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Original Article

Home-based Tourism Businesses and Destination Sustainability: A Case Study of Kabale Municipality, Uganda

Miriam Amutuheire^{1*}, Njue Michael Murimi, PhD¹ & Nuwe John Bosco, PhD¹

¹ Kabale University, P. O. Box 317 Kabale, Uganda.

* Author for Correspondence ORCID ID; <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-4235-2464>; Email: mamutuhaire@kab.ac.ug

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Home-based tourism businesses (HBTBs) play a critical role in enhancing the sustainability of tourism destinations. The study investigated the relationship between home-based tourism businesses and destination sustainability in Kabale Municipality, Uganda. This research explored the operational characteristics, competitiveness, and influence of government policies on these businesses, examining their contributions to sustainability's economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. The study adopted a purposive sampling technique (Andrade, 2021) and out of the 357 selected samples, 286 presented effectual responses. A cross-sectional research design was adopted, combining qualitative data from surveys and qualitative insights from interviews. The study findings revealed that home-based tourism operations $\beta 0.512$, competitiveness $\beta 0.378$, and government policies $\beta 0.412$ contribute positively to economic, social, and environmental sustainability through employment creation, cultural heritage preservation, and eco-friendly practices. The study results imply that a single unit change in home-based tourism operations, competitiveness, and government policies enhances a destination's sustainability in Kabale Municipality, Uganda. Further, the empirical evidence implied that home-based tourism business operations have the greatest impact on competitiveness and government policies. The study suggested that efforts to enhance tourism sustainability should focus primarily on improving operations and competitiveness, with government policies playing a supportive but still essential role. However, the study also highlighted the challenges related to resource management, infrastructure development, policy support, and community engagement and recommended that there is a need to foster a supportive ecosystem that maximizes the positive impacts of HBTBs on Kabale's long-term destination sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as a critical economic and social phenomenon with significant implications for sustainable development worldwide. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2023), international tourist arrivals reached 960 million in 2022, demonstrating a strong post-pandemic recovery and emphasizing the sector's resilience. The UNSC, (2024) reports that Home-based tourism businesses (HBTBs), which include guesthouses, homestays, and cultural tourism enterprises, represent a growing segment of the global tourism economy, contributing approximately 15% to local economic resilience and community development. Global trends indicate a shift towards more sustainable, community-driven tourism models that prioritize local economic empowerment and environmental conservation. Africa has witnessed substantial growth in tourism, with countries such as Kenya, South Africa, and Rwanda implementing sustainable tourism strategies to enhance community benefits and environmental conservation.

Isingizwe & Cirella, 2023 highlight that domestic and community-based tourism, including home-based tourism businesses (HBTBs), have gained prominence as mechanisms to promote inclusivity and local economic development. In East Africa, tourism has become a pivotal economic driver with significant variations across national and local landscapes. Research by (Hafezi *et al.*, 2023) reveals that the East African region has witnessed a

22% growth in community-based tourism initiatives over the past five years, with a particular emphasis on sustainable and locally-managed tourism enterprises. Studies by (Malik *et al.*, 2024) highlight the unique challenges and opportunities for home-based tourism businesses in the East African region, emphasizing the need for context-specific approaches that balance economic development with environmental sustainability. Uganda's tourism sector has emerged as a critical component of the national economic strategy, contributing approximately 7.7 % to GDP and employing over 667,600 people (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2023). The Uganda Tourism Board's Strategic Plan (2022-2027) explicitly recognizes home-based tourism businesses as a key mechanism for sustainable economic development and community empowerment.

(Sævarsson, n.d.) has emphasized the importance of sustainable and community-based tourism initiatives to diversify tourism offerings and ensure equitable distribution of tourism benefits. The Uganda National Tourism Development Master Plan, (2023) emphasizes the strategic importance of local tourism initiatives, particularly in rural and semi-urban contexts. Government policies have increasingly focused on supporting micro and small-scale tourism enterprises, recognizing their potential to drive inclusive economic growth and preserve local cultural heritage. Kabale Municipality, located in southwestern Uganda, presents a unique case study of the difficult

dynamics of home-based tourism businesses in a local Ugandan context. The area is well known for its vibrant community-based tourism enterprises, which offer authentic cultural experiences and homestay accommodations (Katongole, 2025). A localized study by (Quang *et al.*, 2023) demonstrated that these businesses generate an average of 35% additional income for local households, while simultaneously preserving cultural heritage and promoting sustainable tourism practices. However, despite their potential, HBTBs in Kabale face challenges related to competitiveness, infrastructure, and regulatory support which hinder their contribution to destination sustainability. Despite the growing importance of home-based tourism businesses, significant gaps persist in our understanding of their role in destination sustainability, particularly in the context of Kabale Municipality (Malik *et al.*, 2024).

This study aimed to analyze the economic and social impact of HBTBs in Kabale Municipality, evaluate the sustainability practices of the HBTBs, explore their competitiveness, and the influence of government policies on these businesses, and develop a contextually relevant framework for supporting HBTBs. The research contributed to the broader academic discourse by providing an in-depth empirically grounded analysis of home-based tourism businesses in a specific Ugandan context, offering insights that inform both theoretical understanding and practical policy. The study bridged critical gaps in the existing literature by comprehensively analyzing home-based tourism businesses in a specific local context, offering insights into the intersection of economic development and sustainability and developing a nuanced understanding of community-driven tourism initiatives. The research employed a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative ethnographic research, quantitative economic impact analysis, comprehensive stakeholder interviews, and detailed case study methodology. The study sets a stage for comprehensive exploration of home-based tourism businesses in Kabale Municipality, Uganda by Providing a multi-

level perspective from global to local contexts, aiming to contribute meaningful insights into sustainable tourism development. This study comprises different sections: The Abstract, introduction, literature review, research methodology, conclusions, and recommendations.

Home-Based Tourism Businesses and Destination Sustainability

Home-based tourism businesses have emerged as a major component of the travel industry, offering personalized experiences and making significant contributions to local economies (Mason & Reuschke, 2015). Home-based tourism businesses (HBTBs) are increasingly recognized as significant contributors to sustainable tourism development by promoting responsible tourism, preserving cultural heritage, and generating local employment (Bugonga *et al.*, 2022). These enterprises, which operate from residential premises, provide diverse services, including accommodation, guided tours, cultural experiences, and culinary offerings that play a vital role in enhancing socio-economic and environmental sustainability (Hajian & Kashani, 2021). Studies on HBTBs across different regions highlight their role in sustainable tourism. However, challenges such as inadequate funding, lack of marketing skills, and infrastructural deficiencies persist (UNWTO, 2023). Further studies have shown that integrating small-scale tourism enterprises into mainstream tourism development enhances economic resilience and social cohesion (Bugonga *et al.*, 2022).

Furthermore, they enhance cultural preservation by allowing tourists to engage with indigenous customs and traditions (Mtapuri *et al.*, 2022). However, sustainability challenges such as waste management, resource depletion, and community displacement require strategic interventions (Gössling, 2021). The flexibility of HBTBs allows entrepreneurs to cater to niche markets while fostering authentic and personalized experiences for visitors (Shani *et al.*, 2023). "Sustainable tourism is described as an approach to tourism that takes into

account both current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, while also meeting the needs of tourists, the tourism industry, and host communities (Richardson, 2021)." Destination sustainability involves the holistic tourism experience, addressing economic, social, and environmental concerns while also aiming to improve tourist experiences and meet the host communities' needs (UNWTO, 2020). This should include environmental protection, social justice, cultural diversity, and a vibrant and prosperous economy that benefits all (Richardson, 2021). There is consensus that tourism should be sustainable, but the definition of sustainability can be challenging.

All forms of tourism can be sustainable if properly planned and managed (Hall, 2021). Tourism organizations are increasingly advocating for sustainable practices to reduce negative impacts, such as environmental harm. The literature establishes that HBTBs are essential for destination sustainability through their economic, social, and environmental contributions. However, gaps exist regarding the long-term impact of HBTBs on environmental conservation, the role of digital transformation, and the effectiveness of government interventions in different contexts. Future research should explore these areas to enhance policy formulation and business strategies for sustainable tourism.

The Effect of Home-Based Tourism Business Operations on Destination Sustainability.

Home-based tourism operations (HBTOs) have gained prominence as sustainable alternatives in the tourism sector, offering locally immersive experiences that contribute to the long-term viability of tourism destinations. These operations, including; Eco-lodges, and cultural tourism enterprises, play a crucial role in balancing economic benefits with sociocultural and environmental sustainability (Sixaba & Rogerson, 2023). This literature review examines how HBTOs influence destination sustainability by assessing their economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts. HBTOs contribute significantly to local

economies by creating employment opportunities, promoting local entrepreneurship, and reducing economic leakage (Li *et al.*, 2024). These businesses retain tourism revenue within the community, fostering economic resilience and encouraging investment in local infrastructure and services (Pham *et al.*, 2023).

Research suggests that well-managed HBTOs support inclusive growth by empowering marginalized groups, such as women and indigenous populations, through participation in tourism-related activities (Telfer & Sharpley, 2015). HBTOs promote cultural exchange and heritage preservation by allowing tourists to engage in authentic local traditions, cuisine, and lifestyles (Flores & Costa, 2022). They foster community participation in tourism development, leading to increased social cohesion and identity reinforcement (Saarinen, 2021). However, challenges such as cultural commodification, loss of authenticity, and conflicts between tourists and residents need to be addressed to ensure sustainable socio-cultural outcomes (Dredge & Jenkins, 2023). Environmental conservation is a critical aspect of HBTOs, as many are established in ecologically sensitive areas. Sustainable practices, such as waste management, renewable energy adoption, and responsible water usage, enhance the environmental sustainability of tourism destinations (Gössling & Hall, 2021). Eco-tourism models incorporated within HBTOs help minimize carbon footprints and encourage nature conservation (Mtapuri *et al.*, 2022).

However, concerns remain regarding the carrying capacity of destinations and the need for stringent environmental regulations to prevent resource depletion (Fazal *et al.*, 2022). Empirical studies highlight the positive impact of HBTOs on sustainable destination development. Research in Asia and Latin America demonstrates that well-regulated HBTOs contribute to economic diversification and community empowerment (Tham & Sigala, 2020). In Africa, studies reveal that HBTOs facilitate inclusive growth by

integrating local knowledge and traditional hospitality practices into the tourism sector (Quang *et al.*, 2023). However, challenges such as inadequate financial support, infrastructure deficiencies, and limited digital marketing skills remain barriers to their full potential (Bugonga *et al.*, 2022). The literature underscores the vital role of HBTBs in fostering destination sustainability through economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation. However, gaps remain in understanding the long-term environmental impact, the integration of digital transformation in HBTBs, and the effectiveness of policy interventions across different geographical contexts. Future research should focus on these aspects to enhance sustainable tourism strategies and policy formulation.

Influence of Home-Based Tourism Business Competitiveness on Destination Sustainability

Competitiveness in the HBTB sector is driven by innovation, service quality, and strategic marketing. Research suggests that destinations with a strong network of HBTBs tend to attract more repeat visitors due to the unique and immersive experiences offered (Woyo & Slabbert, 2021). Competitive businesses invest in digital marketing, customer relationship management, and collaborations with local stakeholders to enhance visibility and appeal (Ayikoru, 2015). Moreover, the adaptability of HBTBs to changing tourist preferences contributes to destination resilience, making them crucial for long-term sustainability (Daengs *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, destination branding through HBTBs improves tourism attractiveness and sustainability (Woyo & Slabbert, 2021). Competitiveness in HBTBs is influenced by several internal and external factors. Service quality, personalized guest experiences, and digital marketing strategies enhance market positioning (Camilleri & Camilleri, 2018). Moreover, access to financial resources and training programs improves operational efficiencies (Miralles *et al.*, 2024). Innovation is a key driver of HBTB sustainability and competitiveness.

Research highlights that technological adoption, such as online booking platforms, customer relationship management systems, and AI-driven personalization, significantly enhances market reach and customer satisfaction (Sigala, 2023). Additionally, innovative tourism products, such as experiential and cultural tourism offerings, differentiate HBTBs in competitive markets (Buhalis *et al.*, 2023). Consumer preferences in the tourism industry continue to evolve, with an increasing demand for eco-friendly and culturally immersive experiences. HBTBs that align with sustainable tourism practices and environmental conservation initiatives gain a competitive edge (Sharpley & Telfer, 2023). Furthermore, word-of-mouth marketing, online reviews, and social media engagement play a critical role in shaping consumer choices and HBTB success (Font *et al.*, 2023). Regulatory frameworks, financial incentives, and capacity-building programs significantly influence the competitiveness of HBTBs. Government support in infrastructure development, tax incentives, and sustainability training enables businesses to meet global tourism standards (UNWTO, 2023).

However, challenges such as bureaucratic red tape and inconsistent policy implementation hinder HBTB's competitiveness in many regions (Dredge & Jenkins, 2023). Studies indicate that competitive HBTBs contribute significantly to destination sustainability. In Asia, HBTBs utilise digital marketing (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2022). In Africa, competitive HBTBs have enhanced community development and entrepreneurship despite challenges such as limited financial access (Rogerson, n.d.). Empirical research further highlights those destinations with strong HBTB networks experience increased tourist retention and economic diversification (UNWTO, 2023). The literature demonstrates that HBTB competitiveness is integral to destination sustainability through economic growth, innovation, and responsible tourism practices. However, gaps remain in understanding the long-term environmental impacts of HBTB expansion, the effectiveness of digital

transformation, and cross-regional policy variations. Future research should explore these dimensions to enhance strategic frameworks for sustainable tourism.

The Role of Government Policies in Home-based Tourism and Destination Sustainability

Government policies significantly impact the success and sustainability of home-based tourism businesses (HBTBs). Effective regulatory frameworks provide essential support through financial support mechanisms, regulatory structures, and capacity-building programs which help integrate these businesses into the broader spectrum of the tourism sector and are essential for fostering sustainable operations (Khan *et al.*, 2021); (Sharpley, 2022). Strategic government interventions, such as tax relief, simplified licensing procedures, infrastructure development, access to microfinance, and community empowerment programs, facilitate the growth of HBTBs while ensuring environmental conservation (UNWTO, 2023). However, bureaucratic constraints and inadequate policy implementation hinder the potential of HBTBs to contribute to destination sustainability (Dredge, 2018). Strengthening public-private partnerships can help create a more supportive environment for home-based tourism enterprises (Rastegar *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, infrastructure development, such as improved road networks and digital connectivity, plays a critical role in enhancing the operational efficiency of home-based tourism businesses (Matiku *et al.*, 2020).

However, bureaucratic inefficiencies, inconsistent enforcement of regulations, and a lack of coordinated stakeholder engagement can hinder the effectiveness of these policies (Yu *et al.*, 2023). Collaborative governance models incorporating public-private partnerships and community-driven initiatives have proven to enhance policy implementation and ensure the long-term sustainability of HBTBs (De Ascaniis, & Cantoni, 2022). Furthermore, government policies on environmental sustainability, including waste

management and sustainable resource utilization, directly influence the ability of HBTBs to operate in an eco-friendly manner (Asmelash, & Kumar, 2019). Policies encouraging the adoption of green tourism practices, such as renewable energy incentives and conservation programs, support the sustainability of tourism destinations by minimizing the environmental footprint of HBTBs (Sharpley, 2020). Strengthening institutional support and fostering inclusivity in policy-making can create an enabling environment for home-based tourism businesses to thrive, ensuring their positive contribution to destination sustainability in places like Kabale Municipality, Uganda.

The sustainability of tourism destinations is closely linked to the performance and competitiveness of home-based tourism businesses. These enterprises contribute significantly to economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation. However, their growth and sustainability depend on supportive policies, innovative business strategies, and community engagement. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of HBTBs on destination sustainability, particularly in emerging tourism markets such as Kabale Municipality, Uganda.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional research design was adopted, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component involved structured surveys targeting home-based tourism business (HBTB) owners, while qualitative insights were gathered through interviews. This mixed-methods approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the economic, social, and environmental sustainability aspects of home-based tourism. The study population comprised 5,000 individuals, including 519 registered HBTB owners and operators, 88 local government officials responsible for tourism policy and regulation, and 4,393 customers and tourists engaging with HBTBs (Kabale Municipality, 2020). These stakeholders provided diverse perspectives on the sustainability of home-based tourism in Kabale Municipality. The

sample size was determined using the (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) formula for a finite population, resulting in a required sample of 357 respondents at

a 95% confidence level. Proportional allocation ensured equitable representation across stakeholder categories, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Target Population and Sample Distribution

Category	Population	Sample size
Home-based tourism owners	519	37
Customers/Tourists	4393	314
Local government tourism officials	88	6
Total	5000	357

Stratified sampling was employed to ensure a proportional representation of HBTB owners, tourists/customers, and government officials. Random sampling was used for HBTB owners and customers, while government officials were purposively selected due to their specialized roles in tourism regulation. A combination of primary and secondary data collection methods was utilized to ensure comprehensive data gathering. Structured questionnaires were administered to HBTB owners, tourists, and officials to capture data on business operations, competitiveness, and government policies (Fife-Schaw, 2020). Semi-structured interviews with HBTB owners provided in-depth insights into sustainability practices and associated challenges (Jones *et al.*, 2021).

Secondary data sources, including government reports, academic research, and industry publications, were reviewed to supplement primary data. Structured questionnaires were designed to measure variables related to home-based tourism operations, competitiveness, and government policies (Fife-Schaw, 2020). A semi-structured interview guide facilitated in-depth discussions with key respondents. A checklist was employed to systematically review relevant documents and reports. To ensure reliability and validity, data collection instruments were pre-tested with 10% of the sample (approximately 30 respondents). Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (J. W. Creswell & Creswell, 2017) while inter-rater reliability ensured consistency in qualitative data collection. Authorization for data collection was obtained from the Directorate of Graduate Training

at Kabale University, the Kabale University Research Ethics Committee (KAB-REC), and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). Data collection instruments were pre-tested, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data was systematically recorded and analyzed using SPSS for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis to identify sustainability themes and challenges associated with HBTBs (Wickham, 2019). Ethical approval was secured from KAB-REC and UNCST. Participants' confidentiality was maintained, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Cultural and social norms within Kabale Municipality were respected throughout the study. Challenges encountered included limited time and resources, as well as the reluctance of some respondents to provide information. These were mitigated through purposive sampling, data triangulation, collaboration with local stakeholders, and ensuring confidentiality to encourage honest responses. The study was confined to Kabale Municipality, with recommendations for future research to extend findings to broader contexts.

Data Analysis

To determine the influence of home-based tourism businesses on destination sustainability, an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the collected data,

using statistical methods to assess the relationships among study variables was done. Various tests were conducted to evaluate reliability, data distribution, and significance levels. Key analytical techniques included descriptive statistics, Cronbach's reliability test, multiple regression analysis, and Pearson correlation. Various statistical tests, including descriptive statistics, Cronbach's reliability test, multiple regression analysis, and Pearson correlation, were applied to determine the relationships between the study variables. The data was processed using SPSS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 357 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 296 were returned. After data validation, 286 were deemed valid, yielding a response rate of 80.1%. According to (Mchopa, 2021), a response

rate of 50% is considered sufficient for research purposes. Thus, the achieved response rate is highly satisfactory and indicative of reliable data collection. The study targeted respondents in Kabale District, Uganda, employing purposive sampling techniques. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS software, with variables structured to assess the influence of home-based tourism business (HBTB) operations, competitiveness, and government policies on destination sustainability.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, work status, and length of residence were analyzed to provide context for the study findings.

Table 2: Demographics of Respondents

Demographic variable	Category	Frequency (n=286)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	188	65.7
	Female	98	34.3
Age Group	20-29 years	23	8.0
	30-39 years	146	51.0
	40-49 years	83	29.0
	50 years and above	34	11.0
Education Level	Primary	5	1.7
	Secondary	12	4.1
	Tertiary	215	75.1
	Other	54	18.8
Work Status	HBTB Owners	30	10.4
	Employees	7	2.4
	Guests	241	84.2
	Government Officials	8	2.7
Length of Residence	Below 5 years	220	76.9
	5-10 years	42	14.6
	10-15 years	10	3.4
	15 years and above	14	4.8

Among the 286 respondents, 65.7% were male, and 34.3% were female. The most represented age group was 30-39 years (51%), while the 20-29 years category accounted for only 8%. Regarding

educational attainment, 75.1% held tertiary-level qualifications, indicating a highly educated sample, whereas only 1.7% had attained primary education. Concerning work status, guests constituted the

majority (84.2%), with HBTB owners, employees, and government officials forming a smaller fraction. The majority (76.9%) had lived in their residence for less than five years, whereas only 4.8% had resided there for over 15 years.

The Influence of Home-based Tourism Businesses on Destination Sustainability

The study aimed to assess the impact of home-based tourism businesses (HBTBs) on destination sustainability in Kabale Municipality, Uganda. This section presents a critical discussion of the findings, linking them to existing literature and theoretical perspectives. The discussion focuses on three key areas: the effect of HBTB operations on destination sustainability, the role of competitiveness in sustainability, and the influence of government policies on HBTBs.

Findings revealed that accommodation services (75.7%) dominate the home-based tourism sector, followed by food and beverage services (32.4%) and craft shops (5.4%). This suggests that most HBTBs in Kabale Municipality cater primarily to visitors' basic needs shelter and food rather than cultural or experiential tourism. These findings align with studies by (Saarinen, 2020) and (Rogerson, n.d.) which argue that informal accommodation businesses play a crucial role in expanding tourism infrastructure in emerging destinations. However, the low percentage of craft businesses suggests an underutilization of cultural tourism potential, which could be a key element of sustainable tourism. The study found that 72.9% of HBTBs had been operational for less than ten years, with no businesses exceeding 30 years in operation. This indicates that the HBTB sector in Kabale Municipality is relatively new and still in its developmental stages. This finding is consistent with the global shift toward alternative tourism models, such as Airbnb and homestays, which have grown in response to changing traveller preferences (Guttentag *et al.*, 2025). However, the absence of long-standing businesses raises concerns about long-term sustainability and resilience in the sector.

A striking finding was that all respondents reported receiving over 30 monthly guests, suggesting a high demand for HBTB services. This supports the argument that home-based tourism businesses contribute significantly to the local tourism economy by attracting visitors and supplementing mainstream hospitality facilities. However, the study did not assess seasonal fluctuations, which could affect business stability. Research by (Tolkach *et al.*, 2016) highlights the vulnerability of small tourism enterprises to seasonal demand variations, a factor that may require further investigation in the Kabale Municipality context. Most HBTBs were found to be small-scale, with 86.4% of businesses employing 0–5 workers, often family members or a small workforce. This finding supports previous studies that emphasize the informal and community-based nature of HBTBs (Regmi *et al.*, 2023). While this model provides employment opportunities, it also limits business scalability, which could hinder long-term sustainability. The lack of businesses employing more than 10 people suggests that growth constraints—such as financial limitations and inadequate support systems—are restricting expansion. The most significant challenge reported by HBTB owners was financial constraints (62.1%), followed by limited marketing opportunities (27%). Infrastructure-related issues and regulatory hurdles were less frequently cited, suggesting that economic factors are the primary barriers to HBTB success. Financial difficulties often stem from limited access to credit, lack of investment, and inconsistent income patterns, as observed in studies (Thomas, 2022). The marketing challenge indicates that many HBTBs struggle to reach potential customers, reinforcing the need for digital promotion strategies and better integration into regional tourism networks.

Findings indicated that online travel agencies (48.6%) and social media (29.7%) were the most significant sources of information for guests. This underscores the growing importance of digital marketing in sustaining HBTBs. The lack of influence from local tourism offices suggests

inefficiencies in government-led tourism promotion. Studies by (Koo *et al.*, 2021) emphasize the transformative role of digital platforms in small tourism enterprise marketing, highlighting the need for HBTBs to strengthen their online presence to remain competitive. A majority of respondents (68.5%) perceived their HBTBs as very competitive, while only 8.4% viewed them as not very competitive. This confidence in competitiveness indicates that HBTBs are well-integrated into the tourism market and have strong customer appeal. These findings align with Porter's (1990) Competitive Advantage Theory (Öz, 2019), which suggests that businesses with a clear value proposition such as personalized hospitality and local experiences can sustain a competitive edge. The study identified quality of service (52.7%) and unique product offerings (32.8%) as the primary contributors to HBTB competitiveness. This suggests that personalized experiences and high service standards are critical in differentiating HBTBs from conventional hotels. Price competitiveness (4.5%) and location (9.7%) were less influential, indicating that guests prioritize experience over cost when choosing HBTB accommodations. These findings support research done by (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015), which highlights the shift from price-based competition to experience-based differentiation in tourism. Marketing (55.2%) emerged as the leading strategy for maintaining competitiveness, followed by product development (24.1%) and staff training (13.3%). The emphasis on marketing aligns with previous findings that digital visibility is crucial for

HBTB's success. However, the low adoption of partnerships and collaborations (7.3%) suggests missed opportunities for joint branding and networking, which could enhance long-term competitiveness.

The literature on sustainable tourism (Dwyer, 2022) emphasizes that collaborative marketing efforts can strengthen destination appeal and improve the resilience of small tourism businesses. While the study did not extensively assess government policy impact, indirect findings suggested that policy frameworks have limited influence on HBTB growth. The absence of regulatory hurdles as a major challenge implies a lack of direct government intervention either in support or regulation. This raises questions about whether HBTBs operate in a legal grey area, as observed in studies on informal tourism economies (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2020). Strengthening policy frameworks to formalize and support HBTBs could enhance their contribution to destination sustainability.

Factor analysis was conducted to identify key underlying dimensions influencing HBTBs and their contribution to destination sustainability. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was applied to extract key components from the dataset. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.812, indicating that the data was suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 812.54$, $p < 0.001$), confirming the appropriateness of factor analysis.

Table 3: The Extracted Factors and their Loadings:

Factor	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained (%)	Key Variables (Factor Loadings > 0.5)
F1: Business Operations	3.68	34.5%	Type of business (0.79), Business longevity (0.74), Number of employees (0.71)
F2: Competitiveness	1.89	18.3%	Quality of service (0.83), Unique products (0.72), Marketing strategies (0.68)
F3: Policy Influence	1.24	11.5%	Government support (0.76), Policy regulations (0.64)

Factor analysis results in Table 3 above show that; factor 1 (Business Operations) was the most influential, explaining 34.5% of the variance, confirming that HBTB sustainability is largely driven by operational characteristics, factor 2 (Competitiveness) showed that quality service, unique product offerings, and effective marketing were crucial for maintaining a competitive advantage, and factor 3 (Policy Influence) indicated that government interventions and regulatory frameworks play a role in shaping the sustainability of HBTBs, albeit to a lesser extent.

Regression Analysis

To determine the predictive power of HBTB operations, competitiveness, and government policies on destination sustainability, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using the following model: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$ (Y = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$) Where: Y = Destination Sustainability, X_1 = HBTB Operations, X_2 = Competitiveness, X_3 = Government Policies, β_0 = Intercept and ϵ = Error term.

Table 4: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F-Statistic	Sig. (p-value)
1 (Overall Model)	0.734	0.539	0.524	37.52	0.000***

The R² value (0.539) in Table 4 above indicated that 53.9% of the variation in destination sustainability is explained by the independent variables, and the

overall model was statistically significant (F = 37.52, p < 0.001), confirming that the predictors effectively explain destination sustainability.

Table 5: Coefficients and Significance Levels

Independent Variable	Unstandardized β	Standardized β	t-Statistic	Sig. (p-value)
HBTB Operations	0.512	0.437	6.81	0.000***
Competitiveness	0.378	0.296	5.42	0.000***
Government Policies	0.142	0.098	2.31	0.022**
Constant	2.107	-	4.56	0.000***

In Table 5 above, HBTB Operations ($\beta = 0.512$, p < 0.001) had the strongest positive effect on destination sustainability, meaning well-managed home-based tourism businesses significantly enhance the sustainability of tourism destinations, competitiveness ($\beta = 0.378$, p < 0.032) was weak predictor, indicating that businesses with better service quality, unique products, and effective marketing strategies contribute significantly to

sustainable tourism, and government Policies ($\beta = 0.142$, p = 0.042) had a weaker but still significant impact, suggesting that while policies do play a role, they are less influential than business operations and competitiveness.

Hypothesis Testing

Based on the statistical analyses, the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis	Statement	Findings	Decision
H ₁	HBTB operations have a significant impact on destination sustainability.	$\beta = 0.512$, p < 0.000	Rejected
H ₂	HBTB competitiveness positively influences destination sustainability.	$\beta = 0.382$, p < 0.001	Rejected
H ₃	Government policies significantly influence HBTB sustainability.	$\beta = 0.274$, p = 0.005	Rejected

The rejection of H_1 confirms that business operations such as the type of service provided, longevity, and workforce size are critical factors in sustainable tourism development. This aligns with studies by (Saarinen, 2020), which emphasize the role of small-scale tourism enterprises in fostering sustainability, the confirmation of H_2 reinforces the importance of quality service, unique product offerings, and marketing strategies in maintaining competitiveness, consistent with findings by (Buhalis, 2021) and the acceptance of H_3 indicates that government policies have an impact, though relatively weaker than business-related factors. This suggests that while regulatory frameworks and government support are relevant, the direct actions of HBTB owners play a more dominant role in sustainability outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study support the premise that government policies significantly influence destination sustainability in Kabale Municipality. The high level of awareness of government policies (87.1%) suggests that regulatory frameworks governing home-based tourism businesses (HBTBs) are well-communicated and understood by stakeholders. Additionally, the effectiveness of government policies in supporting HBTB operations is overwhelmingly positive, with 82.8% of respondents perceiving them as very effective. This reinforces the crucial role of government interventions in shaping sustainable tourism practices.

Regulation simplification (47.3%) was identified as the most impactful area of government support for sustainability. This finding implies that reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks and creating a more business-friendly regulatory environment can enhance the efficiency and viability of HBTBs. Marketing and promotion (24.4%) and financial support (18.8%) were also highlighted as key government interventions, indicating that while regulatory ease is paramount, efforts to boost visibility and provide financial incentives are also necessary to strengthen the sector. Training and

capacity building, while still relevant, was the least prioritized (12.9%), suggesting that business owners may already have foundational knowledge but require more tangible support in operations and marketing.

In terms of destination sustainability, the results indicate that HBTBs contribute significantly to economic, environmental, and cultural sustainability. The majority of respondents (54.1%) reported full-time employment generation, underscoring the importance of HBTBs in job creation. Furthermore, the sector's contribution to the local community was deemed significant by 51% of respondents, demonstrating the broader socio-economic impact of HBTBs in Kabale Municipality.

From an environmental perspective, the predominant sustainability practices adopted by HBTBs included waste reduction (63.9%) and water conservation (16.4%), highlighting a strong commitment to eco-friendly operations. However, practices such as pollution control (9.7%) and recycling (5.2%) were less common, suggesting potential areas for policy intervention and improved compliance measures. The total absence of noise reduction initiatives indicates a possible oversight in addressing sound pollution, which can have long-term environmental and social consequences.

Cultural sustainability was also strongly supported, with 81% of respondents confirming their involvement in cultural preservation activities. This finding highlights the symbiotic relationship between tourism and cultural heritage in the region, reinforcing the role of HBTBs in safeguarding traditional practices and promoting cultural tourism.

The results of the factor analysis confirm that the key variables influencing destination sustainability—home-based tourism operations, competitiveness, and government policies—exhibit strong internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7. Specifically, awareness of government policies (0.85) and their

effectiveness (0.78) were the most significant contributors within the policy dimension, reinforcing the role of informed and efficient governance in sustainable tourism development.

The regression analysis further substantiated these findings. Home-based business operations had the most substantial impact on destination sustainability ($\beta = 0.512$, $p < 0.001$), emphasizing that well-structured and efficiently run HBTBs are central to sustainability. Competitiveness ($\beta = 0.382$, $p = 0.001$) also played a significant role, indicating that factors such as unique products, service quality, and marketing strategies contribute meaningfully to long-term sustainability. Government policies ($\beta = 0.274$, $p = 0.005$), while statistically significant, had a comparatively moderate impact, suggesting that while policy interventions are essential, their influence is enhanced when coupled with strong business operations and market competitiveness.

Hypothesis testing further validated these insights. The null hypotheses for all three factors HBTB operations, competitiveness, and government policies were rejected, confirming their significant influence on destination sustainability (p -values of 0.000, 0.001, and 0.005, respectively). This aligns with previous studies that highlight the interplay between regulatory frameworks, business practices, and competitive advantages in fostering a sustainable tourism sector.

The collinearity diagnostics suggest minimal multicollinearity concerns, confirming the independence of the predictor variables. The highest variance proportion was attributed to home-based business operations (90%), followed by competitiveness (80%) and government policies (80%). This further validates the regression results, indicating that each factor contributes uniquely to sustainability without significant overlaps.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The research presented an in-depth statistical analysis of the study findings, incorporating factor analysis, regression analysis, and hypothesis testing

to determine the relationships between home-based tourism businesses (HBTBs) and destination sustainability in Kabale Municipality, Uganda. These statistical techniques provided empirical evidence on the significance of HBTB operations, competitiveness, and government policies in shaping sustainable tourism development. Factor analysis identified four major components influencing destination sustainability: business operations, competitiveness, and policy influence. Regression analysis demonstrated that HBTB operations ($\beta = 0.512$) and competitiveness ($\beta = 0.378$) are the most significant predictors of sustainability, while government policies ($\beta = 0.142$) play a supporting role. Hypothesis testing confirmed that all three independent variables significantly influence destination sustainability. Enhancing Business Operations: Government and stakeholders should support HBTBs through business incubation programs, training, and financial assistance to improve operations focused on quality service, branding, and digital marketing strategies to maintain a competitive edge, and formalize HBTB operations, streamline licensing, and integrate them into national tourism strategies. As a result, additional research is needed to assess the seasonal variations in HBTB operations and their impact on sustainability and to evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in enhancing HBTB competitiveness. By addressing these areas, home-based tourism businesses can become key drivers of sustainable tourism in Kabale Municipality and beyond.

Disclosure

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest associated with this study. All research activities, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, were conducted independently and objectively. The study was carried out in compliance with ethical research guidelines, ensuring that all participants provided informed consent before participating in the survey. Confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were strictly maintained throughout the research

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