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Rwanda Mice Strategy and Its Influence on the Tourism Industry. Case Study of Rwanda Convention Bureau

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Keywords:

*MICE,
Tourism,
Enablers,
Strategy.*

The MICE sector is one of the more rapidly growing market segments of Rwanda and this aroused the interest of researchers to investigate its performance and promotion in Rwanda. The study was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The population of this research was 100 respondents and the total sample size was 80 though after editing and coding, only 75 questionnaires were found to be valid. The study used convenience and purposive sampling. Both primary and secondary data sources were applied in the study including documentation, questionnaire, and interviews. The study revealed the enablers of MICE tourism development in Rwanda to be good infrastructure, cleanliness of Rwanda (e.g., Kigali city), zero tolerance to corruption, adequate security, and stability of the country, among others. The strategy Rwanda is using to attract delegates to choose Rwanda were; top leaders' negotiations at international forums, zero tolerance to corruption, being a reliable and safe destination for MICE events, strengthening "remarkable Rwanda", and visiting Rwanda Campaigns, among others. The influence of MICE tourism on the economy of Rwanda includes generating local employment, branding Rwanda, developing small and medium enterprises. The challenges identified were; limited or lack of facilities for special needs delegates, inadequate training for service providers, few ceremonies, and events etc. The study concluded by recommending RCB and the government to involve private sectors in event organisation/management, training the taxi men and night cab men how to deal with delegates, and good and reliable government policy that eases delegates' movement in and out of Rwanda, more infrastructure in term of accommodation and big venue capacity to enhance to host 10,000 delegates.

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INTRODUCTION

MICE tourism, also known as business tourism, occupies a significant position in the tourism sphere. The term "MICE" is an abbreviation for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions. MICE is sometimes known as MICE tourism or meetings industry, or business tourism (Sharma & Arora, 2022). The International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA) and Smagina (2017) define it as corporate tourism as it is designed for business people travelling to attend exhibitions, conventions, company or corporate meetings, congresses, and large events, among others. Business tourism, in short, is when you travel for professional purposes and business purposes rather than for personal gain where you are going (Degarege & Lovelock, 2020). That is, you travel to represent your company or business for example, Chief executive officers, managers, researchers, ministers, professors, permanent secretaries, government officials, and company employees, among others. These business people on the move are technically called delegates (Kerdpitak, 2019). These delegates require organisers to conduct intensive planning, programming, and expeditions if these events are to be successful as Mice or business tourists are less cost-sensitive than leisure tourists, hence requiring quality than quantity while spending as their purchase decisions are influenced primarily by their

ability to use time efficiently while travelling (Kumar et al., 2015).

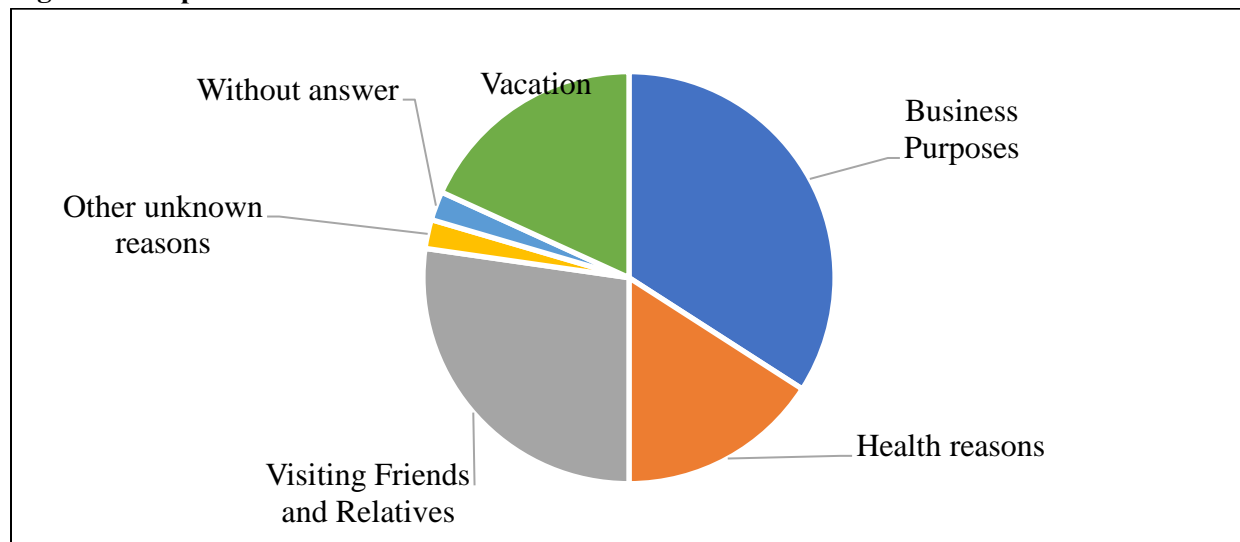
MICE tourism is therefore, the use of travel services, hotel facilities and other amenities by people travelling for business purposes, which may include but is not limited to meetings, incentives, events, conferences, seminars, gatherings, celebration parties, company ceremonies, product launch, annual investor meet up, and training programs and after or during their schedules, these travellers often visit towns, villages, tourist attractions, souvenir shops among others, hence a source of tourism revenue for the host city (Sharma, 2018). According to Katsitadze & Natsvlishvili (2017) as quoted by Smagina et al. (2017), 15.6% of the total number of tourists, or about 119 million, were participants in business trips in 2014. In 2015, the number increased to 16% translating to 130 million business travellers (Tola & Gebremedihen, 2020). This represented 29% of the total number of tourists. According to the British Tourist Authority and London Tourist Board, MICE tourism accounted for about 30% of all trips to or within the UK (Sharma, 2018; Sharma & Arora, 2022). This was supported by a UNWTO report of 2017 that stated that business travel accounts for between 20% and 30% of international tourism. The needs for MICE tourists vary from one person to another or from one region to another, but the minimum is:

- Well-arranged protocol as some are VIPs
- Luxury cars for transport
- Safe and Comfortable venue
- International F&B services
- Professional ushers who cannot familiarise
- Internet at the venue and in hotel rooms
- After the conference send-off cocktails and/ or dinner
- Well-arranged program and time conscience
- Etc.

Recent industry reports by ICCA (2018) revealed that every fourth individual out of ten people who travel locally or abroad are on business trips. This is supported by the worldwide exhibition for

incentive, travel, meeting, and events (IMEX) and the European incentive and business travel and meeting exhibition (EIBTM) when they reported that in 2017 many conferences, congresses, meetings, events/exhibitions, were held with the largest being held in Frankfurt, hosting over 3,000 participants from over 100 countries annually. It was also observed that the global standing of MICE performance per country ranked Europe and North America as the leading host regions for MICE tourism (Kerdpitak, 2019). This was followed by Asia, where the winning cities were Beijing, Seoul, Singapore, New Delhi, and Bangkok. (Buathong & Lai, 2019; Thailand Conference and Exhibition Bureau [TCEB], 2015). For example, *Figure 1* below shows the purposes for tourists' arrival in Serbia in 2011, where 58.2% of all tourists in Serbia travelled for business purposes (Mishra, 2020).

Figure 1: Purposes for tourists' arrival in Serbia in 2011



Source: (Uansa-ard & Binprathan, 2018) and the International Association Meetings Market (2001-2010, 2011)

South Africa ranked number one in Africa, followed by Egypt, Morocco, and Kenya, respectively. For instance, Fédération International de Football Association (FIFA) selected South Africa to become the first African nation to host the world cup on 11 June to 11 July 2010, and the matches were played in 10 stadiums in nine host cities around the

country (Lekgau, & Tichaawa, 2022; Wahyudin et al., 2019).

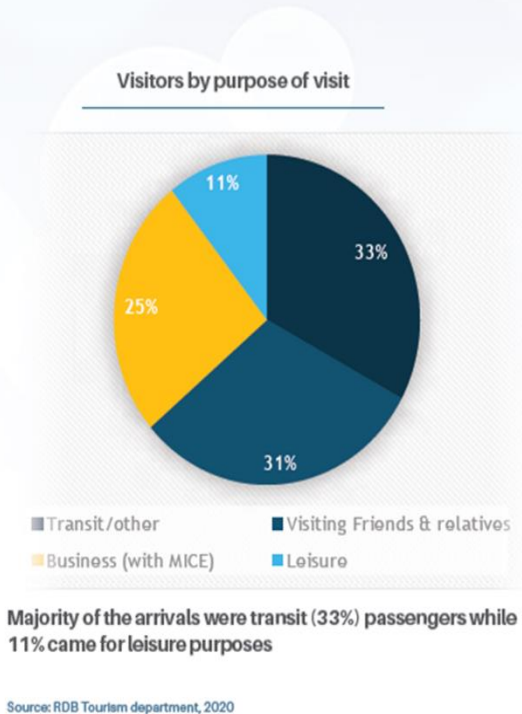
According to International Congress and Convention Associate (ICCA, 2019), Kigali city ranked as the second most popular conference destination in East Africa and that enabled Rwanda to host the International Conference on AIDS and

Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA, 2019), which over 10,000 delegates attended from all corners of the world. Furthermore, other events hosted in Rwanda include over 4,000 delegates at Transform Africa Summit 2019, an International Conference on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Implementation in Africa and the 3rd India – Africa ICT and Expo summit, as well as the Africa Public Relation Association (APRA) Annual General Meetings (ICCA, 2019). From these events, the country generated about \$88 million from \$56 million in 2018. Other conferences included the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM

MOBILE 360), Africa Tech Summit, and Cybertech Africa, which normally host over 1,000 participants each and resonate with Rwanda’s bid to become a technology hub for Africa (Mwijarubi and Sabulaki, 2019). This and many other reasons have made Rwanda put more emphasis on MICE tourism promotion given its multiplier effect on the economy as tourism employs more than 84,000 workers and a lot of revenues is generated (Pascariu & Ibănescu, 2018; Nizeyimana & Kalulu, 2017). This is true as the RDB report of 2019 stated that 25% of all visitors to Rwanda were for business purposes, as depicted in *Figure 2* below.

Figure 2: Purpose of travel in Rwanda

In 2019, 25% of total arrivals come for Business (with MICE) purposes



Source: **RDB Tourism department, 2020**

Tourism Revenues of Rwanda

- Tourism Revenues of Rwanda
- In 2021, total tourism revenues were \$164 million, a 25 per cent increase from \$131 million in 2020. The country welcomed more than 512,000 international visitors in 2021

(RDB Tourism department, 2020).

- In the 2019 fiscal year, more than \$38.5 million was collected in 86 conferences that attracted more than 18,400 foreign visitors, according to the Rwanda Convention Bureau.
- Tourism Revenue increased by 17% from US\$

425 million in 2018 to US\$ 498 million in 2019- (RDB report, 2019)

- \$438 million in 2017 was received
- \$404 million in 2016 was received
- \$318 million (about Rwf250 billion) in 2015
- \$305 million (Rwf240 billion) in 2014

However, due to Covid-19 in March 2020, Rwanda reported losses amounting to over Rwf13 billion. For example, according to Rwanda Convention Bureau (RBC), Rwanda was scheduled to host 147 events in 2020, but at least 20 conferences were postponed, denying the country approximately \$8 million in revenues compared to the projected revenue target of \$88 million in 2020 (RDB, 2020). A number of events were postponed or cancelled following a government directive as a precautionary measure against the Covid-19 pandemic. They include the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting [CHOGM], 2020), the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference 2020, which was scheduled for March 17-20 and the Cybertech Africa slated for March 11-13. Rwanda Automobile Club (RAC) Postponed the 2020 Mountain Gorilla Rally until further notice as the country continues to mitigate the covid – 19 Pandemic; the event, which was scheduled for May 2020 saw the sponsors lose a lot of capital they invested towards the event. This is clear proof of how the MICE industry has been strongly affected by the disruptive effects of COVID-19, yet these events were expected to have a huge impact in terms of forex and spillovers to the economy of Rwanda (Suleiman, 2017)

MICE tourism has been recognised by many countries as it brings in the needed revenue with minimal effort. For example, “in 2013, the size of MICE tourism market comprised of 1.1 trillion USD, while in 2014 it increased to 1.17 trillion USD, and in 2015, it grew to 1,234 trillion USD and it kept growing till date (ICCA, 2017). Exhibitions which is a very key component in MICE tourism as per the report of the Centre for Exhibition Industry

Research (CEIR), indicated growth of the exhibition industry in the first quarter of 2020 by 72.6% though some were cancelled in the second half of March yet other events of 27.4% were postponed (Odunga, 2022).

Therefore, MICE tourism, as it’s known today, is a pulling branch of tourism that aids in the diversification of the economy as well as promoting other tourism resources and facilitates such as the country’s convention centres, conference halls and hospitality services given its multiplier effects on the economy in the form of knowledge dissemination, networking, business skills transfer, international corporation and that it supports other business sectors like hotels, restaurant, music, tourism, transport services, convention facility supply, catering sector and tour operations (Aburumman, 2020) and as quoted by (Gitau, 2017; Mishra, 2020). This is in agreement with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2016 declaration which categorised MICE tourism as a “Clean industry”, as observed in Kigali, Rwanda where many English-speaking country delegates gathered in Kigali for various business discussions during CHOGM 2022 meeting. In this case, the sector is a key driver of the economy as it supports the tourism industry during low seasons (i.e., by considering its multiplicative effect on the tourism industry) and that it spreads knowledge and enhances innovation and creativity (Ermolaev et al., 2019) as quoted by (Rwigema, & Celestin, 2020).

But for MICE tourism to survive, there is a need for stronger stakeholders. As they make decisions, participate in events, draft policies, and enhance the coordination of policies and strategies as well as benefit from the potential benefits of MICE. Stakeholders’ groups are categorised as primary, which are city officials, marketing organisations, competitors, tourism attraction operations, service companies, tourists, restaurants, and hotels; while secondary stakeholders are chamber of commerce, incentive planners and community groups, property

owners, local business, coastal zone managers, and employees (Ermolaev et al., 2019).

Despite Rwanda's considerable effort in promoting modern hotels, convention centres, cultural villages, art galleries, and monuments (spread across the city of Kigali and other secondary cities such as Rubavu, Huye, and Musanze among others), still, Rwanda MICE tourism has not reached the desired position the county wants (RDB, 2019). This and other reasons pushed the researchers to conduct a study to find out Rwanda's imminent strategy as far as MICE tourism promotion is concerned, as well as to look at MICE tourism's influence on the tourism Industry. The study used Rwanda Convention Bureau as a case study. The key questions of the study were; i) what are the enablers of MICE tourism development in Rwanda? ii) What is the influence of MICE tourism on the economy of Rwanda? iii) What relationship exists between MICE tourism and tourism development in Rwanda? And what strategies can be used to develop MICE tourism in Rwanda?

Justification of the Study

This study is significant in providing information about the influence and strategies of MICE tourism development in Rwanda; it also provides information for policymakers about how to regulate the problems of MICE tourism in Rwanda; thus, this research paper would serve as guidelines for those who want to study MICE tourism. It also gives a clear picture of the exciting contribution and challenges of MICE in Rwanda for newcomers or investors. For researchers, it builds strong knowledge that the researcher has towards the issue and also gains experience in undertaking the study. The findings will guide tourism stakeholders including governments, local people, the private sector, and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in planning and execution of MICE tourism development in Rwanda. It will help them to identify problems and weaknesses which are affecting the tourism industry in terms of Meetings,

Incentives, conferences, and exhibitions. The study provides a way forward to eradicate the challenges which might stand as a hindrance to the development of tourism in developing countries through MICE tourism. The results of this research increase the productiveness of the MICE tourism industry and will form the basis for future researchers who wish to pursue their research in the same field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents a review of related literature and the various studies done by several authors. It also identifies the research gap and tries to fill it through academic discussions as follows.

As described in the introduction, the term MICE has many descriptions and various scholars understand it in various dimensions. In Europe, MICE is referred to as the meeting industry, while in Australia, it is the business event industry and in North America and Asia constitute MICE tourism (Ronald et al., 2017; Rwigema & Celestin, 2020) and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2018), MICE tourism is business tourism while Lin and Chen (2014) define it as the corporate industry which takes in the form of meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions. ICCA define it as "*a set of activities designed to accommodate the millions of delegates that attend meetings, congresses, exhibits, corporate events, and incentive travel*". Most scholars generally agree that MICE tourism includes all activities related to meetings, exhibitions, conferences, and events of life which are organised for delegates. However, Albayrak and caber, (2015) disagree with the scholars' perceptive about MICE tourism when they stated it as a new form of tourism aimed at increasing the number of conventions, exhibitions, meetings, and conferences in order to build the country's tourism industry. Overall, MICE tourists consume a range of tourist services and essential tourism products within tourist destinations

(Katsitadze & Natsvlishvili 2017, as quoted by Mishra, 2020).

Components of MICE tourism

According to Rojas Bueno et al. (2020), the term meeting refers to a gathering of people in a place for certain activities, yet the Convention Industry Council (CIC,2019) disagrees when it gives its own meaning of meeting as an event in which participants join in communicative meetings for educational or other purposes.

Incentive travel as per the Society of Incentive Travel Executives (SITE) refers to management tools used by managers of a modern company where employees are given travel tickets outside their jurisdiction with the aim of motivating them, especially if they have reached or completed company goals (Trišić & Arsenov-Bojović 2018 as quoted by Sardar et al. 2020). Incentive travel, henceforth, is a motivational instrument for high performance or is used to encourage more productivity among the employees of the company.

Conference refers to an annual gathering of similar professionals to share and exchange ideas (Sardar et al., 2020). A conference generates debate, information exchange, giving solutions to issues and consultation (Gitau, 2017). However, scholars have differentiated “Conference” from Congress or Convention, i.e., they have a different perspective regarding conference meaning; they stated that a convention is usually used for business purposes while a conference is used for academic and for

technical purposes. Furthermore, congress refers to three types of meetings which include family gatherings, scientific gatherings, and trade meetings; therefore, convention, conference and congress are different terms that are often used for similar purposes.

An exhibition on the other hand, refers to a public show for the promotion of goods and services (Hossain et al., 2022). The aim of exhibitions is to enhance product sales, make it known to the public, and seek new information about the products as well as an avenue for networking (Getz, 2018) and (Buathong & Lai, 2019). The present study views the exhibition as a public display of goods and services to the public coupled with a lot of reasons which are only known to the exhibitor but mainly business oriented. The present study did not cover the multiplier impact of the Mice tourism activities on the economy of Rwanda, especially local businesses, or individuals and thus, another study may be conducted to uncover the multiplier impact of the Mice revenue, especially in secondary cities of Rwanda other than Kigali city.

METHODOLOGY

The study was exploratory in nature. Data was obtained from both Primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through interviews and questionnaires, while secondary data was collected through the perusal of government reports and published articles. The sample size was obtained using Krejcie and Morgan’s table (1970).

Table 1: Sample size determination

Sample Elements	Population	Sample size
Hotel venues/conference centres	10	10
RCB staff	10	10
Kigali Cultural Village staff	10	10
Travel Agencies managers	20	19
Kigali Convention Centre	10	10
Corporate tourists	40	36
Total	100	80

Source: (Primary data, 2022)

The study used both qualitative and quantitative designs, given the nature of the study that enabled the study to describe the different ways of MICE tourism in Rwanda. A triangulation of measurement processes was utilised to merge quantitative and qualitative research methods. Because of the nature of the study, a judgmental sampling method was applied to initial respondents who were staff of Rwanda Convention Bureau (RCB), hotel managers, city administrators, local leaders, transportation sector and travel agencies, and local business owners. Afterwards, the study adopted the snowball sampling technique as well as convenience simple random sampling according to the availability of the respondents. Snowball was used due to its referrals to similar customer groups, as supported by (Parker et al., 2019). The consensus was sought and all participants voluntarily attended interviews which each lasted about 50-60 minutes.

The modified questionnaire was pilot tested on 20% of the total population consisting of tourism students at the University of Tourism, technology, and Business studies Rwanda as these would be future tourism leaders and investors in the country. This was also more practical as students in colleges are more accessible, and with the help of colleagues in other colleges, a similar testing environment could be assured (Parker et al., 2019). In the context of research, according to Rüdiger & Dayter (2017), the following ethics were observed in the research study: Confidentiality/Anonymity, which led participants to give more open and honest responses. In addition, there was informed consent as participants were given a choice to participate or not to participate, and furthermore be informed in advance about the nature of the study. There was a right to privacy and honesty was observed and the data was not fabricated to support a particular conclusion. However, the data gathering faced hardships such as the spread of the respondents in Rwanda, like the city of Kigali, public offices, hotels, and tour agencies, among others. In addition, the language barrier made the data collection hard

as some respondents did not understand English. The above challenges were mitigated by the use of interpreters, obtaining permission from an authority, field observations and photo elicitations.

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter illustrates the general information regarding the findings obtained from the study about MICE tourism in Rwanda. Data was collected and analysed and eventually presented in tables, figures, and narrative language.

Demographic Findings

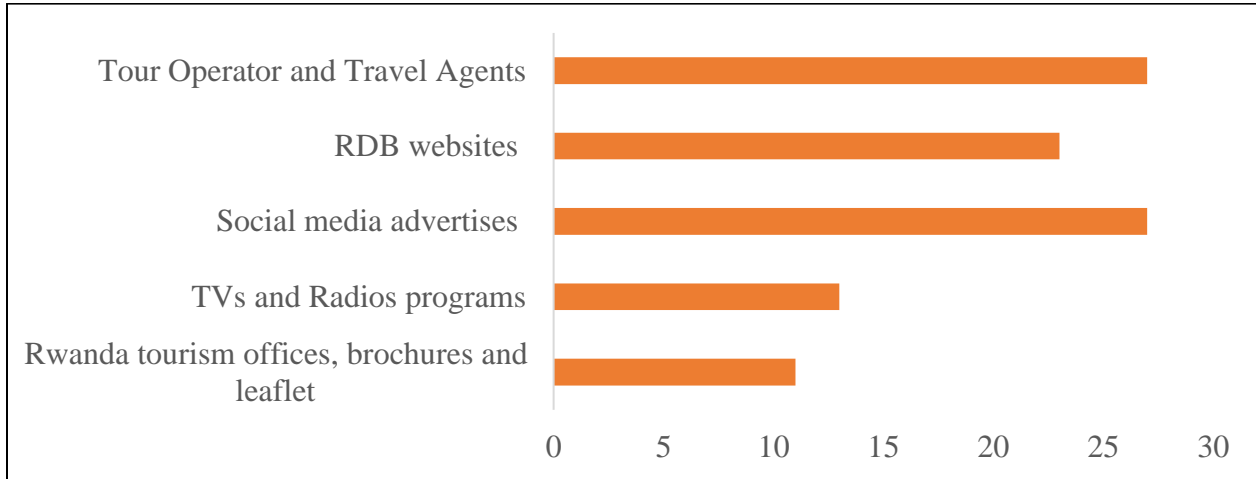
Grouping of respondents based on their age is vital in data collection. Some groups of ages may be reliable yet others may not, whereas others can also give the data subjectively, especially minor persons (primary survey, 2022). According to the table above, respondents from the age bracket of 51-60 are outnumbered by younger people as they were 53%. In this situation, young people are more productive than old people, but this age bracket circle are most MICE tourist delegates than the younger ones. Gender is also a very necessary aspect to consider in research, particularly in sampling to get the representativeness of the sample. The study had all genders represented, according to the table shown above, men have the higher percentage of 65%, due to the fact that men do represent their countries as a delegate and have the upper hand over women in terms of representing in MICE activities, they occupied MICE tourism than women, involvement of women in MICE activities or delegate that represent their countries or organisations are low with 35%.

The results of the present research indicated that 9.3% of the respondents had completed their Secondary level education, 17.3% are at certificate level, 27% had completed Diploma level, 40% are at degree level while 7% are at Masters Level. This is an indicator that the majorities of respondents are skilled enough and also have a deep understanding and knowledge of MICE tourism development in

Rwanda. As the respondents have different educational levels, it indicates that the result of the present research is the summary of many skilled personnel that can contribute effectively.

Figure 3 indicates the current marketing strategy tools used by RCB to advertise and invite delegates around the globe to consume Rwanda as a host for MICE activities.

Figure 3: The current marketing strategy tools used by RCB

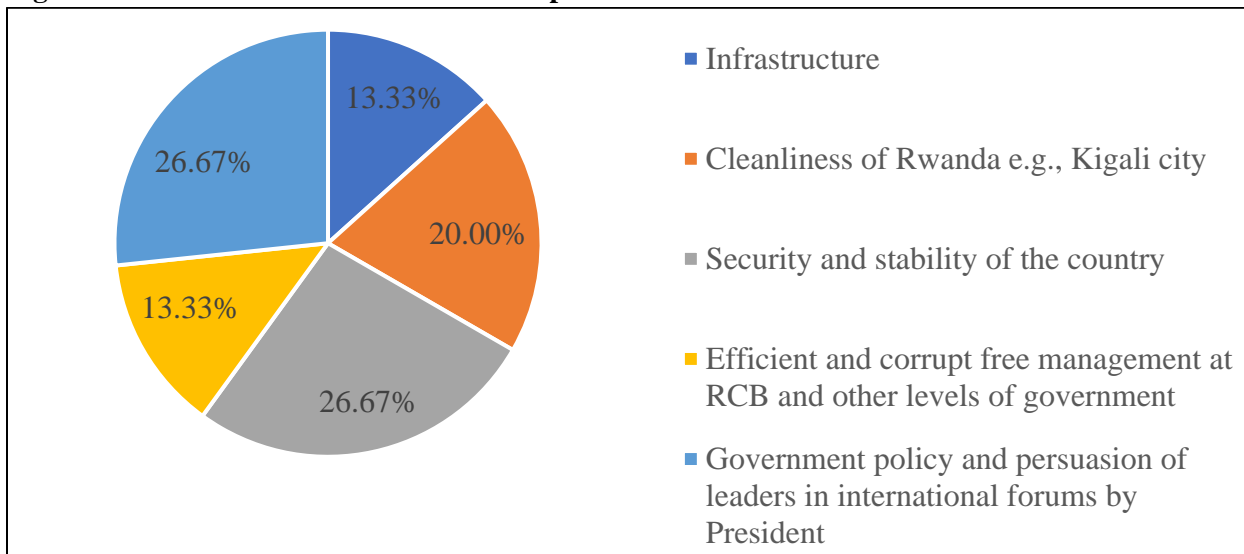


Source: Field survey, 2022

Figure 3 explains the current marketing strategy tools used by RCB; 11% of the respondents confirmed that they got information through Rwanda tourism offices, brochures, and leaflets. 13% of the respondents confirmed that TVs and Radio programs are a good marketing strategy to pass messages to delegates that have visited and will still visit Rwanda. 27% of the respondents

confirmed that social media advertisement is most frequently used in marketing strategy, and 23% of the respondents confirmed that RDB websites (Remarkable Rwanda, Visit Rwanda and rdb.com as the Official web) are also very helpful in reaching out to prospective delegates around the world, 27% of the respondents confirmed that Tour Operator and Travel Agents are most effective tools used.

Figure 4: Enablers of Mice Tourism Development in Rwanda



Source: Field survey, 2022

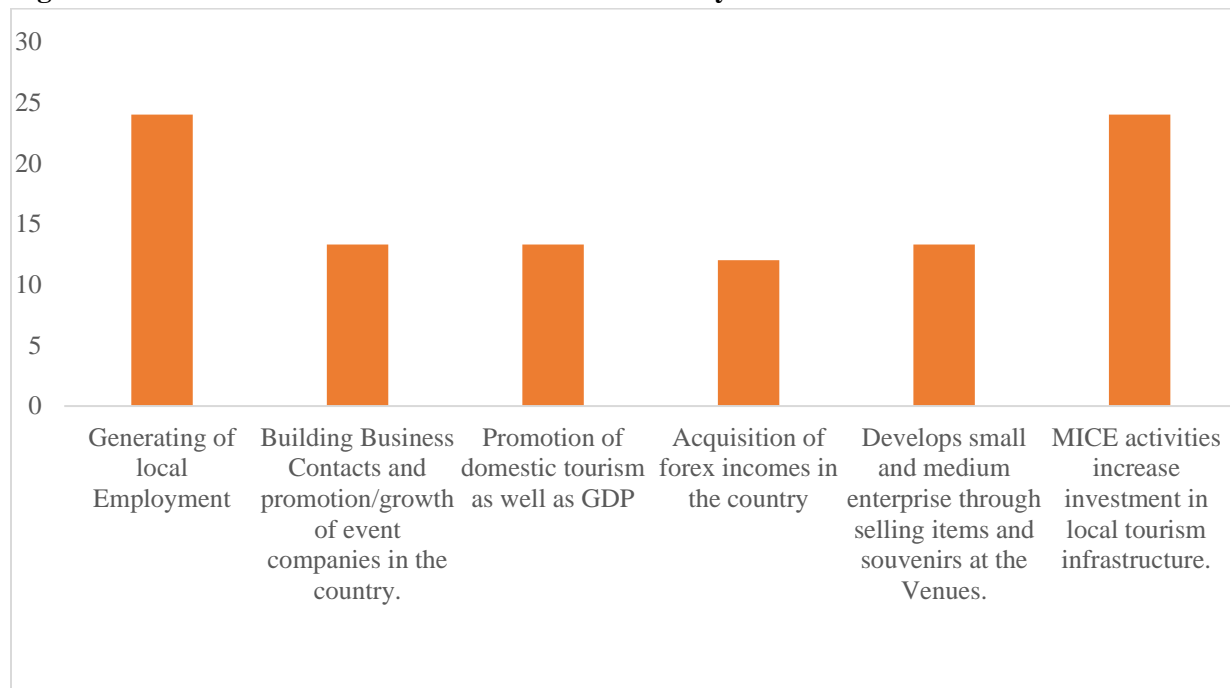
The enablers of MICE tourism development in Rwanda as obtained from the field were; that 13% of the respondents stated that the infrastructure is key in attracting international guests to Rwanda, 20% of the respondents confirmed that Kigali city cleanliness had wooed many event organisers to Rwanda city, 27% of the respondents confirmed that security and stability of Rwanda is another great enabler of MICE tourism development as majority trust that the government will deliver safety of delegates, 13% of the respondents confirmed that efficient and corrupt free management at RCB and other levels of government is another great pulling factors delegates consider here in Rwanda as a host

destination, while 27% of the respondents also confirmed that government policy and persuasion of leaders in international forums by President is very good enablers that make MICE tourism easy for delegates to visit Rwanda without much stress.

The influence of MICE tourism on the economy of Rwanda

The respondents were asked to inquire from them if MICE tourism has any influence on their economy. This question applied to all respondents who participated in the study. Below are their responses as depicted in *Figure 5* as follows.

Figure 5: The influence of MICE tourism on the economy of Rwanda



Source: Field survey, 2022

Figure 6 clearly indicates that MICE tourism is of great influence on the economy as the majority of the respondents confirmed that it helps in generating local Employment, Building Business contacts through networking, and promotion/growth of event companies in the country; it promotes domestic tourism and GDP, earns the country the needed forex income, developing of the small and medium enterprise through selling items and souvenirs at the

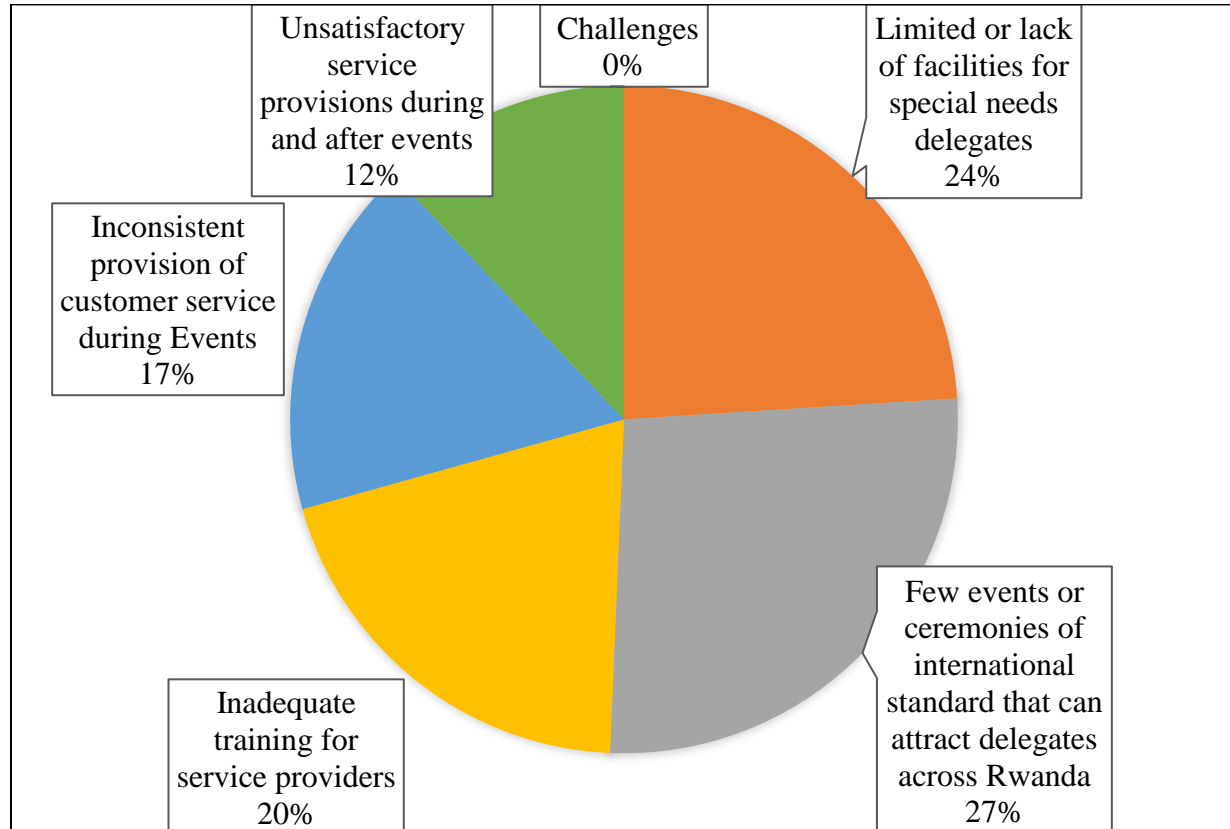
venues and also support the local vendors in Rwanda as well as help increase local tourism infrastructure. The majority of the respondents mentioned generating local jobs as well as increasing local tourism infrastructure as the major influence.

The challenges facing MICE tourism development

following issues were identified as a deterrent to its development in Rwanda, as depicted in *Figure 6*

Although MICE tourism has enormous potential for Rwanda as a destination and as the host country, the

Figure 7: Challenges of Mice Tourism in Rwanda

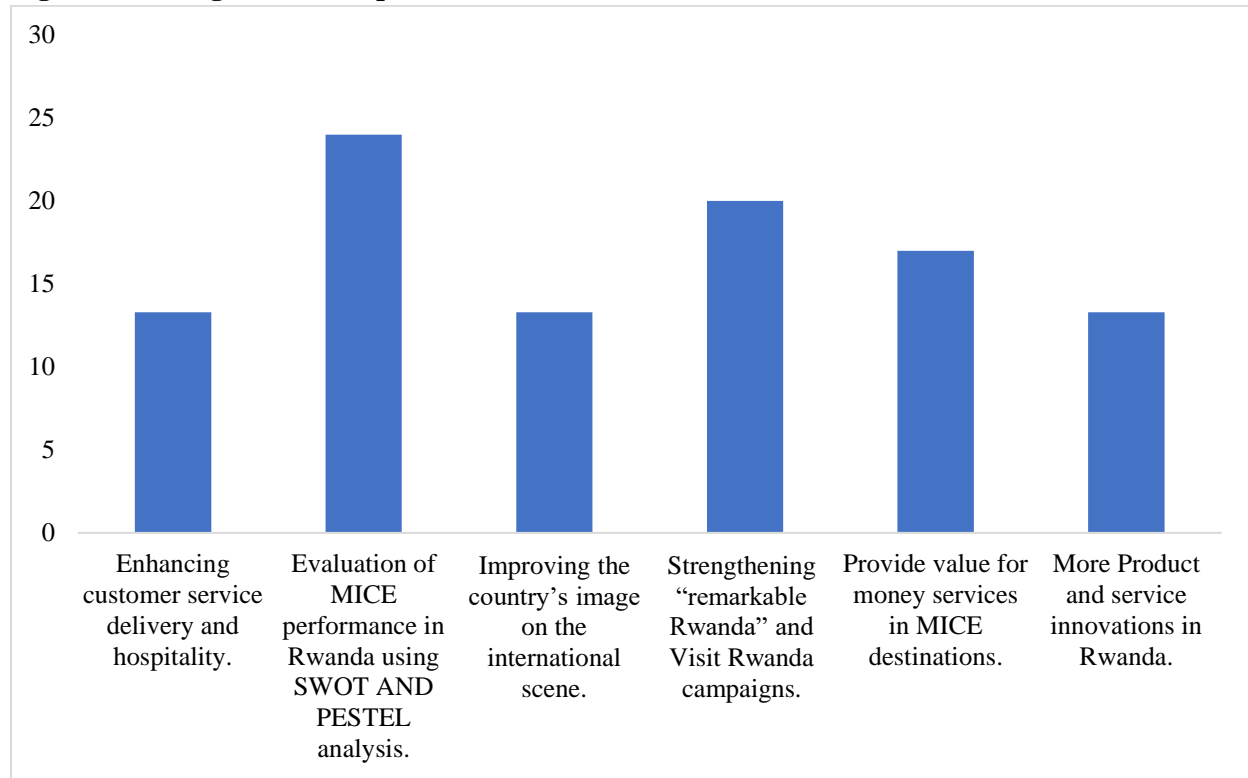


Source: Field survey, 2022

Figure 6 explained that limited or lack of facilities for special needs delegates is a challenge, especially for those that cannot be able to go upstairs in some venues; RCB observed that there are few events or ceremonies of international standard across Rwanda, inconsistent provision of customer service

during events is not effective, unsatisfactory service provisions during and after events are big issues that need urgent attention while other respondents confirmed that inadequate training for service providers need more attention.

Figure 8: Strategies to develop MICE Tourism in Rwanda



Source: Field survey, 2022

Figure 7 shown above gives details of how Rwanda use different Strategies to develop MICE tourism which the respondents confirmed as; enhancing customer service and improving the hospitality to delegates in Rwanda, Evaluation of MICE performance in Rwanda using SWOT and PESTEL analysis, improving the country's image on the international scene is also a great strategy used to attract delegates to use Rwanda as host destination, strengthening "remarkable Rwanda" and visit Rwanda campaign is part of strategy use which has to go a long way and also spread across the globe, providing value for money services in MICE destination is a good method use to motive delegates to come and more product and service innovations

in Rwanda is a new way of an idea to bring delegates to Rwanda.

However, most respondents emphasised evaluation of MICE performance in Rwanda using SWOT and PESTEL analysis, and strengthening the "remarkable Rwanda" and visit Rwanda campaign across the globe are key strategies that must be promoted and given more attention. The SWOT analysis of Rwanda was described. It was noted that making a diagnosis of the MICE industry will be of value for policymakers, academia, private players, government, regulators, and benefactors and is summarised in the following table.

Table 2: Rwanda’s MICE tourism SWOT Analysis

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existence of recognisable safety and security of the destination • Employees’ training in hospitality and tourism • Government support in marketing Rwanda outside • Political and economic stability • Cleanliness of Kigali city • State of stable transport infrastructure • Good climate of Rwanda • A myriad of cultural and biodiversity • Entertainment • Availability of international hospitality establishments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myriad foreign languages by employees in the tourism industry • Over-emphasis on Kigali city development
Opportunity	Threat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A world-class leader in the name of H.E. Paul Kagame • Joining the Commonwealth nations • East African community-wide market with over 200 million people • Growth of the corporate world and corporate functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglect of secondary cities in infrastructure spread and improvement • Insecurity at neighbouring DRC

Responses from the Interview

According to the interviews conducted, the MICE business manager at RCB understood MICE to be a meeting, incentive, conference, and exhibition and that it is the number one puller of conferences, events, and meetings in Rwanda. He stated that the Kigali Expo which is an annual activity is attributed to MICE tourism given its revenue and marketing influence for both local and international companies. The manager also narrated that the government policy in terms of Visa on arrival and Visa free for travellers visiting Rwanda from all Africa countries, commonwealth countries and francophone countries has encouraged delegates to come in big numbers, which gives tourists easy access to visit Rwanda for MICE tourism.

He further went ahead and revealed that MICE infrastructure, especially conference facilities like the Kigali Convention Centre, Kigali Arena, Intare conference centre and first-class hotels/restaurants, have played a big role in attracting more delegates to come and use Rwanda as a host destination. For example, Kigali and other secondary cities are grounded on good and standard accommodations.

The government also established the Rwanda Convention Bureau (RCB), which is the institution in charge of implementing the MICE Strategy, which is in charge of selecting events, facilitating events that will happen, negotiating on behalf of the country which events should come, how to support the events etc.

Airline connections is also a great way that makes MICE tourism happen and makes it easy for delegates to come to Rwanda, i.e., Rwanda airline is expanding its destinations worldwide, which encourage tourists or delegates coming from conference wherever they are coming from around the world to easily access Rwanda through airlines.

Rwanda partners with airline carriers like Qatar Airways, KQ, and KLM, for easy movement for delegates. Meanwhile, Some key challenges facing MICE tourism in Rwanda are the lack of good and adequate infrastructure to host big events valued at 10,000 delegates; Airline connections are still a big issue facing Rwanda MICE tourism to happen, especially in Africa countries, i.e., delegates in Africa regions find it difficult to travel within Africa compare to other countries, for instance going to

Morocco from Rwanda, such delegate will pass through Qatar (Doha) or Amsterdam in the Netherlands, Internal factor is also one of the challenges facing MICE tourism to perform effectively, normally MICE tourism should be regulated by private sectors not government bodies.

The major actors that play a vital role and also manage MICE tourism in Rwanda include values used by delegates such as conference centres, conference halls, like Kigali Arena, Kigali convention centre etc., Hotels for accommodations, PCO – Professional conference organiser, Suppliers of items used in the venues such audio visions, transportation, entertainment, translation equipment's etc. and Associations such as universities, NGOs, some governments institutions can't be left out, on a final note most events that happen in Rwanda are attracted by Rwanda Convention Bureau and association like PCO also allow to bring events to Rwanda provided the events is in line with Rwanda culture. Finally, MICE tourism is good according to the ICCA ranking, which only considers association meetings globally; Rwanda is ranked fifth host destination for MICE tourism in Africa after South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, and Kenya, respectively.

DISCUSSIONS

MICE tourism has increased rapidly in recent years in both developed and developing countries. This kind of development brings with it several benefits to destinations/host cities as any activity that delegates engage in while participating in MICE tourism/business tourism at a given destination spreads to the whole economy. Thus, MICE tourism act as a link for tourism growth and economic diversification, as well as local economic development (Degarege & Lovelock, 2020). This fact is supported by the fact that corporate tourists stay in the more expensive accommodation establishments, use expensive restaurants, use expensive transportation, spend more, and have a lot of time available for them at the display, as

supported by Rwigema and Celestin (2020). Hence, MICE tourism development is dependent on hotels, transport and communication facilities, restaurants, attractions, amenities, and even conference venues. According to Getz et al. (2018), MICE tourism influences the economy as it generates international visitors who generate local employment, build business contacts, and enable access to new ideas and technologies and helps in case of the off-season, assist small businesses like photographers, special hire car drivers or florists, porters, guides, restaurants among others. These findings are supported by a by Li et al. (2018) conducted in the tourism sector of Wales, which found a significant revenue difference between MICE tourism and other tourism segments and that MICE tourism provides four times the revenue to Wales' economy compared to other aspects of its tourism industry and that events can take place at any time of year, including off-season periods thus building the country's image and economy.

However, MICE tourism faces a lot of hurdles such as those mentioned in the study above and supported by Disimulacion (2021) and Li et al. (2018). These included:

- Safety and security of MICE event attendees
- Sometimes forgetting the needs of travellers with special needs
- Quality of services, facilities, venues design and IT developments
- The lack of data on MICE tourism
- Differentiating MICE tourism from other forms of tourism
- Customer satisfaction (i.e., providing leisure activities, planning more free time during the conferences and meetings, avoiding difficult routes, having relaxation exercises and classes at the venues) and finally
- Negative environmental impacts after the events (i.e., pressure on the environment, traffic

flows, pollution, hospitality, transport excessive energy consumption, and increase in the trash).

- Following rules and regulations by organisers and attendees.
- Language barrier

One of the strategies to develop MICE tourism in Rwanda was increased investment in MICE infrastructure apart from the already available ones like Kigali Convention Centre (KCC), Kigali cultural Village (KVC), Gikondo expo ground, entertainment centres and other related facilities spread all over the country has propelled MICE attractions in the country. Meanwhile, the present study agrees with the PESTEL analysis strategy because good political will, economic factors, sociocultural factors, technological factors, and legal factors in terms of business tourism will give tourists full assurance to visit any destination where events are taking place. Rwanda uses the national airline, RwandAir, to fly visitors across the globe and it recently partnered with Qatar Airways to increase its location, which includes Brussels, London, and Mumbai (Degarege & Lovelock, 2020). According to (RCB), Rwanda also signed a sponsorship deal with a big football club (Arsenal and PSG) with their brand logo Visit Rwanda, which attracts more tourists to visit Rwanda. Rwanda also joined the commonwealth, thus winning the CHOGM2022 meeting host.

There is a need to come up with unique tourism products built on unique, original, and representative value of tourism resources, both natural and human, for a certain territory or destination, creating magnetic tourism products and services, improving the nation's image and destination branding; spreading infrastructures in secondary cities (Degarege. G. A., & Lovelock, B., 2020).

Other scholars suggested that Gap analysis and PESTEL analysis, including the MICE's sociocultural, technological, economic, political,

environmental, and legal factors and their influence on business tourism known. According to (Stenden University, Qatar National Hotel Company, and Qatar Airways) stated that the development of business/MICE tourism in Qatar is based on political stability, and government supports international sporting events, political conferences and meetings, elegant weddings, and local event promotions in the country (Abulibdeh & Zaidan, 2017). For instance, Qatar has recently won the tender for the organisers and hosts of the World Cup to be held in Qatar 2022. Qatar also won the tender for the maintenance of the 24th World Championship Handball Championship, which was held in the year 2015 which also affects the development of business tourism destinations because without the support of political circles, clear development strategy destinations in the state and government, success in this segment would not be present and the world international symposia held in Qatar (World Economic Forum 2010th, 20th World Petroleum Forum held in December 2011 etc.).

The positioning of Qatar as a world business destination with heavy investment in large 5-star hotels and resorts, rich offer of restaurants, fancy sports stadiums, finest clubs, and entertainment theatres has and will continue to yield many benefits to the country (Abulibdeh & Zaidan, 2017).

CONCLUSION

The study confirmed that tourism is crucial for national growth. Based on the findings, the strategy used by the Rwanda Convention Bureau (RCB) to attract delegates to Rwanda ranges from policy, branding and product innovations. The Meetings, Incentives, Conferences/ Conventions and Exhibitions/ Events known as (MICE) can't perform well in any country, especially in Rwanda, without Enablers of MICE of tourism which are factors that make MICE perform effectively, the influence it contributed to the economic growth, the strategy that has been used to attract delegates to

come and consume MICE tourism in Rwanda and also the challenges facing MICE tourism in Rwanda with the body in charge of MICE tourism has tackled and hoping for more improvement. The combination of all factors and other benefits to the development of MICE tourism in Rwanda.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussions and conclusions, and after coming to the end of the study, we propose the following as appropriate recommendations to enable Rwanda destinations to develop and grow in Rwanda;

- RCB should revise the current MICE strategy to make it all-inclusive of private sector, public and expert participation in the formulation and implementation of events in Rwanda. In this case, MICE tourism's private sector should be at the frontline than government bodies as they are the ones in charge of events, conferences, and exhibitions.
- Rwanda should initiate a tourism fund to help private players gain access to finance that can be used to plan and organise successful MICE activities.
- The tourism and hospitality training institutions being the source of human resources in the country should be given support in the form of capital grants to help them survive the storms of academia.
- More MICE infrastructures in terms of accommodation, venue capacity, ICT and transport should be enhanced to suit international delegates.
- The government should make it a policy to share revenues from events with surrounding communities. This will boost more product innovations and other small events in local communities in Rwanda hence contributing to the national economy in the form of taxes, local jobs and marketing the country.
- There is a need to work with close neighbours like Uganda, DRC, and Burundi to enhance

cross-border security. This strategy will give assurance to potential customers of Rwanda.

- RCB and their partners should equip and frequently train professional event organisers in Rwanda to explore and meet international standards while organising events. Training should be done on the following operators/persons: taxi men, night clubs, saloon operators, hotel management, restaurants, bus drivers, freelance guides, marketing companies, venue owners, etc

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