) of the thesis – the role of Rwandan office of Tourism and Conservation.

Kwita Izina ceremony also known as, “Gorilla naming” as discussed earlier in destination’s image (Chapter 3), has strengthened the image of the park and contributed to its awareness across the borders. The United Nations has established a strategy to support the Rwandan government in its commitment to conserve and protect the gorillas up in volcanoes national park. In addition, the collaboration between Uganda, DR of Congo and Rwandan government to tackle the challenges faced by gorillas in this region is in progress, according to Mr. Prosper, the chief warden of the park. This is seen as strength for the future of this national park. The collaboration between Rwanda and neighboring countries is due to the fact that, Uganda and Congo share this product with Rwanda from each side of their borders with Rwanda. It is in their advantage to collaborate with Rwanda, since the country has proved the effectiveness of its strategy and commitment in conserving these endangered species.

Weaknesses

Taking a closer look at the weaknesses, however, the location has its setbacks on this issue. It is seen that the destination is quite far away from the capital region and its mountainous relief cuts the motivation of tourists to take the trip towards the Northern part of the country with the limited infrastructure such as hospitals and roads. The trekking of gorillas in this destination includes enduring of a fairly steep climb, which is hard for some tourists groups.

Weak infrastructure in the region affects the destination as a whole. Poor roads and lack of hospitals and good hotels, clean water, touristic restaurants, and the distance of the destination from the city capital Kigali are all considered a challenge for tourists. The distance from Kigali capital takes around two hours of driving, and the gorilla

trekking itself covers a period of 1-2 hours depending on the location and time of their availability in the park.

The lack of information about this destination in some countries has led to a limited number of visitors to Volcanoes National Park. A brief look at the chart presenting key international arrivals to Rwanda, specifically Volcanoes National Park (See chart 1, page 4), reveals that 39% are from Europe. In the interview the Chief Warden Prosper noted that, there are a limited number of tourist arrivals from the Nordic countries. This fact generated the researcher to focus on the national park and to analyze the awareness in Nordic customers' mind by providing detailed information about Volcanoes National Park in order to attract more customers.

Opportunities

Regardless of the weaknesses discussed above, Rwanda Volcanoes National Park has opportunities to showcase itself and attract more tourists and maintain its repeat customers. The Research and improvement in awareness as well as effort by the Rwanda government are some of the opportunities of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. Scholars and other interested groups as well as researchers have played a great role in increasing awareness of the destination to the outside worlds. Marketers of service providers in the region have increased the identity of the destination across the borders and helped in designing the current brand image of this destination, which inhabits these endangered species hence its increase in tourists' visits.

The country's overall political stability has established confidence in tourists' safety and security. It has been argued that, the location of the destination has had a long lasting political instabilities for the past few years and civil unrest that hampered this region. But the government of Rwanda in its strategy has settled the political situation and ensured the safety and security of tourists for Volcanoes National Park.

Technological advancements are likely to be improving with Rwandan government's effort in collaboration with a Chinese Communication Network firm, which established communication network in rural areas including Kinigi, the habitat of

these endangered species. The access of electricity has been improved and the whole region is currently electrified.

Threats

Taking a closer look at the threats that affect the destination (Rwanda Volcanoes National Park) and the survival of these endangered species we find that, the main threats are caused by clearing and degrading of forests. This is due to the growing number of human population trying to make a living out of the area. The only solution to ensure the security of this gorilla habitat is to promote economic pastime of the area in order to allow the human population living around gorillas the opportunity to meet their needs.

Diseases are also seen to be a big threat to gorillas in these Rwandan volcanoes. Gorillas are more like humans with same anatomical as well as physiological features, which make them vulnerable to many of the same diseases as humans. The first time experience to an illness/virus that is innocuous to humans can destroy the whole gorillas population. They live in small groups and it is argued that, making any human contact is harmful to gorillas and causes life-threatening conditions. (Int'l Gorilla Conservation Program 2012)

Poaching is another issue that affects the living of these gorillas in Rwandan volcanoes of Northeastern part of the country. According to the interview with the Prosper, the Chief Warden of the park, poaching experience in this area comes from far back in history where he mentioned that “In the first two decades after the discovery of gorillas in Rwandan volcanoes, European and American scientists and trophy hunters killed over 50 mountain gorillas – and to this day poaching still puts the survival of these gorillas in jeopardy”. The Chief Warden also pointed out, “Gorilla poaching for food is totally rare in this region, but gorillas are injured or killed by traps set by hunters aiming to snare antelopes and bush pigs”.

The ongoing conflict and civil unrest in this region is also seen as putting these endangered species in a total disaster. The illegal mining in Democratic Republic of Congo, which shares borders with Rwanda and also known to habituate gorillas as well, has had a devastating impact on wildlife and that includes gorillas. (Chief Warden Prosper, 2011)

5.2 Key results from Survey

This section will discuss the key results from survey and opinions of respondents will be addressed in accordance to the survey questions. As discussed earlier in data collection process, (graphic 7), a quantitative research technique was applied and saw 20 survey questionnaires being distributed to around 20 travel agencies and tour operators in Kigali capital of Rwanda. These travel agencies and tour operators were chosen based on the services they provide to tourists who come to experience the trekking of gorillas in Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda.

It was the choice of the researcher to collect as much information as possible from these service providers given the fact that, they are the most involved parties in providing services in everyday life of tourists in terms of activities in all parks in the country. The following results are discussed based on information and opinions of these service providers during their responses in regard to questionnaires.

5.2.1 Background information on the respondents

Graphic 17: Presents the background of survey respondents of tourism service providers in Rwanda

Background information of Tourism Service Providers in Rwanda		
	Gender	
Male	13	65 %
Female	7	35 %
Total	20	
	Education	
High School	2	10 %
Bachelor's	11	55 %
Master's	7	35 %
Total	20	
	Company size	
Small	4	20 %
Medium	10	50 %
Big	6	30 %
Total	20	
	Position	
Manager	11	55 %
Clerk	7	35 %
Total	18	90 %
Missing	-2	10 %
	Location	
Kigali	20	100 %
	Field of Business	
Travel agency	16	80 %
Hotel/Restaurant	2	10 %
Total	18	90 %
Missing	-2	10 %

(Survey results, 2011)

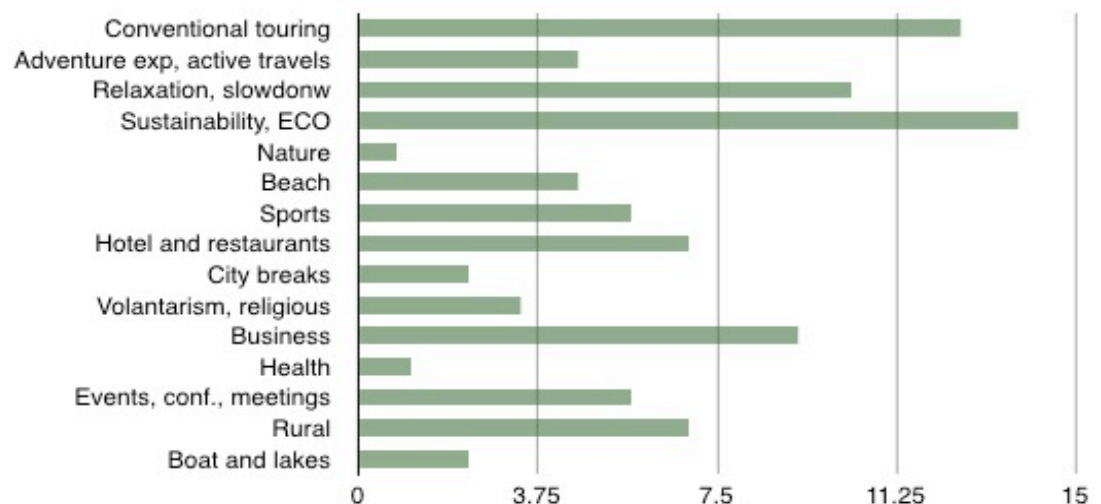
The table above illustrates the background of respondents and their field of expertise in tourism activities. The survey questionnaires were distributed to travel agencies mostly as it shows. Travel agencies are the ones involved in everyday services to tourists who visit the Volcanoes National Park and it was imperative that the researcher gets their detailed opinions about the destination in question.

A close look at the table above tells that 13 out of 20 respondents were males representing a percentage of 65%. Most of respondents hold a bachelor's degree from different academic disciplines with 55% whereas 35% hold master's level and 10% with high school respectively. All respondents are located in Kigali capital and their travel

agencies vary in sizes with the medium size companies being the most involved in offering services to national parks in the country including Volcanoes National Park, with 50% followed by big size companies, 30% and 20 occupied by small size travel agencies. 55% of respondents are from managerial positions, whereas office clerks represent a percentage of 35%. All respondents were Rwandans running local private owned companies. Some of the respondents did not share their views as it is shown from the table with the missing values in the positions they held in their offices and field of business they were specialized in.

5.2.2 Type of services/activity offered to foreign tourists

Graphic 18: Activities offered to foreign tourists by Rwandan service providers

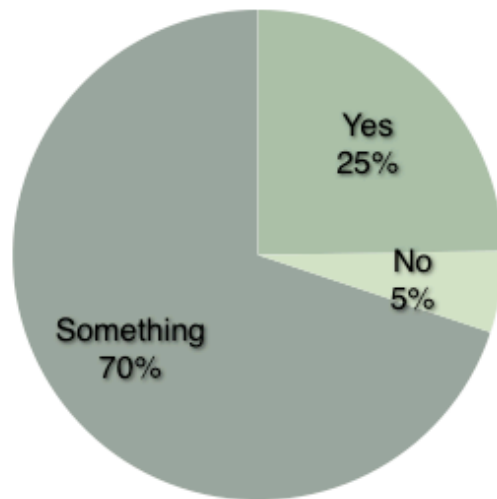


(Survey results, 2011)

The graphic above displays the specialized tourism areas of survey respondents and the type of services offered to their foreign tourists. As we discussed from the introductory chapter, we mentioned that Rwanda is focused on improving ecotourism and sustaining environment. It is again revealed from the graph with 13,8% that most of respondents prefer to provide services that promote sustainability and ecotourism in line with the government regulations. Conventional touring is also one of the most preferred areas of tourism in Rwanda according to respondents' opinions as it comes next with a rate of 12,6%.

5.2.3 Level of knowledge about Nordic tourists as potential target market

Graphic 19: Are you aware of the expectations of Nordic tourists?



(Survey results, 2011)

The chart above represents the general knowledge of Rwandan tourism service providers in regard to their potential customers. These results reflect to the level of knowledge of respondents have on their Nordic potential customers. According to the survey respondents, at least 25% are aware of Nordic tourists' expectations whereas 70% know a little about Nordic tourists.

It was the main purpose of this research to put together information needed to start off a strategic branding plan of the Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. It is revealed that at least 5% of respondents did not know anything about Nordic tourists. With the results given above, we aim to put this destination to great heights of awareness into Nordic markets and pull in tourists from Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark respectively.

5.2.4 Strategies to attract foreign tourists by service providers

Rwanda tourism service providers in line to increase their clientele and attracting more tourists are establishing new packages in addition to trekking gorillas. Package activities in addition to Gorilla trekking are seen as a strategy put in place by service providers in Rwanda to attract more tourists. The accommodation is on the other hand improving to better standards in order to motivate tourists in staying longer for more activities.

It is argued that though most of tourists to Rwanda are looking forward to trek gorillas in Volcanoes National Park but tourism service providers have packages for their tourists in addition to gorilla trekking. Majority of respondents definitely agree with adding gorilla trekking to their package and the rest agree if it is combined with a city break in Kigali capital or other cities as displayed in the graph above.

In addition to trekking gorillas up in these Rwandan volcanoes, the destination itself offers other attractions and activities. The destination has a range of eight massive chains of volcanoes that everyone should have a privilege to taste. Tourists will find amazing beautiful birds and golden monkeys that welcome them as they start entering the park. (Mr. Prosper said during the interview, 2011)

5.2.5 Challenges for service providers in Rwanda

The results of this study confirm a lack of tourists' information. This needs to be improved in regard to promoting the awareness of what Rwanda has to offer to the outside markets. The researcher of this study had moments to share views with respondents in words during which, one of the respondents said that "majority of guides in parks are not professionals in terms of training and they lack necessary skills and experience in conservation and tourism industry itself.

The researcher took time to do own observations during data collecting process. It was imperative for the researcher to go and trek these endangered species and have a personal experience with the destination, the gorillas, and the services and study the

entire image of the destination. During the observation, the researcher focused on how the service was delivered and from personal observational point of view, there is lack of confidence in the guides' team, lack of language skills, the hesitation to approach tourists, lack of satisfactory answers to tourists' questions etc.

The government of Rwanda has been trying hard through the office of tourism and conservation to include the local community in tourism activities by participating in local projects. It is revealed however, that this initiative could be even more effective if the population had direct benefits resulting from their participation. The local communities residing around the park sites cause problems and end up harming the gorillas due to the pressure of lack of land concerns and other economical reasons. If the community had a direct interest resulting from these projects that involve local population it would ease the situation through a mutual understanding.

5.2.6 Opportunities associated with general tourism in Rwanda

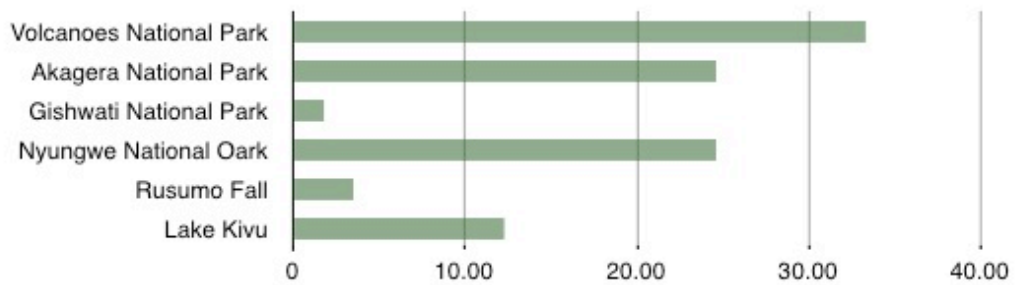
This chapter will discuss the opportunities associated with investing in tourism in Rwanda. The country is currently a nation reascent and a country that is in advanced stage to rehabilitate. It is a country that is looking to a brighter future. The level of political stability has contributed to the development of not only politically but economically and social achievements. Rwanda's economy may still be small and predominantly agricultural, in the last few years the country has focused on its tourism potentials and has managed to attract much interest in foreign tourists in what Rwanda has to offer. (Rwanda network, 2012)

The country's national parks including the unique Volcanoes National park that offers an unforgettable experience with endangered gorillas has contributed to the growing interest in private investors to devote their investment in tourism industry. The safe and quick access to get around with short distances to destinations has attracted more interest in investing in tourism in Rwanda. The country's size makes it easy for tourist

providers arrange itineraries that will see tourists get a chance to sightsee the entire tourism attractions in the country. (RDB 2010/2011 Reports)

5.3 Destination analysis

Graphic 20: Respondents' most sold destinations to their European and American customers.

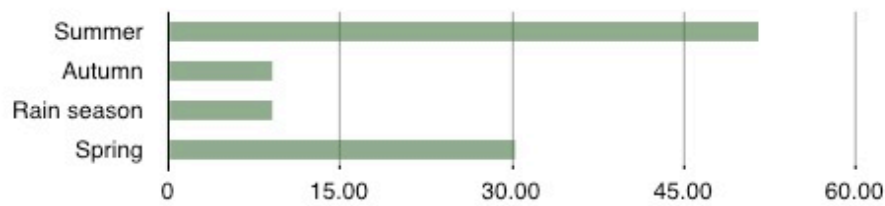


(Survey results, 2011)

Volcanoes National Park is, according to the graph above ranks the most sold destination among its competitors such as Nyungwe National Park, Akagera National Park, Lake Kivu, Rusumo falls and Gishwati National Park. The destination ranks high with 33,3% followed by Akagera NP with 24,6% and lake Kivu with 12,3% and the least in competition are seen to be Rusumo falls and Gishwati respectively.

5.4 Most preferred season by European and American customers to Rwanda

Graphic 22: Most preferred season



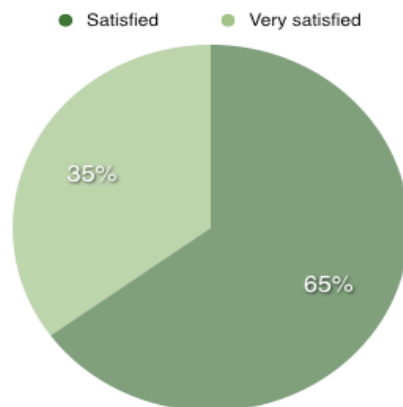
(Survey results, 2011)

A brief glance at graph 6 above, which specifies the most favorable seasons by tourists from Europe and America, we find that an affluent number of tourists prefer to travel to Rwanda during Summer with at least 52% being the highest. Summer in Rwanda ranges from months of June to September and seen, as the best time of a year for gorilla trekking in this Central African state.

Spring, is however cited as one of the good times to travel to Rwanda according to the results from respondents. Traveling to Rwanda is somewhat preferred in months of February to Early May with 30% according to the results above.

5.5 The level of customer satisfaction

Graphic 23: Level of customer satisfaction in past trips



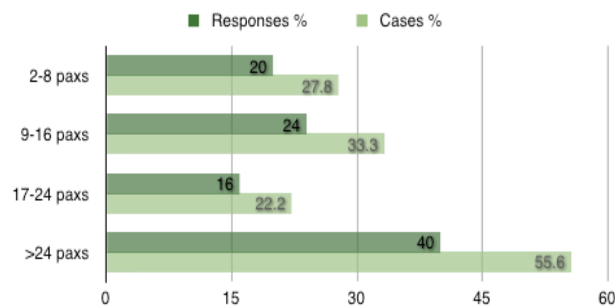
(Survey results, 2011)

According to results analyzed from data collected by a quantitative method in particular, the chart above represents the level of customer satisfaction during the previous trips to Rwanda in general. The survey respondents however, point out that at least 35% of customers were satisfied, whereas a high percentage says that 65% of customers were satisfied.

It is with these findings that we recommend more work to be done in order to improve the quality of services not only in Volcanoes NP but also the general tourism services in Rwanda such as accommodation, infrastructure, staff trainings etc.

5.6 Ideal size group

Graphic 24: Preferred ideal size group of tourists

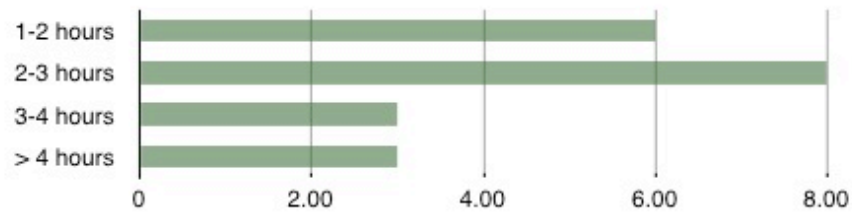


(Survey results, 2011)

The graph above illustrates the ideal size group based on the size and capability of different tourism service providers in Rwanda. Most of tourism service providers, who were the survey respondents, say that at least 40% of them prefer to deal with a size group of 24 persons and more. On the other hand, 24% point out that a group of 9 to 16 gives the company a comfort to provide services to their customers with excellent delivery respectively. Whereas 20% would like to deal with a size group of 2 to 8 tourists and finally 16% prefers a group of 17 to 24 tourists.

5.7 Desired duration to activities

Graphic 21: Suitable duration of transport to activities



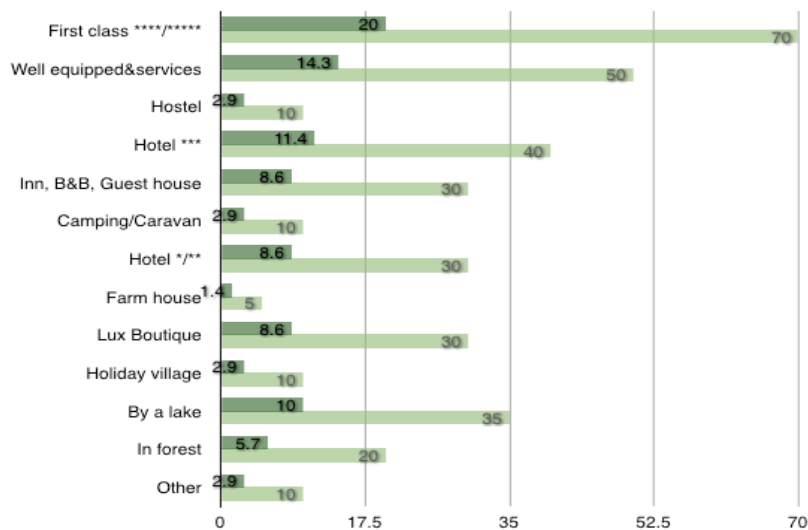
(Survey results, 2011)

The distance and duration of transport to and from activities according to tourism service providers in Rwanda is most likely to be between 2-3 hours. Other respondents however thought that a period of 1-2 hours would suit their services depending on the location of activities and attractions. In case of Volcanoes National Park, it is said to be an entire day.

Travelling from Kigali Capital to the Northwest part of the country towards Volcanoes national park takes a driving period of two hours and takes approximately one hours of trekking these endangered species, then 2 more hours of driving back to Kigali. The whole process of briefings before gorilla trekking plus the time of traveling and trekking sums up a full day.

5.8 Accommodation

Graphic 25: Accommodation for Nordic tourists according to Rwanda tourism service providers



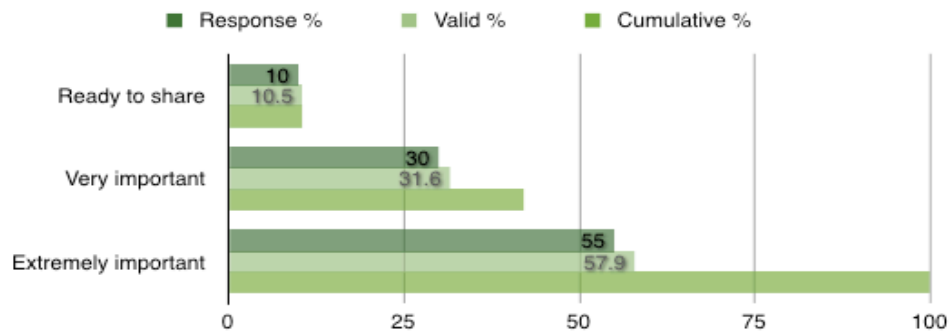
(Survey results 2011)

Graphic 25 looks at accommodation in regard to Nordic customers. A leading percentage of tourism service providers in Rwanda, which is 20% points out that the type of accommodation they would book for their Nordic customers is "First Class Hotel 4*/5*". While 14% say they would book well equipped cottage or holiday home on the lakeside with services included. 11% however, would book a mid-grade hotel 3* for their Nordic customers according to the survey respondents' results.

There are 10% of respondents who thought that booking accommodation for Nordic customers by the lake would be their best take in this regard. At least 9% would be glad to book for their customers from Nordic countries a budget hotel of 2* and 3* respectively. It is also revealed that, another 9% would book luxurious boutique hotel, Country Inn, bed and breakfast or guesthouse in their choice.

5.8.1 Private toilettes and showers

Graphic 26: The use of private toilettes and showers

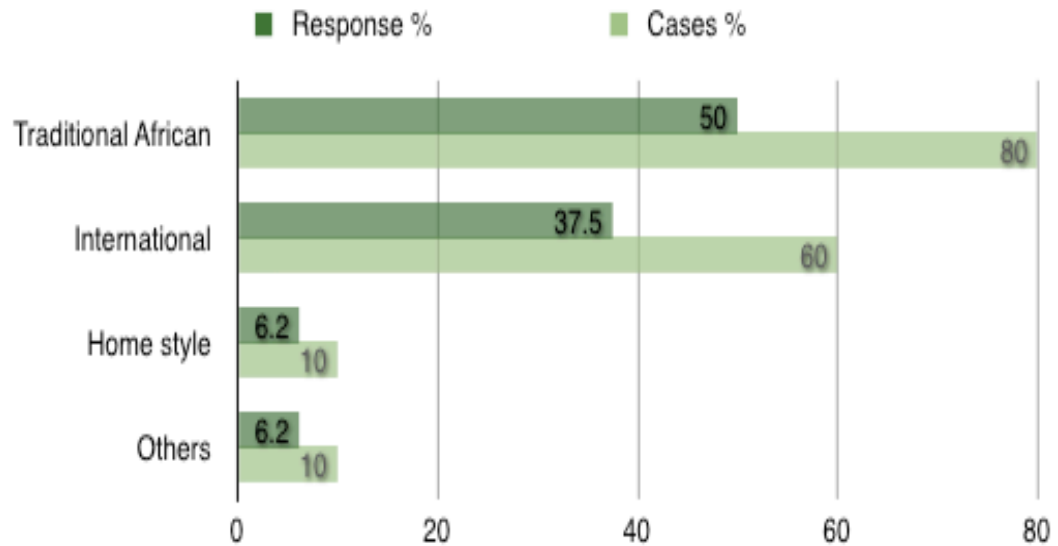


(Survey results 2011)

When asked about the importance private toilettes and showers in their opinion in regard to their customers from Nordic countries, 55% of tourism service providers in Rwanda say that it is extremely important to offer private toilettes and showers in accommodation for their Nordic customers. Whereas 30% also think that it is important to have private toilettes and showers for their customers. 10% however, suggests that they would offer ready to share type of toilettes and showers in their accommodations.

5.8.2 Food and cuisine

Graphic 27: The choice of food and cuisine

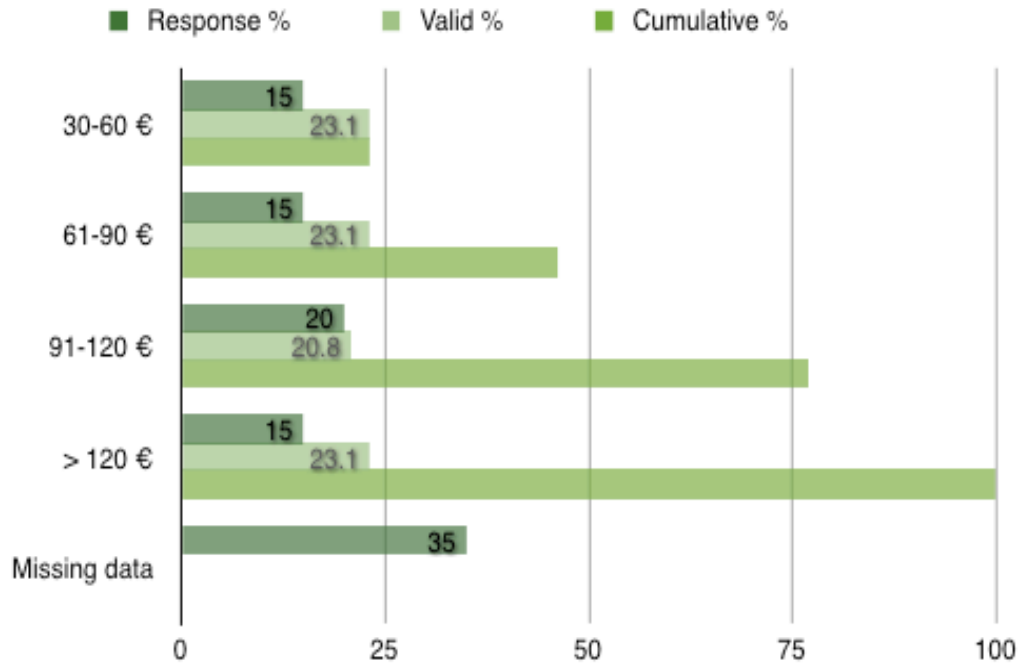


(Survey results, 2011)

Following the results from survey respondents during data collecting in Rwanda, the researcher thought that it is imperative to hear what the Rwandan tourism service providers think about the food and cuisine to offer to their customers with Nordic tourists in particular. The above graph represents the findings where at least 50% of respondents say they would offer “*Traditional African Cuisine*”. While a compounded 38% say they would offer International cuisine and 6% would offer home-style food as illustrated in the graph 27.

5.9 The cost per day for the tourist activities

Graphic 28: The fee charged per day for tourist activities

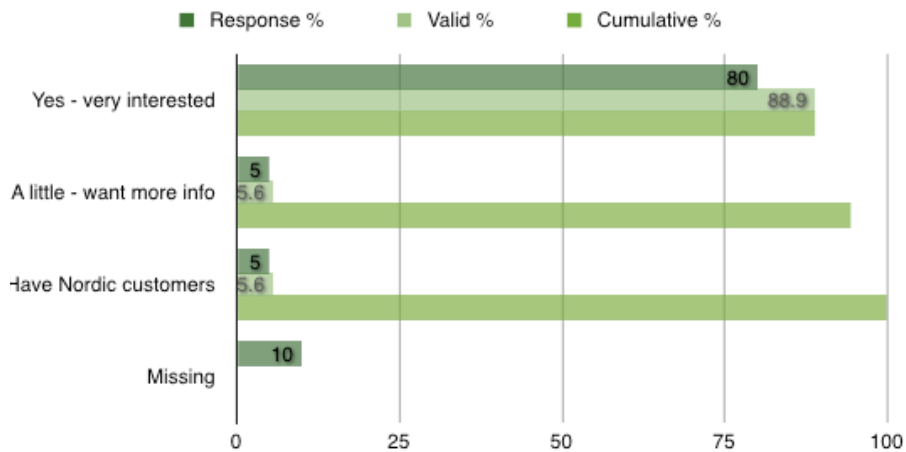


(Survey results, 2011)

The graph above shows the charges and fees charged by tourism service providers in Rwanda based on different criteria of services that a company has to offer to its customers. 20% of respondents charge 91 €-120 € per day for their tourists' activities. 15% of respondents charge 30 € - 60 € and 15 % charge 61 € - 90.

5.10 Interest to consider Nordic tourists

Graphic 29: Interest to consider Nordic tourists as potential market by Rwandan tourism service providers



(Survey results, 2011)

The above final graph represents the interest of respondents in considering Nordic tourists as potential customers after filling out the survey questionnaire. As it shows in the above graph, 80% were very interested in considering and contacting Nordic tourism service providers for joint agreements and start working together to improve tourism-based business between these countries and Rwanda. Another 5% would like to know a little bit more about Nordic customers before considering them as their target customers. It is revealed however, that 5% of respondents actually already have Nordic customers.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

The discussion in this chapter will be based on result analysis of the collected data by means of interviews conducted as well as analyzed study from surveys. The theoretical part of this study, (chapter 2), played a great role in illustrating the notion of the destination to the researcher and understanding the brands and building strong brands especially in case of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. As we discussed before from the introductory part of this thesis, we described the main objective of this study, which aims at branding Rwanda Volcanoes National Park as a general project. This thesis is however, only focused on the analysis of the destination investigate its current environmental operating situation by tackling the key issues and variables to be studied upon before as part of strategic planning of any destination's analysis.

6.1 Summary of the findings

This section will provide the summary of this study and its findings. The main objective of this research has been about studying and collecting information to analyze Rwanda Volcanoes National Park as the first step of building the park's brand. The investigation of this study was, as illustrated in (graphic 7) carried out with means of survey questionnaires, oral interviews, desk research as well as researcher's personal observation.

The questionnaires were distributed to travel agencies and tour operators around Kigali capital, which deal with everyday life of tourists especially in case of Volcanoes National Park. The questionnaires were aimed at respondents who hold managerial positions since the research was looking for concrete information based on the current operational environment of the destination. Only 20 questionnaires were distributed and as we saw in graphic 17, most of the respondents hold master's degrees and bachelor's degrees from different academic disciplines.

The general investigative results show that, Rwanda has a rich and attractive culture. Majority of the respondents agree that the country indicates a range of beautiful attractions and unspoiled nature. From observational point of view, there is lack of tourism infrastructure such as distribution of electricity and clean water in the region and more importantly in case of Northwest part of the country in Volcano Mountains where these endangered species reside.

6.2 Suggestions to Rwanda Development Board, office of tourism and conservation in Rwanda

After a thorough study of the destination by means interviews, observations, survey results as well as desk information collecting as tools used to gather information for this research, the researcher outlines suggestions to the office of Rwanda tourism board. It is with in this chapter that we discuss these suggestions from researcher's point of view as a result from the data analyzed.

The potential of Volcanoes National Park for tourism are great and its progress will depend on the overall economic growth, sticking on the strategic plan, widen the research towards these endangered species and so on. It looks that, since the destination, Volcanoes National Park is unique and only park that provides this an unforgettable experience with gorilla trekking, there are greater possibilities that its touristic activities will continue dominating with new plans to develop even further. Rwanda has its tourism policy but the resource and institutions to implement it effectively and get the tourism operating fully are still not proper.

Tourism activities in Volcanoes National Park have been mostly depending on natural tourists attractions such as gorilla trekking. With this unique natural existence in the park, the park's administration and the Rwandan government should consider a proper conservation strategy that will help manage and sustain the environment. The solution to this would be establishing tourism guidelines that will develop the environment in a friendly manner. There is need to promote training and fill the existing gap of

professional challenge. Tourism industry is different from most of other sectors, therefore, it needs a careful thorough and a well managed strategic plan. The training of personnel with the current skills needed in tourism industry would push forward the development of this destination.

In continuation to this study, there is still so much to work on in order to execute its primary objective, which is branding Rwanda Volcanoes National Park. The branding as discussed earlier, (graphic 4) has three steps to be followed in order to brand a product in a more effective and successful process. Graphic 4 (Brand Identity Branding) maps down a process that starts with analysis of a destination, which this study has been concentrated on, then it suggests that the next step would be analysis of the competition and the third step looks at the consumer analysis.

6.3 Suggestions to service providers in Rwanda

Tourism industry is increasingly recognized in Rwanda as capable of working successfully in local economic development strategy. Tourism businesses create jobs, bring foreign currency into local markets and can help diversification of local economic grounds. The researcher of this study suggests that improving of overall quality of products and services in tourism such as accommodation, tour guides, tour operators, restaurants and other services always lifts up the level of national regional and international demand. Service providers in Rwanda, thus, should promote competitiveness in tourism industry and strive to provide valuable information on their quality standards for both tourists and travel industry.

The research recommends Rwandan tourism service providers to evaluate the present tourism quality situation especially via negotiations with government of Rwanda and other stakeholders such as Rwanda Tourism and Conservation and ORPTN in order to identify customers' needs and wants as well as expectations. It is important to work closely with UNWTO following its modules to tackle issues of stakeholders, direction, environment, facilities, resources and overall aims. Tourism service providers are the

key to successful tourism operations in Rwanda in close cooperation with the government. A complete analysis of tourism industry should be presented in order to review existing criteria of operating environment to establish and formulate the new development plan.

6.4 Suggestions for further studies

It is from my observation that there is a huge gap of information to be studied about before reaching the main objective of the branding process of Volcanoes National Park. Future studies and researchers of this topic should focus on how to develop a model for Rwanda Volcanoes National Park and its performance in regard to competitors. Developing strategies of competitiveness will bring a new picture to the strategists and will be able to analyze the image of Volcanoes National Park and help establish a strong position and build a relationship towards potential customers.

Among other destinations and national parks in Rwanda, Uganda, DR Congo and the entire East African block, Rwanda Volcanoes National Park needs to position itself as the upcoming destination for high-end travellers coming to the entire East African Community region. This means that the destination needs to differentiate its position from its competitors such as gorilla trekking in Uganda and gorilla trekking in DR Congo as well as other local national parks like Akagera, Nyungwe and Gishwati National Park respectively.

The third step of successful branding of Volcanoes National Park would be analysis of customers. It is argued that, understanding of customers' interest, needs and wants is the key element to creating a brand image and awareness among customers, (Aaker 2010, 79). After understanding the image of a destination and its current operating environment and then its competitive situation plus analysis of customers' interests, then the implementation and communication program comes in a flat line. It is imperative to take a thorough investigation of the potential markets and analyze their customer interests. The main target market according to this study has been Nordic

Countries. It is suggested that, a well-structured study of customer-to-customer and business-to-business analysis be carried out during the consumer analysis in order to get an insight picture of the target markets and potential customers' behavior.

6.5 Reliability and validity

The reliability of the research and the validity of recommendations can in the first place be projected through the quoted sources. As stated in the introduction, the research is carried out with the aim to explain the basics and to describe the process of brand building of Volcanoes National Park. The research discusses the importance of brands and how they can bring value to organizations, destinations and customers. The quantitative research and the results thereof can be taken by face value.

Suggestions outlined in this thesis are based on data results, observational experience of the researcher, as well as oral interviews carried out during the data collecting process as illustrated in (graphic 7), which maps the research approaches and methods.

Academic theories applied in this thesis to help us understand the scope of brands and branding have played a big role in pointing out suggestions to the office of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation, government of Rwanda, and Rwanda tourism service providers. The literature in this thesis also led to suggestions for future further studies by any interest groups. It is imperative that the branding of VNP be carried out following the structural design if this study is to be continued to execute its primary goal in a broader strategy.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions

1. Could you please introduce yourself and the position and role you play at Rwanda Tourism and Conservation office?
2. Could you also introduce briefly what is Rwanda Tourism Board and what it does?
3. Could you mention the core values, which pushed for the reform of Rwanda Tourism and Conservation operations?
4. What are the key responsibilities of Rwanda Tourism & Conservation in the national Tourism strategy?
5. What are the key strategic tourism pillars in the Republic of Rwanda?
6. If Rwanda Volcanoes National Park is one of your most visited parks, could you please introduce that national park to someone who does not know anything about it?
7. What is the mission of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park and what are the goals and objectives for the moment?
8. What are the key products and services does the Rwanda National Park offer
9. Who are your current key customers for the Rwanda National Park?
10. What do you see as main pull factors for these customers to visit that park?
11. Who are the key potential customers that you would like to attract? Why?
12. Why do the current customers choose your park?
13. How would you like the Rwanda National Park to be perceived by national customers
14. How would you like that park to be perceived by foreign customers?
15. What kind of personality would you like to project through the Rwanda Volcanoes National Park Brand?
16. Who are the key actors in case of Rwanda Volcanoes National Park?
17. Which role do different actors play for the development of the park?
18. What are the most important relationships between all these stakeholders
19. Could you please describe the Rwanda Volcanoes National Park as if it was a

person, a product, and an organization, a color, a shape, an animal? Could you please use some adjectives according to the three different roles?

20. In your opinion, what are the strengths of the Volcanoes National Park?
21. What may be the difficulties this park may face?
22. What are the future opportunities for this park?
23. Are there some threats the Volcanoes National park is facing
24. What are your office wishes as the national office for Tourism?
25. How would you like to describe the Volcanoes national Park in the coming 5-10 years?

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for Tourism Service Providers in Rwanda

1 Background Information	
Respondent	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Education	High School <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate <input type="checkbox"/> Other - What? <input type="checkbox"/>
Size of the company	Small size <input type="checkbox"/> Medium size <input type="checkbox"/> Big Size <input type="checkbox"/>
Position	Managerial <input type="checkbox"/> Office Clerk <input type="checkbox"/> Lower position <input type="checkbox"/>
Location of the company	Kigali <input type="checkbox"/> Ruhengeri <input type="checkbox"/> Gisenyi <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> _____
Field of Business	Travel Agent <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel and Restaurant <input type="checkbox"/> Transport <input type="checkbox"/> Airline <input type="checkbox"/> Church <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> What _____

2 Company's operations are specialized in (you can choose more than one option)							
Conventional Touring	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adventure Expeditions Active travels	<input type="checkbox"/>	Relaxation Slow down holidays	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sustainability and Ecotourism	<input type="checkbox"/>

Nature Travels	<input type="checkbox"/>	Beach Holidays	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sport Events	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hotel and Restaurant	<input type="checkbox"/>
City Breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	Voluntarism/ Religious tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Business Travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Events, conferences and meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>	Boat on Lakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____	

3 Your Business operations are focused mainly on customers from							
USA, Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>	West Europe	<input type="checkbox"/>	African countries	<input type="checkbox"/>	Central Europe	<input type="checkbox"/>
Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian countries	<input type="checkbox"/>	Southern Europe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eastern Europe & Russia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nordic Countries	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rwanda	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		

4 Which are the most sold destinations for your European and American customers? (You can chose more than one option)							
Rwanda Volcanoes National Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	Akagera National Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gishwati National Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nyungwe National Park	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rusumo fall	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kivu Lac	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

5 Can you specify the seasons when your European and American customers usually travel the most to Rwanda? (You can choose more than one option)							
Summer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Autumn	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rainy season-period	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spring	<input type="checkbox"/>

6 Were your foreign customers satisfied with experience and services in the past trips to RWANDA?							
Very satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	I can't say	<input type="checkbox"/>

Imagine that your company would have the chance of creating a product Customers from Finland, Sweden and Norway would be interested in. Could you select your preferred options

9 In your opinion what is the ideal group size to deal with (you can chose more than 1)						
2-8 paxs	<input type="checkbox"/>	8-16 paxs	<input type="checkbox"/>	16-24 paxs	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than 24Paxs <input type="checkbox"/>
10 What kind of accommodation would you book for Nordic customers?						
First Class Hotel 4*/5*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Well- equipped cottage or holiday home, on the lake side, with services	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hostel (dormitories and toilettes to share)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sleep in forest shelter <input type="checkbox"/>
Mid-grade Hotel 3*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Country Inn, Bed & Breakfast or Guest House	<input type="checkbox"/>	Camping/ Caravan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family home <input type="checkbox"/>
Budget Hotel 1*/2*	<input type="checkbox"/>	Farmhouse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Luxurious Boutique Hotel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holiday Village <input type="checkbox"/>
Located by a Lake	<input type="checkbox"/>	Located in the Forest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Others	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11 Rank from 1 to 5 how important is for you to offer to your Nordic customers, private toilettes and showers in the accommodation.						
1 Not important, 2 They could share, 3 Important, 4 Very important, 5 Extremely important						
		1	2	3	4	5
Private toilette and shower		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 What kind of food would you like to offer to your Nordic Customers? (You can chose more than one option)						
Traditional African Cuisine	<input type="checkbox"/>	International Cuisine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Home-style food	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gourmet food <input type="checkbox"/>
Others (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>					
13 How much would you be prepared to charge per day for the tourist activities?						
30 - 60	<input type="checkbox"/>	60 - 90	<input type="checkbox"/>	90 -120	<input type="checkbox"/>	+ 120 <input type="checkbox"/>
14 Which is your duration for the daily transfers to the activities/attractions? (One-way).						
1-2 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	2-3 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	3-4 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than 4 hours <input type="checkbox"/>
15 Are you aware of the expectations of Nordic Tourists?						

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	I know something about them	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16 After you have answered this questionnaire, did it awake any interest in you to consider Nordic countries as a good market for your product portfolio?						
Yes it did, I am very interested now	<input type="checkbox"/>	No, I am not interested	<input type="checkbox"/>	A little bit, I would like to know more	<input type="checkbox"/>	I know and have Nordic customers already
17 Would you like to be contacted by Nordic Outbound service providers?						
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>			