

**THE EFFECT OF ONLINE ACCESS ON PERFORMANCE OF TOUR COMPANIES
IN UGANDA: A CASE STUDY OF KAMPALA CITY BASED TOUR COMPANIES**



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family who inspired me in taking up the challenge. I also dedicate it to the tourism industry in Uganda particularly tours and travel companies which participated in this study, in their daily struggle to see that tourism business in Uganda flourishes.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CRS	Central Reservation System
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
GDS	Global Distribution System
HTLM	Hyper Text Language Markup
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Tourism Organization
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
SMTEs	Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises
SSI	Server Side Includes
TSSA	Tourism Sector Situation Assessments
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation

ABSTRACT

Tourism is increasingly becoming an important sector of economy in Uganda, as it contributes around 10% to the country's GDP, which is consistent with the earlier projection by World Travel and Tourism Council that the contribution of tourism to the World's GDP would rise to nearly 11% by 2014. Tourism industry is also considered among the first sectors to embrace Information Technology (IT) use; and in particular online access is considered crucial to the tourism industry and its success. This study sought to understand the use of online access to promote tourism products in Uganda, as relates to different levels of website development and their relative contribution to number of bookings done online and actual visitors. The study adopted an approach where questions prepared in the questionnaire format were administered to the respondents in face-to-face interviews. The respondents were employees of tour companies randomly selected to participate in the study. The variables of interest included nature of website a tour company has, level of website development, factors influencing the development of a website and the contribution websites make to the business success. The results showed that most tour companies, 43(84.3%) out of 51, use website to market their products and services. However, the levels of website development varied significantly between static and interactive types of websites, with over 80% of static websites being developed to a low level compared to interactive websites. The variations were influenced by a company's financial resource endowment as well as technical expertise. Although all tourism enterprises reported business success, the level of website development also influenced the number of bookings and visitors, and consequently contributed to the success in tourism business. For example, tour companies with high levels of website development booked an average of 91 and 121 number of people higher than companies with medium and low levels of websites development, respectively. In conclusion, these findings have important implications for policy and practice regarding tourism business in Uganda. For instance, tourism business policy should encourage public-private partnerships that would provide necessary support to address factors constraining website development to higher levels that can foster the growth of tourism industry in Uganda

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Tourism is recognized as an international industry and as being among the fastest growing industries. In recent years tourism industry has become one of the biggest provider of jobs on the planet, as it boasts a greater array of heterogeneous stakeholders than many other industries worldwide (Buhalis *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, Buhali *et al.* (2008) argued that the energetic growth and development of the industry are perhaps only mirrored by the growth of ICTs. A recent study by Bethapudi (2013) revealed that use of technology in communicating information regarding tourism products and related services is accelerating the growth of tourism industry globally. Therefore, even if only partially, the accelerating and synergistic interaction between technology and tourism in recent times has brought fundamental changes in the industry and on our perceptions of its nature. Bacchus *et al.* (2001) concur that the significance of crossing the new information threshold of universal, ubiquitous communications access has brought the entire tourism industry to the new levels of interactivity, propelling management by wire. Increasingly, ICTs play a critical role for the competitiveness of tourism organisations and destinations as well as for the entire industry as a whole (UNWTO, 2001). Developments in search engines, carrying capacity and speed of networks have influenced the number of travellers around the world that use technologies for planning and experiencing their travels. ICTs have also changed radically the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism organizations.

The studies have shown that users of websites want mainly travel-related information together with graphical illustration of tourist attractions (tourism products), list of events as well as usefully extending the website to cover provision for exchange of information such as responding to queries from users of the system, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and emails (Doolin *et al.*, 2002)

Tourism is still a new phenomenon in Africa. It is competing with Middle East to get a share of international arrivals, but the fact that Africa has manifold destinations than Middle East gives it a competitive advantage and therefore there is an urgent need for more efficient connectivity systems of ICT in all spheres of tourism activities including travel, tour operations, and souvenir related shopping (WTO, 2007).

Therefore, African countries like other countries in the developed world have every reason to promote tourism which has been identified and applauded for its contribution to global economy. Several writers agree that tourism is important in generating foreign exchange and improving balance of payments (Barzetti, 1992). Tourism industry also creates employment opportunities (Saasa, 1991), as well as diffusion of development to non-industrial regions (Kotabe, 1992) like sub-Saharan Africa where Uganda is found. Consequently, tourism industry has a great potential to promote overall national economic development through multiplier effect, as expenditure on tourism filters throughout the economy (both micro and macro-economies), thereby stimulating other sectors (Pritchard, 1992) as well as inter-sectoral competition (Rama, 1992).

More than 148.3 million people use internet to make reservations for their accommodation, tour and activities. This is 57% of all travel reservations each year. Internet travel bookings revenue has grown by more than 73% over the past 5 years and many people now prefer to find businesses online.

1.1 Background of the study

Developments in information and communication technology, particularly the popularity of the web and associated online access to products and services, have forced organisations in the tourism and hospitality industry to appraise the use of technology in marketing their business (Namaivayam *et al.*, 2000). At global level, the digital revolution has emphasized innovation, new business models, new ways of organising work as well as learning (Buhalis *et al.*, 2003).

In tourism, progress in technological innovation and use has been going on for many decades (Poon, 1993; Sheldon, 1997). Since the 1980s, Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been transforming tourism globally. Developments in ICTs have undoubtedly changed both business practices and strategies as well as industry structures (Porter, 2001). The establishment of the Computer Reservation Systems (CRSs) in the 1970s and Global Distribution Systems (GDSs) in the late 1980s, followed by the development of the Internet in the late 1990s, have transformed the best operational and strategic practices in the industry dramatically (Buhalis *et al.*, 2003, Emmer *et al.*, 1993, and O'Connor, 1999). If the past 20 years have seen an emphasis on technology per se, then since the year 2000 we have been witnessing the truly transformational effect of the communications technologies. This has given scope for the development of a wide range of new tools and services that facilitate global interaction between players around the world.

According to Mulira (2013), the Minister of ICT, Ugandan businesses can exploit opportunities beyond local borders if they utilise opportunities in Information and Communication Technology has to offer. Speaking during the launch of “Look Uganda, an online marketing website at Kampala City Council grounds” the Minister of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), emphasized that ICT offers business opportunities that supersede local boundaries. The Minister further revealed that local businesses are increasingly taking on online marketing, in an effort to market their products across the globe.

Indeed, intensive tourism enterprises are increasingly adopting E-business models to achieve organisational goals. ICTs and particularly web based advertising tools have been used to redefine tourism and deliver products to consumers as noted by Buhalis *et al.* (2010).

However, much as there is a rush to transform business marketing into online operations, indications are that online use for products promotion is still not benefiting companies as it should, mainly because most web development are still at their lower stages of development compared to more technologically advanced countries. One of Uganda’s ICT experts, Sebirumbi (2014), observed that online marketing in Uganda is still in its rudimentary form, as most

companies still lack the essentials for online trade. Sebirumbi further explained that “most companies may not have the capacity to supply to online buyers in the United States or Europe.” Consequently, this study seeks to evaluate the various stages of online (worldweb) use for tourism services promotion in Uganda in order to generate information on current situation against constraining and facilitating factors in web use.

D'Souza *et al.* (2004) and Boubakri *et al.* (2005) in parallel studies compare sources of performance improvements in developed and developing countries and whereas they agree that in both cases performance improvements occur, in the form of profitability, output and efficiency, the sources of these improvements appear different.

According to a report presented by Kamuntu (2013), former Minister of Tourism, in the area of Tourism promotion, the Missions continue to partner with some major tour operators and to advertise on their websites and hold some TV and Radio talk shows to promote Uganda. These efforts are encouraging and should be continued.

Some Missions like Ottawa, Berlin, Moscow and Brussels have undertaken a selection of some major tour agents to undertake promotional tours to Uganda. The work that was done by some of these Tour Operators to promote Uganda as the best tourists' destination have resulted in increased number of tourists from those countries. The Ministry wishes to encourage the Tour Companies to continue working with the Uganda Missions in various countries to promote Uganda. For example the Source of the Nile has been declared one of the Seven Wonders of Africa and that Uganda has a unique culture with 53 tribes. There is a lot of faith tourism to promote in Uganda e.g. Uganda Martyrs in Namugongo,, the Old Kampala Mosque, church crusades among other faith related activities.

He further welcomes investors to promote Health tourism which he says, investments in this field will attract people to flock in for health purposes and investors quickly recoup on their investments. In his own words, Professor Kamuntu said, “We invite the Foreign Media to participate in work with our Missions to market the beautiful weather and scenery in Uganda and we invite the tour companies and media houses to visit Uganda to see for themselves what Uganda offers”.

Uganda's economy traditionally relies on small-scale agricultural products like coffee, tea, cotton, and grains, while tourism serves as the largest non-traditional export. In the 1960s, Uganda was the main tourist destination in East Africa and it relied heavily on tourism for economic growth. However, during the 1970s and 80s, Uganda's image as a tourist destination was severely damaged by natural resource depletion, an exodus of trained personnel, the destruction of tourism infrastructure, and poaching. With political instability and civil unrest behind it, Uganda is enjoying strong economic growth and making progress toward biodiversity conservation and redevelopment of its national parks. However, basing on the fact that Tourism is still new in Uganda, many potential tourists do not know a lot about Uganda. It is important therefore that tour companies market this beautiful country online to promote tourism here.

1.2 Problem Statement

Studies around the world indicate that online access, and internet in particular has revolutionized the travel and hospitality industry (Casalo *et al.*, 2008), both as a source of information and as sales channel. Marketing tourism products using website implanted photographic images of products and associated narratives, are bringing destinations and attractions to the screens of potential travelers around the world.

In Uganda, scanty evidence suggests that tour companies use websites as online marketing tools. Indeed the Ministry of tourism, wildlife and heritage (MTWH, 2012) pointed out this as a limitation and recommended that Uganda needs to focus on growing online marketing to promote products like nature attractions, adventure tourism, bird watching hotspots and cultural sites. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that some tour companies in Uganda have adopted online marketing of tourism products, it is not known yet how the websites are developed, as well as the experiences of companies regarding website use to market tourism products. Although Uganda is endowed with some of the rare gifts of nature like source of Nile and other attractions, it continues to lag behind in the East African region. Lack of information on the contribution of website use as marketing tool to tourism business is a setback (Tonderai et al, 2008; DeLisi, 2016). There is need to clearly understand and document the role websites play in terms of the

number of bookings and visitors. Such knowledge could facilitate efforts aimed at promoting online tourism marketing in Uganda. Therefore, this study sought to generate this knowledge as a basis for tourism promotion in Uganda.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Major Objective

The major objective of this study was to examine the effect of online access on tourism performance in Uganda, as it relates to both products and their accessibility to the customers, taking into account different sets of tourism products which various tour companies promote online.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To identify types of websites and how each is used in the marketing of tourism products and services.
2. To examine levels of website development and the factors influencing these levels.
3. To assess whether the level of website development in a tour company influences the number of bookings and actual visitors.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the nature of websites tour companies use to promote online access to tourism products?
2. How many levels of website development exist?
3. What factors determine the various levels of website development?
4. Does website use by tour companies influence the number of bookings and actual visitors?

1.5 Scope of the Study

1.5.1 Conceptual scope

The conceptual scope of this study focused on ways in which tour companies operating in Kampala make tourism products visible to potential consumers via website. It also draws particular attention to opportunities created therein for the potential tourists to interact with the products online, and subsequently make decisions which become evident through online booking and ultimately visitation. It is therefore limited to evaluating the contribution of online access to tourism products to the performance of tour companies in Kampala, Uganda. The evaluation is limited to variables such as products promoted, number of website visitors, number of bookings done online, contribution to the growth of a tour company and frequency of online enquiries/conversations. This is necessary for identifying and describing opportunities that can be exploited to achieve long term success in tourism business in Uganda.

1.5.2 Geographical Scope

This study was carried out in Kampala district of Uganda. Kampala district in central Uganda is located within the wider Kampala Capital. It covers a total area of 236,040 Km^2 . Kampala was chosen as the area of study because it is the city center, strategically located as an entry point for tourists traveling to various tourism destinations in Uganda, and hence has the highest concentration (112 out of 151) registered tour companies operating in Uganda.

1.6 Justification

Studies have shown that website use as a tool to market tourism attraction sites in general has the potential to market tourism industry beyond a country's borders. Tonderai et al (2008) investigated e-commerce adoption of travel and tourism organizations in Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The study by Tonderai et al (2008) concluded that compared to developed world, use of ICT for tourism marketing in these countries is limited and lacked interactive facility for online transactions. This study builds on the understanding that some tour companies in Uganda already adopted the use of website based marketing, but the extent to which website is developed and how that was contributing to business success has been lacking. The researcher believes that generating information on the effect of website use might provide a

platform for tour companies to make informed decision regarding different levels of website development for tourism marketing. Recently, the USA ambassador to Uganda (Scott DeLisi, 2016) raised the same concern and argued in favor of interactive facility, that the use of information technology in tourism allows someone in Tokyo sitting in the comfort of his home sipping coffee to take a quick scan around the pearl of Africa.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Lack of a comprehensive understanding of tourism products promotion using websites as a platform for communication with potential tourist abroad, as well as the implication of web-based platforms through “online access” for the growth of tourism sector in terms of business expansion and jobs creation, is an important problem to address. This is so, given that the success of tourism depends almost entirely on marketing. Thus, this study is of great significance not just for Uganda’s tourism industry, but also for the potential travelers who aim at having access to relevant information and booking online within the confines of their screens. This study was intended to increase the understanding of the role online access, specifically web-based platforms plays, as tourism products communication platform, in boosting the growth of tourism industry in Uganda. It also described how tourism business performance compares between companies in Uganda. Finally, it highlighted the current trends in the use of website promotion to connect with customers abroad and market tourism products in Uganda, with prospects for keeping local tour companies alive to the realities of their performance regarding online access of their services by customers, while providing details on factors constraining or facilitating the growth of tourism industry in Uganda. Consequently, the findings of this study would become a basis for promoting tourism services that give Uganda an edge and position itself where it can compete favorably with neighboring countries in the Eastern African region.

1.8 Definition of Terms

1.8.1 The Web (World Wide Web)

It is a way of accessing information over the medium of the Internet. It is an information-sharing model that is built on top of the Internet. The web allow applications to communicate in order to exchange business logic, and share information as the Web documents also contain graphics,

sounds, text and video which intended audience can interact with. So the Web is just a portion of the Internet, albeit a large portion, but the two terms are not synonymous and should not be confused (Mitchel B 2009)

1.8.2 Tourism products

A tourism product is any product that is marketed by a country or a tour company to visitors so as to attract them to visit a country as tourists and experience the said product (Koutoulas 2004).

1.8.3 Status of Tour Company

The term “economic status” is used in this study to mean years of establishment and the economic advancement of a tour company, because this can affect the capacity to hire more experienced web designer and to allocate sufficient financial resources for web design and maintenance.

1.8.4 Target Tourist

Target tourist refers to particular group of people a tour company may wish to target by designing its website in a certain manner. It is believed that different tour companies deal in varied range of products, which they promote to target a particular type of tourist. This can influence the content of information and stages of web development.

1.8.5 Inventive Capacity

Inventive capacity refers to a firm’s ability to internally explore knowledge, i.e. to generate new knowledge inside the firm (Lichtenthaler U. and Lichtenthaler E., 2009), starting from the perception of particular opportunities (Shane, 2000). In this study, the term “inventive capacity” is used to mean not only the quality of a consultant hired for web design, but also the ability of a tour company to hire and maintain a network with certain cadre of employees, including web designers who are qualified and can sustain the development of a website in increasing competitive tourism industry.

1.8.6 Interactive website

A website provides company contacts, pictures animated with labelled products' catalogue. It also contains customer support hyperlink and easy to navigate for more information, as well as allowing direct information exchange between the company and the website browser.

1.8.7 Static website

A website provides company contacts, static pictures often accompanied with general information, but without labelled products' catalogue. It also does not contains customer support hyperlink with frequently asked questions (FAQs), and is often difficult to navigate for more information online. The company and website browsers have no options for direct engagement at a point in time online when the website is visited by potential tourists.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The use of online access for tourism business promotion has been identified as one of the elements of tangible resources that tour companies apply to attract customers. This makes a company website a good fit platform for reaching out to overseas tourists without compromising the information need for local tourists. Web design and content, aimed at achieving online access by customers usually the type of tourists a company is targeting as well as the status of individual companies, are the independent variables influencing performance. The conceptual framework proposed in this study further illustrates how a company's inventive capacity and tourism products involved, existing networks, seasons and festivities, external factors/ prevailing conditions involved moderate the process that leads to tourists' choice of travel destination.

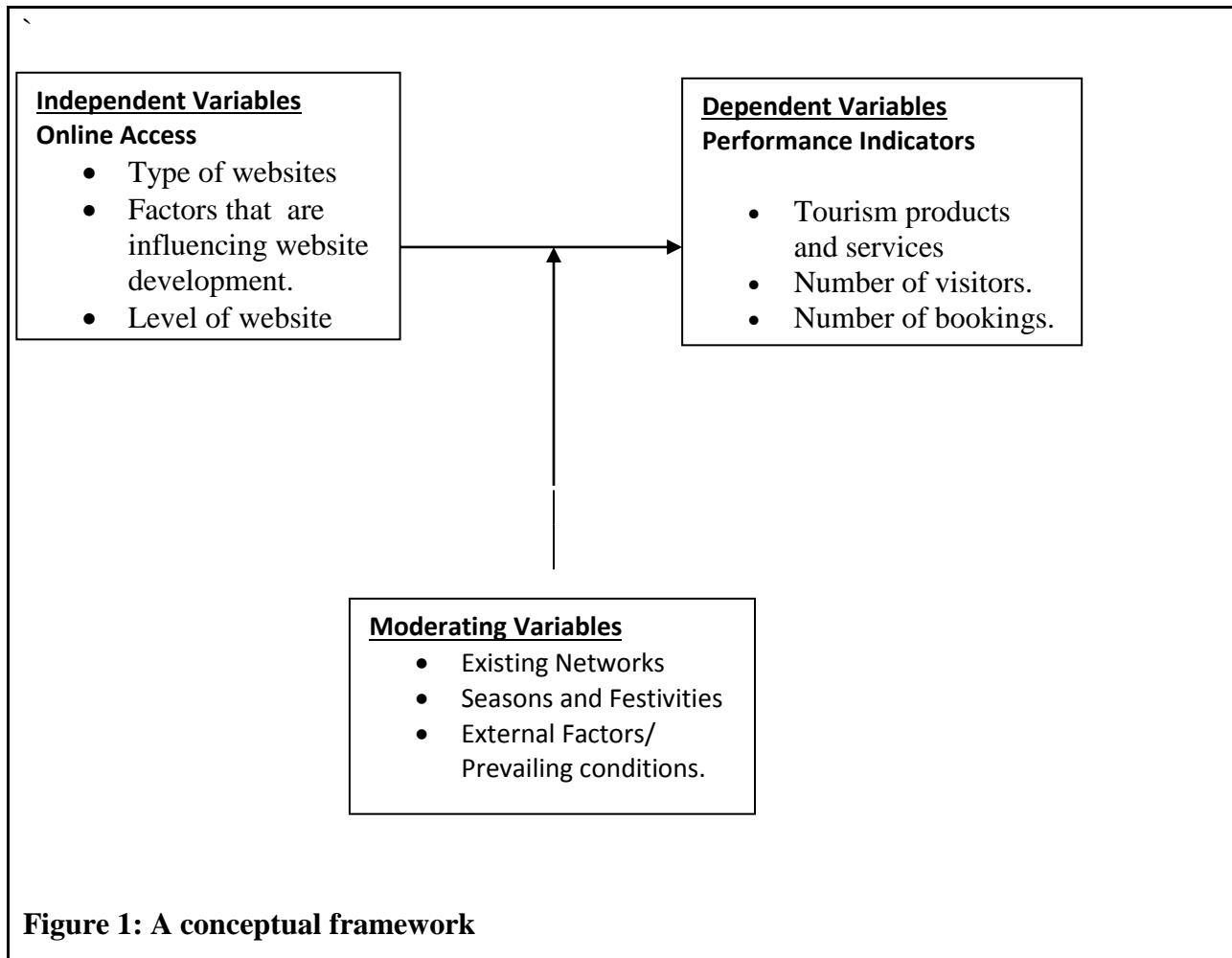


Figure 1: A conceptual framework

Source: Doolin 2002

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the relevant literature on strategies for marketing tourism products using online access. It begins with the global focus on online access to tourism products and services, through to the regional and local level. The chapter is organized into four sections as follows: firstly the general overview of tourism marketing concept is explored. In the second place is a theoretical model regarding appropriate development of tourism promotion based website. Thirdly, the use of web for online marketing in tourism industry is discussed. Finally, this chapter provides a critique of the literature in order to identify gaps that needed to be closed. The review of existing body of knowledge on the subject was intended to provide a theoretical basis for understanding the role of websites in tourism products promotion when seeking to attract foreign tourists to Uganda.

2.1. Theoretical Review

It is assumed that tour companies in Kampala have developed their own websites which they use to communicate to potential customers regarding their services, as well as offering provisions for online bookings and enquiries.

2.1.1 The theoretical review for extended model of internet commerce (eMICA), that was adapted in the study of tourism marketing in Australia (Doolin et al., (2002) and China (Derong et al., 2009), was most preferred and subsequently adopted in this study to determine the level of website development and usage amongst tour companies operating in Kampala, Uganda. According to Doolin, Burgess and Cooper(2002), many authors have empirically verified the usefulness of eMICA, since its development, to examine the performance of various tour companies as relates to online access. For the purpose of this study, the perceived use and usefulness of the online access in tourism marketing was conceptualized as potential factors

affecting growth of tourism industry in Uganda. The effect of online access for tourism business success was measured against the number of bookings, enquiries and layers of web development constructs as illustrated in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1: Extended model of Internet Commerce Adoption (eMICA) functionality used to evaluate web development in tourism marketing

Stages	Layers	Characteristics
1. Promotion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Company information, physical address and contact details, area of business 2. Information on company activities and services 	
2. Provision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low interactive, basic product catalogue (static pictures), hyperlink of further information, online enquiry form/inbox 2. Medium interactive, hyper –label product catalogues (animation), customer support (e.g., site maps, FAQs) and some specific value added features 3. High interactivity – updates by email, news letter subscriptions and chart box 	
3. Processing		Secure online transactions, order/reservation status and tracking, interaction with corporate servers

Source: Burgess & Cooper 2000 in Doolin et al, 2002

Promotion is the initial stage of web development, with static information which serves mainly to promote and publicize the business offerings. A second level is has a variety of information. It is therefore a more improved marketing strategy. This is when a tour company moves to a dynamic stage where 3 level are identified. The low level of interactivity is simply characterised by on-line catalogues, links to detailed information and online registration. The medium level is characterised with more complete product catalogue, on line help for users and a more personalised information as well as wider links to other sites. On the side, high level interactivity

is completed by the sites that include chat rooms, discussion forums, multimedia applications and dynamic newscasts.

The third level identified in eMICA theory is when a website has a fully matured and it can now permit on-line transactions. This level requires higher levels of security compared to the lower ones. This is where users are able to purchase products and services across the web, maintain an individual profile and obtain personal profiles matching offerings to the individual needs. This is the broadest and most complex ecommerce application because the company can at this stage perform multtasks such as online orders, online delivery and online payment (Kadzin 2003).

2.1.2 General System Theory and Tourism

Success in tourism business relies heavily on opportunities of interactions between potential tourists and tourism products, which play key role in influencing decisions tourists make regarding their travel destinations and specific choice of a tour company. Understanding tourists' reaction towards IT embedded tourism products as a factor influencing their destination decisions and choice of a company from a range of tour companies is essential for assessing the relevance of embedding a set of tourism products on IT platform in tourism promotion (Patriche, D., et al 2000).

General systems theory provides an appropriate means of conceptualising complex relationships that exist between tourism products and the choice of communication platform (ICT), as well as revealing how a particular communication platform bearing a set of products impacts tourists' decision. Scholars around the world began applying the general system theory to studies of tourism in the 1970s. The use of general system theory in tourism has since resulted in a number of system theories of tourism (Getz, 1986; Gunn, 1972; Mill & Morrison, 1985). System theory emerged way back, during the 1930s, as a response to limitations of 'mechanist' approach to understanding complex phenomena (Flood & Jackson, 1991; Leiper, 2004). With the advent of

systems theory, several scholars eventually recognized that mechanist approach was being problematic because it advocated analysis of elements in a linear relationship. Systems thinking has overcome this limitation by advocating the analysis of connectivity between a range of elements (Hall, 2000). Systems theory further distinguishes between *open* and *closed* systems, whereby an open system such as tourism business interacts with its external environment(s) within and beyond where it exists (Skyttner, 2001). In this study of tourism marketing strategy, using IT embedded products to communicate to potential tourists, we explore aspects of the theory where different tour companies may receive varied number of tourists (highs and lows) in terms of tourists turn up due to a particular package of tourism products and the platform of communication involved (Leiper, 2004).

This study applies theories of attitude as either perceived inhibitor or facilitator influenced choice of tourists destination (Seoho and Crompton, 1990). In this study tourism products are presented as facilitators that could influence a tourist's decision regarding travel destination, but the types of tourism products in a single advert package may play a role in modifying attitudes towards a particular company in favour of another. Tourism is expanding its toolkit beyond traditional advertisement methods by embracing a range of marketing techniques, notably the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is increasingly becoming critical.

2.2 Types of websites and their use in online marketing of tourism products

2.3.1 Website

A website can be described as the company's electronic face to the world. It consists of a number of information pages linked together to form one site, but is in the midst of a multitude of other websites found on the Internet. According to Wan (2002:159), websites are primarily designed for introducing and advertising a company's products and services. A corporate website is capable of communicating all elements of the marketing mix (Hoey 1998:33). For these communications to become truly effective, the company must not simply create an on-line catalogue of product and corporate information, but rather provide content-laden channels of

communication through which site visitors may interact. Business websites should therefore contain varied and timely information to attract as many users and potential customers as possible.

A site can contain a description of a company's business operations, a listing of all its brands and products, all its executives and company contact information (Duncan 2002:437). Most companies post their press releases and maintain a file for a certain period of time. A site may also have information on job vacancies and financial data such as annual reports.

Navigability is a significant aspect of user convenience. It is the combination of benefits, statements and hyperlinks together with a customer-focused structure that provides cues and pointers to the most relevant products within the customer's area of interest (Hoey 1998:33). As the number of websites continues to grow at an explosive rate, the way in which the websites of each industry attract customers will become increasingly critical for business survival (Wan 2002:159). Tourism companies should frequently evaluate the content of their websites in order to meet the needs of consumers.

Wan (2002:152) further argued that for suppliers, understanding the purchasing behaviour of buyers is essential for effective management of their marketing efforts. Techniques that could be used to encourage browsers to return to the company's website could be to encourage browsers to add the site to their bookmark list (Sweeney 2000:368). Also, a "site of the week" could be initiated. Sweeney (2000:370) maintains that if interesting information is provided, visitors will continue coming back to the site. Tourism companies could profile a "location of the week". Another option is to ask visitors if they would like to be sent e-mails to inform them of updates or changes to the site (Sweeney, 2000:375). When communication messages are sent to subscribers, a hyperlink could be added to the e-mail taking them directly to the site.

Website marketing is necessary because merely having a website does not guarantee business (www79, 2002). This can be done by using traditional marketing methods such as print media, by adding the web address to the bottom of the magazine advertisement or to a large billboard.

Afrikatourism has developed a unique website which allows browsers to experience Africa's splendours (Wan 2002:156). The website is part of a continuous network and enables potential travellers to print maps or routes linked to various subjects of interest. Also, www.southafrica.net (part of South African Tourism) focuses on providing information to the traveller and allows complete itineraries to be planned online (Internet proves its worth when it comes to promotion 2000:5).

The International Marketing Council (a body charged with promoting South Africa worldwide) has set up a website which it describes as an official national portal for the country (Sweeney 2002). The site can be found at www.safrica.info and gives information on public services, trade, investment, arts, culture and travel. This site has a "Plan a trip" section in which different holiday experiences can be sought (such as cultural or wildlife experiences). Travel tips are also provided. This is most useful for potential foreign tourists to obtain information on South Africa. Four extremely useful websites for travellers to and in South Africa are the South Africa Online Travel Guide (www.southafrica-travel.net), SA Venues (www.sa-venues.com), Go to Africa (www.go2africa.com/south-africa/) and Linx Africa (www.linx.co.za). All four provide ample information on accommodation, interesting places to visit, maps – in fact, any information a tourist would generally need.

South African Tourism has built a new website to promote South Africa as the holiday destination of choice to international markets (Web catches tourists 2002). An itinerary planner as well as information about cultural destinations and recreational activities is provided on the web. A general electronic newsletter is published with a view to sending subject-specific newsletters on wildlife, golfing, sporting and art and culture in the near future.

A technique that could be used to attract users to a website or help them make travel decisions is a virtual tour. An effective way to encourage traffic to a tourism web site would be to offer browsers a virtual tour of the tourism operation (Sweeney 2000:363). A virtual tour could be as simple as a picture tour through different rooms or as complex as a complete streaming video

tour of the tourism operation. This will enable potential customers to see what the tourism operation has to offer and what to expect when they arrive at a certain destination. Marketers can once again use other media (such as print or broadcast media) to inform potential users of this unique feature to encourage traffic to the website.

2.2.2 Types of Website

Websites can be divided into two broad categories - static and interactive sometimes known as dynamic. Interactive sites are part of the web that allows interactivity between the site owner and site visitors. Static sites serve or capture information but do not allow engagement with the audience directly.

2.2.3 Static Website

A static website is one that has web pages stored on the server in the format that is sent to a client web browser. It is primarily coded in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML); Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) are used to control appearance beyond basic HTML. Images are commonly used to effect the desired appearance and as part of the main content. Audio or video might also be considered "static" content if it plays automatically or is generally non-interactive.

This type of website usually displays the same information to all visitors. Similar to handing out a printed brochure to customers or clients, a static website will generally provide consistent, standard information for an extended period of time. Although the website owner may make updates periodically, it is a manual process to edit the text, photos and other content and may require basic website design skills and software (Hoey 2008). Simple forms or marketing examples of websites, such as classic website, a five-page website or a brochure website are often static websites, because they present pre-defined, static information to the user. This may include information about a company and its products and services through text, photos, animations, audio/video, and navigation menus.

Static web sites can be edited using four broad categories of software (Buhalis and Law 2008):

- Text editors, such as Notepad or TextEdit, where content and HTML markup are manipulated directly within the editor program
- WYSIWYG offline editors, such as Microsoft FrontPage and Adobe Dreamweaver (previously Macromedia Dreamweaver), with which the site is edited using a GUI and the final HTML markup is generated automatically by the editor software
- WYSIWYG online editors which create media rich online presentation like web pages, widgets, intro, blogs, and other documents.
- Template-based editors, such as RapidWeaver and iWeb, which allow users to quickly create and upload web pages to a web server without detailed HTML knowledge, as they pick a suitable template from a palette and add pictures and text to it in a desktop publishing fashion without direct manipulation of HTML code.

Static websites may still use server side includes (SSI) as an editing convenience, such as sharing a common menu bar across many pages. As the site's behaviour to the reader is still static.

2.2.4 Interactive / Dynamic website

A dynamic website is one that changes or customizes itself frequently and automatically. Server-side dynamic pages are generated "on the fly" by computer code that produces the HTML (CSS are responsible for appearance (Buhalis and Law 2008) and thus, are static files). There are a wide range of software systems, such as CGI, Java Servlets and Java Server Pages (JSP), Active Server Pages and ColdFusion (CFML) that are available to generate dynamic web systems and dynamic sites (Hoey 1998). Various web application frameworks and web template systems are available for general-use programming languages like PHP, Perl, Python, and Ruby, to make it faster and easier to create complex dynamic web sites.

Dynamic websites allow a better interaction between the tourists, tour companies and tourism products. This new technology of communication is flexible and allows interaction with millions at the same time. An interactive website for tourism has been designed to examine the power of interactivity, how it affects web efficiency and consequently functionality. An interactive map is also designed on the website to allow users to interact on the same page (Wind et al 2002).

2.2.5 Uses of website in marketing of tourism products.

A website is used to inform, persuade, have an influence on the tourist's behavior in order to develop a more efficient relationship among them (Wind et al 2002)

It is important to consider that the search for the client's personal information is one of the priorities of the promotion of tourist destinations on the web as it allows better relationship with tour companies. Without any doubt, interactive websites are the best option to obtain such data. Another good reason is to have feedback about the website, products and services and to create a relationship with the users (Vassos 1997).

Similarly, (Molina 2002) states that the interaction with clients creates opportunities to set up unique products, services and tourists experiences which make tourists aware of whatever is available and at the destination. Therefore the major reasons for using websites is to communicate with clients across the globe and be in position to obtain feedback and to respond to clients.

Websites especially particularly interactive ones present an opportunity of dialogue with clients. Another option for establishing a higher degree of interactivity with the clients is the creation of a discussion forum (Davis & Meyer 1999). This forum is a site or technological resource where any user can have access in order to give a suggestion or opinion, to make a complaint, comments show preference or criticism, read and discuss opinions of others about the products, services and information offered on the web. This helps the tourist to have real knowledge about the place to be visited.

In order to increase the opportunities of interaction on their websites, the user gets tips and information as this gives a more positive and real image of the destination.

A site can display the current state of a dialogue between users, monitor a changing situation, or provide information in some way personalized to the requirements of the individual user. For example, when the front page of a new site is requested, the code running on the web server might combine stored HTML fragments with news stories retrieved from a database or another web site via RSS to produce a page that includes the latest information (Buhalis and Law 2008; Hoey 2008). Dynamic sites can be interactive by using HTML forms, storing and reading back browser cookies, or by creating a series of pages that reflect the previous history of clicks. Another example of dynamic content is when a retail website with a database of media products allows a user to input a search request, e.g. for the keyword Beatles. In response, the content of the web page will spontaneously change the way it looked before, and will then display a list of Beatles products like CDs, DVDs and books (Hoey 1998).

Dynamic HTML uses JavaScript code to instruct the web browser how to interactively modify the page contents. One way to simulate a certain type of dynamic web site while avoiding the performance loss of initiating the dynamic engine on a per-user or per-connection basis, is to periodically automatically regenerate a large series of static pages. Use of the Internet and websites can be combined to facilitate e-commerce (Buhalis and Law 2008).

Wind et al (2009) states that, when compared to other forms of promotion, the web creates added value to marketing as it is based offer of customised products and services, providing assistance before, during and after the sale. It offers benefits to the destination management organisations as it is easy to change the products available and trustworthy interactions. Tourists also benefit as it is convenient in terms of access to all sites. It provides entertainment while searching and buying products.

Now, with the creation of the web, the power is transferred to clients as they have at their disposal a technology where they are able to compare prices 24/7 and personalised services. Therefore, it is extremely important that tourism managers are constantly updating their destinations on the web. This will lead to better and broader communication and trade of tourism products and services through interaction among tourists, residents and enterprises (Wind et al 2009) . Static websites particularly have been from the very beginning simply used

as online brochures, in other words, providing static information for the online consumers to view.

2.2.6 E-commerce

E-commerce involves the use of the Internet to buy and sell products and services (Duncan 2002:151). Companies have found the Internet to be a low-cost convenient way to reach target audiences around the world, while customers have found it to be a convenient way to shop (Duncan 2002:429). According to Morath (2000:4), the Internet provides a marketing and sales channel that is cheaper to implement than a brick and mortar business. However, this new market is more demanding than the traditional physical outlet market – it is faster and more competitive because the customers have all the information at their fingertips. The Internet affords business the opportunity to sell directly to customers in the consumer and business-to-business market. Many companies retain physical stores while also facilitating sales through the Internet (Belch & Belch 2001:509-510).

Hence, according to Duncan (2002:429), ecommerce can either stand alone or be one aspect of a company's overall marketing communication effort. Through e-commerce, national borders diminish in their importance (Morath 2000:7). Electronic commerce can be done even if the provider and consumer are in the same region or country or in different countries. No other

worldwide industry has been so deeply affected so quickly by the new e-commerce economy as has tourism (Bridges 2001:7). Through use of the Internet, consumers have instant access to goods, services and knowledge and they can buy and communicate globally (Morath 2000:3).

Online ticketing is another growing category of e-commerce. Tickets for air travel can be printed out on home printers along with schedules and maps (which do not usually fit onto or accompany traditional air tickets). In order to ensure that tickets are not counterfeited, a company has been developed that sells encryption and bar-code technology to online ticketmasters.

2.2.7.1 Global Overview of Tourism Promotion in General

Several unique approaches to tourism business and specific marketing strategies exist for companies operating tourism businesses. For example, Imamul and Rahman (2012) observed that tourism industry is an amalgamation of transportation, accommodation, entertainment and recreation, including important intermediaries (travel agents & tour operators), use of information and communication technologies has become a vital part of this industry. For real time availability of seats in the airlines, railways & Volvos and their bookings IT plays very important role. Airlines are using Global Distributions System (GDS) for these purposes. Hotels are using IDS, interactive TV and Interactive Phone for reservations and operations.

Many software and networking channels have been developed for travel agencies to serve the purpose, ranging from bookings to accounting. Introduction of information technology in the tourism industry has changed its dimensions and resulted in the form of exponential growth (World Bank, 2012; Morrison, 1989). Now information and options are available online and one has to choose the best from these options to make bookings and pay online (Werthner & Klein, 1999). This has reduced the unnecessary rush of customers in booking offices. Its feasibility can be seen in terms of reduced manpower requirement in the tourism offices.

Dogac *et al.* (2004) appreciated the fact that Internet provides many advantages to players in the tourism industry, of which benefits include enhanced level of collaboration between tourism operators, as well as between travel agencies and service providers. In a more similar way, web service discovery has enabled tour companies to identify innovative ways of constructing product packages targeting potential consumers. Where the level of technology available to the programme permits, a website can be relatively cheap and effective means of communicating tourism products. The design and management of websites is moving from the domain of computer experts to that of the general computer literate public, making it easier to design a simple website and then to upload products (updating) without great expense.

On the other hand, a newsletter or flyer can be an easy and fun way of updating already familiar or potential customers on the products a company is offering. A few page newsletter can be produced for tourism products promotion, on an annual or bi-annual basis and distributed either in hard copy or electronically. A simple flyer may also be produced as quick with graphic overview of products for a wider audience.

Companies adopt approaches which accord them some degree of competitive advantage, in order to be able to succeed in tourism business already characterized by complex behavior of players. Competitive advantage is derived from core competencies, which are products of resources invested, capabilities and strategic positioning as critical determinants (Hoskinsson et al. 2005, p. 79). Resources are usually categorized into tangible and intangible resources. The four types of tangible resources include financial, organizational, technological and physical while the intangible ones include innovational, human, and reputational resources (Werthner & Klein (1999). Tangible resources are those that can be measured and quantified while intangible are those ones that are ingrained in the organizations history and culture and are usually harder to imitate (Hoskinsson et al. 2005, p. 79). Therefore in creating competitive advantage, intangible resources are perceived to play an integral role as they are harder to imitate. Thus, sustainable competitive advantage is created from within the organization, which makes online access an important aspect of tourism promotion, requiring better understanding.

2.2.7.2 Tourism Services and Tourism Product Promoted Online

The demand for tourism is met by the concentrated marketing efforts of a wide variety of tourist services such as hotel bookings and air ticketing, to mention a few. Together these services form the world's largest and fastest-growing industry (Halloway, 1998). Traditionally, products are distributed through a number of intermediaries. These intermediaries link the producers with consumers. Producers are - sometimes called principals- carriers, accommodation places, man-made attraction ventures, car rental firms, restaurants and other destination based tourism enterprises. (Yilmaz Y and Bititci U, 2006).

The information technologies also play a significant role in the tourism industry. The impact of internet (Wynee et al, 2001; D'ambro and Wilson, 2004) and the computer reservation systems (Duliba et al, 2001; Alamdari, 2002) on the distribution value channel of tourism have been discussed. Information Technologies allow suppliers, i.e. airlines and hotels, to monitor, manage and control their capacity through communicating with the intermediaries and the end consumers. For example, authorized tour operators can access a dedicated part of a hotel company's intranet to see the room rates and availability for their customers. This transparency and interactivity can increase the efficiency and productivity of the entire value chain (Buhalis, 2003).

2.2.7.3 The tourism products

The tourism product carries both the characteristics of service product and the characteristics unique to the tourism industry, which makes the tourism product different from physical goods. These characteristics are effective for the performance of the tourism establishments and need to be taken into consideration when designing performance measurement and management systems. Hence, some of them are worth emphasizing. One of the distinctive features of the tourism product is that it cannot normally be seen and touched physically prior to purchase, which is intangible. Its intangibility makes it harder to buy but easier to distribute (Evans et al, 2003). On the other hand it also makes tourism dependent upon representations and the descriptions in printed or audio-visual forms, and, therefore, information is the vital tool that holds together producers within the travel industry (Ujma, 2001). The role of travel information for consumers is so significant because visitors expose themselves to risk in buying vacations that they hope satisfy various needs and wants important to them (Mill et al., 2002).

2.2.7.4 Tourism products and products marketing strategies

Tourism products have a complex content and may be defined as a set of material goods and services meant to satisfy the general and specific needs of tourists, a total of natural and manmade elements, and a package of various services (Patriche, D., et al 2000). The complexity comes from the multitude of components, participants and types of products. The tourism product is made from different components, which "assembled" give it shape: transport,

accommodation, food, recreation, etc., and this variety raises the question regarding the development of a coherent and integrated product. Regarding the multitude of participants, the tourism product is ensured in its entirety by a single economic agent only in rare cases. Typically, companies that participate in a tourism product (whose interests are often divergent) are not integrated vertically or horizontally in a single organization; at most there are more or less formal understandings or agreements between them (Gherasim, T., Gherasim, D., 1999). In order to prevent possible conflicts between companies participating in the creation of a tourism product, a harmonious integration of its component elements is essential, which imposes cooperation between all the involved companies and bodies (transport companies, hotel and restaurant owners, traders, tourism operators and tour operators, coordinating bodies, local communities, etc.). The term of tourism product is used quite liberally, starting from a simple hotel or restaurant, continuing with an amusement park and ending with their totality, all being provided to the client as a homogeneous package (for a fixed price). It is usual for a series of individual products to be called by their own term: hotel product, restaurant product, recreation product, etc., but the tourism product could be seen on a smaller scale (hotel product) or a larger scale (resort, city, country).

On marketing tourism products Witt and Moutinho (1994, p.5) use the metaphor of a tourism market basket based to explain the component tourism product. The tourism industry, consisting of a large private and public apparatus and networks, attracts, receives, accommodates and serves tourists away from home. This hardware dimension of tourism is the market basket (Witt and Moutinho, 1994, p.5). In selecting a destination the tourist chooses a particular market basket, such as Uganda, and once a choice of Uganda is made to stay away from home country, during the holiday/break from routine work a tourist purchases tourism products and experiences for his/her enjoyment. Such products and services may include a visit to national park, game lodge, cultural sites and other attractions which s/he places in his basket to form a package to his satisfaction. These products may be tourism oriented, or resident-oriented, such as transport to the destination. It is believed that this basket is figuratively shaped by the tourist attractions; natural, cultural, or man-made.

Five main components of tourism products have been identified and described: attractions, accessibility, destination facilities/amenities, images and prices. Attractions comprise natural elements such as landscape, seascape, beaches, and climate., as well as built attractions (historic and /or new townscape as in newly built resorts and purpose-built attractions such as theme parks), cultural attractions (presentation of history and folklore organized as festivals and pageants, museums, theatre), and social attractions (opportunities to meet with, or encounter the residents of destinations (Morrison, 1989, p.32-38), and experience their lifestyle, to some extent). On the other hand, access is a subject of transport infrastructure and transport technology. Whilst transport infrastructure includes airports, harbours, motor ways and rail networks, transport technology becomes important in the form of costs of travel and the time consumed in reaching the destination (Middleton 1994, p.85-90). Therefore, accessibility can be specified in terms of the extent of comfort or hassle with which visitors can reach the destinations of their liking.

The three critical factors in transportation – cost, convenience and speed – affect the success of every destination or tourism product, even if it is intended to be highly exclusive. For most tourists, the choice of travel mode is guided by the choice of destination (Morrison, 1989). Once again there are attractions of particular modes, including convenience, comfort and perhaps speed, as well as ‘distractions’ such as safety, and the same constraints of time and cost. Destination facilities imply the elements within the destination or linked to it, and facilitate the tourists’ stay at destinations and their partaking in the tourist activities.

Facilities are purpose-built around the needs and wants of the potential visitors, and they subsume accommodation (all types), restaurants, cafes and bars, transport at the destination (car rentals and taxis) and other ancillary services such as retailing, visitor information among others. An image typically reflects the intrinsic qualities of the tourism product, the design, quality, style of attractions and, its built and social environment. Images are, indeed, very potent and telling motivators in holiday- choice. These are the logical focus for tourism product marketing to uphold, adapt or create fitting images to influence potential tourists’ expectations. Price is a function of the attractions and facilities provided, with a range of prices according to the needs of

target visitor segments. Price is the sums total of the costs on product elements such as travel, accommodation and involvement in a range of selected services at the destination (Goodall 1990b, p.255-262). Price of the tourism products is not static but changes by the physical distance travelled, nature of accommodation (deluxe or economy), season of the year (peak-time and lean/off-peak time), and the types of activity opted for. Medlik and Middleton (1973) suggest that “in terms of demand for products, product formulation involves analyzing and assessing consumer requirements (existing and potential) and identifying homogeneous groups of potential purchasers (segments).

2 .2.7.5 Use of IT and ICT to Market Tourism Products

The tourism industry can be described as among the fastest growing businesses worldwide, and is one sectors where business functions are almost exclusively reliant on the use of information and communications technologies (ICT) (Garzotto et al, 2004). Information Technology (IT) and ICT have played an important role in the development of tourism. For instance, Computerised Reservations Systems (CRS) were among the first applications of IT worldwide in tourism. Since services available and, or consumer goods in the form of physical products, as well as the provision of information to that effect are at the centre of tourism business, IT and ICT play a very important role (Garzotto et al, 2004). However, much as tourism business worldwide is dominated by use of information, the success also depends on the real physical products which potential tourists encounter when they access IT and ICT platforms for different players in tourism business. It is in this sense of integrating information with physical products that Werthner & Klein (1999) referred to tourism as a hybrid industry.

Indeed ICT facilitates this integration and enables customization of tourism products to suit the needs of individuals. It is assumed that when integration is done in such a way that the needs of different potential customers are met, a tour company is more likely to influence the decision of the individuals interacting with its products embedded communication platform in its favor. Due to changes in consumer behavior of the tourist the market is becoming more segmented with each potential consumer belonging to a number of market segments simultaneously. Tourist

operators are increasingly becoming aware of these changes, but they need to be equipped to respond, or better still, take a proactive approach to adapt and remain relevant players in tourism business. The challenge for the tourism operator is the provision of accurate, well packaged, and easily accessible via IT, whilst creating and maintaining a niche through fostered relationship with the tourist. Indeed IT can play a role in this relationship building, whether direct or via networking.

2.3 Factors Influencing different levels of website development

Despite the current development of Internet marketing, understanding the effective use of the Internet still poses problems for academic researchers and marketers (Kassaye, 1999). This research attempts to empirically explore some aspects of the factors influencing commercial company Internet and Web development. The key factors considered for company Internet and Web site development are technology capacity, the use of different developers, company on-line measurement patterns and marketing executives, Web site knowledge. As a result of a cross-sectional comparative study of effectiveness in tour companies, the findings (Ashok 2002) indicate that companies with better performance from Web sites tend to possess higher technological capabilities for Internet-based marketing. It seems that their marketing executives have more knowledge of technical aspects of Web site development. They tend to be early Internet adopters using a multiple approach to measure their on-line performance. These results help to improve general understanding of company effectiveness in developing on-line markets.

According to Porter (2001), the development of a proper level of technological resource and capability by a firm is essential for achieving sustainable competitive advantage. For a firm, the major part of cybermarketing relies heavily on the deployment of the latest technology. The resources available in this area must surely offer strategic advantages. At the same time, the effective use of the resources for marketing activities depends not only on a well-developed marketing intelligence, but, more importantly, a proper understanding and awareness of

technological capability. This capability is one of the critical prerequisites for Internet based marketing. In a recent article on Web advertising, Kassaye (1999) points out that the mismatching between marketing objectives and Internet technology has become a primary problem for effective on-line marketing.

Some websites are more sophisticated while others display simple images (Routledge *et al* 2002) considered website development to be an evolutionary process, with the highest level of websites providing for intranet and extranet extensions. As noted by Kowtha and Choon (2001) also noted that the most sophisticated website was an intergrated one that interacted with customers, partners and employees

Models of Internet adoption are examined in relation to how retailers can use the Internet to communicate, interact, and transact with their customers. Following this a review on the factors influencing retailers Internet adoption decisions is discussed.

2.3.1 Models of Internet Adoption

In Internet retailing, a business model may be viewed as the primary method of organising retailing activities online (Grewal et al., 2004). Hoffman et al. (1995) described a number of ways the Internet can be used as a commercial medium namely, an online store, Internet presence, content sites, eMalls, interactive sites, and search agents. More recent studies on retailers' adoption of the Internet have identified three main ways retailers use the Internet as a retail channel. The Internet can be used as a platform to communicate and disseminate company and product information, and to interact with customers. This communication level of adoption permits retailers to engage with their customers, provide better customer service, and use valuable customer information to improve future product offerings and inform marketing campaigns. The next level of adoption enables retailers to present their offline product offering online in the form of an e-shop (Ellis-Chadwick et al., 2002).

This platform allows customers to purchase products in a multi-channel shopping environment (Min and Wolfinbarger, 2005). Finally, progress in online retailing has resulted in firms moving beyond the e-shop model by participating in a trading community where they can link together with other online retailers and suppliers via online shopping portals or e-malls (Ellis-Chadwick et al., 2002; Kennedy and Coughlan, 2006).

Consequently, research has sought to explore the factors that might explain reasons why retailers' choose different levels of adoption when making the transition to a bricks and clicks business model (Doherty et al., 2003; Teo and Pian 2004; Ashworth et al., 2006)

2.3.3 Factors influencing Internet adoption decisions

It has been suggested that there are a variety of factors that have a significant affect on the level and extent to which firms adopt the Internet. Auger and Gallagher (1997) found that low development and maintenance costs had a significant impact on small businesses decisions to go online and that adopting a web based sales presence is perceived as a relatively low-risk, high-reward strategy. O'Keefe et al. (1998) concluded that product type and company size were not seen as differentiating factors of Internet success but that the extent of the interactivity of their web offer affects the overall success. Doherty et al. (1999) found factors relating to the relative advantages of trading online encourage retailers to set up transactional websites. Other studies indicate that operational factors influence the different levels of adoption such as, retail sector and product type (Hart et al., 2000; Ellis-Chadwick et al., 2002). Market orientated factors such as Internet marketplace, market development opportunity, and infrastructure and development capability were the primary drivers of online sales adoption in Doherty et al.'s (2003) study.

Decisions to develop an active website are more dependent on Internet target segment and Internet strategy factors where

management commitment and capabilities influence the adoption of the Internet. These findings are consistent with the work of Teo et al. (1998) who identified the importance of factors such as technological policy, senior management commitment, and an appropriate infrastructure, in

influencing Internet adoption among large businesses in Singapore. Vadapalli and Ramamurthy (1997) explored the motivations behind business adoption of the Internet and found that organisational boundaries, transaction costs economies, and cognition are the key influences on business adoption among large US based communication companies. In addition, they found that organisations that have positive perceptions regarding the potential value of the Internet are more likely to adopt.

The success of integrating bricks and clicks models has exposed various operational and logistical challenges retailers' need to confront. The costs of supporting the two channels of restructuring the organisation and the costs associated with logistics infringe on the extent and level of Internet adoption decisions. Retailers need to improve and integrate their demand, supply, and information management capabilities to create efficiencies in the supply chain of their online operation to enhance customer value and gain a competitive edge (Ellram et al. 1999; Mentzer et al., 2004; Nicholls and Watson, 2005).

This requires internal and external co ordination of customer service and logistics quality, low cost supply and distribution, and the use of information technology to communicate, deliver products and service in conformance with customers' requirements and standards (Mentzer et al., 2004) a deficiency of which will result in the online operation becoming a mildly effective extension of the sales process.

2.3.4 Logistical Challenges

In the context of online operations, research relating to the order fulfilment process is of particular importance as it has been found to raise a number of logistical difficulties for the retailer more so in terms of picking, packing, delivery, and receipt of goods (Gurau et al., 2001; Kotzab and Madlberger, 2001; Punakivi and Tanskanen, 2002).

Furthermore, the transport and distribution structures have changed for traditional retailers as online orders require a system that needs to cater for the delivery of a single package to an individual household as opposed to shifting merchandise in bulk from large warehouses to store shelves (Enders and Jalessi, 2000) the result of which passes the costs and responsibility of online order fulfilment from the consumer back to the retailer (Burt and Sparks, 2003).

2.4 The influence of website development on the number of clients to a tour company.

The world is now becoming digital with more internet users accessing broad band and surfing the web at higher speeds, social networking, user generated content, social bookmarking and sharing of information. Internet technology has direct impact on companies and customers (Porter 2001).

Similarly, (Porter, 2001) argues that instant reply to customer's feedback is a crucial part of maintaining loyal customers. Implementing online tactics requires constant connectivity and may consume considerable amount of time but it is very cost effective, nearly cost-less. Internet presence will enable tour and activity businesses to extend the brand awareness and reach a larger audience. A website is a display window of the product offering of the company to the World Wide Web, a perfect tool to win customers.

The Key success in the tourism industry is to generate awareness about the company's product and brand. The more awareness the company raises about the tours and activities offered, the more bookings the company generates. A website therefore provides an avenue to showcase photographs, videos, tour descriptions, and prices to the clients. At the same time, an online booking is provided so that the future customers can quickly and easily book a tour with the concerned company (Buhalis and Law 2008).

2.4.1 Relationship between Online access and tourism business success

Uganda, a top African destination in the 1960s, has reawakened up again at a time the country is

marking 50 years of independence. Uganda received 1,151,000 visitor arrivals in the year 2011 representing an increase of 34% from 2010, an indication of a growing tourism market. As a result, the sector is already making major contributions to employment, revenue generation, and foreign exchange earnings. The tourism sector which was prioritized as a primary growth sector in the 2010/11-2014/15 National Development Plan (NDP), once again has its own fully fledged Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage.

In terms of visitor arrivals, conference business, and investments in the tourist accommodation facilities, the sector is catching up. There has also been resurgence in the numbers of wildlife owing to the high conservation initiatives. These are all indicators of a vibrant sector on a strong growth path. Ugandan tourism is at a turning point with tremendous opportunities emerging. Lonely Planet, an independent tourists' trusted information source, has named Uganda its top destination for 2011/12.

As the number of independent tourists increases, website development, e-commerce, online reservations, and financial capability will be the defining features of successful operators. The digital marketplace has the ability to level the playing field and to redefine the way companies, small and large, do business. In order to harness the potential of this new tool, education, media marketing, and online transaction capability is needed. Investment in website development will help enhance the sales and reservation capacity of ground operators while simultaneously building their professionalism and competitiveness.(Johnson, S., J. D. Ostry, and A. Subramanian (2007). *The Prospects for Sustained Growth in Africa: Benchmarking the Constraints*, IMF Working Paper WP/07/52, International Monetary Fund, Washington, DC.)

Nature and culture are core components of the SSA tour product. Tourism in SSA is also an opportunity to facilitate pro-poor development, but this does not always occur without facilitation. A number of destinations are already facing severe environmental and social challenges as a result of tourism development. Careful planning and management are needed to ensure sustainable outcomes for all stakeholders and to avoid destroying the valuable assets the tourists are coming to see.

2.4.2 The relationship between packages of tourism products and tourists

Crompton (1979) argues that destination image is composed of a mixture of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person holds about a certain destination, while Buhalis (2000) stated that destination image is made up of, “a set of expectations and perceptions a prospective traveler has of a destination”.

- Induced sources such as traditional forms of advertising created by the destination/product, such as promotional videos.
- Autonomous sources, which are independently, produced images, created by unofficial sources such as books, movies or social networks
- Organic sources such as word of mouth and experiences of other tourists. It is through these new organic sources such as YouTube, that consumers are finding ways to connect with images that are outside the control of official images.

The concept of a destinations’ image is closely linked to Urry’s (1990) seminal work on the “tourist gaze”, where he argues that tourists are, “directed towards features of the landscape that separate them off from everyday experiences”. Turner, et al, (2005) argues that this gaze is manipulated so that “the gaze falls upon what the gazer expects to see”. Ibrahim and Gill (2005) linked this tourist gaze to a destinations image, arguing that before a tourist engages with a destination, they already have preconceived ideas of what they expect to see, which are based on a destination image, but how and where does the tourist source such images?

In terms of destination image, there is empirical evidence, to suggest a strong link between destination image and tourists’ buying behavior. Sirgy and Su (2000) found that, “consumer research has shown that a consumer’s attitude towards a product (and product purchase) is influenced by matching a product’s user image with the consumer’s self concept”. This can be tested and applied to a tourists’ attitude towards a destination, as tourists have stereotypic images of different destinations. Tourism marketers can and do promote a specific destination images in order to maximize patronage, however, the question that remains to be answered, is what and

whose image does a destination want to project? Crompton (1979) argues that destination image is composed of a mixture of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person holds about a certain destination, while Buhalis (2000) stated that destination image is made up of, “a set of expectations and perceptions a prospective traveler has of a destination”.

2.4.5 Tourism Performance

Although Sub Saharan Africa is still a relatively minor world region for tourism, its performance since 1990 is encouraging. It is catching up with Southeast Asia in terms of arrivals and it is growing faster than any Asian sub-region. Perhaps the most important indication of the growth of tourism to Sub Saharan Africa is its increase in market share of world tourist arrivals. In 1990, Africa received just 4% of world tourist arrivals. By 2005, Africa’s market share had increased to 5%. In 2009, it was 6%. Over the same period, Europe’s market share dropped from 62% in 1990 to 56% in 2009. Christie, I. and Crompton, D. E. (2001)

Tourism is one of the industries that have benefitted economically from the use of the internet in the tourism sector. Internet technology has created online travel market where travel organizations are able to sell their products and can communicate with their customers through electronic media. On the other hand the richness of information of information that is available online has empowered tourists to exploit the internet for researching travel related information and even partially book objects for their trip online. This way, stake holders, suppliers and consumers benefit from the use of the internet for information research and as additional selling channel. The provisions and consumption of online travel services have become both nearly a daily business (Marcussen, C.H.(1999).

The penetration of high end mobile devices equipped with GPS together with decreasing mobile data prices have resulted in an increased usage of mobile devices. Therefore tourists like to access travel related services not only in the pre-trip phase but especially need personalized,

up-to-date on the trip assistance in form of information about tourism products (Lamsfus et al.2009).

2.5 Critique of the Literature

From the reviewed literature, the possibilities online access introduced through the use of Internet have changed the behaviour of agents in tourism business. Consumers of tourism products and services, on one hand, are able to interact more directly with tourism providers, allowing ease with which they can identify and satisfy their constantly changing needs for tourism products (Gursoy and McCleary, 2004). Also, on the demand side, it is possible to reduce the uncertainty related to the products via forums, or to exert an instantaneous control over the quality of products supplied by specifying their unique preferences using tour company's hyperlink to influence quality. While this is good for the consumer, it often places pressure on tour companies and increases competition whereby resource endowed tour companies are at an advantage. In other words, online access has led to the emergence of purely competitive markets, which also implies the possibility of reducing prices of tourism products and consequently increasing number of clients at both global and local scales.

Tourism services providers, on the other hand, are able to reach out to a wider range of clients, and deal more effectively with the increasing complexity and diversity of consumer requirements. Based on inquiries and specific interests, tour companies are able to track clients, identify, select and categorize products according to different choice criteria (Buhalis and Licata, 2002; O'Connor and Murphy, 2004) . Therefore, tour companies are able to use online access as a tool to communicate, distribute and market their products to potential customers worldwide in a cost- and time-efficient way (Buhalis and Law, 2001).

The challenges notwithstanding, specifically regarding online access to tourism products and services as a business promotion strategy, the relevance of website in tourism industry is increasingly recognized (Buhalis and Law, 2008). Indeed any tour company intending to grow its business in the industry must be re

ady to adopt the technology and compete with the rest for clients. In this study, the researcher attempted to identify aspects of online access that can be strengthened through website development in order to improve the performance of tourism industry in Uganda.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design applied in this study. It also provides information regarding the study population, sample size determination and sampling techniques, as well as the data sources and data collection instruments. Finally, it highlights the statistical tests that were performed to transform raw data into a format that allows interpretation and subsequent understanding of facts.

3.1 Research Design

This is a case study of tours and travel companies in Kampala Uganda. According to McCutcheon (1993) a case research methodology is just one of many empirical approaches that aim to develop the understanding of “real world” events (Kothari, 2004; Yin 2002). This is so, especially because the methods these two approaches rely on for data collection are the same (questionnaire, observation and interviews). However, a case study requires considerable depth to allow measuring associations and making comparisons with other studies rather than merely describing a population or a phenomenon as descriptive survey does. For example, this study measured if there is any significant association between website development and tourism business performance. Thus, this study adopted the use of a case study, which is an in depth study of a particular situation or trends. It is a logical approach used to narrow down a very broad field of research into a researchable topical issue. The case study research design is also useful for testing whether scientific theories and models actually work in the real world (Yin, 2002; Gillham, 2000). Consequently, this study adopted a case study design in applying eMICA to evaluate web development stages in tourism industry in Uganda. The design also allowed incorporating important aspects of the study which relate to the concepts of validity and reliability. For simple factual information collection, a questionnaire may be used at the end of

continuum, otherwise this design relies heavily on qualitative observation approach to data collection (Gillham, 2000)

3.2 Description of the Study Area

The study was carried out in Kampala. Kampala has the highest concentration of operating tour companies, resorts and recreational centers in the country, and hence the most appropriate for this case study. It is chosen because it hosts the ministry of tourism, worldlife and heritage (MTWH), and is a pivotal stop over for most tourists, who on arrival to Uganda disperse to different trails and destinations.

3.3 Study Population

According to (Kothari, 2004) study population is the sum total of individuals with particular characteristics of interest to the researcher. It is from a population whose distinct characteristics are known that a sample of individuals was drawn. In this study, the researcher obtained a list of all registered tour companies (151) from association of Uganda tour operators (AUTO). All registered tour operators on the list (151) were targeted as indicated in sample size determination below (section 3.4.1), but then we focused on those operating in Kampala (102) for data collection. Accordingly, a representative group of individual tour operators was determined at 50 using statistical method. However, a sample of 51 tour companies was preferred as it gives half value of tour companies operating in Kampala. The logic is, the closer a sample is to the entire population the better the representation of a target population. The ideal sample would be the entire population.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

3.4.1 Sample Size Determination

The term 'sample size' refers to a smaller group obtained from the accessible population (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003: 11). In this study all registered tour companies were eligible and, therefore, had equal chance of being included in the study.

Accordingly, tour companies guide (list) published 2013 on the website of Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) was used as the sampling frame. The list contained 151 registered tour companies operating their tourism businesses in Kampala, through provision of services such as nature based travels, hotel bookings and tour guiding (UTB, 2013). To obtain a sample size from the sampling frame of 151 registered companies, this study adopted a formula for finite sample size determination by Kothary (2004, 179), since the researcher already knew the total population. A representative proportion was determined using the formula below:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot (p) \cdot (1 - p) \cdot N}{e^2 (N-1) + z^2 \cdot p \cdot q} \quad \text{where}$$

N = Total population given as 151

n = Size of sample;

z = 1.96 as per the table area under normal curve for the given confident level of 95%;

P = 0.95 being the probability of success;

q = (1 - p) if q represents the probability of failure where p represents the proportion of success;

e = 0.05 as the degree of accuracy within 5% margin of error.

Substituting in the figures for the equation

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times (0.95) \times (1 - 0.95) \times 151}{0.05^2 (151-1) + 1.96^2 \times 0.95 \times (1-0.95)} = 49.43 = \mathbf{50}$$

3.4.2 Sampling Technique:

According to Sarantakos (1997: 124), the term sampling simply means the process of choosing the research units of the target population, which are to be included in the study. The researcher obtained a list of 151 registered tour companies of which 102 are operating in Kampala. A computer aided random numbers were then generated after numbering all companies and entering the numbers into the computer, using unique values system (Wichmann and Hill, 2006).

The numbers generated by the computer were marked on the list of tour companies to identify specific tour companies which were finally involved in the study.

This random sampling technique is important for elimination of sampling bias as it gives equal chance of being involved in the study to all companies registered and operating tourism business in Kampala. Random sampling method has been applauded for reliability, and the information obtained can be generalized on the entire population with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

3.5 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

3.5.1 Data Collection Methods

This study adopted a case study approach to collect data using interview schedule and observation checklist. Using observation checklist involved accessing a company's website and evaluating it against a list of items which characterize static and interactive websites and their various levels of development. The interviews were intended to find out the inside information related to the website development and use, and therefore focused on persons who could provide experts opinion in terms of online access to information and how that is influencing tourists decision regarding destination choice. The influence of online access to tour company's products and services was recorded in terms of number of online bookings, online enquiries made, and number of people visiting the website per month on average and company owners' perception regarding their performance in tourism business due to the use of website to promote business. Finally additional information on lessons learned by tour companies, regarding website use to market tourism products was obtained, and the prospects for future improvements in business recorded as well.

3.5.2 Data Collection Instruments.

Depending on the nature of the information one wants to gather, different tools/instruments are available for use to conduct the assessment. The instruments used in this study were observation

checklist and a document containing a set of questions administered on face to face interviews to gather information from individual representatives of the selected companies.

3.5.2.1 Interviews

In this study semi-structured questions were formulated in the format of a questionnaire, which the researcher administered in face – to – face interviews with the respondents from randomly selected tour companies in Kampala. The interview is an alternative method of collecting data. Rather than asking respondents to fill out surveys, an interviewer asks questions orally and records the respondents' answers. This type of survey generally decreases the number of —do not know and —no answer responses, compared with self-administered questionnaire. Interviewers also provide a guard against confusing items. Where the respondent misunderstood the question asked, the interviewer was able to clarify, thereby obtaining relevant responses and this approach agrees with Babbie's (1992) notion regarding the use of interview method of data collection. The advantage of interview is that it allows flexibility in questioning where the interviewer is in control of the situation, and it also has high response rate (Kothari, 2004) compared to questionnaire method of data collection where the respondent is expected to fill in the information by themselves and then return the questionnaire.

3.6 Data Quality Control

Key indicators of the quality of a measuring instrument are the reliability and validity of the measures. The process of developing and validating an instrument was in large part focused on reducing error in the process of generating and analysing data. Reliability estimates evaluated the stability of measures, internal consistency of measurement instruments, and interpreter reliability of instrument scores. Validity is the extent to which the interpretation of the results of a test was warranted. It depends on the particular use the test is intended to serve. Several issues may affect the accuracy of data collected, such as those related to self-report and secondary data sources.

3.6.1 Validity

Validity refers to the conceptual and scientific soundness of a research study or investigation, and the primary purpose of all forms of research is to produce valid conclusions (Graziano & Raulin, 2004). To produce valid, or meaningful and accurate, conclusions researchers must strive to eliminate or minimize the effects of extraneous influences, variables, and explanations that might detract from the accuracy of a study's ultimate findings. Put simply, validity is related to research methodology because its primary purpose is to increase the accuracy and usefulness of findings by eliminating or controlling as many confounding variables as possible, which allows for greater confidence in the findings of any given study (Marczyk et al., 2004). There are different types of validity. Internal validity is addressed in this study by ensuring the chance of more than one independent variable influencing the outcome is eliminated in the study design, while external validity allows the information obtained based on a small sample to be generalized to the population as a whole. Similarly, a construct validity in this study focused on the congruence between the results obtained and the theoretical underpinnings which guided the research (Kazdin, 2003c), whereas statistical validity dealt with procedures typically used to test the relationship between two or more variables to determine whether an observed statistical effect is a true reflection of a causal relationship (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 2002).

3.6.2 Reliability

Reliability was tested using test of scale for reliability in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) at Cronbach Alpha 0.67, with 72% valid cases. In the context of this study, reliability was based on the appropriateness of the design and sampling frame from which the researcher obtained a comprehensive source list of all registered tour companies operating in Kampala. Such a list was considered a reliable data source and, therefore, it was relied upon as the sampling frame from which a representative sample was drawn. It has been argued that when the list of a study population is comprehensive, correct, and appropriate, it can be relied upon as data source (Kothari, 2004). Reliability refers to the consistency of the results obtained during the study. This study used performance indicators different companies' use to measure their success and or failure to compare the use of online access for tourism business in Uganda. Reliability was tested using test of scale for reliability in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) at

Crombach Alpha 0.67 based on standardized items, with 72.5% valid cases. In the context of this study, reliability was based on the appropriateness of the design and sampling frame from which the researcher selected 51 registered tour companies operating in Kampala (Table 2). The reliability test was based on five items: 2 types of website and 3 different levels of website development (Table 3).

Table2: Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	37	72.5
	Excluded ^a	14	27.5
	Total	51	100.0

Table 3: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.69	.67	5

Such a list was considered a reliable data source and, therefore, it was relied upon as the sampling frame from which a representative sample was drawn. It has been argued that when the list of a study population is comprehensive, correct, and appropriate, it can be relied upon as data source (Kothari, 2004). Reliability refers to the consistency of the results obtained during the study. This study used performance indicators different companies' use to measure their success and or failure to compare the use of online access for tourism business in Uganda.

3.7 Data Processing and Analysis

The data collected was processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS).

3.7.1 Data Processing

Processing of data involved classifying data, coding, entering, editing and tabulating the data.

3.7.2 Data Analysis

Statistical tests were performed to analyze data for frequencies of variables, mean and paired mean differences using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 for windows. Descriptive data analysis involved calculation of frequencies, mean, standard deviations and percentages. This was followed by cross tabulations and correlation analysis using Pearson's Coefficient of partial correlation at 95% confidence interval (0.05 level of significance), with a view to establish the relationships between the variables under investigation. Chi Square test examined expected equal distribution of the respondents by gender and education, to understand how information obtained from them could be relied upon for knowledge and responsibility in the performance of online access through web development stages. Qualitative analysis of performance indicators also involved listing and describing specific indicators from the perspective of individual tour operators. The analyzed results were presented in tables and figure for easy interpretation of findings.

3.8 Ethical Issues and Limitations

3.8.1 Ethical Issues

Considering their willingness to take part in the study, respondents received full disclosure of the nature and purpose of the study and any other information that was required by them before being interviewed in the study. The researcher further assured the respondents that the

information given was entirely for academic purposes and not for any other purpose and that their personal identification would be kept confidential.

3.8.2 Limitations of the Study

This study investigated the influence of online access on the performance of tour and travel companies in Kampala as an isolated case. It is therefore limited to the extent that online access, a website-based tourism products and services marketing, was evaluated without comparison to other marketing strategies. Accordingly, this study did not measure the contribution of online access against other options tour companies use to promote tourism as a business in Kampala.

During data collection, key informants with relevant experience regarding website use for tourism promotion were out of office in some companies; and this meant repeat visits. This caused delay in data collection which in turn delayed dissertation write up.

Finally, this study was limited to understanding the contribution of online access to tour and travel companies operating in Kampala. Therefore, the information obtained could only be generalized for the entire country with caution. This is so, because the experience of tour and travel companies in other regions of Uganda might be different.

3.9 Summary

Research methods are generalised and established ways of approaching research questions regarding tour companies' use of online access to promote tourism business. This study focused on registered tours and travel companies operating in Kampala, both as a population and as a particular case. The study generated mixed data types, namely qualitative and quantitative. Accordingly the data collection instruments used were appropriate for collecting quantitative and qualitative data. The data was verified and entered into excel data sheet before being exported to SPSS window for analysis in order to answer particular research questions related to specific objectives of the study. For example, the use of quantitative data was intended to enable the

researcher to produce generalizable results whether the use of online access was beneficial to tour companies as a marketing tool. Similarly, qualitative data was aimed at answering questions as to what level of performance and who are the targeted groups from the respondents' own perspective based on their experience.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the interpretation of the results obtained after analysing data, and goes on to discuss the findings in light of already established knowledge on the subject matter. Key findings are presented in tables and figures for each of the specific objectives of the study. The results are explained and discussed to integrate explanation of the findings as well as providing more information for clarity based on previous studies, as well as the experience of interaction the researcher had with various tour companies, and the lessons learnt during the study.

4.1 Respondents' Bio-data

The tour and travel company employees interviewed during the study were expected to be equally distributed in terms of their gender and level of education, but the results showed that they differed significantly by these two parameters: gender and level of education (Table 2). All the respondents who took part in the study had attained some level of tertiary education, as most of them had either Marketing or Tourism background. About two thirds of the respondents (64.7%) were females, and most of them had been in their respective companies for over 18 months, with some having stayed on their current jobs for upto five years, or more. Thus, the respondents' level of education and years of employment experience suggest that they had a fair level of understanding regarding online promotion of tourism services and products. Most tour companies visited during the study had been in business for over 10 years, so they understood the opportunities online access was offering and appreciated very much what the questionnaire was all about. Table 4 provides summary of biodata of the respondents who participated in the study.

Table 4: Bio data of respondents

Variables	Demographic Characteristics of respondents		
	Expected	Observed	%
Sex ($X^2 = 4.412$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$)			
Females	25.5	33 18	64.7
Males	25.5	35.3	
Education ($X^2 = 58.57$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.01$)			
Certificate	12.8	1	2.0
Diploma	12.8	6	11.7
Bachelors	12.8	36	70.6
Post-graduate	12.8	8	15.7

Source: Primary Data, 2015 [Note: Chi-square tested equal distribution of respondents, and percentages are given of the observed].

4.1.1 The response rate

In data collection, the study targeted 50 respondents drawn from 50 tour companies within Kampala. There was a 100% response rate. The researcher achieved this through direct interviews with the respondents, which also allowed interpretation of a few questions that seemed difficult for some respondents. In some incidences, the researcher filled in the questionnaire for the respondents who proved to be busy and unwilling to leave their jobs for

even a minute to answer the questionnaire. The respondents answered questions which were being asked as they went on with their work. In some tour companies, the website technical questions were directed to their colleagues who were in the technical area of the company. Most of the respondents were managers who were also owners of the tour companies and therefore had better understanding of the questionnaire.

4.2 Findings by Specific Objectives

4.2.1 Types of websites and their uses in marketing of tourism products and services

The results showed that out of 51 tour companies which participated in the study 43 (84.3%) had websites on which they uploaded different types of tourism products and also advertised various products and services to attract potential tourists. As few as 8 (15.7%) did not have website and the reason the companies which did not have website gave was that they deal mainly with local tourism, but in some instances receive tourists referred to them by other companies for special services which such companies did not have. For example, two tour companies without websites reported that they were majorly involved in tour and travel with particular focus on air ticketing. They further mentioned that other companies which do not offer air ticketing services were working closely with them and often referred some clients to them.

However, of the eight tour companies which did not have websites, five were already in the process of developing websites for their businesses. Thus, there is a rapid transition towards online marketing as a strategy by tour companies operating in Kampala. This transition towards online marketing of tourism products and services reflects the finding of previous studies indicating that several unique approaches to tourism business and specific online marketing strategies exist for companies through the use of websites (TSSA, 2012). For example, this study revealed that tour companies in Kampala have become an amalgamation of services, including transportation, accommodation, entertainment and recreation and adventure. Elsewhere, Imamul and Rahman (2012) observed a similar trend of marketing strategy, which incorporates travel agents & tour operators through use of information and communication technologies that are vital part of this industry.

During the study, two website types were identified, namely interactive website and the static website type. Interactive websites use browser interface on posted news and events besides giving usual information about products and services. On the contrary, static websites are mainly online business brochures which do not allow interaction with visitors. Companies with interactive websites were significantly higher in number compared to the companies with static websites (Table 5).

Table 5: Shows the types of websites and their percentages

types	Websites	
	Proportions	Percentages
Interactive	31	72.9
Static	12	27.1
Total	43	100

Source: Primary Data, 2015

Table 3 shows a skewed distribution of website types in favour of interactive type of website, having browser interface with animated images and script information. This indicates that the importance of web technological advancement in communication is increasingly being appreciated by tour companies operating in Uganda.

The need for tours and travel companies to disseminate information to a wide range of clients was the major driving force towards websites creation by tour companies. The respondents were fully aware that tourism is rapidly growing worldwide, but needed to compete with the rest for the growing number of tourists and be able to make profit and a big market share. This phenomenon has been observed in previous studies linking website use in tourism to successful competition in the market (Sweeney, 2008).

Furthermore, the different types of websites tours and travel companies in Kampala have demonstrated that these findings are congruent with the theoretical underpinnings of eMICA

theory which guided the research process (Doolin, 2002). In the theoretical model, previous studies had shown that website development levels vary, sometimes greatly among tour companies even at local scale. Previous studies have also observed that these differences in the levels of website development have important implications for tourism business success with regard to online promotion of tourism products and services (Belch & Belch 2001:509-510).

The theoretical model also reveals two types of websites which are static and interactive. The static website is usually the first level of a tour company's website development. The companies were using static websites to promote and publicize the company to potential clients in terms of contact details, online static images of products and description of services. On the other hand, tour companies with interactive websites were using them for multiple value added features such as photogallery, online customer support link as well as FAQs, site search engines, currency converters, interactive maps, downloadable materials, online bookings, order form inquiry multi-language support, customer relations, customer feedback and to provide secure online payment. Generally, the two types of websites were used to persuade, influence and entice customers to buy their products and services.

The theory of eMICA has been used in several countries like China, Australia, Newland and Asia Pacific (Jeong & Lambert 1999). Tourism in these countries has grown tremendously. Understanding this, as a contribution online access makes to tourism business, is therefore very important for local tour companies in Uganda.

The results revealed that all tour companies were using online access to promote and market more than one product, as well as providing several services. The choice of a product to promote or a service to provide was largely influenced by financial resources and vision of a company owner with regard to specific products targeting particular types of clientele for business. This was further confirmed by Witt and Moutinho (1994, p.5) who acknowledged that tourists need to have a basket of tourism products to choose from.

The respondents from tour companies with static websites confirmed that they were receiving complaints from their clients, because they were not able to communicate changes due to

limitations static web imposed on their ability to upload news and events. Table 6 provides the popularity ranking of tourism products and services tour companies in Kampala promote through online access.

Table 6: Products and services tour companies market on their websites

Product/service	Number of providers by website		Total n(%)
	Interactive (prop.)	Static (Prop.)	
Nature tourism	17	10	27 (16.2)
Car rentals/hire	13	11	24 (14.4)
Air ticketing	13	9	22 (13.2)
Hotel bookings	14	7	21 (12.6)
Cultural tourism	11	7	18 (10.8)
Visa arrangements	5	4	9 (5.4)
Travel insurance	9	0	9 (5.4)
Adventure	5	2	7 (4.2)
Education tours	2	3	5 (3.0)
Airport picks	2	2	4 (2.4)
Mountaineering	3	1	4 (2.4)
Honeymoon packages	3	1	4 (2.4)
Volunteering	2	1	3 (1.8)
Community based tourism	1	2	3 (1.8)
Conferences	1	1	2 (1.2)
Eco-tourism	2	0	2 (1.2)
Camping	0	1	1 (0.6)
Filming trips	1	0	1 (0.6)
Events planning	0	1	1 (0.6)

Source: Primary Data, 2015

Out of the total, 19 products and services tour companies market, only a few (5) products accounted for a significant 67.4%. The results also showed that community based tourism, though important and is growing in some parts of the world, is not well developed in Uganda. This means that nature attraction remains the single most consumed Uganda's tourism product, and car rentals follow in position two while hotel bookings took distant fourth position. As much as nature attraction remains in the lead, it is generally recognized that both car rentals and hotel bookings facilitate access and consumption of nature services. Therefore, if hotel bookings are well developed and managed nature attractions could receive even higher number of visitors than it does currently. Unlike other countries where leisure and collective rural tourism or community based tourism are common activities (World Tourism Organization, 2007) where online access facilitates awareness creation (Sweeney, 2008: 236), in Uganda these forms of tourism are less developed, as nature attraction tops all tourism products consumed by both local and international tourists.

This research objective is also in line with (Witt and Moutinho, 1994, p.5) who stresses that in selecting a destination the tourist chooses a particular market basket, such as Uganda, and once a choice is made to stay away from home during the holiday/break from routine work, a tourist purchases many tourism products and services for his or her enjoyment. Such products and services may include a visit to national park, game lodge, cultural sites and other attractions which s/he places in his basket to form a package to his/her satisfaction. These products may be tourism oriented, or resident-oriented, such as transport to the destination and accommodation. It is believed that this basket is figuratively shaped by the tourist attractions such as natural, cultural, or man-made tourism products.

Therefore, tourists appreciate a variety of products to choose from in order to have a great experience. According to the findings, no tourist wished to have only one product but a combination of many. This is one of the reasons as to why tour companies which had interactive website performed better than those which had static websites and those which did not have websites at all because interactive websites are able to show a variety of tourism products.

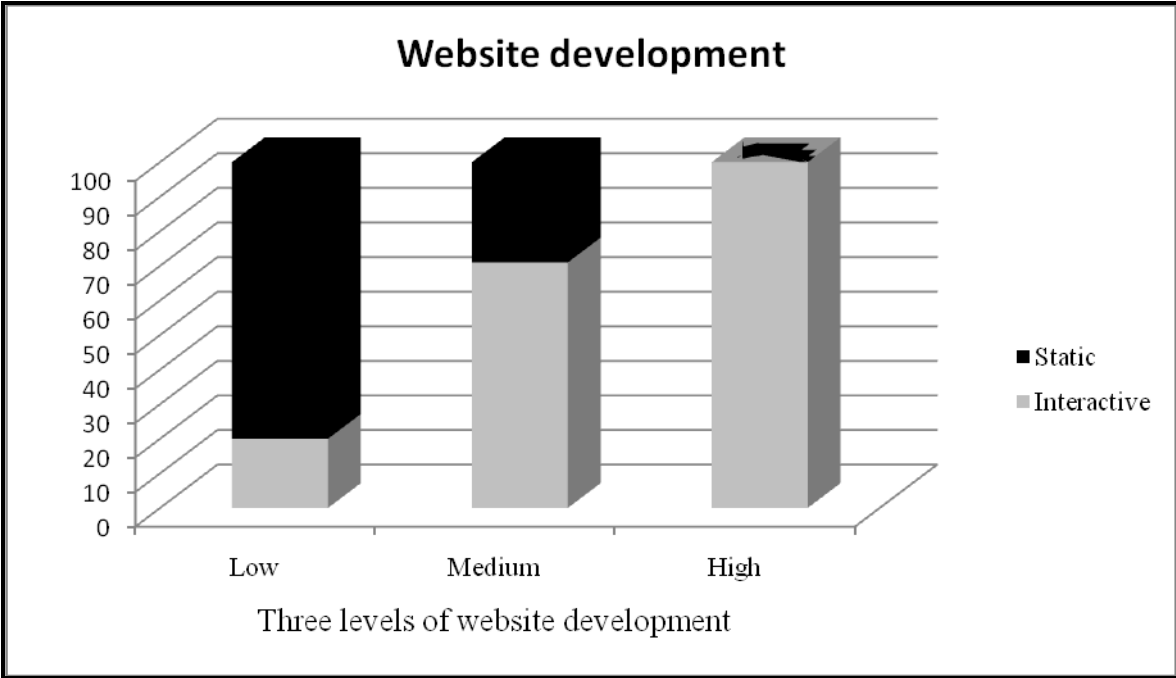
On whether tourism business was benefiting the tour companies operating in Kampala, the respondents from all tour companies interviewed during the study were in agreement that their businesses were successful, as far as profit making was concerned. Similarly all companies with the websites acknowledged some significant ($P < 0.005$) contribution of website to the success in doing tourism business.

4.2.2 Factors influencing the different levels of website development

In order to understand factors influencing various levels of website development, this study first presents the levels of website development by type of website (Figure 2). It then proceeds to explain factor influencing levels of website development (Table 7). Accordingly, this study identified three levels of website development, and each level of website development was classified by the type of a website as either interactive or static. From the results obtained, all websites with high level of development were interactive in nature. Static websites were almost exclusively at lower level of website development. Only a few static websites had been developed to medium level as per eMICA model (Table 1). The static websites were characterized by static images of tourism products like photos of wildlife, lakes and rivers, mountains and hotels among others. Such static images do not enhance interaction with the user and even the narratives which often accompany such information are less exhaustive. On the contrary, interactive websites were largely in high level of development. The websites which were considered to be interactive had images animated, easy navigation for the clients and contained elaborate information, including frequently asked questions (FAQs).

As shown in Figure 2 below, three levels of website development were identified and categorized by the type of website.

Figure 2: Types of website and their respective levels of development



Source: Primary Data, 2015

Although aware that most tourists now get to the use of web to search for relevant information on tourism products, local tour and travel companies are still at low levels of website development. They have adopted the use of web as online marketing tool that could lead to booking for travel destinations. This is also confounded by the companies’ need to sell products or services to a large number of customers and be able to grow the business. Thus, online promotion of tourism products/services is becoming a very promising approach to getting foreign clients interested in local tourism products. Accordingly, website use has emerged due to opportunities and challenges marketing tourism online present to different companies, but three key factors determine the levels of a company’s website development. These factors are target clients, resource capacity of a tour company and particular products being promoted online (Table 7); and they influenced website development disproportionately.

Table 7: Factors determining websites development by tour companies in Kampala

Target client	Resource	Products
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Responses		capacity		involved			
		number	%	number	%	number	%
Valid		27					
cases	Yes	53	43	84	28	54.9	
	No	24	8	16	23	45.1	
Total		51	51	100	51	100	

Source: Primary data, 2015

From the results of Table 7 above, resource capacity was the main factor determining the levels of website development. For the companies with high level of website development, reaching out to target clients was the main motivation and resource constrains were minimal, while companies with low to medium levels of website development cited financial resources and technical capacity as major constraint factors accounting for over 70% of decisions they made regarding website development and maintenance. As shown in the table above, four companies operating in Kampala paid less attention to the products mix in their choice of the level of website development. Yet studies have revealed that tourist's basket as regards products of choice is very important to take note of when marketing tourism services online (Garzotto *et al*, 2004).

On target clients, information and communication technology (ICT) has played an important role in the development of tourism. For instance, Computerised Reservations Systems (CRS) were among the first applications of IT worldwide in tourism. Since services available and, or consumer goods in the form of physical products, as well as the provision of information to that effect are at the centre of tourism business, ICT plays a very important role (Garzotto *et al*, 2004). Indeed a study by Garzotto *et al* (2004) concurred with the findings of this study; that four companies which had highly interactive websites also had more bookings done online compared to those companies with low to medium levels of website development. In their conclusion, however, Garzotto *et al* (2004) noted that the success of a website also depends on the real physical products involved such as nature attractions, good hotels, adventure, good roads

and skilled workers. Therefore, in combination with their websites, tour companies in Uganda need to come out boldly to defend nature and culture from deterioration and work hand in hand with the training institutions to promote development of skilled labour force for tourism.

Based on the assessment made during the study, levels 1 and 2 website development tended to be common among the small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs). These tour companies included the most recent tourism business establishments. On the other hand, companies with high levels of website development like Uganda Travel Bureau and Pearl of Africa were characterized by higher levels of financial resources and online technical expertise. Unlike SMTEs which appeared to be less endowed resource wise, larger and long established tour companies were more focused on strategic view rather than taking operational issues as was the case with small to medium tour companies. Similar observations were made regarding different stages of tourism development in Australia by Sharma, Carson & DeLacy (2000: 159).

Belch & Belch (2001) also contend that this new approach to tourism products marketing, through online access, is more demanding than the traditional physical outlet market. Besides moving away from traditional physical outlet market, merely having a website does not guarantee business success. Tour companies therefore need to put in more effort and promote appropriate mix of products with user interface which allow easy navigation and interesting experience for visitors. The traditional marketing tools for domestic tourism, which cannot be over emphasized, includes Televisions, Radios, mouth to mouth and modern ones like Social media.

Tourism company's website contents, as regards products being promoted, are a key success factor in internet based online promotion. What this means for a tour company is that, if the content was congruent with the attitudes and values of target travelers, the effect of promotional ads could be greatly enhanced. The online promotional sites may include web interface, background colors, pictures, sound effects, textual content and dynamic techniques that also contribute highly to advertising specific products and services (Wu, 2008).

4.2.3 Level of Websites development and their influence on number of bookings and visitors

The level of website development had significant association with the number of online bookings and actual visitors. Out of 51 respondents, 41 (80.4%) reported that online access was contributing positively to the tourism business success, but the level of success in website use to market tourism products depend on the type of a website and its level of development. For instance, the differences in mean value for the number of bookings done online and visitors were compared by the levels of website development. The results showed (Table 8) that tour companies with high level of website development had significantly higher mean number of bookings and visitors. In fact, to a tour and travel company, having high number of visitors means better income. Thus, compared to companies with low to medium levels of website development as a marketing tool through online access, tour companies with high website development had significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) economic benefits.

Table 8: Levels of website development and tourism business success

Dependent Variable	Levels of website development		
	Mean Difference (I-J)	Mean \pm SD	Sig.
Number of bookings	High (I) - Medium (J)	91.4 \pm 15.0	P<0.001
	- Low (J)	112.8 \pm 15.5	P<0.001
	Medium (I) – Low (J)	21.4 \pm 14.7	P>0.05
Number of visitors	High (I) - Medium (J)	72.4 \pm 9.8	P<0.001
	- Low (J)	78.9 \pm 10.4	P<0.001
	Medium (I) – Low (J)	6.5 \pm 9.6	P>0.05

(Source: Primary data, 2015)

The mean difference was significant at P-value less than 0.05. The mean was calculated statistically in SPSS window by adding all recorded number of bookings and visitors against each level of website and then divided the total value for each level of website development by its respective number of units (respondents) to generate mean. In the end, mean for low level was

subtracted from mean for Medium and High levels of website development, with margin of error given as standard deviation (SD).

Besides the use of online bookings and number of visiting tourists as indicators of the performance of online access, the respondents were also asked to provide their own assessment on the performance of website in tourism marketing. For example, the respondents were asked to attach a value (i.e., very low, low, satisfactory, good and excellent), as indicator of the contribution a company's website make to tourism business. The results of tour company employee's own assessment on performance of online access are given in Figure 3 below.

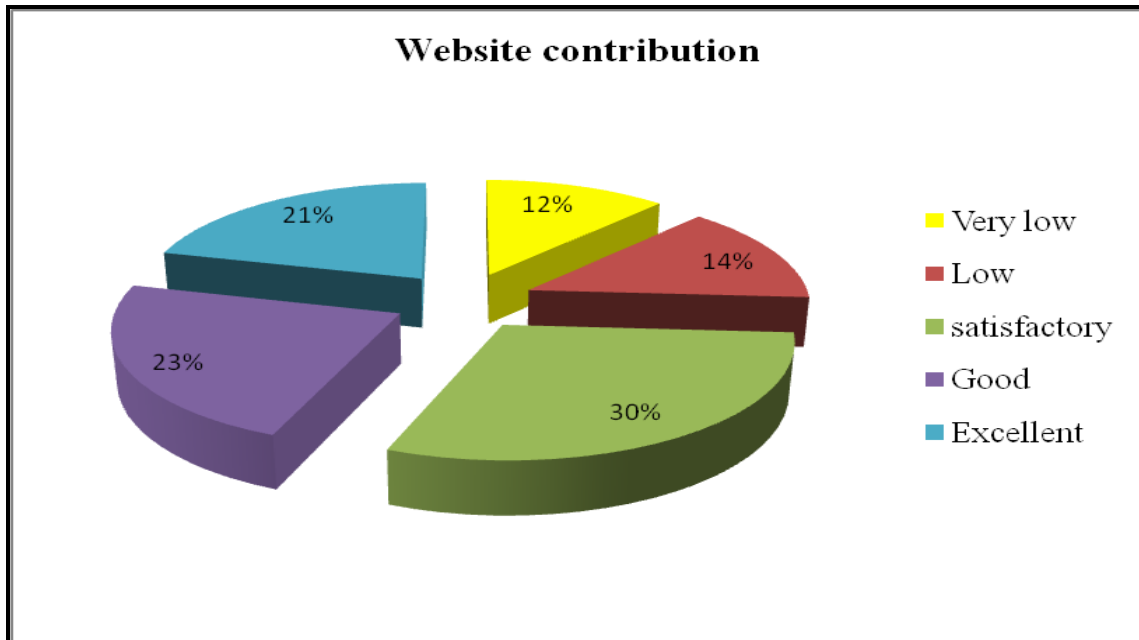


Figure 3: Value of website contribution to the success in tourism business (Source: Primary data, 2015)

From the data presented in Figure 3, only 26% of the respondents showed that their companies were not satisfied with the performance of website use as a marketing tool. This dissatisfaction with the performance of website was consistent with the number of tour companies, 27.9% (12/43), still having static type of website. On the contrary, upto 44% of the respondents viewed the contribution of website to their success in doing tourism business as either good or excellent.

A comparatively higher values attributed to website use for tourism business success was also consistent with 14/43 (32.6%) of websites with high level of development. Thus, website use by clients to select destinations and be able to book online is consistent with the general trend of growth in tourism industry, not only in Uganda (UBOS, 2011) but globally as well (World Bank, 2012). These results are in agreement with the previous projections made by Buhalis *et al.* (2003), Emmer *et al.* (1993), and O'Connor (1999) that the use of internet and online access in particular to promote tourism was experiencing exponential growth worldwide with hotel reservations and airline checking ins expected to exceed 50% (Buhalis *et al.* 2003).

Despite the two different websites being in use at various stages of development, tours companies in Uganda are cognizant to the fact that online sales promotion is the quickest and cheapest way of connecting with customers both locally and abroad. Previous studies have shown that visitors to websites can gain volumes of information about a company's products and services (Belch & Belch 2001:509-510); unfortunately these products and services are not well packaged among local tour companies. Not only can potential customers learn about what the company has to offer, but the company can serve and qualify prospects more cost effectively online. The web can also be used to stimulate trial, and in so doing, customers can determine if the offering satisfies their needs and if so, request personal sales call or make reservations.

However, contrary to the experience of countries with developed economies where websites have been used effectively to enhance and support the selling effort (Belch & Belch 2001:509-510), the experience regarding website use by tours and travel companies operating in Uganda varied significantly, with 27.9% of the respondents indicating that they were not satisfied with the contribution of website.

Porter (2001.), also concurs with this objective finding that the level of website development has a significant influence on the number of visitor bookings. Tour companies that had highly interactive websites also had successful businesses with higher bookings compared to the companies that had low interactive website and those which had no website. He argues that instant reply to customer's feedback is a very crucial part of maintaining loyal customers.

Internet presence will enable tour and activity businesses to extend the brand awareness and reach a larger audience. A website is a display window of the product offering of the company to the World Wide Web, a perfect tool to win customers.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed that most tour companies use website to market their products and services online. However, the levels of website development varied significantly among tour and travel companies in Kampala. This variation was largely attributed to a company's financial resource endowment as well as technical expertise. The other factors contributing to website levels of development were type of clients a company was targeting, as well as the nature of products and services a company was providing. Although all tourism enterprises reported business success, including those without websites which further suggests that online access was not the only marketing strategy tour companies use to get customers, the level of website development had direct relationship with the number of bookings and visitors. Thus, websites which were developed to higher level contributed significantly to the success in doing tourism business in Kampala. In the end, these findings have important implications for improving marketing practices, which might also require policy reforms. For instance, tourism business policy should encourage public-private partnerships that would provide necessary support to address factors constraining online tourism promotion in Uganda.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the study findings which answer the research questions and further raises issues that might need to be considered for growing tourism industry, especially with regard to the types of website and their levels of development against their relative uses for the promotion of tourism products and services in Uganda. In the end, it highlights important suggestions and identifies further areas that might require research focus in the future.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Tour companies operating in Kampala consider website use very strongly in managing their marketing activities. They endeavor to direct online business activities toward a particular target market, the global market, and hence turn to a framework known as the product basket or marketing mix. The study identified five popular products which should constitute a company's marketing mix; at least one of the key products must be in a company's product basket targeted at markets abroad. But the five popular products give a company a good competitive edge, especially in a well designed website which can allow easy navigation during engine search, in order to trigger repeat traffic for better sales online.

Furthermore, during the study, it was noted that some tour companies with websites reported limited number of online based reservations, meaning that of all who visited their websites only a few people were getting back to the companies after visiting the websites to see what they were offering. Therefore, it became apparent that having a website do not guarantee profitability and they may even worsen the competitive position of firms and the attractiveness of an industry, if the products and services are not well packaged to catch the attention of the clients.

In order to satisfy tourism demand and service in long term, tours and travel companies have no choice but to incorporate technology and enhance the interactivity with the market place. It can be fruitful only if certain prerequisites are satisfied. Most important, innovative tourism business process re-engineering and top management commitments are required with a long term planning & strategy and training employee throughout the hierarchy.

5.2 Conclusions

This study was undertaken in an attempt to understanding the use of online access by tour companies to promote tourism products in Uganda. The role of online access was assessed with regards to different levels of website development and they were contributing to the number of bookings done online and actual visitors. The results showed that most tour companies use website to market their products and services, and the levels of website development varied significantly according to a company's financial resource endowment as well as technical expertise. Although all tourism enterprises reported business success, the level of website development also influenced the number of bookings and visitors, and consequently contributed to the success in tourism business. For example, having a website which allowed customers high interactivity, with updates through email, online subscriptions and chat box significantly increased the number of bookings and visitors. These results could help tour companies and policy makers to better develop strategies to enhance and promote online products access to future users, while retaining existing customers. Moreover, it might encourage public authorities to popularize internet use for generating higher local tour and travel related purposes.

5.3 Recommendations

This study suggests that characteristics such as gender and age of foreigners who frequent website search for information, as well as visitors stratified by country of origin, need to be studied. It might be interesting for purposes of planning a more focused online marketing to find variables that most accurately predict decisions tourists make regarding their choice of travel

destination. Making such information available might help tour companies in Uganda to take advantage of different needs of their clients and be able to edge out their competitors in the region.

This study also recommends that tour companies which currently do not have websites should endeavor to develop their own. It was important to do so, because this study revealed that companies with websites were benefiting through online tour and travel services promotion.

From the reasons tour companies gave for creating a website, most companies were driven by the need to meet expectations of the global market by targetting clients abroad. There was no mention of potential local tourists among the targeted market, as focus was placed on international tourists. Therefore, another study is required to investigate factors hindering local tourists' use of tour companies' websites to book online.

Companies without websites were unanimous that they deal successfully with local clients, and only provided services to international visitors who were referred to them by other companies in their network. Thus, future studies need to consider the types of networks that have developed among tour companies in Uganda, with a view to identifying particular types of networks which benefitted both parties most.

Upto 80% of tour companies interviewed mentioned that website development and maintenance was expensive, as it requires a technician to keep re-engineering it in order to suit the dynamic needs of their clients. Thus, only a few financially able companies were updating their websites regularly. Therefore, this study recommends that Ministry of tourism together with government financial institutions should come up with a favorable loaning policy for local tour companies, especially due to the fact that tourism contributes significantly to Uganda's GDP.

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Uganda Martyrs University (UMU)



QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am currently enrolled for a Master of Business Administration (MBA) and I am carrying out research on tour companies in Kampala to enable me complete my degree. The topic of my dissertation is *Effect of Online Access on the Performance of Tour Companies in Uganda: A Case Study of Kampala City Based Tour Companies*. Your response will help us better understand how websites can be leveraged to improve tourism in Uganda. You have been selected to form part of the study. This is to kindly request you to assist me in my data collection by responding to the questionnaire below.

Your response will be kept strictly confidential. The names on the completed questionnaires will not be made available to anyone other than the research team. A summary of the results will be mailed to you after the data are analyzed, should you have indicated that you would like a copy.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Florence Lunyolo (Researcher)

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Gender

a) Male

b) Female

2. Highest Qualification Obtained

a) Diploma

b) Bachelors Degree

c) Masters

d) Others

Specify.....

3. How long have you been working in this tour company?.....

4. Name and location of Tour company

5. Years of operation <5

6-10

11+

6. Tick the types of services you offer (i) Nature tourism (ii) Cultural tourism (iii) Car rentals (iv) Archaeological tourism (v) Hotel Bookings (vi) Adventure (vii) Airline ticketing. Others, Specify.....

SECTION B I: Type of on line access

6. (a) Does your company have a website?

Yes

No

6 (b) If No, how do you market your tour company?.....

.....

6 (c) In terms of efficiency (speed and cost) and output (number of tourist bookings) what method have you found most useful?.....

7 (a) If yes, what type of website is it?

Interactive

Static

7 (b) Explain your answer in 6(c)

above.....

.....
.....

7 (c) Why was the website created?.....

.....
.....

7 (d) What kind of information do you upload on your websites?.....

.....

7 (e) Does the website serve the purpose for which it was created? Explain.....

.....

7 (e). If no, why do you think the website has not met its purpose?.....

.....

8. How often do you review your company's website?

Frequently

Regularly

Occasionally

Never

SECTION B II: Factors influencing level of website development

9. At what level of website development is this tour company?

Low Interactive (Static Pictures)

Medium Interactive (Animation, site maps, FAQs)

High Interactive (Updates by emails, Chart box, News letter subscript)

10. Why has your tour company chosen the level of website development in 9 above?

.....
.....
.....

11(a). Does your level of website development have any influence on the number of tourists who actually visit?

Yes

No

11(b) Does your website suit your customer needs?

Yes

No

12(a). What kind of tourism products do you promote on your website?.....

.....

12 (b). Which of these products are most preferred by tourists?.....

.....

12 (c). Do you secure on line transactions such as:

Bookings

Cancellations

Tracking

13 (a). Do you normally receive any form of complaints from your clients about your website?

Yes

No

13 (b). If yes, what do they complain of?.....

.....

SECTION D: Level of website development and usage by (potential) tourists

14 (a). How many tourists do you receive in a month during the peak season?

.....
.....

14 (b). How many tourists do you receive in a month during the off season?

15. How would you describe the contribution of on line access to the success of this company?
(Place a tick at the most appropriate choice)

A. Very Low (=1)

B. Low (=2)

C. Satisfactory (=3)

D. Good (=4)

E. Excellent (=5)

16. What are the critical success factors you consider when designing a website for tour companies?.....

.....

17. What other factors are contributing to the success of your tour company?

.....
.....

18. List things you consider as indicators of success in the use of on line services to promote tourism business.....
.....

19. Are there challenges you have encountered regarding the use of website to promote tourism in Uganda? List them in order of importance

- i.....
- ii.....
- iii.....

20. What do you think could be done to address the challenges listed above?.....
.....

THANK YOU