

Promotion Strategies And Development Of The Tourism Sector In Uganda; A Case Study Of Uganda

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Abstract.

This study investigated the promotion strategies and their implications for the development of the tourism sector in Uganda, with a specific focus on the Uganda Wildlife Education Center (UWEC) in Kampala. Recognizing the pivotal role of tourism in global economies, the research aimed to understand the diverse strategies employed by Ugandan nationals to attract and foster the growth of the tourism industry. Through a historical exploration of the development of UWEC, from its establishment in 1952 to its transformation into a conservation education center in 1994, the study contextualized the challenges and opportunities faced by the Ugandan tourism sector. Despite political instability affecting the industry in the early 1970s, Uganda's stabilization in the late 1980s paved the way for reinvestment. However, charismatic wildlife losses and competition with neighboring countries posed challenges. The study addressed the gap between tourist arrivals and sector growth, emphasizing the need for effective promotion strategies. To achieve its objectives, the study employed a quantitative research design, utilizing both primary and secondary sources of information. Primary data was collected through questionnaires distributed to 225 staff and non-staff members at UWEC. Results indicate varied perceptions among respondents on factors such as infrastructure development, marketing, cultural preservation, regulatory frameworks, and sustainability. A robust positive correlation ($r = 0.507$, $P = 0.001$) is observed between strategy promotion and tourism industry development, emphasizing the critical role of effective promotional efforts. The study concludes by offering recommendations, urging policymakers and industry practitioners to adopt a comprehensive approach that integrates infrastructural development, marketing, cultural preservation, and sustainability. Additionally, the researcher suggests diversifying promotional strategies beyond digital marketing, considering complementary approaches like search engine optimization, collaborations, and event sponsorship for enhanced impact.

Key words: Strategies, Tourism and Development.

Background to the study

Tourism is one of the fastest growing and single largest industries in the world (Christopher & Felex, 2022). The contribution of tourism industry in the global as well as individual perspective is really amazing. Many countries in the world depend upon tourism as a main

source of foreign exchange earnings (Ivan & Florence, 2023). However, the development strategies employed various countries significantly differ (UNWTO, 2019). Promoting strategies are vital to the development of the tourism industry through

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communicating to potential visitors about the destination's tourism product and services, thereby increasing the demand for tourism (Ronald et al., n.d.). Therefore, a destination that wishes to realize the full potential of its tourism industry should make use of exhibition events as a potential promotional strategy (Ivan & Kazaara, 2023). Popularly known as "Entebbe Zoo", was opened in 1952, by the Colonial Government in Uganda, as a reception centre for wild animals that were found as casualties (sick, injured, orphaned, confiscated from illegal trade etc.). In the early 1960s, it changed its role to a traditional zoo ("Entebbe Zoo"), a name that rings memories in the minds of many Ugandans to date (Entebbe et al., n.d.). At that time, a number of non-indigenous species, including bears and tigers, were kept as attractions (Christopher & Micheal, 2022). In May 1994, the UWEC Trust was founded to take over the zoo primarily for Conservation Education purposes. The Centre's location on the edge of Lake Victoria, its rich vegetation and its surprisingly wide range of birds, butterflies and other indigenous animals make it an

attractive venue for education as well as a pleasing one for those who visit, whether Ugandans or people from overseas (Wilber et al., 2023). Tourism was the country's fourth largest earner of foreign exchange. The tourist industry ended in the early 1970s because of political instability (Nicholas et al., 2023). By the late 1980s, Uganda's political climate had stabilized and conditions were suitable for reinvestment in Uganda's tourist industry. However, the loss of charismatic wildlife in previously popular safari parks such as Murchison Falls National Park and Queen Elizabeth National Park prevented these parks from competing with similar tourist attractions in neighboring Kenya and Tanzania (Filstar, 2023). Despite that, African markets (regional and neighboring countries) that entered Uganda by road makeup 69% of Uganda's international arrivals, and grew by 6.1% in 2018 (Sophie, 2023). Internationally, during the quarter, UTB participated in a number of expos and events both at regional and international arenas. These include; Kili Fair in Tanzania, Uganda – Tanzania(Phiona et al., 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Uganda's tourism sector is well poised to be the leading growth and development sector in the country (Christopher & Micheal, 2022). This is in part due to the expansive array of tourist attractions the country is blessed with including ten national parks that boast a cocktail of fascinating wildlife species, various mountains, waterfalls and cultural sites(Christine et al., n.d.). Over the past 10 years, the tourist arrivals into Uganda have steadily increased from 850,000 in 2008 to over 1.4 million arrivals in 2017 (MFPED, 2020). However, the growth in the number of tourist arrivals in the country is not in equal proportions with the growth in the tourism sector (Sylvia et al., n.d.). It is behind this backdrop that the researcher seeks to evaluate the possible promotion strategies Ugandan nationals devise to attract the development of the tourism sector. Numerous studies have looked at adoption to internet and web-based tourism promotion as a strategic player even as the principal enabler in business success (Juliet et al., 2023a). However, it could be counter argued that the underutilization of ICT could create strategic vulnerability to the organization. This

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study strongly underpins that the success and development of the tourism sector greatly depends on the approach being employed, not on the technology itself (Irumba, n.d.). Thus, developing new strategies is more productive than solely investing on emerging technologies (Juliet et al., 2023b).

Specific Objectives

- i). To identify the strategic factors for the development of the tourism industry;
- ii). To assess the existing promotion strategies for the development of the tourism sector in Uganda;
- iii). To suggest the probable impact of promotion strategies on the tourism development economy.

Research Questions

To achieve the above objectives, the following research questions will be sought;

- i). What are the strategic factors for the development of the tourism industry?
- ii). What are the existing promotion strategies for the development of the tourism sector in Uganda?
- iii). How and what possible impact are the promotion strategies employed to the development of tourism sector?

Methodology.

The Researcher adapted to a quantitative research design. Quantitative research design was used because the researcher carried out research in Kampala, Uganda for a case study of UWEC. The choice of the study area was because the researcher used all the languages used in the study area and more so the researcher understood all the study area properly which made data collection easy and concrete. The researcher adopted both primary and secondary sources of information. Primary sources of information included using questionnaires to collect data and secondary source of information included use of articles related to the study, publications and books. The case study was Uganda Wildlife Education Center (UWEC) - the official tourism board of Uganda concerned with wildlife rescue, treatment of injured

and sick animals, offering wildlife quarantine services and contributing to species recovery. Out of all adults working with Uganda Wildlife Education Center (UWEC) were targeted, only 225 staff and non-staff were interviewed. These may range from those that are in the conservation projects, education center activities and those involved in school programs, working and leisure visitors. The researcher developed both primarily and secondary sources of information and data. In collecting Primary Data, the researcher used questionnaires as tools for collecting data. For Secondary Data, publications by re known authors in this field for example magazines, articles, books and News Papers will be used by the researcher to gather information that is required. Data analysis was conducted in SPSS and all results were presented in a

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tabular (Nelson et al., 2022). Frequencies and percentages were reported at univariate level, correlation and regression analysis were considered for further analysis.

Results.

Table 1: Shows the strategic factors for developing the tourism industry.

RESPONSE	SA		A		UD		D		DS		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Infrastructure Development	58	26.0	78	34.0	37	16.0	27	12.0	25	11.0	225	100
Marketing and Promotion	98	44.0	75	33.0	27	12.0	25	11.0	0.0	0.0	225	100
Cultural Preservation and Heritage Management	89	39.0	69	31.0	60	27.0	7	3.0	0.0	0.0	225	100
Regulatory Framework and Policy Support	65	29.0	82	36.0	52	23.0	16	7.0	10	4.0	225	100
Sustainability and Environmental Conservation	49	22.0	91	40.0	29	13.0	36	16.0	20	9.0	225	100

Source: primary Data, 2021

According to the table, 56(26%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 78(34%) agreed respectively that the infrastructural development was one of the strategic factors to developing the tourism industry. Accordingly, 37(16%) were not sure, 27(12%) disagreed and only 11(5%) Strongly disagreed to the idea. 98(44%) of the respondents strongly agreed that market promotion is a strong pillar to tourism development (Christopher & Micheal, 2022). The table then showed that 89(39%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the Cultural Preservation and Heritage Management was

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pillar to tourism development, 69(36%) agreed, 60(27%) they were not sure, 7(3%) disagreed and non-strongly disagreed to the idea. The table indicated that 65(29%) of the respondents strongly agreed, 82(36%) agreed, 52(23%) were no sure, while 16(7%) strongly agreed, and 10(4%) to Regulatory Framework and Policy Support as a great contributing factor to tourism development. The findings from the research indicated in the table above that 49(22%) of the respondents strongly agreed that Sustainability and Environmental Conservation can well be a factor for development of tourism, 91(40%) agreed, 56(25%) were not sure, 29(13%) disagreed, while on 20(9%) strongly disagreed.

Table 2: Shows the relationship between strategy promotion and tourism industry development.

		Strategy promotion	Tourism development
Strategy Promotion	Pearson Correlation	1	.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	225	225
Tourism development	Pearson Correlation	.507**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	225	225
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Findings from the correlation matrix indicated evidence of a strong significant positive association ($r = 0.507$, $P = 0.001$) between strategy promotion and tourism industry development. The association is statistically significant since the $P - \text{Value} = 0.001$ was less than 0.01 at 99% level of significance (Nelson et al., 2023).

Table 3: Showa the model estimation for the relationship between strategy promotion and tourism industry development.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.314	.441	.440	2.10449
a. Predictors: (Constant), Cash Budget				

Findings from the model revealed that there was a positive association (Coeff = 0.314) between strategy promotion and tourism industry development. This implied that a unit increase in strategy promotion resulted into 0.314 units increase in the tourism development. Furthermore, 44.1% of the variations in the tourism development were explained by the strategy promotion. This evidenced a positive impact of strategy promotion on tourism development.

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Table 4: Shows the existing promotion strategies.

Strategy.	Frequency.	Percentage.
Digital marketing	106	47.11
Search Engine Optimization	24	10.67
Collaborations and Partnerships	56	24.89
Event Sponsorship	39	17.33
Total	225	100

Findings from the table above indicated the existing promotion strategies for the tourism industry and it as well revealed that digital marketing is used the most in the industry (106, 47.11%). This is followed by collaborations and partnerships (56, 24.89%), then event sponsorship (39, 17.33%) and the least used strategy was searching engine optimization (24, 10.67%)

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the comprehensive analysis of the survey data provided a nuanced understanding of the strategic factors that influenced the development of the tourism industry. The findings highlighted the diverse perspectives among respondents regarding the significance of infrastructural development, marketing and promotion, cultural preservation, regulatory frameworks, and sustainability. Notably, the positive correlations established between strategy promotion and tourism industry development underscored the pivotal role of effective promotional strategies in fostering the growth of the tourism sector. The model estimation further reinforced these relationships, offering insights into the magnitude of impact and explaining a substantial portion of the variations observed in tourism development. The identification of digital marketing as the most widely employed strategy, along with the relative frequencies of other approaches, equipped industry stakeholders with valuable information to refine and tailor their promotional efforts for optimal outcomes.

This study contributed to the existing body of knowledge by unraveling the intricacies of strategic considerations and their implications for the tourism industry. The insights gleaned from the survey not only enhanced our understanding

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of the factors shaping tourism development but also offered practical guidance for policymakers, industry practitioners, and stakeholders seeking to formulate effective strategies. By recognizing the historical significance of these findings, past decisions and their outcomes could inform future endeavors, fostering a more informed and strategic approach to the ongoing development and promotion of the tourism industry.

Recommendations.

Policymakers and industry practitioners should collaborate to create a comprehensive strategy that addresses not only infrastructural needs but also incorporates effective marketing, cultural preservation efforts, and sustainable practices.

The researcher as well recommends stakeholders in the tourism industry consider diversifying their promotional approaches. While digital marketing remains a potent tool, exploring complementary strategies such as search engine optimization, collaborations, and event sponsorship can enhance the overall promotional impact.

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