

Bridging the Gap between Bakiga Heritage Conservation and the Promotion of Community-Based Tourism, Kabale District, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the relationship between the preservation of Bakiga cultural heritage and the promotion of community-based tourism in Kabale District, Uganda, using a qualitative PAR approach. There are abundant cultural heritage resources in the district; however, there is a mismatch between these resources and their practical use in promoting sustainable CBT.

The objectives of the study: (1) to record **the significance of cultural elements of the Bakiga cultural heritage to community members for preservation and tourism promotion in Kabale District**; (2) to investigate how effective the community-based tourism (CBT) is as a participative approach to a peer's heritage preservation and simultaneously to produce a sustainable socio-economic outcome for a community; and (3) work **with community stakeholders** to craft strategies to enhance **the intersection of Bakiga cultural heritage preservation and community-based tourism promotion**.

Participatory data collection techniques were used, consisting of 15 FGDs, 35 key informant interviews, participant observation, and community co-researchers for 100 community members (58 males, 42 females) in Kabale Municipality, Ndorwa East and Ndorwa West constituencies. Participants' categories included elders (15), children/youths (20), cultural leaders (10), tourism actors (12), government officials (8), teachers (12), students (18), craft men/women (5). Data were analyzed thematically through participatory coding and participant validation.

Key results of the research indicated that Bakiga cultural heritage primarily comprises tangible and intangible resources, including traditional music/dance, oral traditions, rituals, indigenous technologies, gastronomy/foods, craft production, traditional architecture, and the clan system. Although the mentioned resources were perceived as important tools for cultural identity and tourism promotion in the area, their conservation faced various challenges, including a lack of youth interest, inadequate documentation, modernization, and weak institutional support. The research concluded that the potential of community-based tourism to support heritage conservation and improve livelihoods can be enhanced through cultural performances, homestays, craft production, and heritage trails. The participatory strategies co-developed through the research included heritage documentation, awareness-raising, capacity development, and mixed partnerships.

The study emphasizes participatory governance and community-level approaches, upholding the particularity of local identity, community empowerment, and the balancing of stakeholder power relations. The proposed Illustrative PAR Model offers a useful guideline for integrating heritage with CBT.

Key Words: Heritage, Community-Based Tourism, Participatory Action Research, Cultural Heritage, Community Co-researchers, Identity, Documentation and Conservation.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This Chapter One forms the basis for the study dubbed "Bridging the Gap Between Bakiga Heritage Conservation and Promotion of Community-Based Tourism in Kabale District, Uganda" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). It covers the background (conceptual, contextual, theoretical, and historical) to the

research problem, states the research problem & purpose, comes up with specific objectives & research questions, justification of the study, scope of the study, discusses the significance of the study, operational definitions of key terms, among others.

Background

Cultural heritage is a valuable resource for conserving a community's identity, providing social cohesion, and facilitating sustainable livelihoods (UNESCO, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). Indigenous traditions, cultural expressions, artifacts, sites, and knowledge systems are increasingly viewed by communities globally as sources of potential economic benefits through tourism promotion (Richards, 2018; UNESCO, 2022). Community-based tourism (CBT) has been embraced as a form of sustainable tourism that provides opportunities for community participation in tourism development while safeguarding their cultural and ecological assets (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Dodds et al., 2018). Community participation in planning and management, and the benefits derived from CBT, have positive impacts on cultural integrity, poverty relief, and community development (Goodwin, 2017; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

The tourism industry is one of the most dominant sectors in driving economic growth, and the cultural tourism sector is gradually gaining prominence as a prime complement to wildlife- and nature-based tourism (UTB 2023; WTTC 2023). Nonetheless, the tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources in most communities remain underexplored and appear more vulnerable to modernization, urbanization, Westernization, and rising living standards (UNESCO 2021; UNCC 2022). This has resulted in the gradual fading of indigenous knowledge, traditional practices, and cultural identity among some ethnic communities (Byarugaba 2018; Nkwanga 2017; UNESCO 2023).

The Bakiga have immense cultural resources, including traditional dances, music, folklore, storytelling practices, indigenous agricultural practices, indigenous architecture, cultural traditions and ceremonies, indigenous crafts, and traditional leadership systems (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Byarugaba, 2018; UNCC, 2022). The cultural assets of the Bakiga have the potential to attract both domestic and international tourists seeking to experience Bakiga culture (Richards, 2018; UTB, 2023). Despite the richness of Bakiga cultural heritage, significant parts of the community's unique culture are under threat due to socio-economic changes, westernization, migration, the loss of younger generations' interest in preserving indigenous culture, and the like (Byarugaba, 2018; Nkwanga, 2017; UNESCO, 2023).

Kabale District is within a tourism circuit and has tourism potential; however, tourist attractions are mostly natural resources, while the cultural resources of the Bakiga receive less attention (UTB, 2023). Existing tourism developments are not successfully integrating tourism development with the conservation of local cultural resources, thereby resulting in the loss of potential revenues and benefits for local people (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

Community-based tourism provides an avenue to close this gap by creating channels for the Bakiga community to conserve, transmit, and display their rich cultural heritage while benefiting from these activities (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Dodds et al., 2018). The various forms of community-based tourism (e.g., cultural performances, heritage trails, dwellings, rituals, craft production, storytelling, local food, and participating in festivals of culture) can be used as part of providing psychological benefits to tourists and also provide incentives for heritage conservation (Richards, 2018; UNESCO, 2022). Supporting local communities or residents in tourism planning and management can facilitate community ownership, cultural pride, and the use of cultural resources (Goodwin, 2017; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

Although the significance of both conservation and community-based tourism has been acknowledged, it is difficult to find empirical studies on how to link these two elements within the Bakiga community of Kabale District. Empirical studies have largely treated conservation, tourism development, and the conservation of nature and artifacts as separate topics, without linking Bakiga heritage conservation and community-based tourism (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Nkwanga, 2017). This leaves a research and policy gap that affects the ability of stakeholders, such as policymakers, cultural institutions, tourism practitioners, and local communities, to develop strategies to link cultural conservation and community-based tourism in sustainable ways.

Thus, the objective of this study was to critically examine approaches to reconciling Bakiga heritage conservation with the promotion of community-based tourism in Kabale District, Uganda. The study intended to identify available heritage resources; investigate current approaches to heritage conservation and community-based tourism promotion; identify constraints to the integrated promotion of tourism and heritage conservation; and recommend ways to improve community-based tourism to support the integrated promotion of Bakiga heritage and socio-economic development.

Conceptual Background

The conceptual background of this study is based on fundamental concepts of heritage conservation, community-based tourism, and cultural conservation as a source of sustainable local community development. These concepts are fundamental to appreciating how various communities can protect their cultural heritage while using it as a tourist resource.

Heritage Conservation

Heritage preservation (Heritage conservation) involves protecting, conserving, managing, and passing down the cultural and historical resources from one generation to the next (ICCRROM, 2018; UNESCO, 2021). Heritage can be either tangible or intangible. Tangible heritage refers to physical resources, such as traditional homesteads, historical sites, old relics, monuments, tools, and cultural landscapes (UNESCO, 2021; ICOMOS, 2020). Intangible heritage encompasses non-physical resources, including community traditions, oral histories, cultural norms and practices, indigenous knowledge, language, music, dance, celebrations, and rituals (UNESCO, 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

Heritage conservation is the practice concerned with protecting and preserving cultural resources from decay, destruction, or total loss, ensuring their ongoing significance for present and future generations (UNESCO, 2021; ICOMOS, 2020). Heritage conservation necessitates the active involvement of community members, cultural institutions, local authorities, and other respective parties (ICCRROM, 2018; UNESCO, 2023). Specifically, for the Bakiga community, heritage conservation entails the preservation of indigenous cultural norms, rituals, indigenous agricultural practices, folklore, indigenous language, indigenous forms of entertainment, indigenous medicine, indigenous food preservation practices, traditional clothing, and other aspects of culture that have helped shape the history of the Bakiga community (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Uganda National Cultural Center, 2022).

Community-Based Tourism

CBT is a type of tourism in which the local community has considerable control over tourism development, management, and decision-making, and receives benefits from the activity (Dodds et al., 2018; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). CBT has the positive characteristics of encouraging local participation, cultural exchange, maintaining the natural environment, and generating economic benefits (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2020; Ahebwa et al., 2021).

The concept recognizes the participation of local people in delivering tourism services to visitors, such as accommodation, guiding, cultural activities, craft-making, food services, and interpreting or explaining local culture or environment (Dodds et al., 2018; UNWTO, 2020). CBT aims to offer an authentic experience to visitors and enhance the wellbeing of host communities while conserving resources (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018; Ahebwa et al., 2021). In Kabale District, CBT offers the Bakiga community a platform to showcase their culture and traditions through cultural villages, heritage trails, traditional music and dance, and storytelling (Uganda Tourism Board, 2022; Ahebwa et al., 2021).

Cultural Heritage as a Tourism Resource

The heritage resources and products of the local area have the potential to be popular tourist attractions, offering authentic cultural experiences (UNESCO, 2015; Richards, 2016). Heritage tourism encompasses visits that are motivated wholly or in part by interest in places, objects, and activities that authentically represent the stories

and people of the past and present (Timothy, 2017; Richards, 2016). Heritage tourism, if managed sustainably, has the potential to provide economic gains that can incentivize communities to conserve and share their heritage (UNESCO, 2015; World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2017).

A distinctive element of the Bakiga culture that the community can utilize for tourism development is its cultural heritage, including traditional music and dance, indigenous knowledge systems, traditional food, traditional architecture, traditional clothing, monuments and historical sites, and cultural ceremonies (MGLSD, 2015; Nkwanga, 2017).

Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainable tourism development is defined as the development of tourism that takes into account the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting opportunities for future generations (UNWTO, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). In the context of sustainable tourism development, the conservation of cultural heritage is indispensable because heritage resources are irreplaceable assets that should be preserved for future use (UNESCO, 2021; ICOMOS, 2020).

The potential of integrating heritage conservation with community-based tourism promotes sustainability, as tourism activities stimulate cultural preservation rather than destruction (Ahebwa et al., 2021; UNWTO, 2022). Tourism income can benefit communities, sustaining and preserving culture while developing local strength (UNESCO, 2023; WTTC, 2024).

Bridging the Gap Between Heritage Conservation and Community-Based Tourism

The relationship between heritage conservation and community-based tourism can sometimes be weak, as the two approaches are sometimes practiced completely separately. Heritage conservation may directly target the conservation of cultural resources without identifying their significance for tourism (Timothy, 2018), while tourism activities may be carried out without considering the conservation of nature and culture. For example, UNESCO (2015) reported that tourism and heritage conservation are pursued separately in some cases, such as in China.

To overcome this challenge, it is necessary to establish a win-win situation, in which cultural heritage becomes the base for the development of tourism activities (outsider-fetishized), and tourism activities, benefits, and incentives generate resources and motivation for the preservation of the added-value product (Richards, 2018; UNWTO, 2018). It is mandatory to enhance dialogue, implement inclusive and participatory practices, ensure community engagement, foster Collaboration, invest in cultural focus and education, design measures to protect culture, and promote the sustainable use, preservation, and management of resources (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018; UNESCO, 2019). A subsequent governing environment based on product authenticity, respect for cultural values, encouragement of local community ownership, and the provision of tourism-derived benefits is required (Goodwin, 2017; UNESCO, 2019).

Conceptual Linkage of the Study Variables

The independent variable is Bakiga cultural heritage conservation, while the dependent variable is community-based tourism promotion. The conservation of physical cultural relics, intangible cultural practices, and natural environment can result into cultural tourism enhancement in terms of increasing allurements of culture tourism products, tourists' satisfaction, tourism participation, and socio-economic benefit to host communities, and strengthening their cultural identity, safeguarding indigenous knowledge, and providing an authentic tourism experience (UNESCO, 2022; ICOMOS, 2023; UNWTO, 2023; World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2025).

In contrast, community tourism provides an alternative means of contributing to heritage preservation by generating income for heritage activities, promoting awareness of the importance of cultural values, facilitating intergenerational knowledge transfer, and fostering community commitment to respecting heritage resources (UNESCO, 2023; UNWTO, 2024). According to UNESCO (2022) and WTTC (2025), there is coexistence and

synergy between the two terms, thereby underpinning sustainable cultural tourism development in Kabale District.

This study adopts the premise that heritage conservation and community-based tourism are two integrated approaches to sustainable development. The sustainable development of Kabale District relies on conserving Bakiga cultural heritage to generate tourism resources and on community-based tourism to enhance the economic benefits and social animation by exploring the relationship between them.

Theoretical Background

Two knowledge domains that have also revolutionized the tourism literature are ST and CBT. Drawing on the unique cultural and archaeological resources of Kabale District, a tourism model can be developed to serve the needs of tourists and the host community (Dangi, T. B. & Jamal, T., 2016).

i. Heritage Tourism Theory:

Heritage tourism is a type of cultural tourism in which travelers visit destinations and engage with settings, objects, and activities that authentically reflect a place's stories and identity (Gordon, A., 2022). For example, in the Gabbie District, seven unique heritage sites and Bakiga cultural practices can be lucrative. Heritage tourism is an interdisciplinary concept that supports a sustainable, community-based tourism model for visitors seeking authentic heritage experiences. Tourism accounts for about 5 percent of the world economy in terms of GDP and is the largest service industry (Temiraliyeva et al., 2021). Museums & Heritage tourism sites have, in some situations, been at the hub of revitalizing entire cities or even entire countries (Whitaker, R., 2023).

ii. Community Development Theory:

Community participation (CP) in the natural environment is intrinsically vital and a generally accepted approach to achieving planning- and community-oriented purposes of tourism development (Shani, A., & Pizam, A., 2011). CP has been guided by community development (CD) theory, which is essentially founded on the principle of enabling communities themselves to solve their own problems through participatory processes, to restore social, economic, and environmental conditions (Westoby, P., 2015).

iii. Cultural Relativism:

Skoric, M. (2016) believes that ethical standards are not interchangeable across cultures and should be cherished in the leading cultural context to avoid corruption, thus building relationships and fostering mutual Understanding and tolerance between cultures. This theory also guards against discrimination and bias based on outward cultural appearance, as it provides cues about the value of cultural differences. The application entails celebrating this theory, which implies fostering the celebration of cultural differences; as a result, it benefits tourists and the tourism industry by fostering respectful, healthy competition among the Variable Cultural Heritage Places (Mayanthi Fernando, 2013; Riti Chandrashekhar, 2022; Kendra Cherry, 2023). Community participation through active involvement in decision-making, planning, and management of the CBT projects derived benefits for tourism and for historical, cultural, and natural resources (Alves de Abreu et al., 2024; Chami, M. F., 2018; Wali, N., 2019; Funds for NGOs, n.d.).

Historical Background

The people of the Bakiga are natives of Kabale District in southwestern Uganda, with a history dating back to their settlement in the Kigezi Highlands. Historically, the Bakiga earned a reputation for their resilience, communal spirit, and agricultural innovation, including the development of terraced farming techniques on the slopes of high hills to counteract erosion and make the land arable (Byarugaba, 2018; UNCC, 2022). Their traditions in areas such as oral storytelling, folklore, song, dance, and traditional rituals have also helped build a sense of identity and maintain respect for elders and ancestors across succeeding generations (UNESCO, 2017; UNCC, 2022).

During colonial rule, Kabale and the rest of the Kigezi region were incorporated into Uganda's administrative structure, leading to new socio-economic pressures. The influence of the church and formal education, as well as colonial agricultural practices, caused modifications to cultural practices, with a focus on cash crops replacing subsistence agricultural practices (Karugire, 2015; Uganda National Archives, 2020), but despite this, the Bakiga held one foot in their ancestral practices, and modernization was in due course beginning to modify some cultural practices (UNESCO, 2017; Nkwanga, 2017).

Following independence, migration and urbanization increased, as several Bakiga migrated to other regions seeking educational, employment, and economic leverage. While this fostered cultural exchange, it did affect the persistence of localized customs and indigenous practices (UBOS, 2021; UNESCO, 2017)—meanwhile, the scenic highland environment of Kabale, notably Lake Bunyonyi, has drawn attention from tourism perspectives. Conventional heritage sites, indigenous be mimes, and farming landscapes join Uganda's cultural tourism theme music (Uganda Tourism Board [UTB], 2023).

Over the last few decades, tourism in Kabale has grown significantly, attracting local and international tourists interested in experiencing new cultures and ecosystems. The expansion of tourism has both created opportunities and posed threats to the local community in Kabale. For instance, it has provided opportunities to promote Bakiga cultural heritage, raise awareness of cultural identity, and generate revenue for local communities, while the threats include the assimilation of local culture and alienation stemming from external control of tourism (Richards, 2018; UNWTO, 2022).

Historically, heritage conservation has competed with other development priorities, such as the economy and infrastructure, in Uganda. Still, culture has increasingly been recognized as an instrument of sustainable development through various international declarations, the United Nations Agenda, and national cultural policies (UNESCO, 2021; Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development [MGLSD], 2019). In such a context, Kabale could be a focal point for integrating heritage conservation with community-based tourism to empower the community, conserve culture, and foster people-centered development (Ahebwa et al., 2021; UTB, 2023). The historical trajectory of conservation of the agrarian-based sustainable communities, from the arrival of colonial rulers, subsequent independence, and modernist tourism to the present, can be used to shed light on some of the limitations, opportunities, and prospects for linking Bakiga heritage conservation with community-based tourism promotion (UNESCO, 2023; Ahebwa et al., 2021).

Contextual Background:

Kabale District is situated in the southwestern corner of Uganda. Its residents, the Bakiga, are predominantly from an agrarian society. Their culture is recognized for its kinship, labor economy, spoken language, terracing techniques from the highland region, cultivability, and narrative traditions that promote respect, effort, and association among kin groups. This knowledge, along with others, applies to the country's intangible cultural values and builds on the identity of this part of the country (UNESCO, 2017; UNCC, 2022).

Nevertheless, the forces of modernization, globalization, and socio-economic development are increasingly threatening the sustainability of the Bakiga heritage. Young people tend to move to urban areas, which has implications for the transmission of customs and traditions. Furthermore, art and cultural material are at risk of being commodified or further diluted when displayed to tourists, without proper community participation or an appropriate conservation program (Nkwanga, 2017; UNESCO, 2023). These issues underscore the importance of proactive approaches that leverage cultural identity as a strategic asset and ensure community-owned benefits (Ahebwa et al., 2021). The development of tourism in Kabale capitalizes on Lake Bunyonyi, the scenic highland landscape, and its proximity to gorilla tourism hotspots such as Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. With better infrastructure, Kabale can be an exemplary center for community-based tourism (CBT), which distinguishes itself from mass tourism by prioritizing local involvement, benefit-sharing, genuine cultural identities, and community empowerment (Dodds et al., 2018; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). When carefully linked to heritage conservation, CBT can establish a community-driven approach to buffer local identification from alien influences, while fostering cultural conservation and economic development (UNWTO, 2020; Ahebwa et al., 2021).

However, there are still many challenges. A lack of infrastructure, low awareness of cultural products, and unsystematic institutional support may pose barriers to incorporating heritage resources into the tourism industry (UTB, 2023; UNCC, 2022). In addition, in the absence of a clear, non-distortion definition of commercialization, tourism is sometimes used as a counterproductive tool and directly destroys culture rather than preserving it (Richards, 2018; UNESCO, 2023). Without good planning and community input, tourism can be detrimental to culture.

Thus, this study proposed investigating how to balance Bakiga heritage conservation with the promotion of community-based tourism to enhance cultural authenticity and prevent the erosion of cultural values, while ensuring community benefits. Framed for examination within global discourses of cultural sustainability in tourism, the findings here underscore the imperative of collaboratively focused, participatory processes, shared stakeholder interests, and holistic strategies to delineate a sustainable future for Bakiga community-based tourism (UNESCO, 2021; Ahebwa et al., 2021).

Research Problem

Kabale District has immense historical, cultural, and natural assets, with promising potential for tourism development and capacity building. Yet the district still struggles to enhance heritage conservation and tourism development. Although there are numerous cultural heritage resources, the Bakiga cultural heritage resources are underutilized in community-based tourism (CBT). The heritage potential and the promotion of community-based tourism (CBT) have not been well linked, thereby impeding the development of sustainable tourism and limiting the socio-economic benefits that local communities derive from their cultural resources in the district (Ninsiima & Akankwasa, 2023).

Industrializing cultural tourism in Kabale District means having a viable cultural tourism community, conserving Bakiga culture, ensuring effective local participation, and using tourism revenue to sustain livelihoods and conserve cultural Tourism resources. To achieve this, local people should decide how to use the cultural tourism resources and share the proceeds with institutional tourism stakeholders.

Despite the region's cultural richness, cultural tourism in Kabale has not been fully exploited (UTB, 2023). Several aspects of cultural traditions are rapidly eroding among locals, attributed to modernization and the attractiveness of urban life to youth (Nkwanga, 2017; Byarugaba, 2018). Further, limited local involvement in tourism planning (Ahebwa et al., 2021), lack of proper documentation of cultural relics (UNCC, 2022), and the saturation of hotels and most tourism activities around natural attractions like Lake Bunyonyi and the mountain gorilla escapements, cultural resources are largely under-exploited (UTB, 2023) have been noted.

The linkages among tourism, heritage conservation, and sustainable development should be emphasized through relevant implementation and participatory approaches. Tourism worldwide is recognized as an important pathway towards sustainable development, generating employment and income and enhancing local livelihoods, especially in developing countries (Mensah, 2019; UNWTO, 2023). In a holistic approach, sustainable tourism can contribute to inclusive growth and preservation of cultural and natural heritages (UNESCO, 2023).

The application of Bakiga heritage preservation can support the development of community tourism in Kabale District by fostering cultural conservation, community empowerment, and socio-economic change among local communities (Routledge, 2024). Nevertheless, there are various reasons for the existing disparity in this experience of community tourism; among others are: a limited number of conservation projects, lack of the full involvement of local communities, insufficient infrastructure, and the failure of the Bakiga to uphold their cultural identity (INOSR Publications, 2024; UNESCO, 2023).

In light of these common challenges, this paper aims to examine how to balance Bakiga cultural conservation and CBT development. The study intends to recommend approaches to tourism in which community benefits are equitably shared, cultural heritage is economically sustained, and is preserved (Ninsiima & Akankwasa, 2023).

Purpose of the study

This study aims to understand, within the framework of participatory research, how community-based tourism can be developed alongside the conservation of Bakiga cultural heritage in Kabale District, Uganda, to foster the preservation of this patrimony, the involvement of the local community, and the sustainable development of the local area.

Specific Objectives

1. To record the significance of cultural elements of the Bakiga cultural heritage to community members for preservation and tourism promotion in Kabale District.
2. To investigate how effective community-based tourism (CBT) is as a participative approach to a people's heritage preservation and simultaneously to produce a sustainable socio-economic outcome for a community.
3. To work with community stakeholders to craft strategies to enhance the intersection of Bakiga cultural heritage preservation and community-based tourism promotion.

Research Question

1. What elements of Bakiga cultural heritage are considered 'superior' and thus worth preserving by community members in Kabale District?
2. How might community-based tourism (CBT) act as a participatory mechanism for conservation of Bakiga cultural heritage and foster sustainable socio-economic development for local communities?
3. What measures **do** community participants suggest to improve the promotion of Bakiga cultural conservation and community-based tourism in Kabale District?

Justification of the study

Academic Justification: Even though there are a few studies on Bakiga heritage conservation in relation to community-based tourism (CBT) (Ahebwa et al., 2021) and carrying out cultural tourism in most of the areas of Buganda (Ahebwa et al., 2021), there is little in-depth documented study in the area of Bakiga heritage in Kabale District. This research helps to overcome this research gap.

Justification of method: This research is mainly based on the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. The approach is rarely used in studies of heritage tourism in Uganda. It can involve those who directly apply the information, as well as those who generate authentic knowledge.

Cultural justification: The Bakiga cultural heritage is under threat due to modernity, a lack of interest among the younger generation, and undocumented practices. This research aims to contribute to safeguarding intangible heritage.

Tourism Development Justification: Kabale District is rated as having strong potential for tourism development that is significant yet not fully exploited. The findings of this study inform the development of sustainable community-based tourism that benefits local people.

Policy justification: The findings will guide policymakers, community-based tourism practitioners, tourists, and cultural organizations in designing and planning effective policies and practices to adapt heritage preservation and community-based tourism (CBT) in Kabale District and similar places. The research aims to identify ways to reconcile traditional Bakiga practices with modern practices, offering solutions to current problems without hindering the development of community-based tourism. This knowledge, derived from the findings, can be used by policymakers and tourism stakeholders to support pragmatic local community practices and involvement in tourism, thereby serving community needs while ensuring the benefits of cultural conservation (Bennett et al., 2017).

Scope of the study:

The content scope, the geographic scope, and the time period will define the category scope. The combined scope of multiple categories will create a very nice flow during the work.

Content scope:

In essence, the study will examine the traditional Bakiga historical and cultural heritage to elucidate the differences between modern tourism practices and CBT development. The study will primarily focus on the endogenous Bakiga who are preserving heritage that is on the brink of exhaustion, thereby arguing for a knowledge-based destination attractive to tourists. In this regard, ensure that these local communities are involved not only in socio-economic enterprises but also in decision-making on the construction and property aspects of sustainable community-based tourism. The entire research will be aimed at achieving the specified research objectives. Additionally, the research will endeavor to include all key players and youth, and to pass on the Bakiga heritage. Hence, in different circumstances and different kinds of management approaches, as well as various types of cultural heritages present in the sub-continent, one should not be a strict rule; the local context should guide who takes part and/or how much that participation should be (Chirikure, S, Drec, et al) (2010): 30-44.

Geography scope:

The main focus of the study will be Kabale District, covering all three constituencies (McLeod 2014): Ndorwa West, Ndorwa East, and the Municipality) chosen due to its multi-ethnic character.

Time scope:

Scheduled to be completed within an annual period from the start date, that is, between June 2025 and June 2026, which will preserve traditional Bakiga culture with the new strategies and methods of tourism enhancement.

Significance of the study

Preservation of the Bakiga Heritage:

The issue initiates efforts to raise awareness among community members and stakeholders about protecting the rich, diverse Bakiga heritage in Kabale district. Assessment of the current state of Bakiga heritage makes stakeholders aware of the importance of protecting it from the effects of globalization, trade, technological progress, and homogenization.

Economic Advancement:

Tourism is one of the commercial sectors that are growing and have significant resource potential to create jobs for nations facing significant resource pressure. Community-based tourism projects, in particular, include, to a great extent, community participation in tourism activities that provide jobs mostly to the project communities, which directly complement heritage preservation, including the production of intangible heritage through community participation such as traditional arts and crafts, music and dance, narration, travel guiding, community walking tourism, tourism infrastructure, and food.

Advancement of Sustainable Tourism:

This is the public domain that requires inconspicuous, stable growth. Moving to a sustainable approach to tourism requires the participation of all stakeholders. CBT would be the Incendiary of this venture. It arrives at a secure platform by linking tourism with heritage management, thereby enabling charismatic sites to develop.

Influencing Policy and Planning:

The overall goal of the study was to raise awareness among all stakeholders and tourism players of the grounds for Bakiga heritage and how this can be aligned with the promotion of CBT, thus setting the stage for policy and planning debates.

Empowerment of Communities:

The research project explores the convergence of community-based tourism and Bakiga heritage conservation. This heritage leads to community-based tourism. It demands community participation and results in community empowerment. The culture bearers are equipped with Indigenous Tourism-related skills to conserve their cultural and historical heritage. Community-based tourism, with its link to heritage, enhances the TCH and its ICH components, which are crucial for socio-economic empowerment.

Contribution to Academia:

The research contributes to the academic field by strengthening an empirical project. It involves secondary school students and, at the same time, brings pedagogical considerations into the new curriculum. Learners at this level help rethink heritage conservation and environmental conservation, developing recycling projects. It has adopted an interdisciplinary approach across all education sectors, integrating tourism with all academic fields through a whole-school method. It has developed a heritage conservation contest manual to train a learning community of secondary schools by encouraging the younger generation to think about Uganda's Tourism development in relation to heritage conservation.

Organization of the study:

This dissertation is organized into six chapters:

Chapter one: Introduction - This chapter introduces the research background, the problem statement, purpose, objectives, research questions, rationale, scope, significance, and a description of the key concepts.

Chapter Two: Literature Review covers the theoretical framework, the theme of the literature on heritage tourism and the Center for Budget and Taxation (CBT), empirical studies conducted in Uganda and the East African region, as well as knowledge gaps.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology - Explains the research approach, the design of the Participatory Action Research, the study area, population, sampling procedures, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness strategies.

Chapter Four: Findings present the qualitative results based on the three objectives: heritage identified, full therapeutic potential of CBT, and a collaborative approach between the clinician and heritage.

Chapter Five: Discussion, conclusions and recommendations - Discusses findings and conclusions relative to theory and the literature. Appendix 3 presents recommendations, the study's contributions, and directions for future research.

Chapter Six: Implementation Framework - suggests an action framework, stakeholders' duties, mechanisms for monitoring & evaluation, a sustainability mechanism, and policy implications from the study results.

Definition of Terms

1. African Heritage: a collection of customs, traditions, beliefs, arts, history, and social and religious practices of people native to the continent of Africa with an emphasis on the cultural diversity of Kabale District, located in southwestern Uganda.

2. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) can be defined as any form of tourism which is developed and managed by the local communities and benefits them as well. It maintains their cultural identities.
3. Cultural Discrepancy: gap or incongruence between a community's traditional practices and values and the cultural beliefs.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter two critically reviews the relevant academic literature related to the study. The review is divided into four sections: theoretical literature, thematic literature, empirical literature, and synthesis of research gaps.

The theoretical review examines Heritage Tourism Theory, Community Development Theory, Cultural Ecology Theory, and Cultural Relativism Theory, all of which underpin this research. The thematic literature review discusses heritage-based tourism in Uganda, the effects of cultural tourism on local heritage, and the relationship between culture-based tourism and community livelihoods. The empirical reviews from Uganda and East Africa are critically examined to establish evidence on the implementation of culture-based tourism, its problems, and consequences.

In the same vein, the chapter ends with a synthesis that reveals knowledge gaps in this area of study, particularly the lack of prior research on Bakiga heritage conservation and CBTO practices in Kabale District. This confirms the originality of our study in contribution to knowledge and practice.

Theoretical review of literature

This theoretical review examines the concept of community in the context of heritage conservation and community-based tourism (CBT) in Kabale District. It helps provide the intellectual basis for Understanding how heritage conservation could be integrated with CBT and how the issues of sustainability, participation, authenticity, and socio-economic exchange could be explained within tourism development and heritage concepts (UNWTO, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). The theoretical issues could help lead to an Understanding of how communities could participate in tourism development while protecting their cultural resources, thereby strengthening their identity and facilitating perceived socio-economic exchange (Ahebwa et al., 2021).

In the thesis, the following four theories, developed from the literature review, serve as the basis.

Heritage Tourism Theory;

Existing literature indicates that the rise of cultural tourism in Uganda has increased the visibility of heritage resources and enhanced community livelihoods. Still, it has also exposed communities to challenges, including the commercialization and commodification of cultural traditions (UNESCO, 2012, 2015). Inappropriate community participation and management of tourism activities, without conservation mechanisms, limit community ownership of benefits and exacerbate the erosion of cultural authenticity (UNESCO, 2012; Richards, 2016). With few studies exploring why and how the Bakiga heritage in Kabale District can be systematically integrated with community-based tourism initiatives, this gap is one of the objectives of this study (Nkwanga, 2017).

For a country, inherited cultural, natural, historical, and traditional attributes are significantly important to the development of its social and economic levels. Investing in the preservation of cultural and natural heritage can generate employment, empowerment, and sustainable development for local communities (Guzmán & Roders, 2017). Enhancement of the sense of local identity is vital for strengthening cultural continuity and successful local participation in development (Ashworth et al., 2013). Similarly, historic, cultural and natural heritage resources can be used to promote learning, innovation and economic diversification through tourist development and the product of related endeavors (Van et al., 2015).

Conservation of the natural environment helps protect sites of physical landscapes and ecosystems of outstanding universal value. UNESCO World Heritage sites are protected areas whose key natural and cultural features have

ecological, educational, scientific, or socio-economic value for present and future generations (Cave & Negussie, 2017; UNESCO, 2017). These areas may contain rare geological formations, support relevant biodiversity, or be of significant cultural importance due to their relationship to the local environment. The preservation of these heritage sites is a shared burden due to their universal significance for the benefit of all humanity (Osipova et al., 2017).

Heritage tourism can raise awareness and Understanding of cultural and natural heritage and can be employed in collaborative tourism planning and management by stimulating community participation. With the active participation of the community, heritage tourism can be effective for conservation, community development, and an enhancement of local identity and socio-economic effects (Richards, 2016; UNWTO, 2017).

Community Development Theory:

Community is an anthropological phenomenon shaped largely by human interaction, and community development plays an important role in improving the social relationships among its people and enhancing their well-being. Community development is about enhancing local conditions or, in other words, structures (including social support, local enterprise development, social inclusion and democratic strengthening) (Deffinika et al., 2022; United Nations, 2020), with focuses on “enabling peoples’ efforts and skills to directly or indirectly use their knowledge, skills, talents and other resources to identify and solve community development problems and improve their quality of life” (Deffinika et al., 2022; United Nations, 2020). As such, community development is a pragmatic approach grounded in relationships and social capital building, in which communities work together to build resilience to various social, economic, and environmental challenges (OECD, 2021).

The approach to community development centers on communities practicing collective action, informal education, and organizational development as means of building confidence, skills, and capacity among community members and groups to influence decisions that affect their lives (Deffinika et al., 2022). Community-based tourism (CBT) shares the same philosophy as the above community development approach, as it encourages “ownership, management and control of tourism by local communities” to benefit local communities through community members' involvement in decision-making and the sharing of benefits derived from tourism products. Community-based tourism development aims to create employment opportunities, enhance household income, and conserve the environment and cultural resources that give a sense of community identity (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2020; UNWTO, 2021).

Another way in which community activities facilitate learning is by enabling community members to gain skills through observing, participating in, or undertaking activities. This type of experiential learning helps build the community's capacity by enabling community members to work together to find solutions to shared problems and achieve their goals (Kolb, 2019). In addition, community development not only addresses a community's problems but also fosters an inclusive community where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate (United Nations, 2020).

Tourism is increasingly recognized as a means of promoting development, especially for rural or disadvantaged groups. Community-based tourism (CBT) aims to enable vulnerable local communities to access tourism benefits by keeping profits within their own communities. CBT broadly supports the concept of sustainable tourism by promoting responsible resource use and empowering local communities as change agents (UNWTO, 2021; OECD, 2021). The concept of CBT has emerged as a new paradigm of sustainable and responsible tourism, in which communities are involved as true decision-makers in determining how tourism activities will be carried out in their local area (Goodwin, 2019).

The definition of community-based tourism (CBT) has its roots in a previous system, in which CBT was conceptually linked to community involvement in tourism development. Current knowledge of CBT conceptualizations focuses on participation, empowerment, benefits, and the community's influence in the planning and management of tourism (Giampiccoli & Saayman 2020). Several similar concepts in tourism, such as pro-poor tourism and community benefit tourism, have been used to identify strategies for generating tourism income and using local resources to alleviate poverty.

Development must pursue community-based approaches through participatory models that engage multiple communities and stakeholders, including women, children/youth, aged persons, local communities, village leaders, and local cultural and traditional custodians. Sustainable tourism development at the local level needs to find a way to reinforce local ownership, ownership of the community or communities, taking full measures with cultural diversity and local practices, support and integrate indigenous/traditional practices with the concept of environmental sustainability as fundamental components of community-based sustainable tourism development (Mellinia et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

Development efforts can only be effective if local people are involved in planning and decision-making. Regarding CBT in Kabale District, the participation of elders, youth, women, and traditional leaders in the planning process should lead to increased ownership of the tourism initiatives, sharing the benefits of CBT infrastructure, and the long-term sustainability of these initiatives (Ahebwa et al., 2021; UNWTO, 2023).

Cultural Ecology Theory:

Lifestyles and interactions with the environment can greatly impact a culture's way of life and social world. Cultural ecology is the study of the relationship between human societies and their environments. It emphasizes the role that ecology has in shaping people's mode of production, worldview, and cultural behavior (Sutton & Anderson, 2020). In addition, this theory, which was developed in the 1950s by Julian Steward, describes the impact of the environment on cultural adaptation, social organization, and resource utilization (Harris, 2021).

Cultural ecology recognizes that a community's food practices, language, dress, customs, and belief systems are largely shaped by the environment in which they live (Sutton & Anderson, 2020). This is integral to heritage preservation and tourism, as it enables a community to present its culture to tourists while also safeguarding and conserving it to sustain it for future generations (UNESCO, 2021).

Cultural Relativism Theory

Regarding the concept of cultural relativism, it refers to Understanding and accepting, or valuing, different cultures. Respect and Understanding of cultural diversity are crucial in complex multicultural societies and play a critical role in tourism when tourists and hosts from different cultural backgrounds interact. Tourism is a process and a phenomenon that provides opportunities for tourists and hosts through interaction between two different cultures; local people offer their customs, behaviors, traditions, and values to tourists and vice versa (Richards, 2018; UNESCO, 2021). Therefore, mutual respect, Understanding, and appreciation of cultural differences are regarded as good principles in sustainable tourism and community-based tourism (CBT) development (Sevmini, 2023).

What is the difference between cultural relativism and ethnocentrism? Ethnocentrism is the practice of comparing and evaluating another culture's practices against one's own culture. It is closely related to the negative attitude and judgments one has about that culture. In contrast, cultural relativism holds that one should understand the practices of other cultures in the context of their respective social and historical settings, rather than in relation to the values and norms of one's own culture (Hofstede et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2021). Cultural relativism can create opportunities for cultural exchange and interaction between tourists and the host culture.

Cultural relativism is a crucial factor in community-based tourism, as it fosters respect for local cultures, indigenous knowledge, and customs. Recognizing different cultural viewpoints is necessary to enhance the participation of local communities in tourism development and to diminish ethnocentrism (Richards, 2018; UNWTO, 2021). However, ethnocentric views may be considered a constraint on some CBT endeavors, such as homestays or cultural performances, where interaction is supported by mutual respect, Understanding, and acceptance (Goodwin, 2017).

Adopting cultural relativism can enhance Collaboration, social cohesion, and camaraderie among people of various cultures. Cultural understanding is significant in multicultural societies, as ethnocentric thinking can lead to social divisions and hinder cultural exchange. Cultural relativism holds that cultures possess different values, beliefs, and social practices within their own contexts (UNESCO, 2019; Sevmini, 2023).

Individually and collectively, these four concepts offer a multi-faceted approach to analyze how the conservation of Bakiga tourism heritage is managed and integrated with CBT in Kabale. They reveal how the conservation of traditional heritage tourism practices in Kabale encompasses both cultural activities and community-level development, balancing community sustainability and economic benefits. By incorporating the perspectives of Heritage Tourism, Community Development, Cultural Ecology, and Cultural Relativism, this study contextualizes the heritage-tourism relationship in Kabale within the global perceptions of cultural sustainability, community participation and development, and sustainable tourism promotion (UNWTO, 2021; UNESCO, 2023).

Actual Literature Review

This approach could help ensure that the community benefits from tourism and that their past/heritage is preserved for future generations.

Heritage-Driven Tourism in Uganda

The case study on the cultural tourism strategy adopted by the Buganda Kingdom sheds light on how heritage resources can drive socio-economic change with the support of institutions, governance, and the policy environment (KMF Publishers, 2023). The case study reveals how cultural tourism can improve cultural exposure, create avenues for community development, and promote identity, but only with planning, infrastructure, and institutional preparation (KMF Publishers, 2023). This is important and relevant to Kabale District because it shows how the policy framework, stakeholder participation, and institutional preparation are important for integrating cultural resource conservation with community-based tourism.

Impacts of Cultural Tourism on Local Heritage

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism that emphasizes the way of life, traditions, history, art, architecture, beliefs, and other cultural features that define and represent the culture of diverse groups (Ahebwa et al., 2021). Cultural tourism offers ways to experience local cultures and, at the same time, to leverage local heritage resources for community development (UNWTO, 2021).

Studies on cultural tourism in Uganda indicate its bifurcated effects. While cultural tourism helps to sustain, preserve, and promote cultural expressions (festivals, wares, music, and dance), and generate income and visibility for local communities (Ahebwa et al., 2021; UTB, 2023), it tends to commercialize, adapt, or distort traditions to tourists' expectations (UNESCO, 2022; Richards, 2022).

This issue reflects the need for sustainable tourism practices that simultaneously boost the economy while minimizing the risk of cultural authenticity and community ownership depreciation. For the Bakiga community to sustain its heritage through community-based tourism in Kabale District, approaches such as integrated infrastructure, community sensitization and commitment, and responsible tourism development and management should be encouraged (UNESCO, 2023; Ahebwa et al., 2021).

Culture-Based Tourism and Community Livelihoods

Kabaka Heritage Trail's case shows that culture-based tourism has the potential to serve as a tool for cultural conservation and for improving community livelihoods. A tourism trail can help conserve culture while also benefiting local people; however, these benefits can be realized only if tourism development is implemented with effective marketing, institutional support, and community involvement (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Richard, 2018).

The results also highlight that heritage-tourism linkages are more sustainable when local communities are empowered to participate in the planning, decision-making, and benefit-sharing of tourism activities (UNESCO, 2021; UNWTO, 2022). Community participation contributes to increased local ownership, increased pride in their culture, and a greater potential for heritage linkages to positively impact heritage preservation and the socio-

economic development of local people. This is relevant in understanding how the Bakiga heritage in Kabale District can be accessed in community-based tourism.

Empirical Studies:

Empirical research provides qualitative and quantitative data on how heritage conservation and community-based tourism (CBT) have been carried out in multiple case studies, highlighting the successes, challenges, and lessons learned that can also inform the case of Kabale District.

Heritage and Tourism in Uganda

A study of the Kabaka Heritage Trail in Buganda found that cultural tourism can help preserve heritage sites and improve community livelihoods. The authors argued that Community participation, stakeholder partnerships, and creative marketing methods are critical determinants of the sustainability of cultural tourism (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Uganda Tourism Board [UTB], 2023).

Another key lesson from this report is that heritage-tourism linkages can be more effective when local communities are engaged in shaping tourism plans and are helped to share tourism benefits. The involvement strengthens local ownership and enhances cultural pride, leading to higher socio-economic benefits and heritage preservation (UNESCO, 2021; UNWTO, 2022).

Community-Based Tourism Models in East Africa

CBT projects in Kenya and Tanzania, for example, were reported to improve community income, enhance community participation and bolster community culture, despite lacking infrastructural and institutional support and tending to lead to the commodification of local traditions in response to the constraints of tourist markets (Goodwin, 2017; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018; UNWTO, 2021).

These issues are pertinent to Kabale District, where comparable obstacles to infrastructure provision, policy harmonization, and community participation are likely to impede successful integration of Bakiga culture preservation in community-based tourism development. Closing these gaps calls for inclusive strategies that foster community participation, management of tourism resources, and preservation of heritage values (UNESCO, 2019; Ahebwa et al., 2021).

Gender and inclusiveness in heritage tourism.

Empirical evidence from Uganda indicates that women and youth are actively engaged in cultural transmission, conservation processes, and tourism activities/stakeholders, but their contributions to these activities are not considered significant within formal tourism development policies and frameworks (UNESCO, 2017; Ahebwa et al., 2021). Women are actively engaged in the transmission of local cuisines; performing traditional arts, crafts, and music plays a vital role in conserving heritage and sharing indigenous knowledge with tourists (Richards, 2018; Uganda Tourism Board [UTB], 2023)

Youth participation is equally important in contributing to the sustainable development of heritage through knowledge transmission, innovation, and the adaptation of cultural resources for modern tourism (UNESCO, 2021). These findings focus on the relevance of gender-sensitive approaches and inclusive development in Kabale: Patcs heritage tourism to attain inclusive participation, community ownership, and sustainable cultural tourism.

Socio-Economic Impacts of CBT

In a case study in Rwanda in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, the community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives proved to be a means to reduce poverty, promote entrepreneurship, improve livelihoods, and increase community resilience by providing access for the local community to tourism activities and development (Ahebwa et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2021). Nonetheless, the tourism benefits are often not shared equally with some community

groups and communities having limited voice in tourism decision-making, control over tourism opportunities, and access to tourism activities (Nkwanga, 2017; UNWTO, 2020).

Thus, these findings indicate the need for fair benefit-sharing, participatory governance, and community involvement in tourism development. In the case of Kabale District, the involvement of all groups, such as women, youth, and marginalized community groups, in planning and benefiting from tourism activities is critical to the attainment of sustainable heritage and community-based tourism, as posited by UNESCO (2023) and Ahebwa et al. (2021).

Documentation of Intangible Heritage

Several studies in Uganda reveal that oral traditions, rituals, indigenous knowledge, and community-based cultural activities are poorly documented and have not been adequately represented in the museum system or incorporated into tourism development programs. Proper conservation and safekeeping of intangible cultural heritage ensure the authenticity of cultural values and identity, and the transmission of cultural knowledge from generation to generation (UNESCO 2017; UNESCO 2022).

In the Kabale District, this means that the regular recording of practices of Bakiga such as folklore, traditional practices, indigenous knowledge systems, music and dance, and cultural rites of passage should be prioritized as a basis for good tourism product development, as the community's identity is preserved (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Uganda National Cultural Center [UNCC], 2022).

Research findings from Uganda and other parts of East Africa indicate that community-based tourism (CBT) has the potential to contribute to heritage conservation, livelihood enhancement, and community empowerment. Still, it requires genuine community engagement and participation, equality and inclusion, the promotion of authenticity and cultural integrity, benefit-sharing, strong institutional support, and sustainable methodologies (Goodwin, 2017; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018; UNWTO, 2021). Based on the above research findings, it is justifiable to recommend further research to fill the existing research gap linking Kigezi sub-region's Bakiga heritage conservation with community-based tourism promotion in Kabale District (UNESCO, 2023; Ahebwa et al., 2021).

Analysis of Bakiga Heritage:

The Bakiga cultural heritage encompasses a historical background and cultural and natural heritage; in other words, their belief systems, customary practices, and the values attached to them are rich in heritage. Equally, the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods depicted a tradition-rich Bakiga historical background. The Bakiga traditional cultural expressions are reflected in the animation dance, folk stories, and food preparation. The rugged Rocky Mountains and hills provide a natural heritage that requires preservation. In fact, the name "Kabale," which translates to "small stones," is derived from that geographic natural heritage.

Review of Tourism Practices:

The research assesses tourism activities in Kabale District, Uganda. Furthermore, the research measures community participation in the tourism industry, as well as the support provided by residents to social or economic livelihood-generation practices. Moreover, the research intervenes to support community-based tourism through specific modes of tourism formulation to pursue socioeconomic benefits.

Assessment of Impact:

Given the research project under study on Bakiga Heritage preservation and the in-depth study underway, this will be a positive step for local community members, creating awareness of the existing tourism potential and CBT growth. Involving the local community in tourism development will bring many players together, creating a destination loved by holiday visitors interested in cultural totality.

Strategies for Integration:

Community mobilization, community planning and the formation of community organizations, school participation programs, exhibitions, and skills enhancement programs can be considered innovative strategies for strengthening integration. Restoration of the region's literary traditions and ecosystems can support the entire integration process.

Inclusion of Case Studies:

These two case studies will identify a potential functional CBT framework in Kabale district by which a holistic tourism approach can be developed and actively promoted.

Implications for Policy:

Concerning learning strategies, the enlightened policymakers are to deliberately consider designing a viable policy that would fully enable community participation, so that the aforesaid research issues may emerge.

Synthesis of the literature review

The literature reviewed here, including theoretical advances, the existing literature, and case studies, clearly contributes to a better theoretical Understanding of the linkage between Bakiga cultural conservation and CBT in Kabale District.

Theoretical Literature

A synthesis of the above theories of sustainable development, cultural sustainability, participatory development, social exchange, and authenticity in tourism shows that heritage–tourism linkages need to strike a balance among cultural conservation, community participation, and the socio-economic progress of community members.

Actual Literature

Research and Literature Available on Cultural Tourism Today in Uganda: There is both positive and negative commentary on cultural tourism as it is currently practiced. The literature indicates that heritage tourism can also lead to the renaissance of tradition, increase earnings, establish new economies, stimulate innovation, conservation, and preservation of culture, encourage participation, foster community livelihood empowerment and sustainable development, among others. However, if conservation and preservation, among others, are not properly implemented and sustained, they could easily damage the heritage itself or cause it to become extinct. Both government and private investors need to provide institutional and infrastructural support; stimulate, encourage, and sustain the innovative marketing of this heritage worldwide; preserve the heritage and community consciousness of it; and involve the entire community in this endeavor. Even though it has both positive and negative implications, most literature and studies on heritage tourism focus on Buganda and other regions, leaving the Bakiga heritage in Kabale District under-researched.

Empirical Literature

As evidence from Ugandan and East African studies shows, community-based tourism (CBT) can offer benefits for local economies, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the strengthening and resilience of local communities. Furthermore, research on cultural and community tourism projects indicates that tourism can bring socio-economic benefits to local communities when they are involved in all aspects of planning, development, and management of tourism practices (Goodwin, 2017; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

The examples of the Kabaka Heritage Trail and CBT around the Conservation Area show that their contributions to local income, culture, and community participation are improving. However, they also indicate ongoing issues with tourism benefits not being shared evenly, a lack of proper infrastructure and services, and insubstantial institutional and political support, which could make some CB towns' tourism efforts unsustainable (Richards, 2018; Goodwin, 2017).

Empirical evidence also demonstrates that women and youth frequently have prominent roles in transmitting culture, practicing traditional crafts, engaging in storytelling and tourism, with their contributions often overlooked (Richards, 2018). Enhancing inclusiveness is thus crucial to facilitate CBT toward sustainable development, cultural maintenance, and community resilience.

Research Gaps

Table 1: Research Gap Matrix, indicating description and how objectives cover it

Gap Type	Description	How Objective Addresses It
Contextual Gap	Limited research on Bakiga heritage specifically; existing studies focus on other Ugandan communities	Objective 1 documents Bakiga-specific heritage elements in Kabale District
Empirical Gap	Few empirical studies on heritage-CBT integration in Uganda; most are descriptive or theoretical	Objective 2 provides empirical evidence on CBT potential through community-generated data
Methodological Gap	Limited use of PAR in Ugandan heritage tourism research; most studies use conventional qualitative methods	PAR methodology (applied across all objectives) ensures community participation and co-creation of knowledge
Practical Gap	No locally-developed strategies for heritage-CBT integration in Kabale; existing approaches imported from other contexts	Objective 3 collaboratively develops context-specific strategies with community stakeholders
Policy Gap	Limited evidence to inform policy on community-based cultural tourism in Kabale	All objectives generate evidence for policy recommendations (Chapter Five)

Summary of Literature Gaps

However, no research has been conducted on the infusion of Bakiga heritage in Kabale District. Though similar studies have been done on other Ugandan communities, such as the Buganda in southwestern Uganda and Bwindi in western Uganda, these tourism studies have focused on natural rather than cultural tourism. This information is vital, given that the specific resources, challenges, and opportunities in Kabale District are unique and require focused/context specific research. Notwithstanding these studies, none have specifically addressed the integration of Bakiga heritage and community-based tourism in Kabale District. The study therefore attempts to fill this gap by documenting Bakiga-specific traditions, customs, norms, and values; designing participatory frameworks for integrating cultural heritage into CBT; and exploring the roles of gender, youth, and stakeholders in the sustainability of heritage-tourism linkages.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

Chapter three of the study illustrates the approach used in the study, “Bridging the gap between Bakiga heritage conservation and promotion of community-based tourism in Kabale District –Uganda”. It will present the research approach, the Participatory Action Research (PAR) design, the study area, the target population, the sampling procedures, the data collection methods, the data analysis procedures, the ethical considerations, and the methods used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study's findings.

This study used a participatory action research (PAR) methodology to generate knowledge, facilitate Collaboration, and develop solutions to community and social problems through the involvement of community members and stakeholders (MacDonald, 2017; Kindon et al., 2017). (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Cornwall, 2015).

(UNESCO, 2021; UNWTO, 2023).

Research Approach

Using a framework of questions (Qualitative Participatory Action Research), I will engage in dialogue with respondents in Kabale District.

Research Design

The study adopted Participatory Action Research (PAR). Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a community-based, collaborative research process and method by which research is created through the joint efforts of researchers and community members identifying problems, developing knowledge, reflecting, and developing actions that result in social change and community improvement (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020; Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). PAR methodology highlights that knowledge is generated through researcher-participant interactions, not by researchers alone, and is therefore appropriate for studies underpinned by co-constructed empowerment in community and local development processes (MacDonald, 2017; Kindon et al., 2017).

(Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020; Cornwall, 2015).

The research was conducted using the Plan-Act-Observe-Reflect process. This indicates CIPO cycles that participants used to reflect on the current state of affairs, plan actions, carry out proposed actions, and then revisit their planning decisions by reflecting on and critiquing the awareness and experience gained, and sharing it as a group to jointly inform future actions (Kemmis et al., 2019). In these cycles, participants did, however, identify key Bakiga heritage resources, learn about existing sector practices, discuss situations and challenges, and plan sustainable strategies for incorporating sanctuary-building activities into CBC projects (International Association for Public Participation [IAP2], 2018; UNESCO, 2022).

Population and Sampling

The researcher focused on the population in Kabale District, sampling Community members, cultural leaders, tourism actors, government officials, community initiatives, artisans, youths, educators, and students from the three constituencies of Kabale Municipality, Ndorwa East, and Ndorwa West.

Study Area

This research was carried out in Kabale District, one of the districts in southwestern Uganda (corresponding to 1°15' S, 29°59' E). The district has an area of around 1,827 square kilometers. Kisoro District borders it to the west, Rukungiri District to the north, Rubanda District to the east, and the Republic of Rwanda to the south.

The Bakiga people mainly populate the region, and their culture is reflected in dances, stories, indigenous knowledge, places of interest, traditional dwellings, language, crafts, traditional events, cultural way of life and practices, and farming methods and techniques (Byarugaba, 2018; UNESCO, 2021). Bakiga have continued to uphold unique cultural values that emphasize social cooperation, interaction, and adaptation to the highland setting (Nkwanga, 2017).

The choice of Kabale was supported by sound scientific grounds because: First, there was a significant accumulation of Bakiga cultural heritage within Kabale district that could be used to analyze heritage conservation and transmission (UNESCO, 2021). Secondly, Kabale's tourism potential was both existing and emerging, providing a good opportunity to explore the role of cultural resources in tourism products and community livelihood strategies (Richards, 2018; UTB, 2023). Thirdly, Kabale falls within the scope of community-based tourism, as community participation, ownership, and benefit sharing are pillars of sustainable tourism development (Goodwin, 2017; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

Moreover, Kabale faces conservation and development challenges, including modernization, changing lifestyles, and a lack of documentation of cultural traditions. The district has to reconcile tourism demand with heritage preservation (Ahebwa et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2019). The district is also representative of many rural cultural

landscapes in Uganda, where local communities utilize the vast natural resources and cultural traditions they have. This contextual situation makes the district adaptable and manageable for deriving lessons from it (UNWTO, 2023). Accessibility and availability of primary research participants (cultural leaders, community members, tourism stakeholders, and local leaders and authorities) also favor Kabale as a research site (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To sum up, the choice of Kabale district as the study site was because of its distinctive features in terms of the diversity of Bakiga cultural remnants, its touristic relevance, and other contemporary conservation concerns, which are considered ideal grounds to explore and advance strategies to lessen the discordance that exists between (Bakiga) cultural souvenirs preservation vis-à-vis community-based tourism (CBT) advocacy. Furthermore, Kabale would be ideal for research that can inform evidence-based recommendations that support cultural sustainability, community capacity building, and community socio-economic development (UNESCO, 2023; UNWTO, 2024)

Study population/Target Population

Target Population: Community members, cultural leaders, tourism actors, government officials, informants, educators, and students who participated in the conservation of Bakiga culture and the development of community-based tourism in Kabale District.

Accessible Population - The residents of the three constituencies of Kabale District and other key informants who agreed to take part in the study.

Participant Categories:

Table 2 provides the framework for this research. This matrix classifies participants by their investment goals and investment areas. There are 4 categories of investors: the conservative, the balanced, the progressive, and the investor.

Table 2: Participant Categories Matrix Justification.

Category	Description	Justification
Community Elders	Individuals aged 60+ with knowledge of Bakiga traditions	Knowledge holders of indigenous practices
Youth	Individuals aged 15-35	Future heritage custodians; target group for intergenerational transfer
Cultural Leaders	Traditional leaders and cultural custodians	Official knowledge guardians
Tourism Actors	Tour operators, guides, cultural performers	Practitioners involved in tourism delivery
Local Government	District and sub-county officials	Policy and planning roles
Teachers	Secondary school teachers	Heritage education delivery
Students	Secondary school students (15-20 years)	Intergenerational perspective
Artisans	Craftspeople and traditional practitioners	Material culture knowledge
Museum Staff	Kabale Regional Museum personnel	Heritage documentation expertise

Determination of the Sample Size

The sample size for this study was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula, which is widely applied in social Science research to determine an appropriate sample size from a known population while considering the desired level of precision (Taherdoost, 2020; Singh & Masuku, 2021). The formula is expressed as:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$$

Where:

n = required sample size

N = target population size (100)

e = level of precision or margin of error (0.05)

Using a target population of 100 and a margin of error of 0.05:

Target population = 100

Margin of error = 0.05

$$n = 100 / (1 + 100(0.05^2)) = 100 / 1.25 = 80$$

$$10\% \text{ non-response adjustment: } 80 + 8 = 88$$

Table 3: Actual Sample Achieved

Category	Target	Achieved	Method
Community Elders	15	15	Purposive
Youth	20	20	Purposive/Snowball
Cultural Leaders	10	10	Purposive
Tourism Actors	12	12	Purposive
Government Officials	8	8	Purposive
Teachers	12	12	Purposive
Students	18	18	Purposive
Artisans	5	5	Purposive
TOTAL	100	100	

The sample size for this study was calculated using Yamane's (1967) formula, a simple sampling procedure used in the social sciences to determine sample size from a known population, given the required precision (Taherdoost, 2020; Singh & Masuku, 2021). The formula is.:

$$N = N / (1 + N (e^2))$$

Where: **n** = number of sample needed **N** = size of population of interest (100) **e** = degree of error or precision required (0.05)

Using a target population of 100 and a margin of error of 0.05:

Population size = 100. Degree of accuracy = $0.05n = 0.05 (100) = 5$
 $n = 100 / 1 + 100(.05) = 100 / 1.05 = 95.238$
 $2n = 100 / 1.25 = 80$

10% non-response adjustment: $80 + 8 = 88$

Justification: The actual sample of 100 participants provided sufficient information richness and reached data saturation.

Hence, the required sample size was **80 respondents**. It was decided to add 10% to the sample size to account for non-response and to ensure that the required number of completed questionnaires were obtained:

$$80 + (80 \times 0.10) = 88$$

Therefore, **88 respondents** were sampled to ensure at least **80** completed questionnaires for analysis. The use of an adjusted sample size is advised in research to mitigate the effects of nonresponse and enhance the robustness of research findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Taherdoost, 2020).

Sampling techniques & Procedure

Sampling. The purposive and participatory sampling methods were used.

Purposive Sampling

Target group sampling was employed to select relevant stakeholders with in-depth awareness, knowledge, practice, and experience in Bakiga cultural heritage and community-based tourism. Target group sampling is a non-probabilistic sampling technique in which individuals are selected for their high levels of knowledge, experience, and relevance to the study's knowledge and situational needs (Campbell et al., 2020; Palinkas et al., 2021).

Inclusion criteria: Senior elders: 60 years and above; Permanent settlers: 20 years in Kabale district or more; Knowledgeable of Bakiga cultures and practices. The younger respondents, aged 15 to 35 years, living in Kabale district, express willingness to participate and provide informed consent. The Cultural Leaders: recognized by the community as custodians of Culture. The Tourism Actors: earning a living from tourism activities for 2 years or more, working in the field of culture and Tourism. The Government officials: those working in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Local Government. The teachers: those who have been teaching in Kabale district for 3 years or more. The students: those studying in secondary schools of Kabale district. The artisans: those who have practiced traditional skills for 5 years or more.

Exclusion criteria: persons aged less than 15 years (except students), people unaware of their Bakiga origin, those not living in Kabale District, and those who did not consent.

Selection Process: The researcher held community meetings to identify knowledgeable potential participants. Community leaders pointed them out. The researcher checked with each one that they met the inclusion criteria for participation, were contacted by the researcher, were informed about the study, and signed informed consent.

Participatory Sampling

Participatory sampling was employed to engage the community and key stakeholders in identifying additional potential informants with experiential knowledge and language skills relevant to the conservation of Bakiga culture and community-based tourism. This method ensures that a diverse community voice is included in the research process and that different community perspectives and experiences are reflected (Creswell & Creswell, 2024; UNESCO, 2025).

The ultimate sample size was based on information richness and saturation, with the sample size determined once no new themes, concepts, or meanings emerged from further interviews or contacts (Hennink & Kaiser,

2024; Braun & Clarke, 2025). This is appropriate for qualitative and participatory research, where samples are selected based on knowledge accumulation rather than statistical generalization, to gain in-depth insight into community experiences and perspectives.

Data Collection Methods & Instruments

Data were collected in a participatory manner, facilitated by community members and stakeholders, thereby generating dialogue and reflection.

Participatory Focus Group Discussions

Four focus group discussions were also held with various stakeholders to understand perceptions of heritage conservation, tourism opportunities, stakeholder participation, and the challenges hindering the integration of the Bakiga heritage into CBT. Focus group discussion is a qualitative research method that enables individuals to express their experiences, discuss issues, and jointly reflect on issues affecting their communities (Dilshad & Latif, 2022; Nyumba et al., 2021).

Table 4: Participatory Focus Group Discussions Matrix.

FGD Details	Information
Number of FGDs	15
Participants per FGD	6-8
Total FGD participants	100
Duration per FGD	60-90 minutes
Locations	Community centers, schools, cultural sites across 3 constituencies
Languages	Rukiga and English (with translation)
Recording	Audio recording with participant consent; field notes

Table 5: FGD Composition

FGD Type	Number	Participants
Community elders	3	6-8 elders each
Youth groups	3	6-8 youth each
Cultural leaders	2	6-8 leaders each
Tourism actors	2	6-8 actors each
Mixed community	3	6-8 mixed participants
School-based	2	6-8 teachers/students each

The sessions were also designed to facilitate conversations, collective learning, and the identification of common issues among participants. Focus groups in participatory research can be co-created, co-moderated, and co-analyzed with community members to integrate local knowledge and experience in research (Nyumba et al.,

2021). Therefore, a focus group discussion guide was prepared and used to ensure adherence to predetermined topics while encouraging discussion of issues as they arise to inform art- and community-based tourism projects.

Key Informant Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to gather information from cultural leaders, tourism practitioners, government officials, and heritage custodians regarding policies and practices, as well as challenges and opportunities for heritage management and sustainable community-based tourism development. Semi-structured interviews are well-suited to qualitative research because they provide prompts for discussion while remaining open-ended, allowing participants to share their knowledge and experiences freely (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2020; Kallio et al., 2021).

Table 6: Key Informant Interviews

Interview Details	Information
Number of interviews	35
Duration per interview	45-90 minutes
Locations	Participants' homes, offices, cultural sites
Languages	Rukiga and English
Recording	Audio recording; field notes

An interview guide was also prepared the interviews and to enable comp to enable lever, it provided room for the interviewees to bring in new topics and experience the interview process with more depth through the individual characteristics, knowledge and expertise to gain detailed insights of the individual interviewees' perspectives, context and knowledge of the study area, especially regarding the heritage conservation and tourism development link (Kallio et al., 2021).

Participatory Observation

The researcher and the community co-researchers participated in observing community events, tourism activities and sites, and community meetings to gain a deeper understanding of the management, utilization, and interpretation of the community's heritage resources. Observation is a key qualitative data collection method because it can capture the real performances, practices, behaviors, and interactions of the subjects, as well as details of the social context that cannot always be obtained through interviews or focus group discussions (Ciesielska et al., 2021).

Table 7: Participatory Observation

Aspect	Description
What was observed	Cultural events (dance performances, ceremonies, festivals), tourism activities, community meetings, heritage sites
Who participated	Researcher and community co-researchers
Duration	12 months (June 2025 - June 2026)
Observation sites	Kabale Municipality, Ndorwa East, Ndorwa West
Outputs	Field notes, observation checklists, photographs (15 images)

Observation checklists and field notes were used throughout the research. These were used to record observation data, notes, and recordings, as well as emerging patterns, to support participatory research and reflection (researchers and community members can reflect on what they lived through and produce new knowledge about the context of heritage conservation and community-based tourism; Ciesielska et al., 2021).

Community Mapping

Table 8: Community Mapping

Aspect	Description
What was mapped	Heritage sites, cultural landscapes, community resources
Who participated	Elders, youth, cultural leaders
Outputs	Heritage maps of three constituencies
Contribution to PAR	Heritage mapping informed Cycle 2 (documentation) by identifying specific sites for further research.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted from June 2025 to June 2026 through the following sequential steps:

1. Community Entry (June 2025) – The researcher met with local authorities and community leaders in each constituency to introduce the study and to gain permission through community meetings in each of the three constituencies.
2. Participant identification (July 2025) - 100 participants were identified through purposive and snowball sampling in the three constituencies.
3. Focus group discussions (August-November 2025): 15 FGDs with 6-8 participants each. The duration of each FGD was 60-90 minutes in Rukiga/English, held in the following locations:
4. Key Informant Interviews (September 2025 - March 2026) - thirty-five semi-structured interviews with elders, cultural leaders, tourism stakeholders, and officials.
5. Participant Observation (June 2025 - June 2026) Continuous observation of culture-related activities, tourism-based activities, and community meetings during the period of fieldwork.
6. Community Mapping (October- November 2025) - Elders and youths mapped heritage sites in the constituencies.
7. Participatory Workshops (January - March 2026) - A series of three participatory workshops were held to analyze results and formulate recommendations.
8. Conclusion Meetings (April - May 2026) - Findings were discussed with participants for validation and elaboration.

A data collection procedure using the Qualitative PAR approach focused on the researcher and participants working together consistently throughout all phases of the research. PAR is a participatory method that involves community members as co-researchers in defining problems, generating knowledge, examining research, and developing actions to address community problems (Chevalier & Buckles, 2023; Vaughn & Jacquez, 2024).

The researcher involved the participants as co-researchers in the process and trusted their experience and indigenous knowledge as evidence. Data were collected through community meetings, which were used to

determine and prioritize the problem of conserving Bakiga tradition and community-based tourism. Data were collected through focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation, which are among the most common qualitative methods used to research community experiences and meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Kallio et al., 2024).

The gathering and analysis of the data were conducted simultaneously, enabling the participants to check the data, reflect on it, ensure accuracy, and further develop the meaning-making process. We held regular meetings to review the findings, plan possible actions, and assess the results, in line with participatory action research as a learning process (Kemmis et al., 2023). All interviews and group discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim with participants' consent, and augmented with field notes to facilitate rigorous thematic analysis of qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2024).

Participatory Thematic Data Analysis

Data analysis - The data analysis was undertaken through a participatory thematic analysis process in which the researcher and community co-researchers participated. The collaborative analysis of data from interviews, discussions, observations, and mapping exercises helped identify, analyze, and report patterns and themes. Participatory thematic analysis is a method used in community-based participatory research, in which community members play an essential role in deciding on and interpreting the research data and results (Chevalier & Buckles, 2023; Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020).

The data are engaged with by a participatory thematic analysis using the six-phase approach as set out by Braun and Clarke (2024):

Phase 1, Conversion: Acclimatization. (October 2025 to January 2026).

- All the audio recordings were accurately transcribed.
- Field notes were filed chronologically by date and place
- Participants, researcher, and community co-researchers read all transcriptions.

Phase 2: Producing Early Codes (February - March 2026)

Open coding was used to identify the 'interesting places in the data', which necessitated finding significant extracts of the data in the transcripts.

- Codes emerged from the data inductively from participants' own words

The second level is example codes with quotes, such as "youth disinterest" and "cultural pride".

The Beginning of a theme- developing the content. The third phase will take one and a half months, from March to April 2026, during which the discovered themes are further developed.

O Categories were potential themes.

- Themes were checked by being compared to coded extractions

Phase 4: Searching for Themes (April 2026)

- Themes were tested for internal consistency & specificity; theme maps were also created.

Defining and Naming of Themes (April - May 2026)

- Final themes were clarified and bounded (argued using external resources).
- The researcher did not arbitrarily decide theme names.

Writing up (May-June 2026)

- Findings were written up together with quotes to support the data

Table 9: Codebook Example:

Code	Definition	Example Quote
Youth-Interest	Youth engagement in cultural activities	"Young people are not learning traditional dances anymore"
Cultural-Pride	Community members' cultural identification	"Our culture is what makes us who we are"
Economic-Benefit	Financial advantages from tourism	"We could make money from tourists if we had something to show them"

Participant Validation: Themes were shared at community meetings (May 2026). Participants validated themes and interpretations. Corrections were made based on feedback. Validated themes provided the basis for conclusions

Audit trail: A full research audit trail was available, comprising. Field notes: dated and paginated. Interview transcriptions. Records of theme development. Minutes of reflection meetings. Minutes of validation meetings.

Thematic analysis, which offers a straightforward method for detecting, analyzing, and reporting recurring themes in qualitative data, can assist researchers in gaining insight into diverse social experiences and their significance (Braun & Clarke, 2021). This approach was employed in this study to reveal the links among Bakiga heritage preservation, community involvement, and community-based tourism, and to establish findings that remain locally relevant (UNESCO, 2022).

Data Quality Control (Trustworthiness of Findings)

To ensure valid, reliable, believable, complete, and relevant data, data quality control measures have been implemented at every stage of the study. Since the nature of this study is qualitative and participatory, we focused on the trustworthiness of the findings, which was pursued through rigor, triangulation, reflexivity, and systematic documentation strategies. As Lincoln and Guba suggested, principles such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability are fundamental to ensure the quality of qualitative research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2015).

According to the Lincoln and Guba (2015) guidelines for qualitative research, trustworthiness was assessed by:

Table 10: Credibility (Ensuring Accurate Representation)

Strategy	Implementation
Prolonged engagement	Researcher spent 12 months in the field, building relationships
Triangulation	Multiple data sources (FGDs, interviews, observation) and methods
Member checking	Participants reviewed and confirmed findings (May 2026)
Participatory validation	Community meetings to validate interpretations
Peer debriefing	Regular discussions with supervisors

Table 11: Transferability (Applicability to Other Contexts)

Strategy	Implementation
Thick description	Detailed description of study context, participants, and processes
Purposive sampling	Diverse participant categories captured multiple perspectives
Contextual details	Provided information on Kabale District, culture, and tourism context

Table 12: Dependability (Consistency and Stability)

Strategy	Implementation
Audit trail	Comprehensive documentation of all research decisions
Intercoder reliability	Two researchers coded selected transcripts with 85% agreement
Research diary	Maintained daily journal of fieldwork and analysis
Supervisor oversight	Regular review of methods and findings

Table 13: Confirmability (Grounded in Data)

Strategy	Implementation
Raw data retention	Transcripts, field notes, and recordings retained
Documentation of decisions	All methodological decisions recorded
Participant validation	Findings confirmed by participants
Reflexivity journal	Researcher documented biases and assumptions

The researchers used triangulation of different data sources, researcher validation, record-keeping of the research process, and ongoing reflection with community participants to establish credibility (Nowell et al., 2017).

Due to the qualitative nature of the study and its participatory design, priority was given to validity, reliability, objectivity, and the applicability of the results as the most relevant indicators for strengthening research quality. These parameters are commonly used as standard criteria for evaluating the weight of qualitative inquiry results and for ensuring credibility, accurate representation, and the true applicability of research data (Lincoln & Guba, 2015; Nowell et al., 2017).

Ethical Considerations

Has Ugandan ethical approval, granted by the Kabale University Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number: KU/REC/2025/036). A... was issued by Kabale University to all authorities.

a) Informed Consent

Informed consent. All participants signed a written consent form that detailed: the purpose of the study; voluntary involvement; the right to withdraw; penalties for withdrawal; and Data handling.

b) Parental/Guardian Consent

For student participants < 18 years, parental/guardian consent and participant assent were sought. Consent forms were developed in English and Rukiga.

c) Participant Assent

Written assent was obtained from students (15-18 years) following explanation of the study, in age-appropriate language.

d) Institutional Permission

Under the approval of: Kabale District Local Government, Immaculate Heart Girls School, Trinity College Kabale, Kabale Regional Museum, and Community leaders in each constituency

e) Confidentiality and Anonymity:

Participants' names were not recorded. Pseudonyms are used in all reports. Data is stored securely (on a secure computer and in a locked cabinet); only I and supervisors have access.

F) Image Use consent: consent for all photographs was obtained in writing: Individual consent for identifiable photographs; institutional approval for all school-based photographs; permission obtained from CCFU for Figure 5

g) Data Security:

The audio recordings will be destroyed after 5 years. The Transcripts are in an encrypted file, and The Field notes are stored securely.

h) Special Safeguards for Minors:

1. Parental/Legal guardian Consent: consent was obtained in writing from parental/legal guardians for all those aged less than 18 years. The consent form clarified the purpose of the study and the nature of participation, and confirmed willing, voluntary participation.
2. Student Assent: Students aged 15-18 years signed written assent after being provided with an age-appropriate description of the study. Assent forms were read aloud to allow questions and confirm understanding.
3. Head teachers were notified about the study. Notification to parents was provided via the school's letter seeking consent.
4. Institutional Permission: Before engaging students in the study, official permission was sought and acquired from the administration of the two schools: Immaculate Heart Girls School and Trinity College Kabale.
5. Images used with consent: written consent from individuals for all photos showing faces (Figures 1-4, 6, 8, 10-15), institutional consent for school photos (Figures 5, 11), and source attribution and written permission to use 'Figure 5 (CCFU calendar) (Figure 5)

Necessary ethical considerations were ensured throughout the study. Participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the research, and volunteers were given informed consent to participate in the study. They were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. Privacy and anonymity were protected by excluding any personal identifiers in research records and reports. The study took into account local cultural values and traditions, as well as community protocols. The results of the study will be shared with all participants and the community, as well as with Kabale University, to encourage the utilization of the research findings and

their community ownership. The respondents were also informed that the results of this study will be shared with Kabale University, that a website will be established, and that the results will also be shared for publication and on the Google Scholar website.

Plan for Compensation of Participants' Time

Participants were paid for the time they spent in the study. Compensation is a payment or other benefit given to compensate for time, inconvenience, or other costs of participating. Compensation is provided to users for their participation and the costs involved. Participants were given an amount in relation to their participation upon providing informed consent. The compensation was provided regardless of their responses and was not provided if they withdrew from the study before completing all their participation activities. The compensation was determined to be sufficient to compensate participants for the four months they would spend conducting the research, without being so large as to influence their decision to participate. The participation incentives were provided in cash, via mobile money, as gift vouchers, or as other reimbursements when necessary. The incentives were provided during the consent process, and participation was confirmed upon receipt of the incentives.

Limitations of the Study

1. The design itself is identified to have one or more reasonably probable limitations which would be expected to present problems for the investigation.
2. Various instruments or samples/models could have been employed in previous studies, and you may therefore encounter difficulties in attempting to compare and contrast findings.
3. The Internet questionnaires to be used by the researcher are based on the fact that the participant is required to be able to access the internet and be connected to the same location where the research is being undertaken. If internet access is unavailable or keeps fluctuating, it may delay progress.
4. Also relevant to the above, there may be cultural variations, taking into consideration the fact that the study will be undertaken in various countries (visitors or tourists), which may result in cultural effects impacting the results. Additionally, the targeted visitors may refuse to cooperate (Bassey, 1999; p. 2001; Bowen et al., 2017)

Presentation, Analysis And Interpretation Of Findings

Chapter 4 reports results produced from participatory action research with community members, cultural leaders, youth, tourism stakeholders, and other participants in Kabale District. Findings are presented in relation to the three research objectives above:

1. Key elements of Bakiga cultural heritage important for conservation and tourism development
2. Community-based tourism and its potential as a participatory approach to heritage preservation and socio-economic development
3. Collaborative strategies for strengthening the heritage-CBT link

The results are presented with quotes from participants under a system of anonymous coding. Through the participatory process, those with local knowledge identified what constituted heritage values by drawing on their experiences, cultural attachment to the heritage site, and perceptions of tourism opportunities.

4.2 Community Participation in Identifying Bakiga Cultural Heritage Elements

So, participatory activities showed that community members are rich in information about Bakiga cultural heritage resources. The community members, through the use of focus group discussions, interviews, and

community reflection sessions, identified different elements of culture that they use to symbolize their identity, history, social organization, and relationship with the environment,

Participants insisted that heritage is not only about old buildings but also about living notions, values, skills, and practices passed down through generations. Community informants explained that several practices and activities are being gradually eroded by modernization and urbanization, among other factors.

Table 14: Participant Characteristics

Category	n	Gender	Age Range	Mean Age	Sub-county Representation
Elders	15	10M, 5F	60-87	72.5	Kamuganguzi, Kitumba, Butanda
Youth	20	10M, 10F	15-35	24.5	All constituencies
Cultural Leaders	10	7M, 3F	45-78	58.5	All constituencies
Tourism Actors	12	8M, 4F	25-55	38.2	Kabale Municipality
Government Officials	8	5M, 3F	30-55	42.5	District offices
Teachers	12	6M, 6F	28-55	40.3	Schools across district
Students	18	9M, 9F	15-20	17.2	Trinity, Immaculate Heart
Artisans	5	3M, 2F	30-65	45.0	Kabale Municipality
TOTAL	100	58M, 42F	15-87	Average 43.5	

Objective 1: Key Elements of Bakiga Cultural Heritage

Participation practices showed that the local community identified various cultural components that strengthen the community's knowledge of cultural heritage resources. Through several methods, including focus group discussions, interviews, and community reflection, the community identified many components of their culture as cultural heritage resources that reflected their identity, history, organization, and relationship with the environment. Participants observed that heritage encompasses not only physical heritage but also ways of life, technologies, skills, norms, and institutions transmitted from generation to generation. Participants noted that some aspects of cultural practices are diminishing due to increased modernization, migration, changing lifestyles, and declining interest among future generations.

Table 15: Tangible and Intangible Heritage Elements Identified

Heritage Category	Specific Elements	Conservation Priority	Tourism Potential
Intangible	Ekizino dance, Oral traditions, Indigenous knowledge	High	High
Intangible	Ceremonies, Clan systems, Social values	High	Medium
Tangible	Traditional architecture, Historical sites	Medium	High
Tangible	Crafts, Artifacts, Tools	Medium	High
Culinary	Traditional foods, Local beverages	High	Medium

Table 16: Heritage Elements by Priority Ranking

Heritage Element	Mentioned by Elders	Mentioned by Youth	Priority Ranking
Music/Dance	15/15 (100%)	12/20 (60%)	1st
Oral Traditions	14/15 (93%)	10/20 (50%)	2nd
Ceremonies	13/15 (87%)	8/20 (40%)	3rd
Indigenous Knowledge	12/15 (80%)	6/20 (30%)	4th
Culinary Heritage	11/15 (73%)	9/20 (45%)	5th
Crafts	10/15 (67%)	11/20 (55%)	6th
Architecture	9/15 (60%)	5/20 (25%)	7th
Clan Systems	8/15 (53%)	3/20 (15%)	8th



Figure 1: Tourist having
Culinary Experience



Figure 2: Researcher interacting with Youths during culinary sessions



Figure 3: A Youth mingling in a pot during culinary Sessions



Figure 4: The Researcher having Sessions with Tourists

Key Elements of Bakiga Cultural Heritage Identified by Community Members

Traditional Music, Dance and Oral Expressions

Some Community initiative leaders identified intangible heritage (traditional music, dance, storytelling, and oral traditions) as one of the most important elements of Bakiga cultural heritage. The Traditional performances such as “Ekizino” (Bakiga traditional dance), songs like Kakitari, praise poetry (ebigano), and storytelling were listed as significant cultural forms of expression that conveyed historical experiences, social values and lifestyles, community togetherness, and societal moral teachings.

Participant Voices:

A Community Elder-01 (female, age 72, from Katuna): "While we dance and sing, our culture is carried through our dances and songs, stories of our ancestors, food, culinary practices, and other ways of living. According to what is happening today, if our young people do not learn these things, be sure that our identity may suffer a loss."

Another Community Initiative Leader A1: "We must acknowledge that our Traditional songs not only preserved information about historical events, agricultural activities, and social relationships, but also community celebrations as well."

Also, Elder-03 (a male, age 78, from Ahamurwa): "Many of our Traditional dances (Ekizino) were performed at every important occasion, like planting and harvesting, naming and initiation ceremonies, among others. But as of now, people only perform for the tourists visiting the area to get money."

Elder A2 from Kiyora village emphasized: "We would sing and dance some of our traditional songs during marriage ceremonies and harvest celebrations, and communities would gather up and tell stories to the young; that would introduce them to resilience and hard work while we celebrated. It was then a time to impart values to the young generation because every occasion was taken to be equally important."

A Community Elder A3 (aged 60 from Rwakaraba) clarified: "These cultural expressions, if we can harmonize and preserve them, are not only valuable for tourism where visitors are interested in authentic cultural experiences but also significant in Bakiga heritage visibility across the globe."

Head Teacher A (a male aged 54 from one of the secondary schools) expressed: "Younger generations are becoming less interested in learning traditional performances simply because of too much technological engagement, modernization and homogenization, and also unserious parents who have left their children entirely to the teacher."

Teacher-05 (female, age 48, in one of the secondary schools): "There is no time to engage the youth with cultural issues, and yet, when we sing, we communicate our history. Our traditional songs had an element of teaching young people about our values, unlike some contemporary songs that are very popular with youth today. The truth be told, if we do not rise and motivate our young people to sing songs of our tradition, the history will be forgotten."

Youth-03 (female, age 22, from Kabale Town): "I know some of our traditional dances, but not all of them. We sometimes learn them at school, but it is not enough. Many in our age group prefer Amapiano songs, and where one does not know how to dance and sing these amapiano songs is considered archaic."

Youth-10 (male, age 22, from Kabale Town) expressed: "We no longer have time with the elders who would be our mentors; even when elders are there, they tend to other issues like looking for money to pay our school fees and also regard us as spoilt children of these days."

The findings suggest that traditional performing arts represent both a conservation priority and a potential CBT product that can generate income while encouraging cultural continuity.

A Government Official-03 (female, age 50, from Makanga) emphasized: "If we the parents can be serious firstly with ourselves as regards our traditions, then the young people will have authentic teachers of the time, secondary, we must task the heads of formation centres to include culture-based curriculum on their menu, if we are to transmit cultural ideals to the forthcoming generation, and their we are sure of such cultural heritage conservation."



Figure 5: Ekizino Dance by Ampaire Marvin Trinity, Collage Kabale

Source: Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) Calendar, 2026. Used with Permission.

A Community Elder A3 clarified:

“These cultural offerings are in greatest demand for tourism because of enthusiastic tourists’ curiosity for real cultural experiences.”

Elder A expressed:

-ELI-There is declining interest among younger generations in mastering traditional technologies.

I hypothesize that the traditional performing arts are both a conservation priority (local) and a possible CBT product that can bring higher income and promote continuity of the traditional culture.

Traditional Ceremonies and Cultural Events

The research findings established that Bakiga ceremonies and cultural events are significant heritage places that should be conserved.

Participant Voices:

The important cultural practices identified by Elder A4 included marriages, naming ceremonies, dust rites, community programs, and clan conferences.

The Head Teacher A further explained: *‘A lot of these ceremonies were valued on the premise that they facilitate social linkage, since it conveys the sense of participation, transmits skills or learnings, and preserves community’.*

Tourists from England suggested that: *‘as cultural events could provide an opportunity for tourists to understand Bakiga social systems and values as being promoted appropriately’.*

Elder A5 warned that the commercialization of cultural ceremonies should be approached carefully, as it may lead to the loss of their cultural significance.

Cultural Leader-02 (male, 65 years, Ndurwa West): *“Our ceremonies are not a mere display of performance. They have a very special meaning. We should be careful when we perform them for tourists, to make sure that we do not lose the relevance.”*

Youth-05 (male, age 22, Kabale Town): *We have attended some ceremonies with my grandparents. It is good, but I don't fully understand all their meanings.*

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Traditional Practices

According to community leaders, indigenous knowledge constituted a living part of Bakiga cultural heritage more generally, including: traditional farming practices, herbal medicine, environmental protection practices, traditional weather prediction techniques, traditional food preservation techniques, and so on.

Participant Voices:

Community Leaders 4 and 5 (A4 and A5 also added that: *“Indigenous knowledge was an important part of Bakiga culture and history. It was represented among others by indigenous agricultural activities, herbal medicine, conservation practices, prediction of weather, fermentation of traditional foods.”*

Elder A3 mentioned: *“The people of Kabale District (Bakiga) have practiced agro-ecological farming based upon the diverse environment of the region. The usage of traditional methods of cropping (traditional terraces, crop diversity, or soil conservation) would be good items to represent the indigenous environmental knowledge.”*

Elder-02 (male, 80 years, Kamuganguzi): *“Our ancestors could predict weather, plant, and preserve food. This knowledge is disappearing because young people are not learning it.”*

Community Initiative Leader A2 and A3 elaborated: *“These practices were seen as having tourism potential by means of activities like agricultural tourism, cultural performances, study and research, publicity and sale of the products.”*

The findings reveal that IJ may serve as a bridge linking heritage conservation, environmental conservation, and community-based tourism.

One Artisan pointed out: *“It is upon us, the artists, to depict and include our authentic history in the art that we do, as this will keep the knowledge for the next coming generations.”*



Figure 6: Kigezi Mosaic Vase depicting Batwa Homestead by M. M. Moses



Figure 7: Traditional Stool and Shield Immac Heart Museum

Traditional Foods and Culinary Heritage

Traditional Bakiga foods were identified as important cultural resources. Participants mentioned foods prepared from locally grown crops, including millet, sorghum, Irish potatoes, beans, and vegetables, as well as traditional beverages.

Participant Voices:

Community Initiative Leader A4 articulated: *“Food is an important expression of cultural identity, because the way it is prepared and served and the way it is eaten reflect community values.”*

Elder-04 (female, age 70, Kitumba): *“What we eat and how we make food reflects everything we are. It is traditional, and it is good for us.”*

Youth-08 (female, 20 years old, Kabale Town): I love traditional foods; however, most young people prefer foreign foods. We should market our local foods to the world.

Elders felt that foodways could be incorporated into CBT activities through cultural restaurants, trips to homesteads, cooking demonstrations, and community festivals, and Head Teachers added that schools could develop Conservation Heritage programs to link and coordinate the Heritage syllabus with formal schooling.



Figure 8: Tourists having culinary experience. Photo by the researcher

The results also indicate that culinary heritage offers the potential for tourism diversification that can be promoted whilst creating incentives for the local farmers and households.

Traditional Crafts and Material Culture

Other aspects of Bakiga culture noted by participants include traditional crafts such as basket making (weaving), pottery, traditional tools and household items as well as handicrafts produced by using materials found locally. Participants further stated that traditional crafts are recognized as valuable skills and serve as a means of livelihood for women and young people.

Participant Voices:

The artisan-01 (a man, 55years, Kabale Town): *“Artisans are not just for sale. They have our long history in them. In every basket, in every pot is a story.”*

Artisan-06 (a male, 40 years, Lake Bunyonyi): *“We make crafts and partner with hotels and restaurants, for example at The Gathering Place in Kabale Town, to sell them on our behalf with 20% commission of each craft sold to tourists.”*

Artisan-02 (fem, 40 yrs, Kabale Town): *‘Women have been making crafts for ages; it is our profession and the way we participate in the community’*

Youth-10 (male, age 18, Butanda): *‘I want to learn some traditional crafts. This knowledge can help me find a job, and I will also sustain our culture.’*



Figure 9: Traditional Blacksmithing, courtesy of Kabale Regional Museum

The approach suggested that a two-way relationship exists between CBT and craft production. However, the research findings indicated that craft production has the potential for such a relationship through multiple channels of cultural markets and visitor experience. Artisans, however, pointed out several barriers, including access to markets, skills development, and competition from modern goods.



Figure 10: Crafts Demonstration by the Researcher

A youth not in school explained: "Acquiring practical skills will help them achieve their dreams since they can sell their products to the tourists who come to Kabale."



Figure 11: Secondary School Students after Metal Casting Session

One student emphasized: "These craft-making skills are integrated in the new teaching style where learners get skills for competence-based curriculum"



Figure 12: Conventional Blacksmith Vs Formal Casting

Traditional Architecture and Historical Sites

Community elders identified traditional homes, such as Mzee Festo Karwemera's home, historical sites, and culturally significant landscapes, such as Lake Bunyonyi, Kabale Hills, and the artificial lake of Ngorogoza, as important tangible heritage resources. Traditional homesteads, such as those of the Batwa people, were considered symbols of Bakiga settlement patterns, family organization, and historical adaptation to the highland and forestry environment.

Participant Voices:

Community Initiative Leader A 10 (female, aged 57, from Kagitumba village) emphasized: "Certain locations contain historical memories associated with clan (Abanzira, Abaitira, Abasigi and Abaishekatwa) origins, community leaders, and important cultural events like giveaway ceremonies."

Elder-09 (a male, age 75, Kitumba): "Our traditional homes are unique. They were built using local materials like 'einoni' colored soil, grass, and designs depicting zigzag patterns and cultural symbols, such as stools and shields, that suit our environment. We are losing these buildings just because of modernization."

Youth-12 (female, age 18, Butanda): "I have visited some traditional homes and witnessed structures like granaries 'Ebitara'. They are interesting; however, many are falling."

Youth-09 (female, age 25, also from Butanda) narrated: "Our grandfather (not living) once shared with us how these homes were built communally, where village mates would mobilize their fellows who would come for a week and build a house, with some elders giving free supervisory work. After the construction, they would make an extra mile to carry 'Okushomba', a girl for marriage, into the newly constructed house."

Elder-12 (female, age 76, Muyumbu): "As for me, as I was fetching water, strong men carried me, and I found myself in a new house, with some meat, local brew 'enturire', with some fireplace in one of the corners, which they called 'okuhemberera', literally meaning warming the house. I did not think of going back home. I understood that I was now old to begin a family. You would not get out of the house for like 2 to 3 months, 'Okwarukwa', literally meaning fattening the bride. Today you hear, someone is wedded the next day that she has gone to work in Kampala; things have changed."

Female Elder-04 (age 66, Ahamurwa): "When I was still a teenager, my mother would send me to the home of Mzee Festo, and I would find men together plastering the house using 'amasha' cow dung while women were cooking for them. It was a good thing for me because the next day they would do the same to another person."

That was the life, enjoyed with love and togetherness. Today, without the money, you can not build like before, where you need the community.”

These sites were viewed as potential tourism attractions if documented, protected, and integrated into community-managed tourism initiatives.



Figure 13: Mzee Festo Karwemera's Home, photo by the Researcher.



Figure 14: Lake Bunyonyi Landscape, photo by the Researcher

Clan Systems, Social Values and Traditional Leadership

The study revealed that Bakiga clan systems (abasigi, Abagahe, Abaishikawa, Abangwe and many others), traditional leadership structures ‘obusika’ heirs, and social values remain important cultural heritage elements. Participants explained that clans such as those mentioned above preserve genealogical knowledge, social responsibilities, and community identity.

Participant Voices:

Cultural Leader-01 (male, age 60, Buhara): "Our clans connect us to our ancestors. Through clans, we know our history, our responsibilities, our relationships. Clan totems bind us together as relatives. Clansmen respect one another"

Elder-06 (female, age 65, Kamuganguzi): "The clan system not only taught us how to live together but also guided our way of life. It is our social structure." We highly respect it. We love it. It is our identity. For instance, the system cannot allow you to marry someone from the same clan. It is prohibited. This promotes belonging.

Cultural Leader-05 (female, age 52, Mparo): "Women (mothers and aunts) and other women elders have important roles, for example, cooking food and cultural drinks 'efunguro' in cultural ceremonies. However, women's knowledge is often overlooked, such as not being allowed to gather in a meeting with men and not eating some parts of meat like tongue."

Traditional leaders and elders, 'abakungu', were recognized as important custodians of cultural knowledge. However, participants noted that due to post-independence formal governance systems and modernization, the influence of some of these traditional institutions has diminished. Today, women can assume leadership roles and can be heirs 'abasika'.

The findings suggest that involving cultural custodians is essential for successful heritage conservation and CBT development.

Community Perceptions of the Importance of Heritage Conservation

Stakeholders identified several reasons (Preservation of Cultural Identity, Transmission of Knowledge to Future Generations, Promotion of Tourism Development, and Strengthening Community Pride) why Bakiga heritage should be conserved:

i. Preservation of Cultural Identity

Community members viewed heritage (tangible and intangible) conservation as necessary for maintaining Bakiga identity, preventing cultural loss, and promoting togetherness.

Elder-07 (a male, aged 70, Kamuganguzi): "Talking about our culture is what makes us who we are. Without it, we lose our identity. We cannot be. Who we are reflects where we came from and where we are heading."

Another Cultural Leader-03 (male, age 55, Kiniogo): "When young people lose a taste of our culture, they lose the roots of their forefathers. They don't know where they come from and where they be."

ii. Transmission of Knowledge to Future Generations

Participants, especially community elders, educationists, cultural leaders, and some youths, emphasized that conservation enables young people to learn traditional values such as resilience, hard work, skills (pottery, blacksmithing, etc.), and agricultural and culinary practices.

Elder-08 (female, age 75, Kitumba): "We must teach the young people our traditions, starting with our mother tongue, Rukiga. If we don't, they will be lost forever. And we can't keep blaming them."

Youth-05 (male, age 22, Kabale Town): "I want to learn from the elders. It is our duty to learn, uphold, and transmit. They (the elders) have knowledge that is not in books, that will never be in school libraries."

iii. Promotion of Tourism Development

Participants recognized heritage resources as potential tourism assets capable of attracting visitors and generating community benefits.

Tourism-03 (male, age 40, tour operator): "Tourists are interested in real cultural experiences like Kikiga dance (Ekizino) and culinary (Bakiga foods). We have what they are looking for."

Tourism-08 (female, age 42, cultural performer): "Cultural performances can promote socio-economic transformation. But we need to keep them authentic, not to water them down for tourists. We must also guard against the danger of commodification and resource depletion."

iv. Strengthening Community Pride

Participants indicated that valuing cultural heritage not only increases community confidence and appreciation of local identity but also visibility.

Community Initiative Leader-04 (female, age 45, Ndorwa East): "Valuing our culture builds in us the special feeling of pride, proud of who we are. It gives us power and confidence."

Challenges Affecting Bakiga Heritage Conservation

The participatory findings identified several challenges:

i. Declining Interest Among Youth

Participants noted a decline in young people's participation in cultural activities due to changing lifestyles and external influences.

Elder-01 (female, age 72, Kitumba): "Young people are not learning traditional dances anymore. They prefer modern music. And also those who are interested have no elders to teach them."

Youth-15 (male, age 20, Kabale Town): "We are busy with school and trying to find jobs. We don't have time for cultural activities. Nevertheless, it is not our type. It is for the old people."

ii. Limited Documentation

Many cultural practices remain undocumented, creating risks of knowledge loss when elderly custodians pass away.

Cultural Leader-02 (male, age 65, Ndorwa West): "Much of our knowledge is only in the minds of the elders. If they pass away, it is gone. We are proud of Mzee Festo, who tried to compile some work in books like *Enfumu z'Abakiga*; however, they are also not available in schools and are expensive."

Teacher-06 (male, age 40, St. Mary's Rushorooza): "There is no written record of many of our traditions. We need to document them. Little that is, is not easily accessed, and even when it is accessed, it is written in Rukiga, hard for the youth to read."

iii. Modernization and Cultural Transformation

Participants explained that modern alternatives are replacing some traditional practices.

Elder-03 (male, age 78, Rwakaraaba): "There is change everywhere. Young people are more interested in modernity, and they tend to forget our traditions and values."

iv. Limited Institutional Support

Community members have also highlighted inadequate funding, limited conservation programs, and weak coordination among stakeholders.

Official-02 (male, age 45, District Tourism Officer): "We are endowed culturally but with limited budget for conservation and promotion of heritage preservation."

v. Lack of Tourism Integration

There is still much lacking. Although cultural resources exist, participants noted that much has not been developed to cater for tourism experiences.

Tourist-04 (male, age 35, Germany): "We expect an organized cultural institution that can provide us with the experience we would want to have. The government of Uganda should support local communities to promote their culture as this will enhance visitors' experiences and engagement."

Table 17: Challenges Affecting Bakiga Heritage Conservation

Challenge	Mentioned by	Frequency	Evidence
Youth disinterest	All groups	100%	Participant quotes, observation
Limited documentation	Elders, Cultural Leaders	90%	FGD discussions
Modernization	Elders	85%	Participant testimonies
Weak institutional support	Officials, Tourism Actors	80%	Interviews with officials
Limited tourism integration	Tourism Actors	75%	Tourism sector observations

Objective 2: Potential of Community-Based Tourism

CBT Opportunities Identified

Participants identified the following specific CBT opportunities:

Cultural Performances:

Tourism-03 (male, age 40, tour operator): "Performing 'Ekizino dance' creates an authentic and powerful experience for tourists. This is what people want to see."

Elder-07 (male, age 70, Kamuganguzi): "There is a need to teach young people cultural songs and dances so we can perform for visitors while managing and upholding Bakiga heritage."

Tourism-08 (female, age 32, cultural performer): "We delight in our Cultural performances simply because they make a clear definition of our identity and also are our source of livelihood. However, we need to keep them authentic and original, not to compromise them for tourists' sake."

Homestays:

Tourism-05 (male, age 38, tour operator): "Our homes reflect the Bakiga heritage spirit, and so tourists want to stay in our homes, eat our food, drink our 'nturire' Bakiga local brew and learn our way of life."

Youth-08 (female, age 20, Kabale Town): "Our homes are spacious and can accommodate visitors. Our cultural values include hospitality so that visitors can find a resting place in our homes."

Elder-04 (female, age 66, Katuna): "Tourists would learn a lot and be entertained as they stay with us."

Craft Production:

Artisan-02 (female, age 40, Kabale Town): "Our traditional crafts like stools, basketry, fabric prints, bags and many others communicate a rich Bakiga heritage for tourists."

FGD-ELD-01: "Crafts can not only provide income for women in the community but also can provide a learning moment for the visitors."

Culinary Experiences:

FGD-YTH-02: "Tourists enjoy participating in the preparation of traditional foods, tasting, and learning about stories therein. Showing them how we cook provides a special love that builds both intercultural aspirations and connectedness."

Youth-12 (female, age 18, Butanda): "Cooking classes could be a business."

Heritage Trails:

Cultural Leader-03 (male, age 55, Ndorwa West): "We can guide tourists to visit historical sites like Akampene Island (Lake Bunyonyi Punishment Island), the Batwa settlement space, and learn about our history."

Agricultural Tourism:

Elder-02 (male, age 68, Kyiyoora village): "Tourists would be interested in our farming methods that capitalize on the terrace system because of Kabale terrain."

Storytelling:

Elder-08 (female, age 75, Kamukira): "We can tell stories to tourists about our history and traditions, for instance, stories about Nyabeingi, Clan systems (Abangwe, Abayangwe, Abakimbiri), and others who celebrate their relationships with nature 'emizi' (totems)."

Table 18: CBT Opportunities Identified by Participants

Opportunity	Proposed By	Feasibility Rating	Resource Requirements
Cultural performances	Tourism Actors, Elders	High	Performance groups, training
Homestays	Tourism Actors, Youth	High	Community homes, training
Craft production	Artisans, Youth	High	Raw materials, market access
Culinary experiences	Elders, Youth	High	Food, facilities
Heritage trails	Cultural Leaders	Medium	Site mapping, guides
Agricultural tourism	Elders	Medium	Farm sites, guides
Storytelling	Elders, Cultural Leaders	High	Knowledge holders

Perceived Benefits of CBT

Economic Benefits:

Local Government Official-02 (male, age 45, District Tourism Officer): "Tourism can bring money to our community if well managed, not to harm Bakiga heritage."

Artisan-01 (male, age 55, Kabale Town): "Crafts such as 'emikyee' mats, 'enyabya' soup bowls, 'engabo' shields, and many others can provide income for families."

Youth not in school-05 (male, age 22, Kabale Town): "Young people can get, firstly, skills and secondary jobs without leaving their home villages."

Tourism-03 (male, age 40, tour operator): "Cultural tourism can create employment for many people and help create a rich infrastructure within the district for example hotels lauging industry, transportation (boda boda and tukutukus, local tour companies and others."

Cultural Benefits:

Community Elder-03 (male, age 68, Rushorooza) explains: "Our young people need to be culturally motivated. If tourists pay to see our dances like ‘Ekizino’ which expresses Bakiga energy and resilience, young people will want to be involved and learn."

Cultural Leader-01 (male, age 60, Municipality): "Heritage Tourism elevates the visibility of our culture in the form of tangible and intangible heritage."

Elder-07 (male, age 70, Kyanamira village): "Tourism well managed to include local communities gives value to our traditions like storytelling, culinary and food staffs, historical events and locations for example Akampene Punishment Island on Lake Bunyonyi."

Community Benefits:

Teacher-06 (female, age 40, St. Francis College Kyanamira): "Participatory Action in tourism brings communities together for a common purpose, contributing richly to socio-economic transformation and sustainable development."

Community Initiative Leader-06 (female, age 40, Kyanamira): “Integrating heritage conservation with the promotion of community-based tourism would necessitate communities standing together to manage tourism without endangering the Bakiga cultural traditions.”

Youth-10 (male, age 18, Butanda): "CBT can bring the community together for a common purpose."

Table 19: Perceived Benefits of CBT

Benefit Type	Specific Benefits	Mentioned By
Economic	Income generation, Employment, Market access	All groups
Cultural	Cultural pride, Knowledge transmission, Identity strengthening	Elders, Cultural Leaders
Community	Social cohesion, Community development, Cooperation	Teachers, Youth
Environmental	Conservation awareness, Sustainable resource use	Elders

Challenges to CBT Implementation

Infrastructure:

Tourism-08 (male, age 42, tour operator): "We lack enough physical and virtual tourism infrastructure. Better roads for tourists to reach us, good hotels, and transport facilities like boats are insufficient and poor."

Official-03 (female, age 38, District Planning Officer): "There are no good places for tourists to stay, and those that are there have limited internet network, especially around Lake Bunyonyi."

Marketing:

Tourism-04 (male, age 35, tour operator): "Tourists who show interest in coming to Kabale don't know what we have to offer in terms of cultural heritage, historical and natural heritage."

FGD-MIX-01: "We need to promote our cultural experiences by using the available social media platforms and websites."(Datu, A. P., & Beltran, J. R., 2025)

FDG-MIX-04: “Posters and Banners depicting our cultural heritage should be strategically positioned for both local and international tourists.”

FDG-MIX-12: “Radio talk shows Voice of Kigezi, and Virtual Televisions should be engaged in the promotion of Bakiga heritage.”

Skills:

Youth-10 (male, age 28, Butanda): "We need skills in hotel management and hospitality and tour guiding skills (well equipped with the Bakiga traditions and locations) for the coming tourists."

Artisan-03 (male, age 40, Kabale Town): "We don't know how to market and price our services."

Financial:

Youth-15 (male, age 20, Kabale Town): "We have limited capital to start tourism businesses."

Official-02 (male, age 45, District Tourism Officer): "The government should support us, especially the youth and women, for Bakiga heritage conservation and promotion of Sustainable CBT."

Balancing Authenticity and Commercialization:

Cultural Leader-05 (female, age 52, Ndorwa East): "We must keep our culture authentic, not to dilute it for tourists."

Tourism-03 (male, age 40, tour operator): "Tourists want real experiences, not performances, and so we should not compromise our traditions for modification."

Tourism-07 (female, age 28, tourism actor): “For future generations’ sake, we must keep it original and authentic. We must keep it to the dot.”

Table 20: Challenges to CBT Implementation

Challenge	Mentioned By	Severity	Potential Solutions
Infrastructure	Tourism Actors, Officials	High	Government investment, community projects
Marketing	Tourism Actors, Community	High	Promotion campaigns, UTB support
Skills	Youth, Artisans	Medium	Training programs, mentorship
Financial	Youth, Community	High	Microfinance, government support, partnerships
Authenticity	Cultural Leaders, Elders	Medium	Community control, guidelines

Feasibility of CBT in Kabale District

Tourism-01 (male, age 50, tour operator): "Tourism is possible in Kabale. People (community initiatives, artisans and craftsmen, cultural leaders and elders) are interested."

FGD-MIX-02: "Inclusivity is vital; therefore, we need to work together to make it happen."

Official-02 (male, age 45, District Tourism Officer): "Kabale has potential for heritage tourism (cultural, historical, and natural). We need to align and develop it better."

Elder-05 (female, age 68, Butanda): "We have a rich cultural experience that tourists want. We just need to organize ourselves. The government needs to support us."

Youth-12 (female, age 18, Butanda): "We are ready to learn and to work in tourism. Policymakers need to include us in tourism management and to share the tourism revenue equally."

The participatory community findings indicate strong community willingness to participate in CBT, though structural challenges need to be addressed to preserve, manage, and transmit it.

Objective 3: Collaborative Strategies for Heritage-CBT Integration

Strategies Co-Developed by Participants

Table 21: Strategies Co-Developed by Participants

Strategy	Proposed by	Supported by	Priority Rating
Document Bakiga heritage	Elders (ELD-02, 05, 09), Cultural Leaders	All groups	1st
Heritage education in schools	Teachers (TCH-03, 06, 10), Students (STU-07, 12)	All groups	2nd
Support cultural custodians	Elders, Cultural Leaders	Government	3rd
Develop community-owned tourism products	Tourism Actors, Youth	All groups	4th
Training in tourism management	Tourism Actors, Youth	Government, NGOs	5th
Marketing cultural tourism	Tourism Actors, Officials	All groups	6th
Partnerships and collaboration	All stakeholders	All groups	7th

Participant Voices:

Elder-14 (male, age 60, Kamuganguzi): "We must document our culture. Write it down. Record it. Before we elders pass away. Knowledge that is already documented should be virtually preserved"

Teacher-06 (female, age 40, Kigezi High): "Heritage should be integrated into the curriculum. Students need to see culture as relevant to their future. National Curriculum Development Center should devise means of new intercultural educational pedagogy."

Cultural Leader-02 (male, age 65, Ndorwa West): "For us to realize CBT, we need to work together with the government and key tourism players. We cannot achieve anything if we are to be left alone."

Youth-12 (female, age 20, Brainstorm High School): "I think if we are to participate as young people, we must walk side by side with the elders. Schools should bring elders to teach us. There is not enough on the internet and social media."

Tourism-03 (male, age 40, tour operator): "For us to benefit from heritage tourism, we need to develop authentic tourism products. Products that are owned by the community (basketry, paintings, and other crafts) and can communicate Bakiga cultural values."

Consensus and Prioritization Process

Priority strategies like documentation, heritage education, among others were determined through participatory voting during three community workshops (January-March 2026):

Table 22: Consensus and Prioritization of Strategies

Strategy	Support Level	Priority Rank	Justification from Participants
Documentation	30/30 (100%)	1st	"We must record our heritage before it is lost"
Heritage education	28/30 (93%)	2nd	"Schools are key for teaching young people"
Support cultural custodians	27/30 (90%)	3rd	"Elders need support to pass on knowledge"
Develop community-owned products	26/30 (87%)	4th	"Communities should own tourism"
Training	25/30 (83%)	5th	"We need skills"
Marketing	23/30 (77%)	6th	"We need to promote our culture"
Partnerships	22/30 (73%)	7th	"Collaboration is important"

Cultural Leader-01 (male, age 60, Ndorwa East): "Now that we have agreed on the strategies, we need to put them into practice. We must walk the talk not tomorrow but now."

Official-02 (male, age 45, District Tourism Officer): "The strategies are practice-oriented. Where the community initiatives (Kiyiyoora Women Workers Initiative, Kabale Potters Initiative, Abaheesi Ba Kabale Twimukye Association) are ready, they can implement them with community support."

Emerging Participatory Action Research Insights

PAR Cycles Documentation

Table 23: Cycle 1: Planning → Action → Observation → Reflection

Stage	Activity	Participants	Outcome
Plan	Initial community meetings	Elders, leaders	Agreement to participate
Action	Heritage identification workshops	50 participants	List of heritage elements
Observe	Researchers documented discussions	Researcher, co-researchers	Rich data on heritage values
Reflect	Community reflection session	20 participants	Youth disinterest identified as key challenge
Revised Action	Youth-focused activities added	Researcher, youth	FGDs with youth groups

Table 24: Cycle 2: Planning → Action → Observation → Reflection

Stage	Activity	Participants	Outcome
Plan	Capacity-building workshops	Youth, elders	Plans for intergenerational knowledge transfer
Action	Elders teaching youth	Elders (5), Youth (15)	Youth learned traditional dances
Observe	Researcher observed sessions	Researcher, co-researchers	Youth engagement was high
Reflect	Reflection meeting	15 participants	Need for more training sessions identified
Revised Action	Additional craft training scheduled	Artisans, youth	Ongoing skill development

Table 25: Cycle 3: Planning → Action → Observation → Reflection

Stage	Activity	Participants	Outcome
Plan	Strategy development workshop	30 stakeholders	Draft strategies identified
Action	Strategy refinement sessions	25 stakeholders	Strategies refined
Observe	Researchers documented discussions	Researcher	Priority strategies emerged
Reflect	Validation meeting	30 participants	Strategies validated
Revised Action	Implementation planning	20 stakeholders	Action plans developed

Table 26: Cycle 4: Planning → Action → Observation → Reflection

Stage	Activity	Participants	Outcome
Plan	Implementation planning	20 stakeholders	Action plans developed
Action	Heritage documentation began	15 participants	Initial documentation created
Observe	Researcher documented progress	Researcher	Progress observed
Reflect	Reflection meeting	15 participants	Lessons learned documented
Revised Action	Future planning	10 stakeholders	Continuation plans developed

Table 27: PAR Cycles Documentation

Period	Action	Participants	Outcome	Reflection
Jun-Aug 2025	Community meetings	50	Heritage list	Youth focus needed
Sep-Nov 2025	Heritage identification	100	Heritage elements	Documentation needed

Dec-Feb 2026	Participatory analysis	40	Challenges identified	Intergenerational transfer needed
Mar-May 2026	Strategy development	30	Strategies validated	Implementation readiness

Key PAR Outcomes

a). **Knowledge Generation:** Local Communities within Kabale documented their own heritage knowledge and meanings.

Elder-01 (female, age 72, Kitumba): "We have first and foremost acknowledged the importance of knowledge documentation and through this process, we have recorded our knowledge. Now it is not lost. Forthcoming generations now have a Bakiga heritage knowledge bank."

b). **Collective Reflection:** Through a well-guided group discussion, students and teachers identified threats affecting cultural preservation.

Teacher-03 (male, age 45, Lake Bunyonyi Secondary School): "For at least three months, we have reflected on our culture. We were able to identify different challenges, and the opportunities are available to us."

c). **Participatory Action Orientation:** The stakeholders within the district (Community initiative leaders, educationists and community elders, e.t.c.) identified possibilities for linking heritage conservation with CBT.

Cultural Leader-02 (male, age 65, Ndorwa West): "This community research has just come at the right time. These planned strategic actions are to help preserve our culture. Now that everybody is brought aboard, we shall not sleep but tirelessly work for Bakiga heritage documentation."

Summary of Findings

The first objective found that Bakiga heritage, that is, cultural, historical, and natural heritage, in Kabale District consists of diverse tangible and intangible resources. This includes traditional music and dances, ceremonies (celebrating rich harvest, marriage, naming ceremony), indigenous knowledge (local medicine and its administration), culinary (Irish, sweet potatoes, karo and 'empegyere', a mixture of maize and beans), crafts, architecture, clan systems, and social values. Members of the community regard these elements as important for preserving and managing identity, transmitting knowledge, and developing tourism opportunities.

Table 28: Summary of Key Heritage Elements

Heritage Category	Specific Elements	Conservation Priority	Tourism Potential
Performing Arts	Ekizino dance, songs, music	High	High
Oral Traditions	Storytelling, folklore, proverbs	High	High
Ceremonies	Marriage, naming, initiation	High	Medium
Indigenous Knowledge	Farming, medicine, conservation	High	Medium
Culinary Heritage	Traditional foods, beverages	High	Medium
Crafts	Basketry, pottery, tools	Medium	High
Architecture	Traditional homesteads	Medium	High
Clan Systems	Social organization	Medium	Low

The second objective revealed CBT as significant in offering opportunities for cultural performances, homestays, craft production, culinary experiences, heritage trails, agricultural tourism, and storytelling. Participants noted economic, cultural, and community benefits from CBT, while identifying challenges related to infrastructure, marketing, skills, finance, and authenticity. Local community members expressed their willingness to participate in CBT, indicating practicality.

The third objective prioritized seven strategies: documentation of Bakiga heritage, heritage education in schools, support for cultural custodians, development of community-owned tourism products, skills training in tourism and environmental management, marketing of cultural tourism, and strengthening partnerships. All strategies received strong support (73-100% agreement).

Yet, heritage conservation faces challenges related to modernization and homogenization, declining youth involvement, inadequate documentation, and limited institutional support. These discoveries underscore the need for participatory action approaches in which communities are at the center of heritage conservation and tourism planning. In addition, these documented heritage elements provide a profound foundation for exploring the potential of Sustainable Community-Based Tourism, as discussed under the second research objective.



Figure 15: An Elder enjoying “Enturire” Bakiga Local Brew, Photo by the Researcher

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chapter discusses the community-based findings of the study titled “Bridging the Gap between Bakiga Heritage Conservation and the Promotion of Community-Based Tourism in Kabale District, Uganda: Applying an “Illustrative Participatory Action Research Model.” The discussion builds on the three specific objectives, interpreted through the lenses of Heritage Tourism Theory, Community Development Theory, Cultural Ecology Theory, and Cultural Relativism Theory.

Furthermore, the chapter examines Bakiga heritage resources and how they can be conserved and transformed into community-based tourism opportunities through participatory action approaches. It positions local communities as knowledge vessels, decision-makers, and active actors in heritage management. It again presents the study's conclusions, recommendations, contributions, limitations, and areas for further research.

Discussion of Findings

Key Elements of Bakiga Cultural Heritage Important for Conservation and Tourism Development

Finding – Local Community members identified traditional music and dance (Kakitari and Ekizino), oral expressions and storytelling, ceremonies (marriage and harvesting), indigenous knowledge (life at birth through adulthood to afterlife), culinary heritage (traditional foods and drinks), crafts, architecture, and clan systems as key heritage elements. Traditional music and dance that portray Bakiga as energetic and resilient were prioritized most highly (100% of elders, 60% of youth).

Comparison with Literature - This finding systematically aligns with Ahebwa et al. (2021), who, in their research, found that cultural performances are crucial to Ugandan heritage tourism. It again upholds Richards's (2018) findings, which note that the performing arts are commonly valued in tourism contexts. Byarugaba (2018), in a similar way, documented the significance of the Ekizino dance to Bakiga identity.

Agreement/Disagreement – Similar to other Ugandan communities (e.g., the Baganda), the Bakiga community (co-researchers) placed stronger emphasis on dance (Ekizino) as central to identity, compared with studies in other regions, where, according to Nkwanga (2017), historical sites were prioritized. This proposes that, for the Bakiga people, living cultural practices are more important than physical heritage sites.

Theoretical Interpretation - Heritage Tourism Theory fundamentally explains this finding by showing how performing arts serve as a cultural gateway to heritage visibility resources that can be changed into heritage tourism products while maintaining cultural meaning (Timothy, 2018). The elevation of the Bakiga dance reflects its role (identity) as a living, intangible heritage practice rather than as a historical, tangible artifact. Community Development Theory builds on the premise that when communities prioritize heritage elements, they can actively engage with and control them (Deffinika et al., 2022). Cultural Ecology Theory recognizes that lifestyles and interactions with the environment can greatly impact a culture's way of life and social world (Sutton & Anderson, 2020). Cultural Relativism Theory explains why community members value practices meaningful within their cultural context, regardless of external perceptions (Hofstede et al., 2017).

Implication – This implies that Heritage Conservation and CBT strategies should first prioritize support for traditional music and dance, as they provide documentation, performance opportunities, and skills training for youth. The study substantiates that, to achieve successful heritage conservation, one first requires an Understanding of the social and cultural meanings conferred on heritage resources (UNESCO, 2021).

Finding: Indigenous knowledge, particularly agricultural practices, herbal medicine, and environmental conservation, was recognized as significant yet less acknowledged among youth (only 30% of youth stated that they knew about indigenous knowledge).

Comparison with Literature - This finding aligns with UNESCO's (2022) observation that indigenous knowledge is being lost across generations and needs to be documented. Nkwanga (2017), in his research, similarly documented a sharp decline in the transmission of indigenous knowledge in Uganda. On the other hand, the finding contrasts with studies in which indigenous knowledge is well documented (e.g., Mzee Festo Karwemera's home library) and valued (Byarugaba, 2018).

Theoretical Interpretation - Cultural Ecology Theory puts right the relationship between Bakiga practices and their mountain environmental experience, as traditional terracing and soil conservation techniques reflect ecological adaptations to nature's provision (Sutton & Anderson, 2020). Community Development Theory emphasizes the need to integrate generational knowledge transfer with prevailing circumstances to maintain community resilience (United Nations, 2020).

Implication - Documentation of indigenous knowledge should be prioritized before it is lost. Youth engagement activities through well-defined practical learning experiences can enhance knowledge transmission from one generation to the next. This aligns with the PAR model developed in this study.

Finding - Heritage conservation, as a matter of fact, faces challenges that include youth disinterest (100% of participants mentioned), limited documentation or no documentation at all (90%), modernization and homogenization (85%), weak institutional support (80%), and limited tourism integration and local community inclusion (75%).

Comparison with Literature - The findings reflect challenges observed in other Ugandan contexts (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Nkwanga, 2017). UNESCO (2023), in the same way, points out modernization and homogenization, and youth disinterest due to advanced technology as the most global threats to intangible heritage. However, the study provides specific evidence for Kabale District, filling a contextual gap.

Theoretical Interpretation - Heritage Tourism Theory sounds an alarm that failure to conserve heritage resources may be tantamount to significant heritage loss, thereby causing a decline in tourism potential (Timothy, 2018). Community Development Theory reveals that institutional support is vital for sustainable community initiatives (Deffinika et al., 2022). Cultural Relativism Theory highlights the risk of cultural loss due to modernization and external influences such as trade and labor mobility (UNESCO, 2021).

Implication – Attending to these challenges requires consolidated efforts toward systematic documentation, youth and women's engagement programs, strengthened institutional support, and heritage tourism integration planning. However, the participatory action strategies co-developed in this study address these challenges directly.

Potential of Community-Based Tourism as a Participatory Model for Heritage Conservation and Sustainable Socio-Economic Benefits

Finding – Most of the Participants identified solid CBT opportunities, including cultural performances (mentioned by all tourism actors), homestays with rich heritage, craft production, culinary experiences, heritage trails, agro-ecology tourism, community initiatives engagement, practical skills apprenticeship, and storytelling.

Comparison with Literature - This is well aligned with Goodwin's (2017) finding that CBT can be developed using available heritage resources in East Africa. Ahebwa et al. (2021) similarly noted cultural performances and homestays as being successful CBT products in Uganda. The range of opportunities listed in this study is comparable to those in other Ugandan communities, though Bakiga participants emphasized culinary experiences and skills apprenticeship connected to environmental greening strategies more than in other studies.

Theoretical Interpretation - Heritage Tourism Theory strongly affirms the need to transform heritage resources into tourism experiences that attract visitors seeking authenticity as essential (Richards, 2018). Community Development Theory underscores how CBT can enrich and empower communities by promoting income-generating strategies they control (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). Cultural Relativism Theory not only promotes the need to uphold cultural authenticity in tourism products but also ensures intercultural connectedness (Hofstede et al., 2017).

Implication – Local communities can develop multicultural heritage tourism products based on their related and available resources. However, maintaining authenticity and community ownership throughout the entire production process is paramount. The co-developed strategies in this study offer a pathway for developing these products with a strong focus on protecting cultural meanings.

Finding - Participants, with their diverse views, perceived economic benefits (sustainable income generation, employment opportunities, equitable share of heritage tourism revenue), cultural benefits (cultural pride, knowledge ownership and transmission), and community benefits (social cohesion, cooperation, and policy and decision-making) from CBT.

Comparison with Literature - This phenomenon confirms findings from Uganda and East Africa, where CBT has ignited efforts toward livelihood enhancement and community empowerment (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Goodwin, 2017; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). The perceived benefits in this particular study are similar to UNWTO (2021) findings on CBT's potential for sustainable development.

Theoretical Interpretation - Community Development Theory underscores how CBT can contribute to community well-being when communities participate fully in and benefit from tourism (United Nations, 2020). Heritage Tourism Theory for CBT's visibility proposes that economic benefits that create incentives be directly channeled to conservation (Timothy, 2018). Cultural Ecology Theory, which focuses on environmental greening in climate change programs, is strongly supported by community initiatives (Sutton & Anderson, 2020). Cultural Relativism Theory supports the idea that cultural preservation has intrinsic value beyond economic benefits (UNESCO, 2021).

Implication - Benefits should be clearly communicated to community members to motivate participation. Equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms should be established to ensure all groups benefit.

Finding – Co-community researchers observed that CBT implementation faces challenges related to infrastructure, marketing, skills, finance, and authenticity. Notably, these challenges were consistently identified across participant categories.

Comparison with Literature - These challenges align with findings from Uganda and East Africa (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Dodds et al., 2018; Goodwin, 2017). Giampiccoli and Saayman (2018), in the same vein, observed infrastructure and capacity challenges in southern Africa. The authenticity concern is particularly notable, reflecting principles of cultural relativism.

Theoretical Interpretation - Heritage Tourism Theory warns that commodification and material depletion can undermine cultural authenticity (Timothy, 2018). Community Development Theory suggests the need for capacity building and institutional support (Deffinika et al., 2022). Cultural Relativism Theory highlights the importance of community control over cultural representation to avoid cultural moral decay (Hofstede et al., 2017).

Implication – Attending to these challenges requires comprehensive strategies including infrastructure development (physical and virtual), marketing support (ICT), practical skills apprenticeship and training, financial mechanisms, and community-guided authenticity standards. Holistically, the strategies co-developed in this study address these challenges.

Collaborative Strategies for Strengthening the Link Between Bakiga Heritage Conservation and CBT Promotion

Finding – The seven priority strategies were co-developed, and they include: documentation, heritage education, support for cultural custodians, community-owned tourism products, practical skills apprenticeship and training, marketing, and partnerships. Documentation emerged as the highest priority (100% agreement).

Comparison with Literature - The strategies are consistent with success factors noticed in other studies, including community participation (Ahebwa et al., 2021; Dodds et al., 2018), capacity building (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018), institutional support (Goodwin, 2017), and cultural education (UNESCO, 2022). The documentation being emphasized reflects the specific contextual needs in Kabale District.

Theoretical Interpretation: Community Development Theory supports strategies that emphasize community ownership, participation, and capacity building (Deffinika et al., 2022). Heritage Tourism Theory supports the development of tourism products (Timothy, 2018) based on available heritage resources. Cultural Ecology Theory emphasizes responsible land use and material sustainability, while Cultural Relativism Theory strengthens strategies that protect cultural meanings and authenticity (UNESCO, 2021).

Implication – Participants observed that implementation should follow the scale of preference, with documentation as the priority, followed by education, and then tourism development. The PAR process showed that communities can effectively prioritize and develop contextually appropriate strategies.

Finding: Consensus was achieved through participatory action processes, with high agreement levels (73-100%). Documentation and education (practical skills apprenticeship) received the strongest support.

Comparison with the Literature - This demonstrates the effectiveness of Participatory Action Research (PAR) approaches in fostering community ownership and consensus (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019; Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). The high levels of agreement indicate authentic, genuine community commitment to the strategies.

Theoretical Interpretation - Community Development Theory explains how participation leads to ownership and commitment (United Nations, 2020). The PAR approach aligns with principles of community empowerment and collaborative knowledge generation.

Implication - Implementation should involve all stakeholder categories to maintain ownership and commitment. Regular reflection and adaptation, consistent with PAR principles, should guide implementation.

The Illustrative Participatory Action Research Model for Bridging Bakiga Heritage Conservation and CBT Promotion

Based on the findings, the study proposes an illustrative PAR model derived from the participatory research process with community members, cultural leaders, tourism actors, and other stakeholders in Kabale District.

Derivation from Data:

The model emerged from four data sources:

1. **Participant identification of heritage elements** (Objective 1 findings) → Stage 1 - Participatory Heritage Identification
2. **Participants' emphasis on documentation gaps** → Stage 2 - Cultural Documentation and Knowledge Preservation
3. **Participants' ideas for tourism products** (Objective 2 findings) → Stage 3 - Participatory CBT Development
4. **Participants expressed a need for training** (Objective 3 findings) → Stage 4 - Capacity Building
5. **Participant validation and reflection sessions** → Stage 5 - Reflection, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

Model Stages (Empirically Grounded):

Stage 1 - Participatory Heritage Identification

- i. Originated from Community members identifying heritage elements (Objective 1)
- ii. Notably, key players were Community Elders, cultural leaders, community initiative leaders, plus Educationists
- iii. Activities included community meetings, focus groups, and heritage observation
- iv. Output measured as a priority heritage list and community engagement

Stage 2 - Cultural Documentation and Knowledge Preservation

- i. Stemmed from Participants' concern about undocumented heritage
- ii. Key players included Elders, Youth, Researchers, Museum staff
- iii. Activities planned were oral history recording, photography, and website building
- iv. Output measures included documentation records, archives, and digital cultural databases

Stage 3 - Participatory CBT Development

- i. Consequent from participants' ideas for tourism products (Objective 2)
- ii. Major players included community members and tourism actors

- iii. Planned activities included product development, market testing, visitor experiences, and skills apprenticeship.
- iv. Output measure indicated community-owned tourism products, visitor engagement, and skills kit development.

Stage 4 - Capacity Building and Stakeholder Partnerships

- i. Obtained from the participants' identified need for training (Objective 3)
- ii. Key players indicated all stakeholders
- iii. Activities planned included Skills training, partnership development, and governance structures
- iv. Output measured as skilled community members, partnerships, and governance

Stage 5 - Reflection, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

- i. Arose from the PAR cycle reflections during the research
- ii. Key actors indicated as all stakeholders
- iii. Activities planned were reflection meetings, evaluation, and adaptation
- iv. Output measured as refined strategies and sustainable practices



Figure 16 - Illustrative Participatory Action Research Model

The model is grounded in:

1. Heritage Tourism Theory emphasizing heritage preservation in relation to tourism practice.
2. Community Development Theory linking up to community empowerment and local participation.
3. Cultural Ecology Theory translating into proper land use and environmental greening.
4. Cultural Relativism Theory explaining Respect for cultural meanings and diversity.y

Empirical Validation:

The model was validated through community reflection sessions, in which participants confirmed its relevance and feasibility. Major validation points included:

- i. Community members agreed the model captures their heritage priorities
- ii. Stakeholders confirmed the stages are logical and practical
- iii. Participants identified resources needed for each stage
- iv. Community leaders committed to supporting implementation

Conclusions

Conclusion 1 (Based on Objective 1):

Based on the first specific objective, Bakiga cultural heritage in Kabale District comprises diverse tangible and intangible resources, with traditional music, dance, oral traditions, and indigenous knowledge being most valued by community members. Conservation challenges were cited as youth disinterest, limited documentation, modernization pressures, and weak institutional support.

Conclusion 2 (Based on Objective 2):

Sustainable Community-based tourism, based on the second specific objective, offers significant potential for heritage conservation and socio-economic transformation in Kabale District. Community researchers identified tangible CBT opportunities and acknowledged economic, cultural, and community benefits, while also identifying challenges related to infrastructure, skills, financing, and authenticity concerns.

Conclusion 3 (Based on Objective 3):

Based on the third specific objective of this study, community researchers co-developed a seven-priority strategy measure for CBT heritage integration, with heritage documentation, school-based education, and support for cultural custodians as the highest priorities. These strategies emphasize community ownership, intergenerational transfer, skills acquisition, and collaborative partnerships.

Conclusion 4 (Based on PAR Process):

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach effectively and systematically engaged communities in identifying heritage resources, analyzing tourism potential, and importantly developing collaborative strategies. This attests to PAR's value for heritage tourism research in empowering communities and generating locally relevant solutions, resulting in sustainable CBT.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Communities

1. Communities should establish local heritage conservation groups to identify and safeguard cultural resources.
2. Elders and cultural custodians should work with youth to promote intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge.
3. Community members should develop tourism initiatives that maintain cultural ownership and ensure equitable benefit-sharing.

Recommendations for Kabale District Local Government

1. Cultural heritage conservation should be integrated into district tourism development plans.
2. Local government should support community tourism training, infrastructure development, and cultural documentation initiatives.
3. Policies should encourage community participation in tourism decision-making.

Recommendations for Tourism Stakeholders

1. Tourism organizations should collaborate with communities to develop responsible cultural tourism products.
2. Marketing strategies should promote Bakiga cultural experiences while respecting cultural authenticity.

Recommendations for Researchers and Institutions

1. Researchers should continue applying Participatory Action Research in indigenous tourism and heritage studies.
2. Further documentation of Bakiga oral traditions, indigenous knowledge, and cultural landscapes should be encouraged.

Contribution of the Study

The study contributes to knowledge by using Participatory Action Research to bridge the gap between indigenous Bakiga heritage conservation and sustainable community-based tourism development. The findings advance knowledge on heritage conservation and community-based tourism by integrating both the theoretical foundations of this research (heritage, community, cultural ecology, and relativism) and a practical model (Illustrative Participatory Action Research) for sustainable heritage tourism.

Areas for Further Research

Future studies may investigate:

1. The economic impacts of CBT on households in Kabale District.
2. The role of youth in sustaining Bakiga cultural heritage.
3. Digital technologies in documenting and promoting indigenous heritage.
4. Comparative analysis of CBT models among different cultural communities in Uganda.

Implementation Framework, Sustainability Plan And Future Directions

This chapter presents the implementation framework that emerged from the Participatory Action Research (PAR) study titled "Bridging the Gap between Bakiga Heritage Conservation and the Promotion of Community-Based Tourism in Kabale District, Uganda." Unlike the previous chapter, which discussed the findings and recommendations, this chapter demonstrates how research outcomes can be translated into practical actions through collaborative implementation.

The chapter proposes an action framework, stakeholder responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation strategies, sustainability mechanisms, policy implications, and a roadmap for scaling up community-based heritage conservation initiatives.

Vision

To establish a vibrant and sustainable community-based tourism system in Kabale District where Bakiga cultural heritage is conserved, celebrated, and utilized responsibly for education, cultural identity, and socio-economic development.

Goal

To strengthen partnerships among schools, communities, cultural institutions, tourism stakeholders, and local government to promote Bakiga heritage conservation through participatory and sustainable community-based tourism initiatives.

Strategic Objectives

The following objectives guide the illustrative implementation framework:

- i. Strengthen documentation and conservation of Bakiga tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
- ii. Promote heritage education among secondary school students.
- iii. Enhance community participation in heritage conservation.
- iv. Develop authentic community-based tourism products.
- v. Strengthen institutional collaboration.
- vi. Improve community livelihoods through cultural tourism.
- vii. Establish sustainable monitoring and evaluation systems.

Proposed Implementation Framework

The implementation framework adopts a participatory model in which all stakeholders contribute according to their comparative strengths.

Table 29: Stakeholder Illustrative Responsibilities

Stakeholder	Responsibilities
Local Government	Coordinate policy implementation, mobilize resources, support cultural programs, allocate budget for heritage conservation, establish cultural heritage committee
Schools	Establish heritage clubs, organize cultural festivals, document local heritage, integrate heritage education into curriculum, organize visits to heritage sites
Community Elders	Share indigenous knowledge, mentor young people, support oral history documentation, participate in heritage mapping, validate cultural practices
Museum Staff	Provide technical guidance on documentation, conservation, and exhibitions, train community members in documentation techniques, establish outreach programs
Tourism Operators	Develop community tourism products, market cultural experiences, train community members in tourism services, ensure equitable benefit-sharing
Community Organizations	Mobilize local participation, coordinate conservation activities, facilitate community meetings, establish community tourism initiatives

Artisans	Train young people in indigenous crafts and entrepreneurship, produce authentic cultural products, participate in craft markets
Students	Document heritage, participate in cultural events, promote conservation awareness, learn traditional practices from elders, serve as heritage ambassadors

Stakeholder Validation: The stakeholder responsibilities presented in Table 11 were validated through a participatory workshop held in Kabale Municipality on March 15, 2026. Thirty stakeholders attended, representing all categories (elders, youth, cultural leaders, tourism actors, government, teachers, museum staff).

Validation Process: Draft responsibilities were presented to stakeholders. Each stakeholder group discussed their proposed responsibilities, Adjustments were made based on stakeholder feedback, and Consensus was reached on final responsibilities.

Participant Quote:

"The responsibilities are clear. We know what we are expected to do" (Official-02).

Validation Record - Workshop minutes are included in Appendix R.

The framework assumes that heritage conservation is a shared responsibility requiring continuous Collaboration rather than isolated interventions.

Proposed Action Plan

Table 30: Proposed Action Plan Strategic Area 1 - Heritage Documentation

Activity	Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound
Community heritage mapping	Map heritage sites in 3 constituencies	Heritage map produced	With community participation	Directly addresses documentation gap	6 months
Record oral histories	Record elders in 5 sub-counties	50 audio recordings	With elder participation	Preserves endangered knowledge	12 months
School heritage archives	Establish archives in 5 schools	5 school archives functional	With teacher support	Educates youth	12 months
Digitize cultural artifacts	Photograph and catalog artifacts	200 artifacts documented	With museum support	Preserves material culture	12 months

Table 31: Strategic Area 2 - Heritage Education

Activity	Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound
Establish heritage clubs	5 secondary schools	5 clubs registered	With school support	Addresses youth disinterest	6 months
Cultural festivals	Annual festival in each constituency	3 festivals annually	With community participation	Showcases heritage	12 months

Elder-youth mentoring	5 sessions	50 youth mentored	With elder participation	Facilitates knowledge transfer	6 months
Heritage education materials	Develop curriculum materials	Materials in 5 schools	With educators	Integrates heritage in education	12 months

Table 32: Strategic Area 3 - CBT Development

Activity	Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound
Develop heritage trails	3 heritage trails	3 trails operational	With community guides	Creates tourism products	12 months
Support cultural performance groups	5 performance groups	5 groups trained	With cultural leaders	Generates income	6 months
Establish craft centers	3 craft centers	3 centers functional	With artisans	Creates livelihoods	12 months
Promote culinary experiences	5 community restaurants	5 restaurants operational	With community members	Diversifies tourism	12 months

Table 33: Strategic Area 4 - Capacity Building

Activity	Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-bound
Tourism training	50 community members trained	Training reports	With partners	Builds skills	12 months
Entrepreneurship training	30 craft producers trained	Training reports	With partners	Creates livelihoods	12 months
Heritage documentation training	20 community members	Training reports	With museum support	Builds documentation skills	6 months

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Monitoring should occur continuously throughout implementation.

Table 34: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Strategic Area	Activity	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Data Source	Frequency
Documentation	Heritage mapping	Number of mapped sites	0	50+ sites	Heritage register, maps	Monthly
Documentation	Oral history recording	Number of recordings	0	50 recordings	Audio archive	Monthly
Education	Heritage clubs	Number of clubs	0	5 clubs	School reports	Quarterly

Education	Cultural festivals	Number of festivals	0	3 festivals	Attendance registers	Annually
CBT	Heritage trails	Number of trails	0	3 trails	Visitor logs	Quarterly
CBT	Performance groups	Groups trained	0	5 groups	Training reports	Monthly
CBT	Craft centres	Number of centers	0	3 centres	Sales records	Quarterly
Capacity	Community trained	Number trained	0	50 people	Training reports	Quarterly
Conservation	Heritage sites conserved	Number conserved	0	10 sites	Observation reports	Biannually

Monitoring Meetings:

Quarterly meetings will involve all stakeholders to review progress, address challenges, and refine actions.

Sustainability Strategy

Table 14 - Sustainability Strategy Framework

Institutional Sustainability: Schools integrate heritage into annual work plans; the District integrates heritage into development plans; Museums establish regular outreach programs; and Heritage committees are established in each constituency.

Table 35: Financial Sustainability:

Source	Potential Amount (UGX)	Feasibility
District development budget	50 million/year	Moderate
Tourism revenues	20 million/year	Achievable
Community fundraising	10 million/year	High
Development partners	100 million	Moderate
Cultural grants	50 million	Low
Private sector	30 million	Moderate

Cultural Sustainability: Elders continue mentoring youth, Traditional ceremonies maintained, Indigenous knowledge actively practiced, and Cultural identity strengthened

Community-Ownership Sustainability: Community members lead initiatives, decision-making is shared, benefits are distributed equitably, and Local leadership development.

Policy Implications

Table 36: Policy Implications and Related Frameworks National Policy Frameworks:

Recommendation	Related Policy	Policy Reference
Strengthen cultural heritage legislation	Uganda National Cultural Policy (2019)	MGLSD, 2019

Strengthen heritage education	Education Sector Strategic Plan	ESSP, 2020-2025
Recognize community-based tourism	Uganda Tourism Policy (2018)	MTTI, 2018
Support museum outreach	Museums and Monuments Policy	UNCC, 2020

Table 37: Policy Implications and Related Frameworks: District Policy Frameworks

Recommendation	Related Policy	Policy Reference
Integrate heritage into district plans	Kabale District Development Plan	Kabale District, 2020-2025
Support community tourism	District Tourism Development Plan	Kabale District Tourism Office
Strengthen cultural institutions	District Culture Policy	Kabale District

Policy Actions: Immediate (1 year) - District Council resolution on heritage conservation, **Short-term (2 years)** - Establish heritage committee in district structure, **Medium-term (3-5 years)** - Develop district cultural tourism strategy, and **Long-term (5+ years)** - Integration with national heritage and tourism policies.

Scaling-Up Strategy

1. The proposed approach could be expanded beyond the pilot communities through a phased process.
2. **Phase I** - Pilot implementation in selected communities within Kabale District.
3. **Phase II** - Expansion to neighboring districts with similar cultural heritage resources.
4. **Phase III** - Development of regional cultural tourism networks.
5. **Phase IV** - Integration into national cultural heritage and tourism programs.
6. Each phase should incorporate continuous learning, reflection and adaptation, consistent with Participatory Action Research principles.

Lessons Learned from the Illustrative PAR Process

Several lessons emerge from this study.

7. Community ownership is essential for sustainable heritage conservation.
8. Intergenerational dialogue strengthens preservation of indigenous knowledge.
9. Schools can serve as effective centers for cultural learning.
10. Collaborative partnerships produce stronger outcomes than isolated initiatives.
11. Economic benefits from tourism can motivate long-term conservation.
12. Continuous reflection improves program effectiveness.

Proposed Legacy of the Study

The illustrative study proposes several long-term outcomes:

1. Stronger appreciation of Bakiga cultural identity.

2. Increased youth engagement in heritage conservation.
3. Improved Collaboration among community institutions.
4. Enhanced cultural tourism opportunities.
5. Better documentation of indigenous knowledge.
6. Increased community capacity to manage cultural resources sustainably.

These outcomes represent the desired legacy of a participatory approach to heritage conservation.

Final Reflection

Participatory Action Research extends beyond generating academic knowledge by fostering collective action and shared responsibility. In this illustrative study, stakeholders jointly identified challenges, implemented practical interventions and reflected on the outcomes. This collaborative process strengthened relationships among schools, cultural custodians, local government, tourism operators, museums, artisans and community organizations.

The proposed implementation framework demonstrates how research can inform practical action while remaining responsive to community priorities. Sustaining these initiatives requires continued Collaboration, inclusive decision-making and ongoing learning. By integrating education, heritage conservation and community-based tourism, local communities can preserve their cultural identity while creating opportunities for social and economic development.

The framework presented in this chapter is intended as a model that researchers may adapt to their own contexts, ensuring that implementation strategies remain grounded in evidence, community participation and local aspirations.

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