MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

RURAL DESTINATION VULNERABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM PROJECTS IN SELECTED RURAL DESTINATION AREAS IN BUSOGA SUB-REGION

BY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL (FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH) IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

PLAN A

NOVEMBER, 2023

DECLARATION

I, **Mugoya Akibu**, declare that this research dissertation is my own original work and has never been submitted for the award of a Degree in any University/ College/Institution in and outside Uganda.

Signed..... **Date:** 21/11/2023.....

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APPROVAL

This research dissertation has been submitted with my guidance as a University Supervisor.

Signed..... Date..21/11/2023.....

Assoc. Prof. Atcero Milburga

Signed..... Date..21/11/2023.....

Mr. John Paul Aporu

DEDICATION

I wholeheartedly dedicate this dissertation to my parents Mr. Mustafa Mwondha and Mrs. Hadijah Namaganda and the entire family. Your relentless love, support, and encouragement have been my guiding light throughout this academic journey. This achievement is a testament to your sacrifices and belief in me. Thank you for always standing by my side.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the individuals who have contributed to the successful completion of this research dissertation, "*Rural Destination Vulnerability, Sustainability and Growth Perceptions of Community Based Tourism Projects in Selected Rural Destination Areas in Busoga Sub-Region*," as part of the requirements for the Master of Hospitality and Tourism Management program at Makerere University Business School.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to my esteemed University Supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Atcero Milburga, for your guidance, support, and invaluable expertise throughout this research journey. Your steadfast commitment to my academic growth and your insights have been instrumental in shaping this dissertation.

I also wish to acknowledge and express my gratitude to Mr. John Paul Aporu, who provided valuable assistance and support during the course of this research. Your contributions and dedication to this study have been highly appreciated.

To my parents Mr. Mustafa Mwondha and Mrs. Hadijah Namaganda, friends and family, thank you for your understanding, encouragement, and patience during this academic endeavor. Your support has been a source of strength for me.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Makerere University Business School, particularly the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for providing the platform and resources necessary for the successful completion of this research.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to all the respondents from the Busoga Sub-Region who participated in this study, as without their valuable insights and contributions, this research would not have been possible.

Once again, thank you to everyone who played a part, big or small, in this research journey.

May the Almighty Allah bless you all!

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the relationship between rural tourism destination vulnerability, sustainability and growth perceptions of Community Based Tourism (CBT) projects in selected rural tourism destination areas of Busoga Sub-region. This was guided by the following objectives; to examine the relationship between rural destination vulnerability and growth perceptions of CBT projects, to examine the relationship between rural destination sustainability and growth perceptions of CBT projects, to determine the relationship between rural destination vulnerability and rural destination sustainability, and to examine the combined effect of rural destination vulnerability, sustainability and growth perceptions of CBT projects in rural destinations.

The study adopted a cross-sectional design, utilizing quantitative and qualitative methods, focusing on 476 households near four vulnerable rural tourism destinations in Busoga Sub-region (Kagulu Hill, Bishop Hannington site, Itanda falls, and Buswiikira site). A sample size of 214 households was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, selected through Purposive Random Sampling. Primary data was gathered from self-administered questionnaires and secondary data from various sources. Quantitative data underwent analysis using SPSS.

The study found a positive relationship between rural destination vulnerability and CBT project growth, as well as a strong correlation between rural destination sustainability and project growth. Additionally, it revealed a significant and positive link between rural destination vulnerability and sustainability, with a regression model indicating their combined impact on project growth. The study's key recommendations emphasize prioritizing vulnerability management in rural destinations, particularly addressing seasonal impacts, economic shocks, and climate change, especially within the Busoga Sub-region context.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

The section provides the background of the study, the purpose of the study, the statement of the problem, the research objectives, and the significance of the research study as well as the conceptual framework.

1.2 Background to the study

Rural tourism has garnered considerable attention as a potential avenue for economic advancement and community empowerment worldwide (Arintoko, Ahmad, Gunawan & Supadi, 2020). The Busoga Sub-region in Uganda also joins this trend, boasting cultural heritage, natural beauty, and distinct local communities that attract both domestic and international tourists. Nonetheless, the growth of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) projects within these rural tourism destinations presents challenges related to vulnerability and sustainability.

CBT project growth perceptions refer to an individual's subjective interpretation of an ongoing expansion and enhancement of CBT initiatives or developments (Arintoko et al., 2020). The Busoga Sub-region, rich in tourism potential, offers an ideal backdrop for such growth perceptions, although realizing this potential requires a multifaceted approach. By addressing vulnerabilities and ensuring CBT project sustainability, the region can become a thriving rural tourism hub. This expansion benefits CBT project size, community welfare, and local involvement through training (Giampiccoli, Mzobanzi & Dłużewska, 2020). However, despite positive evidence such as meetings with influential figures like the Speaker of Parliament (Rtn. Rebecca Kadaga) with the Busoga Consortium (Speaker of Parliament, 2019) and President Yoweri Museveni during the Bishop Hannington Memorial Day Celebrations (Bishop

Hannington Memorial Day Celebrations, 2022), CBT project growth in the sub-region remains limited.

Understanding CBT project growth in rural tourism contexts entails grappling with challenges linked to vulnerability and sustainability. Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2016) define rural destination vulnerability as the degree to which social, economic, and environmental systems are exposed to and affected by hazards and shocks, and their ability to cope and recover. Vulnerability relates to fragile ecosystems, limited infrastructure, and external factors like climate change leave rural destinations vulnerable (Kim and Marcouiller, 2015). Ahebwa, Aporu, and Nyakaana (2016) highlight how this vulnerability can jeopardize tourism viability and local livelihoods.

Conversely, rural destination sustainability means maintaining long-term economic, social, and environmental well-being while preserving local communities and natural resources (Tumwebaze, 2019). Striking a balance between economic growth, environmental conservation, and socio-cultural preservation is pivotal. To avoid resource degradation, cultural loss, and social tensions due to increased tourism, the Busoga Sub-region's rural destinations must adopt sustainable practices.

The study employs the Tourism Theory of Change (ToC) to enhance comprehension of CBT project growth in rural settings. This theory focuses on CBT project growth and elucidates the interconnectedness of destination vulnerability, sustainability, and community-based tourism project expansion. ToC outlines causal steps illustrating how interventions lead to positive outcomes. Applying ToC to the variables' relationship enables researchers to establish a logical progression.

Upon all the above perspectives, the researcher is inspired to carry out this study in order to explore the relationship between rural tourism destination vulnerability, sustainability, and growth perceptions of CBT projects in selected rural tourism destination areas of the Busoga Sub-region.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

As rural economies increasingly rely on tourism, understanding the complex interplay of vulnerability, sustainability, and the growth perceptions of CBT projects becomes crucial (Kesande, 2023). Although prior research has explored these connections, there is a need to better grasp the subtle mechanisms by which vulnerability and sustainability levels influence the development of CBT projects in rural areas. Despite existing evidence linking destination vulnerability to tourism sustainability, the specific ways vulnerability and sustainability shape the evolution of CBT projects in rural destinations have not been thoroughly investigated especially in Uganda's Busoga Sub-region. This gap may arise from the prevailing focus on broader macro vulnerability and sustainability indicators such as health, security, and socio-cultural aspects, as well as energy conservation, cultural preservation, and waste management. This approach tends to overlook micro-level factors like climate change, seasonality, economic shocks, and considerations of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT), and Ecotourism. If this continues, the full potential for CBT projects may not be realized in rural destinations. To bridge this gap, this study aimed to explore the intricate relationship between these overlooked micro-level indicators of vulnerability, sustainability, and the growth perceptions of CBT projects in rural destinations.

1.4 Research purpose

The study explored the relationship between rural tourism destination vulnerability, sustainability, and growth perceptions of CBT projects in selected rural tourism destination areas of the Busoga Sub-region.

1.5 Research objectives

This research was guided by the following specific study objective;

To examine the relationship between rural destination vulnerability and the growth perceptions of community-based Tourism projects in rural destinations.

To explore the relationship between rural destination sustainability and the growth perceptions of Community Tourism projects in rural destinations.

To determine the relationship between rural destination vulnerability and rural destination sustainability.

To establish the combined effect of rural destination vulnerability, sustainability, and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in rural destinations.

1.6 Research questions

What is the relationship between rural destination vulnerability and the growth perceptions of community-based Tourism projects in rural tourism destinations?

What is the relationship between rural tourism destination sustainability and the growth perceptions of community-based Based Tourism projects in rural tourism destinations?

What is the relationship between rural destination vulnerability and rural destination sustainability?

What is the combined effect of rural tourism destination vulnerability, sustainability, and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in rural tourism destinations?

1.7 Scope of the study

1.7.1 Geographical scope

The study was conducted in the Busoga Sub region with a focus on the growth perceptions of CBT projects in rural tourism destination areas. The rural destination areas were selected by purposive sampling method.

1.7.2 Subject scope

The research was restricted to rural destination vulnerability, sustainability, and growth perceptions of CBT projects in tourism destination rural areas of the Busoga region.

1.7.3 Time scope

The research used a cross-sectional design.

1.8 Significance of the study

The study aimed at addressing the pressing need for sustainable development in rural areas. Rural destinations often face vulnerabilities such as climate change and economic shocks which can impede their growth. By analyzing these vulnerabilities and proposing sustainable solutions, the study may guide policies and strategies that promote balanced economic, social, and environmental development in rural destinations crucial for building resilience and enhancing adaptive capacity. This can lead to more robust communities that are better equipped to respond to and recover from challenges.

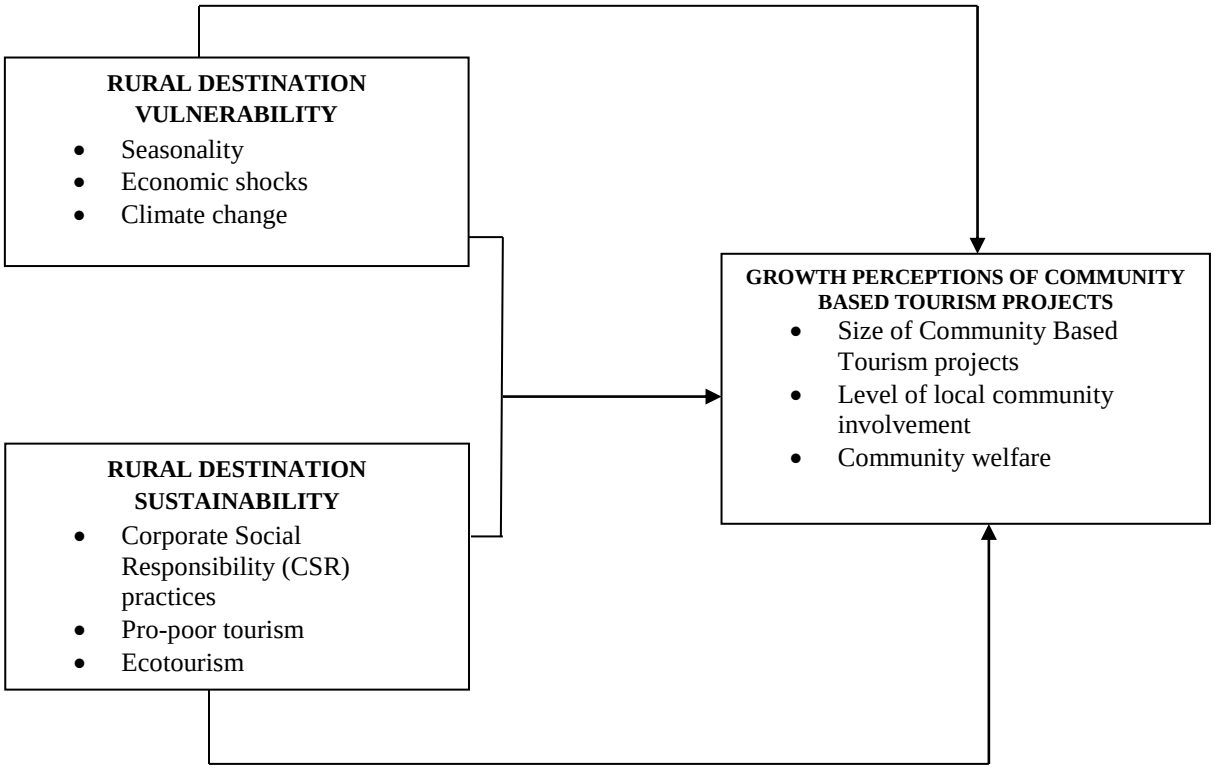
CBT projects have the potential to empower local residents economically, socially, and culturally. By investigating the growth potential of these projects, the study aimed to shed light

on how they can be designed and managed to maximize benefits for the community. This empowerment can lead to improved livelihoods, increased pride in local heritage, and stronger social cohesion.

From an academic standpoint, the study adds to the body of knowledge related to rural tourism, sustainability, and community-based initiatives. It can serve as a reference for researchers, educators, and students interested in exploring the intricate relationships between destination vulnerability, sustainability, and community-based tourism growth. This study's findings have demonstrated the application of the Tourism Theory of Change to address vulnerabilities in rural destinations.

1.9 Conceptual framework

Figure 1.1: Showing the conceptual framework



Source: Adapted from Scott, Hall and Gössling (2020), Mtapuri, Camilleri & Dłużewska, (2022), Saayman and Giampiccoli (2016) and; Jamini and Dehghani, (2022).

From figure 1.1 above rural tourism destination vulnerability and rural tourism destination sustainability are independent variables whereas the growth perceptions of CBT projects is a dependent variable. Therefore, the presence of vulnerability determinants such as economic shocks, seasonality and climate change in a rural tourism destination are likely to negatively affect the size of CBT projects, level of local community involvement and community welfare. However, their absence is likely to affect the growth perceptions of CBT projects positively.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The section covers the theoretical and conceptual review of existing literature on the study variables. The literature review is presented about the relationships between the study variables.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The study's framework was guided by the Tourism Theory of Change (ToC), as defined by Anderson (2005) as a conceptual model that outlines how various stakeholders collaborate to achieve a common long-term objective. Initially conceived as a tool to delineate the sequence of changes leading to a long-term goal and the interconnections between activities, outputs, and outcomes within a project or intervention program (O'Flynn, 2012), ToC is emphasized by Getz (2019) as a product of critical-thinking exercises that comprehensively depicts the intermediate-term changes necessary within a community to realize its long-term goal.

In this context, ToC serves as a framework through which stakeholders can identify and implement sustainable measures in tourism, such as CSR, PPT, and Community-Based Ecotourism, as strategies to address vulnerabilities present in rural destinations, including challenges related to seasonality, climate change, and economic shocks. The widespread adoption of ToC stems from its capacity to offer a comprehensive approach to program planning, design, strategy development, implementation, evaluation, and impact assessment (Stein & Valters, 2012). Acting as a roadmap and theory of action, ToC not only provides insights into how change occurs but also helps harness the developmental potential of tourism projects.

However, it is crucial to emphasize that ToC's effectiveness hinges on its proper application as a transformational tool (Bours, McGinn & Pringle, 2014). It offers a step-by-step guide for designing tourism projects and programs grounded in the Theory of Change. By its design, ToC provides greater flexibility compared to conventional log frames, facilitating the consideration of unforeseen impacts and outcomes (Bours et al., 2014). Therefore, the strategic application of ToC in vulnerable destinations holds the potential to not only enhance but also stimulate the growth of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) projects.

2.3 Rural Destination Vulnerability

The concept of rural destination vulnerability holds significant importance for understanding the state of rural destinations (Ahebwa, Aporu & Nyakaana, 2016). In the context of this study, vulnerability refers to the conditions shaped by various physical, social, economic, and environmental factors that increase the susceptibility of rural communities to threats (United Nations General Assembly, UNGA, 2016, p. 25). Kim and Marcouiller (2015) conducted a study on considering disaster vulnerability and resiliency. The findings revealed that external micro vulnerabilities like seasonality, economic shocks, and climate change can negatively affect rural tourism destinations. Dileep and Pagliara (2023) propose that seasonality can exacerbate vulnerability, particularly when communities heavily rely on temporary surges in tourism. However, Campbell's (2019) research confirms that CBT projects thrive during peak tourist seasons but face challenges during off-peak periods due to issues like an unskilled labor force and an unstable labor market linked to locally-produced tourist goods. Likewise, existing literature suggests that such circumstances could discourage potential investors and residents from participating in CBT enterprises within rural areas globally (Su, Wen, Zeng, Ye & Khotphat, 2022).

Globally, economic shocks, like economic downturns, currency fluctuations, global crises, or workforce reductions, can significantly impact community well-being and the size of CBT projects by reducing disposable income and altering travel behaviors (Gounder & Cox, 2022; Valente, Zaragozí & Russo, 2023). However, climate change may introduce additional vulnerabilities to rural destinations, including shifts in weather patterns, increased extreme weather events, and rising sea levels (Barya, 2021; Le, Scott, Becken, & Connolly, 2019). Dogru, Marchio, and Bulut, 2019) in their study of the vulnerability and resilience of tourism and the entire economy confirm that these changes can directly affect tourism activities, disrupt natural attractions, and influence local livelihoods.

This study aims to investigate rural destination vulnerability based on its dimensions, namely seasonality, economic shocks, and climate change.

2.4 Rural Destination Sustainability

Sustainability, with its diverse interpretations, is widely embraced as "development that meets the needs of the present generation while safeguarding and enhancing opportunities for future generations" (Carley & Christie, 2017). In the context of rural tourism destinations, sustainability pertains to a rural area's capacity to satisfy the needs of tourists, the tourism industry, the environment, and the local community, in the present and the future (Rodrigues, Gonçalves, Branco & Martins, 2022, April). This intricate notion requires balancing the economic, environmental, and social impacts of tourism in rural settings. This study envisions rural destination sustainability as being rooted in the practices of CSR, PPT, and Eco-Tourism, all directed toward fulfilling the requirements of rural destinations.

CSR is typically integrated into a destination's vision and involves financial, environmental, and social aspects. Baniya, Thapa, and Kim's (2019) study about CSR among Travel and Tour Operators in Nepal discovered that CSR practices often entail voluntary actions from the community itself. These actions aim to address environmental, social, cultural, and economic issues to mitigate vulnerabilities in rural areas. LundDurlacher's (2015), findings suggested that corporations worldwide can participate in socially responsible practices such as investments, partnerships, and community empowerment to enhance infrastructure, services, and cultural preservation in these locales. However, governments also have a role in promoting CSR in rural destination tourism by raising awareness and offering tax incentives to stimulate socially and environmentally conscious behavior (Kesande, 2023).

PPT involves strategies aimed at benefiting economically disadvantaged communities. Its primary goal is to create opportunities for local participation in tourism activities, thereby reducing poverty and enhancing the well-being of rural communities (Wang & Dong, 2022). PPT places rural residents at the forefront, expanding income prospects within the tourism sector by involving them in various aspects of the value chain. To Saayman and Giampiccoli (2016), PPT empowers local communities to manage tourism initiatives, generating employment and training opportunities, while ensuring a significant portion of tourism revenue directly benefits the local population. Eco-tourism, introduced to mitigate environmental impacts and balance local well-being, focuses on conserving natural attractions (Musavengane & Matikiti, 2015). Its focus aligns with preserving the environment while involving local communities. This aligns with the goals of community-based tourism projects, which empower communities to manage their resources. Eco-friendly practices such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and wildlife habitat protection appeal to environmentally conscious travelers and bolster the growth of

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) projects in rural destinations (Mwesigwa & Mubangizi, 2016).

2.5 Growth perceptions of CBT projects in rural destinations

CBT involves the active participation of the local community in the planning, development, and management of tourism activities (Arintoko et al., 2020). This approach is seen as a means of promoting sustainable development in rural areas, conserving natural resources, safeguarding the environment, and enhancing the well-being of local residents (Katongole, Ahebwa & Kawere, 2013). CBT projects prioritize community involvement in tourism development, positioning the community as the primary actor through which tourism benefits are channeled, ultimately empowering and benefiting the local populace (Malelak, Taimens & Plaituka, 2021).

In the context of this research, "growth" signifies not only the expansion of the rural destination's primary tourist attraction but also an increase in the scale of community tourism projects, improvements in community welfare, and heightened local participation in these projects. Nguyen, D'Hauteserre, and Serrao, 2022) revealed that over the past two decades, tourism development in rural areas has emerged as a pivotal strategy to stimulate economic and social progress in marginalized rural destinations, serving as a poverty alleviation approach in many countries to elevate living standards and augment the size of CBT projects while fostering local community involvement.

China, the world's most populous country, has embraced CBT initiatives to enhance living conditions, ensuring local engagement and enlarging rural CBT projects (Yang, 2015). Furthermore, Tan and Cong (2022) highlighted that CBT project growth hinges on collaboration between the host community and the private sector, enabling genuine community participation,

ownership, and control. It's noteworthy that sustainable CBT projects lead to sustainable livelihoods, which, in turn, contribute to the expansion of CBT project sizes in rural destinations.

2.6 The relationship between rural destination vulnerability and the growth perceptions of CBT projects

Rural destination vulnerability, a critical precursor to the growth perceptions of CBT projects, has garnered significant attention (Rocca & Zielinski, 2022). Literature reveals a nuanced relationship between rural destination vulnerability and CBT project growth. Phuong, Van, and Quang (2020) discovered that vulnerability factors like seasonality, economic shocks, and climate change can either negatively or positively affect CBT project growth, contingent on whether they are properly addressed. This underscores the importance of assessing and managing vulnerabilities (Jacobson, Crevello, Nguon & Chea, 2018). For instance, Gossling, Scott, and Hall (2020) highlighted that understanding vulnerabilities, as demonstrated in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, aids in devising tourism strategies that encourage diversification, explore new markets, and prioritize sustainable practices like CSR, PPT, and ecotourism.

Liu, Cheng, and OuYang (2019) while assessing disaster risk, risk management, and tourism competitiveness, observed that more vulnerable rural destinations are likely to experience growth in CBT projects, as such projects offer economic diversification and income generation even amidst adversity. However, Bujosa, Riera, and Torres (2015) indicated that vulnerability disruptions can impede CBT project growth if they deter tourists or diminish attraction appeal. Schwarting, Alonso-Mora, and Rus (2018) supported this perspective, underscoring the impacts of vulnerability on various aspects of rural destinations.

While extensive research has been conducted in other continents, studies on rural destinations in Uganda, particularly in the context of the Busoga Sub-region, remain scarce. Moreover, micro-level indicators of vulnerability have received limited exploration. The current research endeavors to examine how micro indicators of vulnerability such as seasonality, economic shocks, and climate change influence the size of CBT projects, community welfare, and local engagement in CBT initiatives within rural destinations.

2.7 The relationship between rural tourism destination sustainability and the growth perceptions of CBT projects in rural areas

The growth of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) projects is closely tied to ensuring sustainability, as recognized by various authors (Kesande, 2023). Studies, such as those by Mtapuri, Camilleri, and Dłużewska (2022) and Saayman and Giampiccoli (2016), have shown that integrating sustainable tourism practices into communities can drive rural development. Sustainable practices like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT), and Eco-Tourism have been linked to improved financial performance, employment opportunities, and the growth perceptions of CBT projects in rural tourism areas (Tien, Anh & Ngoc, 2020; Yim, Bae, Lim & Kwon, 2019).

However, despite their recognized potential for growth, implementing these sustainable practices remains challenging (Juma & Khademi, 2019). Research by Zielinski, Jeong, Kim, and Milanés (2020) indicates that while tourism has the potential to enhance community welfare, expand CBT projects, and increase local involvement, many initiatives stumble due to sustainability challenges like insufficient community participation, resource scarcity, limited government support, and environmental degradation, which can hinder CBT growth. Thus, the effective application of sustainable practices is crucial for the success of CBT projects and rural tourism

destinations (Diaz & Espino, 2016). A study in Hoi An, Vietnam, by Ngo and Creutz (2022), further confirmed the positive impact of well-planned and managed sustainable tourism practices on CBT growth, although challenges in implementation were identified.

On the flip side, CBT projects actively contribute to promoting sustainability within rural destinations. These projects prioritize environmentally friendly initiatives, including responsible waste management, conservation efforts, and habitat protection, aligning with the growing demand for sustainable travel options (Salman, Jaafar, Mohamad & Malik, 2021). As eco-conscious tourists seek such destinations, rural areas with established community-based projects can attract these travelers. Additionally, CBT project growth directly supports rural destination sustainability by distributing economic benefits among local residents, diversifying economies, reducing dependency on a single sector, and contributing to poverty alleviation (Mensah and Afenyo, 2021). This fosters a cyclical relationship where sustainable tourism promotes community well-being, reinforcing the foundation for ongoing sustainable tourism development (Salman et al., 2021).

In this context, this study seeks to investigate the dynamic interaction between sustainable practices (CSR, PPT, and Eco-Tourism) and the growth perceptions of CBT projects in rural destinations.

2.8 The relationship between rural destination vulnerability and rural destination sustainability

Rural tourism destinations are often characterized by their natural beauty, cultural heritage, and traditional ways of life (Nakisanze, 2022). However, they can also be vulnerable to various factors that pose risks to their sustainability. These vulnerabilities can include economic shocks,

seasonality and climate changes (Scott, Hall, and Gössling, 2019). If these vulnerabilities are not effectively addressed, they can lead to negative impacts on the local environment, economy, and community, ultimately compromising the long-term sustainability of the rural destination. So, according to Idahosa (2019), sustainable tourism practices should be embraced, aiming to minimize negative impacts on the environment, while maximizing benefits for local communities. This can involve promoting responsible tourism behaviors, such as CBET, PPT, and CSR (Saayman & Giampiccoli, 2016) to foster waste reduction, energy conservation and supporting local businesses and artisans. Furthermore, destination managers should engage in long-term planning, considering carrying capacities, infrastructure development, and community involvement.

2.9 A combined effect of rural tourism destination vulnerability and sustainability on growth perceptions of CBT projects in rural tourism destination areas

Rural tourism destinations often face vulnerabilities stemming from their dependence on climate, seasons, and economic systems. Sustainability, as emphasized by Priatmoko, Kabil, Purwoko, and Dávid (2021), is essential to secure the long-term viability of these destinations, maintaining visitor needs and conserving natural and cultural heritage through practices like CSR, PPT, and Eco-tourism. These sustainable approaches are strategies to foster the expansion of CBT projects in rural tourism areas. Research indicates that the vulnerability of rural tourism destinations is inversely linked to sustainability, as susceptible destinations might struggle to harmonize economic growth with environmental preservation (Pollice, Rinella, Epifani & Miggiano, 2020). However, CBT projects offer a remedy by enabling local communities to responsibly manage tourism resources, as highlighted by Aquino (2022). Tumwebaze (2019) suggests that involving residents in tourism development in CBT enhances social and economic welfare while

safeguarding cultural heritage and promoting environmental preservation, ultimately stimulating economic growth and fostering entrepreneurial opportunities and job creation.

Combining vulnerability and sustainability makes sense because they are often interconnected in a cyclical relationship. Rural destinations are vulnerable to various external factors such as climate change, economic shifts, and social dynamics. This vulnerability can impact the sustainability of these destinations, as their ability to thrive and endure over time is compromised. On one hand, you can argue that sustainability is a more stand-alone independent variable. Sustainable practices, policies, and community engagement can be implemented proactively to enhance the resilience of a rural destination, making it less vulnerable to external shocks.By focusing on sustainability as an independent variable, you can create a foundation that helps mitigate vulnerabilities.

2.10 Conclusion

In summary, the vulnerability of rural tourism destinations presents a substantial obstacle to the sustainability and expansion of community-based tourism projects. Nonetheless, through the implementation of sustainable practices and the mitigation of vulnerabilities, these projects can play a crucial role in bolstering the enduring resilience of rural communities. Embracing sustainable community-based tourism initiatives holds the potential to not only bolster the local economy and safeguard cultural heritage but also to ensure environmental conservation and foster community empowerment through inclusive decision-making processes.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section elucidates the study design, study population, sample size, and selection, source of data, sampling techniques and procedures, data collection methods, data collection instruments, validity and reliability, procedures of data collection, data analysis, and presentation, measurement of variables, anticipated limitations and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional design. The study adopted quantitative and qualitative approaches.

3.3 Study Population

The study focused on 476 households near four risk-vulnerable rural tourism destinations within Busoga Sub-region: Kagulu Hill, Bishop Hannington site, Itanda falls, and Buswiikira site. The destinations and respondents formed the unit of analysis and unit of inquiry respectively. The distribution for these destinations is indicated in the table below;

Table 3.1: Showing average household population per destination

Name of the destination	***Population***
Kagulu hill	140
Bishop Hannington site	113
Itanda falls	127
Buswikira site	96
Total	**476**

Source: Local Council I records (2022)

3.4 Sample Size determination

The population from each of the categories was targeted using the formula proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), which gives a representative sample of 214 for the population of 476 households.

Table 0.2: Sample size of respondents per destination

Name of the destination	***Population***	***Sample size***
Kagulu hill	140	62
Bishop Hannington site	113	51
Itanda falls	127	57
Buswikira site	96	44
Total	**476**	**214**

Source: Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

3.5 Sampling Techniques and Procedure.

Purposive Random Sampling was used to select the sample for the study. Purposive sampling was used to deliberately select the rural destinations while simple random sampling was used to choose respondents to participate in the study through self-administered questionnaires. This was done until the sample size for each destination was attained.

3.6 Data Sources

Both primary and secondary data was used. Primary data came from self-administered questionnaires, while secondary data was obtained from various sources, including CBT reports, literature, articles, and destination records.

3.7 Data Collection methods and Instruments

Quantitative data was collected using a self-administered 5-Likert scale questionnaire, designed to align with the study objectives and was carefully structured for the respondents who indicated the level of agreement and anchored as: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Not sure, 4= Agree, 5= strongly Agree.

3.8 Measurement of variables

Variables included rural tourism destination vulnerability, measured by dimensions like economic shocks, seasonality, and climate change; rural tourism destination sustainability, assessed by dimensions like CSR, PPT, and CBET; and growth perceptions of CBT projects, encompassing CBT project size, local community involvement, and community welfare.

3.9 Reliability and Validity

Validity was assessed using the Content Validity Index (CVI), while reliability was evaluated through the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The research study instrument was tested for validity and reliability. The validity is the extent to which the research instrument actually covers and taps the information regarding the said variable. The validity in this study was captured using the Content Validity Index (CV) which is the ratio of the items that are rated to be relevant to the total number of items in the study. For each variable, the formula for this concept is as follows;

CVI = *Number of Relevant Items/ Total Number of Items***.**

The items are rated by the experts in the study of the concepts and in this case, the experts were the supervisors at the university. The CVI for each variable should be at least 0.700 for us to understand that the research study complied with the content validity

expectations. This was satisfied by the research instrument as the results for the Content validity in table 2 below indicate.

Table 3: Reliability and Validity results

Variable	*Cronbach Alpha Coefficient*	Number of Items	Content *validity* Index
Rural destination vulnerability and sustainability	.722	14	.857
Growth perceptions of CBT projects	.747	14	.786

Reliability: Reliability of the research instrument in this case was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Reliability helps us determine whether the research instrument can generate consistent results on repeated scoring using a given sample. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient should at least be 0.7000 for us to accept the research instrument items as being internally consistent. This condition was satisfied by the research instrument indicated in the table 2 above, since the lowest value of the Cronbach alpha was .722

3.10 Data management and Analysis

Quantitative data went through descriptive and inferential analysis using SPSS Version 20.0, including Pearson correlation coefficient and regression model analysis.

3.11 Ethical considerations

The following ethical considerations were taken seriously;

***Voluntary Participation*:** All respondents were allowed the liberty to participate freely in the study and not one of them was coerced to participate in the study.

***Anonymity of the respondents*:** The anonymity of the respondents was truly respected and in the course of conducting the research study, respondents were not required to give their names and physical address of their places of residence.

***Plagiarism avoidance*:** The plagiarism tendency was avoided in this study and all secondary sources used was duly be cited.

3.12 Study limitations

Despite the significance of the study, there are a number of limitations of the study, attracting auxiliary empirical enquiry.

The selection of specific rural tourism destinations in the Busoga Sub-region was not a full representative of all rural areas within the sub-region. The chosen destinations may have had unique characteristics that do not accurately reflect the broader spectrum of rural destinations in the area, potentially limiting the generalizability of the study's findings.

Due to the specific context of the Busoga Sub-region, the findings of the study might have limited applicability to other regions or rural areas with different socio-economic, cultural, or geographical characteristics.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis and interpretation of research findings of the study, obtained from the primary data, which was analysed using SPSS in relation to the subject of the study: rural destination vulnerability, sustainability and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in selected rural destination areas in Busoga sub-region. This chapter begins with the presentation and interpretation of the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as like Gender, Marital Status, Age Groups, and the Highest Educational Attainment, before proceeding to unveil the study's Key Findings. The data was collected through the administration of questionnaires, and the findings are presented in tabular format to illustrate the frequency and correlational analysis. The research objectives were:

i. To examine the relationship between rural destination vulnerability and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in rural destinations.
ii. To examine the relationship between rural destination sustainability and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in rural destinations.
iii. To determine the relationship between rural destination vulnerability and rural destination sustainability.
iv. To examine the combined effect of rural destination vulnerability and sustainability on the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in rural destinations.

4.1.1 Response rate

A total of 214 questionnaires were distributed for data collection purposes. Of these, 192 questionnaires were completed and returned, resulting in a notable response rate of 89.7%. As

per Amin (2005), this response rate is deemed sufficiently high to yield accurate findings that can be considered representative of the study's target population.

Table 4.4: Showing response rate

Respondents	frequency	Percent
Response	192	89.7
Non-response	22	10.3
Total	**214**	**100.0**

Source: Primary Data (2023)

4.2 Descriptive statistics of the sample

This section presents findings on the demographic characteristics of the study's respondents. Understanding these demographic characteristics is vital as they provide valuable contextual insights into the study's population, thus enhancing the depth and significance of the research findings on the objectives.

4.2.1 Individual characteristics of the respondents

The following results show the descriptive analysis of the background characteristics of the respondents. A frequency table was employed to analyse the demographic data of respondents, including gender, marital status, age brackets, highest level of education, and marital status. The findings are presented in Table 4.2 below:

Table 4.5: Characteristics of respondents

Gender of respondents				
		Count	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Male	97	50.5	50.5
	Female	95	49.5	100.0
	Total	**192**	**100.0**	
Age of the respondents				
		Count	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	21 - 30 years	54	28.1	28.1
	31 - 40 years	53	27.6	55.7
	41 - 50 years	55	28.6	84.4
	51 years and above	30	15.6	100.0
	Total	**192**	**100.0**	
Highest level of education of the respondents				
		Count	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
	Primary	46	24.0	24.0
	Secondary	66	34.4	58.3
Valid	Certificate	50	26.0	84.4
	Diploma	15	7.8	92.2
	Bachelor’s degree	13	6.8	99.0
	Postgraduate	2	1.0	100.0
	Total	**192**	**100.0**	

Marital status of respondents				
		Count	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Single	35	18.2	18.2
	Married with children	64	33.3	51.6
	Married without children	44	22.9	74.5
	Single parent	31	16.1	90.6
	Empty nester	18	9.4	100.0
	Total	**192**	**100.0**	

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Table 4.2 displays the characteristics of respondents. It reveals that out of the 192 respondents, 97 (50.5%) were male, while 95 (49.5%) were female. Notably, a majority of the respondents in this study were male, constituting 50.5% of the total sample. However, the study exhibits gender balance, even though men were in the majority.

The findings from Table 4.2 indicate that the largest proportion of respondents in this study fell within the age bracket of 41 to 50 years, representing 28.6%. This was followed by the age groups of 21 to 30 years (28.1%), 31 to 40 years (27.6%), and lastly, 51 years and above (15.6%). This implies that the majority of respondents in this study were of a mature age, capable of comprehending the research questionnaire.

Table 4.2 results also show that among the 192 respondents, 46 (24.0%) had education at the Primary level, 66 (34.4%) at the Secondary level, 50 (26.0%) had Certificates, 15 (7.8%) had Diplomas, 13 (6.8%) possessed a Bachelor's degree, and 2 (1.0%) were at the Postgraduate level. The majority of respondents in this study had at least reached the Secondary level of education, representing 34.4%. This indicates that most respondents possessed the minimum qualifications necessary to comprehend and answer the questions in the research questionnaire.

Furthermore, Table 4.2 shows that among the 192 respondents, 35 were single (18.2%), 64 were married with children (33.3%), 44 were married without children (22.9%), 31 were single parents (16.1%), and 18 indicated that they were "empty nesters" (9.4%). The majority of respondents in this study were married with children, making up 33.3% of the total, indicating that most of the destination communities included individuals who were committed to family responsibilities, and thus, were capable of providing meaningful insights for this study.

4.2.2 Destination characteristics

In this section, the focus shifts to the characteristics of the tourism destination.

Table 4.6: Characteristics of respondents

Name of the tourism destination				
		Count	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Kagulu hill	54	28.1	28.1
	Bishop Hannington site	47	24.5	52.6
	Itanda falls	52	27.1	79.7
	Buswiikira site	39	20.3	100.0
	Total	**192**	**100.0**	

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Table 4.3 provides an overview of the respondents' distribution across various tourism destinations. According to the results, 28.1% of the respondents were associated with Kagulu Hill, 24.5% were linked to Bishop Hannington site, 27.1% were situated near Itanda Falls, and 20.3% were in proximity to the Buswiikira site. The findings from Table 4.3 suggest that the majority of the respondents resided in communities adjacent to Kagulu Hill.

4.3 Relationships between the Study Variables

To assess the degree of association in line with the research objectives, a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was employed. The results, shown in Table 4.4 below, were presented to scrutinize the nature of relationships between the study variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) used in this analysis ranges between -1.00 and 1.00, providing valuable insights into the strength and direction of these associations.

Table 4.7: Showing Correlations

		Rural Destination Vulnerability	Rural Destination Sustainability	Growth perceptions of community based Tourism Projects
Rural Destination Vulnerability	Pearson Correlation	1	.332**	.244**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.001
	N	192	192	192
Rural Destination Sustainability	Pearson Correlation	.332**	1	.590**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	192	192	192
Growth perceptions of community based Tourism Projects	Pearson Correlation	.244**	.590**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	
	N	192	192	192

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary Data (2023)

4.3.1 Rural destination vulnerability and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects

Table 4.4 reveals a significant positive relationship between rural destination vulnerability and the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects, as indicated by the Pearson correlation coefficient "r" ($r = 0.244^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that as the vulnerability of rural destinations increases, there is a corresponding boost in the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects. The implication of this finding is that addressing and mitigating

vulnerabilities in rural destinations could play an essential role in promoting and sustaining community-based Based Tourism endeavours**.**

4.3.2 Rural destination sustainability and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects

Furthermore, the results in Table 4.4 demonstrate a strong and positive relationship between rural destination sustainability and the growth of community-based Tourism projects ($r = 0.590^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). This signifies that as rural destinations become more sustainable, there is a corresponding increase in the expansion of community-based Tourism initiatives. The implication here is that focusing on enhancing sustainability in rural destinations can be a key driver for fostering the growth and success of community-based Tourism projects.

4.3.3 Rural destination vulnerability and rural destination sustainability

Additionally, the results in Table 4.4 demonstrate a positive and significant relationship between rural destination vulnerability and rural destination sustainability ($r = 0.332^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that as the vulnerability of rural destinations increases, the sustainability of these areas also tends to rise. The implication is that efforts to improve the sustainability of rural destinations may have a positive impact on mitigating their vulnerabilities, creating a mutually reinforcing dynamic that benefits both sustainability and resilience in these regions.

4.3.4 The Combined Effect of rural Destination Vulnerability and sustainability on the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in rural destinations

In this section, a regression model was employed to examine the combined predictive power of rural destination vulnerability and sustainability on the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in rural areas. The results of the regression analysis were instrumental in

elucidating the extent to which changes in rural destination vulnerability and sustainability can explain variances in the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects. This was analysed using the coefficient of determination (R^2).

Table 4.8: Multiple regression analysis Coefficients[a] of the variables

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.094	3.897		-.281	.779
	Rural Destination Vulnerability	.073	.084	.054	.871	.385
	Rural Destination Sustainability	.753	.082	.572	9.216	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Growth perceptions of community based Tourism Projects

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.593[a]	.351	.344	7.54904

a. Predictors: (Constant), Rural destination vulnerability, rural destination sustainability

Source: Primary Data (2023)

The results from Table 4.5 suggest that rural destination vulnerability and sustainability were significant predictors for the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects, with the parameters (Beta = 0.054, $p < 0.01$) and (Beta = 0.572, $p < 0.01$) respectively. These two variables jointly could predict 59.3% of the variance in the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in this model (Adjusted R Square = 0.593). Importantly, the overall model was statistically significant (Sig. < 0.00).

The t-test results revealed that rural destination sustainability ($t = 9.216$, Sig. < 0.00) emerged as a more potent predictor of the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects compared to rural destination vulnerability ($t = 0.871$, Sig. < 0.00). In essence, this implies that both rural destination vulnerability and sustainability, taken together, exert a positive and significant influence on the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects. Consequently, addressing and bolstering both vulnerability and sustainability factors can play a major role in facilitating the expansion and success of Community Based Tourism initiatives.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of findings, conclusions and recommendations. The discussion is as per the findings in chapter four, and recommendations are derived therefrom. The study focused on examining the relationship between rural destination vulnerability and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects, examining the relationship between rural destination sustainability and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects, determining the relationship between rural destination vulnerability and rural destination sustainability, and a combined effect of rural destination vulnerability and sustainability on growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects.

5.2 Discussion of findings

This section presents a discussion of the findings of the study. The respondents chosen for this study exhibited the requisite demographics and qualifications, and each of the rural destinations had an adequate number of respondents, ensuring they possessed the necessary information concerning rural tourism destination vulnerability, sustainability, and the growth perceptions of community based Tourism (CBT) projects in selected rural tourism destination areas within the Busoga Sub-region. The discussion of the findings aligns with the objectives of the study as follows:

5.2.1 Rural destination vulnerability and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects

The analysis of this study objective revealed a positive relationship between rural destination vulnerability and the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects. As rural

destinations exhibited higher levels of vulnerability, the growth perceptions of community based Tourism initiatives correspondingly increased. This suggests that by addressing vulnerabilities in these rural areas, there is a potential to stimulate the expansion and prosperity of Community Based Tourism projects. This finding highlights the interplay between the susceptibility of a destination and the success of Community Based Tourism, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies to address vulnerabilities for sustainable growth. This is complemented by the construal interpretation that the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects can be met if rural destination vulnerability is effectively managed, highlighting the significance of vulnerability mitigation in fostering sustainable tourism growth.

The findings of this study are in line with existing literature on the subject. For example, Rocca and Zielinski's work (2022) highlights the critical role of rural destination vulnerability in the growth perceptions of community based Tourism (CBT) projects. Research by Phuong, Van, and Quang (2020) indicates that vulnerability factors, such as seasonality, economic shocks, and climate change, can have varying effects on CBT project growth, depending on how effectively they are addressed. This emphasizes the importance of assessing and managing vulnerabilities in rural destinations. Additionally, the study draws support from Jacobson, Crevello, Nguon, and Chea's research (2018), which emphasises the importance of understanding and managing vulnerabilities to promote sustainable tourism growth. The works of Gossling, Scott, and Hall (2020) emphasize that recognizing vulnerabilities, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, can inform strategies that encourage diversification, explore new markets, and prioritize sustainable practices. Liu, Cheng, and OuYang's study (2019) also contributes to this understanding, noting that more vulnerable rural destinations are likely to experience growth in CBT projects as these projects offer economic diversification and income generation, even in

adverse conditions. However, Bujosa, Riera, and Torres (2015) caution that vulnerability disruptions can impede CBT project growth if they deter tourists or diminish attraction appeal. Schwarting, Alonso-Mora, and Rus (2018) support this perspective, highlighting the various impacts of vulnerability on different aspects of rural destinations.

5.2.2 Rural destination sustainability and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects

The study findings demonstrate a strong, positive relationship between rural destination sustainability and the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects. As rural destinations become more sustainable, there is a concurrent surge in the expansion of Community Based Tourism projects. This sheds light on the vital role of sustainability in promoting and supporting the growth of such projects. Focusing on sustainability measures can be a key driver for fostering the growth and success of Community Based Tourism initiatives. This is further confirmed by documentary data at one of the destination sites, which reveals how the adoption of sustainable practices resulted in a noticeable increase in Community Based Tourism activities.

The study moreover revealed that rural destination sustainability predicted the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects with a high correlation coefficient ($r = 0.590$), indicating that tourist destination sustainability plays a critical role in mediating the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in rural destinations. This reaffirms the critical role that sustainability measures play in influencing the successful expansion of Community Based Tourism initiatives within rural areas, ensuring long-term prosperity and engagement within these communities.

These findings are in accord with previous studies, including the works of Mtapuri, Camilleri, and Dłużewska (2022), Saayman and Giampiccoli (2016), and Zielinski, Jeong, Kim, and Milanés (2020). These scholars have highlighted the significance of sustainability in promoting rural development, economic growth, and community involvement through tourism initiatives. Specifically, Mtapuri, Camilleri, and Dłużewska's research (2022) highlights the essential role of sustainability in driving rural development, which aligns with our findings that emphasize how rural destination sustainability positively correlates with the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects. Saayman and Giampiccoli's work (2016) reinforces the notion that sustainability can lead to economic growth; a concept that resonates with our findings that point to the concurrent surge in Community Based Tourism projects when rural destinations embrace sustainability measures. Furthermore, Zielinski, Jeong, Kim, and Milanés' research (2020) highlights how tourism has the potential to enhance community welfare and expand Community Based Tourism projects when sustainability challenges are effectively addressed. The study findings echo these perspectives by demonstrating a strong correlation between rural destination sustainability and the growth perceptions of community based Tourism initiatives, highlighting the importance of sustainability measures in ensuring the long-term prosperity and engagement of communities within rural destinations.

The findings of this study further empirically prove the Tourism Theory of Change (ToC) as outlined by Anderson (2005), which serves as a conceptual model that outlines how various stakeholders collaborate to achieve a common long-term objective. This theoretical framework has been reinforced by the study's results, illustrating the effectiveness of ToC in guiding sustainable practices and measures in the context of rural tourism. The study findings substantiate the ToC theory by showcasing how sustainable strategies, such as CSR, PPT, and

Community-Based Ecotourism, can effectively address vulnerabilities in rural destinations, including those related to seasonality, climate change, and economic shocks. While emphasizing that the effectiveness of ToC depends on its proper application as a transformational tool (Bours, McGinn & Pringle, 2014), the study findings demonstrate its potential to not only enhance but also stimulate the growth perceptions of community based Tourism (CBT) projects within vulnerable destinations.

5.2.3 Rural destination vulnerability and rural destination sustainability

The study's findings disclosed a significant and positive relationship between rural destination vulnerability and rural destination sustainability. This relationship was demonstrated in Chapter Four, specifically in Section 4.3.3, where it was expounded that rural destination vulnerability plays a key role in shaping the sustainability of rural destinations. These findings depict that the conceptual dimensions of rural destination vulnerability, which encompass seasonality, economic shocks, and climate change, serve as key determinants of rural destination sustainability. In essence, the study emphasizes that the vulnerabilities inherent in rural destinations, such as fluctuations in visitor numbers due to seasonality, economic shocks, and the challenges posed by climate change, exert a profound influence on the overall sustainability of these areas. By recognizing the intrinsic link between vulnerability and sustainability, the study highlights the need for proactive measures to address these vulnerabilities effectively. This approach is essential to ensuring the long-term prosperity and growth perceptions of community based Tourism initiatives in rural destinations, as the sustainability of these areas is intricately intertwined with their capacity to mitigate and manage vulnerability-related factors.

These findings are in agreement with literature such as that of Scott, Hall, and Gössling (2019), Nakisanze (2022), and Saayman & Giampiccoli (2016). Rural tourism destinations, as

highlighted by Nakisanze (2022), are often celebrated for their natural beauty, cultural heritage, and traditional lifestyles. However, they are susceptible to a range of vulnerabilities, as illuminated by Scott, Hall, and Gössling (2019), encompassing factors like economic shocks, seasonality, and climate changes. The failure to effectively address these vulnerabilities can result in adverse impacts on the local environment, economy, and communities, posing a risk to the long-term sustainability of rural destinations. In response to these challenges, Saayman & Giampiccoli (2016) advocate for the adoption of sustainable tourism practices to mitigate negative environmental effects while maximizing benefits for local communities.

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence for the effectiveness of the Tourism Theory of Change (ToC) as applied in this study, which is based on the conceptual model defined by Anderson (2005). According to this theory, as validated by the results of this study, ToC offers a structured approach that outlines the sequence of changes leading to long-term goals and the intricate interconnections between various activities, outputs, and outcomes within a project or intervention program. In the context of this study, ToC serves as a guiding framework through which stakeholders can identify and implement sustainable measures in tourism, including practices such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT), and Community-Based Ecotourism as proposed by Saayman & Giampiccoli (2016).

5.2.4 The combined effect of rural destination vulnerability and sustainability on the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in rural destinations

The regression model employed in the study demonstrates the combined effect of rural destination vulnerability and sustainability on the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects. Both vulnerability and sustainability were significant predictors, together explaining 59.3% of the variance in the growth of these projects. Notably, rural destination

sustainability emerged as a stronger predictor than vulnerability. This portrays the importance of simultaneously addressing vulnerabilities and enhancing sustainability to positively impact the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects.

This finding is in accordance with the study by Pollice, Rinella, Epifani, and Miggiano (2020), which also suggests that the vulnerability of rural tourism destinations is inversely related to sustainability. Vulnerable destinations may face challenges in striking a balance between economic growth and environmental preservation. However, as emphasized in the study by Aquino (2022), Community Based Tourism (CBT) projects offer a potential remedy by involving local communities in the responsible management of tourism resources. Tumwebaze (2019) further supports this notion by highlighting that community engagement in CBT not only enhances social and economic welfare but also safeguards cultural heritage and promotes environmental conservation. This, in turn, stimulates economic growth, fosters entrepreneurial opportunities, and facilitates job creation within these rural destinations.

5.3 Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the relationship between rural destination vulnerability, sustainability, and the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects within selected rural destinations in the Busoga Sub-region. In pursuit of this aim, several key objectives were addressed, each yielding valuable insights into the connection between vulnerability, sustainability, and Community Based Tourism project growth.

The study's findings highlight a significant, positive relationship between rural destination vulnerability and the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects. As rural destinations displayed higher levels of vulnerability, the corresponding expansion of Community

Based Tourism initiatives increased. This stresses the need for addressing vulnerabilities within rural areas, signaling the potential to stimulate the prosperity of Community Based Tourism projects. The interdependence between destination susceptibility and Community Based Tourism success portrays the importance of tailored strategies to manage vulnerabilities, facilitating sustainable growth.

Furthermore, this study reveals a strong and positive relationship between rural destination sustainability and the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects. As rural destinations embrace sustainability measures, there is a corresponding surge in the expansion of Community Based Tourism projects. Sustainability, thus, emerges as a key driver for fostering the growth and success of Community Based Tourism initiatives. The adoption of sustainable practices has a direct and positive impact on Community Based Tourism activities within rural destinations. These findings emphasize the critical role that sustainability measures play in ensuring long-term prosperity and engagement within these communities.

Additionally, the regression model applied in this study elucidates the combined impact of rural destination vulnerability and sustainability on the growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects. Notably, both vulnerability and sustainability were significant predictors, jointly explaining a substantial portion of the variance in the growth of these projects. However, rural destination sustainability was found to be a stronger predictor compared to vulnerability, underscoring the significance of simultaneously addressing vulnerabilities and enhancing sustainability. This approach is fundamental in fostering the positive expansion of Community Based Tourism projects, ensuring their long-term viability and contribution to the overall growth of rural destinations.

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations and policy implications are suggested as derived from the study findings:

Stakeholders, including government bodies and destination managers, should prioritize vulnerability management in rural destinations. Strategies for addressing seasonal impacts, economic shocks, and climate change should be developed and implemented. In the context of the Busoga Sub-region, the study findings underscore the importance of prioritizing vulnerability management. Vulnerability to seasonal impacts, economic shocks, and climate change was evident in the case of Busoga's rural destinations, such as Kagulu Hill and Itanda Falls. Government bodies and destination managers in Busoga should develop and implement strategies specifically tailored to address these vulnerabilities. For example, they can create climate-resilient agricultural practices that consider the region's specific climate challenges.

Additionally, capacity-building programs should be initiated to empower local communities with the knowledge and skills to effectively respond to vulnerabilities. This includes training on diversifying income sources, disaster preparedness, and climate-resilient agricultural practices. This is because the study findings highlight the need for knowledge and skills to respond effectively to vulnerabilities. Disaster preparedness and diversification of income sources are critical areas that should be addressed. Local communities, such as those near the Buswiikira site, can benefit from training and workshops to enhance their resilience.

Based on the study findings, rural destinations should actively adopt sustainable practices such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT), and Eco-Tourism. These approaches can contribute to both economic growth and environmental conservation. This is

because the study findings show that sustainable practices, including CSR, PPT, and Eco-Tourism, can contribute to economic growth and environmental conservation in rural destinations. Busoga's destinations, such as the Bishop Hannington site, can benefit from adopting such practices to promote sustainable growth.

Public-private partnerships that support sustainable practices should be encouraged. Collaboration between destination managers, businesses, and local communities can foster the adoption of responsible tourism behaviors. The recommendation for public-private partnerships is particularly relevant to the Busoga subregion as evident in the study findings. Collaborative efforts between destination managers, local businesses, and communities near Kagulu Hill, for instance, can help foster responsible tourism behaviors. Kagulu Hill, in particular, stands as a prominent tourist attraction in the Busoga Sub-region, drawing a substantial annual influx of visitors, as actively promoted by the Busoga kingdom. This can be encouraged through educational campaigns and initiatives that promote local culture and heritage.

Based on the study findings, rural areas in the Busoga Sub-region, including those around Itanda Falls and Kagulu Hill, should invest in Community Based Tourism projects as a means of enabling local communities to actively manage tourism resources, which aligns with the study's findings on the importance of community involvement. This can lead to the growth of CBT initiatives, job creation, poverty alleviation, and the preservation of cultural heritage and environmental resources. Destination managers in the Busoga Sub-region should take specific actions to promote environmentally friendly initiatives, responsible waste management, habitat protection, and conservation efforts such as near destinations like the Buswiikira site.

The government of Uganda should formulate and implement policies that encourage rural destination sustainability. These policies, consistent with the study findings, should include incentives for businesses that adopt sustainable practices and penalties for environmentally harmful activities. Long-term planning is crucial for the Busoga Sub-region. Policies should consider factors like carrying capacities, infrastructure development, and local community involvement to ensure sustainability.

Stakeholders should engage in the documentation and sharing of best practices related to vulnerability management and sustainability in rural destinations. This recommendation is highly relevant to the Busoga subregion. Documenting successful approaches in vulnerability management and sustainability can benefit other destinations facing similar challenges. The knowledge sharing can help other rural areas learn from Busoga's experiences and best practices.

5.4.1 Policy Implications

Policymakers in the Busoga subregion and at the national level should design integrated policies that address both vulnerability management and sustainability. These policies should encourage coordination among various stakeholders for the comprehensive development of rural destinations. These policies should emphasize the active involvement of local communities in the decision-making processes of destination management. Engaging residents in shaping the tourism landscape is crucial for long-term success. Furthermore, regular monitoring and evaluation of policies are essential. Policymakers should establish mechanisms for tracking the effectiveness of strategies, making necessary adjustments, and ensuring that they align with long-term objectives.

5.5 Areas of further research

The study suggests the following areas of study to future researchers:

Given that the current study was cross-sectional in nature, future studies can consider longitudinal research designs to dig deeper into causation and better understand the dynamic relationships between rural destination vulnerability, sustainability, and Community Based Tourism project growth. This approach can provide insights into the long-term impacts of vulnerability management and sustainable practices.

As this study used community members as the target study respondents, expanding the scope to include a more diverse set of social groups, including tourists, local business owners, and other various community members, can offer a more comprehensive understanding of how rural destinations' vulnerability and sustainability affect different stakeholders. Such studies can provide valuable insights into the perspectives and experiences of these distinct groups.

Comparative research across different rural destinations, both within and outside of Uganda, can help identify regional variations and best practices in vulnerability management and sustainability. Analysing the factors that contribute to successful Community Based Tourism projects in different contexts can guide policymakers and destination managers.

Furthermore, conducting in-depth case studies at specific rural destinations within the Busoga Sub-region can provide a more detailed and context-specific examination of the dynamics between vulnerability, sustainability, and Community Based Tourism project growth. Such case studies can unearth unique challenges and opportunities specific to individual destinations.

Future research can also focus on evaluating the effectiveness of policies and interventions aimed at enhancing rural destination sustainability and reducing vulnerability. These studies can

assess the real-world impact of policy initiatives on Community Based Tourism project growth and overall destination well-being.

Another rich area for further study can be investigating the economic and environmental aspects of rural destination sustainability and their impact on Community Based Tourism projects. Research in this area can provide insights into the economic benefits of sustainability practices and their contributions to local environmental conservation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am Mugoya Akibu, a student of Makerere University Business School. I am undertaking a research study on ***"Rural tourism destination vulnerability, sustainability and growth perceptions of community based Tourism projects in selected rural tourism destinations in Busoga Sub-region."*** You have been selected to participate in this research study because I believe you will kindly provide the required information to the study. You are therefore kindly requested to fill in this research questionnaire. Please note that, the information provided will only be used for academic reasons and will be treated with outmost confidentiality.

Section A- Background Characteristics

Please tick as appropriate

A1- Name of the tourism destination

Kagulu Hill	Bishop Hannington site	Itanda falls	Buswiikira site

Section B- Individual Characteristics

Please tick as appropriate

B1- Gender

Male	Female

B2. Age Group

21 – 30 years	31 - 40 years	41 – 50 years	Above 50 years

B3. Marital Status

Single	Married with children	Married without children	Single parent	Empty nester

B4. Please indicate your highest level of education attained

Primary	Secondary	Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Post Graduate level	Others (Please Specify)

For the questions that follow, please indicate your level of agreement by ticking once for each statement.

	Section C: RURAL TOURISM DESTINATION VULNERABILITY	***Strongly Disagree***	***Disagree***	***Uncertain***	***Agree***	***Strongly Agree***
	At the destination,					
	Economic shocks					
1	The government and other agencies consistently fund the destination	1	2	3	4	5
2	Local people are laid off and replaced by the skilled people	1	2	3	4	5
3	Investors do not repatriate their earnings back home	1	2	3	4	5
4	Local workers are paid well and their social capital is high	1	2	3	4	5
5	There is economic openness to trade, export concentrations, and dependence on strategic imports					
	Seasonality					
1	The labor market is unstable due to temporal employment	1	2	3	4	5
2	The target market for the locally produced products sold to tourists are stable	1	2	3	4	5
3	Sometimes investors and residents who would have potential in investing in Community Based tourism projects are scared away	1	2	3	4	5
4	There is continuity in commercial and economic operations during the whole year	1	2	3	4	5
5	Annual destination income steadily flows	1	2	3	4	5
	Climate change					
1	The patterns of tourist flows are influenced by climatic changes in the area	1	2	3	4	5
2	Climate change impacts are affecting human health, food, water, infrastructure, economy and security	1	2	3	4	5
3	We have measures to deal with climate hazards	1	2	3	4	5

4	Climate events have destroyed rural livelihoods especially in agriculture and access to raw materials for locally made products	1	2	3	4	5

	PART D: RURAL DESTINATION SUSTAINABILITY Please respond to the following statements as in regards to rural destination vulnerability using the alternative give below. If you are not sure about any of the statements, mark it "uncertain"	*Strongly Disagree*	*Disagree*	*Uncertain*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
	▪ **Corporate Social Responsibility**					
1	The local people are offered training and support in tourism	1	2	3	4	5
2	Education and growth are provided to the local people	1	2	3	4	5
3	The local community is allowed to manage tourism enterprises on its own	1	2	3	4	5
4	There is high visitor experience for tourists visiting the area	1	2	3	4	5
	▪ **Pro-Poor tourism**					
1	The net benefits accrued are directed to the local poor people	1	2	3	4	5
2	There are linkages between tourism businesses and poor people	1	2	3	4	5
3	The local people ably make use of the available infrastructure to start direct or indirect tourism enterprises	1	2	3	4	5
4	There exists a full range of activities that are required to bring a tourist to a destination	1	2	3	4	5
	▪ **Ecotourism**					
1	We take care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem	1	2	3	4	5
2	We have conservation initiatives in place	1	2	3	4	5
3	Conservation initiatives involve people living within the destination	1	2	3	4	5
4	Competitive use of local natural resources is always addressed	1	2	3	4	5
5	Tourists have responsible travels in the area	1	2	3	4	5

	PART E: GROWTH PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM PROJECTS Please respond to the following statements as in regards to the growth perceptions of CBT projects using the alternative give below. If you are not sure about any of the statements, mark it "uncertain"	*Strongly Disagree*	*Disagree*	*Uncertain*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*
	▪ **Community welfare**					
1	Local people incomes and welfare have increased over the years	1	2	3	4	5

2	There is increased local access to infrastructure and services	1	2	3	4	5
3	Local employment has expanded	1	2	3	4	5
4	Locally made tourism products have an easy access to market	1	2	3	4	5
	▪ **Local community involvement**					
1	Local people are allowed to participate in decision making	1	2	3	4	5
2	Local capacity building and training is highly given attention to	1	2	3	4	5
3	There is effective flow of information and communication between the local people and other tourism stakeholders	1	2	3	4	5
	▪ **Size of Community Based Tourism projects**					
1	Local tourism enterprises have increased in the area	1	2	3	4	5
2	Local community inclusion and capacity building in Community Based Tourism has increased	1	2	3	4	5
3	Local community income generating groups have been formed	1	2	3	4	5
4	Homestays, local cuisines, local artisans among others have been developed alongside the major tourist attractions in the area	1	2	3	4	5
5	Foreign investors have been attracted and have Community Based Tourism enterprises in the area already	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you very much for your time

APPENDIX II: THE PROPOSED WORK PLAN

Duration	**September 2022 to October 2023**													
Months	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	**Feb**	**Mar**	**Apr**	**May**	**Jun**	**Jul**	**Aug**	**Sep**	**Oct**
Proposal writing														
Formulation of the problem statement and conceptual model														
Formulation of literature review														
Formulation of methodology														
Designing and testing of the questionnaire														
Submission of the proposal draft														
Correction of the proposal														
Submission of the corrected proposal														
Data collection														
Data entry and analysis														
Writing of final dissertation														
Defense and submission of final dissertation														

APPENDIX III: BUDGET

ITEM	UNIT	UNIT COST (UGX)	AMOUNT (UGX)
A. Stationary			
Note books	3	1,000	3,000
Pens	8	700	5,600
Ruled/Duplicating papers	2 Rims	20,000	40,000
Folder files	2	10,000	20,000
Sub-Total			**68,600**
B. Transport and communication			
Communication			220,000
Transport			532,500
Sub-Total			**752,000**
C. Printing & Binding			
Printing			254,600
Binding	3	15,000	45,000
Sub-Total			**299,600**
D. Support Services			
Research Assistants	2	150,000	300,000
Computer services			780,000
Internet			300,000
Sub-Total			**1,380,000**
Grand-Total			**2,500,200**

APPENDIX V: KREJCIE AND MORGAN (1970) TABLE

Table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population

N	*S*	*N*	*S*	*N*	*S*
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	1000000	384

Note: *N* is population size.

S is sample size.

APPENDIX VI: DATA COLLECTION LETTER

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Plot 21A, New Portbell Road, P. O. Box 1337, Kampala - Uganda
General Line: +256-414-338120; Fax: +256-414-505921

Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research

August 17, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: MR. AKIBU MUGOYA – MHTM – REG. NO. 2021/HD10/22701U

The above named is a student of Makerere University Business School pursuing studies leading to the award of a **Master of Hospitality and Tourism Management (MHTM)** of Makerere University.

He has completed the course work component and is currently carrying out research on the topic

"Rural Destination Vulnerability, Sustainability and Growth of Community Based Tourism Projects in Selected Rural Destination Areas in Busoga Sub-Region."

Any assistance rendered to him will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Harriet G. Nakayenga Balamaga
Assistant Director, Faculty Registrar

Makerere University Business School ★ Faculty Of Graduate Studies And Research ★
17 AUG 2023

Email: deangrc@mubs.ac.ug @mubs fgsr @mubsfgsr Website: www.mubs.ac.ug