

An examination of Kenya's Outbound Tourism to Ugandan Destinations: Towards Re-thinking Kenya's Tourism Product Development and Marketing

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Abstract

Kenya has placed high attention to the tourism industry as it constitutes one of her principal export sectors that not only earns her the much sought after foreign exchange but also creates employment opportunities directly and indirectly. However, Kenya's dominant tourist products (beach and safari) are already tired, and this has substantially reduced Kenya's competitiveness in the tourism market, (World Bank, 2010). Kenya's overreliance on few tourist generating countries for its tourists has placed the country's tourism industry in jeopardy particularly when these tourist generating countries issue unexpected travel advisories. Tourism scholars and commentators alike have over time recommended the development and marketing of the country's domestic tourism sub-sector. This study examined Kenya's outbound tourists to Ugandan destinations with a view of understanding their characteristics, preferences, travel motivation, expenditure patterns, their duration of stay, their knowledge of Kenya's tourist products, their information sources, the sources of their finances, and their willingness to take recreation in Kenya. The study employed mixed methods approach, where both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were used. The study established that: despite Uganda boasting of natural wildlife-based attractions such as the famous Gorilla conservation area, most Kenyans (94.8%) who visit Uganda are attracted by religion/faith-based, culture/heritage-based and historical/political-based attractions as well as by the African hospitality of the local Ugandan people. Few (5.2%) of Kenyans visiting Uganda are attracted by nature-based attractions. The study recommends rigorous tourism marketing in Kenya as well as harnessing the country's rich history for tourism.

Keywords: Kenya's outbound tourism; Domestic tourism; Ugandan destinations; Tourism product development; marketing.

1.0 Introduction

Tourism is a flourishing industry in terms of growth and economic importance worldwide, especially in developing countries. Africa, like most least developed countries (LDCs) have embraced tourism as a vehicle to economic sustainability and community development, and Kenya is one of Africa's success story in terms of tourism development, (Akama, 1997). In Kenya's economy, tourism has become a significant component contributing substantially to employment, foreign exchange and infrastructural development as well as improvement on household incomes. Over the years, Kenya's tourist product has included a galaxy of attractions ranging from pristine parks, modern conference facilities to clear beaches (Akama and Kieti, 2007). However, most of the available information for Kenya's tourism industry has been inbound tourism, that is, Kenya has given emphasis on her inbound tourism with little research on her outbound tourism. Inbound tourism represents a significant component of export earnings while outbound tourism is an import, meaning the money generated from inbound tourism is leaking through outbound tourism. Records at the exit points to Kenya's neighbors indicate that the number of Kenyans departing for recreational purposes outside the country is increasing annually. For instance, according to Ugandan Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2011); 249,786 and 261, 329 Kenyans entered Uganda in the year 2008 and 2009 respectively; while 294, 170 Kenyans visited Uganda in 2010. These statistics are of significance to Kenya who received a mere 19,800 Ugandan national as tourists in the year 2010 as it will aid in her tourism product diversification strategies as well as in crafting her tourist marketing initiatives.

1.1 Kenya's tourism development record

Over the years, there has been a growing recognition and understanding in Kenya of the pivotal role that tourism plays in generation of foreign exchange earnings and employment creation, as well as its contribution to investment opportunities, enhancement of government revenues and balance of payments among other significance, (Akama, 1999). Hence, the motivation of Kenya to invest in tourism and tourism infrastructure is because of these and other direct and indirect benefits that accrue from tourism. For instance, in 2010, the tourism industry was the leading foreign exchange earner, surpassing agriculture, (KNBS, 2012)

Generally, the performance of the Kenya's tourism industry has been uneven, with the industry witnessing decline in 2007-2008 as a result of post election violence. However, even before the post election violence, the performance of Kenya's tourism industry has been a subject of debate among tourism professionals and investors alike. Among the issues dominating discourse on tourism development in Kenya is the overreliance on inbound tourism, with the performance of domestic tourism being rated as below par. Commentators point out that Kenya has not harnessed its domestic tourism to a point where it can cushion the industry in the event of unexpected travel advisories that are issued by tourist generating countries to their nationals who wish to visit Kenya.

Even within tourist generating countries such as in Europe and America, Kenya is increasingly being perceived as providing a sterile and limited tourism product that is mainly centered on visitations to few wildlife and beach tourism destinations, (Akama and Kieti, 2006). Hence, Kenya will continue to heavily rely on international (inbound tourists) despite the risks mentioned above. The development and aggressive marketing of domestic tourism in Kenya is the only sure way to increasing the reliability of tourism as an area of investment.

1.2. The Kenya's outbound tourism situation

The concept of outbound tourism still sounds strange to many tourism stakeholders in Kenya yet available information indicates that most Kenyans are engaged in it. Kenya has over the years paid high attention to its inbound tourism industry, but the increasing popularity of outbound tourism calls for an urgent attention. Available statistics indicates that Kenya is one of the most well-established tourism destinations in sub-Saharan Africa, with tourism beginning during colonialism and emerging as a key growth area in post-independence (Sindiga 1999; Akama 2004; Christian 2012). However, Kenya as a national destination is at a crossroads, with both the principal locations – Maasai Mara and Coastal region although exhibiting strong visitor numbers, are struggling with challenges associated with over-development and resource management (World Bank 2010; Christian, 2012).

Table 1: Tourist arrivals to Kenya by country of origin in 2009

Country	No. of tourists	Percentage (%)
UK	113,747	16
USA	75,000	10
Italy	54,885	7.8
Germany	37,185	5.3
France	33,801	4.8
Uganda	19,800	2.8
Netherlands	20,150	2.9
Tanzania	19,683	2.8
South Africa	20,140	3.0
India	23,648	4.5
Canada	17,708	2.4
China	11,751	2.8
Australia	9,681	1.6
Switzerland	13,440	1.4
Spain	10,643	1.4
UAE	5,608	1.2
Sweden	6,564	1.1
Belgium	9,055	1.2
Japan	9,118	1.0
Denmark	6,638	0.9
Norway	5,278	0.8
Austria	7,932	0.7
Poland	2,923	0.8
Finland	1,868	0.3
Russia	1,950	0.4
Czech Republic	2,894	0.4
Hungary	2,211	0.2
Brazil	1,119	0.1
Mexico	727	0.1

Source: Ministry of Tourism, Kenya, 2010

Tourists visit the Mara for its reputation as a popular destination to view the ‘Big Five’ (lions, elephants, rhinos, buffalo and leopards) and the romanticized pastoralists, the Maasai. The Coastal region exhibit typical mass tourism model of large hotel resorts and all-inclusive packages, (World Bank, 2010). However, while mass tourism is present at the coast, poverty is persistent and chronic for most people in the province. Both these prime destinations in Kenya are closely interconnected with the global production network, but there are strong economic and social upgrading outcomes based on race/ethnicity, regions, and gender (Christian, 2012).

1.3 Tourism Development in Uganda

Though tourism development in Uganda was affected by political upheavals of 1960’s and 70’s, the establishment of a stable state under the National Resistance Movement (NRM) opened a new chapter for tourism development in Uganda. A notable milestone in Uganda’s tourism industry was the adoption of structural adjustment programme that revamped the tourism industry (Christian, 2012). Uganda witnessed an improved tourism performance in the 1990’s, for instance, compared to 1980, when only US \$ 0.125 million were earned, the 1995 earnings had reached a level of US \$ 90 million, and has since then remained one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy with an annual growth rate of 21% over the years 1992 – 2000, (Christian, 2012). In 2010 Uganda recorded a total of more than 946,000 tourists, spending over US \$662 million (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2011) in Christian, 2012.

Table 2: Tourist arrivals to Uganda by country of origin

Continent/Country	2008	2009	2010
Africa	624,352	631,258	677,774
Kenya	249,786	261,329	294,170
Rwanda	181,339	199,530	177,043
Tanzania	45,276	48,948	42,287
America	53,950	56,131	65,175
USA	42,418	37,971	45,856
Asia	33,532	29,656	41,200
India	16,236	12,946	16,747
Europe	106,020	79,710	112,870
UK	51,812	35,716	39,171
Germany	8,083	6,778	8,650

Source: UBOS, 2011

Table 3: Estimates and forecast of tourism’s contribution to Ugandan economy, 2011 and 2021

	2011			2021		
	US\$ Million ¹	% of total	Growth ₁	US\$	% of total	Growth ³
Direct contribution to GDP	682	3.2	8.9	1198	3.1	5.8
Total contribution to GDP	1628	7.6	7.7	2887	7.4	5.9
Direct contribution to employment ⁴	181	2.7	5.6	250	2.6	3.3
Total contribution to employment ⁴	447	6.6	4.4	625	6.4	3.4
Visitors export	743	14.6	10.9	1282	13.3	5.6
Domestic Spending	397	1.9	5.9	703	1.8	5.9
Leisure spending	393	2.8	-3.5	720	1.8	6.2
Business spending	752	3.5	17.1	1275	3.2	5.4
Capital Investment	216	4.6	3.6	355	4.4	5.1

¹2012 constant prices and exchange rate; ²2011 real growth adjusted for inflation (%); ³2011-2021 annualized real growth adjusted for inflation (%); ⁴000 jobs.

Source: World Travel and Tourism Council, 2011 (Cited in Mwaura and Ssekitolesko, 2011)

1.4 Tourism Development between Kenya and Uganda

The importance of tourism for sub-Saharan Africa cannot be understated. Outside agriculture, tourism is one of the few global industries that has less stringent barriers to entry, needs multiple skilled workers, and, particularly, harnesses local knowledge, so that locals can become self-employed guides, micro entrepreneurs, artisans, or fill various low-skilled positions. Sub-Saharan Africa is also home to some of the world’s most spectacular natural sites, wildlife and traditional cultural groups. The difficult task Africa faces, however, is to foster ‘shared growth’ and to turn ‘survivalist’ and ‘marginal’ micro-entrepreneurs into sustainable businesses, giving workers Decent Work options (Rogerson, 2008, Christian, 2012). It is important to study the participation of African countries and internal destinations in the production network because the continent, although still a relatively small player

in global tourism, is poised to be a leader in the next wave of tourism to the developing world (Rogerson 2007, Christian, 2012).

Table 4 captures the statistics of tourism developments between Kenya and Uganda where both countries have experienced increased visitor arrivals, tourism contributions to GDP, total employment, and visits to their national parks, (Christian, 2012). Its strength as a dominant regional player, however, has not hidden the challenges that many of its internal tourism destinations face for example low occupancy rates. The emergence of regional lead firms on its borders has maintained challenges for specific workers, small producers, women, and racial and ethnic groups (Christian, 2012).

Table 4: Descriptive tourist statistics for Kenya and Uganda.

	Kenya		Uganda	
	2000	2011	2000	2011
Visitor Arrivals '000	1,036,500	1,095,945	200,000	1,084,000 (2009)
Number of hotel beds	7,765,700.(2003)	17,125,300.(2009)	N/A	1,656,089.(2008)
Hotel occupancy rate	33% (2003)	36% (2009)	N/A	30% (2008)
Number of tour operators	N/A	2,075 (2003)	N/A	164+
Contribution to GDP*	1.29* 10%	4.472* (13%)	.526* 8%	1.695* 9%
Total employment '000	424.8, 8.9%	778.3, 11.8%	337.8, 7.3%	522.69, 8%
National Park visits	1644.8	2385.3 (2009)	128,810 (2005)	151,059 (2009)

*Millions USD. Sources: World Travel and Tourism Council; Ministry of Tourism Kenya; Ugandan Wildlife Authority; Ugandan Ministry of Tourism, Travel and Industry, (Cited in Christian, 2012).

1.5 The research study

The main aim of this study was to examine the Kenya outbound tourism to Ugandan destinations. Specifically, understanding the socioeconomics characteristics of the Kenyans visiting Uganda was believed to be vital in aiding Kenya to diversify her tourist product, and adopt marketing strategies that are efficient to the market segment. Specifically, the study purposed to answer the following research questions:

- What are the characteristics of Kenya's outbound tourists to Ugandan destinations?
- What are the motivations of Kenya's outbound tourism to Ugandan destinations?
- What is the perception of Kenyan's outbound tourists regarding the attractiveness of Ugandan tourist product?

2.0 Methods and Materials

This study studied Kenyans departing to Ugandan destinations at the entry points to Uganda. The study had sought to answer the question why Ugandan destinations are becoming popular among Kenyans seeking recreational experiences. The study population consisted of Kenyans leaving for Ugandan destinations between the Month of August-November 2012. Purposive sampling was employed to select the Kenyans at the entry point of Malaba and Suam. Simple random sampling was applied when selecting individual respondents from the groups identified for study. Data collection was mainly by use of questionnaires. However, additional information for this study was obtained through review of secondary data. Questionnaires were administered at Malaba and Suam entry points. One type of questionnaire was administered in the two points. In addition, structured dialogue was conducted with customs officials at the two points. The questionnaire mainly had two sections, with the first section seeking to capture the respondents' general socio-demographic attributes, while the second section addressed overall issues on motivations to visit Uganda, the budgetary allocations for the trips, the sources of finances for the trip as well as the respondents' knowledge of Kenyan attractions and destinations. Out of the one hundred and ninety respondents who participated in this study, one hundred and fifty five respondents completed the questionnaires accordingly. The collected data was organized, coded and analyzed using computer statistical packages for social scientist (SPSS) version 16.

3.0 Research Findings

3.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Age Bracket: Since age is a significant factor in making trip decisions, this study sought to find out the age bracket of Kenyans who visit Ugandan destinations. The results revealed that majority of Kenyans visiting Ugandan destinations (77.5%) are between the ages of 15-34 years, (Table 5). This information is significant to tourism marketers in Kenya as it represents a significant component of market segment. Further, the findings reveal that the number of Kenyans visiting Uganda decline with increase in the age bracket.

Table 5: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic factors	Description	Freq	Percent (%)
Age bracket of the respondent	<15	10	6.4
	15-24	50	32.3
	25-35	70	45.2
	35-44	16	10.3
	45+	9	5.8
Gender	Male	81	52.3
	Female	74	47.7
Education level	Primary	16	10.3
	Secondary	30	19.4
	Tertiary	49	31.6
	University	60	38.7
Income levels	<5,000	10	6.5
	5,000-10,000	40	25.8
	11,000-20,000	35	22.6
	21,000-30,000	40	25.8
	31,000-40,000	14	9.0
	41,000-50,000	11	7.1
	>50,000	5	3.2
Occupation	Self employed	13	8.4
	Student	30	19.4
	Civil servant	60	38.7
	NGO	20	12.9
	Part-time employment	15	9.7
	Others	17	10.9
Religion	Christian	125	80.6
	Muslim	20	12.9
	Others	10	6.5
If a Christian, which denomination	Roman Catholic	60	48
	Protestant	40	32
	Evangelical	25	20
Intended duration of the trip	< 2 days	41	26.5
	2-5 days	90	58.1
	>5 days	24	15.4
Nature of the trip/tour	Family tour	17	10.9
	Church related tour	70	45.2
	School/academic	25	16.1
	Organizational/association	28	18.1
	Individual/private tour	15	9.7

Source: Survey data, 2012

Gender: Understanding the gender of Kenyans taking their holidays in Ugandan destinations was also examined, and the findings revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female vacationers. 52.3 % of the respondents were male and 47.7% were female (Table 5).

Level of Education: The results indicate that most Kenyans who tour Uganda have post secondary education, with respondents holding both tertiary and University education comprising 70.3% of the total respondents, (Table 5).

3.2 Nature of attractions preferred by Kenyans

Religious (faith) based attractions appeared the most significant attraction to Kenyans visiting Ugandan destinations, closely followed by culture (heritage) based attractions, and historical (political) based

Table 6: The nature of Ugandan attractions preferred by Kenyans

Attraction	Freq.(%) preference	Mean	S. Dev.	Description of specific attractions	Freq	%
Culture/ heritage based attractions	47 (30.3%)	3.6968	1.2876	Local Ugandan culture	20	12.9
				Songs and dance	26	16.8
				Hospitality of Ugandan people	59	38.1
				Ugandan foods	32	20.6
				Uganda dressing	18	11.6
Historical/ political based Attractions	46 (29.7%)	3.6618	1.14163	Idi Amin regime sites	41	26.5
				Kabaka lake and palace	39	25.2
				Kasumbi tombs	40	25.8
				Naggalabi Buddo Coronation site	12	7.7
				Ugandan museum	9	5.8
The Entebbe Airport	14	9.0				
Religious/ Faith based attractions	54 (34.8%)	3.8129	1.29829	Uganda martyrs shrine-Namugongo	70	45.1
				Church architecture	51	32.9
				Baha'i & Hindu temples	4	2.6
				Colonel Gaddafi Mosque	30	19.4
Nature based attractions	8 (5.2%)	3.8516	1.28223	Game drive & viewing	3	2.0
				The source of river Nile	107	69.0
				The 'big five'	2	1.3
				Waterfalls	23	14.8
				Flora & fauna	20	12.9
Accommodation type preferred				Five star	2	1.3
				Three star	2	1.3
				Church owned facility	60	38.8
				Community owned guest house	79	50.9
				Others	12	7.7

Source: Survey data, 2012

attractions with 30.3% of the respondents identifying culture based (heritage) attractions as their first motivation to travel; 34.8% identified religious (faith) based attractions, while 29.7% of the respondents identified historical (political) attractions as their number one motivation for visiting Uganda. However, only 5.2% of the respondents identified nature based attractions as their main motivation for visiting Ugandan. Among the nature based attraction sites, the source of river Nile was the most preferred destination among Kenyans visiting Uganda with 69% of the respondents identifying with it. Surprisingly, the 'Big five' as well as game drive & viewing expeditions that Kenya has heavily invested in do not attract Kenyans as indicated by the 1.3% and 2.0% respectively. Among the historical based attractions in Uganda, majority of the respondents (26%) identified the Idi Amin regime sites as the most attractive historical (political) attraction. This was closely followed by Kasumbi tombs (25.8%), Kabaka Lake & palace (25.2%), the Entebbe airport (9%), with Naggalabi Buddo Coronation site and Ugandan Museum scoring (7.7%) and (5.8%) respectively. Finally, the respondents were asked to rate the religious based attractions in Uganda, and majority of the respondents (45.1%) confirmed that the Ugandan martyrs' shrine-Namugongo is the most attractive religion (faith) based attraction.

The magnificent church architecture exhibited by the Rubanga and Namirembe cathedrals is the second most attractive religious feature with 32.9% of the respondents affirming with it, while Colonel Gaddafi mosque was the third most attractive religious feature among Kenyans visiting Uganda with 19.4% of the respondents supporting it.

3.3 Nature of the trips

The study also sought to understand the nature of the recreational trips being conducted by Kenyans to Ugandan destinations, and it established that majority (70%) of the respondents were on a church related trips, while (28%) of the respondents were on trips organized by organization/association; 25% of the respondents were on School/academic related trip and a mere 15% of the respondents were on individual/ private tour of Uganda. These statistics are significant to organizations bestowed with marketing Kenya locally as it reveals that the church can make a huge contribution into the domestic tourism market.

3.4 Nature of accommodation preferred

This study also sought to find out the kind of accommodation facilities preferred by most Kenyans while in Uganda, and the findings indicated that majority of the respondents (50.9%) prefer community owned accommodation facilities while 38.8% prefer church owned facilities. Surprisingly, both the five and three star hotels that Kenya is known of are not attractive to Kenyans, with both categories attracting a mere 1.3% of the respondents.

4.0 Discussion

The findings from this study shades some light on what should be done to develop domestic tourism in Kenya. Kenya boasts of rich religious, cultural and historical resources but has not been tapped for tourism development. Kenya has kept on relying on coastal and safari tourism products at the expense of other products which can be attractive to Kenyans and the East Africa at large. For instance, the rich slave trade history along the Kenya's coastal region has over the years been overshadowed by beach tourism; the railway line history, the Mau Mau history are among the unique tourism products that Kenya can turn to in order to rejuvenate herself an a competitive destination. In addition, the diverse local culture of over 40 tribes in Kenya can be harnessed for purposes of domestic tourism development. The early missionaries left a lot in Kenya that can be harnessed for tourism development yet not much has been done so far. The Ugandan scenario is very interesting, where they have made use of every aspect of their resources for tourism development. Kenya enjoys a galaxy of historical, political and religious resources most of which is developed can diversify the Kenya's tourism product to a greater extend. The missionary 'routes' from the coast to the mainland offers immense opportunities for tourism product development yet Kenya has not ventured into, and the Ugandan case may be an eye opener to Kenya, and this is what this study sought to achieve. Kenya also boasts of many churches and church organizations, and as this study indicates, church organized trips are on the rise, and as a result, marketers need to target this market segment in order to increase domestic tourism in Kenya.

5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

This study attempted to establish the fact about outbound tourism in Kenya, and concludes that outbound tourism in Kenya is real. Knowledge about this phenomenon will be instrumental to policy makers in terms of developing unique tourism products for the domestic market. The prominence of the two major tourism products in Kenya (Beach and Safari tourism) has resulted in many Kenyans not engaging in domestic tourism, a fact that puts the country's tourism industry in jeopardy when unforeseen circumstances take place in the generating countries. For instance, the Euro zone crisis as well as the threats that were posed Al Shabaab affected the industry negatively, (KTB, 2010), and since the domestic industry is not developed, the country lost a lot in terms of revenue earnings. Further, the study concludes that, like Uganda, Kenya has a huge potential for developing and diversifying her tourist products, and if this is done and well marketing is undertaken, the Country's tourist industry is set for more growth. The study recommends for concerted efforts by all tourism stakeholders in Kenya to develop as many tourism products as possible. The new constitutional dispensation in Kenya that has seen governance devolved to Counties should also see tourism product developed relayed at the County level so as to facilitate the identification of unique tourist products at these counties and put it forth for tourism developments.

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