

Investigating the Performance of the Tourism Industry in the Kabarole District of Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the performance of the tourism industry in Kabarole district, Uganda. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design with a sample of 154 respondents that was determined using Solvener's method of sample size determination. Findings confirm that there is a significant influence of tourism attraction sites on the socio-economic performance of local communities in the Kabarole district, which indicates that an increase in attraction sites results in increased job creation in the district. Based on the findings, the study recommends that efforts should be made by the Kabarole local government district in conjunction with the central government to improve the condition of transport routes to enable tourists to maintain their contact with the rest of the world and enhance the fringe benefits to the local communities. Also, more accommodation establishments should be established in the local district to create further employment opportunities for locals in the district.

Keywords: Income, Performance, Revenue, Socioeconomic development, Tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Uganda's tourism sector has experienced significant growth in recent years, attracting a growing number of international visitors this was evident when Fort Portal in Kabarole district was declared a tourism city in early 2020 [1]. Kabarole district has been working to develop its tourism industry in recent years, with a focus on community-based tourism initiatives. These efforts have been significant for the local communities, as they have provided new economic opportunities and helped to preserve the area's natural and cultural heritage. One example of this is the Kibale Association for Rural and Environmental Development (KAFRED), a community-based tourism organization that works to promote sustainable tourism in the Kibale Forest area of Kabarole district. KAFRED has helped to establish home-stays and other forms of accommodation for tourists, as well as guided tours of the forest and nearby villages [2]. Through these initiatives, local communities have been able to earn income from tourism while also sharing their culture and traditions with visitors. While tourism development holds the potential to enhance the socio-economic performance of local communities, as per the Local Government report of Kabarole

district (2019), there is high unemployment, limited local participation and empowerment in the district. The involvement of local communities in tourism activities is essential for their socio-economic wellbeing [3]. National Population and Housing Census indicates that there are increased number of people who drop out of school every year which has contributed high illiteracy rate of approximately 38%. However, Woldehanna [4], highlighted the lack of meaningful engagement and limited decision-making power of local communities in tourism planning and development processes in Uganda. According to Luweze [5], the goals of tourism development contain economic, social, and environmental aspects. The development of tourism influences the improvement of living standards and has a role in reducing poverty and developing social support in the district. Despite the district's potential for economic growth and development in tourism, there are persistent challenges related to poverty, unemployment, income inequality, and limited access to basic services. It is crucial to understand the factors that influence the socioeconomic performance of Kabarole District to identify appropriate strategies for promoting

inclusive growth, reducing poverty, and enhancing the overall well-being of its residents[6]. In Kabarole district, tourism development has been identified as a key strategy for poverty reduction and economic growth [2]. This empirical literature assessment also showed that a few studies have looked at the connection between tourism

development and socioeconomic performance in Uganda[7], and the scant literature that is available focuses mostly on industrialized countries while ignoring emerging economies like Uganda. This study fills this gap by onerously exploring the performance of tourism in Kabaloye district of Uganda.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Irridex irritation theory propounded by Doxey[8]. Irritation Index or "Irridex" theory measures locals' attitudes toward tourists and tourism growth across a destination's life cycle. Tourism development's social, economic, and environmental implications on the location drive its phases. This model predicts unfavourable socio-cultural repercussions can irritate the local community. Local populations' declining attitudes to

tourism expansion are explained by its four stages: euphoria, apathy, irritation, and antagonism. Tourist numbers are low initially, and the local community welcomes them. Apathy increases tourism and formalizes the bond between tourists and residents. Residents become irritated by tourism due to rising arrivals and resource rivalry. In hostility, travelers are blamed for all host community misfortunes.

METHODOLOGY

Design and setting

Mixed methods and cross-sectional designs were followed to investigate the performance of tourism in the Kabarole district of Uganda. Heap and Waters[9], explained that "the cross-sectional research design is popular with experienced and student researchers alike since it offers a

straightforward approach to collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data. It is particularly attractive because cross-sectional research can be undertaken within a limited timescale, and can be employed on a component-by-component basis or as an overarching design".

Participants

The 154 persons participated in this study-comprising people from the general population which represented the eco-system of those who are

directly and indirectly involved and impacted by tourism in the district.

Sampling and Procedure

The survey was conducted in the Kabarole district through the use of a purposive sampling technique in administering questionnaires to households, hotel owners, tourism officers, rangers, local leaders, local business owners, and tour and travel operators. Care was taken to make sure that participants suffered no physical, social, economic, or psychological harm by obtaining ethical approval from the Ethics

Committee of the Kampala International University, Uganda. Even at that, participants' free and informed consent was obtained and their protection from risk or harm was guaranteed. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality of their information were assured since the exercise was purely for research purposes.

Data Analyses

After sorting, collation and coding of the quantitative data, the computation was carried out with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 25.0). Although the responses of the participants who completed the structured interview guide were transcribed and themes assigned to

complement the quantitative data, some salient themes were retained in their original contexts in the form of excerpts. The qualitative data were collated, cleansed, and analysed using Bardin's [10] Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) technique with the utilisation of Atlas Ti 5.2 software.

RESULTS

Table 1: Scale of Mean Interpretation

Range	Legend	Interpretation
1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree	Very Low/Very Poor
1.81-2.60	Disagree	Low/Poor
2.61-3.40	Not Sure	Average
3.41-4.20	Agree	Good/High
4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Good/Very High

Source: Primary Data, 2023

Table 2: Descriptive findings of tourism infrastructure on the socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district

Tourism Infrastructure on socio-economic performance of local communities	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Tourism infrastructure has led to increased employment opportunities, improved living standards, and increased income for local residents.	7%	08%	8%	70%	17%	2.86	0.46
Transport networks other communication lines have improved the general health fare of local communities in Kabarole district	1%	10%	5%	65%	19%	2.80	0.48
Accommodation facilities in line with tourism has improved the sanitation levels of the community such as clean water	2%	10%	2%	65%	21%	2.76	0.51
Tourism infrastructure have facilitated the development of other economic activities, such as agriculture and manufacturing, resulting in increased economic growth in the region	10%	53%	2%	30%	5%	2.65	0.54
Tourism infrastructure has a positive impact on the environment, including increased conservation efforts and the preservation of cultural heritage	9%	50%	2%	33%	6%	2.55	0.56
Overall mean						2.72	0.51

Source: Primary Data, 2023

From the questionnaire results in Table 2 and interviews which were held with the key informants that tourism infrastructure on the socio-economic performance of local communities in the Kabarole district, the majority of the respondents (70%)

agreed that Tourism infrastructure has led to increased employment opportunities, improved living standards, and increased income for residents and thus uplifting their socio-economic standards in the district as indicated with a mean value of (2.86).

The findings were backed up by various interview responses;

“.....Tourism infrastructure includes ancillary and complementary facilities, equipment, systems, processes, and resources necessary for the functioning of every tourist destination. This primarily includes roads, airports, and the like, which has made Kabarole district not only accessed to tourists but also to us the residents in our local communities. And this has enabled us to do business across our communities, hence improving our standards of living.....”

“.....Money from the tourism infrastructure is in most cases used by our local governments for better service delivery and often goes into improving local infrastructure, and sustainable management and protection of natural wonders that attract visitors. Further, tourism infrastructure has generated incomes for a variety of businesses here in Kabarole, and it is creating a wide range of employment opportunities for our youths in the district.....”

The interview response implies that tourism infrastructure has a significant impact on the socio-economic performance of the Kabarole district. And from the specific responses, the majority of the respondents (65%) asserted that the transport networks and other communication lines have improved the general health fare of local

communities in Kabarole district, with a mean value of (2.80). A good number of the respondents (65%) agreed that accommodation facilities in line with tourism has improved the sanitation levels of the community such as clean water, with a mean of (2.76).

Similarly, from the interviews conducted, some respondents were noted that,

“.....Just like elsewhere, tourism infrastructure has helped us to increase the benefits and to reduce the negative impacts caused by tourism for destinations through protecting natural environments, wildlife, and natural resources and managing tourism activities in the district.....”

“.....Without tourism infrastructure, the access to clean drinking water, food, health care, communications systems, and housing was indeed very hard, actually not possible, but these Infrastructures have helped us by providing us a basis for making life tenable.....”

The interview response, it implies that accessibility of social services in Kabarole is made easy due to the existence of tourism infrastructure. However, a good number of the respondents (53%), disagreed that tourism infrastructure has facilitated the development of other economic activities, such as agriculture and manufacturing, resulting in

increased economic growth in the region, with a mean of (2.65). Lastly, a good number of the respondents (50%) disagreed that Tourism infrastructure has a positive impact on the environment, including increased conservation efforts and the preservation of cultural heritage with a mean value of (2.55).

Table 3: Descriptive analysis of tourism attraction sites on the Socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district

Attractions on the socio-economic performance of local communities	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Attractions such as Cultural centers act as a source of income through the employment of local people which boosts their standards of living	0%	5%	5%	75%	15%	2.69	0.29
Cultural centres serve as community hubs where people can come together to learn, share experiences and knowledge and celebrate their heritage	2%	10%	2%	70%	17%	2.55	0.36
Conservation areas create an opportunity for the local people to enjoy and celebrate nature in its holistic form	1%	7%	6%	65%	20%	2.37	0.39
Cultural centres build social capital and foster a sense of community as they provide spaces for local people to come together, share their experiences and knowledge, and participate in cultural activities	2%	9%	9%	57%	25%	2.24	0.45
Cultural centres provide opportunities for local artists and artisans to showcase their work and sell their products, which can generate income and support the local economy	1%	4%	6%	50%	40%	2.15	0.48
Overall Mean						2.35	0.41

Source: Primary Data, 2023

From the questionnaire results in Table 3 and interviews which were held with the key informants, majority of the respondents 75% of the respondents asserted that Attractions such as cultural centers act as a source of income through the employment of

local people which boosts their standards of living, this is confirmed by the mean value of (2.69). This was backed by the interview conducted where one of the respondents said;

.....many of the households are given employment opportunities in the established amenities such as the banking institutions to work as tellers, also due to the establishment of shopping centers and supermarkets in Kabarole especially in Fort Portal City, more young adults are given opportunities to work as casual workers which enable them earn a living and afford the necessities.

As per the interview response, it implies that more job opportunities are created and made available for the locals as more tourist attraction sites are being established thus improved socio-economic performance.

by the mean value of (2.37). More so, of the respondents (57%) agreed that cultural centres build social capital and foster a sense of community as they provide spaces for local people to come together, share their experiences and knowledge, and participate in cultural activities this is confirmed by the mean value of (2.24). (50%) and (40%) of the respondents asserted that cultural centres provide opportunities for local artists and artisans to showcase their work and sell their products, which can generate income and support the local economy, this is confirmed by the mean value of (2.15).

And (70%) agreed that cultural centers serve as community hubs where people can come together to learn, share experiences and knowledge, and celebrate their heritage, this is confirmed by the mean value of (2.55). 65% of the respondents asserted that conservation areas create an opportunity for the local people to enjoy and celebrate nature in its holistic form this is confirmed

Table 4: ANOVA showing regression analysis of Tourism development on the Socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district

ANOVA ^b						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.262	1	21.262	217.164	0.000
	Residual	58.647	149	0.275		
	Total	79.909	150			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Tourism development						
b. Dependent Variable: Socio-economic performance of local communities in the district						

Source: Primary Data, (2023)

The ANOVA table 4 indicated a significant effect Tourism development has on the Socioeconomic performance of local communities in the district (F-value =217.164 and Sig-value=.000), this is because the sig. value (0.000) was less than 0.05 and is the

maximum level of significance required to declare a significant effect. This showed that Tourism development influences the Socioeconomic performance of local communities in Kabarole district.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings revealed that there was a significant effect of Tourism Attraction sites on the Socioeconomic performance of local communities in Kabarole district. This implies that an increase in attraction sites results in increased job creation and other economic activities, in turn, results in improved Socioeconomic performance of local communities in Kabarole district. The findings are backed up by Apriyanti et al [11], who asserts that attractions can create new businesses and job opportunities, particularly in the hospitality and service sectors. Additionally, the presence of cultural centers and conservation areas can lead to an increase in tourism revenue, which can then be invested in local infrastructure and services. However, Ulabiden [12]

contradictorily argued that there are also potential negative impacts of attractions on local communities. For example, increased tourism can lead to an increase in property prices, making it difficult for locals to afford housing. Additionally, the influx of tourists can lead to overcrowding, congestion, and environmental degradation, which can negatively impact the quality of life for residents. In agreement, Boz [13] discussed that tourism attraction sites are a social, economic, cultural, and environmental phenomenon seen as significant for income generation, employment source, and foreign currency earner. It also plays a considerable role in socio-economic development in underdeveloped and developing countries [14].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study results concluded that there is a significant influence of tourism attraction sites on the socio-economic performance of local communities in the Kabarole district which indicated that an increase in attraction sites results in increased job creation and other economic sources, which in turn, results in improved socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district. The study results recommended that efforts should be made by the local government authorities in the Kabarole district to coordinate with the central government to improve the condition of the transport routes to the tourist spots to enable the tourists to maintain their contact with the rest of the world and enhance the fringe benefits that are lured by the local communities from such transport routes such as the development of other economic activities.

Furthermore, more accommodation establishment should be established so that more local people are given employment opportunities and these can be directly be owned by the government authorities like (UWA) within the conservation areas. The study equally recommends that the government of Uganda through the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), should work towards establishing, and developing more tourist attraction sites and also conserve, support, and protect the existing attraction sites to increase the number of tourists visiting the destinations like Kabarole district which in turn enhance the multiplier effect in the region resulting into more employment opportunities and establishment of more micro business initiatives by the local people thus improving their socio-economic status.

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