

Impact Of Infrastructure Development On Tourist Satisfaction: A Case Of Fortportal City.

Gwokyalya Flavia¹, Lunyoro Florence²

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

Abstract

The study was about tourism infrastructure development on the tourists' satisfaction in fort portal city The study was aimed at achieving the following objectives; examine the effects of tourism infrastructure development on tourists' satisfaction, to examine the effects of cultural image on tourists' satisfaction and to examine the effects of infrastructure factor on tourists' satisfaction. The study discovered that despite the importance of infrastructure development on the tourism sector very few papers have tried to explore the relationship of tourism infrastructure development on tourists' satisfaction in Uganda. This creates the question of what is the impact of infrastructure development on the tourists' satisfaction in the Ugandan Economy. 36 respondents were selected to give their views about tourism infrastructure and tourist satisfaction and closed ended questionnaire was the main tool used to collect the responses from the different respondents. We used across sectional research design and a quantitative approach. Findings showed that there was a very significant effect between tourism infrastructure and tourist satisfaction; cognitive and tourist satisfaction; and, infrastructure factor and tourist satisfaction. The study therefore, recommends that improvement of tourist satisfaction requires a good tourism having facilities, cognitive images for instance the tourist attractions, accommodation and infrastructure.

Keywords: Infrastructure, Development, Tourist and Satisfaction

Background of the study

Tourism plays a main role in contributing to economic growth which is an integral part of economic, social, regional and physical development. In 2018, tourism performance of the world grew 5% of international tourist arrivals which successfully reached to the 1.4 billion arrivals as well as generated USD 1.7 trillion of export earnings from tourism (UNWTO, 2019).

In the global perspective, the tourism industry has underlined the importance of destination image as one of the best ways to strengthen the competitive advantages of a destination as well as increasing the quality of tourism destination (Nicholas et al., 2023). Vietnam tourism industry has seen impressive growth recently. In 2017, Vietnam welcomed more than 7.8 million international tourists and the domestic tourists also increased rapidly to about 38.5 million visitors which generated an income of US\$8.8 billion, contributing a significant proportion to the country's GDP and tourism ranked 5th among the best industries to bring income in foreign currencies for the country (VNAT, 2016). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization UNWTO (2019), international tourist arrivals worldwide is expected to increase by 3.3% a year between 2010 and 2030 to reach 1.8 billion by 2030, according to UNWTO's long term forecast tourism towards 2030. Between 2010 and 2030, arrivals in emerging destinations (+4.4% a year) are expected to increase at twice the rate of those in advanced economies (+2.2% a year) (T. Christopher et al., 2024). The market share of emerging economies increased from 30% in 1980 to 45% in 2014 and is expected to reach 57% by 2030 equivalent to over 1 billion international tourist arrivals. Travel within Europe actually fell from August to October. In October,

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025

international travel globally remained 88% below the level of one year ago. Business confidence had returned to pre- COVID levels but consumer confidence was still down (Oromo et al., 2023). At the end of November, forward bookings in the EU for the peak Christmas period were 80% below last year's IATA estimates that air travel revenues, as measured by revenue passenger-kilometers (RPKs), will fall by 66% in 2020 and not recover to pre-COVID levels until 2024.

In the sub-Saharan region, the tourism industry is one of the most important contributors to the growth of Malaysia (Kushwah & Chaturvedi, 2019). The tourism industry is the third-largest contributor in Malaysia which is accounting for more than 7.0% of the country economy.

In 2018, the tourism industry has generated revenue with a total of RM 11.0 billion for Sarawak as well as contributed 7.5% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Sarawak (DOSM, 2018).

Countries like Kenya experience low levels of tourist satisfaction witness significant reductions in tourism businesses (Frank et al., 2023). Tourists will not revisit the same destination if they feel dissatisfied, which may cause a significant decline in the tourism economy (Khoshnevis Yazdi et al., 2017). Park et al. (2019) demonstrated that tourists reported lower satisfaction level with destination quality as well as its image after they have revisited the destination. This underlines the need for a better understanding of the factors that influence tourist satisfaction and revisit intention which are needed for developing a desirable destination in a region (Zainuddin et al., 2016). In this regard, the power of destination image is acknowledged universally due to its effect on perception, consequent behavior, and destination choice of tourists (Zhang et al., 2018).

In the Ugandan economy, UNWTO, (2019) explains that, international tourist arrivals fell by 81% in July and 79% in August, 2020 compared to 2019. In late October, they estimated a fall in international arrivals of roughly 70% for 2020, with the rebound only starting in the third quarter of 2021. It is estimated that it will take between 2½ and 4 years to return to 2019 levels (F. Christopher & Micheal, 2022). The International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported a 99% drop in international air travel in May. There was a slight improvement in the following months, but this trend stopped with the second wave of infections. As with other observers, they expect domestic travel to pick up first. For international travel, visiting family and friends is likely to rebound before business or leisure tourism (Nicholas et al., 2023).

Therefore, the problem of declining tourist attraction could be ascribed due to poor destination images made by the tourists' sector. However, a lot of studies have been carried out in Vietnam, Malaysia and India but the problem seems not to be addressed regard to the solution. There is also no evidence of such a study conducted in Uganda and therefore, this presents a knowledge gap and thus, there is need to conduct such a study in order to examine the effects of tourism infrastructure development on the tourists' satisfaction in Uganda a case study of fort portal (F. Christopher et al., 2022).

Problem statement

The travel and tourism industry is one of the biggest industries in the Uganda. Given its many disparate parts, and the lack of reliable data, it is impossible to give a satisfactory estimate of its total size (Nicholas et al., 2023).

Tourists' satisfaction seems to portray a negative trend for instance dissatisfaction of tourists' associated with low

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025

perceived attractions, inaccessibility of resources and poor lodging services of the hotel. This is evidenced by the annual report of UNWTO, (2019) which asserts that international tourist arrivals fell by 81% in July and 79% in August, 2020 compared to 2019 due to low accessibility to resources (Julius, 2025). In late October, they estimated a fall in international arrivals of roughly 70% for 2020, with the rebound only starting in the third quarter of 2021. The UNWTO, (2019) estimated that it will take between 2½ and 4 years to return to 2019 levels (Julius & Matovu, 2025). In a similar situation, a report by WTTC, (2020) forecasted a fall in international tourist arrivals between 41% and 73% for 2020. By August, it appeared to be leaning towards the worst-case scenario, after observing the return of some travel restrictions in the European market and later they estimated a drop of 73% in international tourist arrivals for Africa for 2020 in November (Oromo et al., 2023). Therefore, despite the importance of infrastructure on the tourism sector very few papers have tried to explore the relationship of tourism infrastructure development on tourists' satisfaction in Uganda. This creates the question of what is the impact of tourism infrastructure on the tourists' satisfaction in the Ugandan Economy.

Specific objectives of the study

1. To examine the effects of infrastructure factor on tourists' satisfaction.
2. To examine the impact of tourism development strategies and policies on tourists' satisfaction.
3. To examine the challenges faced by tourist in fort portal city.

Methodology

The methodology for this study adopted a qualitative exploratory case study design, which enabled the researcher to analyze processes and make sense of social phenomena by comparing and classifying the study's items. As Creswell (2019) explains, a qualitative design directs the investigator's observations, data gathering, analysis, and interpretation. An exploratory approach was utilized to explain how tourism stakeholders represent various tourism interests and practices in tourism infrastructure development, as well as the extent to which they are implementing tourism strategies and policies (Nafiu et al., 2017). These approaches were selected because of their capacity to capture rich data with high validity while situating and interpreting data in their larger context, with particular insistence on interviews with key informants and the handling of multiple sources of data. A case study approach was employed to obtain in-depth information about the target area, combining observation of behavior, attitudes, and perceptions of research participants. As noted by Yegidis, Weinbach, and Myers (2012), case studies represent some of the most interesting research exercises to conduct, and they are widely used across disciplines in the social sciences to research various social and political phenomena related to individuals, groups, and organizations (Çakar & Aykol, 2021). The study was cross-sectional, conducted within a specific period, and fundamentally qualitative to guarantee flexibility and adaptation to conditions in the field.

The research design was grounded in an inductive research paradigm. According to Woiceshyn and Daellenbach (2018), inductive research involves investigations starting with the observation of a problem or situation to develop and test theories, models, or frameworks about it (Azungah, 2018). This makes inductive research an effective method for explaining observable trends and testing the validity of theories about the situation under

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025

study (Malhotra, 2017). Inductive research was used in this study to generate knowledge on tourism infrastructure strategies and policies in Uganda's tourism sector (Olanrewaju et al., 2021). Additionally, inductive reasoning was chosen because of its flexibility during data collection, which allowed for obtaining in-depth information about the research topic. In inductive analysis, the researcher read through the data and allowed codes and concept names to emerge naturally (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022).

Data collection tools were designed based on the main research questions and categorized according to the offices targeted or stakeholders involved. Three key informant guides were developed and pretested before data collection, including guides for technical personnel, policymakers, and tourism site operators and managers, who were mainly tourism entrepreneurs in Fort Portal City. Having identified the categories that would be resourceful to this study, the researcher developed a list of key informants per category and endeavored to search for their contacts, including telephone numbers and emails, through personal networks, friends, and official avenues like district human resource personnel and tourism officers. Appointments were made via telephone and emails, and the researcher developed an interview schedule based on the appointed times provided by interviewees. Interviews were conducted in their respective offices and for tour operators at their premises.

Key informant interviews, which are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who possess critical knowledge of community dynamics, involved leaders, managers, and owners of tourism companies, sites, and associations in Fort Portal City (Cossham & Johanson, 2019). The study collected data from respondents with critical knowledge of the subject under investigation (Fleming et al., 2022), who were purposively selected after devising an inclusion criterion based on the aspects required from each respondent. In this category, respondents were asked open-ended questions from a key informant guide designed by the researcher. However, non-directive probing was applied by the researcher to supplement the primary questions, allowing respondents to proceed in whatever direction they found meaningful, which affirmed a deeper understanding (Moerman, 2010). Secondary data was sourced through document review, a method used to categorize, investigate, interpret, and identify the limitations of physical sources (Payne, 2004, as cited in Mogalakwe, 2016). A document was treated as a written text studied as a socially situated product, with the major aim of understanding the meaning and significance of its content (Scott, 1990, as cited in Ahmed, 2010). This study reviewed various documents related to sustainable tourism to understand the content, gather background information, and comprehend the history, philosophy, and operations relevant to the research, preparing to organize data into a meaningful format for better decision-making.

A broad search was undertaken across several databases to access suitable sources with relevant material for this investigation. Using a combination of manual and database search approaches, articles, books, and peer-reviewed journals with relevant studies were identified. The flow diagram guidance for the systematic review search strategy guided the combination of the essential elements of the search question to retrieve accurate results, while the documentary review plan was produced. A precise flow diagram was developed to review appropriate materials

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025

using field studies, manual searches, and database search engines. The study reviewed literature related to tourism infrastructure development, with the outcome measure focusing on studies providing evidence of sustainable urban development globally, continentally, and nationally. Non-systematic reviews and observational studies were excluded, and potentially relevant studies presenting only abstracts without full manuscripts were also excluded. A thorough search technique was devised to find all relevant studies, matching key terms and criteria into search databases. Web databases were used to locate literature, with a Google search conducted for relevant papers published in peer-reviewed journals up to 2021. Duplicates were eliminated from all publications on sustainable tourism and urban sustainable tourism in Uganda, and potentially relevant studies were sorted while irrelevant issues were removed. Full manuscripts were collected, and those with subjects unrelated to the study were excluded. The study also employed the Intra-Action Review (IAR), an interactive, structured method using user-friendly materials and techniques. Thirteen sources, including policy briefs and blog posts authored by academics, think tanks, and international organizations, were based on assumptions proven from tourism infrastructure development studies, and finally, studies included in the research review were extracted.

The study targeted three categories of respondents: policy and strategic level respondents, technical level officers, and tour operators. Policymakers were targeted for their instrumental role in crafting policies and monitoring implementation, technical officers for their responsibility in promoting tourism and devising development initiatives, and tour operators and managers for their core position in the tourism value chain, providing services directly to tourists and developing tourism enterprises. The choice of these categories was informed by their significant knowledge and expertise in the tourism sector and the research project. Considering the qualitative nature of the study, purposive sampling was used to select participants for key informant interviews. Purposeful sampling involves deliberately selecting specific people or events to provide important information unavailable through other selection methods (Creswell, 2017; Williams, 1985). To draw a purposive sample, the researcher began with specific perspectives in mind and sought research participants covering that full range of perspectives, justifying selections based on theoretical grounds (Berndt, 2020). Purposive sampling was used because the goal was to include participants representing a broad range of perspectives on sustainable tourism strategies and policies. Sampling served as a useful tool for obtaining quality data, and the sample size was determined based on prospects for in-depth information rather than numerical representativeness, resulting in 14 key informants being interviewed.

Data collection from key informants was conducted face-to-face on agreed dates set through phone calls and email interactions. Interview times lasted between 30 minutes to one hour, with some interruptions due to office interactions and pauses by officials. Question guides were divided into three categories: one for tourism technical personnel at the district level, another for policymakers at local government and parliamentary levels, and a third for tourism managers and site operators. However, some technical personnel were interviewed on postponed dates due to office duties and travels, requiring adjustments to the data collection plan. Participants were eager to

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025

participate, feeling attached to the study given Fort Portal's designation as a tourist city. In-depth interviews were conducted, with a digital phone recorder used after seeking consent, supplemented by note-taking for key observations. Data collection spanned twenty days in Fort Portal, with interviews conducted in English.

Transcribing data began post-interview, with respondents asked for consent to record interviews at the start. Three out of seventeen respondents rejected recording and were replaced. The obtained data was transcribed in a denaturalized format, serving as the basis for discussion through a thematic analytical approach. Transcribing was time-consuming, and the researcher performed transcriptions to begin examining meaning during the process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2019), preserving the sense of quotes and protecting validity through careful verbatim transcription. Validity and reliability, defined as the stability and truthfulness of findings (Mohajan, 2017), were crucial for increasing transparency and reducing bias. Reliability, important for word-of-mouth and recommendations, focused on subjective definitions from respondents. The researcher enhanced validity and reliability by using both primary and secondary data, covering content validity (Nelson et al., 2023). Given the researcher's interpretive community influence, content validity was assessed collectively, with findings evaluated by at least two persons and a third resolving discrepancies. Data underwent forensic checks and cleaning to ensure validity, reliability, and elimination of duplicates, demonstrating consistent information collection (Waugh, 2018).

Qualitative data analysis involved listening to audio recordings, transcribing interviews, cleaning data from notes, and categorizing it into objectives, headings, and subheadings (Nelson et al., 2022). Thematic analysis and descriptions were used, with content analysis quantifying content systematically and reproducibly (Creswell, 2017). Qualitative content analysis, among methods like ethnography and grounded theory, was employed (Hsieh & Shannon, 2015). Using a thematic analysis framework, responses from semi-structured key informant interviews were categorized into themes and sub-themes based on patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis allowed flexibility in focusing on data, identifying, organizing, and offering insight into themes across the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2016). It involved describing data and interpreting during code selection and theme construction, applicable across theoretical frameworks and research questions (Berbekova et al., 2021).

Ethical considerations were thoroughly addressed, with the researcher explaining the academic purpose of the study, ensuring voluntary participation, and allowing respondents to decline or withdraw at any time. Privacy was protected through anonymity, using position initials instead of names. Consent was sought for recording interviews, and ethical soundness was maintained throughout research steps, emphasizing honesty and fairness (Creswell, 2019; Norris, 1997). The study faced limitations, including sensitivity in discussions with stakeholders and conflicting interests regarding tourism plans, where community awareness

Results

Tourism Strategies through Economic Aspects

a) Investment in Infrastructure

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025

According to the discussions and the interviews we had with the stakeholders, one method

for implementing sustainable tourism in Fort Portal is to invest in sustainable infrastructure. The Mbarara- Fort Portal-Kasese, Fort Portal-Ntoroko Fort Portal-Bundibugyo, Fort Portal -Kampala, and Fort Portal-Kamwenge Roads are all paved, making them easily accessible from Fort Portal. Thus, this transport system performs the task of connecting areas with each other, as well as with tourist attractions, and becomes a factor in the competitiveness of the destination like Fort Portal city. One of the key informants remarked that. "This road network has bolstered tourism in Fort Portal city, in addition to other already existing advantages such as its central location; all the major tourist sites are less than an hour away from Fort Portal at an average speed of 80 Kilometers per hour, allowing for daily to and from journeys from Fort Portal" (K.IV)

The welcoming and hospitable nature of the Batooro people of the area makes any visitor feel at ease, giving tourists a home away from home feel, and that the area has not experienced any form of violence or threats in many years, making it the safest place to settle for any tourist in Uganda. This nature of the people has been praised for leading to the construction of mega hotels and other accommodation facilities for tourists to enjoy their stay in Fort Portal, the built hotels and resorts can therefore accommodate hundreds of thousands of tourists from all over the world at any given time. K.V was confident about the city's tourism future and noted that. "Fort Portal will be a fully-fledged tourism city by 2040. Adding that this will be easily accomplished with increased government funding and a focus on further infrastructure development, as well as providing incentives to local and international tourism investors".

Investment in infrastructure is indeed a key investment for sustainable tourism flow within any destination. Seetanah et al., (2011) notes that infrastructure is an integral part a tourism package and improvement particularly in hotels increases the stay of tourists indeed the investment in the hotel and restaurant industry will provide accommodation, food and beverage services for tourists, especially international tourists who come not only to visit Fort Portal city as well as the entire Tooro region. Therefore, there is need to attract tourists and implement an appropriate pricing policy, investing in tourism infrastructure development to make the destination more attractive and competitive are critical strategies in place. Nguyen (2021) noted that recent studies have shown that tourism infrastructure contributes positive impact both directly and indirectly on the quality of life of residents through sustainable tourism development where the policymakers agree that infrastructure development plays a major role in maintaining visitor arrivals and overall economic growth of a destination. Accessibility to facilities is important in creating an everlasting impression among tourists because they create satisfaction of the services in Tourism. Road infrastructure for example will enhance accessibility of tourists to different tour sites in the country while communication infrastructure enhances ease of communication between the origin and destination of the tourists, hence creating a sense of certainty and safety. However, the need to work on the weak infrastructure within the city through renovation, as this can disrupt a city's economic development and competitiveness.

In summary, investment in infrastructure drives economic growth and social development, the importance of tourism growth in Fort Portal city in this study still justifies the need for government to fund for more on transport

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025



infrastructure, communication, and information, need to invest in modern amusement parks and more recreational facilities this in the long run will make Fort Portal destination more attractive to the visitors.

b) Creation of Sustainable Employment Opportunities

The findings show that tourism is a significant contributor to job creation in Fort Portal, especially for women, youth, migrant workers, rural communities, and that it has various interconnections with other sectors. As a result, all key informants agreed that tourism in Fort Portal has partly contributed to poverty reduction, socio-economic development, and decent work. They did say, however, that tourism that does not respect local customs and is unmanaged, unsustainable, or socially accountable could have a severe impact on local communities, history, and environment, increasing disparities. As a result, Fort Portal's sustainable tourism has been encouraged to support local job creation, notably in surrounding rural communities, while also contributing to social and economic development through social inclusion, regional integration, and increased local incomes. Asserted by K.III that; *“Tourism has aided young people in obtaining work and employable skills in this city.”*

It was also found that several institutions have invested in skill development and vocational education and training. *“As Kogere we have community museum, income generating activity from crafts, music dance and drama, we use locally made materials. We train ladies in communities we (give them capacity building) and after making crafts they sell to others, its employment”.* (K.X) The tourism entrepreneurs have plans of building more education institutions to train the youth in tourism income generating activities in the community mentioned by respondent. *“I have a small business engaging in community, I have developed an NGO,through connections like friends from abroad who are helping in community like planning to put a school for skills, especially in crafts, there is one big institution in Kihingami eco-tourism training school in Kabarole district. I am employing youth in bird watching, but owners are destroying the forest, NEMA is not acting”* (K.XII)

It should be noted that employment rate in Uganda is low, measured at 62% (UBOS 2019). Additionally, 37% of the employed population is engaged in subsistence work and this is blamed on a lack of employable skills especially among Uganda’s youth (UBOS 2019). As such, tourism stake holders have taken it as a key investment to skill potential employees in Fort Portal, as well as improving working conditions, and service quality, professionalism, commitment, loyalty, and soft skills of workers to enhance competitiveness. These initiatives have produced many enterprises for a sustainable tourism sector.

The findings suggest that the tourist business has the potential to contribute to economic and social development, as stated in several Sustainable Development Goals. "By 2030, establish and implement policies to encourage sustainable tourism that produces jobs and promotes local culture and goods," according to Goal 8 (Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for everyone). Tourism aims are included in Goals 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns) and 14 (Conserve and sustainably utilize the oceans, seas, and marine resources). All these goals are enclosed in Goal 11 of “Sustainable cities and communities “which emphasizes making human cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, and resilient more sustainable (Siakwah et al., 2020a).

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025



Using Available Resources as tourism strategy

a) Maintaining Natural Tourism sites

The findings suggest that when it came to developing and managing tourism operations,

tourist operators were especially concerned with enhancing the benefits through protecting the environment and natural resources. The population was degrading and encroaching on some of the city's tourist attractions, particularly marshes, which were being exploited for other purposes such as bricklaying and fish breeding, according to respondents. To ensure the long-term survival of the city's tourism activities, the tour operators who have established their enterprises have worked with city management to conduct capacity development of the local populace on the necessity of having swamps and other community-based tourism locations. Second, efforts were made to discover and map out all income-based optimal supply-side activities, as well as to conduct environmental programs aggressively.

"We recognize that unchecked city expansion has the potential to harm our environment and cultural heritage in and around the city. As a result, we're making sure that we're making the best use of our natural resources to encourage tourism," (K.IV)

The city has the King's Cultural Palace, which is in the city's heart. This is a popular tourist attraction that has brought in a large sum of money for the monarchy. Planting trees and warning people not to trespass on the riverbanks have helped to conserve our city's river, which runs through it.

b) Maintaining Essential Ecological Processes for tourism i) Organic Crop and Animal Production

The findings showed that the city's tourism activities were growing but important ecological processes in agriculture and animal production were being preserved through Agro-tourism by farmers. Organic production was the primary approach emphasized for this component, which is critical in soil development, organism reproduction, and preserving a natural environment. As a result, efforts have been made to develop pro-environmental practices among the city's residents, so that they are aware of the advantages of environmental preservation. According to the information gathered for this study, pro-environmental behaviors are actions made by an individual or a group to prevent or solve environmental problems. As a result, tourist stakeholders, particularly those from the city's tourism agency, sought to adopt environmentally friendly measures that would have fewer detrimental effects on the environment. In an interview with the KVI this is what she had to say.

"As a result of one's environmental knowledge, one's favorable attitudes about the environment can be converted into enhanced environmental stewardship. A balanced eco-system evolves because of improving community understanding about their, roles in environmental conservation, allowing natural processes to continue".

ii) Support for Eco-Tourism Activities

Ecotourism is one of the most significant tourism items, according to respondents, and its market cannot be

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025

sustained without proper environmental protection. Ecotourism in Fort Portal City, according to the study findings, has several benefits, including improved awareness of animal issues and conservation initiatives in and around the city, as well as increased income and community development for the local population. This also helps to ensure the financial viability of natural ecosystems in the city, such as wetlands and other natural assets many contradictory demands and trade-offs within the socio-ecological systems must be managed to have sustainable tourism in the city.

The human population is increasing, and a growing number of people expect to improve their living conditions and accumulate material goods, putting further demands on resource usage. To achieve balance, humans must change their expectations, aspirations, and activities, as well as their immediate resource consumption. To achieve acceptable levels of fairness and sustainability, city goals must be recognized, and support offered to enable them to achieve them. Excessive resource usage must also be controlled. As a result, the city leaders emphasize the need for increasing eco-tourism whenever they meet with local tour operators and investors.

Maintaining green vegetation in the city through tree planting and beautifying the city by growing grass, in addition to the above, improves the aspect of sustainable tourism. In this setting, a variety of intriguing natural animals, such as birds, butterflies, and flowers, can thrive. If there is a management strategy in place on natural resources, local community can take lead role in promotion of wildlife and eco-tourism, if all the natural resources are protected, the success of eco-tourism industry can be achieved. (Boo 2020)

c) Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Conservation strategy i) River Mpanga System as a tourism spot

According to the interactions with the National Environmental Authority representative in Fort Portal City, one of the tasks for environmental conservation is the maintenance of the river Mpanga, which runs through Fort Portal Town. In the findings policy maker argued on conservation of river Mpanga.

“A city has nature there is need to protect nature and heritage can give example of river Mpanga as our major river and center for attraction so conserving it is important. Sustainability in terms of pursuing green cover, plan for our city to keep it green and we are partnering with companies to get seedlings, preservation of green space and should be natural, we have gone ahead to measure air quality, have better breathe we have put up different zones in the city for visitors to enjoy, we are embarking on preservation, protection, and heritage”. (K.III)

He pointed out that the Mpanga River passes through various biologically significant places that must be protected if they are to be retained for long-term tourism. The town of Fort Portal is located around 15-20 kilometers downstream of the river's source. As the city's population expands, the Mpanga is exposed to typical local repercussions. The city puts an additional burden on the ecosystem due to its proximity to numerous beautiful national parks (such as the Rwenzori, Semuliki, Kibale, and Queen Elizabeth). During the collection process, it was determined that the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) operates a drinking water plant that draws water from the Mpanga River and distributes it to homes after physical and chemical treatment. He did remark, however, that the river continues to receive considerable amounts of detergent- and organic-waste-

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025



containing residential discharges, both from washing (e.g., laundry, car washing bays) and from both controlled and uncontrolled garbage disposal. Rinsing water from the local slaughterhouse and rubbish disposal from Mpanga Market within the city are two additional sources of organic and inorganic (plastic) waste. To take note, people who live close to the areas with greatest biological diversity are often among the most disadvantaged economic wise and the poorest of the poor thus need to monitor and guide their activities. (McNeely, 1993)

As a result, preserving and maintaining this river system is crucial in the fight to protect natural heritage and biodiversity. Nonetheless, a concerted effort has been made to promote awareness about the need of keeping River Mpanga and the town clean. The slogan is *"Keep Fort Portal tourism Clean."* (K.V)

Sustainable Tourism Strategies through Socio-cultural Aspects

a) The Palace of the King in the City

The Tooro royal palace is one of Fort Portal's most stunning landmarks. The palace is

conspicuously located on Harukoto hill in the middle of Fort Portal city, providing a clear and scenic perspective of the complete royal complex with its distinct architectural designs. The Royal Palace is a cultural landmark for the people, and it complements the other tourist attractions in Fort Portal Tourism City. The presence of the palace in the city was also recognized as contributing to development, asserted by KVII

"People's cultural heritage has an impact on how they make decisions and react to various development projects in their communities. If development projects fail to take cultural factors into account, they may fall short of having the desired influence on target groups. So, to preserve our natural heritage, we must be proud of our palace and urge local tourist operators not to exploit it as it's one of the city's key tourist attractions".

The findings show that if the city's cultural heritage potential is preserved, it may play a key role in poverty eradication and development. The palace earns money from tourist visits and important cultural celebrations mainly; the Ekyooto Hampango Festival, Empaako Festival, and World Tourism Day celebrations where tourism stakeholders do take part in showcasing the culture and traditions, like songs, books telling stories, and history of Batooro people and selling of handicrafts such as baskets, carpets, drums, decorations.

b) Innovative Social Practices

The findings show that there are creative methods targeted at promoting social-cultural aspects of the city considering the insights in adopting more sustainable practices in the Fort portal city. These best practices show how SMEs have been able to make changes in their operations, develop new approaches, and introduce new visions or initiatives that have proven (or aimed) to make their tourism businesses more sustainable. Using the examples of Kabarole Tours & Travel, they have been able to create innovative products and services that are more sustainable overall by using sustainability concepts at all stages of the business.

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025



"We founded this company because we are passionate about environmentally friendly tourism. We saw that guests were sleeping in city hotels and then departing the next morning for activities in Queen Elizabeth National Park. We decided to get boda boda bikes to easily transport them around while we educate them about our city and other tourist attraction assets that we have because when they came, they would tour around on foot and cover small areas". (KVIII)

They underwent a sustainability transition that gives major potential to address marketing and communication challenges, as well as unique opportunities for their firm to become greener and more sustainable. They invested in a sustainable means of transportation (tour and travel) to carry tourists around Fort Portal city, outside of the main tourist attractions. Focus on sustainability in every aspect of their operations (transportation, service providers, products, etc.), transporting tourists from routine tourist activities and other popular tourist destinations; educate tourists about history, traditions, culture, and nature. According to World Wildlife Fund, (2009) Tourism operators handle the day-to-day running of tourist networks, they target market and make profits, this puts them in a unique position to implement environmental management strategies like on recycling, energy conservation measures. Tour operators and other intermediaries play a key role in raising this awareness, as well as promoting sustainability on site. Promotion and marketing of tourism products is however needed, sustainable tourism requires close collaboration between community, private and public sectors. From the view of economics, recreational landscapes are common goods supported by multi-functional ecosystems and therefore cooperation between different stakeholders is so important.

Capacity-building for environmental awareness

According to most respondents, MoTWA is supporting capacity-building activities to enhance the abilities of industry participants and actors. The city's Head of Tourism Department indicated that one of the methods to achieve sustainable tourism in the city is through rigorous capacity building. Most respondents agreed that strengthening the capacity of major players in tourism has the potential to increase awareness among city residents as well as potential tourists from outside the city on two fronts: first, it will result in improved environmental conservation, which is critical given the abundance of biodiversity in the city.

Secondly, capacity building will provide tour operators and guides with the best practices for providing services to visitors to the city's many attractions. Capacity building is now carried out through training facilitated by city officials, subject matter experts, and the private sector, according to the respondents. The tour operators also stated that there are still a lot of suspicions and a lack of understanding of the goal, technique, and potential of sustainable tourism. As a result, as stated in the following statement, altering this mindset, particularly among tour operators and community members, is critically on the outskirts. *"We are doing everything we can to raise awareness among community members about the value of the environment so that people do not intrude on natural resources that have the potential to generate tourism money." For example, the community had encroached for roughly 52*

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025

craters on the Rwamukira River, but now we've started talking to the encroachers, and they're leaving without being rewarded by the government" (K.I)

It was also stated that environmental awareness was primarily focused on waste management, reuse of waste resources (for example, sorting waste for reusable materials such as plastic containers and metals, which are sold to scrap material dealers for recycling), and immediate recycling materials, such as abattoir wash water and spent diesel oil from mechanical workshops and garages. According to respondents, the emphasis in the message was on organizing tree-planting days at schools and in the city center, avoiding littering plastic waste in the city's various divisions and wards, and ensuring that municipal skips are placed in convenient locations, particularly near large-scale waste-producing units.

d) Encouraging investment in environmentally friendly tourism

Tourists, as in other tourist areas, are quite demanding and demand a long list of goods and services that must be easily available for a traditional service. The answers showed that tourists visiting Fort Portal city will demand travel agents, transportation, lodging, catering, and entertainment services, among other things, based on this offer. According to interviewed policymakers, to address these competing goals, Fort Portal City Council and the Ugandan government have worked together to create a free environment for the private sector by rewarding them with environmentally friendly housing options. As a result, several environmental tourist lodges have been built. This article emphasizes the commitment of the city of Fort Portal and the government of Uganda through public awareness of the need for sustainability in tourism seen slowly but steadily shifting demand towards destination and tourism entrepreneurs that embrace sustainable tourism practices. Change can also be noted in supply, both from responsible investors as well as from more responsible governments. (World Wildlife Fund 2019)

Bureaucratic Tendencies

Many prerequisites for starting a tourism business, according to respondents, are linked with tiresome bureaucratic tendencies. They stated that many decisions are made from the top- down, with a great deal of bureaucracy involved. Within the extremely fragmented tourism business, this produces a lack of coordination and cohesion. Thus, for the highly fragmented tourism industry, the creation of coordination mechanisms across formal authorities, between the public and private sectors, and among private firms is critical. In this regard, the findings revealed that most tourism business owners are not active in the planning process to understand what must be done to generate products and places that are in line with the policies in place. Furthermore, as the study revealed, KXIII narrated that,

"The approval processes of local officials are opaque, and I was blackmailed for two years by leaders who wanted to demolish my forest for a 5-star hotel." So, this demotivated me a lot since there were powerful people involved who, I believe, wanted me out of the company."

During the interviews, it was also discovered that there are various bureaucratic impediments to giving support that

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025

was experienced during the establishment stage relating to key institutions. It was established that businesses seeking financial resources through bank loans have met bureaucratic hurdles relating to banks.

“We made a project in the city to receive support and there we realized this point: If you do not do a 10-25 million budget project for the development agency, it is not worth the efforts, transport, energy, document preparation and bringing a letter of guarantee all of which you need there”. (KII)

Conclusions

Optimal use of environmental resources, protection of critical ecological processes, and natural asset and biodiversity, meeting the needs of host communities and infrastructural development, are three key attributes that have the capacity to lead to sustainable tourism development.

There is a dearth of understanding among tourist stakeholders when it comes to sustainable tourism policies. Even though there are several rules at the national level, many tourist stakeholders had an insufficient grasp of sustainable tourism policies because they were unaware of any policy that governed their operations. As a result, sustainable policies and standards at the district level are required, which are often acceptable and straightforward to implement.

To establish sustainable tourism sectors, tourism stakeholders must address several issues, all of which require attention from both the public and private sectors. Communication and marketing, money, infrastructure, and retaining a competitive advantage challenge. Despite the existence of numerous national standards, most tourism stakeholders lack a basic understanding of sustainable tourism legislation since they were unaware of any policy that governed their operations. To build sustainable tourism, it is vital to increase public awareness of tourism policy at the municipal level and a close coordination of the tourism policies with other sectors, for instance housing, taxation, environmental conservation and protection, resource management and taxation.

As a result of policy implementation issues and low individual policy adherence, Uganda's efforts to construct sustainable tourism cities to increase the economy and alleviate poverty may be in vain. Following the identification of these constraints, more good measures to

facilitate the development of sustainable tourism cities, particularly Fort Portal are required. Furthermore, even though Fort Portal has significant tourism resources, if the problems are not remedied, the people of Fort Portal may continue to live in poverty, with those who are close to breaking even also falling into poverty. Sustainable tourism, on the other hand, aims to improve inhabitants' quality of life by maximizing local economic benefits, preserving natural and built heritage, and providing recreational opportunities. Therefore, focus tourism on poverty can help to unlock tourism opportunities and reduction of poverty especially if poverty as a major issue is put into tourism agenda.

This study's conclusions cannot be applied to all locations, including Kampala, Uganda's capital, which has had a monopoly status since the country's independence in 1962. Kampala will serve as a paradigm for growth in this environment. This could serve as a model for duplicating and distinguishing success stories (if any exist) in the new cities that opened in July

2022. Some of them are as follows: Lira, Arua, Masaka, Mbarara, Mbale, and Jinja have previously been identified as tourist destinations through policy in this study.

Recommendations

If the tourism city of Fort Portal is to be sustained, infrastructure development strategies must be devised for each tourism site in the Tooro region, beginning with the Rwenzori national park attractions. To develop new themes for further research, the Uganda Tourism Development Board should share ideas and viewpoints with the business sector, particularly local tour operators. The planning and development of the tourism sector should be participatory to address the gap of a disconnect between what the national policy requires and what tourism stakeholders at the grass root are doing. Public private partnership is also vital where the state lacks in terms of expertise in policy development and dissemination.

The Uganda Tourism Development Board should ensure awareness and implementation of the tourism plan, which already caters for optimal use of environmental resources, protection of critical ecological processes, and natural asset and biodiversity, meeting the needs of host communities and infrastructural development, the three key attributes that have the capacity to lead to sustainable tourism development.

There is a need to enforce implementation of tourism infrastructure strategies by concerned authority. This can be done through periodical monitoring with fines and or other

retributions attached to failure to implement required standards. This will enhance the policy implementation at local level. As a result of this holistic approach, tourism strategies should be included in local, regional, national, and global policies.

References

Christopher, F., & Micheal, M. (2022). *The Role of Tourism on Poverty Reduction of People: A Case Study of Magambo Sub County in Rubirizi District*. 6(5), 23–29.

Christopher, F., Moses, N., Muhindo, M. E., & Komunda, T. R. (2022). Employee Training and Organizational

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025

- Performance: A Case Study of African College of Commerce and Technology in Kabale District, South Western Uganda. *International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research*, 6(5), 1–7.
- Christopher, T., Turyasingura, B., University, M., & Alex, I. (2024). *Adoption of Digital Revolution in Government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) In Uganda; Reflection on Uganda Revenue Authority Digital Strategy Integration Approach towards Enhanced Tax Revenue in Post Covid-19 Pandemic*. 3(4), 235–247.
- Frank, M., Nelson, K., Kazaara, A. G., Deus, T., Christopher, F., & Catherine, M. (2023). *The Macroeconomic Determinants of Economic Growth in Uganda a Case Study Of Wakiso Distict*. 7(2), 147–159.
- Azungah, T. (2018). Qualitative research: Deductive and inductive approaches to data analysis. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 18(4), 383-400.
- Berbekova, A., Uysal, M., & Assaf, A. G. (2021). A thematic analysis of crisis management in tourism: A theoretical perspective. *Tourism Management*, 86, 104342.
- Berndt, A. E. (2020). Sampling methods. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 36(2), 224-226.
- Bingham, A. J., & Witkowsky, P. (2022). Deductive and inductive approaches to qualitative data analysis. In C. Vanover, P. Mihas, & J. Saldaña (Eds.), *Analyzing and interpreting qualitative research: After the interview* (pp. 133-146). SAGE Publications.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57–71). American Psychological Association.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2016). (Mis)conceptualising themes, thematic analysis, and other problems with Fugard and Potts' (2015) sample-size tool for thematic analysis. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 19(6), 739-743.
- Çakar, K., & Aykol, Ş. (2021). Case study as a research method in hospitality and tourism research: A systematic approach. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 39, 100847.
- Cossham, A., & Johanson, G. (2019). The benefits and limitations of using key informants in library and information studies research. *Library and Information Research*, 43(1), 1-21.
- Creswell, J. W. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2019). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th ed.). Pearson.
- Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM). (2018). *Tourism Satellite Account 2018*. Putrajaya: Department of Statistics Malaysia.
- Elliott, R., & Williams, M. (2016). The ethics of research. In *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (pp. 73-90). SAGE Publications Ltd.

Received: 16.10.2025

Accepted: 20.10.2025

Published on: 30.10.2025

- Fleming, J., Ward, P., & D'Costa, B. (2022). *Conducting key informant interviews in a pandemic*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Healy, M., & Perry, C. (2000). Comprehensive criteria to judge validity and reliability of qualitative research within the realism paradigm. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 3(3), 118-126.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2015). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288.
- International Air Transport Association (IATA). (2020). *Air passenger market analysis*. IATA Economics.
- Khoshnevis Yazdi, S., Homa Salehi, K., & Soheilzad, M. (2017). The relationship between tourism, foreign direct investment and economic growth: Evidence from Iran. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 20(1), 15-26.
- Kushwah, S. V., & Chaturvedi, A. (2019). The role of tourism in the economic development of India. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 6(1), 719-723.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2019). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Malhotra, N. K. (2017). *Marketing research: An applied orientation* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Moerman, L. (2010). The power of non-directive questioning. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, 7(2), 223-245.
- Mohajan, H. K. (2017). The impact of tourism on the economy of Malaysia. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*, 6(4), 42-54.
- Norris, N. (1997). Error, bias and validity in qualitative research. *Educational Action Research*, 5(1), 172-176.
- Park, S., Xu, Y., Jiang, L., & Chen, Z. (2019). The influence of destination image on tourist satisfaction and revisit intention: A case study of Chinese tourists in Korea. *Sustainability*, 11(5), 1368.
- Payne, G., & Payne, J. (2004). *Key concepts in social research*. SAGE Publications.
- Scott, J. (1990). *A matter of record: Documentary sources in social research*. Polity Press.
- UNWTO. (2019). *International Tourism Highlights, 2019 Edition*. World Tourism Organization.
- Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT). (2016). *Vietnam Tourism Annual Report 2016*. Hanoi: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism.
- Wagh, C. K. (2018). *Reliability and validity in qualitative research*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Williams, B. (1985). *A sampler on sampling*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Woiceshyn, J., & Daellenbach, U. (2018). Evaluating inductive vs deductive research in management studies: Implications for authors, editors, and reviewers. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 13(2), 183-195.
- World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). (2020). **The Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Travel & Tourism**. WTTC.

- Yegidis, B. L., Weinbach, R. W., & Myers, L. L. (2012). *Research methods for social workers* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Zainuddin, Z., Radzi, S. M., & Zahari, M. S. M. (2016). The impact of destination image on tourists' satisfaction and loyalty: The mediating role of tourists' satisfaction. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts*, 8(2), 75-87.
- Zhang, H., Wu, Y., & Buhalis, D. (2018). A model of perceived image, memorable tourism experiences and revisit intention. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 8, 326-336.
- Julius, A. (2025). *Beyond Conformity : A Three-Tiered Model of Discipline and the Stagnation of Autonomous Development in Ugandan Secondary Schools*. 9(8), 139–145.
- Julius, A., & Matovu, K. (2025). *Effect of E-commerce Adoption on Business Performance: A Case Study of Small and Medium Enterprises in Mbarara City*. 4(2), 93–102. <https://www.journals.miu.ac.ug>
- Nafiu, L. A., Ph, D., Ibitayo, L. D., Ph, D., Muyombya, S. M., & Sc, M. (2017). *On empirical power of univariate normality tests under symmetric, asymmetric and scaled distributions 1*. 8(3), 381–387.
- Nelson, K., Christopher, F., & Milton, N. (2022). *Teach Yourself Spss and Stata*. 6(7), 84–122.
- Nelson, K., Kazaara, A. G., & Kazaara, A. I. (2023). *Teach Yourself E-Views*. 7(3), 124–145.
- Nicholas, K., Nelson, K., Kazaara, A. G., Deus, T., & Moses, N. (2023). *Examining the Influence of Climatic Change Patterns on Tourism Activities in Uganda . A Case Study of Bududa District .* 7(2), 72–79.
- Olanrewaju, R. O., Waititu, A. G., & Abiodun, N. L. (2021). *On the Estimation of k-Regimes Switching of Mixture Autoregressive Model via Weibull Distributional Random Noise*. 10(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.5923/j.ijps.20211001.01>
- Oromo, O. D., Julius, A., & Nelson, K. (2023). *Effect of Covid-19 Lockdown on Household Income in Uganda A Case Study of Kitoro Parish , Entebbe Municipality*. 7(4), 107–117.