
EFFECTS OF COVID 19 OUTBREAK IN TOURISM INDUSTRY IN UGANDA.

A CASE STUDY OF UGANDA MUSEUM

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study was to discuss the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry in Uganda. This review utilized journals, historical records, newspaper articles, World Health Organization statistics, governmental data, and website materials on COVID-19 incidences in tourism. Secondary research was adopted in which secondary data were collected through a comprehensive literature review. The COVID-19 outbreak has significantly affected global travel and tourism. Uganda has also experienced an adverse impact on inbound and outbound tourism. International and domestic tourists have cancelled bookings in Uganda, and outbound tourism activities have also been banned. Airlines have cancelled flights, while hotels are almost completely vacant, and as a result, supporting tourism agencies are facing huge economic losses and employment cuts in Uganda. From the findings, most (45.0%) respondents indicated that their businesses have lost revenues above 2.5millions, 5.8% from 2.1 to 2.5 million, 7.9% from 1.5 to 2 million, 3.7% from 1.1 to 1.5 million, 22.8% from 500,000 to 1 million, and 14.8% below half a million. These results indicated that, cumulatively millions of shillings have been lost by tourism organizations in Uganda as a result of COVID-19 outbreak. The loss was estimated to have been recorded within a period of 4 months from the first time the outbreak was reported in China in December 2019. Once the situation has stabilized it is expected that there will be a rapid recovery, since travel demand has proven resilient in bouncing back from downturns in the past. Travel levels are expected to fully recover by 2023.

Key words: **covid 19 outbreak, tourism and industry**

Background of the study.

The outbreak of coronavirus, also referred to as COVID-19, started in Wuhan, China in December 2019. The virus is spreading globally at an alarming charge, with 1,341,907 showed infections and 74,476 deaths as of April 7, 2020. Despite the fact that COVID-19 has been slow to take root in Africa, cases are actually spreading swiftly (Brighton et al., 2023). since the first case become recorded on the continent on February 14, 2020, Africa has registered 10,018 cases and 484 deaths as of April 7 (parent 1). Within Japanese Africa and the terrific Lakes place, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda have the best range of confirmed instances, respectively 161 and one zero five, followed by means of Uganda (158), Uganda (52), Ethiopia (44) and Tanzania (24) (Davids et al., 2023). South Sudan additionally registered its first case on April 5.2. The variety of new infections and deaths is anticipated to retain to upward thrust on a day-by-day foundation as long as there may be endured contact, each direct and indirect, among infected persons and uninfected participants of the populace, and the quantity of uninfected capacity hosts within the populace is huge.

In Uganda, the variety of COVID infections has risen sharply (Oromo et al., 2023). most effective nine days since the first case turned into recorded on March 21, 2020, with the aid of March 30 the cases had risen to 33. As witnessed in different African countries, the variety of latest infections is probable to hold to rise; this changed into visible in international locations inclusive of Ghana (27 cases on March 24, accelerated to 137 on March 29) and Rwanda (17 on March 23, improved to 60 on March 29).

The outbreak of coronavirus isn't always only a public fitness emergency inflicting massive-scale lack of existence and human suffering; it also poses a primary threat to the global economy. The virus has halted manufacturing in affected nations, hitting deliver chains the world over, and led to steep drop in intake collectively with a crumble in self-belief (Davids et al., 2023). Trade networks have been disrupted, causing shortages of drugs, business chemical substances, scientific gadget, and client items (inclusive of basic items like lavatory paper), as many factories, particularly in mainland China, remain closed (MacLean et al., 2012). hundreds of jobs, especially in journey, tourism, and events, had been lost. The activity loss multiplier impact is huge and increasing as supply chains come to a halt and people stay domestic. The loss in cost of stocks and different monetary devices traded on global markets is raising fears of a recession, and prompting the organization for monetary Cooperation and development (OECD) to revise downward international increase quotes in 2020 from 2.9% to two. Four% (Ramadhan et al., 2023).

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At a continental degree, Africa is enormously prone to the spread of the COVID-19, given fragile public fitness structures and close ties (in phrases of alternate, funding and finance, schooling and safety cooperation) with China. In keeping with the UN financial fee for Africa (UNECA), the unfolding coronavirus disaster may want to exacerbate Africa's already stagnant growth. as an instance, oil-exporting countries are anticipated to lose as much as US \$sixty-five billion in revenues as crude oil expenses

hold to fall. UNECA estimates that the pandemic may additionally bring about seventy-eight% decline in GDP boom, from 3.2% to 1. Eight%, whilst OECD anticipates GDP to grow by only 1.5% because of disruption of global supply chains and different factors (Frank et al., 2023). UNECA similarly anticipates a decline in employment by means of 48%, and forty-eight% decline within the length of the populace predicted to move out of poverty (Vincent & Peter, 2023).

Objectives of this study:

1. To analyze the impact of covid on the travel and tourism in Uganda.
2. To examine the measures taken against covid 19 in the travel tourism industries in Uganda.
3. To propose the recovery pathways in dealing with covid 19 in travel tourism industry in Uganda.

Research questions

1. What are the impacts of covid 19 on the tourism industry in Uganda.
2. To examine measures taken against covid 19 in tourism industry.
3. To find out the recovery pathways in dealing with covid 19 in tourism industry in Uganda.

Methodology

Research Design

Following the Covid-19 outbreak, the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife through the Tourism Risk and Crisis Management Committee requested academia and industry practitioners to carry out a research study on the "Impact of COVID-19 on Tourism in Uganda, the Measures Taken and the Recovery Pathways" (Ivan & Kazaara, 2023). The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive research design. The research design was chosen due to its effectiveness, low cost and it enables easy access to information (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Consequently, a joint working team was formed. The team members comprised industry experts from the academia and practitioners within the country.

Target Population

The study targeted two cohorts for quantitative and qualitative data collection purposes. The 1st cohort (for quantitative data collection) comprised members of key tourism stakeholders including members of accommodation sector, attractions, destination management organizations, exhibition centers, travel agents, tour operators, event organizers, restaurateurs, air operators, and safari/drive guides.

Sampling Techniques

The study was used to complete enumeration approach that involved systematically acquiring and recording information from the members in the target population.

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Sample Size

The study undertook a census of the population by systematically acquiring and recording information from the association members and CEOs in the target population.

Research Instruments

The study used questionnaires and interview guides to collect quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The questionnaires comprised close-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaires were administered online to the hospitality and tourism agencies and associations in the target population. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants in the tourism sector.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Tables and graphical presentations were used to present the data collected for ease of understanding and analysis. Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) was used to analyze narrative data from interviews using NVivo qualitative data analysis software and SPSS for analyzing the coded data (Nelson et al., 2022).

RESULTS**Impact of COVID-19 on Tourism Employment**

The travel and tourism industry in Uganda is facing an unparalleled global health emergency in COVID-19 outbreak. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the whole world to a halt with unprecedented and sudden impact on international tourist arrivals, domestic tourism, tourism sector businesses, safety and security, visitors, and employment in the tourism sector.

Considering the unprecedented and rapid evolving nature of the pandemic, it is extremely challenging to estimate the impact of COVID-19 on international tourist arrivals (Nicholas et al., 2023). But, on the basis of the latest global developments (such as quarantine measures, grounding of local international flights, travel restrictions and bans, closure of borders especially in Europe (representing about 50% of international tourism [UNWTO, 2020a]), United State of America, Middle East and Countries in Africa, international tourist arrivals in Uganda have been brought to zero for the first time in history. This is manifested in the following statements:

Reduction of Employees as a Result of COVID-19 Outbreak

Details of whether the tourism organizations and establishments have reduced the number of employees are given in Table 1. Most 81.3% (157) respondents indicated that their organizations had reduced the number of employees as a result of COVID-19 outbreak and 11.4% (22) showed otherwise. Only 7.3% (14) indicated that reduction of number of employees was not applicable to their organizations either because of the smaller number of employees engaged or are among the fewest still in operation during COVID-19 pandemic (Nicholas et al., 2023). Generally, unprecedented government measures such as bans on international travels, restriction of movements and cancellation of major tourism activities in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 pandemic have adversely affected business operations resulting to reduction of number of employees engaged in tourism organizations.

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Table 1: Reduction of Number of Employees Engaged by Tourism Organizations

Category	F	%
Yes	157	81.3
No	22	11.4
Not applicable	14	7.3
Total	193	100

The COVID-19 pandemic has put millions of the jobs at risk. The outbreak has resulted into many tourism organizations sending employees on unpaid leaves. And some have been forced to take unpaid leave as indicated in the following statement:

“We honestly cannot project the number of jobs lost because at the moment let say okay most of our members who happen to work for tour operators, most of them are currently at home on unpaid leave”, said the CEO KPSGA.

The pandemic has also resulted to organizations letting their employees to work from home in line with the President’s call to be able to contain and suppress the contagion. Indeed, the pandemic has seen many employees from the top management down to subordinates take home pay cuts. “From top management in my company, the top management conspired a pay cut of 35 – 50 % depending on job group, they have taken paucity and working from home (Alex & Kazaara, 2023). We are currently grumbling with how to structure the middle and low cadre of employees because if someone is earning for example ksh.50, 000. I am not sure even at KTF how I’m going back to that person to agree on 30k or 40k. You have to negotiate, one cannot dictate, its negotiable”, said the CEO of KTF.

Implementation of Pay Cuts

Results of the analysis shown that most 85.5% respondents reported that their organization had indeed taken pay cut as a way to survive the loss of revenue as a result of COVID-19 outbreak. Only 14.5% reported otherwise. This could be because they are still in operation at the time when others closed their businesses and thus able to generate revenue enough to cater for their employees’ salaries and remunerations (Allan et al., 2023). However, in an effort to comply with government appeal to employers not to lay off staff, most organizations resulted to implementing pay cuts as the most convenient way of coping with the effects of the pandemic on business operations. What is not clear is the sustainability of the pay cuts in the near long run period.

Percentage of the Pay Cut

The results of the analysis of data collected on the percentage of pay cuts implemented by the tourism organizations and establishments as a result of COVID-19 outbreak. As shown, most 31.9% respondents reported over 70% as the percentage of pay cut implemented by their organizations. The 27.7% of the respondents reported between 30% and 50%, 25.9% between 50% and 70%, and 10.8% between 20% and 30%. Only 3.6% of the total respondents reported that their organizations implemented a 10% pay cut (Faridah et al., 2023).

In a struggle to stay afloat, the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled most employers to implement massive pay cuts. The ripple effect of the pay cuts on social stability and economic growth is inevitable. Most especially, the pay cuts may lead to a decline in consumption and total demand, hence affecting production and employment. Ultimately the total tourism earning may face a decline.

Status of Unpaid Leaves

The results shown that most (81.9%) respondents reported their organizations sent employees on unpaid leaves with only 18.1% (35) reporting otherwise. The high number of employees on unpaid leave underscores the harsh impact of COVID-19 on tourism employment in Uganda and generally the entire world. It is notable that majority of employees on unpaid leave may directly lead to a decline in wages which may be accompanied by a fall in tourism product prices, because of the reduced purchasing power of the people (Brighton et al., 2023). This may eventually slow the growth of tourism markets, especially domestic, hence a decline in tourism earnings.

Percentage of Employees on Unpaid Leaves

The results of the percentages of employees sent on unpaid leaves by their organizations shown that 57.4% of the respondents reported over 70% as the percentage of employees already on unpaid leaves. The 16.0% reported 30 – 50% as the percentage of employees on unpaid leaves, 10.5% between 50 – 70%, 9.3% at most 10%, and 6.8% between 20 – 30%. The huge number of staff on unpaid leave points to uncertainty of the sustainability of tourism enterprises during the COVID-19 outbreak. Though these results corroborate the earlier mentioned facts that majority of tourism enterprises are MSMEs, the indefinite nature of the mitigation efforts to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic compounds the situation especially in terms of planning and sustainable business recovery (Turyatamba et al., 2022).

Likelihood of Staff Reduction in Coming Months

The organizations were more than likely to right-size in coming months as reported by most (74.2%) respondents. About 12% were fairly likely, 9.8% did not know, and 4.1% not likely.

These results underscore that the future of tourism employment is pointing towards an increased likelihood of immense layoffs even compounded by the fact that the end to the pandemic is uncertain and nowhere in sight. These findings coincide with [WTTC \(2020d\)](#) that predicted that one million jobs a day are lost globally in Travel and Tourism owing to the pandemic (Ivan & Kazaara, 2023).

Changes in Bookings in the Domestic Market as a Result of COVID-19 Outbreak

Most (27.2%) respondents reported at most 10% as the percentage of domestic bookings affected by COVID-19 outbreak and 11.4% reported over 90%. Also, 4.3% of the respondents indicated that of all the changes to existing bookings experienced by their organizations, none were from the domestic market. These results indicate that organizations had lower domestic tourists bookings. The domestic markets have experienced numerous changes in bookings due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Paul & Kazaara, 2023).

The changes have been occasioned by postponements and cancellations of bookings due to the government mitigation measures such as restriction of movements, 7pm5am curfews, isolation among others. However, it is interesting to note that the high segmentation of the bookings from the domestic market underscores the fact that this market is a major contributor to total tourism receipts in Uganda.

Changes in Bookings in the Regional Market as a Result of COVID-19 Outbreak

The percentage of booking changes experienced by tourism organizations in the study from the regional market was at most 10% as reported by most (50.3%) respondents. Over 90% was reported by only 2.8% of the respondents. These results resonate well with those from the domestic market clearly indicating that tourism organizations were having few bookings from the regional market. These results indicate over-reliance of the international tourist market by tourism organizations and establishments in Uganda. Besides, the slight change in bookings from regional markets can be majorly attributed to COVID-19 mitigation measures

Amount of Revenue Lost as a Result of COVID-19 Outbreak

From the findings, Most (45.0%) respondents indicated that their businesses have lost revenues above 2.5millions, 5.8% from 2.1 to 2.5 million, 7.9% from 1.5 to 2 million, 3.7% from 1.1 to 1.5 million, 22.8% from 500,000 to 1 million, and 14.8% below half a million. These results indicate that, cumulatively millions of shillings have been lost by tourism organizations in Uganda as a result of COVID-19 outbreak. The loss is estimated to have been recorded within a period of 4 months from the first time the outbreak was reported in China in December 2019.

Impact of COVID-19 on Security and Safety

On the top-side, COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased security of the general populace especially at the many set police check-points. Equally, the pandemic has heightened the safety and hygiene of the populace. On the downside though, COVID19 outbreak has brought increased fear of job losses and society lawlessness with many theft cases reported. “We are also staring at imminent job cuts and unemployment which are indicators of insecurity, generally when people don't have jobs. People have got salaries cut. People are unemployed. It is a recipe for chaos. And so this is how COVID-19 is affecting the security of the state the security of the citizenry”, the CEO of Bomas of Uganda retorted.

Impact of Covid-19 on Tourism at the County Government Level

At the Counties level, tourism has not been saved from the impact of COVID-19 either. Although the impact varies with individual counties, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the following six impacts: firstly, closure of hospitality businesses (hotels, restaurants, and clubs, bars) as a result of travel restrictions and the call by the GoK to stay home and social distance. Secondly, diminished revenues to County Governments as hospitality businesses and tourism service centers (such as recreational facilities) are not in operation. Counties where fishing in activity cannot do the business leading to loss of revenue.

Mitigation Measures

The mitigation measures are to provide strong support for the tourism sector in Uganda to not only recover from the unparalleled impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but to do so faster and better. Knowing that travel and tourism has been the toughest hit of all sectors, the mitigations measures are provided to support the GoK and the private tourism sector in circumnavigating the unprecedented economic and social impact of COVID-19 (Christopher & Micheal, 2022). These measures put in place by Government and tourism businesses include, but not limited to:

Measures Undertaken by the Government of Uganda

In Uganda, the following measures have been taken to curb the spread of the virus: all international flights were suspended effective 25th March, 2020 at midnight with the exception of cargo flights whose crew must observe strict guidelines; all travelers coming into the country before 25th March, 2020 had to go through quarantine at a government-designated facility at their own expense; all international meetings and conferences have been banned until April. Besides, there are internal restrictions, the government has put a curfew which started on 27th March, 2020 and enforced between 7pm-5am (Damasus et al., 2023).

In Uganda, the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, in mid-March 2020 set aside Sh500 million for the country post COVID-19 recovery plan. Part of this money will be used to restore destination confidence to ensure that Uganda remains as a preferred travel destination globally while the rest will be used for the post COVID-19 recovery strategy in all the key source markets. Table 4.7 indicate the measures taken by the Ugandan government to contain the spread of the COVID-19 in the country.

Conclusion

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The increasing intricacy and interconnectivity of global events require governments to work with the private sector so as to improve their preparedness to mitigate the impact of the crises, their management to efficiently address the crisis as well as enhance their responses to ensure a speedy recovery. About 90% of economic losses during any outbreak arise from the uncoordinated and irrational efforts of the public to avoid infection. In this context, it is essential to enhance coordination and cooperation to make sure people are safe from a health perspective but also an economic one.

Recommendations

Once the situation has stabilized it is expected that there will be a rapid recovery, since travel demand has proven resilient in bouncing back from downturns in the past. Travel levels are expected to fully recover by 2023. In the meantime, KTB and private stakeholders should use the opportunity to keep their brands at the front and center on social media and through public relations. DMOs and companies are now focused on developing robust recovery communications plans, to ensure they are locked and loaded as soon as the all-clear is given.

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