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Cultural Heritage Tourism Management for Local Economic Development in Uganda: A Case of Fort Baker in Gulu District, Northern Uganda

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Abstract

The study explored how cultural heritage tourism could be a strategy for promoting Local economic development in Uganda, specifically, Northern Uganda, Gulu District, Patiko Sub-County, which has not received sufficient attention. This study aimed to address this gap by investigating the level of Community awareness, the contributions and critical challenges faced in the management of Fort-Baker, Patiko. It was theorized by plan behaviour theory and deployed a qualitative single case study design with a total population of 33 participants comprising District Local Government technical and elected officials, the Lower Local Government appointed and election leaders, Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities field staff, elders and Cultural leaders. Primary data were obtained using in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation, and Documentary reviews. In order to ensure reliability and validity, content and construct validity were used. The collected data were organized, processed and analyzed using thematic content analysis. The study findings indicate that there is a low level of community awareness of cultural heritage tourism as a resource for local economic development. Furthermore, it's revealed that Cultural heritage tourism has a great potential to contribute to Local economic development. In addition, the findings have established that management is one of the critical challenges facing Fort-Baker Patiko. In general terms, the findings confirm that Cultural heritage tourism is a potential area that could be exploited to promote Local economic development when it's well managed. Key recommendations are realignment of the management of Fort-Baker Patiko to the decentralization policy to ensure active participation of the district local government and lower local governments staff, community and stakeholders, based on a partnership arrangement hinges on a bottom-up development paradigm. Government should immediately map and document all potential and existing Cultural heritage tourism sites for effective planning, and finally, sensitization of the community and re-training of the field-based staff are paramount in this direction.

Keywords: Management, Monument, Physical infrastructure, Livelihoods, Theory of Planned Behavior, Northern Uganda.

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1.0 Background to the study

The tourism industry is a critical driver for economic development worldwide, particularly in developing countries, including Uganda. Globally, the industry has rebounded to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels with earnings of over USD 1.5 trillion, creating employment, and stimulating infrastructure development (International tourism highlights,2024). There are several definitions of tourism. For instance, Jacint Beleaguer & Manuel Cantavella-Jordá, (2002) said it is a set of activities a person is temporarily engaged in, normally away from their usual place of abode, for a period of not more than one year, and for a broad range of reasons; of leisure, business, religion and Culture interest. Furthermore, Gilbert, D. C. (1990) defined tourism as part of a continuum of activities ranging from local leisure pursuits and home-based activities (non-tourist) to those of travel away from home on work and extended tours (tourist). Similarly, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) defined it as a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon involving people travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for less than one consecutive year for leisure, business, or other personal purposes. This study defined it as a human activity motivated by experiencing appreciation of the cultural values.

Globally, it's an important economic strategy (Petronela, T. 2016; Modi R.K 2024). It's a multi-billion-dollar industry that generates employment, stimulates infrastructure development, and drives economic growth from the hotels and restaurants to transportation and entertainment, creating a ripple effect, benefiting numerous sectors that revitalize communities, in rural areas, by providing opportunities for entrepreneurship and sustainable development (Richardson, 2010). In developing countries, tourism is a significant booster of economic growth and development. For instance, in2024, travel and tourism became a crucial engine for developing economies, with total global tourism contributions reaching \$10.9 trillion (10% of global GDP) and supporting 357 million jobs, or 1 in 10 globally. International receipts hit \$1.6 trillion in 2024 (4% above 2019 levels), driven by high-growth, lower-middle-income countries in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2025).

In Uganda, it is a vital pillar of the economy, contributing approximately 7.6% to 7.75% of GDP and generating over 600,000 jobs as of 2022/2023. Furthermore, it is a top foreign exchange earner, generating over US\$1.6 billion in pre-pandemic revenue, with significant recovery in 2024 to Ush. 4.8 trillion, driven by mountain gorilla tracking, wildlife, and cultural tourism (UNWTO, Country Summary report 2023). Tourism includes wildlife, Community-based tourism, adventure experiences, and cultural heritage tourism, among others (Gómez-Zapata, J. et al., 2025).

The study focuses on cultural heritage tourism for promoting local economic development. Cultural heritage tourism is an important sub-sector of the industry. McKercher, B, et al, (2002) defined Cultural tourism as a partnership between tourism and cultural heritage management. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) defined cultural heritage as the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. Santa, E. etal, al (2019) and Baral, A. (2024) said that Cultural heritage tourism is travelling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. In this study, cultural heritage tourism is defined as a Community-based activity in which the visitors are involved in real-life, tangible and intangible life-changing experiences, with a huge unforgettable memory of the destination for a long time, attracting repeat

visits to the destination. Previous studies paid limited attention to the contributions of Cultural heritage tourism to Local economic development (Ahebwa et al, 2016). Furthermore, the focus was on the Buganda Cultural institution in the urban setting of central Uganda, neglecting the rural areas, including Northern Uganda. In addition, Culture and heritage are facing extinction due to threats from human-induced activities (Bosher, L. et al., 2020), posing a challenge in the conservation and management of critical cultural and heritage sites for tourism.

In addition, earlier studies conducted focused on healings Giblin, J. D. (2014) and Nsibambi, F. (2022). Furthermore, Sebastian Krantz (2020) concentrated on economic contributions. Similarly, Ahebwa, et al (2016) focused on community livelihoods and conservation. While Nakayi and Annika Witte (2019) concentrated on making cultural institution voices heard on gas and oil exploration. All these studies were conducted mainly in central Uganda, in the urban Buganda Sub-region, with limited focus on Northern Uganda. In this study, we explored the management of a cultural heritage tourism site for local economic development.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Cultural heritage tourism plays a critical role as a driver for unlocking the binding constraints that affect national development. For instance, in 2024, the sector experienced a substantial growth with earnings of over Uganda Shillings 4.81 trillion, equivalent to U\$17,779 million, compared to Shs3.82 trillion, which is equivalent to U\$14,134M in 2023 (Tourism Trends and Statistical Report,2025). In addition, it contributed to the infrastructure development, generated income, direct and indirect employment, and supported Gross Domestic Product (Tourism Development Program Annual Performance Report, 2022/23). However, despite the significant contributions of Cultural heritage tourism to national development, there are limited studies conducted to explore how Cultural heritage tourism could promote Local economic development of the area.

Furthermore, available studies focused on Central Uganda, mainly in the urban areas based on Buganda Cultural Institutions, neglecting the rural areas in Northern Uganda. This is a gap which the study intends to address. This study is relevant because understanding the level of Community awareness of Cultural heritage tourism as a resource for local economic development is essential for effective planning, Community engagement, ownership and critical for designing community-centred interventions. In addition, this study will highlight the need for effective management, conservation and preservation of cultural heritage tourism sites, and the findings will appeal to local, national and international audiences to re-focus resources on maintaining culture and heritage as a resource for national development. Similarly, this study will contribute significantly to the body of knowledge arising from empirical literature from Northern Uganda, focusing on Cultural Heritage tourism. Therefore, failure to conduct the study now will escalate the rampant Community encroachment, vandalism of the sites, and mismanagement, causing conflict between the Central government, Local government and the community with dire consequences.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This study aimed to explore how the management of Cultural heritage tourism could promote Local economic development based on the following specific objectives:

1. To explore the level of Community awareness of the Fort-Baker Patiko Monument site as a resource for Local economic development of the area

2. To examine the contributions of Fort-Baker Patiko Monument site in promoting Local economic development in the area.
3. To identify key challenges faced in the Management of Fort-Baker Patiko Monument Site.

This study is important because it will provide an insightful knowledge on the level of community awareness of Fort-Baker Patiko Monument site as a resource, discuss the contributions and identify challenges faced in the Management of the site and will provide a basis for policy formulation, encourage local, national and global debate on the need for advocacy for improvement of the management functions. The gap the study intends to bridge hinges on the limited study conducted in Northern Uganda, because most studies were in Central Uganda, mainly in Kabaka Cultural institutional settings. Therefore, this study must be conducted now to contribute to the preservation and conservation of culture and heritage sites to harness the benefits that spur local economic development, justifying the importance of this study. This study is theoretically premised on the Theory of Planned behavior.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

2.1 The theory of planned behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB), postulated by Ajzen (1991), explains human behaviors and their motivation. According to the theory, behaviors are intentional, planned and based on reasoning and behavioral decisions are mainly determined by intrinsic factors, and intention to engage in certain behaviors is the primary determinant of actual behavior. Steg & Vlek (2009) argued that making reasonable choices and choosing the alternatives with the highest benefit and least cost or negative issue for individuals are the fundamentals of this model. In this model, attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are seen to support positive effects on behavioral intention, as found in a number of studies (Chan & Bishop, 2013; Han, 2015; Lee & Kim, 2017). Furthermore, empirical studies have shown that the TBP is currently one of the most promising theories to be applied to explain various situations and behaviors in the tourism and hospitality domain (Hsu et al., 2018; Shin et al., 2018). TPB can also help to clarify the decision-making of cultural heritage practitioners' sustainable tourism behavioral intention from the rational perspective through their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls. All these influence decisions to undertake a cultural heritage tourism journey.

This theory explains the attitude towards behavior, which is important in understanding the level of awareness of the Monument as a resource for Local economic development. Where there is a positive community attitude towards cultural heritage tourism, the impacts on local economic development are not known. Furthermore, subjective norm helps to examine the contributions of physical infrastructure in Local economic development. The community will have their own subjectivity due to social pressures to acknowledge or refute the contribution of Cultural heritage tourism to Local economic development. Moreover, perceived behavioural control or individuals' perception is important in identifying the key challenges in the Management of Cultural heritage tourism sites.

However, it should be observed that a positive attitude and behaviors play a critical role in promoting functional management arrangements, which could lead to the promotion of Local economic development. Furthermore, positive or negative attitudes contribute to understanding the level of awareness of Monuments as a resource for Local economic development. Positive

attitudes and behaviors have a higher impact on awareness. Furthermore, a positive community attitude promotes a better understanding of monuments as a resource for local economic development. However, a negative attitude affects planning and community maintenance of the sites. Similarly, perceived social pressure could hinder the contribution of Cultural heritage tourism because of the judgment by other members of the community. Subjective norms could influence management arrangements, contributions, awareness, and challenges of Cultural heritage tourism sites. This theory was used because Cultural heritage tourism primarily is based on intention, decision and the behavior of the individual to undertake the activity.

In addition, this theory is widely used by scholars to explore cultural heritage tourism besides pull and push factor theories and others. This theory was deployed because it's been used in Tourism, Marketing, and other discipline studies, and it's aligned with Local economic development which advocate that, positive attitude leads to physical infrastructure, development of small-scale businesses and local Government revenue. Furthermore, the theory is important in decision-making and supports planning. However, this theory tends to emphasize that the individual is rational and therefore, makes rational decisions, which may not be the case. Furthermore, it undermines the emotional aspect of the decision. Nonetheless, it's the best theory to use for the study of phenomena.

2.2 Literature review

2.2.1 Cultural heritage tourism

Cultural Heritage tourism is an old activity performed globally for centuries and is as old as mankind itself. Del Bosque, A. et, al, (2025) underscored the important role played by tourism and culture, which present significant driving forces of economic growth and sustainable development in many destinations, with shared values and adjacent ties between tourism and culture stakeholders. Cultural heritage is described as comprising the cultural elements being described. These might include monuments and complexes of buildings, sites of archaeological or historic significance, ancient works of art (including rock carvings and cave paintings), and ethnographic items (Hafstein, 2012).

They argued that Culture presents a potential in the creation of place uniqueness for the tourism sector, while tourism presents a potential for reinforcing and supporting cultural production. Whereas, they contend that, cultural heritage is key for economic growth and sustainable development, there is limited information on how it has contributed to local economic development of the region, thus, this study argued that, effective management of Cultural heritage tourism is an important resource promotion of Local economic development of the region when, there is general awareness and when is well managed. Furthermore, in Italy, specifically Sicily, official statistics provided by the Italian Statistical Office (ISTAT) show that in 2005, more than 29 million out of 88 million arrivals (33.5% of the total) were registered in the arts cities. Furthermore, in Asia, Cultural heritage tourism plays an important role in the creation of creative cities, giving them a new lease of life and generating employment opportunities and local economies in the process. For instance, a global overview of cultural and creative industries report shows that the Asia-Pacific region is the most prosperous in the world for cultural and creative industries (with a total revenue of US\$743 billion (Wai-Kit Ng et al,2023). However, whereas evidence suggests that it's critical for national development of these countries, there is limited information on how effective management of Cultural heritage tourism could promote local

economic development in the region. This study argued that Cultural heritage tourism is critical for promotion of local economic development when properly managed.

In Africa, past heritage can become economically sustainable for long-range survival, productivity, and contribute to global education, research, tourism, and pride in the past accomplishments of humanity. For example, Heritage is a public good, essential for national identity, national cohesion, employment generation, education, and cultural and religious values. In African heritage sites are threatened with various forms of economic development. Furthermore, in Tanzania, cultural tourism plays a significant role in promoting local economies and preserving cultural heritage. However, the success of cultural tourism initiatives hinges upon local communities' awareness and perception of their cultural heritage resources.

In Uganda, the country is blessed by rich historical, natural, tangible and intangible cultural heritage potentials (Sebastian Kranzt,2020). This includes diverse and unique cultures in many different ethnic communities, which are intangible as well as monuments and museums, which are intangible cultural heritage which could be a resource for the local economic development (Mkono, 2019; Jain, 2011). Some of these heritage sites have attained international and national recognition, like the Kasubi Royal Tombs in the Buganda Kingdom and Fort-Baker Patiko in Gulu District, respectively. Furthermore, Cultural heritage tourism is a major product niche which attracts a huge tourism market segment of the industry, contributing enormously as a driver for national development. For instance, it has been used as a tool for cultural conservation, preservation and improvement of the community livelihoods (Ahebwa et al. 2016; Sebastian Kranz (2020); and John Daniel Giblin (2014). Cultural heritage tourism has been partially exploited and therefore, this study argued that, despite the availability of several development strategies in place aligned to the tourism sub-sector, there has been limited focus on Cultural heritage tourism for the promotion of Local economic development. It's therefore imperative and urgent to explore how the management of Cultural heritage tourism could promote local economic development besides other domain functions. However, there are challenges for example, there are lack of adequate financing, understaffing, inexperienced staff, poor legal framework, limited mandatory assessment, inadequate quality control measures and others (S. Chirikure1,2013). Nevertheless, this could be resolved by employing the Public-Private partnership as well as community partnership, sensitization and awareness creation, bottom-up Community planning strategy, and capacity building that could significantly address the challenges. Its underpinned by Monument and tradition.

2.2.2 Monument

Monuments are attractions and an essential component of Cultural Heritage tourism. El-Hakim et al. 2002 defined monuments as explicit structures created to commemorate a person or important event which bears importance to a social group as a major part of their remembrance of past occurrences. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2010) defined a monument as: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations, which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science. Furthermore, monument site is defined as works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view “any object, natural or artificial,

fixed permanently in the soil as an indication, evidence or token of some fact or intended to commemorate a person, nation, event or idea. In this study, monuments are referred to as a natural and artificially built-up physical infrastructure to commemorate the past events of community significance, which is supported by the theory of planned behavior, which is linked to subjective norms.

Globally, Monuments are viewed as an important human aspect of society associated with the cultural achievement of their homeland's history, where people understand themselves as a part of nation-building linked to cultural identity (Horst TODT1 et al,2008). According to Yi-Fu Tuan (1978), a monument can be recognized as both a symbol and a sign: as a symbol, a monument relates to thought, whereas as a visible landmark, it is a useful sign for orientation, and thus it relates to both behavior and action. It has contributed to public art (Hall & Robertson, 2001; Senie & Webster, 2014).

This study recognized several aspects of monuments which have huge potential to promote tourism and recreational activities that could promote Local economic development. However, in the case of Fort-Baker, it is arguably the biggest site in the sub-region, with a strong link to the British Imperial rule in the region. Monuments are instrumental in the socio-economic development of the communities living around them. For instance, it's important for enabling the community to remember the history, nostalgia and others (Vinegar, A. et al. (2011). It attracts tourists, and generates income from tourist activities at the site, which could significantly contribute to the Local economic development of the sub-region when effectively managed. However, there are challenges faced in the management of the Monuments, for example, management and policy shift (Remigius Kigongo et al,2007). Despite these challenges, monuments have the potential to contribute to Local economic development of the communities when well managed and could be reinforced by the tradition.

2.2.3 Tradition

Tradition is an essential element of Cultural heritage tourism, which determines destination attraction. Yan et al (2025) said tradition can be defined as customs, beliefs, or ideas transmitted or handed down from one generation to the next. Nelson et al (2001) observed that it is often considered a social construct which is used as a form of rationality to justify a course of action. and refers to it as both the process of handing down from generation to generation, and something, a custom, or a thought process that is passed on over time. However, attitude towards the behaviors relates to the level to which individuals have unfavorable or favorable evaluations of the behaviors in question' (Ajzen,1991, p. 188). In this context, tradition depends on positive and negative attitudes. Moreover, according to Hagger et al. (2001), an individual's attitude is a self-report of their negative or positive evaluation of the behaviors.

Originally, the concept of tradition, literally from the Latin meaning "something handed over," in slowly changing societies was almost equivalent to inheritance. Tradition was both the means of making a living and the symbols, stories, and memories which gave one both identity and status. Globally and in Africa, the diversity of culture and cultural heritages holds great potential for tourism development on the continent. In recent times, some African countries such as Kenya, South Africa and Egypt have recorded rising figures as tourist destinations, thus demonstrating that tourism could be the continent's largest income generator and employer of labour and tourism development if the sector is properly managed (Hsiao, et al (2016). In Uganda, tradition is

intricately linked and plays an important role in cultural heritage activities. There are two elements of cultural heritage, oral and written traditions.

2.2.4 Written tradition

Written tradition constitutes an important part of cultural heritage tourism. It entails recording and preserving a people's history, culture and traditions, using writing is novel to the African communities. The African pre-literate communities recorded and preserved their cultures and norms in songs, dances, oral narratives, proverbs, and oral poetry, among others. Verbal utterances were the major medium of transition from one generation to another, and performance helped in giving life to these verbal utterances (Hadijah, N., & Earnest, A., 2025). In this study, oral tradition was focused on because it is widely used by the community in the area of the phenomena and is a vital source for preservation of the cultural heritage information. Written tradition is anchored in the attitude. Positive attitude promotes the writing of a story, and a negative attitude frustrates the written tradition.

2.2.5 Oral tradition

Oral traditions exemplify the most essential aspect of cultural heritage tourism. David William Cohen (1989) said oral tradition is the recollections of the past that are commonly or universally known in a given culture. Oral tradition is an important component of Cultural heritage tourism because it narrates the historical perspective of the society and contributes to the preservation of the cultural heritage, Galloway, P. (2009). It's operationalized theoretically by perceived behavioral control, belief and intention, which view oral tradition in terms of: control of the story, proverbs, rhymes, folklore, belief in the narratives and intention to link the preservation for tourism activities. This could contribute to the promotion of local economic development in the area. Oral tradition is an important attraction that influences a tourist's behaviour to visit the site. For instance, folktales, riddles, games, songs, proverbs, spells, rhymes, remedies, recipes (Fred Metting, 1995).

Globally and in Africa, oral tradition has centered on Libraries, as curators of oral tradition and storytelling activities, contribute to preserving cultural heritage, enriching knowledge, and promoting cross-cultural understanding in an interconnected world. These will contribute to preserving, promoting, and sharing worldwide oral traditions, thereby deepening cross-cultural understanding and facilitating meaningful cultural exchange (Oluwayemi et al, 2024). In Uganda, oral tradition has played a critical role in enforcing communications among the rural poor, for instance, village criers, storytellers, orators, and is used as a medium of preservation and conservation of cultural heritage artefacts, history and memories (Aaron Mushengyezi, 2010). Fred Metting (1995) said oral tradition includes folktales, riddles, games, songs, proverbs, spells, rhymes, remedies, and recipes.

In Northern Uganda and in Acholi specifically, riddles, proverbs, and rhymes are the most common form of oral tradition. However, oral tradition suffers from over commodification as a tourism product, undermining authenticity, reliability and the value of the narratives in Cultural heritage. Furthermore, stories passed over from generation to generation are likely to suffer from loss of vital aspects of the story, misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the narrative to suit the interests of the tourist. Therefore, in this study, oral tradition refers to storytelling, proverbs and riddles. This is because it has deep and hidden preserved knowledge on the cultural heritage information. Nevertheless, these challenges could be mitigated by subjecting them to other forms,

such as recorded stories and ensuring that authentic narratives are provided, and it remains an important component of cultural heritage tourism, which could promote local economic development of the region, when it's effectively managed. This paper argued that, Cultural heritage tourism stimulate local economic development of the area.

2.3 Local economic development

Local economic development is understood as a development approach where there is local control of the economy, the use of indigenous resources, the promotion of enterprise and the mobilization of community co-operation (Dianne O'Sullivan Jackson,2002). Furthermore, Rogerson, C. M., & Rogerson, J. M. (2010) said Local economic development is an alternative development approach taking root in much of Africa. In addition, Helming & Egziabher (2005) consider Local economic development to be 'a process in which partnerships between local governments, NGOs, community based groups and the private sector are established to manage existing resources, to create jobs and stimulate the economy of a well-defined territory. Globally, local economic development is generally agreed to have started in cities of the global north during the late 1960s and early 1970s in an environment of global economic restructuring and advancing decentralization (Blakely, 1989;Harvey, 1989;Valler & Wood, 2010). Furthermore, in Africa, it has been greatly influenced by decentralization reform, which reduced central state control in an era of accelerating globalization (Nel, 2007). For instance, in South Africa, it represents an important shifted in development burden and responsibility for economic development from national to local government level and the promotion of local economic development planning, Rogerson, C. (2000).

One significant response has been the spread and growth in the significance of Local economic development as an aspect of development planning (Rodriguez-Pose & Tijmstra, 2007). As a result, it has become one of the highly fashionable issues of international development cooperation. Local economic development contributes to improved quality of life, culturally desirable working conditions, job creation, retaining local businesses, and attracting inward investment. However, initial attractiveness may suffer from the coming together of several firms and industries, thereby affecting quality of life (Cecilia Wong,2001). Furthermore, the attractiveness of a place will eventually reach a critical point, creating stress on the infrastructure and natural environment, leading to rising cost of living and overall deterioration in the quality of life (Myers,1988). In addition, it promotes tourism and leads to poverty reduction (Goodwin, H. (2008).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, it's exemplified by the activities of the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (Swinburn & Yatta, 2006a, and 2006b; Swinburn et al., 2007). Rodriguez-Pose (2009b) noted that the preparation and implementation of LED strategies help make local institutions more transparent and accountable, thereby contributing to developing civil society. However, there are challenges for instance, how to make the most of local resources in a way that improves returns from global markets' (Christensen & Van der Ree, 2008:2). Nevertheless, this could be resolved by a proper understanding of the concept and effective implementation. Similarly, community-based bottom-up planning could address the challenges.

In Uganda, Local economic development is conceptualized as a development model where Local Governments, the private sector, and the community are jointly and collectively engaged in the identification, mobilization, and management of resources at the local level (LED, Policy 2014).

It aimed to create a conducive environment for investment, increase household incomes, and increase revenues for Local Governments. This study understands local economic development as geographically defined and community-centred development. The history of Local economic development in Uganda began as a modest concept introduced by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) in their work on Decentralization (Report, Third District Development Programme, 2003). It became fully conceptualized in 2005 and mainstreamed as the 6th pillar of decentralization (LED Policy, 2014). However, despite its contribution to national development, it suffered challenges, for instance, deepening and institutionalizing decentralization. These challenges include, among others, technical capacity deficiencies in local governments and tensions among key stakeholders competing to maximize their role in decentralization (Onyach-Oola M, 2003). This could be resolved by training and retooling of local government staff. All in all, Local economic development is a vital development strategy for transforming communities. In this study, Local economic development is underpinned by physical infrastructure, Small and micro-enterprises and Local Government revenue.

2.3.1 Physical infrastructure

Physical infrastructure is a crucial component of local economic development that has a strong influence on the local economy. It refers to highways, waterways, sewer systems, and public buildings (Janet M, etal,1995). Furthermore, physical infrastructure denotes an access road, and it's operationalized by attitude. Positive attitude promotes development and maintenance of access roads, while a negative attitude and subjective norms undermine maintenance of access roads vital for tourists to reach the site. The origin of physical infrastructure could be traced to the Council of state planners and the National league of state cities in 1882, who linked Physical infrastructure to Local economic development, Aschauer (1989,1989,1991).

Globally, and in Africa, it is recognized for its positive contributions to economic growth and development. In the USA, there are linkages in the declining agriculture due to a shortfall in infrastructure investment, with limited scholarly work on how it influences private enterprises. It is believed to improve the ability of communities to attract investment, create jobs, and enhance livelihoods. In Uganda, between 2010 and 2019, there has been a slight improvement in 1-star roads moving to 2-star roads for non-motorized transportation in Uganda. However, there are still no roads rated 3-star or better for NMT (World Bank, 2017). In addition, most roads lack facilities for non-motorized transport users. Although pedestrians have achieved some minimal benefits as a result, other vulnerable road users, like cyclists and people living with disabilities, are still either inadequately provided for or ignored entirely (Mitullah et al., 2017). It argued that when access roads are developed, they could provide accessibility to the monument sites, making it possible for tourists to visit the sites. At the site, they consume goods and services which result in income, and employment to the communities through operating small and micro-enterprises.

2.3.2 Small and Micro-enterprises

Small and Micro-enterprises (SME) are an important element of Local economic development with a significant economic impact on the community. These are business enterprises usually classified based on their size, capital investment, and number of employees (Mulu Gebreyesus,2007). Bolton: 1971) said, the primary reference for qualitative definition of SMEs for all subsequent literature in the field, defines three essential characteristics of small firms: management of firm by its owner(s) in a personalized manner; relatively small share of the market

in economic terms; independence in the sense that it does not form part of a larger enterprise is relatively free from outside control in its principal decisions. (Bolton: 1971 as quoted in Stokes and Wilson: 2010). Micro-enterprises are founded when a triggering factor occurs. Access to certain resources is required, including skills, capital, raw materials, and information about markets. It is justifiable in the eyes of the founders. On the other hand, small-sized enterprises: units produce on a small scale, employ mostly apprentices and in some cases salaried employees usually paid on a piecework basis;(Kaddar, M., et al, 1994).

Globally, and in Africa, it's recognized for generating income and employment, which have a positive impact on the community, promoting local economic development (Fardous Alom et al., 2016). In addition, the initial investment, access to land, access to finance, location, sectoral engagement, market linkage, and business experience are significant in explaining growth, which has an impact on the local community. However, gender, education, ownership, formal recording, and financial management practice are found to be insignificant variables in determining enterprises' growth, which could negatively affect SME. The challenges, include inaccessibility of bank credit facilities, limited skills and knowledge (Hayelom Abrha Meressa,2020). This could be solved by continuous training, mentorship and sensitization.

In Uganda, small and Micro-enterprises are significant for economic development, contributing to improved business, planning, and development of managerial skills and contributing close to 90% of private sector production and play a crucial role in income generation, especially for the poor (Mugarura et al ,2023; UIA, 2008). This study argued that small and micro-enterprises could support cultural heritage tourism by establishing several small and micro-enterprises at the monument sites, which could provide essential goods and services to the tourists through open access to the sites, generating Local government revenues for Local economic development

2.3.3 Local Government revenue

Revenue is the main component of Local economic development, which has a huge impact on community development. Local government revenue refers to locally raised money for Local government operations (Donald C. Shoup,2003). For example, taxation, market dues, fines and fees, permits and others. Bonet et al. (2013) observed that, globally, local revenue has the capacity to support central government development finance when it's well managed. In Africa, and Uganda specifically, local revenues play critical roles in supporting Local government operations. A report by Godfrey et al (2004) indicates that rural taxation and income distribution of local government revenues have implications for poverty reduction. This study argued that Cultural heritage tourism has the potential to promote Local economic development when the management of the cultural heritage site is well aligned.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study deployed a qualitative research approach using a case study design, which is relevant in understanding the participants' perspectives on Cultural heritage tourism for Local economic development. The target population comprised the District Local Government and the Lower Local Government appointed and elected officials, elders and Cultural leaders. They were selected purposively because of their experience, understanding and knowledge of cultural heritage tourism. Data was collected using in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions, participant observation and documentary reviews. These methods enabled the researcher to collect detailed

data on Cultural heritage tourism for Local economic development, and were also used to triangulate the information. The in-depth interview items were generated from Cultural heritage tourism literature to ensure content and construct validity. A non-probability sampling technique based on purposive sampling was conducted to achieve generalization of the findings.

3.1 Study Setting

This study was conducted in Fort-Baker Patiko, in Gulu District Northern Uganda. This site epitomizes and embodied the British imperial administration and depicts the ruthlessness and the brutality committed by the Arab Slave traders on the people of Acholi. This Fort was built in 1872 as a base, to stop slave trade in Equatorial province by Sir Samuel Baker between 1872-1876. It was later occupied and expanded by Colonel Charles Gordon in 1879. It was gazetted a national historic monument in 1972 (Ministry of Tourism Wildlife and Antiquities, Department of Museums and Monuments). Patiko sub-County is bordered by Bungatira sub-County on the south, Owor Sub-county to the west, Paicho Sub-County on the east. It has two parishes of Kal and Ajulu. Is about 30Km to the district Headquarters and 360km from the Capital city.

3.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using thematic and content data analysis techniques. Open coding was done, and the coded data were broken down into themes, aligned to the objectives of the study. Thematic and content analysis were based on the research questions and the objectives to ensure validity and trustworthiness.

4.0 The Study Findings

The section presents study findings based on the objectives which are the levels of Community awareness of Cultural tourism as resource for Local economic development, contributions and the Challenges are as follows:

4.1 Levels of Community awareness on Cultural heritage tourism for Local economic development

The study findings on the objective indicate that there is a low level of Community awareness of Cultural heritage tourism as a resource for Local economic development. This is evidenced by the remarks of a Cultural leader:

“The community awareness about Culture and Heritage tourism as a resource for Local economic development is low”

Similarly, an appointed District Local Government official said:

*“You know, in tourism, people think tourism is just wildlife is **NO**. That’s why this office is still new and is barely 3 years, and we’re trying to work out so that we sensitize...” (11,2026). Similarly, another participant noted that:*

“... I may not be exactly to the point, ... but I think the level of creation of awareness is also low, yes” (P2,2026).

Furthermore, the low level of community awareness of cultural heritage tourism as a resource for Local economic development, as exhibited by Fort-Baker Patiko Monument site, reflects the situation in the community. This, implies that preservation, conservation, and ownership will be

undermined by the Community due to a low level of awareness, which could be a result of a negative attitude, lack of sensitization. Similarly, this could affect protecting physical infrastructure, leading to encroachment of the Monument site, frustrating small business entrepreneurship development, constraining the generation of Local revenue, which are the main components of Local economic development.

4.2 The contributions of Cultural heritage tourism to Local economic development

The study findings indicate that Cultural heritage tourism could promote Local economic development of the area, as evidenced by the participant quotes.

“Definitely yes, because now if those infrastructures are improved, first of all, say for instance a hotel is put there..., employment would be there ..., cleaner, the cooks, you know. Definitely yes. The standard of living will improve.” (11,2026),

Another participant said;

“Yes, I am sure 100% it has all the potential to contribute to local economic development if most of the challenges and most of the issues that I addressed in this discussion can be adequately handled, for example, restructuring the operation of the institution and...”

A participant observed that;

“Yes, it could contribute to Local economic development, it could be a source of revenue to the district, a source of employment to the people, the local people can do business, like the sale of food and provide accommodation facilities to the tourists” (P2,2026).

A member from the Focus Group Discussion said,

“Community would bring both food crop items and even the cultural items that can be sold there, and then, they will get money cheaply because nobody will now travel for, Market will be very ready, and then, people will definitely see that, it's already a point of Local economic development “(11,.2026). This means Cultural heritage tourism could contribute to Local economic development when it is efficient and effectively managed.

4.3 The challenges faced by Fort-Baker Patiko in promoting Local economic development

The findings on Challenges faced by Fort-Baker in promoting Local economic development are mainly management.

During the FGD meeting, one participant said management of Fort-Baker is done from the central government Ministry, which is a big problem for the development of the site:

“Monument is being managed under the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities and all its activities and finances are not accounted for locally here, not even in the district, which means nobody knows what happens here... even the employees that are here are not answerable to the district...local government, the higher Local government, which is the district, cannot come into play even...” (FGD,2026)

A cultural leader said:

“Well, first of all, I want to say the management is one of the biggest contributing factors because the central government has almost taken everything to be theirs, failing to localize the management down here, if, as a sub-county, we don’t have any ownership or control over this monument” (11,2026)

This reveals that there is no clear management structure at the site, which affects planning, participation, physical infrastructure, and the establishment of small businesses, leading to an ineffective contribution to Local economic development.

A technical participant said:

“First of all, Fort Baker is not under the district management. Since 1972, it has been under the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, so right now...” “The Management to me is the biggest challenge in this monument. Ah.... to start with, the community does not feel any ownership of this institution, much as they're situated here...” (II, 2026)

5.0 Discussions of Findings

This study explored how Cultural heritage tourism could promote Local economic development and its contributions. It highlights that there is a low level of community awareness of cultural tourism as a resource for promoting local economic development. Low levels of Community awareness affect the effective and sustainable management and promotion of cultural heritage tourism. However, a high level of community awareness promotes participation, sense of ownership, and contributes to conservation and preservation and improves community attitude toward the sites. This is consistent with a study conducted by Mteti et al (2025), who argued that awareness is critical for sustainable tourism management. This means Community sensitization, bottom-up planning and partnership could remedy the above scenario.

Findings related to the contribution of Cultural heritage tourism to Local economic development indicate that it can contribute to Local economic development when well managed. However, the contributions are socially constructed and subjective. This is supported by studies conducted by Madden, M., & Shipley, R. (2012); Ahebwa et al. (2016); and JULIUS, M. (2024), who concurred that cultural heritage tourism could contribute to economic development. This implies that the management of these sites should be aligned with the Local government to encourage community participation, motivate staff and ensure that the benefit the local community, deter negative attitude and promotes positive community attitude.

In addition, despite its the contributions findings revealed that there are challenges faced at Fort-Baker Patiko. These challenges are mainly management in nature. This finding is in consistent with studies conducted by Landorf, C. (2009); Ismail, N.etal (2014); Imon, S. S. (2017) and Coccossis, H. (2016 who contend that, management is real challenge to Cultural heritage tourism. However, there are other challenges that affects Cultural heritage tourism such as policy, community based challenges. This could be mitigated by effective community participation in planning through a partnership arrangement

6.0 Conclusion

This study concludes that Cultural heritage tourism could significantly contribute to the promotion of Local economic development of the area when management challenges are addressed. The study establishes that a low level of community awareness on Cultural heritage tourism, a negative attitude and inadequate sensitization, affects the preservation and conservation of monuments, traditions for Local economic development. Effective community involvement and a proactive bottom-planning could mitigate the challenges.

7.0 Recommendations

The study recommendations structured into three; Policy, Practice and theory.

Policy Recommendations

The study recommends that the government should immediately review the management of Cultural heritage sites to conform with the decentralization policy based on the devolution of powers, functions and responsibilities. The District Local Government and the Lower Local Government should be involved in the management of these sites.

Practice recommendations.

Furthermore, the District Local Governments and Lower Local Governments should capture the management of these sites in their Five-years annual work plan and Budget for implementation. In addition, the benefits arising from Cultural heritage tourism should be equally shared among the community members. Similarly, it's urgent that all potential and existing Cultural heritage tourism sites are mapped and archived by the Central Government, the District Local government, and the Lower Local Government avert rampant encroachment. Finally, the study recommends a social business model as novelty premised on a private-public partnership.

Theoretical recommendation

The study recommends there is need to expands the existing on the contribution of Cultural heritage tourism for Local economic development and other theoretical framework could use situate the knowledge on cultural heritage tourism.

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