

DOLLARS IN TOURISM

growth and development. Limited infrastructure, particularly in remote areas and tourist sites, continues to hinder accessibility and visitor experience. The insufficient tourist facilities and amenities also limit the sector's growth potential.

Inadequate exploitation of Uganda's tourism potential was identified as a key development challenge in NDPIII. The report says Uganda is still less competitive as a tourist destination compared to regional peers.

"Uganda scored poorly in the health and hygiene category (133/136 countries) and is at 116/136 position in ICT readiness," the report notes.

The NDP III midterm review reports also highlights gaps in tourism statistics, data, and important information on domestic tourism, accommodation facilities and other tourism services to inform planning and investment decisions.



Above, President Museveni (left) officiating at the unveiling of the Explore Uganda Brand

IMPROVING COMPLIANCE

The Government has devoted efforts to regulating, co-ordinating and managing the tourism industry. To this end, the level of tourist satisfaction improved from 71% in the 2017/18 financial year to 79% in the 2021/22 financial year, against a target of 78%.

"One of our responsibilities as UTB is to regulate the tourism sector. We register, license, classify and grade the different businesses [including] tour operators, travel agencies, hotels and tour guides. We have an East African community standard that we are all applying across the region," Ajarova says.

This satisfactory performance is attributed to formation of Tourism Development Working Group that brings together key players under tourism for planning and budgeting purposes.



Amos Wekesa

MATHS OF MARKETING

There are about 100,000 Ugandans living and working in North America (US and Canada). If each of them sent one tourist annually to Uganda spending \$3,000, Uganda would make \$300m per year. If each sent 10, spending the same, Uganda would make \$3b annually."

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

According to the Executive Director of Uganda Tourism Board Dr. Lilly Ajarova, at the height of its peak before the disruptions of COVID-19, the number of tourists coming to Uganda had reached 1,542,620 and foreign exchange earnings from the sector had reached \$1.6b.

On the contribution to GDP and job creation, Ajarova said when the sector was at its peak in 2019, it had created 1559000 jobs and that the sector was contributing 7.7% to the country's GDP (economy).

On the sector targets, Ajarova said the sector targets to increase the number of tourists coming to Uganda from 1.5 million tourists the country got in 2019 to 3.5 million tourists in 2028 and to increase the foreign exchange earnings from \$1.6b in 2019 to \$5.19b by 2028.

The sector, according to Ajarova, also targets to increase the number of leisure tourists coming to Uganda from the 20.1% of 2019 to 30% by 2028.

The UTB ED made reference to studies which showed that for every 100,000 leisure tourists the country gets, an additional 1% GDP growth is realised and the foreign exchange earnings from the sector increase by 15%.

Information from UTB indicates that Uganda's tourism sector is steadily recovering and the latest statistics indicate

that Uganda received 814,508 tourists in 2022, which earned the country \$736m.

Migereko explained that the sector has planned to roll out Explore Uganda brand in the domestic and international markets (East African region, South Africa, USA, Germany) through brand promotional campaigns, media advertising (outdoor, indoor, digital), sports advertising, influencer marketing, Expo participation, brand training for missions abroad.

"The sector plans to undertake domestic tourism promotion for increased domestic tourism visitors and revenue through the Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo (POATE) 2024, regional cluster tourism promotion, and promotion of key national days and events and showcase Uganda's leisure experiences and business opportunities at three leisure tourism expos such as EAC expo and Magical Kenya 2023," he explained.

Migereko revealed that other planned activities include conducting site inspection visits for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions tourism (MICE) buyers.

The sector plans to strengthen and maintain its relationship with three global MICE associations to support client sourcing which include the International Congress and

Convention Association, Union of International Associations, and Society for Incentive Travel Excellence.

Ajarova says they have also planned to produce promotional materials (content creation) in various forms including print, photos, and videos of Uganda's tourism attractions which will be used to intensify efforts of marketing Uganda globally.

Ajarova says improvement of tourism products/sites and creation of new tourism products will be one of their key activities next year.

One such activity will be development of the Source of the Nile which is one of Uganda's most visited tourism sites.

Aware that the standard of services in accommodation has been a big concern to Parliament and tourists, UTB has planned to aggressively undertake grading classification of accommodation facilities and ensure they comply with the required international standards.

Achievements in 2022/23

The Explore Uganda destination promotional won three awards from prestigious world film festivals: International Committee of Tourism Film Festivals (CIFFT) 2022 in Valencia Spain, Zagreb Tour Film Festival in Serbia and

Cannes Media Film Festival in France.

The Uganda Tourism Board developed a promotion film, Rwenzori the Source of Life to promote climate change and mitigate its effects on tourism promotion in the Rwenzori sub-region. The video is lined up for awards and international recognition in the CIFFT Circuit 2023.

The Explore Uganda brand gained international visibility on CNN, where Uganda was recognised as one of the top 23 destinations to visit in 2023.

The Museums and Monuments Bill was approved by Parliament. It enhances the utilisation, protection and promotion of cultural heritage resources as well as the participation by the host communities in conservation and tourism to benefit from these assets.

Explore Uganda brand was rolled out in international markets at six expos: Magical Kenya, United States Tour Operators Association Annual Conference and Marketplace, Kenya-Uganda Tourism Business Summit in Mombasa, IBTM Barcelona, World Travel Market London and Africa Hotel Investment Forum in Morocco.

Explore Uganda digital brand campaign raised over 1.6 million views on YouTube. Google display ads earned 18 million impressions and 381,000 website clicks, brand website earned 441,000-page views.

Activities lined up for 2023/24

Roll out Explore Uganda brand in the domestic and international markets through brand promotional campaigns, media advertising (outdoor, indoor, digital), sports advertising, influencer marketing, expo participation, brand training for missions abroad.

Domestic tourism promotion through the Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo 2024, regional cluster tourism promotion, and promotion of key national days and events.

Showcase Uganda's leisure experiences and business opportunities at three leisure tourism expos such as EAC expo and international expos.

Site inspection visits for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions tourism (MICE) buyers. Maintain membership to global MICE bodies.