

Govt advised to use technology in promoting tourism

By Vision Reporter

As Uganda struggles with exploiting its full tourism potential, the Government has been advised to focus more on the development of technology based solutions, to attract more visitors into the country.

Using technology, according to experts, will increase the country's visibility in tourist markets and reach more potential visitors from around the world.

Experts say using mobile software applications to develop solutions for the tourism sector will also reduce the cost of advertising Uganda to the rest of the world, and increase the sector's contribution to the economy.

Currently, according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, tourism is the leading foreign exchange earner for Uganda, having beaten remittances from

abroad and coffee more than two years ago.

"These applications are easy to create with the right support from the Government and can reduce our advertising costs by more than 80%. All we need is the right focus and zeal to get the best out of the country's natural gifts," said Moses Matovu, the product manager at deiplaces, a US-based software developer, during the launch of a mobile application to market Uganda's tourism at Hotel Africana yesterday.

Last year, the Uganda Tourism Board (UTB) recruited three public relations firms at \$0.5m (sh1.8b) per year, to promote knowledge and understanding of Uganda and its tourism attractions in source markets.

Matovu said the Government could also supplement these adverts with encouraging and supporting software development aimed at

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marketing tourism, since it is a cheaper and more efficient means of reaching people.

"Smart phones are increasingly becoming a platform for all kinds of communication and advertisement. We could have various applications that market our country on the app store, so that potential tourists download them at no cost, which is a benefit to us as a country," he said.

According to Dr Paul Bamutaze, the deiplaces business development manager, ICT solutions are the

best mechanism to drive the government agenda of realising four million tourists by 2020.

Last year, the sector attracted more than 1.2 million visitors with more than 600,000 people employed at various levels and capacities.

He said if properly marketed, tourism has the potential to create more jobs and earn the country more revenue for social and economic development.

"We have made it possible in the deiplaces app for everyone to contribute to marketing Uganda by posting beautiful stories and images which will be accessed by tourists all over the world," he said.

He said the deiplaces app will enable tourists to access information on the various attractions in Uganda and also enable them get in touch with hotels, game parks, tour operator services and other service providers.

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