

Socioeconomic Performance of Local Communities in Tourism Development in Kabarole District of Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the socioeconomic performance of local communities in tourism development in Kabarole district of Uganda. The persistent increase in number of unemployed youths with limited local participation and empowerment in regards to tourism activities in Kabarole district necessitated the present study. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design with a sample of 154 respondents that was determined using Solvne's method of sample size determination. Findings confirm that tourism infrastructure has a statistically significant influence on the socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district, which implies that variations in socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district are explained by tourism infrastructure. Based on the findings, the study calls for tourism destination areas in Kabarole district along with the central government should put in place deliberate conditions that can enhance the establishment of more tourism amenities. These include giving tax holidays to local and international investors who are willing to invest in amenities such as banking institutions, shopping malls. Also, the government should provide land to potential investors in Kabarole and other areas in Uganda so that more tourism amenities can be established in the country.

Keywords: Investors, Socioeconomic performance, Tourism, Tourism infrastructure, Unemployment.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a social occurrence that has gone on in varying forms since the beginning of human society which has become an activity imminent to human nature[1]. Tourism has gradually become one of the most important indicators of economic and social development right from ancient times, the slave-owning and feudal social system when the very beginnings of movement, through the period of the so-called 'oligo tourism' during the 16th century to World War II, the period until 1950s, then through the so-called 'poly tourism' which covers the period from 1950 to 2019, all the way to modern and postmodern tourism today [2]. Globally, classical Rome gave impetus to tourism in form of travels during their expansion wars and consequential occupation, religious pilgrimages, trade, explorations and other forms of holiday. Travels became increasingly important due to the development of infrastructure. Around 300 A.D., there existed a road network with 90,000 kilometres of major thoroughfares and 200,000 kilometres of smaller rural roads[3]. These facilitated not only

the transport of soldiers and goods, but also private travel. Above all, wealthy travellers seeking edification and pleasure benefited from this system. In the first century after Christ, there was a veritable touristic economy which organized travel for individuals and groups, provided information and dealt with both accommodation and meals[4]. Many roads deteriorated when the Roman Empire declined. Travel grew harder, riskier, and more complicated [5]. The modern concept of tourism began in the 17th century when young nobles from western and northern Europe took the Grand Tour, a trip around Europe to see history, art, and culture. Wealthier classes adopted this trend in the 18th century, spreading it to America. Popular Middle Ages religious pilgrimages persisted [6]. The Industrial Revolution in the second half of the 18th century caused a global economic, social, and technological shift. The first international tourism organization, the International Union of Official Tourist Publicity Organizations, was founded in 1925, followed by the establishment of the

International Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO) in 1949. IUOTO was later renamed as the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in 1975 and has since played a crucial role in promoting sustainable and responsible tourism development globally. The art of tourism has spread the whole world as people want to be engaged in travel for education, research, medical, climatic study purposes among others [7]. In Africa, tourism has a long history, with some of the earliest examples of tourism dating back to the ancient Egyptian civilization, where people travelled from all over the world to see the pyramids and other cultural and historical sites[8]. In the modern era, the African tourism industry started to develop in the 1960s, with the rise of air travel and the decolonization of many African countries. However, the industry faced numerous challenges in the following decades, including political instability, economic decline, and negative stereotypes of Africa as a dangerous and disease-ridden continent[9]. Despite these challenges, the African tourism industry continued to grow in the 21st century, with many African countries investing in new tourism infrastructure and marketing strategies to promote their unique attractions and experiences. In East Africa, tourism has been an important industry for many decades, with countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda becoming popular destinations for wildlife safaris, religious pilgrimages and cultural tours. In the early days of tourism development in East Africa, many of the safari companies were owned and operated by foreign companies, with limited benefits for local communities[10]. There has been a greater focus on community-based tourism initiatives and sustainable tourism practices in African states, which aim to ensure that the benefits of tourism are shared more widely. In Uganda, tourism started to develop in the 1950s,

with the establishment of national parks and wildlife reserves. However, the industry faced numerous challenges in the following decades, including political instability and economic decline[11]. In the 1990s, the Ugandan government started to invest in tourism infrastructure and marketing, which led to a significant increase in tourist arrivals in the country. In recent years, the government has also implemented a number of policies aimed at promoting sustainable tourism practices and community-based tourism initiatives. Since the country's tourism sector began, there has been little material and records on Uganda tourism, and what is accessible focuses on the famed Uganda mountain gorillas [12]. Uganda's tourist business has realized the need to diversify its offering in 2019, while without abandoning its most popular asset. As per the Local Government report of Kabarole district 2019, there is high unemployment and lack of skills by the youths [13]. National Population and Housing Census[14] indicates that there are increased number of people who are 18 years and above wat 86.2% and it further states that there are high illiteracy rate approximately at 38%.Community-based tourism initiatives in Kabarole district have also helped to preserve the area's cultural heritage. A study by Wanie, Batool, Ahmad and Shah[15] found that community-based tourism in Uganda had helped to promote cultural awareness and pride among local residents, and had led to the preservation of traditional practices and beliefs. However, due to scanty literature from the previous scholars, Kabarole district in western Uganda has low rates of socioeconomic performance due to inadequate tourism development as well as the dilapidating situation of natives in the district. This necessitated the present study that examines the socioeconomic performance of tourism in Kabarole district of Uganda.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is social exchange theory. The Social exchange theory is a socio-psychological theory that studies the social behavior in the interaction of two parties that implement a cost-benefit analysis to determine risks and benefits. The theory also involves economic relationships—the cost-benefit analysis occurs when each party has goods that the other parties value. In the light of the present study, the theory focuses on residents and tourist's perceptions toward tourism, and understanding community's perceptions towards tourists and tourist practices. It is therefore a need to understand local community leaders' and policy makers' perceptions toward presence and sustenance of socio-economic development of

tourism, as they act as the initiators or facilitators in sustainable tourism development[17]. Social exchange theory assists to clarify each local community members' perceptions as it offers the additional perspectives from different knowledge areas that are usefully, fruitfully and synergically investigate the various issues at each stage of tourism development[18]. This research aims to examine perceptions of local community members on tourism development by applying SET to explain the different elements involved in tourism development especially between local leaders and policy-makers of a destination and the tourism industry.

METHODOLOGY

Design and setting

Mixed methods and cross-sectional designs were followed to explore socioeconomic performance of tourism in Kabarole district of Uganda. Heap and Waters[19] 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.

Instruments

Structured questionnaires complemented with structured interviews were used to collect data for the study.

Sampling and procedure

The survey was conducted at Kabarole district through the use of purposive sampling technique in administering questionnaires to the 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[20] Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) technique with the utilisation of Atlas Ti 5.2 software.

RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive analysis of tourism amenities on socioeconomic performance of local communities in Kabarole district

Amenities on socio-economic performance of local communities	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Amenities such as shopping malls and supermarkets from tourism development have improved the social wellbeing of the local people of Kabarole by providing quality products.	2%	10%	4%	61%	23%	2.74	0.31
Financial services from tourism development render affordable and easy financial services to the local community such as a 24hr banking services using ATM machines	4%	13%	3%	60%	20%	2.59	0.35
Tourism development has helped to improve the security of the people in the community.	12%	56%	4%	19%	9%	2.38	0.38
Tourism amenities have led to increased access to financial services that have increased the ability of locals to participate in the economy	20%	50%	5%	19%	16%	2.25	0.44
Tourism amenities like financial institutions are essential in promoting the employability of local people.	20%	45%	1%	21%	10%	2.20	0.47
Overall Mean						2.32	0.42

Source: Primary Data, 2023

Data from table 1 above show that that majority of the respondents (61%) agreed that amenities such as shopping malls and supermarkets from tourism development have improve the social wellbeing of the local people of Kabarole by providing quality products, with an average mean of (2.74), more so, a

good number of the respondents (60%) agreed that financial services from tourism development render affordable and easy financial services to the local community such as a 24hr banking services using ATM machines, with a Mean value of (2.59). Respondent (19%) agreed that Tourism development

has helped to improve the security of the people in the community, with mean (2.38).

“.....Tourism amenities have boosted our district revenues, created thousands of jobs, developed the infrastructures of our district, and planted a sense of cultural exchange between foreigners and citizens of Kabarole district.....”. Further, these amenities are playing a very important role in shaping the visitor experience and include things like public restrooms, signage, connectivity, emergency services, postal facilities, roads, sidewalks, safe drinking water, good infrastructures, hotels etc. And these are enjoyed by both local and visitors as well, hence stimulating businesses and jobs as well.....”

“Also, through promoting tourism amenities, the community alongside government are trying hard to preserving our local culture and heritage; strengthening communities; provision of social services; commercialization of culture and art; revitalization of customs and art forms and the preservation of heritage.....”

The interview responses imply that tourism amenities do have a great impact on shaping the job industry of Kabarole and also, it's a great player in improving the quality of life for the locals. A good number of the respondents (19%) agreed that Tourism amenities have led to increased access to *“..... Some respondents also added that, the contribution of tourism amenities to their society is reflected in increasing job opportunities in the district, a higher quality of life for locals, and an increase in wealth of an area.....”* this is because, they involve providing cozy and comfortable facilities to the visitor or traveler throughout the tourism, such as drinking water, food, and sanity. That's, due to the demand for better services, varied employment opportunities have been created. Therefore, people do not feel the need to migrate to other cities to earn their living. They interact with the tourists and mix with people from diverse backgrounds, creating a cosmopolitan culture in the region.

“.....Unlike before, these available tourism amenities are providing us comfort and convenience in the areas near them. Amenities encompass additions that are in excess of the basic needs of an individual, and usually include features such as pools, workout facilities, and internet....”

These include road and rail improvements, airport development and improvements in utilities, such as water supply and telecommunications. Through these, local people can benefit from the improved facilities which have been provided for tourists. The

The study findings were in line with the study interviews conducted where some respondents argued that,

financial services that have increased the ability of locals to participate in the economy, with a mean value of (2.25). Lastly the respondents (21%) agreed that Tourism amenities like financial institutions are essential in promoting the employability local people, with a Mean value of (2.20)

interview responses imply that tourism amenities are contributors to enhancing comfort and convenience in the areas of Kabarole especially to regions adjacent to these amenities.

Table 2: Regression Analysis showing the Effect of tourism amenities on socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.841a	0.657	0.4214	0.1286
a. Predictors: (Constant), Tourism Amenities				

Table 3: ANOVA Analysis showing the Effect of tourism amenities on socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.874	1	13.874	56.956	0.000a
	Residual	21.922	149	0.244		
	Total	35.796	150			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Tourism Amenities						
b. Dependent Variable: Socio-economic performance						

Table 4: Coefficient Analysis showing the Effect of tourism amenities on socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district

Coefficients					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	7.260	0.2013		36.06
	Tourism Amenities	0.698	0.0255	0.493	27.37

b. Dependent Variable: Socio-economic performance of local communities

Source: Primary data, 2023

According to the results in the summarized table 4, the coefficient of determination R squared for tourism amenities is 0.657. This means that over 65% of the variation in socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district was explained by tourism amenities. The ANOVA Table 3 indicated that tourism amenities as a concept of Tourism Development significantly affects the socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole District and this was indicated by the F-value=56.956 and Sig-value=.000, since the sig. value (0.000) was less than 0.05; which is the

maximum level of significance required to declare a significant effect. This implies that Tourism amenities highly contributed to the socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole District. The coefficient value Table 4 for tourism Amenities, (0.698) means that a unit increase in tourism amenities increases the socio- economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district by 0.698 and this was statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000 which is below 0.05, the level of significance.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district

	Mean	SD
Social status		
Tourism development has promoted community inclusiveness as many local people are directly and indirectly players to the industry	3.10	0.58
The construction of transport and communication lines has fostered the betterment of the standards of living.	3.05	0.64
Safety of the local people and their properties has improved due to the increased attractions and conservation centers.	2.95	0.67
Literacy levels of locals have improved due to the development of tourism and the related institutions.	2.80	0.69
Sanitation and the general health services have improved due to the development of the tourism industry.	2.45	0.83
Average Mean & SD	2.98	0.65
Economic status		
Household's investment levels have been fostered by the development of the tourism industry.	2.85	0.68
Numerous households have opportunities to work in different profiles in the tourism industry.	2.78	0.70
Households have accumulated more wealth due to involvement tourism industry	2.70	0.72
Households are alleviated from the poverty line using the industry as a tool	2.65	0.76
Households have gained entrepreneurial skills due to the development of the tourism industry.	2.50	0.83
Average Mean & SD	2.75	0.72
Overall Mean	2.69	0.75

Source: Primary Data, 2023

Respondents agreed that tourism development has promoted community inclusiveness as many local people are directly and indirectly payers to the industry with a mean value of (3.10) and the construction of transport and communication lines has fostered the betterment of the standards of living with mean value of (3.05). Additionally, Safety

of the local people and their properties has improved due to the increased attractions and conservation centers. With a mean of (2.95), respondents agreed that Literacy levels of locals have improved due to the development of tourism and the related institutions. With a mean value of (2.80) furthermore, a significant number of respondents

agreed that Sanitation and the general health services have improved due to the development of the tourism industry, with an average mean of (2.45). Respondents agreed that Households investment levels have been fostered by the development of the tourism industry. With a mean value of (2.85), respondents agreed that numerous households are given a chance to work in different profiles in the tourism industry. With a mean value

of (2.78). Additionally, Households have accumulated more wealth due to involvement tourism industry. With a mean of (2.70), respondents agreed that Households are alleviated from the poverty line using the industry as a tool. With a mean value of (2.65), households have gained entrepreneurial skills due to the development of the tourism industry with a mean value of (2.50).

Table 5: Coefficients establishing the impact between variables using multiple regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	0.680	0.732		0.929	0.000
Tourism Infrastructure	0.107	0.360	0.083	0.296	0.020
Tourism Amenities	0.474	0.512	0.493	0.925	0.010
Tourism Attraction sites	0.362	0.211	0.505	1.712	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Socio-economic performance

Source: Primary Data, (2023).

The study results in table show table 5 show that tourism infrastructure is the significant predictor variable among elements of the socio-economic performance of local communities ($b = .083$ and $p = 0.020$). The study results also showed that Tourism Amenities can also significantly predict socio-economic performance of local communities ($b =$

0.493 and $p = 0.010$). The study results also showed that Tourism Attraction sites can also significantly predict socio-economic performance of local communities ($b = 0.505$ and $p = 0.000$). This finding suggests that tourism development impacted on socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district.

DISCUSSION

Tourism infrastructure has a statistically significant influence on the socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district, implying that variations in socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district are explained by tourism infrastructure. This meant that the socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district increased as a result of improved Tourism Infrastructures in the district.

This was in line with the study by Tsartas [21] who investigated the impact of tourism infrastructure on the socio-economic development of local communities in coastal regions in Greece. The study found that the presence of tourism infrastructure, such as hotels and restaurants, led to job creation and income generation for local residents. The study also found that the availability of infrastructure facilities attracted more tourists to the area, resulting in increased economic activity. Similarly, Arumugan, Kumar and Subramania [22] argued that, tourists select their destinations by considering about the attributes of tourism preservation, development heritage conservation as accommodation (luxury, hotels) and activities (indoor/outdoor) historical attractions, natural attractions, etc. It should be given a higher satisfaction to the tourists while minimizing their complaints about the destinations. Then only they will intend to revisit those destinations as well as recommend it to others. At the same time their satisfaction will be diminished if they imagine the

cost of their journey is greater than the service they received [23]. In addition, a study conducted by Hag et al [24] in South Korea found that the development of tourism infrastructure, such as transportation and accommodation facilities, significantly contributed to the socio-economic development of local communities. The study found that the availability of tourism infrastructure facilitated the development of other economic activities, such as agriculture and manufacturing, resulting in increased economic growth in the region. Findings revealed that there is a significant effect of tourism amenities on the Socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district. This indicates that improved tourism amenities stimulate and increase economic activities, which ultimately result in increased Socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district. The findings are backed up by the study findings of Karlan and Valdivia [25] who asserts that training and technical assistance offered to local entrepreneurs and businesses by financial institutions help them manage their finances and operate more efficiently. This leads to better business practices, improved profitability, and increased competitiveness in the tourism industry. They further stated that financial institutions provide essential financing and technical assistance to support the development of tourism infrastructure and services, create jobs, generate income, and promote sustainable tourism practices. In

furtherance to these findings, Haines et al[26] also argued that tourism necessitates the improvement of people's living conditions through increased

income, improved housing and health conditions, among other aspects.

CONCLUSION

The study results concluded that tourism infrastructure do have a positive and statistically significant influence on socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district which meant that the socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district improved as a result of improved Tourism Infrastructures in the district. The study further concludes that there is a

significant effect of Tourism Amenities on the Socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district which suggested that enhanced Tourism amenities stimulate and increase economic activities, which ultimately result in increased Socio-economic performance of local communities in Kabarole district.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study call for Kabarole district and other tourism destination areas in conjunction with the central government to put in place deliberate conditions that can enhance the establishment of more tourism amenities and these can include, giving tax holidays to local and international investors who are willing to invest in

amenities such as banking institutions, shopping malls. More so, the government should provide land to potential investors in Kabarole and other areas in Uganda so as more tourism amenities can be established which will assist in harnessing more benefits of the established tourist amenities to the local communities.

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