

**RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND PERFORMANCE OF THE TOURISM
INDUSTRY IN UGANDA: A CASE STUDY OF UGANDA TOURISM BOARD**

BY

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19/U/GMBA/18858/PD

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH
AND GRADUATE TRAINING IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
THE MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
OF KYAMBOGO UNIVERSITY**

OCTOBER 2024

DECLARATION

I, **Buhanda Ankunda** do hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and it has never been submitted anywhere else for any academic purposes.

Signed.....

Date.....

APPROVAL

This is to confirm that this dissertation has been done under our supervision and guidance and has therefore met the dissertation requirements of Kyambogo University and it is now ready for submission.

Sign..... Date.....

Dr. Madina Nabukeera

Sign..... Date.....

Associate Professor Jacob Oyugi

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family for inspiration to greater heights.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am highly indebted and grateful to my supervisors for their invaluable professional and tireless guidance during the period of this dissertation despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

I thank my dear family for the moral, emotional and financial support they offered me while conducting this research.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ICT	Information and Communications Technology.
MoFED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MoTWA	Minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities
OTA	Online Tourism Agency
POATE	Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo
SET	Social Exchange Theory
Shs	Uganda Shillings
UTB	Uganda Tourism Board

ABSTRACT

This research project was designed to establish the effect of relationship marketing on the performance of UTB. The project was guided by three objectives which included: to examine the effect of communication on the performance of UTB; to establish the effect of customer trust on the performance of UTB; and to investigate the effect of customer participation on the performance of UTB. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a quantitative approach. The research was carried at UTB. A total of 78 respondents were used in the study and were arrived at using Yamane's formula of sample size selection arrived. Simple random sampling techniques was used to generate the sample that was used in the study. The quantitative data was analysed in form descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involved generating and presenting frequencies, means and standard deviations while inferential statistics involved use of correlation and regression analyses. Findings revealed that: there was significant positive relationship between communication and performance of UTB ($r=.557^{**}$, $p= .003$); there was significant positive relationship between customer trust and performance of UTB ($r=.499^{**}$, $p= .000$); and there was significant positive relationship between customer participation and performance of UTB ($r=.349^{**}$, $p= .001$). The study concluded that concluded that; communication has a positive significant relationship with the performance of UTB, thus, it is important for the management of UTB to continue identifying effective means of communication to reach out to potential customers for sustained performance of the organisation; that customer trust has a positive significant relationship with the performance of UTB, thus, it is important for the management of UTB to design deliberate interventions to build and sustain customer trust for sustained performance of the organisation; and customer participation has a positive significant relationship with the performance of UTB, thus, it is important for the management of UTB to design deliberate interventions to attract customer participation in the shaping and delivery of tourism services. The study recommends that: UTB need to adopt communication that is biased to marketing Uganda and that marketing of the country's tourist destinations with their uniqueness should be promoted; UTB and all Uganda tourism sector players should focus on the customers and potential customers and not the product; the government of Uganda and UTB should identify and actualize developing partnerships with the right agents; and lastly the government of Uganda should fully liberalize the tourism sector to attract more players to invest in the sectors.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Uganda, renowned for its diverse and abundant natural resources, presents a significant opportunity to tap into its untapped tourism potential (Tushabomwe-Kazooba, et al., 2020). However, the country's tourism industry struggles to meet global standards, leading to a substantial number of tourists choosing alternative destinations in neighbouring countries (Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI), 2020). This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of relationship marketing in enhancing Uganda's tourism industry performance. The chapter provides a comprehensive overview, including the background, problem statement, research objectives, hypotheses, scope, and conceptual framework. By exploring the role of relationship marketing, the study aims to shed light on its transformative impact in fostering and nurturing relationships, ultimately driving the growth and success of Uganda's tourism sector. This research offers recommendations to bridge the performance gap between the industry and international benchmarks, contributing to the industry's competitiveness and attractiveness. Policymakers, marketers, and industry practitioners in Uganda's tourism sector can benefit from this study by gaining insights into effective marketing strategies and relationship-building practices. Leveraging relationship marketing principles can unlock Uganda's tourism potential, attract more visitors, and contribute to the country's economic growth and sustainable development.

1.1 Background to the study

1.1.1 Historical background

The history of measuring performance dates back to ancient civilizations where rudimentary methods were used to assess the effectiveness of labour and productivity (Hald & Mouritsen,

2018). In the early days, physical outputs and accomplishments were the primary metrics used, such as counting the number of items produced or tasks completed within a certain timeframe. As societies evolved, the Industrial Revolution brought about more sophisticated performance measurement techniques, including time and motion studies to optimize work processes and output. With the advent of the computer age, the digital era introduced data-driven performance metrics, enabling organizations to track and analyse various key performance indicators (KPIs) to make informed decisions and improve efficiency (Hald & Mouritsen, 2018). Today, in the era of big data and advanced analytics, performance measurement has reached unprecedented levels of complexity and accuracy, encompassing a wide range of metrics, from financial indicators to customer satisfaction and employee engagement, empowering businesses and institutions to continuously enhance their operations and achieve greater success.

On the other hand, marketing relationships have a long-standing presence, spanning across the history of trade and commerce. Although marketing practices can be traced back to ancient times, with evidence dating as far back as 7000 B.C., the formal establishment of marketing as a distinct field originated from its integration into the realm of economics during the early 20th century (Lim, et al., 2022). Initially, the focus of marketing was primarily on exchanges and transactions. However, the discipline has undergone significant evolution, with an increased emphasis on the establishment and maintenance of enduring relationships. Esteemed scholars such as Kotler Kotler (2023) and Ferrer-Estévez and Chalmeta (2023) have duly acknowledged this paradigm shift within the field, acknowledging the growing importance of relationship marketing in contemporary marketing practices.

During pre-industrial societies, which predominantly relied on agriculture and commerce involving artifacts and art forms, marketers had concerns beyond mere transactions. Their emphasis entailed customer retention, stimulating repeat transactions, cultivating trust, and enabling subsequent business initiatives. The introduction of open-air markets or bazaars during this era aimed to facilitate ongoing business and trade. These markets served as communal meeting places for buyers and sellers and also sought to deter unscrupulous traders from taking advantage of customers without consequences. In Europe, trade privileges and guild were established to restrict opportunistic sellers from participating in the market system (Ogilvie, 2020). Participants in these markets had familiarity and trust in one another (Berasain, 2023), thereby ensuring continuity and security for repeat buyers. As industrialization commenced, marketing practices retained a personalized approach, emphasizing relationship-building and customization.

During the industrial era, a transactional paradigm in their marketing strategies, influenced by the proliferation of massive production and consumption phenomena (Achrol & Kotler, 2022). The primary objective was to stimulate widespread consumption, leading to the prevalence of both personal and impersonal selling methods, supported by advertising and promotional activities. Marketing strategies were geared towards short-term goals, given the competitive environment and market uncertainty that posed risks to the survival of industries. However, some marketers recognized the significance of repeat purchases and brand loyalty, prompting them to explore innovative methods to safeguard their markets. They acknowledged the advantages of targeting specific customer segments and customizing their marketing initiatives to differentiate themselves from competitors (Kotler, 2023),

which resulted in a resurgence of direct marketing and the establishment of enduring consumer relationships.

During the period following industrialization, significant progress was witnessed in the domain of relationship marketing, encompassing both practical implementation and managerial perspectives. Marketers recognized the necessity of augmenting a transaction-centric approach with a customer-focused orientation. Concurrently, certain enterprises initiated the adoption of fresh procurement strategies, including nationwide contracts and principal procurement agreements, prompting significant suppliers to establish important account relationship initiatives (Dold, 2020). The new endeavours facilitated the cultivation of closer and more enduring relationships between buyers and sellers, as customers shifted their emphasis from mere acquisition of products or services to the establishment of enduring connections with suppliers.

Progression in technology emerged as a pivotal catalyst in facilitating the proliferation of relationship marketing particularly within the realm of the service industry. The implementation of advanced electronic and computer-based communication systems not only eased the process of research and development (R&D), but also empowered producers to collect and evaluate comprehensive consumer data using sophisticated databases (Verhoef, et al., 2021). This affordable accessibility to information recorded every interaction with individual customers, empowering producers to attain a more profound comprehension of their clientele.

Starting from the early 1980s, scholars and researchers who have shown interest in industrial marketing and marketing channels have been actively developing models and theories that

revolve around the dynamics between business buyers and sellers. Over a span of about thirty years, relationship marketing has evolved into an extensively recognized discipline, as it exists today (Peters, et al., 2013). The evolutionary trajectory of relationship marketing can be discerned back to its nascent stages in direct marketing and the utilization of databases. Over time, this concept has progressed to encompass a dynamic phase characterized by instantaneous and interactive engagement across a wide array of communication channels. The driving force behind this transformation has been technology, with milestones such as the widespread adoption of home computers in the 1980s, the invention of the applications for accessing and navigating the internet in the 1990s, and the mass popularity of smartphones in the 2010s. While the transitions between these historical periods may not be sharply delineated, there are at least three distinct phases in the history of relationship marketing, each characterized by a technology-driven tipping point.

1.1.2 Theoretical background

1.1.2.1 Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory (SET), derived from the seminal contributions of Homans (1974), holds substantial significance as a conceptual framework within the realm of organizational behavior (Thomas & Gupta, 2021). Its pervasive utilization is evaluated through interactions and connections established between buyers and sellers, positing that the ideology of exchange exerts a profound influence on individuals' receptivity to organizational politics, job satisfaction, and commitment (Ahmad et al., 2023). In shaping interpersonal connections, SET highlights the significance of various multifaceted resources, including information, status, love, money, goods, and services. Thomas and Gupta (2021) argue that despite the possibility of organizational researchers not fully acknowledging these

resources, the SET provides a holistic framework for understanding the complexities of organizational behavior. Accordingly, the establishment of trust and the embodiment of reliability emerge as indispensable facets for effective competition within the global economy and active engagement within specific systems.

Within the framework of SET, commitment and trust are fundamental factors that influence the behavior of exchange partners. These factors serve as catalysts for partners to uphold their investments in the relationship, resist the temptations of appealing immediate alternatives believing that their counterparts will demonstrate integrity in their actions. Within the realm of business partnerships, frequent interactions contribute to the establishment of trust, which entails one party's unwavering confidence in their partner (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). Trust assumes paramount importance in nurturing enduring buyer-seller relationships within the dynamic business landscape (Lambe, Wittmann, & Spekman, 2001). It plays a pivotal role in mitigating risks during the purchasing process by instilling a sense of confidence and reducing uncertainty. A trusted supplier not only diminishes the buyer's concerns regarding unpredictable behavior and search costs but also minimizes risks while delivering value (Porter, 2018). Similarly, information conveyed by a trusted entity holds greater worth and is regarded as more reliable.

In the domain of interorganizational relationships, commitment assumes a pivotal role and exhibits a close association with loyalty. It encompasses the willingness to uphold a relationship and resist the allure of switching partners. In the organizational domain, commitment encompasses an individual's profound identification and active engagement with a specific entity. This facet has garnered considerable attention from both practitioners

and scholars due to its predictive capacity concerning significant organizational outcomes, such as turnover, absenteeism, and punctuality. In related literature, Ahmad et al. (2023) acknowledge customer commitment as a multifaceted construct encompassing affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. These dimensions encompass the emotional connection to the organization, the perceived consequences of ending the relationship, and the sense of responsibility to uphold the connection, respectively.

1.1.2.1 Hierarchy of effect model

The current study was also guided by Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) model known as the Hierarchy of Effect, which provides insights into the impact of different perspectives on individual conduct across the stages of pre-purchase and purchase. This model examines how consumers perceive and process information stimuli and utilize them to respond to various factors related to products and product model preferences. In line with this model, consumers demonstrate a systematic response to marketing messages, encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects. The process begins with the awareness of a product and culminates in an actual purchase, exerting a pivotal role in shaping the formulation of efficacious marketing communication strategies that encompass cognition, emotions, and actions.

The choice of this model was based on its capacity to address specific objectives of marketing communication and desired outcomes in terms of marketing performance. It provides insights into how relationship marketing can enhance brand equity and influence customer behaviours, ultimately encouraging favourable actions such as product trials, repeat purchases, and brand loyalty. In the tourism industry, similar to other sectors, consumer decision-making is often depicted as a series of interconnected thinking stages that

unfold progressively over time. Prospective travellers progress through these stages in a sequential manner as they approach the crucial juncture of decision-making concerning their selection of a destination. This sequential process holds considerable significance, as it offers the potential for devising more efficient marketing strategies by accurately anticipating the information requirements of consumers throughout the product lifecycle (Chakravarty & Sarma, 2021).

As highlighted by Chakravarty and Sarma (2021) and supported by marketing logic, establishing a robust buyer-seller relationship involves gradual transformations in the perception of value, trust, commitment, satisfaction, and loyalty. Comprehending the intricate dynamics among these variables is paramount for the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) to enhance its performance, as they serve as foundational elements in fostering strong relationships. Understanding the hierarchical nature of these elements in the process of relationship development would foster deeper comprehension and enable more effective marketing endeavours by identifying the specific focus on each variable at every stage, thereby preventing imbalances in the relations.

Therefore, this research utilized this model as a framework to examine how various perspectives impact consumer behaviour, focusing on the pre-purchase and purchase stages. Furthermore, this research aims to explore the sequential nature of decision-making in the tourism industry, delving into the significance of pivotal elements, including value, trust, commitment, satisfaction, and loyalty, in fostering robust relationships. Thus, it generated valuable insights to inform the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) in implementing highly effective marketing strategies and enhancing its overall performance.

1.1.3 Conceptual background

Numerous scholars have provided diverse definitions and viewpoints regarding relationship marketing but literature that relationship marketing plays a pivotal role in fostering long-term engagement, trust, and mutual value between firms and customers, distinguishing it from traditional transactional approaches. Albérico and Joaquim (2023) highlight that modern relationship marketing involves consistent communication and personalized interactions, ensuring satisfaction, loyalty, and reduced churn, particularly in competitive markets. This view aligns with Nugraha et al. (2022), who stress that companies must anticipate consumer needs through data-driven strategies, reinforcing customer relationships across digital platforms. Nguyen et al. (2020) emphasize the increasing importance of personalized experiences in building trust and maintaining customer engagement throughout the lifecycle, underscoring that strong relationships result not only in repeat purchases but also in brand advocacy. These scholars converge on the notion that the essence of relationship marketing lies in the continuous alignment of trust, communication, and value delivery, which strengthens both business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) interactions. Effective relationship marketing thus requires businesses to focus on long-term retention strategies by enhancing customer satisfaction through tailored experiences, ultimately leading to sustainable growth and improved profitability in dynamic market environments.

Grönroos (1994) and Ndubisi (2007) have identified additional dimensions and strategies in relationship marketing, which encompass promises, conflict management, and communication. Pressey and Mathews (2000) support these approaches and propose incorporating factors such as relationship duration, effective two-way communication,

prioritizing customer interests, a mutual commitment to quality, and employing customer retention efforts in a positive manner. Organizations are expected to make strategic decisions and investments to enable the process of attracting and retaining customers who have the potential for loyalty, often requiring trade-offs and wise decision-making. The literature highlights various factors contributing to the success of relationship marketing. Scholars such as Alrubaiee and Al-Nazer (2010) emphasize the significance of trust and building strong connections, while Gupta and Sahu (2015) underscore commitment, communication, and customer satisfaction. Husnain and Akhtar (2016) further expand on these practices, encompassing conflict management, service quality, and delivering on promises. Trust, communication, commitment, and conflict handling consistently emerge as identified practices among scholars. This study aims to investigate the association between relationship marketing and the performance of the UTB, with a specific focus on communication, customer trust, and customer participation.

Recent studies in relationship marketing identify additional dimensions and strategies, focusing on promises, conflict management, and effective communication as key drivers of customer loyalty. Researchers like Rather, et al., (2021) and Gupta and Sahu (2015) highlight the importance of trust, commitment, and customer satisfaction in relationship building, while Husnain and Akhtar (2016) add conflict management, service quality, and the importance of delivering on promises. These elements are further supported by scholars such as Hennig-Thurau and Hansen (2013), who emphasize relationship duration, two-way communication, prioritizing customer needs, mutual commitment to quality, and customer retention efforts. Overall, the literature suggests that organizations should make strategic investments in attracting and retaining loyal customers, weighing trade-offs to maximize

long-term value. Key practices in relationship marketing, including trust, effective communication, and conflict handling, will guide this study's investigation into the relationship between relationship marketing and the performance of the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), focusing on communication, customer trust, and customer engagement.

While some definitions of relationship marketing focus solely on customer relationships, others take a more inclusive approach, encompassing a wide array of stakeholders—such as producers, sellers, distributors, and additional partners involved in the business process. Wongsansukcharoen (2022) defines relationship marketing as a strategy for creating, maintaining, and nurturing enduring connections with clients, employees, suppliers, community members, shareholders, and other key stakeholders. This approach aims to drive long-term financial success sustainably by delivering lasting economic, social, and environmental value. By fostering trust and loyalty across all stakeholder groups, relationship marketing promotes a balanced value-creation model where each relationship strengthens the organization's foundation for growth and resilience in the marketplace.

The inherently subjective nature of performance has led to a variety of definitions. Supramaniam and Singaravelloo (2021), for example, suggest that organizational performance depends on the extent to which outputs align with objectives and goals, resulting in desired outcomes. Performance assessment often involves examining financial standing, stakeholder value, and benchmarking against similar organizations. Alternatively, Blokland and Reniers (2021) define performance as the attainment of goals that align with an organization's strategic orientation. From this perspective, performance is not simply about achieving outcomes, but about evaluating those outcomes in relation to the intended objectives.

Regardless of the chosen definition, scholars acknowledge that assessing and evaluating the performance is crucial in translating organizational goals into tangible outcomes (Supramaniam & Singaravelloo, 2021). Assessing both qualitative and quantitative performance indicators, such as profitability, customer base, and costs, is a common approach to evaluating performance. Thus, it is imperative for organizations to identify relevant indicators, establish their alignment with company objectives, and recognize the interdependency between these indicators and the actions implemented.

1.1.4 Contextual background

The Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) is a legally established authority under the UTB Act of 1994, entrusted with the task of promoting the tourism industry in Uganda (Uganda Tourist Board, 1994). UTB plays a vital part in marketing tourism by promoting all the diverse products and services within the country and internationally (Uganda Tourist Board, 1994). One of the key responsibilities of authority is formulating and executing marketing strategies, both locally and globally, with the aim of attracting tourists (Uganda Tourist Board, 1994). Moreover, UTB focuses on stimulating home-based tourism, drawing investments to support the tourism industry, and showcasing Uganda's exceptional natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, abundant wildlife, and warm hospitality, earning the reputation as the 'pearl of Africa' (Uganda Tourist Board, 1994).

Over the years, UTB has formulated several tourism marketing strategies to enhance its promotional efforts. These strategies encompass the Draft Marketing Strategy 2011-2016 and the Marketing Strategy 2004-2008 (Uganda Tourism Board, 2014). The execution of the 2011-2016 Marketing Strategy was temporarily suspended when the formulation of the Uganda Tourism Development Master Plan commenced, which was ultimately finalized in

2013 (Uganda Tourism Board, 2014). This comprehensive master plan served as a blueprint for UTB, providing a structured framework for conducting marketing initiatives aimed at bolstering tourism in Uganda.

To effectively market Uganda safaris and tourism offerings, UTB places great importance on fostering cooperation and partnership between governmental and non-governmental entities, both domestically and internationally (Uganda Tourism Board, 2014). UTB has adopted relationship marketing strategies to improve the effectiveness and outcomes of Uganda's tourism sector. The Uganda Tourism Development Master Plan 2014-2024 outlines UTB's comprehensive marketing activities, which include the creation of informative materials such as brochures, DVDs, posters, folders, and branded merchandise (Uganda Tourism Board, 2014). The UTB proactively participates in business promotional events and showcases, arranges familiarization trips, leverages various advertising platforms including traditional print and internet based media, and maintains a comprehensive and user-friendly website (Uganda Tourism Board, 2014).

In line with relationship marketing, UTB has engaged the services of public relations firms since 2014 to promote Uganda on the international stage. These firms, including PHG Consulting, Kamageo, and KPRN, are tasked with enhancing Uganda's reputation as a desirable destination, attracting a higher volume of visitors and investment in the tourism sector (Uganda Radio Network, 2016). The goal is to dispel negative perceptions about Uganda and generate tax revenue and employment opportunities for the local population (World Bank, 2017). In 2019, UTB planned to enlist the services of three additional firms from China, Japan, and the Middle East. On a local and regional level, UTB has formed

partnerships with various private and government entities to create compelling experiences for visitors. The "Tulambule Uganda" campaign, for example, aimed to attract local tourists.

While UTB's marketing efforts have yielded some positive outcomes over the past decade, the results have fallen short of projections and comparisons with neighbouring countries like Kenya and Tanzania. Data from the Annual Tourism Sector Performance indicate a consistent increase in tourist arrivals and revenue. Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities (MoTWA, 2019) reported that Uganda experienced an influx of 1,402,409 international visitors in the financial year 2017/18, resulting in a revenue of 5.3 trillion Shillings (\$1.45 billion). Furthermore, in the subsequent financial year of 2018/2019, the country received 1,505,669 foreign tourists, contributing 5.8 trillion Shillings (\$1.6 billion) to its economy. Nevertheless, the emergence of the Covid pandemic in 2018 significantly impacted the tourism sector.

Nevertheless, UTB has faced challenges in implementing its marketing activities due to limited funding, resulting in incomplete execution of previous strategic plans. Consequently, Uganda faces challenges in building a strong destination image, conducting comprehensive marketing research, and establishing a distinct and recognizable tourism brand on a global scale. Additionally, the country struggles with issues such as inadequate signage for guiding tourists to tourism sites, a lack of tour and travel maps, and insufficient internet-based business for bookings and service payments (Ayikoru, 2018). Hence, this current study will explore how UTB utilizes the principles of relationship marketing to drive organizational performance while addressing the aforementioned obstacles.

1.2 Problem Statement

The tourism sector in Uganda is considered a crucial driver for the country's economic growth and its progression towards achieving middle-income status. The government has recognized the significance of tourism and has increased its budget allocation to unleash the untapped potential of the country's tourism industry (MoFED, 2020). UTB has undertaken various initiatives to promote tourism, including organizing exhibitions, hiring international public relations firms, and hosting expos such as the Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo and the Africa Birding Expo (Ayikoru, 2018). Despite these efforts, the performance of Uganda's tourism industry lags behind that of neighbouring countries like Kenya and Tanzania.

For instance, the number of tourist arrivals in Uganda remains relatively low at 1.8 million, compared to 2.5 million in Kenya and 2.1 million in Tanzania (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2023). According to MTWA (2019), there has been a gradual decline in holiday travel, with the number of registered tourists decreasing from 220,000 in 2016 to 208,000 in 2018, just before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the economy. In 2022, Uganda generated about \$1.6 billion in tourism revenue, significantly lower than Kenya's \$2.4 billion and Tanzania's \$2.6 billion. Additionally, Ayikoru (2018) highlights that Uganda Tourism Board has faced challenges in achieving significant success through traditional marketing strategies despite investing substantial funds. These observations suggest that there may be a gap in the performance of Uganda Tourism Board, indicating the need to explore whether sufficient efforts have been made to implement relationship marketing strategies.

Several academic investigations, such as those conducted by Lim (2016) and Lučić (2020) in Europe, propose that relationship marketing presents a viable and sustainable solution to address the performance challenges confronted by the tourism sector. Nonetheless, it

remains uncertain whether UTB has effectively implemented relationship marketing strategies to enhance the overall performance of Uganda's tourism industry. Hence, the primary objective of this study was to investigate the effect of relationship marketing on the performance of the tourism sector in Uganda. Through an examination of the correlation between UTB's marketing endeavours and the industry's performance, this research aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of the efficacy of relationship marketing in fostering the growth and competitiveness of Uganda's tourism sector.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General objective

The general objective of the above study was to investigate and analyze the impact of relationship marketing on the performance of the tourism industry in Uganda considering the evidence from Uganda Tourism Board.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- i)** To examine the effect of communication on the performance of Uganda Tourism Board.
- ii)** To establish the effect of customer trust on the performance of Uganda Tourism Board.
- iii)** To investigate the effect of customer participation on the performance of Uganda Tourism Board.

1.4 Research questions

- i)** What is the effect of communication on the performance of Uganda Tourism Board?
- ii)** What is the effect of customer trust on the performance of Uganda Tourism Board?

iii) What is the effect of customer participation on the performance of Uganda Tourism Board?

1.5 Scope of the study

1.5.1 Content scope

This study aimed to investigate the influence of relationship marketing on the performance of the tourism industry in Uganda, specifically focusing on evidence provided by the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB). The study assessed relationship marketing as an independent variable, considering its sub-variables of communication, customer participation, and customer trust. Performance, the dependent variable, was evaluated using indicators such as tourist growth, tourism revenues, and the sustainability of the industry. The selection of communication, customer participation, and customer trust as components of relationship marketing is motivated by Uganda's initiatives to engage potential tourists, establish trust through effective communication, and the study sought to determine the impact of these efforts on tourist numbers, economic earnings, and the overall perception of the tourism industry.

1.5.2 Geographical scope

The study was conducted at the UTB Headquarters located at Lugogo House, Plot 42 Lugogo Bypass, Kampala. UTB was selected as the research site because it is specifically responsible for marketing and promoting a wide range of tourism offerings, including various products and services, both within Uganda and internationally. Additionally, UTB plays a critical role in regulating and overseeing the activities of private entities operating in the tourism industry.

1.5.3 Time scope

The study spanned a duration of six years, from 2014 to 2019, in order to capture the significant growth in government investment in the tourism sector and the commencement of the implementation of the 10-year Tourism Development Master Plan, covering the period from 2014 to 2024.

1.6 Significance of the study

The study had academic significance as it provided valuable insights to the research field by investigating the correlation between relationship marketing and the performance of Uganda's tourism industry. By extending the existing understanding of tourism marketing strategies and their influence on industry outcomes, this research established a basis for future scholarly discourse and additional studies in this area.

For policymakers, this study served as a valuable resource, providing evidence-based information that could inform the formulation of effective strategies to enhance the performance of the tourism sector. The findings offered valuable insights into the usefulness of relationship marketing in improving industry outcomes, empowering policymakers to make informed decisions and take actions that support the improvement of the tourism industry in Uganda.

The Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), as the central organization responsible for marketing and regulating the tourism sector, was a direct beneficiary of this study. The findings enabled UTB to assess and enhance their marketing strategies, identify gaps, and devise focused initiatives to optimize their marketing endeavours.

Furthermore, the study's significance extended to the Uganda tourism industry as a whole. The findings held practical significance for industry stakeholders, providing valuable insights into the correlation between relationship marketing and crucial performance indicators, including tourist arrivals, tourism revenues, and sustainability. Armed with this knowledge, tourism businesses in Uganda could adopt effective relationship marketing strategies to attract a higher number of tourists, increase revenue generation, and foster the industry's enduring viability and competitive edge.

1.7 Justification of the Study

Similar to many developing nations, Uganda heavily relies on tourism as a significant economic driver. Over the past fiscal years, the country has achieved substantial earnings, totalling US \$1.45b an equivalent of UGX5.3 trillion in 2017/18 and US \$1.6 billion an equivalent of UGX 5.8 trillion in 2018/19. However, the tourism industry in Uganda faces challenges such as fierce competition from neighbouring countries and the need for substantial investments. To address these obstacles and promote a more sustainable tourism market, relationship marketing has emerged as a potential solution. Nevertheless, there is a deficiency in available literature that explores the impact of the marketing efforts of UTB on the overall effectiveness of Uganda's tourism sector. Hence, this research endeavour strives to address this research gap by investigating the relationship between UTB's marketing initiatives and the overall performance of Uganda's tourism industry, providing valuable insights on the subject matter.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presents the relationship between relationship marketing dimensions—such as customer trust, customer commitment, communication, and conflict

handling—and the performance of the tourism industry, as evidenced by the Uganda Tourism Board's activities.

Relationship marketing (IV)

Tourism Performance (DV)

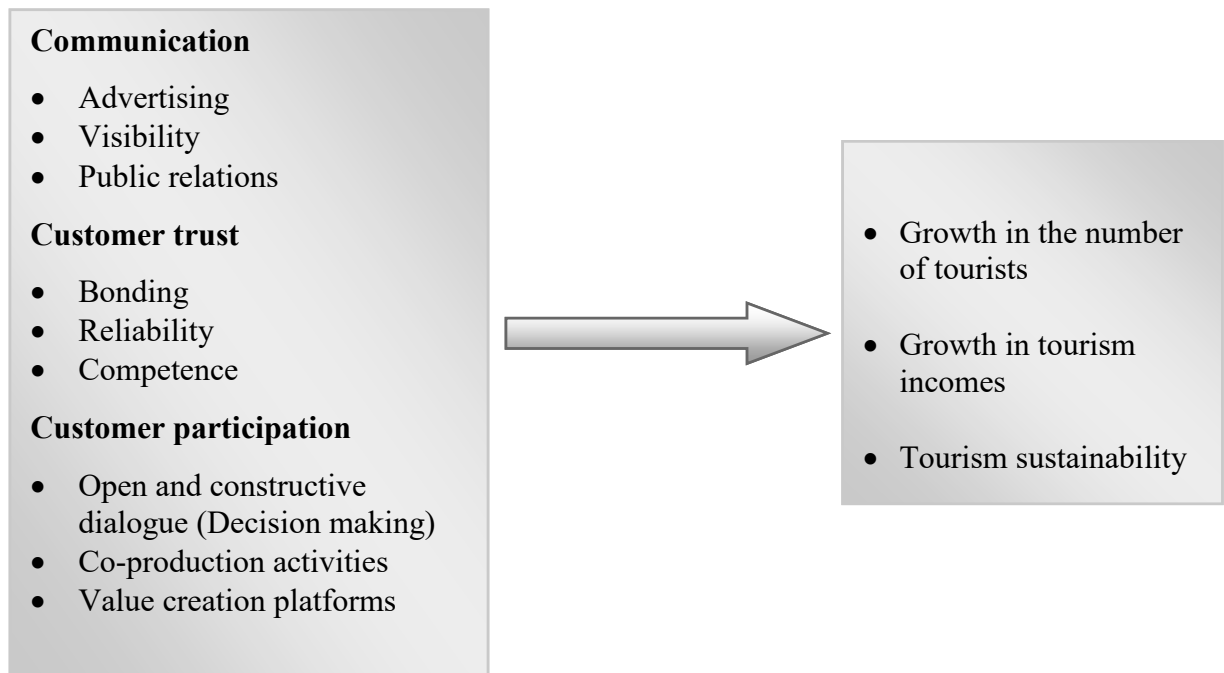


Figure 1.1: The Conceptual Framework

Source: *Adapted from Lucic (2020) and modified by the researcher (2021)*

The conceptual framework proposes that there exists a direct relationship between relationship marketing and the performance of the tourism industry. In this study, relationship marketing is considered as the independent variable, encompassing elements such as effective communication with customers, fostering customer trust in the services, and encouraging customer participation, drawing from the work of Lucic (2020). Conversely, the performance of the tourism industry is measured through indicators such as growth in tourist visits, revenue generated from tourism, and sustainability. The framework assumes that if relationship marketing is executed and managed effectively, it will lead to an

improvement in the performance of the tourism industry in Uganda. Consequently, this study aims to collect evidence from the Uganda Tourism Board to test this assumption.

1.9 Operational definitions of terms and concepts

Communication pertains to the process of exchanging and conveying information, ideas, and emotions between individuals. It encompasses the transmission of messages to a receiver from a sender, involving the sharing of ideas, information, or feelings.

Customer participation refers to the active engagement of customers in the process of producing and delivering a service. It encompasses their involvement and contribution to various activities associated with the service, where they have the ability to influence and shape the service experience.

Customer trust, as defined in this study, refers to the willingness of customers to place themselves in a vulnerable position based on positive expectations regarding the intentions and actions of the other party involved. It involves the belief that the other party will fulfil their commitments and promises, establishing a sense of reliability and dependability in the customer's interactions and transactions.

Marketing strategy in this study was used to mean UTB's or any other organisation's overall game plan for reaching prospective tourists and turning them into tourists.

Sustainable tourism encompasses a holistic approach to the tourism experience that takes into account not only economic considerations but also social and environmental aspects. It emphasizes the importance of balancing the interests of tourists, host communities, and the environment.

Tourism refers to the activity and process of individuals spending leisure time away from their usual place of residence, seeking recreation, relaxation, and enjoyment.

Tourist refers to a person who chooses to temporarily depart from their usual place of residence with the intention of engaging in recreational, relaxing, and pleasurable activities, while utilizing various commercial services available to enhance their experience.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter undertook a thorough review of pertinent literature to investigate the correlation between relationship marketing and organizational performance. The literature review meticulously analysed previous studies, taking into account any contrasting perspectives or opinions. The chapter commenced by providing an overview of the theories that served as the foundation for the study, followed by a comprehensive examination of literature on organizational performance as the dependent variable and relationship marketing as the independent variable.

2.2 Theoretical review

2.2.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The social exchange theory (SET) is widely recognized as a significant conceptual framework utilized by practitioners to comprehend organizational behaviour (Blau, 1964; Cook & Hahn, 2021). SET has been successfully employed to explore participation behaviour in various relationship-building contexts, known as social exchange (Giango et al., 2022).

According to Gergen (2021), perceived social exchange relationships within the SET framework exhibit a lasting alignment, involving ongoing exchanges grounded on diffuse responsibility. According to the investigation by Gergen (2021), social exchange relationships place emphasis on socio-emotional elements like reciprocity and care, where there exists mutual trust and an expectation of reciprocation between the involved parties. However, social exchange involves a holistic investment that encompasses the exchange of

socio-emotional resources and a commitment to nurturing the relationship itself. Gergen (2021) suggests that these attributes may lead to temporary perceived imbalances between contributions and rewards, as one party prioritizes the interests and needs of the other.

Customers who perceive a strong social exchange are more inclined to be motivated by pro-social behaviour, experiencing a heightened sense of duty to reciprocate the received benefits and assistance. This inclination can lead to behaviours that go beyond mere compliance with minimum expectations (Gergen, 2021). It is crucial to acknowledge that the character of a particular exchange relationship is influenced by an individual's subjective interpretation of its significance. According to Gergen (2021), when organizations invest more in the relationship, it creates diffuse obligations in customers. Consequently, customers are influenced to exert greater effort beyond the minimum requirements, not only for future benefits associated with a long-lasting relationship but also as a gesture of appreciation.

SET offers a context for learning the affiliation dynamics between individuals based on the assessment of benefits and costs involved (Ren & Ma, 2021). Individuals strive to optimize their benefits while minimizing costs, seeking an equilibrium between the two (Giango et al., 2022). When examining tourist participation, it is essential to consider it within the context of social exchange theory, which emphasizes the socio-economic aspects rather than solely focusing on economic transactions. SET offers a valuable lens for examining non-economic social behaviours and has found extensive application in studying the intricate dynamics of exchange processes within social relationships. Building upon this foundation, Choi (2015) highlights two key components of social exchange: the dynamic nature of interaction behaviours manifested through repeated exchanges, and the influence of power

dynamics embedded within structural relationships, which shape the capacity to sustain interconnected linkages within the domain of societal interactions.

Within the context of professional interactions, Gergen (2021) has accorded considerable attention to the SET as a powerful framework for understanding interpersonal dynamics. Similarly, Choi (2015) argue that SET proposes the existence of social exchange relationships resulting from specific organizational factors. These relationships are nurtured when organizations demonstrate care towards their clients, leading to favourable outcomes. Nevertheless, Cook & Hahn (2021) draw attention to an important differentiation between social exchange and purely economic exchange, emphasizing the existence of unspecified obligations in social exchange. In contrast, social exchange entails favours and actions that create diffuse future obligations, without explicit negotiation for reciprocation. It is characterized by personal obligations, gratitude, and trust, which are absent in purely economic exchange (Cook & Hahn, 2021). Consequently, social exchanges establish enduring social patterns, as the benefits involved cannot be precisely quantified using a single quantitative medium of exchange.

2.2.2 Hierarchy of effects model

This model provides a conceptual framework that helps understand the impact of information on consumer decision-making regarding the acquisition of products or services. It delineates the progression of consumer learning and decision-making as a result of information received. Although immediate purchases are desirable, companies acknowledge that consumers often go through a longer decision-making process. By employing this model, companies can anticipate and predict consumer reactions to information about a product or service (Santos & Gonçalves, 2021).

According to Colley (1961), it is recommended for managers to utilize a hierarchy of marketing communication objectives to assess the outcomes of marketing communication efforts, instead of solely concentrating on sales figures. In his research, Colley applied this model to evaluate the influence of marketing communication on consumer behaviour and sales volume in the context of post box services. By examining parameters such as awareness, product knowledge, and sales volume, the organization was able to gauge the effectiveness of marketing communication in guiding consumers from a state of unawareness to making an actual purchase. This approach yielded significant insights into the influence of marketing communication on consumer actions and sales outcomes.

Lavidge and Steiner (1961) linked the psychological elements of cognition, affect, and connotation to the hierarchy of effects. However, an immediate challenge arises in distinguishing between cognition and affect, as consumers often criticize attempts to separate them. This challenge stems from two interconnected concerns: firstly, the challenge of precisely defining cognition and affect, which has implications for determining their temporal or causal connections; and secondly, the complexity of employing measures that encompass all aspects of these constructs, which also influences conclusions about their temporal or causal relationships. However, cognition is commonly understood as the "mental activity" that encompasses an individual's knowledge, beliefs, or thoughts regarding a specific aspect of their environment.

Chakravarty and Sarma (2018) examine the differentiation between "effect" and "attitude" concerning emotions and feelings. According to their viewpoint, "effect" primarily pertains to emotions that have a physiological foundation or component. These emotions are deeply ingrained in individuals' experiences and wield significant influence over their behaviour

and decision-making processes. Conversely, companies sometimes employ the term "affect" interchangeably with "attitude." Attitude denotes an individual's overall assessment or judgment of a specific object, person, or situation. Nonetheless, challenges arise in comprehending attitudes based solely on self-reporting. Self-reported attitudes may not necessarily reflect genuine feelings or emotions. Rather, attitudes can be shaped by cognitive processes, wherein individuals make intellectual choices or decisions regarding their preferences. In other words, individuals may express an attitude that aligns with their beliefs or thoughts, rather than reflecting their genuine emotional reaction. This differentiation underscores the intricacy of understanding human behaviour and the difficulties inherent in accurately assessing and interpreting emotions and attitudes. While emotions and attitudes share a close relationship, they are not always interchangeable, necessitating a careful consideration of both cognitive and affective aspects in their evaluation.

The Hierarchy of Effects model is relevant to the study on the Uganda Tourism Board's (UTB) relationship marketing impact, as it offers a structured approach to understanding how UTB's communication efforts—advertising, visibility, and public relations—can shape customer awareness, trust, and engagement. By mapping the stages of consumer awareness, knowledge, and eventual loyalty, this model aids UTB in anticipating and guiding tourist responses throughout the decision-making process. The model's focus on the progression from unawareness to active participation aligns with UTB's goals of enhancing tourist numbers, income growth, and sustainability, providing insights into how targeted communication and trust-building activities contribute to long-term tourism growth.

2.3 Conceptual review

2.3.1 The concept of communication

The concept of communication has been defined and analysed from various perspectives, with scholars offering diverse interpretations that reflect its importance in fostering understanding between parties. Communication, derived from the Latin term "communis," meaning common or shared, emphasizes the role of mutual understanding in the exchange of information. According to De Vito (2019), communication is not just the transmission of a message but a process that involves creating a shared understanding between the sender and receiver. This reciprocal exchange of meaning forms the essence of communication, as the receiver plays an active role in interpreting and responding to the message. Therefore, communication extends beyond the mere act of conveying information to encompass the shared comprehension of that information between participants.

Recent scholarship highlights the significance of communication in business settings, particularly in terms of achieving organizational objectives and promoting effective relationships. Guffey and Loewy (2021) define business communication as a systematic process of sharing information across various platforms, including verbal, written, and nonverbal methods. They argue that effective communication is crucial for enhancing organizational performance, building strong interpersonal relationships, and establishing a positive organizational culture. In this regard, communication serves as the backbone of organizational success, ensuring that all stakeholders remain informed, aligned, and engaged.

In marketing contexts, the role of communication becomes even more pronounced. Kotler and Keller (2020) describe marketing communication as a structured effort by organizations

to inform, persuade, and reinforce the perceptions of consumers regarding their brands. This involves using multiple communication channels, such as digital media, advertising, and direct marketing, to deliver consistent and compelling messages to target audiences. Similarly, Fill and Turnbull (2019) emphasize that marketing communication is an interactive dialogue between brands and their customers, focusing on building and maintaining relationships through ongoing engagement. The interactive nature of communication in marketing highlights its role in creating brand loyalty and enhancing consumer trust.

Furthermore, within sectors like tourism, effective communication plays a pivotal role in shaping customer experiences. Moutinho and Vargas-Sanchez (2018) underscore the importance of communication in tourism marketing, noting that it is essential for conveying key information, building destination image, and managing customer expectations. The ability to communicate effectively with potential tourists, through both digital and traditional channels, is crucial for creating memorable experiences and fostering repeat business. The dynamic and interactive process of communication ensures that tourists receive accurate information about destinations, services, and experiences, which in turn influences their decision-making and overall satisfaction.

Overall, communication is not simply about transmitting information but involves a deeper process of sharing meaning, understanding, and building relationships. Whether in organizational settings or in marketing, the role of communication is fundamental to achieving common objectives, enhancing engagement, and fostering trust. Continued research into communication practices, particularly in the digital age, will further illuminate

its complexities and provide insights into how organizations can leverage communication for greater success.

2.3.2 The concept of customer trust

The concept of customer trust has evolved significantly in recent years, with scholars offering updated perspectives on its definition and role in customer relationships. The term "trust" originates from the German word "Trost," meaning comfort, which ties trust to feelings of security and assurance in business interactions. Akhtar, Ahmed, and Riaz (2022) define customer trust as the confidence customers have that a brand will consistently meet their expectations and deliver a reliable and secure experience. This definition emphasizes the relational nature of trust, which develops through repeated positive interactions and the consistent fulfillment of promises by the brand. Similarly, Palmatier, Dant, and Grewal (2021) explore trust from a psychological standpoint, viewing it as the willingness to rely on another party while embracing vulnerability, based on the belief that the other party will act with good intentions. The complexity of trust is further illustrated by its emotional and cognitive dimensions, which makes defining it challenging.

In terms of measurement, there is considerable debate among scholars regarding whether trust should be viewed through a single-dimensional or multidimensional lens. Some researchers focus solely on reliability, while others argue that a broader approach is necessary, incorporating elements such as competence, integrity, and benevolence (Kantsperger & Kunz, 2020). In relationship marketing, trust is considered a key factor in reducing perceived risks, enhancing customer confidence, and encouraging repeat business. According to Larivière et al. (2022), trust mitigates uncertainties and fosters long-term customer relationships by providing a sense of predictability in the customer-brand

interaction. This is crucial in environments where customers are required to make repeated purchases or commitments, such as in financial services or e-commerce.

In the tourism industry, the concept of trust is especially pertinent due to the intangible nature of services. Tourists often rely on service providers to meet their expectations based on limited prior knowledge or experience. Agag and El-Masry (2017) emphasize that trust in tourism is built through both direct experiences and word-of-mouth, as potential tourists are more likely to trust destinations and services that have been recommended by others. In this context, trust becomes essential in reducing the perceived risk associated with traveling to new destinations. The ability of tourism providers to establish trust through transparency, effective communication, and service reliability is key to attracting and retaining customers.

Despite the growing body of research on customer trust, gaps remain in fully understanding the processes and mechanisms that foster trust across different industries and contexts. Further exploration is needed to uncover the factors that contribute to building and maintaining trust, especially in dynamic business environments where customer expectations are continuously evolving. Addressing these gaps will enable businesses to adopt more effective trust-building strategies, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty over time.

2.3.3 The concept of Customer participation

The concept of customer participation has gained significant attention in recent years, with its importance acknowledged across various domains, particularly in service management and marketing. Scholars define customer participation as the active involvement of customers in service production, delivery, and co-creation processes. Auh, Bell, McLeod,

and Shih (2019) emphasize its interactive nature, defining it as a collaborative process where customers engage with service providers to create mutual value. This participation not only enhances customer satisfaction but also strengthens the relationship between the customer and the service provider. In this sense, customer participation becomes a critical component of co-creation, with direct implications for customer loyalty and retention.

Dong and Sivakumar (2017) contribute to this discussion by categorizing customer participation into three distinct types: mandatory, replaceable, and voluntary. Each of these participation types plays a unique role in shaping service outcomes, efficiency, and customer empowerment. Mandatory participation occurs when customers are required to take part in service processes, such as in self-service technologies. Replaceable participation involves tasks that can either be performed by customers or service providers, while voluntary participation refers to customers' discretionary involvement in improving service experiences. This classification offers a more detailed understanding of how customer participation operates in various service contexts, providing a useful framework for analysing its impact on both service quality and customer experience.

In line with this, Ranjan and Read (2016) focus on the role of customer participation in value co-creation, arguing that when customers take an active role in shaping their service experience, their satisfaction increases significantly. This co-creation process not only benefits customers but also allows service providers to tailor their offerings based on customer feedback, leading to more personalized services. Such participation is particularly vital in industries where customer involvement can directly influence the quality of the service delivered, as seen in sectors like tourism and healthcare. The work of Ranjan and Read illustrates the growing importance of involving customers in service design and

delivery, further emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between customer participation and service outcomes.

Furthermore, the digitalization of services has expanded the scope of customer participation, particularly in online platforms and digital service environments. Wang, Wang, and Liu (2020) examine the influence of customer participation in digital services, highlighting its role in fostering customer engagement and loyalty. As customers increasingly interact with service providers through digital channels, their participation in online communities and feedback mechanisms has become more prevalent. This form of participation strengthens the connection between customers and service providers, leading to improved service innovation and customer loyalty. Digital platforms offer new opportunities for customers to participate in real-time, enabling continuous engagement and a deeper sense of involvement in the service process.

Overall, while different scholars offer varying perspectives on customer participation—whether focusing on its typologies, value co-creation, or digital engagement—the central theme remains consistent: customer participation is integral to shaping service outcomes and enhancing customer satisfaction. The diverse approaches to understanding customer participation reflect its complexity and the need for ongoing research to explore how different types of participation affect service industries. Continued study in this area will not only improve theoretical understanding but also provide practical insights into how organizations can leverage customer participation to drive innovation, improve service quality, and foster long-term customer relationships.

2.4 Empirical review

2.4.1 Communication and performance

Recent research demonstrates that advertising continues to be a powerful tool in relationship marketing within the tourism industry. Mallick (2023) AND Sin, et al., (2020) found that digital advertising, especially through social media platforms, enhances the performance of tourism organizations by fostering direct engagement with potential tourists. George (2021) observed that targeted online ads significantly increased tourist traffic to lesser-known destinations, suggesting that advertising not only boosts visibility but also influences destination choices. Similarly, research by Jain and Rani (2022) highlighted those consistent promotional efforts through online and traditional media improved the competitiveness of tourist destinations, increasing visitor numbers and revenue. These studies confirm that advertising strengthens customer relationships and enhances a tourism organization's ability to attract and retain tourists.

Maintaining visibility is critical for tourism organizations, particularly in today's digital landscape. A study by Kapoor (2022) revealed that destinations with a high online presence, especially on platforms like TripAdvisor and Instagram, experience a significant boost in visitor engagement and bookings. Similarly, Setiawan, et al., (2020) found that search engine optimization (SEO) strategies increased visibility, directly influencing destination awareness and tourist arrivals. In another study, Peltonen (2020) emphasized that visibility through virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies enhanced the customer experience, allowing tourists to explore destinations virtually, which led to higher engagement and visitations. The findings demonstrate that visibility is a key driver of performance, as it enhances tourist awareness and interest.

Effective public relations (PR) play a vital role in shaping the public image of tourism organizations and influencing performance. Research by Huerta-Álvarez, et al., (2020) found that proactive PR campaigns, such as destination branding and sustainability initiatives, contributed to positive media coverage and increased tourist arrivals. Similarly, a study by Syed Azhan, et al., (2021) indicated that well-handled crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic helped tourism organizations recover faster by maintaining public trust and loyalty. Vlahov and Vlahov (2021) highlighted those partnerships with influencers and travel bloggers as part of PR efforts expanded a destination's reach and visibility, particularly among younger audiences. These studies underscore the importance of PR in managing public perception and fostering long-term relationships with tourists, thereby improving overall organizational performance.

2.4.2 Customer trust and performance

Recent studies about customer trust in tourism emphasize its critical role in fostering long-term relationships between organizations and their clients. Trust is foundational for enhancing customer loyalty, satisfaction, and overall business performance (Iglesias, et al., 2020). As organizations strive to compete in a dynamic market, establishing and maintaining customer trust becomes essential. Key elements that mostly contribute to customer trust in relationship marketing include bonding, reliability, and competence.

Bonding is fundamental in building customer trust within tourism organizations. Research by Ortiz-Bonnin, et al., (2022) emphasizes that strong emotional connections through personalized experiences significantly enhance customer loyalty and promote repeat business. In a study conducted by Kapoor (2022), it was found that effective bonding strategies, including engaging customers through social media and personalized

communication, lead to increased trust and advocacy. Additionally, Samuel (2018) highlights that organizations that actively invest in relationship-building initiatives experience higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty, which are critical for competitive advantage. These studies illustrate that bonding is essential for fostering trust and enhancing the performance of tourism organizations.

Recent studies show that reliability is another key element of customer trust that directly affects tourism organizations' performance. According to Joudeh and Dandis (2018), perceived reliability in service delivery correlates significantly with customer satisfaction and loyalty. Their research indicates that reliable service experiences enhance trust, making customers more likely to return. A study by Han, et al., (2019) further supports this notion, revealing that organizations recognized for their consistent and dependable service enjoy higher customer retention rates. Additionally, research by Al-Htibat and Garanti, (2019) emphasizes that reliability in fulfilling service promises is crucial for attracting new tourists through positive referrals. Collectively, these findings highlight the importance of reliability in establishing trust and driving organizational success in the tourism sector.

Research by Uzir, et al., (2021) indicates that demonstrating high levels of competence in service delivery not only enhances customer trust but also leads to increased customer satisfaction. Similarly, a study by Paulose and Shakeel (2022) found that perceived staff competence significantly influences customer confidence in the organization, which is vital for retaining clientele. Furthermore, Papparoidamis, et al., (2019) reveal that organizations recognized for their competence in handling customer inquiries build a positive reputation, further enhancing trust and loyalty. These studies confirm that competence is a foundational

element in relationship marketing, vital for fostering trust and achieving organizational success in the tourism industry.

2.4.3 Customer participation and performance

There is extensive literature on the role of customer participation in relationship marketing and its impact on the performance of tourism organizations. Open and constructive dialogue between customers and service providers is central to building trust and strengthening relationships. Sigala (2018) suggest that effective dialogue fosters transparency, empowering customers to feel valued and involved in decision-making, which enhances customer retention. Sugathan and Ranjan (2019) further elaborate that open communication helps tourism organizations co-create personalized experiences, resulting in increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. Additionally, Kayumovich (2020) argue that platforms such as social media offer unique opportunities for two-way dialogue, where tourists share feedback and suggestions. This continuous communication cycle improves brand perception, deepens customer relationships, and enhances tourism businesses' reputation, ultimately leading to better financial and operational performance.

Co-production activities also play a pivotal role in relationship marketing by involving customers in the creation and delivery of services, which enhances both the quality of the tourism product and customer satisfaction. Lee and Kim (2020) found that customers who participate in designing tourism experiences develop a sense of ownership, which strengthens emotional attachment to the brand. This attachment increases the likelihood of repeat business and long-term loyalty. Steen and Tuurnas (2018) add that co-production not only enhances the overall service outcome but also improves customer commitment, as individuals appreciate the opportunity to influence the service process. Similarly, Nugraha

et al., (2021) argue that tourists actively involved in shaping their own experiences derive more value, resulting in higher satisfaction levels and favourable word-of-mouth, which further promotes the organization and drives future growth.

Value creation platforms are instrumental in fostering collaborative relationships between tourism organizations and their customers. These platforms provide spaces—both online and offline—where customers and businesses can co-create value through shared experiences. Kopalle et al., (2020) emphasize that by engaging customers on such platforms, organizations can tap into customer insights, which helps them innovate and adapt services to meet evolving market needs. Mursid and Wu (2022) suggest that tourism organizations leveraging co-created value platforms build more meaningful relationships with their customers, enhancing customer loyalty and improving organizational performance. Sigala (2018) adds that such platforms enable tourists to exchange experiences and engage in collaborative discussions, increasing their satisfaction and emotional connection with the organization. As customers feel more involved and valued, tourism firms benefit from higher levels of customer retention, referrals, and revenue growth.

Chan et al. (2018) advocate for a shift toward collaborative value creation, emphasizing the need to tailor offerings to meet customer needs. This approach, aligned with service-dominant logic, positions customers as active co-creators of value, particularly in professional services where customer engagement is critical. Chen and Chen (2017) stress that customer involvement in value co-creation benefits both customers and organizations by enhancing satisfaction and fostering strong relationships. While a direct link between participation and repurchase intentions was not found, effective commitment emerged as a key predictor of success.

2.5 Summary of the literature review and knowledge gaps

The synthesis of literature highlights the critical role of communication, customer trust, and customer participation in boosting the performance of tourism organizations. Digital advertising and public relations, particularly through social media, enhance visibility and customer engagement, leading to increased visitor numbers and revenue (Mallick, 2023; Sin et al., 2020). Trust, established through bonding, reliability, and competence, is pivotal for fostering customer loyalty and satisfaction (Iglesias et al., 2020; Ortiz-Bonnin et al., 2022). Additionally, customer participation through open dialogue, co-production, and value creation platforms strengthens emotional attachment to brands and promotes long-term customer relationships (Sigala, 2018; Sugathan & Ranjan, 2019). Despite these findings, gaps remain in the research. There is limited exploration of how emerging technologies like virtual and augmented reality can further enhance communication strategies. Trust-building strategies across different cultural and demographic contexts also require more focused study. Furthermore, while online platforms are well-researched for customer participation, there is insufficient attention given to the role of offline interactions in fostering engagement and loyalty. Addressing these gaps will deepen understanding of how tourism organizations can optimize performance in an evolving market.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive research methodology, including details on the research design, study population, sample size determination, sampling techniques, data collection methods, analysis techniques, presentation of findings, and variable measurement. Its purpose is to ensure transparency, precision, and reliability in the research process, allowing readers to critically assess the study's credibility and the validity of the outcomes.

3.2 Research design

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design combined with a mixed-methods approach, allowing for a comprehensive investigation into the relationship between relationship marketing and organizational performance. A cross-sectional design was ideal for collecting data at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the current state of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2014). This approach was particularly effective in identifying correlations between variables without the need to track changes over time. Quantitative data was gathered through structured surveys to measure variables such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, and organizational performance. Simultaneously, qualitative data was collected via semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, enabling participants to share deeper insights into the contextual factors affecting relationship marketing. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods provided a fuller picture of the research topic, enhancing both the breadth and depth of the findings (Bryman, 2016).

The use of a mixed-methods approach in a cross-sectional design offered several advantages, particularly in the context of organizational research. Mixed-methods research combined the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling the researcher to triangulate

findings and improve the validity and reliability of the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this study, quantitative data provided measurable insights into the relationships between key variables, while qualitative data enriched the analysis by offering contextual understanding and explanations for observed patterns. This methodological integration was well-supported in the literature, as it allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of complex research phenomena, such as the intricate dynamics between relationship marketing practices and organizational performance (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). By employing this design, the study ensured that the findings were both statistically significant and contextually relevant, making them more actionable for practical applications.

3.3 Study population

Based on the human resource records of the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) in 2019, a comprehensive cohort of 158 eligible participants was identified for inclusion in this study, consisting of employees from various departments, including 37 from Public Relations, 38 from Human Resource Management, 44 from Procurement, and 39 from Research and Development. By including employees from these departments, the study aims to gather a comprehensive understanding of the organization's perspective on the interplay between relationship marketing and organizational performance, with a total sample size of 78 participants selected through simple random sampling.

3.4 Sample size and technique

To establish the appropriate sample size for this study, Yamane's formula, as elucidated by Yamane (1967), was employed. This formula accounts for a confidence level of 95% and a probability (p) of 0.5. The mathematical expression for determining the sample size is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$$

In this investigation, the study population was identified to consist of 1,442 individuals, emphasizing the significance of precision with a desired level (e) set at 0.05. The calculation for sample size integration considers the imperative aspect of proportionate representation within the target population. Employing a confidence level of 95% and a probability value (p) of 0.5, the utilization of the formula yields a sample size of 78 employees. This meticulous approach ensures a compelling and representative sample that serves as the foundation for robust statistical inferences.

$$n = \frac{158}{1+158(0.05^2)} = 78$$

Hence, to ensure an appropriate representation of the population and fulfil the desired level of precision, a sample size of 78 employees was carefully chosen for this study. This sample size enabled comprehensive analysis and reliable inferences, fostering the validity and reliability of the research outcomes.

Table 3.1: Target population and sample by sections

No.	Unit/Section	Target pop.	Sample size	Sampling technique
1.	Public relations	37	18	Simple random
2.	Human Resource	38	19	Simple random
3.	Procurement	44	21	Simple random
4.	Research and development	39	20	Simple random
	Total	158	78	

Source: *Primary data, 2020*

3.5 Sources of data

The primary and secondary sources served as the main data collection methods for this study.

Primary data was procured through self-administered questionnaires and interviews,

allowing the researchers to directly obtain responses from the participants. Alternatively, secondary data was derived from diverse sources, including reports and documents from UTB, scholarly and professional journals, textbooks, published literature, as well as dissertations acquired through online databases and library resources. The integration of these primary and secondary data sources ensured a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to data collection, enabling the researchers to obtain a rich and varied dataset for rigorous analysis and interpretation.

3.6 Data collection methods

Data collection methods encompass the intricate techniques employed to procure pertinent information, elucidate research problems, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Within the framework of this study, the researcher embraced two primary data collection methods explained below.

3.6.1 Survey Method

The study employed a methodically crafted self-administered questionnaire as the principal instrument for data collection, ensuring a thorough and appealing approach to gathering information from the participants. This self-administered closed-ended questionnaire technique involved providing respondents with carefully structured written questions, allowing them to provide written responses. As emphasized by Schraeder, Becton, and Portis (2007), this method is widely recognized for its efficacy in collecting quantitative data. By harnessing this approach, the study aimed to elicit specific and well-structured information from the participants, enabling thorough quantitative analysis and statistical interpretation of the acquired data.

3.6.2 Interview Method

In the realm of data collection, interviews emerged as a compelling technique, involving the art of oral questioning directed towards individual or group respondents (Amin, 2005). This methodological approach involved the use of carefully designed questions to elicit detailed verbal responses, enabling an in-depth exploration of the subject matter. In the present study, interviews were harnessed as an invaluable tool to complement the questionnaire method, strategically employed to collect qualitative data. This interactive approach facilitated face-to-face interactions between the skilled researcher and the participants, nurturing an environment conducive to candid and elaborate exchanges of opinions, insights, and perspectives pertaining to the intricate concepts under investigation.

3.7 Data collection instruments

In line with Leung's (2001) scholarly insights, data collection instruments were regarded as vital tools utilized to procure valuable information. For this study, the principal data collection instruments encompassed thoughtfully designed questionnaires and a meticulously crafted interview guide. These instruments were expertly crafted to enable the systematic acquisition of comprehensive and pertinent data.

3.7.1 Self-administered Questionnaire

A questionnaire, encompassing a set of carefully structured inquiries, was utilized to extract valuable information from a substantial participant cohort (Amin, 2005). Comprising five distinct sections, the questionnaire systematically explored demographic characteristics, communication, customer trust, customer participation, and performance. Leveraging pre-formulated multiple-choice questions, this methodological approach offered respondents the opportunity to efficiently select their preferred responses (Sekaran, 2003). Notably, this

method yielded notable advantages, including time efficiency, as participants could readily navigate predefined options, enabling swift data collection within a condensed timeframe (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999).

3.7.2 Interview guide

In this study, interviews served as a valuable approach to obtain comprehensive insights into the study variables (Amin, 2005). The interviews encompassed non-structured questions, facilitating in-depth information gathering. The interview guide was designed to align with the study variables. By employing this method, the study aimed to uncover nuanced insights and enhance the understanding of the research topic.

3.8 Quality control

This study implemented robust quality controls to eliminate errors and ensure reliable and valid research findings. By prioritizing reliability, which refers to the consistency and stability of measurements, and validity, which relates to the accuracy and appropriateness of research methods, the study aimed to enhance the credibility and integrity of its outcomes.

3.8.1 Validity of the study instruments

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research instruments, the study employed content test validity, as recommended by Sekaran and Bougie (2010). Content validity assessed the extent to which the questionnaire's content aligned with the study's intended focus, playing a vital role in establishing the accuracy and reliability of the measurement tools (Wan, 2011). To quantitatively evaluate content validity, the study calculated the Content Validity Index (CVI) using a prescribed formula. By adhering to rigorous validity standards, the study aimed to ensure the robustness and integrity of the research findings.

$$CVI = \left(\frac{n_e - \left(\frac{N}{2}\right)}{\left(\frac{N}{2}\right)} \right)$$

A CVI score above 0.7 is considered acceptable, signifying that the research instrument has successfully passed the test of validity (Slevin, 2002).

A CVI of above 0.7 is acceptable that the tool passed the test of validity as supported by (Slevin, 2002).

Table 3.2: Content validity indices

Variable	Description	No. of Questions	Content validity index
Independent	Communication	7	0.782
	Customer trust	6	0.848
	Customer participation	6	0.79
Dependent	Performance of UTB	6	0.792

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

All the items scored the Content Validity Indices that were above 0.75 illustrating their validity.

3.8.2 Reliability of the study instruments

The attainment of reliable and consistent results was of paramount importance in this research endeavour (Mohamad, Sulaiman, Lai & Mohd Salleh, 2014). To ensure such reliability, the study employed the widely acknowledged Cronbach's alpha measure, which assessed internal consistency across all variables under investigation. Expert opinions were sought to evaluate the internal consistency of the measures, further enhancing the reliability of the study. Additionally, a meticulous pre-testing phase was conducted, involving the administration of questionnaires to a carefully selected subset representing 10% of the total sample size. These rigorous measures were implemented to bolster the reliability and

consistency of the study's measurements and data. By upholding stringent reliability standards, this study aimed to fortify the validity and credibility of its findings.

Table 3.3: Reliability indices

Variable	Description	No. of questions	Cronbach alpha
Independent	Communication	7	0.786
	Customer trust	6	0.827
	Customer participation	6	0.772
Dependent	Performance of UTB	6	0.788

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of all items scored above 0.75 illustrating that they were all reliable.

3.9 Data Analysis

This was a systematic procedure involving the thorough inspection, cleansing, transformation, and modelling of data. Its primary purpose was to unearth valuable and insightful information, support informed conclusions, and facilitate effective decision-making (Coakes & Steed, 2009). As an integral part of the research journey, data analysis empowered researchers to extract significant findings and derive meaningful implications from the collected data, thereby enriching the scholarly discourse and advancing knowledge in the field.

3.9.1 Analysis of quantitative data

The statistical software SPSS version 23.0 was harnessed as a potent tool to facilitate the meticulous analysis of the quantitative data. Employing the time-tested methodology of descriptive statistics, the research aimed to unveil a comprehensive portrait of the respondents, unveiling key background information that enriched the study's context.

Furthermore, the indispensable technique of correlation analysis assumed a central role in elucidating the intricate statistical relationships that existed among the variables under scrutiny, as noted by Kafle (2019), steering the investigation towards achieving its desired objectives. With utmost precision and a commitment to scholarly rigour, all statistical tests were diligently computed at a 2-tailed level of significance, ensuring the authenticity and trustworthiness of the data analysis process. By deftly wielding these robust analytical tools, the study endeavoured to plumb the depths of the research landscape, unveiling profound patterns and eliciting statistically significant findings that augmented the scholarly discourse and advanced the collective knowledge in the field.

3.9.2 Analysis of qualitative data

The analysis of qualitative data in this study encompassed the meticulous application of content analysis, a robust method for extracting meaningful insights from textual data. Key informants' responses were carefully analysed and organized into recurrent themes, capturing the essence of their perspectives. These recurrent issues were presented in the study's results section, aligned with the guiding questions that informed the research inquiry. By employing content analysis, the study unravelled the rich tapestry of qualitative data, highlighted recurring themes, and offered valuable insights into the research phenomenon under investigation.

3.10 Measurement of variables

This study utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods for measuring variables to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the research phenomenon. The quantitative component involved a Likert 5-point scale to assess participants' responses regarding customer satisfaction, loyalty, and organizational performance, with options

ranging from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree, including a neutral midpoint of 3. This scale facilitated the quantification of subjective opinions and enabled statistical analyses to uncover patterns among the variables. Simultaneously, the qualitative component employed content analysis to systematically analyse textual data from key informants gathered through interviews and focus groups. Their responses were organized into recurring themes that aligned with the research objectives, allowing for deeper insights into participants' perspectives. By integrating these approaches, the study combined numerical data with rich qualitative insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between relationship marketing and organizational performance.

3.11 Ethical consideration

In pursuit of the highest ethical standards, this study was conducted with unwavering adherence to ethical and legal considerations, including principles of confidentiality, anonymity, consent, and recognition of contributions, thereby safeguarding the rights and upholding the dignity of the research participants (Artal & Rubinfeld, 2017). Paramount importance was placed on maintaining strict confidentiality throughout the study, ensuring that all gathered information remained confidential and was exclusively used for research purposes. To bolster confidentiality and inspire trust among participants, the research instrument was thoughtfully designed to exclude any spaces for personal identifiers, such as names or telephone numbers. Furthermore, explicit permission was sought from the relevant authority, UTB, and participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Participants who voluntarily chose to engage were provided with the research instrument in a discreet and private setting, ensuring their comfort and preserving the ethical integrity of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study that conducted was to establish the effect of relationship marketing on the performance of Tourism in Uganda considering the evidence from Uganda Tourism Board. The results are presented in accordance with the purpose and the objectives of the study. The first part deals with the response and social background of the respondents. The second part is an empirical analysis of the research results. The response rate was established first and the results are summarized below.

4.1 Response Rate

The response rate was computed using a formula of the number of actual responses divided by the target response and findings are presented in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Response Rate of the Respondents

Population category	Targeted response	Actual Response	Response Rate (%)
Public relations	18	18	100
Management and Administration	19	16	84
Procurement	21	20	95
Research and development	20	20	100
Total	78	74	95

Source: *Field data, 2022*

Table 4.1 above indicates that the response rate for questionnaire was 95%. This came as a result of some respondents either not returning the self-administered questionnaire or fully responding to questions rendering such questionnaires void. The overall response rate of

95% s was good enough for the study since Amin (2005) stressed that a response rate of more than 70% of the respondents qualified the study.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This portion analyses, interprets and presents, findings on the background information of the teachers who participated in the survey. The researcher captured information with regard to their background characteristics and their responses are summarized in the following Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	46	62.2
	Female	28	37.8
	Total	74	100
Age category	Less than 25 years	6	8.1
	25 - 34 years	18	24.3
	35 - 44 years	29	39.2
	45 - 54 years	14	18.9
	55 years and over	7	9.5
	Total	74	100
Department	Public relations	18	24.4
	Management and Administration	16	21.6
	Procurement	20	27
	Research and development	20	27
	Total	74	100
Years in service	Less than 5 years	9	12.1
	6 - 10 years	31	41.9
	11-15 years	21	28.4
	Over 15 years	13	17.6
	Total	74	100

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

From table 4.2 above, the sex of respondents was established and 46 (62.2%) of the respondents that participated in the study were male whereas 28 (37.8%) were female. This

indicates the study was gender sensitive and findings can be used to generalize staffing issues for both sexes.

For the age of the respondents, the majority 29 (39.2%) were in the age bracket of 35 – 44 years, 18 (24.3) belonged to the age bracket of 25 - 34 years, 14 (18.9%) belonged to the age bracket of 50 - 54years, 7 (9.5%) were 55 and above years and remaining 6 (8.1%) were below 25 years. This finding not only reflects the fact that all active age groups were considered for this study making age inclusive.

Regarding organizational departments, all the departments under UTB were represented in this study. 18 (24.4%) were public relations department, 16 (21.6%) were from Management and Administration departments, 20 (27.0%) were from the procurement and the last 20 (27.0%) were from the Research and development department. Since all departments were represented, this study can be used to represent the whole organization.

About the number of years with the current organization, the majority 31 (41.9%) had spent 6 - 10 years, 21 (28.4%) had spent 11-15 years, 13 (17.6%) were over 15 years and the last 9 (12.1%) had spent less than 5 years working their respective organizations. Since the majority respondents had served in this organization for more than 5 years, they possessed sufficient information and experience about the study variables.

4.3 Findings on Study Objectives

In this section, quantitative data are studied, interpreted and produced according to the research objectives which included examining the effect of communication on the performance of Uganda Tourism Board, establishing the effect of customer trust on the performance of Uganda Tourism Board and investigating the effect of customer participation

on the performance of Uganda Tourism Board. The descriptive statistics in form of means and standard deviations were tabulated and presented according to the study objectives.

4.3.1 Communication and the performance of UTB

4.3.1.1 Descriptive statistics on communication and the performance of UTB

The first objective examined the effect of communication on the performance of Uganda Tourism Board. To measure this objective, a number of preconceived structured questions were presented to the respondents. The questions adopted a Likert- 5 points scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2= disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). Responses were aggregated and descriptive statistics produced in form means and Standard Deviations (SD) and presented below;

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics on Communication and Performance of Uganda Tourism Board

Sn	Pre-conceived questions on Communication	Mean	SD
1.	UTB communicates to potential clients	4.61	0.31
2.	There are many communication channels used to reach potential clients	4.33	0.15
3.	The communication channels used to reach potential clients are effective	3.89	1.04
4.	There are different messaging formats used in communication	4.66	0.09
5.	The content of every communication is clear and easy to understand	4.59	0.13
6.	The frequency of communication is adequate	3.91	0.74
7.	Communication is made in different languages to reach many potential tourists	4.82	0.33
	Overall average	4.4	0.4

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

Basing on the adopted scale of 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree, the results in table 4.3 above revealed that the response means for all pre-conceived statements were

above 3.5. With this scale, any data mean of above 3.5 indicates agreement in the question under study. The performance of individual questions is as follows:

The first statement, “UTB seeks customer participation in designing tourist experiences”, with a mean score of 3.81 (SD = 1.19), suggests that respondents generally recognize UTB’s effort to engage customers in crafting their tourism experience, though some views differ. The qualitative findings align with this, with key informants indicating that customer input has shaped UTB’s service offerings. As one respondent explained, “*We believe that involving tourists in designing experiences enables us to create attractions that are genuinely engaging and keep visitors coming back. Their feedback has been essential to building appealing, authentic experiences.*” This triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data highlights how customer participation in designing services strengthens UTB’s ability to develop services that meet customer expectations, thus potentially enhancing customer satisfaction and repeat visitation.

Regarding UTB’s use of platforms for feedback, with a mean score of 3.91 (SD = 0.51), the quantitative data shows a strong perception among respondents that UTB has accessible feedback channels. In qualitative interviews, key informants agreed, noting that UTB has improved its responsiveness through these platforms. One informant detailed, “*Our feedback channels are instrumental for capturing the real-time needs of tourists, which allows us to identify and respond to any areas for improvement almost immediately.*” This close alignment in findings suggests that these platforms are seen as both accessible and responsive, reinforcing UTB’s commitment to continuous service enhancement. The implication here is that effective feedback channels are essential not

only for improving customer experience but also for building a responsive, customer-focused reputation in the tourism industry.

For the accessibility and effectiveness of these channels, the mean score of 3.67 (SD = 1.03) reflects general satisfaction with some mixed responses, hinting at areas for improvement. In qualitative discussions, key informants emphasized the practical challenges UTB faces in providing universally accessible channels, particularly across diverse geographic locations. As one UTB official noted, *“Although we aim to keep feedback channels accessible to all, some remote areas lack the necessary infrastructure, which limits our reach.”* This nuanced finding implies that while feedback mechanisms are valued, further investment in infrastructure could enhance accessibility and thus increase the efficacy of feedback mechanisms across all locations.

On the incorporation of stakeholder views, the high mean score of 4.01 (SD = 0.25) reflects consensus that UTB incorporates tourist and stakeholder feedback into service design. This was echoed in interviews where key informants discussed how this input has improved service quality. A respondent explained, *“Every voice counts, especially in tourism. By considering feedback, we can adjust our offerings to better reflect what tourists and stakeholders want. This strategy has really positioned us as a responsive and dynamic entity in Uganda’s tourism.”* Both the quantitative and qualitative findings imply that UTB’s commitment to feedback integration has a tangible impact on service quality and positively influences UTB’s image, which may lead to increased tourist satisfaction and trust in UTB

The statement that UTB is ready and willing to assist customers, with a mean of 3.94 (SD = 1.13), indicates a generally positive view of customer service, though with some variation. Qualitative insights provided further depth, as key informants emphasized UTB's efforts to be responsive, while also noting occasional resource constraints that can affect consistency. One key informant remarked, *"Our staff members are trained to assist customers to the best of their ability, and we prioritize their concerns. However, sometimes limited resources make it hard to address every issue immediately."* These findings suggest that while UTB's commitment to customer service is evident, there is room for improvement in ensuring that resource limitations do not impede customer satisfaction, highlighting the need for continuous staff support and resource allocation.

The final statement, "UTB always solves problems forwarded by customers", with a high mean score of 4.10 (SD = 0.45), indicates strong agreement among respondents that UTB effectively addresses customer concerns. Key informants reiterated this view, praising UTB's efficient handling of customer issues. One official noted, *"Resolving customer complaints is a top priority. By addressing problems quickly, we demonstrate that we value our customers' experiences, and this builds a stronger bond of trust with them."*

The implications of both the quantitative and qualitative findings are that UTB's proactive approach to problem resolution plays a crucial role in fostering customer loyalty and enhancing UTB's image as a reliable tourism authority, further positioning UTB as a responsive and customer-focused organization in the eyes of both tourists and stakeholders.

4.3.1.2 Inferential statistics and testing of the first hypothesis

4.3.1.2.1 Correlation analysis

The first hypothesis was an alternative and stated “*There is a positive relationship between communication and performance of Uganda Tourism Board*”. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was employed to establish the relationship between communication and performance of Uganda Tourism Board. Pearson correlation coefficient was mainly used because it is highly informative about the degree of linear dependence between two random quantities regardless of whether their joint distribution is normal. The correlation coefficient reveals how strongly the variables are related. The results of the correlation are presented in the table below and are interpreted thereafter.

Table 4.4: Correlation results for the relationship between communication and performance of UTB

		Communication	Performance of UTB
Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.557**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	73	73
Performance of UTB	Pearson Correlation	.557**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	73	73

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

The relationships were measured by Pearson’s correlation rate which ranges between -1 and +1.

With respect to information communication and performance of UTB, the results in table above revealed a significant positive relationship between the two variables that is moderately high ($r=.557^{**}$, $p=0.003$). These results imply that positive change (efficiency) in communication is associated with a positive change in performance of UTB. In

interpreting the moderately high and positive relationship between communication and performance of UTB, a positive change in in communication in terms of advertising, visibility and public relations would significantly affect performance of UTB through aspects like growth in the number of tourists, growth in tourism revenues and increased sustainability in the tourism sector. This change, however, does not exclude other considerations. This positive kind of relationship also implies that the two variables change in the same course. Improvement in the efficiency of communication is related to improved performance of UTB, and poor or inefficiency on communication will lead to poor performance of UTB.

4.3.1.2.2 Regression analysis

Since the correlation was significant, a further analysis was carried out using regression to determine the extent to which communication influenced the performance of UTB and results are summarized below.

Table 4.5: Regression results for the relationship between communication and performance of UTB

MODEL SUMMARY					
Multiple R	0.557				
R Square	0.382				
Adjusted R Square	0.321				
Standard Error	0.12117				
ANOVA	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig F</i>
Regression	1	5.209	5.395	12.976	0
Residual	81	1.013	1.771		
COEFFICIENTS	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Beta.</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Predictor	1.0245		0.406	0.651	0.003
Communication	0.211	0.128	1.106	3.302	0
a. Dependent Variable: Performance of UTB					

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

For communication and performance of UTB, regression analysis was conducted on the dependent variable of performance of UTB and on the as the independent variable of communication. Results of regression analysis indicate a moderate linear relationship (Multiple R = .557). Corrected R square of 0.321 reveals that 32.1% of the variance of performance of UTB is explained by efficiency of communication. This therefore established efficiency in communication as a good predictor for performance of UTB.

When the results were exposed to an ANOVA test, adjusted R square showed a regression of 0.321 and Fishers ratio (F-value = 12.976) ($p < 0.000$) with independent variable. The coefficients of ($\beta = .128$, $t = 3.302$ and p value 0.009) indicate the existence of a significant relationship between communication and performance of UTB. Given that the t was greater than zero at 3.302, the hypothesis which stated that “*There is a positive relationship between communication and performance of Uganda Tourism Board.*” is accepted.

4.3.2 Customer trust and performance of UTB

4.3.2.1 Descriptive statistics

The second objective established the effect of customer trust on the performance of UTB. This objective was measured by preconceived structured questions that were presented to the respondents. The questions adopted a Likert- 5 points scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). Responses were aggregated and descriptive statistics produced in form means and Standard Deviations (SD) and presented below;

Table 4.6: Descriptive Statistics on customer trust on the performance of UTB

Sn	Pre-conceived questions on customer trust	Mean	SD
1.	Uganda is a trusted tourist destination	4.37	0.11
2.	Uganda tourism sector / service providers are honest	3.98	1.27
3.	Uganda tourism sector has competent service providers in the tourism industry	4.21	0.29
4.	Uganda tourism experience meet the expectations of the tourists	4.49	0.24
5.	Majority tourists offer positive ratings after visit	3.99	0.71
6.	There are high incidences return tourists	3.96	0.33
Overall average		4.2	0.5

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

Basing on the adopted scale of 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree, the results in table 4.6 above revealed that the response means for all pre-conceived statements were above 3.5. With this scale, any data mean of above 3.5 indicates a statistical agreement in the question understudy. The performance of individual questions is as follows:

The study established that Uganda is widely regarded as a trusted tourist destination, with a high mean score of 4.37 and a very low standard deviation of 0.11. This quantitative finding aligns with qualitative feedback from key informants who emphasized the importance of customer trust in choosing Uganda as a travel destination. They noted that customer trust builds a sense of security for tourists, crucial in a competitive tourism sector. One informant explained, *“It’s the trust that tourists and potential tourists possess in the destination area that makes a difference in mending or breaking the travel choice.”* This finding implies that trust in Uganda’s tourism industry fosters positive travel decisions, strengthening the

destination's appeal and attracting more visitors through confidence in the safety and reliability of their travel experience.

The study also revealed that Uganda's tourism sector generally upholds honesty, with a mean score of 3.98 and a standard deviation of 1.27. Qualitative findings from key informants supported this, with respondents stressing the importance of honesty as a marketing tool in building trust. They highlighted the impact of UTB's transparent communication, noting that customers value authenticity and trustworthiness over mere product features. A key informant remarked, "*UTB marketing and communication strategies emphasize brand awareness and trust in the brand, achieved through honest communication.*" This suggests that sincerity in interactions and marketing is integral to maintaining strong relationships with tourists, leading to increased loyalty and repeat visits, which are crucial for sustainable tourism growth.

Additionally, the study found that Uganda's tourism sector is perceived as having competent service providers, with a mean score of 4.21 and a standard deviation of 0.29. This was further echoed by key informants, who highlighted the strategic focus of UTB on "people-centered" service quality, prioritizing customer satisfaction and individual needs. Informants expressed that UTB's focus on people—understanding different cultural expectations and adjusting services accordingly—has been essential in providing exceptional customer service. As one respondent stated, "*If you are not keen, you end up brushing with a given grouping of people, and this can make you lose that market.*" The implication is that skilled and culturally aware service providers contribute significantly to customer trust and satisfaction, enhancing Uganda's reputation as a destination that values and respects diverse backgrounds.

The study further established that Uganda's tourism experiences generally meet or exceed tourists' expectations, as shown by a high mean score of 4.49 and a standard deviation of 0.24. This finding was reinforced by qualitative insights from key informants who underscored the authenticity of Uganda's offerings, noting that "seeing is believing" in building customer trust. Key informants highlighted that Uganda's distinct natural resources, rich cultural experiences, and price competitiveness position it favourably, as recognized by reputable bodies like CNN. As one informant shared, "*The actions of UTB to market Uganda tourism have yielded positive results, mainly because the information relayed to tourists is true.*" This high level of satisfaction suggests that Uganda's transparent and genuine marketing approach reinforces visitor trust, enhancing the likelihood of recommendations and repeat visits, essential for the sector's long-term growth.

The study also indicated that tourists frequently provide positive ratings post-visit, reflected in a mean score of 3.99 and a standard deviation of 0.71. Key informants supported this finding, attributing favourable reviews to UTB's commitment to truthful and responsible marketing that aligns with actual tourist experiences. They emphasized that Uganda's diverse offerings—from wildlife and adventure to cultural heritage—contribute to high satisfaction levels. An informant explained, "*Tourists are very selective about places they visit, and the positive ratings reflect Uganda's true value.*" This feedback implies that aligning visitor expectations with their experiences strengthens customer trust, which boosts the reputation of Uganda's tourism sector and encourages continued positive reviews.

Finally, the study highlighted that the rate of return tourists to Uganda is moderate, with a mean score of 3.96 and a standard deviation of 0.33. Key informants concurred, noting that UTB's dedication to honesty and customer care encourages loyalty and repeat visits. They

acknowledged that UTB addresses any shortcomings directly, using them as learning opportunities to enhance customer experience and trust. One respondent observed, “*UTB and its employees take responsibility for any shortcomings and look for the best possible ways to address customer challenges.*” This finding underscores the role of accountability and open communication in fostering long-term trust, leading to increased customer retention and potentially higher return visitation.

4.3.2.2 Inferential statistics and testing of the second hypothesis

4.3.2.2.1 Correlation analysis

The second hypothesis was an alternative and stated “*There is a positive relationship between customer trust and performance of Uganda Tourism Board*”. The Pearson correlation co-efficient (r) was used by the researcher to determine the association customer trust and performance of Uganda Tourism Board. The correlation coefficient helped to reveal how strongly customer trust and performance of UTB were related. The results of the correlation are presented in the table below and are interpreted thereafter.

Table 4.7: Correlation results for the relationship between customer trust and performance of UTB

		Customer trust	Performance of UTB
Customer trust	Pearson Correlation	1	.499**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	73	73
Performance of UTB	Pearson Correlation	.499**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	73	73

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

For customer trust and performance of UTB, results in the table 4.7 above showed that there exists a significant and positive relationship between customer trust and performance of UTB ($r=.499^{**}$, $p= 0.000$ is less than 0.01 at 2-tailed). These statistics show that the relationship is moderately high. This implies that positive change in customers trusting UTB is associated with a positive change in its performance. In interpreting the moderately high and positive relationship between communication and performance of UTB, a positive change in customer trust in terms of bonding, reliability and competence would significantly affect performance of UTB through aspects like growth in the number of tourists, growth in tourism revenues and increased sustainability in the tourism sector. However, this change does not rule out the influence of other factors. As for the positive nature of the relationship, the findings show that both variables change in the same direction which means an improvement in customer trust in UTB and its services is related to improvement in the performance of UTB, and vice versa.

4.3.2.2.2 Regression analysis

A further analysis was carried out using regression to determine the extent to which customer trust influenced the performance of UTB and results are summarized below.

Table 4.8:Regression results for the relationship between customer trust and performance of UTB

MODEL SUMMARY					
Multiple R	0.499				
R Square	0.418				
Adjusted R Square	0.299				
Standard Error	3.53478				
ANOVA	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig F</i>
Regression	1	4.314	6.249	8.1217	0
Residual	81	0.067	0.891		
COEFFICIENTS	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Beta.</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Predictor	1.3376		3.872	1.097	0.000
Customer trust	0.198	0.188	0.675	0.782	0

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of UTB

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

From the table above, regression analysis was conducted between customer trust and performance of UTB. Results indicate a moderate linear relationship (Multiple R = .499). Corrected R square of 0.299 reveals that 29.9% of the variance of performance of UTB is explained by the trust the customers have in UTB and its services. This therefore established customer trust as a good predictor of the performance of UTB.

When the results were exposed to an ANOVA test, adjusted R square showed a regression of 0.299 and Fishers ratio (F-value = 8.1217) ($p < 0.000$) with independent variable. The coefficients of ($\beta = .188$, $t = 0.782$ and p value 0.000) indicate the existence of a significant relationship between customer trust and performance of UTB. Given that the t was greater than zero at 0.782, the hypothesis which stated that “*There is a positive relationship between customer trust and performance of Uganda Tourism Board*” is accepted.

4.3.3 Customer participation and performance of UTB

4.3.3.1 Descriptive statistics

The third objective investigated the effect of customer participation on the performance of Uganda Tourism Board. This objective was measured by preconceived structured questions that were presented to the respondents. The questions adopted a Likert- 5 points scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). To analyze this data, answers were aggregated and descriptive statistics generated in form means and Standard Deviations (SD) and presented below;

Table 4.9: Descriptive Statistics on customer participation on the performance of UTB

Sn	Pre-conceived questions on customer participation	Mean	SD
1.	UTB seeks customer participation in designing tourist experiences	3.81	1.19
2.	UTB has platforms / channels for receiving feedback from tourists and other stakeholders	3.91	0.51
3.	The available channels/platforms for receiving feedback are accessible and effective	3.67	1.03
4.	Uganda incorporates views and suggestions of tourists and other stakeholders in designing and delivering tourism services	4.01	0.25
5.	UTB is always ready and willing to help customers	3.94	1.13
6.	UTB always solves problems forwarded by customers	4.10	0.45
Overall average		3.9	0.8

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

Like the previous objectives, the responses were based on the scale of 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree, the results in table 4.9 above revealed that the response means for all pre-conceived statements were above 3.5. With this scale, any data mean of above 3.5 indicates a statistical agreement in the question understudy. The performance of individual questions is as follows:

The study established that UTB seeks customer participation in designing tourist experiences, reflected in a mean score of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 1.19. This indicates that respondents generally agree that UTB is proactive in involving customers in developing tourism offerings. The qualitative findings supported this result, with the majority of key informants noting that UTB collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders, including tourists, to ensure their products resonate with the target audience. As one key informant emphasized: *“Here at UTB, we are responsible for designing the tourism packages but we cannot do this alone. First, we are not the final service providers, and tourists know what*

they want. Therefore, we coordinate all the players in the industry and come up with offers that we are going to popularize. And it does not end here. We continuously work with the value chain operators to keep our tourism products competitive and attractive.” This collaborative approach is crucial for fostering customer trust and enhancing UTB's market relevance, as it allows customers to feel directly involved in shaping their experiences.

Additionally, the findings revealed that UTB has platforms or channels for receiving feedback from tourists and other stakeholders, with a mean score of 3.91 and a low standard deviation of 0.51, suggesting a strong consensus among respondents about the effectiveness of these feedback mechanisms. The qualitative findings aligned with this, as key informants mentioned that UTB has implemented a robust Quality Assurance Department dedicated to processing and addressing customer feedback. One key informant stated: *“UTB believes in assisting Ugandan tourism service providers by advising them on aspects related to their work. This cannot be achieved without feedback from service utilizers. That’s why UTB has almost all the channels available open, and views are collected, synthesized, and information passed on to the desired users, both government and private.”* This proactive communication structure ensures that customers’ concerns are systematically addressed, reinforcing UTB's commitment to customer satisfaction and continuous improvement.

Furthermore, respondents rated the accessibility and effectiveness of these channels at a mean score of 3.67, with a standard deviation of 1.03. While this reflects a positive perception, the slight variability indicates that some respondents view UTB's feedback channels differently. Qualitative data confirmed these findings, as most key informants noted that UTB’s diverse communication methods—spanning social media, email, and toll-free numbers—facilitate feedback collection across various customer touchpoints. As one

respondent described: *“Tourism is a labour-intensive industry where minor errors can escalate into costly challenges for both individual service providers and the broader sector. UTB, therefore, strives to minimize disruptions along the entire value chain by fostering seamless interactions between tourists and service providers.”* This implies that UTB’s efforts to ensure accessible communication channels support a higher standard of service delivery, enhancing customer trust in UTB's problem-solving capabilities.

Moreover, the study found that UTB incorporates tourists’ and stakeholders' views and suggestions into service delivery, with a mean score of 4.01 and a very low standard deviation of 0.25, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents on UTB’s commitment to integrating customer feedback. Qualitative responses echoed this sentiment, with key informants stating that UTB’s consultative process aligns with evolving customer needs. One respondent explained: *“We consult various stakeholders before finalizing any tourism packages, ensuring they reflect the latest market trends and customer demands.”* This commitment to stakeholder engagement is essential for maintaining competitive and relevant tourism products, further reinforcing customer trust in UTB’s responsiveness.

Additionally, the findings suggested that UTB is ready and willing to assist customers, with a mean score of 3.94 and a standard deviation of 1.13, showing that respondents generally find UTB to be supportive and approachable. Key informants supported this perception, noting that UTB’s customer service efforts are aimed at providing prompt assistance. A key informant observed: *“Our goal is to ensure that tourists feel valued and supported throughout their journey in Uganda. We strive to address their concerns quickly and professionally.”* This supportive stance is crucial in fostering a positive customer experience, thereby enhancing the perception of UTB as a reliable partner in tourism services.

Finally, the study highlighted that UTB is effective in addressing customer concerns, with the highest mean score of 4.10 and a low standard deviation of 0.45, indicating strong respondent agreement. Key informants agreed, citing UTB’s commitment to problem resolution as a key component of its quality assurance. One informant remarked: *“We see problem-solving as integral to UTB’s success, as tourism relies on delivering a seamless experience. By addressing concerns swiftly, we ensure that customers can focus on enjoying their travels.”* This finding implies that UTB’s efficient problem-solving approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also strengthens its reputation as a responsive and dependable tourism authority, thereby positively impacting Uganda’s tourism sector.

4.3.3.2 Inferential statistics and testing of the second hypothesis

4.3.2.2.1 Correlation analysis

The third hypothesis was an alternative and stated *“There is a positive relationship between customer participation and performance of Uganda Tourism Board”*. To test for the relationship, Pearson correlation co-efficient (r) analysis was adopted. The correlation coefficient helped to reveal how strongly customer participation and performance of UTB were related. The results of the correlation are presented in the table below and are interpreted thereafter.

Table 4.10: Correlation results for the relationship customer participation and performance on UTB

		Customer participation	Performance of UTB
Customer participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.349**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	73	73
Performance of UTB	Pearson Correlation	.349**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	73	73

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

With regard to customer participation and performance on UTB, results also revealed a weak but significant positive relationship between customer participation and performance on UTB ($r=.349$, $p=0.001$ which was less than 0.01) which means that when customers participate in the shaping of tourism services, the performance of UTB increases. This implies that customers having more open and constructive dialogue with UTB, co-producing tourism activities with UTB, creating value creation platforms lead to a change in performance of UTB. Although the relationship is relatively weak, its significant nature is interpreted to mean that a change in customer participation is related to related change in performance of UTB. However, as noted in the first two objectives, this change does not rule out the influence of other factors. Further, the positive nature of this relationship means that both variables change in the same direction such that an increase in the customer participation in the shaping and delivery of tourism services is related to the overall performance of UTB, and vice versa.

Table 4.11: Regression results for the relationship customer entrepreneur participation and performance of UTB

MODEL SUMMARY					
Multiple R	0.349				
R Square	0.261				
Adjusted R Square	0.196				
Standard Error	1.20567				
ANOVA	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig F</i>
Regression	1	5.4736	4.771	6.0067	0
Residual	81	1.2239	1.346		
COEFFICIENTS	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Beta.</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Predictor	1.0106		7.625	1.101	0.000
Customer participation	0.445	2.232	2.552	0.415	0.001
a. Dependent Variable: Performance of UTB					

Source: *Primary Data, 2022*

From the table above, regression analysis was conducted between customer participation and Performance of UTB. Results indicate a high linear relationship (Multiple R = .349). Corrected/adjusted R square of 0.196 reveals that 19.6% of the variance of performance of UTB is explained by number of customer participating in the in the shaping and delivery of tourism services. This therefore established customer participation as a good predictor for performance of UTB.

When the results were exposed to an ANOVA test, adjusted R square showed a regression of 0.437 and Fishers' ratio (F-value = 6.0067) ($p < 0.001$) with independent variable. The coefficients of ($\beta = 2.232$, $t = 0.415$ and p value 0.001) indicate the existence of a significant relationship between customer participation in the shaping and delivery of tourism services and the performance UTB. Given that the t was greater than zero at 0.415, the hypothesis which stated that "*There is a positive relationship between customer participation and performance of Uganda Tourism Board*" is accepted.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the discussions from findings presented in chapter four, conclusions and recommendations. The study was conducted to establish the effect of relationship marketing on the performance of Tourism in Uganda considering the evidence from Uganda Tourism Board. The discussion and conclusions are made in accordance with the study objectives as below.

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 Communication and the performance of UTB

The findings of this study emphasize the crucial role of advertising in driving the Uganda Tourism Board's (UTB) performance, particularly through digital platforms. Advertising, as shown in recent research by Mallick (2023) and Sin et al. (2020), has evolved to become a pivotal tool for tourism organizations seeking to engage audiences and promote destinations effectively. Digital advertising, especially through social media, allows for targeted outreach, making it possible to attract specific groups of tourists who are likely to have a genuine interest in Uganda's tourism offerings. This approach is evident in UTB's strategy of leveraging digital channels to increase visibility, a method which has likely contributed to positive outcomes in performance metrics such as tourist arrivals and revenues. Additionally, George (2021) underscores the effectiveness of targeted online advertisements in directing tourist traffic to lesser-known destinations, suggesting that such strategic advertising can significantly impact destination choice. This aligns with UTB's use of advertising to showcase a diverse range of tourism sites, enhancing its ability to reach a broader audience while strengthening overall sector growth.

Visibility, another key theme in this study, emerges as a critical driver of success for tourism organizations in the digital era. Kapoor (2022) demonstrates that destinations with prominent online presences, particularly on platforms like TripAdvisor and Instagram, experience substantial increases in visitor engagement and booking rates. This finding supports the notion that online visibility is integral to building tourist interest and sustaining engagement, both of which are essential for the growth of UTB. UTB's focus on enhancing visibility through digital media, therefore, aligns well with this approach. Moreover, Setiawan et al. (2020) found that search engine optimization (SEO) plays a vital role in improving destination awareness by positioning destinations higher in search results. For UTB, utilizing SEO strategies has likely strengthened its online presence, making it more accessible to prospective tourists and enhancing the board's ability to attract visitors. These efforts in visibility contribute to building UTB's brand as a premier tourism destination, which directly supports increased tourist arrivals and sector resilience.

Public relations (PR) also play an indispensable role in influencing UTB's performance, particularly in establishing and maintaining a positive public image. Research by Huerta-Álvarez et al. (2020) indicates that well-executed PR campaigns, including destination branding and sustainability initiatives, lead to increased positive media coverage and tourist arrivals. This aligns with UTB's focus on promoting Uganda as a sustainable, attractive destination. Additionally, studies by Syed Azhan et al. (2021) demonstrate the importance of effective crisis communication in maintaining public trust, particularly during global challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. During such periods, UTB's PR efforts aimed at portraying Uganda as a safe and welcoming destination were essential in sustaining public confidence and ensuring a quicker recovery. This demonstrates the role of PR in building a

strong reputation, enhancing credibility, and supporting UTB's long-term success. By focusing on strategic PR efforts that highlight both safety and sustainability, UTB has effectively reinforced its image and attracted a wider array of tourists, which has positively impacted its performance.

The findings illustrate the interconnected roles of advertising, visibility, and public relations in enhancing UTB's performance. The integration of these communication strategies not only positions UTB competitively within the tourism sector but also reinforces its resilience and appeal to diverse tourist demographics. Studies by Jain and Rani (2022) further confirm that consistent promotional efforts, spanning both digital and traditional media, improve tourism competitiveness by increasing visitor numbers and generating higher revenue. Furthermore, Vlahov and Vlahov (2021) highlight the effectiveness of influencers and travel bloggers in expanding destination reach, particularly among younger travellers, underscoring the importance of innovative PR tactics. Collectively, these elements contribute to a holistic communication strategy that supports UTB's ongoing efforts to maintain visibility, engage tourists effectively, and build a sustainable tourism industry.

5.1.2 Customer trust and performance of UTB

The findings of this study underscore a significant positive relationship between customer trust in tourism services and the performance of the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), demonstrating that trust is a vital driver of organizational success. Trust is particularly essential in tourism, where customers often face uncertainties in travel planning and decision-making. By fostering trust, UTB can reduce these uncertainties, enhance customer confidence, and encourage repeat visits, ultimately increasing revenue and solidifying customer loyalty. This finding is supported by Iglesias et al. (2020), who underscore trust as

a core element in relationship marketing within tourism, as it contributes significantly to customer loyalty and long-term engagement. The study's results reveal that UTB's efforts to enhance customer trust through dependable and transparent service delivery have positively influenced customer retention and overall organizational performance, resonating with the principles of social exchange theory, which emphasizes reciprocal relationships built on trust.

Bonding is identified as a critical component in building customer trust, as it fosters emotional connections between customers and tourism organizations. Emotional bonding is particularly valuable in tourism, where memorable and personalized experiences can create a lasting impact. Ortiz-Bonnin et al. (2022) found that such bonding through tailored experiences strengthens customer loyalty, a finding mirrored by UTB's strategy to offer customized tourism packages that resonate with diverse customer interests. This approach aligns with Samuel (2018), who posits that cultivating emotional connections with customers provides a lasting competitive advantage by fostering a sense of belonging and exclusivity. For UTB, bonding is essential in creating an experience that goes beyond basic service, encouraging customers to form deep, emotional connections with the brand, which in turn promotes repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth referrals. Although bonding alone cannot guarantee trust, it forms an essential foundation for developing a trusting relationship with customers.

The study also finds reliability in service delivery to be equally important in establishing and maintaining customer trust. Reliable service, as emphasized by Joudeh and Dandis (2018), ensures that customers feel secure in their choices, as consistent service quality builds confidence and reinforces trust. Han et al. (2019) further affirm that reliability is crucial for

customer retention, as dependable service delivery reduces the risk of dissatisfaction and encourages repeat patronage. For UTB, maintaining a consistent standard of service across its offerings is crucial to sustaining customer trust and loyalty. By prioritizing reliability, UTB assures customers that their expectations will be met, which is fundamental to building and preserving a loyal customer base. Reliable service acts as a cornerstone for UTB's growth, as it enhances the likelihood of return visits and long-term relationships with tourists, both of which are essential for sustained performance.

Finally, competence in service delivery emerges as a significant factor in fostering customer trust and enhancing UTB's performance. Competence refers to the ability of UTB and its staff to handle customer needs with professionalism and efficiency. Uzir et al. (2021) note that customers are more inclined to trust organizations that display high levels of competence, particularly in addressing inquiries, challenges, and unique service requests. For UTB, demonstrating competence involves ensuring that staff are well-trained to meet a diverse range of customer needs and maintaining smooth, efficient tourism operations. This study indicates that such competence contributes to building customer trust, as it assures tourists of UTB's capability to deliver exceptional service. As a result, competence strengthens UTB's reputation, fostering a sense of security and reliability that encourages repeat patronage, which in turn positively influences organizational performance.

5.1.3 Customer participation and performance of UTB

The study reveals a weak yet significant positive relationship between customer participation and the performance of the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), emphasizing the role of customer involvement in enhancing tourism experiences and organizational success. Although the impact is modest, involving customers in service creation and decision-making can lead to

improved satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately, better performance. This finding aligns with the work of Sigala (2018), who highlights that an open and constructive dialogue between customers and service providers builds trust and fosters a sense of involvement. For UTB, facilitating open communication in decision-making processes could encourage tourists to feel more connected to their travel experiences. This approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also lays the foundation for a loyal customer base that actively engages with the brand. By enabling open dialogue, UTB can tap into customer insights and preferences, which can shape service improvements and promote sustained customer engagement.

Co-production activities, where customers play an active role in shaping their tourism experiences, also emerged as a critical aspect of customer participation. Sugathan and Ranjan (2019) argue that co-creating personalized experiences through active participation strengthens emotional connections with the brand, enhancing customer retention and bolstering brand loyalty. This is particularly relevant for UTB, as co-production allows tourists to feel a sense of ownership over their experiences, resulting in a deeper emotional attachment to the brand. Lee and Kim (2020) further suggest that customer participation in co-production activities can increase loyalty and repeat visits, as it builds a lasting relationship with the brand. For UTB, implementing strategies that encourage co-production, such as allowing tourists to customize their itineraries, would likely foster a sense of commitment and enthusiasm among travelers, leading to favorable long-term outcomes in both customer loyalty and operational performance.

Value creation platforms play an essential role in facilitating customer participation by providing a structured environment for collaborative interactions. Platforms for co-created value activities, such as online forums, social media channels, and feedback systems, enable

UTB to gather customer insights and adapt its services to changing market demands. Kopalle et al. (2020) argue that these platforms are instrumental in driving service innovation by leveraging customer feedback, which helps align services more closely with customer expectations. For UTB, implementing and maintaining such platforms can deepen customer engagement and foster brand loyalty. Mursid and Wu (2022) also demonstrate that organizations that successfully engage customers in value creation activities often experience increased loyalty and improved performance. Sigala (2018) emphasizes that these collaborative platforms foster a sense of belonging and community, leading to stronger emotional connections with the brand, which ultimately contributes to UTB's competitive advantage in the tourism sector.

5.2 Conclusions

5.2.1 Communication and the performance of UTB

With respect to communication and the performance of UTB, the objective was set to examine the effect of communication on the performance of UTB. The statistical evidence from the correlation and regression findings showed that communication was significantly and positively influencing the performance of UTB. Finding indicated that communication in terms of advertising, visibility and public relations led to growth in the number of tourists, growth in tourism revenues and increased sustainability in the tourism sector. It is therefore concluded that communication has a positive significant relationship with the performance of UTB. Thus, it is important for the management of UTB to continue identifying effective means of communication to reach out to potential customers for sustained performance of the organisation.

5.2.2 Customer trust and performance of UTB

The second objective was in respect to examining the effect of customer trust on the performance of UTB. The statistical evidence from the correlation and regression findings showed that customer trust significantly and positively influenced the performance of UTB. Finding indicated that bonding, reliability and competence were important elements in determine how clients were doing business with UTB It is therefore concluded that customer trust has a positive significant relationship with the performance of UTB. Thus, it is important for the management of UTB to design deliberate interventions to build and sustain customer trust for sustained performance of the organisation.

5.2.3 Customer participation and performance of UTB

In regard to the third objective, it was designed to investigate the effect of customer participation on the performance of UTB. The statistical evidence from the correlation and regression findings showed that customer trust significantly and positively influenced the performance of UTB. Although the influence was established to be relatively weaker compared to communication and customer trust, the elements of having open and constructive dialogue, co-production activities and formation of value creation platform contributed to the success and growth in performance of UTB in its relative capacity. The study concluded that customer participation has a positive significant relationship with the performance of UTB. Thus, it is important for the management of UTB to design deliberate interventions to attract customer participation in the shaping and delivery of tourism services.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Communication and the Performance of UTB

UTB need to adopt communication that is biased to marketing Uganda. Marketing of the country's tourist destinations with their uniqueness should be the order of the day. UTB should utilize the power of the internet and ICT tools to reach out to a large number of potential clients. Marketing should make use of scenic pictures of attractions, writing impressive articles and advising the clients to right reviews on the company page of their great experience throughout their safari. Right communication that involve a lot of marketing and advertisement will create awareness of what makes Uganda a better destination exposing it more to the outside world hence more tourists turn up.

5.3.2 Customer trust and performance of UTB

UTB and all Uganda tourism sector players should focus on the customers and potential customers and not the product. Tourism calls for people from different backgrounds and treating them the same is missing the point. Tourism actors should identify different groups of people, their cultures and beliefs and handle them accordingly. UTB should build capacity of all local tourism actors to understand know that building trust requires a strong focus on one's values, coupled with high regard for customers' feelings and beliefs. Being especially mindful of the impact of each of your interactions with your customers will go a long way to building brand trust, and avoid adding to the list of brands that customers love to hate.

5.3.3 Customer participation and performance of UTB

The government of Uganda and UTB should identify and actualize developing partnerships with the right agents. This could create a significant impact on the travellers who may discover Uganda as their destination. UTB should join a tour operator marketplace where

thousands of OTAs have their distribution channels. This will allow UTB to connect with hundreds of agents instantly. For example, there are many Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) that are used within a specific outbound travel market. Chinese travellers will use one OTA, while travellers from India may opt to book their tours and activities through an OTA that works specifically with their outbound travel market.

The government of Uganda should fully liberalize the tourism sector to attract more players to invest in the sector. UTB should enforce rules and regulations in favour of its citizens and foreigners who have passion in adventure. They should restrict the taxes charged on foreign direct investments in the tourism sector. Foreign tourism investors should not be over charged on the income payments and this will increase their interest to make a safari in Uganda.

5.4 Areas of further research

A study about the effect of information technology on tourism of Uganda. This study is suggested because the adoption of information technology (IT) innovation has influenced the operations and returns of firms globally yet there is a dearth of information on adoption levels of IT in Uganda and the effects of its adoption on firms involved in tourism.

A study about the review of Uganda's tourism's labour requirements and working environment. This suggested study is suggested because potential partners who would want to invest in the ventures cannot have this information as it is lacking. Issues to be addressed may include: jobs allocation by categories, nationality, gender, education levels, age, and regional/ethnic backgrounds; and working conditions for employees in different job positions, including remuneration, working hours, engagement with labour organizations,

discrimination, availability and types of duty leave, health and accident insurance, provision of social amenities, etc. The survey to collect information on labour issues would sample tourism value chain actors.

A study about the factors that influence tourists visiting Uganda is suggested. This study is suggested because there has been concern that most tourists visiting Uganda are either in transit to/from other tourism destinations or have entered the country for other reasons, although yet to be verified. Once the factors are established, it could help to design interventions to change this situation.

5.5 Contribution of the study

The study contributes to empirical evidence concerning significance of the relationship between relationship marketing and performance of UTB. The study found that performance of UTB is improved when management functions of communication, customer trust and customer participation are adequately planned and actualized. The study has therefore filled a gap which previously existed within the implementation of relationship marketing in the tourism industry in Uganda.

5.6 Implication to policy

The study has established the need for the government through UTB and other tourism line agencies to revisit and review the framework under which tourism activities are implemented. Considering the fact that some tourism businesses operate in a localized manner, different districts need to contextualize policies by designing their own ordinances to improve tourism business in their areas.

5.7 Limitations of the study

Major limitations of this research included;

- i.** This research encountered difficulties in accessing relevant documents due to poor record-keeping systems at UTB. The university's online repository was rarely updated, which required the researcher to personally engage with the records department. This process was time-consuming and added complexity to the study.
- ii.** The timing of data collection posed another challenge as it coincided with the end-of-year Christmas holidays. Many respondents were unavailable at their workstations, which made it difficult to gather the necessary sample. Constant rescheduling was required, creating further delays within the study's limited timeframe.
- iii.** The study was also affected by the Ebola outbreak in Uganda, with some areas under lockdown. Restrictions on movement and face-to-face interactions forced the researcher to rely on alternative methods, including online engagements, which increased costs and caused delays in completing the research.
- iv.** A key limitation of the methodology was the use of a cross-sectional design. This approach, capturing data at a single point in time, limited the study's ability to assess how relationship marketing evolved over time or infer causal relationships.
- v.** Additionally, the reliance on self-administered questionnaires may have introduced response bias. Participants might have provided socially desirable answers rather than their true opinions, which could compromise the accuracy and reliability of the data collected.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Questionnaire for UTB staff

Dear teacher,

I am, **Ankunda Buhanda** a student of Kyambogo University carrying out a research on *‘Relationship Marketing and Performance of the Tourism Industry in Uganda: Case Study of Uganda Tourism Board’*. I am requesting for your sincere opinion by asking you to respond to the questions in this questionnaire. Your participation in this study is voluntary. The information you will provide here shall be treated with utmost confidentiality. Please do not write your name and that of your school anywhere on this paper.

Do you agree to participate in this study? (a) Yes (b) No

Section A: Demographic data of the survey respondents

1. Sex: Female Male
2. Age: Below 25 25 - 34 35 – 44 45 – 54 5 and above
3. Section/Department
4. Years in service: 1-5 6 – 10 11 – 15 Above 15

Section B: Responses on Communication

The following table shows questions about communication

Please tick the box you find appropriate.

SN	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	UTB communicates to potential clients					
2	There are many communication channels used to reach potential clients					

3	The communication channels used to reach potential clients are effective					
4	There are different messaging formats used in communication					
5	The content of every communication is clear and easy to understand					
6	The frequency of communication is adequate					
7	Communication is made in different languages to reach many potential tourists					

8. What are commonly used channels of communications to potential tourists

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9. Comment on the overall effectiveness of tourism communication in Uganda

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Section C: Responses on Customer trust

The following table shows questions about customer trust

Please tick the box you find appropriate.

SN	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	Uganda is a trusted tourist destination					
2	Uganda tourism sector / service providers are honest					
3	Uganda tourism sector has competent service providers in the tourism industry					
4	Uganda tourism experience meet the expectations of the tourists					
5	Majority tourists offer positive ratings after visit					
6	There are high incidences return tourists					

7. Comment on the trustworthiness of Uganda as a tourist destination?

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Section D: Responses on Customer Participation

The following table shows questions about customer participation

Please tick the box you find appropriate.

SN	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	UTB seeks customer participation in designing tourist experiences					
2	UTB has platforms / channels for receiving feedback from tourists and other stakeholders					
3	The available channels/platforms for receiving feedback are accessible and effective					
4	Uganda incorporates views and suggestions of tourists and other stakeholders in designing and delivering tourism services					
5	UTB is always ready and willing to help customers					
6	UTB always solves problems forwarded by customers					

7. Comment on the level of customer participation in designing and delivery of tourism services and experiences in Uganda.

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Section E: Responses on tourism performance

The following table shows questions about performance

Please tick the box you find appropriate.

SN	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Sure	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1	Uganda’s tourism has grown in the last 5 years					
2	The number of tourists visiting Ugandan destinations has increased in the last 5 years					
3	Total revenues from tourism sector has grown in the last 5 years					
4	Uganda’s tourism sector is self-sustainable					
5	Local tourism businesses are profitable and growing					
6	Tourism sector ins meaningfully employing a significant number of people and the number is growing					

7. Comment on the performance of the tourism sector in Uganda.

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Appendix II: Interview Guide for Key informants

Introduction:

Hello, my name is **Ankunda Buhanda**, a student at Kyambogo University. I am conducting research on “Relationship Marketing and Performance of the Tourism Industry in Uganda: A Case Study of Uganda Tourism Board (UTB).” Your insights are invaluable to this study, and I would appreciate your participation in this interview. The information shared will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Guiding Questions

1. How does UTB communicate with potential tourists, and which channels are the most effective?
2. What improvements, if any, would you suggest for enhancing UTB’s communication with diverse tourist demographics?
3. In what ways does UTB build and maintain trust with both new and returning tourists?
4. How does UTB ensure that tourism service providers are reliable and deliver quality experiences that meet visitor expectations?
5. To what extent are tourists involved in customizing or designing their experiences, and how does UTB facilitate this participation?
6. How does UTB collect feedback from tourists and stakeholders, and how effectively is this feedback used to improve services?
7. What are the main challenges UTB faces in building strong customer relationships, and how can these be addressed?
8. How would you assess the growth of Uganda’s tourism sector in recent years, particularly in terms of tourist numbers and revenue?
9. What impact does the tourism sector have on Uganda’s economy and job market, and what can UTB do to increase this impact?
10. In your opinion, what are the key areas UTB should focus on to enhance its performance and competitiveness in the tourism industry?

Appendix III: Plagiarism Report