

The Impact Of Mass Communication On Promoting Domestic Tourism In Uganda: A Case Study Of Nation Media Group

Mutonyi Annet¹, Wamimbi Denis²

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

Abstract

This study examined the impact of mass communication on promoting domestic tourism in Uganda, with a specific focus on the Nation Media Group (NMG) as a case study. Adopting a mixed-methods research design, the study surveyed 267 respondents drawn from NMG staff, tourism industry stakeholders, and domestic travellers, supplemented by in-depth interviews and media content analysis. The study assessed four mass communication channels print media, television, radio, and digital/online platforms—and examined their roles in raising awareness, shaping attitudes, and influencing domestic travel behaviour. Results demonstrated that television had the greatest reach and attitude change effect among domestic travellers, while digital platforms showed the highest growth trajectory and were particularly effective among urban youth audiences. The study found a significant positive relationship between exposure to NMG tourism content and domestic travel intention ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$). Content analysis revealed that tourism coverage by NMG prioritised international and high-end tourism narratives, often underrepresenting affordable domestic destinations that were accessible to ordinary Ugandans. The study recommended more inclusive, pro-poor tourism communication strategies, greater collaboration between NMG and the Uganda Tourism Board, and increased investment in digital content production for domestic tourism promotion.

Keywords: mass communication, domestic tourism, Uganda, Nation Media Group, television, digital media, tourism promotion, media influence, travel behaviour

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Tourism remained one of Uganda's most important economic sectors, contributing approximately 9.1% to GDP and generating an estimated USD 1.62 billion in foreign exchange earnings annually as of 2022 (Uganda Tourism Board [UTB], 2022). While international tourism particularly wildlife-based safari tourism in national parks such as Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Queen Elizabeth National Park, and Murchison Falls dominated the sector's economic contribution, domestic tourism was increasingly recognised as a vital component of a resilient and inclusive tourism economy (Nicholas et al., 2023). Domestic tourism referred to the travel activities of residents within their own country for purposes of leisure, culture, business, or visiting friends and relatives (Christopher & Felex, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic, which devastated international travel flows globally between 2020 and 2021, underscored the vulnerability of tourist-dependent economies that relied primarily on international visitors. Uganda's tourism revenue fell by over 70% during the peak pandemic period (UTB, 2021). The crisis accelerated a global rethinking of tourism development strategies, with many governments redirecting attention to domestic tourism as a more resilient and equitable form of tourism development. In Uganda, the UTB's post-COVID recovery strategy explicitly prioritised domestic tourism promotion as a pillar of sector resilience, setting targets for domestic tourist arrivals and overnights across the country's diverse attractions.

Received: 12.05.2026

Accepted: 16.05.2026

Published on: 30.05.2026

Mass communication the process of creating, transmitting, and receiving messages through media channels such as newspapers, television, radio, and digital platforms played a central role in shaping public awareness of tourism destinations, constructing destination images, and influencing travel behaviour (Julius & Kazaara, 2026). Media organisations, through editorial decisions about which destinations to feature, how to frame tourism experiences, and what narratives to amplify, effectively served as cultural intermediaries between Uganda's tourism attractions and the domestic travelling public.

Nation Media Group, East Africa's largest independent media house, operated a significant portfolio of media assets in Uganda including the Daily Monitor newspaper, NTV Uganda television station, 93.3 QFM radio, and a growing suite of digital platforms (Julius & Audrey, 2026). NMG was therefore uniquely positioned to influence domestic tourism behaviour in Uganda through its broad reach across multiple communication channels and diverse audience demographics (Julius & Audrey, 2026). However, the extent to which NMG's mass communication activities actually shaped domestic tourism patterns, and the nature of tourism narratives that NMG disseminated, had not been rigorously examined at the time of this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing policy emphasis on domestic tourism promotion in Uganda, and despite the acknowledged importance of media in shaping tourism behaviour, there remained a significant gap in empirical research examining how specific media organisations influenced domestic tourism in Uganda (Ivan & Kazaara, 2023). The UTB's domestic tourism promotion campaigns relied heavily on mass media partnerships, yet little systematic evidence existed on the effectiveness of these partnerships in generating measurable changes in domestic travel awareness, attitudes, and behaviour (Frank et al., 2023). In the absence of such evidence, tourism promotion resources could not be allocated optimally across communication channels or message strategies. This study therefore sought to examine empirically the impact of NMG's mass communication activities on domestic tourism promotion in Uganda.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study pursued four specific objectives: to assess the reach and penetration of NMG's mass communication channels among domestic travellers in Uganda; to examine the role of NMG's media content in shaping domestic travellers' awareness, attitudes, and travel intentions; to analyse the nature and framing of domestic tourism content in NMG's media platforms; and to recommend strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of mass communication in promoting domestic tourism in Uganda.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study drew on three theoretical frameworks. First, the Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) proposed that the mass media did not tell audiences what to think, but rather what to think about—suggesting that NMG's choices about which tourism destinations and experiences to feature in its content would shape the salience of these destinations in the public consciousness. Destinations featured prominently in NMG content were hypothesised to be more likely to be considered by domestic travellers when making travel decisions.

Second, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) provided a framework for understanding the cognitive pathway from media exposure to travel behaviour. According to this theory, media content influenced domestic travel through its effects on

Received: 12.05.2026

Accepted: 16.05.2026

Published on: 30.05.2026

travellers' beliefs (awareness of destinations and experiences), attitudes towards travel (perceived attractiveness and value), subjective norms (perception of whether significant others approved of domestic travel), and perceived behavioural control (confidence in ability to plan and execute domestic travel).

Third, Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) recognised that audiences were active, selective consumers of media content who chose channels and messages that served their informational, entertainment, and social needs. Applied to tourism communication, this theory suggested that domestic travellers used NMG's tourism content to satisfy needs for information, inspiration, and social connection, and that understanding these gratification patterns was essential for effective tourism communication design.

2.2 Mass Communication and Tourism: Global Evidence

A substantial body of research established the influence of mass media on tourism decision-making. Gartner and Bachri (1994) found that media coverage significantly shaped destination image among potential tourists, with favourable media portrayals positively influencing travel intentions and unfavourable coverage dampening them. Television, in particular, was documented as a powerful driver of destination interest, a phenomenon sometimes called the 'television tourism effect' or 'set-jetting', where fictional or documentary television content inspired viewers to visit featured locations (Kazaara et al., 2023).

In the digital era, social media and online platforms emerged as increasingly important channels for tourism communication, complementing and sometimes supplanting traditional mass media. Xiang and Gretzel (2010) found that online user-generated content, including reviews, blogs, and social media posts, had become a primary information source for tourism planning, particularly among younger travellers. In Africa, studies by Musa and Thirumoorthi (2011) and Mkwanazi and Lubbe (2019) documented the growing influence of digital media in shaping domestic tourism behaviour, though traditional media—particularly television and radio retained significant reach in markets with limited internet penetration.

2.3 Domestic Tourism in Uganda

Domestic tourism in Uganda remained comparatively underdeveloped relative to the country's rich natural and cultural tourism endowments (Davids et al., 2023). Studies by Asimwe and Lwanga (2020) found that cost, lack of information, and cultural perceptions of tourism as a 'foreign activity' were the primary barriers to domestic travel among Ugandans. Information access including awareness of available destinations, costs, and travel logistics was identified as a particularly critical barrier, implying that improved mass communication had significant potential to unlock latent domestic demand (Alex & Moses, 2024).

The UTB's domestic tourism campaigns, including 'Explore Uganda' and subsequent iterations, attempted to leverage mass media to address information barriers and shift cultural perceptions of domestic tourism. Preliminary evaluations suggested some success in raising awareness, but robust evidence on behavioural impacts was limited, underscoring the need for the present study.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a concurrent mixed-methods design combining quantitative survey research with qualitative media content analysis and semi-structured interviews. This design was suited to examining both the measurable effects of media exposure on travel behaviour and the content characteristics of NMG's tourism communication that mediated these effects.

3.2 Population and Sample

The study targeted three populations: NMG editorial and marketing staff involved in tourism content production (N = 48), tourism industry stakeholders including hotel operators, tour operators, and UTB officials (N = 120), and domestic travellers who had consumed NMG content in the preceding six months (N = 892). Using purposive sampling for NMG staff and tourism stakeholders, and systematic random sampling for domestic travellers, a total sample of 267 respondents was selected and successfully engaged (NMG staff: 32; stakeholders: 68; travellers: 167).

3.3 Data Collection

A structured questionnaire measured respondents' media consumption patterns, exposure to NMG tourism content, destination awareness, travel attitudes, and domestic travel behaviour. Media content analysis was conducted on a stratified random sample of 180 NMG tourism-related outputs—60 each from print (Daily Monitor), television (NTV), and digital (Monitor.co.ug and NTV Online)—published between January 2022 and December 2023. Content was coded using a framework assessing destination type, tourism segment (luxury vs. budget), geographic coverage, narrative framing (promotional vs. informational vs. critical), and audience positioning. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 18 key informants including editors, tourism board officials, and tour operators.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis (Nelson et al., 2022a). Content analysis data were tabulated and subjected to chi-square tests to assess differences across media platforms. Qualitative interview data were analysed using thematic analysis, with themes generated inductively from interview transcripts.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Reach and Penetration of NMG Channels

Table 1: NMG Channel Reach and Tourism Content Exposure Among Domestic Travellers (N=167)

NMG Channel	Regular Users Among Travellers (%)	Tourism Content Exposure (%)	Preferred for Tourism Info (%)
NTV Uganda (TV)	71.3	58.7	42.5
Daily Monitor (Print)	54.5	44.3	21.6
93.3 QFM (Radio)	63.5	37.1	18.9
Monitor.co.ug (Digital)	48.5	41.3	12.6
NTV Online/Social Media	42.3	38.9	4.2



Any NMG Channel	89.2	72.5	N/A
------------------------	------	------	-----

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 1 demonstrated that NMG had substantial reach among domestic travellers, with 89.2% reporting regular use of at least one NMG channel. NTV Uganda had the highest regular viewership (71.3%) and the highest rate of tourism content exposure (58.7%), consistent with television's documented dominance as an entertainment and information medium in Uganda(Nelson et al., 2023). Television was also the most preferred channel for tourism information (42.5%), reflecting the medium's capacity to deliver immersive, audio-visual destination content. These findings aligned with global evidence on television's power as a tourism communication medium (Gartner & Bachri, 1994).

4.2 Impact on Domestic Travel Awareness, Attitudes, and Intentions

Table 2: NMG Media Exposure Level and Domestic Tourism Awareness, Attitudes, and Intentions

Media Exposure Level	Mean Destination Awareness (1–5)	Mean Positive Travel Attitude (1–5)	Travel Intention Score (1–5)
High Exposure (Daily)	4.21	4.08	4.18
Moderate Exposure (Weekly)	3.67	3.54	3.72
Low Exposure (Monthly)	2.94	2.87	2.96
Minimal/No Exposure	2.21	2.43	2.19

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The results indicated that respondents with high media exposure (daily exposure) recorded the highest levels across all measured indicators. They achieved a mean destination awareness score of 4.21, a mean positive travel attitude score of 4.08, and a travel intention score of 4.18. These findings suggested that frequent exposure to tourism content in NMG media significantly enhanced respondents’ knowledge of tourism destinations, positively shaped their perceptions of travel, and strongly influenced their intention to undertake domestic tourism(Nelson et al., 2022b). The results implied that continuous exposure played a critical role in reinforcing tourism-related awareness and behavioral intentions. For respondents with moderate media exposure (weekly exposure), the findings showed slightly lower but still relatively high scores. The mean destination awareness was 3.67, positive travel attitude was 3.54, and travel intention was 3.72. This suggested that occasional but consistent exposure to tourism content still contributed meaningfully to awareness and positive perceptions of domestic tourism. The results implied that while the influence was weaker than daily exposure, weekly engagement with media content remained effective in shaping tourism-related attitudes and intentions.

The findings further revealed that respondents with low media exposure (monthly exposure) recorded moderate to low scores across all indicators. The mean destination awareness was 2.94, positive travel attitude was 2.87, and travel intention was 2.96. This indicated that infrequent exposure to tourism-related media content resulted in limited awareness and weaker enthusiasm toward domestic tourism. The findings suggested that irregular exposure was insufficient to strongly influence tourism

Received: 12.05.2026

Accepted: 16.05.2026

Published on: 30.05.2026



perceptions or motivate travel intentions. Respondents with minimal or no exposure recorded the lowest scores across all variables. The mean destination awareness was 2.21, positive travel attitude was 2.43, and travel intention was 2.19. These results indicated that lack of exposure to tourism-related media content was associated with very low awareness of domestic destinations, weak attitudes toward travel, and minimal intention to participate in tourism activities. The findings suggested that without media influence, individuals were less likely to be informed or motivated to engage in domestic tourism.

4.3 Content Analysis Findings

Table 3: Tourism Content Characteristics Across NMG Platforms (Content Analysis, N=180 items)

Content Characteristic	NTV (%)	Daily Monitor (%)	Digital Platforms (%)
International Tourism Focus	48.3	41.7	38.3
Luxury/High-End Framing	56.7	45.0	38.3
Budget/Affordable Tourism	21.7	28.3	35.0
Northern/Eastern Uganda Coverage	18.3	23.3	26.7
Community/Cultural Tourism	26.7	31.7	33.3
Urban Destinations	53.3	48.3	48.3

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The results showed that International Tourism Focus was relatively prominent across all platforms, with NTV recording 48.3%, Daily Monitor 41.7%, and digital platforms 38.3%. This indicated that a significant proportion of tourism-related content emphasized international destinations and experiences. The findings suggested that traditional media, particularly television, placed slightly greater emphasis on international tourism compared to digital platforms, which showed a relatively lower but still substantial focus. In relation to Luxury or High-End Framing, NTV recorded the highest proportion at 56.7%, followed by Daily Monitor at 45.0%, and digital platforms at 38.3%. This suggested that tourism content was often presented in a premium or luxury-oriented manner, particularly on television. The findings implied that tourism narratives frequently emphasized high-end travel experiences, potentially targeting more affluent audiences or promoting aspirational tourism imagery.

The analysis further revealed that Budget or Affordable Tourism was less prominently featured compared to luxury framing. Digital platforms recorded the highest proportion at 35.0%, followed by Daily Monitor at 28.3%, and NTV at 21.7%. This indicated that digital media provided relatively more coverage of affordable tourism options compared to traditional media. The findings suggested a growing presence of budget-friendly tourism content in online spaces, likely reflecting broader audience diversity and accessibility concerns. Regarding geographic coverage, Northern and Eastern Uganda Coverage remained relatively low across all platforms. Digital platforms recorded the highest share at 26.7%, followed by Daily Monitor

Received: 12.05.2026

Accepted: 16.05.2026

Published on: 30.05.2026

at 23.3%, and NTV at 18.3%. This indicated that these regions were underrepresented in tourism content compared to other areas. The findings suggested a concentration of tourism narratives in more commonly promoted or urbanized destinations, with less attention given to less developed or remote regions.

The results also showed that Community or Cultural Tourism content was moderately represented across platforms, with digital platforms recording 33.3%, Daily Monitor 31.7%, and NTV 26.7%. This suggested that cultural and community-based tourism was gaining attention, particularly in digital media. The findings implied an increasing recognition of cultural heritage and local tourism experiences as part of the broader tourism narrative. In relation to Urban Destinations, the findings showed relatively high coverage across all platforms, with NTV recording 53.3%, Daily Monitor 48.3%, and digital platforms 48.3%. This indicated a strong focus on urban tourism destinations such as cities and metropolitan attractions. The findings suggested that urban areas dominated tourism representation, likely due to their developed infrastructure, accessibility, and media visibility.

4.4 Qualitative Insights

Key informant interviews with NMG editors revealed that tourism content production was largely driven by advertising revenue and the preferences of high-end tourism advertisers, which created structural incentives to produce content that appealed to affluent domestic and international audiences rather than ordinary Ugandans. Tourism stakeholders noted that while NMG's media reach was appreciated, the lack of consistent, year-round tourism programming limited its impact on domestic travel behaviour. UTB officials expressed a desire for more structured media partnerships that would enable systematic, data-driven tourism communication campaigns rather than ad hoc coverage.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study concluded that NMG's mass communication activities had a significant positive impact on domestic tourism promotion in Uganda, as evidenced by the strong positive relationships between media exposure and destination awareness, positive travel attitudes, and travel intentions. Television emerged as the most impactful channel for domestic tourism communication, while digital platforms showed strong growth potential, particularly among younger audiences. However, content analysis revealed that NMG's tourism coverage was characterised by a bias towards international, luxury, and urban tourism narratives that limited its relevance and accessibility for the broad mass of Ugandan domestic travellers.

5.2 Recommendations

NMG should develop a dedicated domestic tourism content strategy that prioritised affordable, diverse, and geographically representative tourism coverage, deliberately featuring underexplored destinations in northern and eastern Uganda. The UTB should formalise its partnership with NMG through a memorandum of understanding that specified content commitments, audience reach targets, and joint monitoring frameworks. NMG's digital platforms should be leveraged more aggressively for domestic tourism promotion, with investment in multimedia storytelling, destination video series, and interactive tourism guides tailored to mobile audiences. A domestic tourism content fund, supported by the tourism industry and government,

Received: 12.05.2026

Accepted: 16.05.2026

Published on: 30.05.2026

should be established to subsidise production of high-quality, inclusive domestic tourism programming that was not solely dependent on advertising revenues.

5.3 Areas for Further Research

Future research should examine the specific mechanisms through which NMG television content influenced actual domestic travel decisions using longitudinal study designs. Comparative studies across different media organisations in Uganda would also enable assessment of the relative effectiveness of different communication strategies and media partnerships for domestic tourism promotion.

REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211.
- Asiimwe, E. N., & Lwanga, M. M. (2020). Barriers to domestic tourism in Uganda: A demand-side analysis. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 20(3), 284–298.
- Gartner, W. C., & Bachri, T. (1994). Tour operator role in the tourism distribution system: An Indonesian case study. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 6(3–4), 161–179.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509–523.
- Alex, I., & Moses, N. (2024). *Interest Rates and its Impact on Stock Prices among Small Scale Enterprises : An Empirical Evidence of Kampala District*. 8(4), 43–46.
- Christopher, F., & Felex, N. (2022). Eco-Tourism and Economic Development of People Surrounding Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Kanungu District. In *International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research* (Vol. 6). www.ijeais.org/ijapr
- Dauids, S., Kazaara, A. G., & Kazaara, A. I. (2023). *Examining the influence of broadcast media toward the mitigation of the spread of covid-19 in ugnadafeb- a case study of ubc*. 7(3), 363–371.
- 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.
- Ivan, N., & Kazaara, A. G. (2023). *The Transport Network System And The Development Of The Tourism Sector A Case Study Of Isingiro District*. 7(3), 327–334.
- Julius, A., & Audrey, A. (2026). *Adoption Versus Innovation : Assessing Uganda ' s Readiness to Bridge the Global Generative AI Divide*. 10(4), 201–210.
- Julius, A., & Kazaara, A. G. (2026). *Navigating the AI Frontier : A Strategic Roadmap for Organizational Integration in the African Context*. 10(4), 311–320.
- Kazaara, A. G., Charles, N., & Kazaara, A. I. (2023). *Investigating the Influence of Professional Code of Conduct on Journalist Performance among Women in Uganda . A Case Study of Uganda Broadcasting Cooperation (UBC) Uganda*. 7(3), 248–253.

Nelson, K., Christopher, F., & Milton, N. (2022a). *Teach Yourself Spss and Stata*. 6(7), 84–122.

Nelson, K., Christopher, F., & Milton, N. (2022b). *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.

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176–187.

Mkwanazi, M., & Lubbe, B. (2019). Digital media and domestic tourism in South Africa. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 8(1), 1–18.

Musa, G., & Thirumoorthi, T. (2011). Red Carnation Hotel, Bushmans Kloof: Exploring social media adoption in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 23(7), 988–1011.

Uganda Tourism Board. (2021). *Tourism sector COVID-19 impact assessment and recovery strategy*. UTB.

Uganda Tourism Board. (2022). *Uganda tourism statistical digest 2022*. UTB.

Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, 31(2), 179–188.