

**OPERATIONAL RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND SUSTAINABILITY TOURISM PROJECTS IN RWANDA: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF KIGALI CULTURAL VILLAGE PROJECT**Odunga Sebastian<sup>1</sup>, Abuya Joshua Olang'o<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>Odunga Sebastian, *School of Business & Economics, KIM University, Kigali, Rwanda*<sup>2</sup>Abuya Joshua Olang'o, *School of Business & Economics, KIM University, Kigali, Rwanda***ABSTRACT**

Many projects in Rwanda tourism industry have been initiated but with inconsistent operational risk management practices. **Consequently**, most projects cannot be moved to the next phase of self-sustainability forcing them to seek external support either from the government or the financier. This may not be forthcoming immediately hence collapse of many such projects. **This** study analyzed the effect of project operational risk management practices on sustainable tourism growth in Rwanda. The following objectives will be the basis of the study: to **assess** the effect operational risk management practices on sustainable tourism growth in Rwanda. The target population comprised of 130 employees who were the senior managers and line managers and supervisors of Kigali Cultural Village Project-Rwanda Development Board (RDB). A sample size of 98 was drawn using Yaro Yamane (1967) formula. Stratified random sampling was employed to sample the survey respondents from the target population. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and document reviews whose reliability and validity were tested at an index of 0.70. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to measure the reliability on a 5-point Likert Scale for multiple items obtained from a pilot survey while content validation of the questionnaire was done by supervisors from the University. Descriptive statistics like tables, frequencies and percentages and correlation as well as regression analysis were used besides content analysis to indicate the relationship between the project operational risk management practices and sustainable tourism growth. Regression analysis was used to investigate the statistical significant effect of project operational risk management practices and sustainable tourism growth. The findings indicated that improving project operational risk management practices would significantly improve on sustainable tourism growth. The study recommends governments of developing countries **to** focus on project operational risk management policies to promote sustainable tourism as a potential source of economic growth.

**KEY WORDS:** Project Operational Risk Management Practices, Tourism Sustainability and Growth.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background to the study and builds a case for the research problem. It begins by reviewing the concepts of project operational risk management vis-à-vis sustainable tourism. This section also covers the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, hypotheses, justification, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitations of the study and the organization of the research project. The increasing pace of change, customer demands and market globalization all put operational risk management high on the agenda for forward thinking organization. Risks cause cost overrun and schedule delay in many projects. The effectiveness of operational risk management becomes an important issue in project management. To make operational risk management more efficient and effective, all parties must understand risk responsibilities, risk event conditions, risk preference, and risk management capabilities (Wehrung et al. 1988; Al-Bahar and Crandall 1990)

Risk is inevitable and inborn in each and every economic activity. According to Brain (2001) risk occurs when outcome is uncertain. Risk exists as a part of an environment in which various organizations operate (Shafiq and Nasr, 2010) so each and every business has to face risk. Without taking risk, growth of business is like a nightmare (Asim et al., 2012) Tourism projects like all businesses face various types of risk which arise due to the nature of their activities. Cultural heritages are usually comprised of ancient artifacts and materials which may pose various risk of their own (Cultural Heritage Bureau, 2005). Such risk may constitute financial risks, operational risks, human resource risks, technological risk, economic risk, disaster risks and preservation risks. Operational risks are attributed to the strategic and tactical activities carried on a day to day basis (PMI, 2008). In a project, anything ranging from estimated budget at completion to scheduled duration of any subcomponent, subcontract, operation or activity may be exposed to risk and uncertainty. Thus, risk and uncertainty would be attached to assumptions and probabilities about finances, inflation, strikes and other external aspects of projects. Risk may also be defined as “exposure to the possibility of economic and financial loss or gain, physical damage or injury, or delay as a consequence of the uncertainty associated with pursuing a particular course of action” (Chapman and Cooper, 1983). In any project, a problem is an

unwanted situation which may potentially (or create situation leading to) jeopardize the project objectives. Risk is the occurrence of a negative event or the non-occurrence of a positive event (PMI, 2008). Raftery (2003) argues that “When there is a risk, there must be something that is unknown or has an unknown outcome. Therefore, knowledge about risk is knowledge about lack of knowledge. This combination of knowledge and lack thereof contributes to making issues of risk complicated from an epistemological point of view. He further says, “Risk and uncertainty characterize situations where the actual outcome for a particular event or activity is likely to deviate from the estimate or forecast value” (Raftery, 2003).

In order to manage this increasingly complex notion of risk, the concept of operational risk management becomes handy. Operational risk management practice thus requires a high level of management skills and knowledge; it is a challenging area for project managers worldwide. Although almost everyone agrees to have a ‘good risk management program’, it is nevertheless little tricky to define one owing to the intricacies of common nomenclature and lack of managerial knowledge among practitioners. In contemporary times, project success is swayed by risk and its management in any capital project (Krane et al, 2010). Operational risk management ought to be a fundamental matter for project managers as poorly managed or mitigated risks are at the center of project sustainability (Royer, 2000). Similarly, the complex nature of stakeholder relationships additionally emphasizes for the need for efficient operational risk management (Arto, 2008).

Sustainable investment projects play an important role in the development process of economies against the backdrop of various risks management approaches. As a result, they have been described as the building blocks of development. Although a general accepted definition of a sustainable investment project has not been defined, certain features can be said to characterize any project. According to Fortune & White (2006), a sustainable investment project may be described as a discrete investment activity, with a specific starting point and a specific ending point, intended to accomplish specific economic, social and environmental objectives simultaneously. It comprises a well-defined sequence of investments, which are expected to result in a stream of specific benefits over time. According to IFAD (2007), sustainability involves ensuring that the institutions supported through projects and the benefits realized are maintained and continue after the end of the project. It acknowledges that assessment of sustainability entails determining “whether the results of the project will be sustained in the

medium or even longer term without continued external assistance”.

Indeed, tourism has been considered one of the largest and fastest growing sectors of the world economy. It is increasingly gaining dominance in the socio-economic development literature as a recognized tool for achieving sustainable development especially in developing countries. As a subset of sustainable development theory, sustainable tourism planning has been seen by many as a means of maximizing the positive and minimizing the negative impacts of tourism activity on destination communities. Although the concept has received in-principle support from academia, government and industry, more critical viewpoints have emerged questioning the extent to which sustainability doctrine is actually put into tourism management practice for tourism growth. Tourism has had a high impact upon destinations worldwide, and the 808 million international arrivals in 2005 indicate the magnitude and economic significance of global tourist activity (WTO, 2006). Tourism can undoubtedly create positive economic returns for destination countries; foreign exchange earnings, employment growth, tax revenues, and can substantially stimulate the economy overall (Inskeep, 1991). In the years following World War II, with the recognized beginning of mass tourism, nations, states, cities and regional areas began actively promoting themselves as tourism destinations, committing considerable funds towards tourism development (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000).

As Rwanda makes progress in tourism development, an assessment of the tourism projects against the practicalities of sustainability in the commercial tourism industry becomes crucial. This study thus investigates the effect of operational risk management on sustainable tourism growth of tourism by examining the extent to which the sustainable tourism project operational risk management philosophy is utilized in the management practices of local tourism destinations in Rwanda. Additionally the study seeks to develop a theoretical framework to facilitate the application of sustainability principles to local tourism destination management. The Government of Rwanda has therefore identified tourism as one of the key drives for the economic development of the country as set in its vision 2020. Tourism is projected to play a big role in the creation of jobs as well as increasingly generate many revenues to the economy. In 2012, the total revenues collected through from this sector amounted US \$ 281.8 million and are expected to reach US \$ 860 million by 2017. To compete favorably with other destinations, Rwanda has identified a need to diversify both its tourist product and market reach in a sustainable manner. Under a well-documented hub-and-spoke strategy, Kigali has been

identified as the central tourism hub from which tourism corridors (spokes) and trails will link to the rest of the country. Rwanda prides of its famous mountains, gorillas and world class hotels where the visitors choose the hotels suited for easy access to gorilla safaris at Kigali and near the ANP. The duration of visitors stay is between 3 - 4 days on average (RDB, 2015). The diversity of tourism products in Rwanda also brings more visitors in different parts of country which calls for proper and efficient management. This also conforms to the focus of this study which tries to establish the effect of operational risk management on sustainable tourism growth in Rwanda.

According to Spenceley et al., (2009) the GoR has invested nearly US\$ 428,248 directly invested in community projects and used to empower communities around the National Parks which is directly correlated to the tourism revenues collected in the previous year. Bush, Hanley, and Colombo (2008), confirmed that the percentage of Rwanda National Parks revenues used to enhance local community development does not have a significant effect on tourism demand. This probably could be attributed to improper risk management strategies in place. According to Rutagarama and Martin (2006), community conservation and the increasing number of tourists in Rwanda calls for a highly flexible operational framework as a risk management strategy that would enable capacity and power to co-evolve with local tourism partners in appropriate ways. Rwanda has tried to invest in operational assets that local tourism partners would need to maximize their opportunities for entering productive partnerships should be a fundamental part of plans to widen (and deepen) local participation and service delivery in tourism. The effect of this operational risk management strategy has not yet been established. In Rwanda, therefore, it has been clear that tourism projects are always designed for execution with clear activity lines and sequences against which they can be managed for progression. Many tourism projects in Rwanda have picked up well but on completion they are not able to be passed over to the community for continued sustainable management without further support by the financier or the government. Kigali Cultural Village is now on course but the question lingering is that; “will it be a sustainable tourism project in Rwanda?”

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Risk management is known to increase the probability and impact of positive events and decrease the probability and impact of events adverse to project sustainability objectives. Proper project operational risk management results to successful project implementation and sustainability. While studies on the effect of operational risk management on sustainable tourism growth have

not been exhausted, numerous case studies attest to the fact that tourism destinations have realized the error of their ways. Many projects in Rwanda tourism industry have been initiated but with inconsistent risk management practices, the projects cannot be moved to the next phase of self-sustainability since they would still require external support either from the government or the financier. While some researchers argue that tourism stakeholders are now embracing efficient operational risk management practices based on the philosophies of sustainability, some authors disagree and posit that operational risk management has not been taken seriously. The tourism industry has been slow to adopt proper risk management and sustainability principles and actually putting them into practice due to the fact that economic motivations are always given priority over social and ecological issues. The result being that the economic approach and not sustainability is still the dominant tradition towards tourism development practiced in many tourism destinations (Hall, 1998). With the present projects in Rwanda facing many project risks attributed to inconsistent project operational risk management practices by many project managers, the project outcomes have been fluctuating. There is thus the need to **determine** the role that operational risk management can play towards sustainable tourism. This study therefore comes in to **assess** the effect of project operational risk management practices on sustainable tourism growth in Rwanda.

### 3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the research was to examine effect of project operational risk management practices on sustainability of tourism projects in Rwanda.

### 4. RESEARCH QUESTION

This study was guided by the following research question: What is the effect of project operational risk management practices on sustainability of tourism projects in Rwanda?

### 5. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Christel (2004) low income countries like Rwanda obtain higher number of tourists' arrivals if three main areas are developed: Infrastructures, Education and safety. These constitute some of the operational risk areas in a project economy which must be critically managed. Infrastructural development and maintenance in the areas of IT, roads, communication etc can be well managed through revenues collected from tourist arrivals subsequently becoming a sure reinvestment in the tourism industry and will facilitate its growth and sustainability.

Rutagarama and Martin (2006) stated that there is something of a catch-22 in relation to community conservation and number of tourists in Rwanda. Rutagarama and Martin (2006) further suggest the need for a flexible operational framework as a risk management strategy that enables capacity and power to co-evolve with local tourism partners in appropriate ways. Developing the operational assets that local tourism partners need to maximize their opportunities for entering productive partnerships should be a fundamental part of plans to widen (and deepen) local participation and service delivery in tourism. According to (World Tourism Organization, 2003) the establishment of standard operating procedures in a National Economic Recovery Plan in 2002 led not as immediate as first expected, but to more of a gradual recovery of the tourism sector over months. This witnessed a 3.1% increase in international tourist arrivals but later averaged to a growth rate of 4.3% of the international tourist arrivals. Such increase in tourist arrivals if continued would result in a sustainable tourism growth.

## 6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey research design. It involved gathering data that described events and then organized, tabulated, depicted, and described the data collection. The choice of this design was appropriate for this study since it restricted to the fact finding and was relatively easy to carry out within limited time. It also looked at section of the study population whose results were generalized to the entire population. The target population comprised of 130 employees from Kigali cultural village project- RDB headquarters was involved. The categories of respondents participated in this study, because of their direct relevance with the study objectives included; senior managers, line managers and supervisors. The study employed stratified random sampling in which the respondents were stratified into three categories of senior managers, line managers and supervisors. Yaro Yamane, (1967) formula was employed in determining the sample size. The sample size in each stratum was then being proportionately obtained. The study used structured questionnaires and documentary review as data collection instruments among the 98 respondents. The study had opted for the two methods of data collection because the questionnaires were relatively quick with responses gathered in a standardized way and were more objective compared to other tools of data collection. The primary data was collected through questionnaires to gather information on the effect of project operational risk management practices on sustainable tourism growth in Rwanda Case of Kigali Village Project. The researcher distributed and administered questionnaires to selected

sampled units. Questionnaire is an instrument that consists of a set of questions to be responded by a group of people who are asked to answer in order to provide information on their own free will and time helped the researcher to get the level of knowledge, attitude, and perceptions of respondent on the research topic. This research also reviewed literature obtained from the case study organization. This literature included annual reports and other reports from RDB. This method was chosen because it is vital in providing background information and facts about project operational risk management practices on sustainable tourism growth before primary data could be collected. Indeed, before field data was collected, a wide collection of secondary data was collected to cross check with the primary data that was obtained from the field.

## 7. DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected using questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively using inferential and descriptive statistics and tested using Pearson chi-square test of independence at 0.05 the level of significance to assess associations between the variables under study. In order to ensure logical completeness and consistency of responses, the completed questionnaires were checked thoroughly by editing, coding, entering and then presented in comprehensive tables which would show the responses of each category of variables and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The quantitative data generated were keyed in and analyzed by use of Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 to generate information which was presented using tables, frequencies and percentages.

## 8. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents empirical findings in reference to the research questions in chapter one. These findings were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. They were presented and analyzed using frequency tables and mean and standard deviations to analyze the data according to specific objective. Regression analysis was used to determine the effect of project operational risk management practices on tourism project sustainability in Rwanda. Under profile of the respondent's data about gender, age, educational background and experience of the respondents were analyzed. 71.4% of the respondents were males while 28.6% were females. This implies that research is free from gender biasness since both male and female were interviewed. Majority of the respondents 49% were aged 31 to 40 years. This was followed by 27.6% of the respondents being between 21 to 30 years. There were 17.3% of the respondents between the ages of 41 to 50 years, while 6.1% were 51 years and above. A total 76.6% of the

respondents were within 21 – 40 years. This implies that the research finding is reliable since the findings shows that the majority of the respondents are matured in thinking.48% of the respondents were holding undergraduate qualifications with 42.9% having diploma qualification. Only 9.2% of the respondents were having post-graduate qualification. The findings presented by the respondents are reliable since the majority is educated. Most of the respondents (37.8%) were 3-4 years of experience. This was followed by 25.5% of the respondents being more than 5 years' experience and 21.4% having between 1-2 years' experience. There was however only 15.3% of the respondents having between2-3 years' experience. A cumulative 74.5% of the respondents were between 1 – 4 years' experience. This indicated that the research findings are reliable since majority of the respondents have got enough experience in the tourism sector.

Regression analysis was conducted to investigate the statistical effect of operational risk management practices on tourism project sustainability in Rwanda. Precisely, the following linear model was used:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X + \epsilon$$

Where Y stands for tourism project sustainability, X stands for operational risk management practices,  $\beta_0$  and  $\beta_1$  are (the intercept and the slope) parameters of the model to be estimated and  $\epsilon$  is the error term which is assumed to be independent, identical normally distributed random variable with mean zero and variance a constant. The findings were tabulated as shown in Table 8.1- 8.3.

**Table 8.1: Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.805 <sup>a</sup>	.649	.645	.36370

**Table 8.2: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	23.434	1	23.434	17.160	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	12.699	96	.132		
	Total	36.133	97			

**Table 8.3: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.061	.266		3.996	.000
Operational Risk Mgt Practices	.801	.015	.805	3.310	.000

The study seeks to determine the effect of operation risk management practices on tourism project sustainability (number of customers). The operational risk management practices include but not limited to managing supplier reliability and service quality in a project. An R-square = .645 displayed in Table 8.1 column 3, indicates that 64.5% of change in project sustainability in terms of number of customers is explained by the model while 35.5% of the change in the dependent variable cannot be explained by the model. In the same table 8.1 column 2, it can be observed there is a positive correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.805$ ) between operation risk management practices and tourism project sustainability in terms of number of customers. This is quite strong association since R measured is closed to unit.

Table 8.2 displayed the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Column 5 and 6 display the F statistics ( $F = 17.160$ ) and the p-value ( $\text{Sig} = 0.000$ ). With p-value =  $0.000 < 0.05$ , it is clear that operation risk management practices has an effect on project sustainability which is quite statistically significant.

From Table 8.3, the following regression equation is deduced:

$$S_{CUSTOMER\ NUMBER} = 1.0611 + 0.801X_2$$

Where S stands for tourism project sustainability, X stands for operational risk management practices,  $\beta_0$  and  $\beta_1$  are (the intercept and the slope) parameters of the model to be estimated and is the error term which is assumed to be independent, identical normally distributed random variable with a zero mean and variance as well as being constant. This equation display  $\beta_0 = 1.0611$  and  $\beta_1 = 0.801$ . The model means that a unit improvement in project operational risk management would improve project sustainability in terms of number of customers by 0.801 units. The t-statistic value of 3.310 indicates that the effect of project operational risk

management practices on project sustainability is statistically significant at 95 % confidence level. This is quite true even at 99% since the p-value is of 0.000. The evaluation and monitoring of service quality performance is also a critical responsibility for the project managers. Cost has been traditionally considered as the single most important factor in evaluating and monitoring service level. Changes in competitive priorities have also seen other dimensions of performance, including quality, delivery and flexibility become increasingly important. Consequently, in order to maintain effective service delivery for increased number of customers, the project manager must continuously monitor service quality performance across multiple project dimensions and provide feedback for improvement.

## 9. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 9.1 Summary

This study employed 98 questionnaires which were sent out to respective respondents out of which all were returned giving a response rate of 100%. 71.4% of the respondents were males while 28.6% were females. This implies that the research is free from gender biasness since both male and female were interviewed. Majority of the respondents 49% were aged 31 to 40 years. This was followed by 27.6% of the respondents being between 21 to 30 years. There were 17.3% of the respondents between the ages of 41 to 50 years, while 6.1% were 51 years and above. A total 76.6% of the respondents were within 21 – 40 years. This implies that the research finding is reliable since the findings shows that the majority of the respondents are matured in thinking. 48% of the respondents were holding undergraduate qualifications with 42.9% having diploma qualification. Only 9.2% of the respondents were having post-graduate qualification. The findings presented by the respondents are reliable since the majority is educated. Most of the respondents (37.8%) were 3-4 years of experience. This was followed by 25.5% of the respondents being more than 5 years' experience and 21.4% having between 1-2 years' experience. There was however only 15.3% of the respondents having between 2-3 years' experience. A cumulative 74.5% of the respondents were between 1 – 4 years' experience. This indicates that the research findings are reliable since majority of the respondents have got enough experience in the tourism sector. Regression analysis was conducted to investigate the statistical effect of operational risk management practices on tourism project sustainability in Rwanda. The study findings shows that operation risk management practices has a statistically

significant effect on tourism project sustainability in Rwanda with operation risk management practices for tourism project sustainability with regard to customer numbers.

## 9.2 Conclusions of the study

In regard to the significant role that the tourism industry plays in Rwanda's economic growth, study seek to establish the effect of project operational risk implementation practices on tourism sustainability. The study therefore concludes that project operational risk management practices have statistically significant effect on tourism sustainability. It also concludes that improving the various project operational risk management practices would eventually increase tourism project sustainability in Rwanda.

## 9.3 Recommendations of the study

The study recommends that strong project operational risk management tools like critical path analysis be used to manage critical project activities with regard to operations. This is in view of the fact that improving operational risk management practices would resultantly improve tourism sustainability. The study further recommends governments of developing countries to focus on operational risk management policies to promote sustainable tourism as a potential source of economic growth.

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