



Karelia University of Applied Sciences
International Business

Developing a Social Media Marketing Plan-Case Study: Table Treats UG

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Abstract

Table Treats is a newly founded event management and catering company in Uganda looking to revolutionize the way catering is done in Uganda. The company aims to grow through increasing brand awareness and gaining more clients. This study analyses the Ugandan environment by assessing the current situation of the market. It also highlights the benefits of doing business in the country as well as potential risks the company ought to look out for. This research also analyses the popular social media channels in Uganda and recommends necessary adjustments to the company's current marketing strategy.

The data collection process utilizes both qualitative and quantitative research methods for the purpose of making accurate recommendations. Several theoretical references were used in conjunction with a main interview with one of the company founders; these led to the conclusions of the study.

Overall, this research found that Table Treats has made steady progress, and with a few adjustments in its current marketing plan, its perceived goal to widen its client base while staying profitable can be achieved.

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social media, marketing, Uganda, event management, catering

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Case Company

Table Treats UG is a startup catering and event management company that aims to cater and manage exquisite events. The company is based in Kampala, Uganda, and was started in January 2023 by two co-founders. Table Treats UG is growing steadily and it currently has eight employees. The primary company operations are managing and catering for different events including corporate events, weddings, birthday parties, brunches, and high teas. The company's mission is to redefine the catering scene in Uganda by offering a modern menu to substitute the typical Ugandan cuisine while providing impeccable service. (Kinyi 2023.)

According to its cofounder Kinyi (2023), initially the main focus was on corporate workspaces and high-end events, and within the few months since it was started, Table Treats has worked on various projects. The company has however faced different unprofitable seasons, and due to few events booked, a decision to venture into other audiences was made and now the company works with more customer groups. The severe competition in the catering industry also prompted the company to adjust its operations, which involved creating a variety of snacks sold daily. Currently, the company is facing the dilemma of how to offer its high-end catering services to the Ugandan market, where most competitors offer services at extremely low costs to match customer needs. (Kinyi 2023.)

Kinyi (2023) explains that in order to keep running, the company needs to improve its marketing methods to increase brand knowledge and its client base. The company is currently marketing with a few social media platforms and looking to build a presence on others. In addition to the already existing Instagram and Snapchat marketing, the company is looking to start using TikTok and Twitter for marketing. (Kinyi 2023.)

As a dynamic startup in the catering and event management industry, Table Treats UG recognizes the importance of incorporating advanced Western marketing technologies into its business strategy. With its mission to redefine the catering landscape in Uganda and provide modern culinary experiences, the company's proactive approach to expanding its marketing efforts is essential. (Kinyi 2023.)

Incorporating advanced Western marketing technologies not only offers Table Treats UG the opportunity to increase brand awareness and grow its client base but also helps in establishing a competitive edge in the Ugandan catering market (Blaschke, Demel & Kotorov 2021, 7-12). Given the challenges faced due to fluctuating demand and pricing pressures, having a robust marketing strategy becomes even more crucial (Kotorov et al. 2022, 1–8). Furthermore, as the company diversifies its target audience and offers a wider range of services, a well-planned marketing approach can help communicate the value of its high-end catering services to a market accustomed to low-cost alternatives (Aslam et al. 2023, 873–883). By staying ahead in the marketing game, Table Treats UG can pave the way for successful business scaling, internalization, and the pursuit of various competitive opportunities, securing its place as a leader in Uganda's evolving catering and event management industry (Kotorov, Krasnylykova, Zhdanov & Mazzara 2020, 327–340).

1.2 Aim of the Thesis

This thesis aims to explore and analyze the use of social media as a marketing tool for a small business. In this case, the paper aims to provide valuable recommendations for Table Treats UG through the development of a cost-effective social media marketing strategy. The main emphasis throughout this study will be gaining extensive knowledge of social media marketing and using this as a basis to provide a strategy that will help Table Treats reach more people in the Ugandan market.

For the purpose of being thorough, this thesis will use research questions (RQs) to make the necessary recommendations. These are listed below.

RQ1. What does social media marketing in Uganda look like?

RQ2. What social media platforms are cost-effective and will enable Table Treats to reach its target audience in Uganda?

RQ3. What social media marketing plan can be implemented to attract consumers and increase brand awareness?

In the course of this study, however, a few limitations will be experienced that may hinder the accuracy of this paper. One major limitation is the researcher's absence from the market. Although there is extensive knowledge of the Ugandan market, the ever-changing dynamic of the world today poses a threat. Another limitation is the absence of extensive information concerning different sectors in the Ugandan market, which may prompt the researcher to make a few assumptions in the research process.

1.3 Methodology

Research methods play a crucial role in advancing knowledge and understanding across various disciplines. To achieve comprehensive and robust results, this research will employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Both methodologies offer unique strengths that, when combined, enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

Qualitative research involves the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as observations, interviews, focus groups, and case studies among others. This approach seeks to understand the complexities and nuances of a particular phenomenon, exploring the experiences, feelings, and perspectives of individuals involved. Qualitative research is highly valuable for generating rich, in-depth insights and identifying underlying factors that quantitative methods might overlook. (Bhangu, Caduff & Provost 2023, 39-40.)

Quantitative research emphasizes the use of different data techniques collection and analysis of numerical data, which is often structured and statistically analyzed. This approach focuses on quantifying variables, testing hypotheses, and generalizing findings to a larger population. Surveys, experiments, and statistical analyses are common methods employed in quantitative research. Quantitative research provides measurable and objective data and conclusions based on statistical evidence. The results can be analyzed using various statistical techniques, enabling researchers to identify patterns, trends, and associations among variables. (Williams 2007, 66-67.)

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

The paper provides a systematic overview of the case company but more importantly, an understanding of the use of social media as a marketing tool in Uganda. Chapter 1 outlines the background of the case company. This chapter gives a brief overview of social media marketing in general, the aim of this paper, and the purpose of the study. Chapter 2 digs into the theory concerning four different tools that will be used to analyze the business environment as well as the specific industry. This chapter covers four tools: PESTEL Analysis, SWOT Analysis, Marketing mix, and a positioning map.

Chapter 3 is a detailed analysis of the business environment of Uganda, the main market in which Table Treats operates. This chapter digs deep into the market analysis of different aspects including the competitive situation in Uganda as well as the company's current marketing strategy. Due to the irrelevance of the analysis of the natural environment in which Table Treats operates, this factor will not be discussed in this research. Chapter 4 digs deep into the market analysis of different aspects including the competitive situation in Uganda as well as the company's current marketing strategy. Chapter 5 identifies gaps in the current strategy and discusses and recommends the necessary adjustments the company should make. It plays an important role in enabling the researcher to understand the company's current situation, which in turn favors more accurate recommendations.

Chapter 6 summarises the findings from the analysis of the different social media platforms and examines the value of the research to the company by evaluating the effectiveness of incorporating the selected social media platforms into the company's marketing strategy. In addition, the implications of this study to companies in the event management industry are examined, and the paper is concluded with suggestions for future research in this field if necessary.

Different sections mention three currencies relevant to the research, the Uganda shilling (UGX), the US Dollar (USD), and the Euro (EUR) and below, the currency conversions between all currencies are listed below (Table 1), according to the Bank of Uganda (2023).

Currency (06 October 2023)	Buying	Selling
USD (Opening)	3,739.58	3,749.58
EUR (Closing)	3,942.91	3,953.45

Table 1. Exchange rates (Bank of Uganda 2023).

2 Theoretical framework

Grant and Osanloo (2014, 12) define the theoretical framework as the basis on which all ideas are expounded while supporting the different methods and tools in any research (Grant and Osanloo 2014,12). In strategic planning and management, the need to analyze different factors for effective decision-making is constantly on the rise and research will utilize different analytical tools in order to provide an informative conclusion for Table Treats.

For an extensive analysis of both the internal and external environments in which Table Treats operates, this research uses PESTEL Analysis, SWOT Analysis, the marketing mix, and perceptual mapping. The chapter will provide a comprehensive review of the tools, their origins, limitations, and applications in

planning. The PESTEL tool will analyze the external environment in which Table Treats operate and will identify forces at play in Uganda. For the evaluation of both internal and external environments, the SWOT analysis tool will be applied. This will provide insights into company strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, all crucial in planning.

2.1 PESTLE Analysis

In business and critical planning, the PESTEL (Figure 1) is a strategic tool used to understand and evaluate external macro-environmental factors that can impact an organization, business, or any firm. The tool was first used by Francis Aguilar in 1967 as ETPS: Economic, Technological, Political, and Social variables and has since been developed to form the widely popular PESTEL standing for Political, Economic, Social, Technological Environmental, and Legal factors. (Kralj 2009, 142.)

The PESTLE Analysis is used for situational analysis for business evaluation purposes and is one of the most used models in the evaluation of the external business environment that is highly dynamic according to Gupta (2013). A firm interacts with its external environment in its operations, and the external factors are uncontrollable by the business. Moreover, the PESTLE analysis forms the basis for the identification of the opportunities and the threats that help in the SWOT analysis. (Gupta 2013.)

According to Yüksel (2012), a thoroughly conducted PESTEL offers valuable insights into the external environment in which a firm operates. The tool warrants the identification of the opportunities and threats that may arise against a firm as a result of these external influences and with this, any firm can prepare accordingly to mitigate threats and utilize opportunities. (Yüksel 2012, 53.)

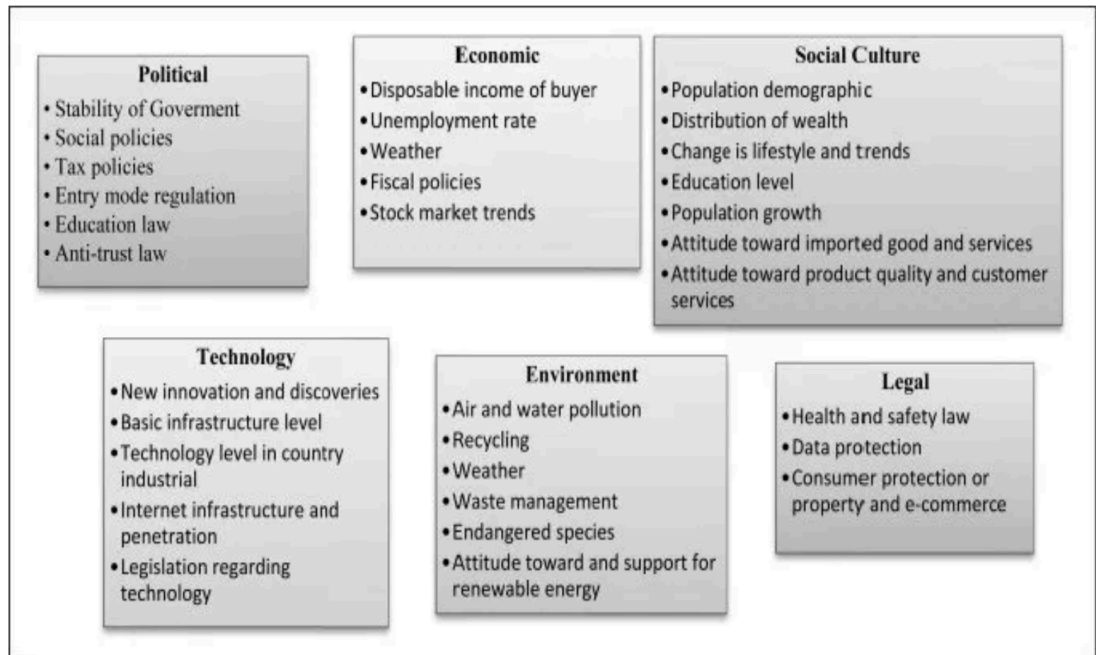


Figure 1. PESTEL Analysis (Magora 2023).

Political Environment

The political environment evaluates the power in a given country and how this affects businesses. Aspects such as political stability, government policies, trade regulations, tax policies, and doctrine are extremely relevant. The stability of a government directly affects the economy whereby recurring regime changes can cause instability, thus leading to a stagnant or declining economy. (Buye 2021, 5.) These changes also favor changes in government policies that could either be beneficial or detrimental to the success of different firms across all sectors in a given economy (Galea & Sammut-Bonnici 2015, 3-4).

By analyzing different government policies and stability thoroughly before entering the given markets, firms are able to make informed decisions. The state of a country's international relations is a significant factor and cannot be overlooked, as this dictates a number of things. Having good relations with other countries makes it easy for companies to expand and even operate internationally. Additionally, changes in tax policies and incentives affect labor and raw material costs. (Galea & Sammut-Bonnici 2015, 3-4.)

Economic Environment

According to Krajl (2009), the economic environment gives a comprehensive analysis of the economic situation of a country while taking into account different factors like purchasing power, availability of loans, inflation and unemployment, exchange rates, and taxation policies among others. These factors directly impact a country's economic growth, and while a steady and continuous growth in any economy creates opportunities for firms to thrive and grow, a weak and stagnated one reduces purchasing power and weakens the overall economic landscape. (Krajl 2009.)

Galea and Sammut-Bonnici (2015, 4) suggest that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is the most common indicator used in the assessment of buyer potential, along with the Purchasing Power Parity. While keeping in mind that it is impossible to directly influence the economic situation in its external environment, a firm should nonetheless keep up with all significant trends, as these are all necessary for decision-making. An analysis of consumer trends will give a bigger picture of the current standing in the market according to Hollesen (2014, 275). For example, a firm may use market trends to adjust its operations depending on consumer behavior, buyer power, and needs. (Hollesen 2014, 275.)

Social Environment

Armstrong and Kotler (2018, 97-103), suggest that the social environment is significant to any firm as it provides relevant insights into the different demographics in a given market. This covers aspects like age, population, diversity, standards of living, education levels, and other data on the market for a better understanding of each market. People (buyers) are a major factor in the business operations of any firm; hence, observation and keeping a close eye on trends in society can aid a firm in strategic planning and management. The different changes in society can either be beneficial or detrimental to a firm, for example, although highly populated markets offer a large sum of potential clients a low education level in that same market implies a shortage of skilled labor. The distribution of age also directly impacts the operations of any firm. An

extremely young population may influence product adaptation or even the development of a new product entirely. (Armstrong and Kotler 2018, 97-103.)

According to Galea & Sammut-Bonnici (2015, 4&5), buyers in different geographic locations often have different behaviors hence observation according to regions provides more data for analysis. This enables a firm to change operations accordingly, thereby maximizing profit and providing value to its customers. Another factor that firms ought to study is the culture and how receptive to change the given society is, as a hospitable culture eases the integration of a firm. In a society where new ideas and innovations are easily accepted, a firm can easily introduce its products and services. (Galea & Sammut-Bonnici 2015, 4-5.)

Technological Environment

The presence of innovation and the rate of technological advancement in a given market is crucial in the analysis of a firm's macro environment according to Armstrong and Kotler (2018, 106). Technological inventions in past decades have changed the ways in which firms carry out businesses and advertise their products while building and maintaining relationships with the internet. The use of the internet in business has enabled marketers to conduct research about markets and consumers. (Armstrong and Kotler 2018, 106.) Figure 2 summarises some aspects of the technological environment directly influencing the decisions and operations of firms in a given market.

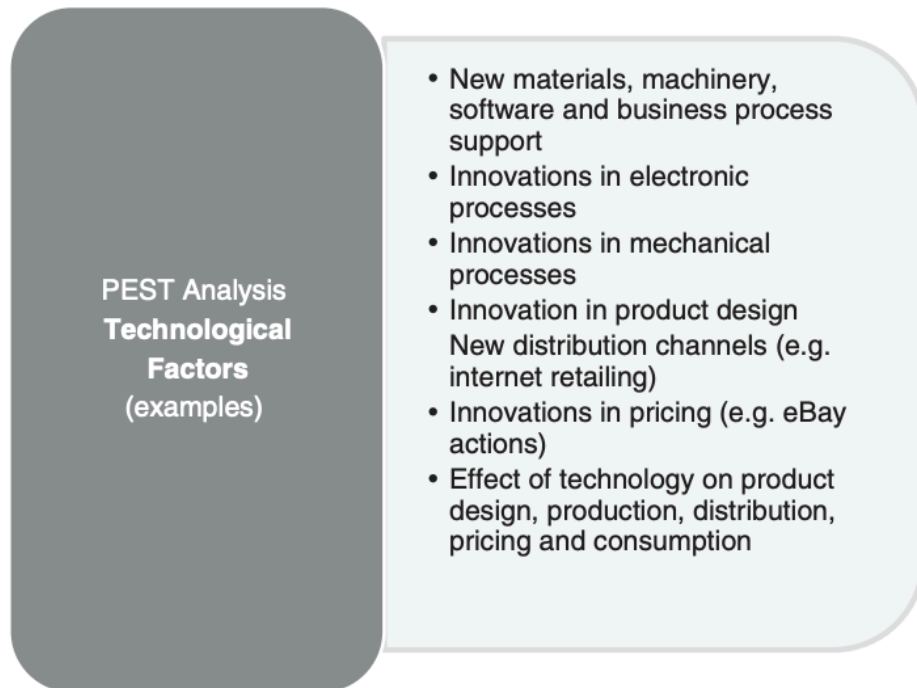


Figure 2. Technological Factors in PEST Analysis (Galea & Sammut-Bonnici 2015, 6).

Legal Factor

El-Jazzar, Hatoum, Musick, and Nassereddine (2023, 10), define the legislative factor as the rules and boundaries within which firms operate in a business environment (El-Jazzar et al. 2023, 10). Governments set these regulations to ensure proper trade and business and for the overall good of the community. The most common laws affecting business are those governing competition, labor, consumption, and health and safety. Competition laws aim to give a fair chance to both small businesses and dominant players in an industry, while consumption laws are meant to protect buyers from unjust products and services. (Armstrong and Kotler 2018, 106.)

Environmental Factor

The environmental factor takes into consideration the physical environment of a market, along with the necessary raw materials a firm requires to operate according to Armstrong and Kotler (2018, 104). The presence, and/or proximity of raw materials determines the ease with which a firm manufactures a product, and the different costs incurred. Based on their geographic locations, markets

have different natural environments and firms need to gather enough knowledge before entry. For example, although natural hazards and disasters happen abruptly, research and preparation can shield a firm from severe consequences. (Armstrong and Kotler 2018, 104.)

Popular campaigns advocating for environmental and people's safety like Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are being incorporated by different organizations, mainly as a result of pressure from environmentally aware societies according to El-Jazzar et al (2023, 10). The attitude towards environmental sustainability is an important trend for any firm to follow as it affects the environment, society, and hence business operations. In most developing nations, however, there is a lag in environmental awareness and preservation leading to increased pollution and destruction of natural resources. This is attributed to several factors like poverty and lack of basic resources, education levels, and weak government intervention. (El-Jazzar et al. 2023, 10.)

2.2 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT Analysis, standing for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, is a framework used in the analysis, evaluation, and management of firms and any other kind of projects. Originally SOFT: Satisfactory, Fault, Opportunities and Threats, the analysis tool was first used in the 1960s for strategic planning at any managerial level. (Lie, Puyt & Wilderom 2023, 2.)

SWOT emphasizes providing insights into both the inner and outer environments of an organization. The inner environment studies the strengths and weaknesses of a company while the outer environment analyses the opportunities and threats in the market a given company is operating. (Gürel 2017, 995.)

Conducting a SWOT Analysis enables a company to identify the success factors in its business model and notice any operations that need evaluation and improvement. A deep dive into the external environment provides insight and enables any organization to make strategic plans that contribute to its

overall success (Mustafa 2016, 3-10). Figure 3 shows an example of a SWOT Analysis template conducted to study a small company's business operations.


STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent, well-trafficked location • Good reputation among local community • Seasonal menu, locally sourced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher costs than comparable chain restaurants • Single location means limited reach • Modest advertising budget • Not currently using food delivery apps/technology
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing interest in/support for locally sourced ingredients • Seasonal menu keeps things fresh and interesting • Potential for growth via food delivery apps/technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensifying competition from established chain restaurants • Uncertain economic environment • Rising costs of ingredients <p style="text-align: right;"> WordStream</p>

Figure 3. How to Do A SWOT Analysis (WordStream 2023).

Strengths

According to Harrison (2010, 93), strengths are defined as different aspects of a company's business model and operations that bring about its success and excellence. Strengths are also described as competencies of a company that make it compete favorably in a market. Strengths study aspects of a company that make it better than its competition, and these may include a strong product or service, a strong brand image, and personnel with high expertise among others. Knowledge of strengths enables a company to utilize opportunities in the market and in the event that any threats arise, a company can use its strengths strategically in response. (Gürel 2017, 997.)

Weaknesses

Weaknesses explore the areas in a company's operations that are lacking or inefficient as compared to its competition. These include any factors that cause hindrance to the growth of a company or affect its business operations.

Identification and assessment of these issues are important to a company as it provides a better understanding of what should be further developed to maximize growth. (Gürel 2017, 997.)

Opportunity

In SWOT, opportunities are the openings in the external environment of a company that warrants positive results when taken. Opportunities offer chances to a company, and these can give a competitive advantage over its competitors. (Gürel 2017, 997). By eradicating weaknesses, companies can also create opportunities that can be utilized thoroughly with the strengths identified. (Mustafa 2016, 13.)

Threats

Elements in the environment in which a company operates that may cause hindrance or affect its ability to compete favorably are considered threats in SWOT. Threats come from both near and far environments and range from currency depreciation to changes in governments. Although threats are beyond a company's control, it is important to be aware of them so as to mitigate them when they come. (Gürel 2017, 998-1000.)

2.3 Marketing Mix

The Marketing Mix is a framework of tools that allows a firm to influence buyer decisions profitably in a target market (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 77). The first marketing mix was drafted by Neil. H. Borden in 1953, and it comprised 12 elements: product planning, pricing, branding, channels of distribution, personal selling, advertising, promotions, packaging, display, servicing, physical handling, and fact-finding and analysis (Goi 2009, 2; Dominici 2009, 17). Jerome McCarthy developed the marketing mix (Figure 4), summarizing all

twelve variables into four, and these became popularly known as the 4Ps namely: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. This framework is widely used by managers, as it summarizes the different factors thus ensuring a firm's success in each market. (Goi 2009, 2.)

Proper adaptation of the marketing mix into a firm's marketing strategy eases the prioritization of customer needs by providing value thus ensuring the profitability of a firm. The digital era poses new opportunities and challenges that were not accounted for in the original framework; it is therefore important for firms to adjust the different variables according to their needs, resources, and target markets. Firms ought to remember that adjustment in one variable may greatly impact other variables in the framework. (Goi 2009, 4.)

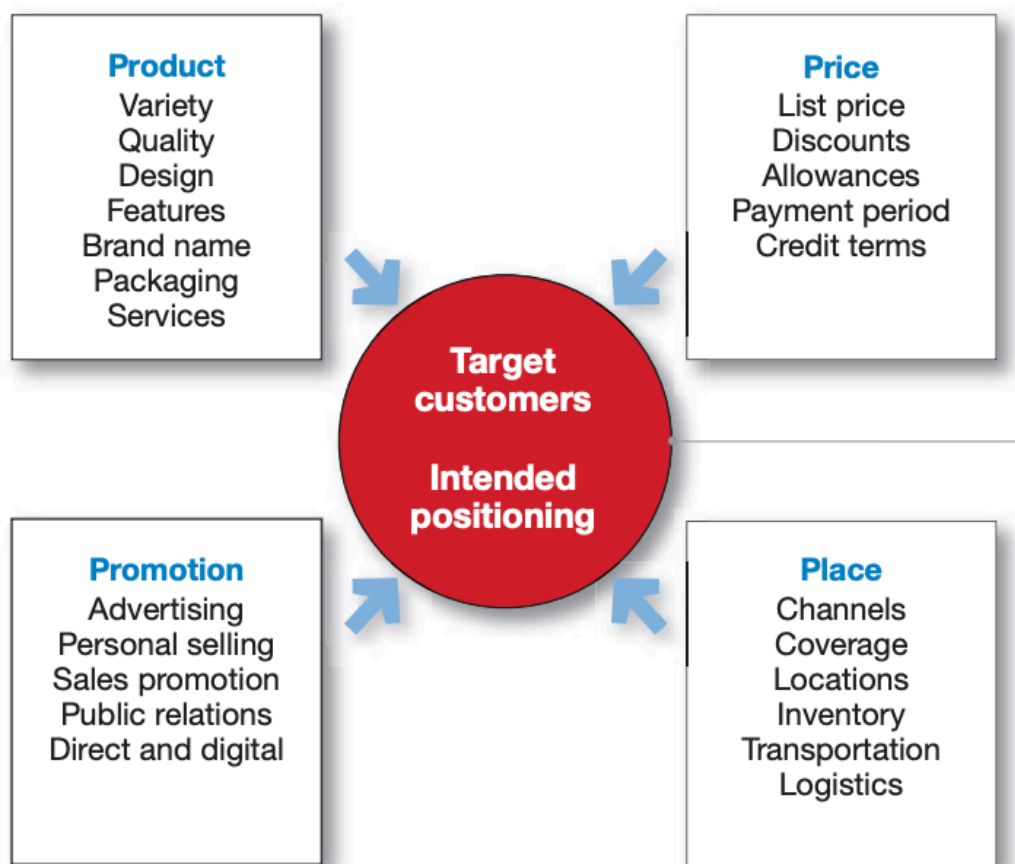


Figure 4. The Four Ps of the Marketing Mix (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 78).

Product

Product refers to the commodities or services offered by a firm in a specific market that aim to satisfy the needs of consumers in the target market by providing value while increasing a firm's profit margin in turn. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 77.) According to Madanat & Nuseir (2015), the product is the most important factor in this framework and it is important for a firm to differentiate its product from competitors. Differentiation of a product may vary based on different consumer needs for example high quality, and good packaging among others. In any given market, continuous research into trends and rising needs enables a firm to provide customer value which builds customer loyalty and increases brand knowledge. (Madanat & Nuseir 2015, 79.)

Price

The monetary value consumers pay a firm in exchange for the product is the price (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 77.) A firm's pricing strategy is crucial and is a determinant of whether its products will be purchased, the quality of its products, and how profitable the firm's operations are. When determining the right price for the product, different aspects like the cost of raw materials, cost of production, cost of delivery, competitor prices, and buyer power should be considered. A correct correlation between the price and quality of the product often boosts customer loyalty; however, the price of the product ought to increase a firm's profit margin. (Madanat & Nuseir 2015, 79.)

Place

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2018), the place is defined as any process or initiative by the firm to make accessible the product to consumers in a given target market. Depending on the size of the firm, the place may vary from having direct selling to consumers to indirect selling through the use of dealers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 77.) Although the original Marketing Mix describes the place as physical, the internet has created infinite possibilities for firms to make available their product by using different platforms to ease the purchasing process for consumers. (Dominici 2009, 20.)

Promotion

Promotion refers to all communication endeavors by a firm to consumers in a target market regarding its product. Promotion emphasizes the different actions a firm takes to enlighten consumers about the proposed added value and benefits of purchasing its product. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 77.) Promotion is crucial in bridging the void in communication between a firm and consumers in the market. With the use of different channels, both virtual and offline, the promotion aims to connect and build engagement from consumers in a firm's activities, increasing brand knowledge and boosting consumer loyalty. (Madanat & Nuseir 2015, 79.)

2.4 Position (Perceptual) Mapping

Gower, Groenen, Vines & Velden (2010, 2), describe position or perceptual mapping as an initiative by a firm to analyze its own product in relation to its competitors while looking at it solely from the eyes of current or potential clients. It involves the use of a diagram, known as a product map, which places a firm's product against competition on a graph using relevant variables. The use of a position map is traced back to 1968 by Frank Carmone, Patrick Robinson, and Paul Green, who incorporated it into multidimensional scaling. (Gower et al. 2010, 2.)

According to Gamble, Strickland & Thompson (2009, 86-88), a position map ought to be made between a firm and competitors with comparable factors to the given market like a close range in prices, quality of products and services, and the same value proposition to consumers among others. The process of drawing a position mapping is simple and includes typical steps, namely:

- Identification of the relevant factors in a given industry, for example price versus quality.
- Arrange the firms on a Cartesian plane using the chosen factors (in twos).
- Plot different firms based on their market standpoint. (Gamble et al. 2009, 86-88.)

The position map is useful for a firm in the differentiation of its own products and services from other products in the market and it enables the firm to identify its direct and indirect rivals (Gamble et al. 2009, 87). The tool analyses the market from the consumer point of view, as the emphasis is put on what aspects of a firm's product are most valuable to its clients. It enables firms to identify areas of improvement, as well as any opportunities in the market. (Gigauri 2019, 73.) Figure 5 shows an example of a positioning map based on clothing brands, comparing their prices with the quality of products.



Figure 5. An example of a brand positioning map (Determ 2023).

3 Business environment of Uganda

Overview of Uganda

Uganda, officially known as The Republic of Uganda, is located in East Africa and is a landlocked country bordered by Kenya to the east, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, Rwanda, and Tanzania to the south, and South Sudan to the north, as shown in Figure 6. According to a census in 2014, the population of Uganda was approximately 34.6 million people and is projected to be 45.5 million in mid-2023. (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2023.)



Figure 6. Map of Uganda showing major cities and bordering countries (List of cities and towns in Uganda, Wikipedia 2023).

3.1 Political Environment

Lutaaya (2022, 7), explains that Uganda's regulations are based on what individuals in power decide creating a biased environment (Lutaaya 2022, 7). The absence of concrete regulations has affected Ugandans on different occasions, for example prior to the 2021 presidential elections, internet access was denied countrywide for five days and there was a month-long social media ban. These abrupt disruptions in communications led to severe losses across all firms. (International Trade Administration 2023.) In 2022, the International Labor Organization in conjunction with the government of Uganda took an initiative to support business owners following the Covid-19 pandemic through grants and training on how to better manage these (International Labour Organisation 2022).

Although relatively peaceful, Uganda's current political climate poses a risk to many firms operating in the country. The current government, with much disregard for basic human rights, consists of an incredibly high number of corrupt officials, which has directly impacted the business environment. Uganda's president has taken several steps over the years by assembling anti-corruption units to reduce corruption in public offices but this is yet to be fruitful. (Wafula 2023.) In 2021, Uganda ranked 144 out of 180 countries included in the Corruption Perceptions Index according to the International Trade Organisation (2023).

3.2 Economic Factor

Uganda's economy is projected to grow by 5.7 % in the 2023 fiscal year according to The World Bank (The World Bank 2023) and 14th most prosperous country in Africa with a GDP of about 48 million US dollars. Uganda's economic growth has grown slowly but surely, as shown in Figure 7.

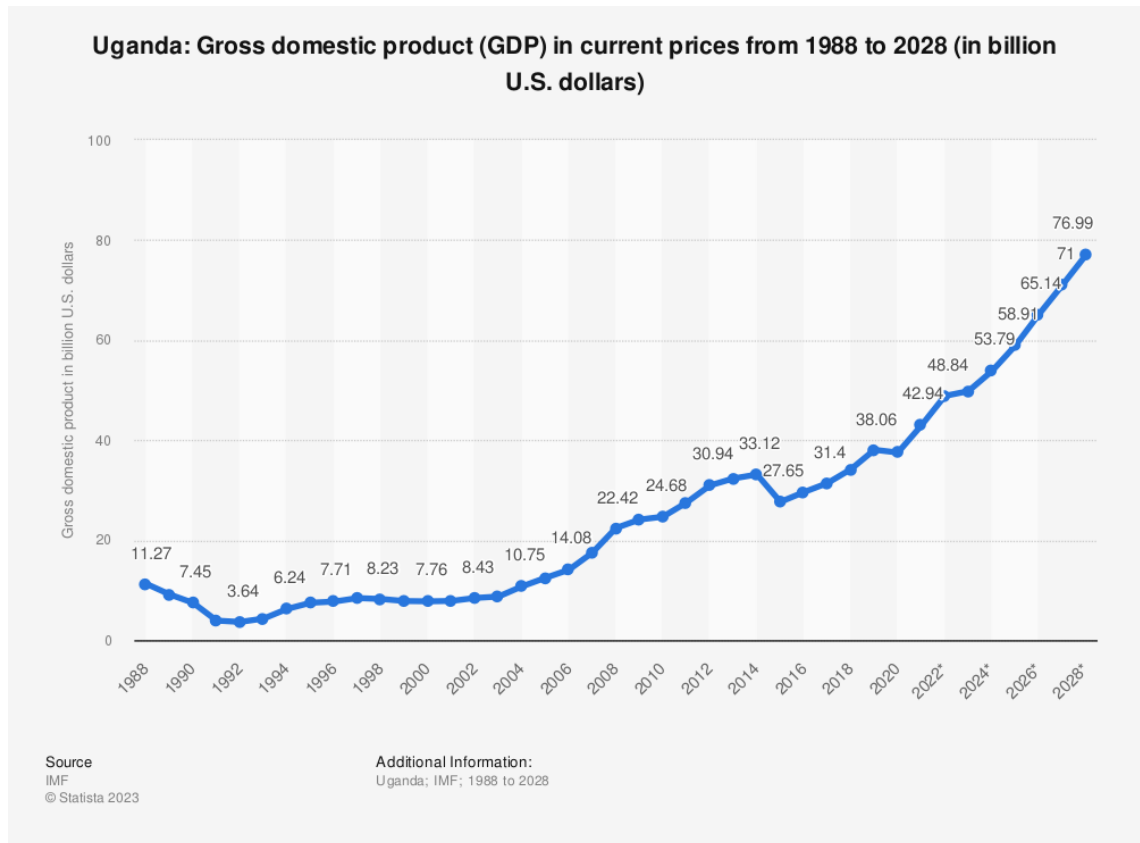


Figure 7. Uganda: Gross domestic product (GDP) in current prices from 1988 to 2028 (in billion U.S. dollars) (Statista 2023).

Currency

The Ugandan Shilling, UGX is the main currency in Uganda and the Bank of Uganda (BOU) is responsible for the printing and distribution of money in the country. Uganda's currency is considered to be one of the weakest in the world with 3,669 Ugandan shillings equating to 1 U.S. dollar (Groves 2023).

The depreciation of the shilling has continued to increase and continues to greatly affect businesses and the Uganda economy at large. Uganda has a lot of foreign investors that use the U.S. dollar actively in the capital region, and the fluctuating exchange rates continue to affect businesses. In 2022, the Bank of Uganda (BOU) made initiatives to curb the depreciation of the currency: 1 U.S. dollar was equivalent to 3900 Ugandan shillings. (The Independent 2022.)

Unemployment

The COVID-19 pandemic came with several challenges and many Ugandans were heavily affected. Due to the lack of a proper healthcare system in most regions, a nearly year-long curfew was implemented leaving most businesses closed. This decision left many Ugandans jobless and led to the collapse of several companies and the closure of most businesses. The pandemic also increased the unemployment rate from 3.55% in 2019 to 4.51% in 2020 according to Statista (2023). Following the reduced restriction, however, the unemployment rate reduced to 4.28% in 2022 as shown in Figure 8. (Statista 2023.)

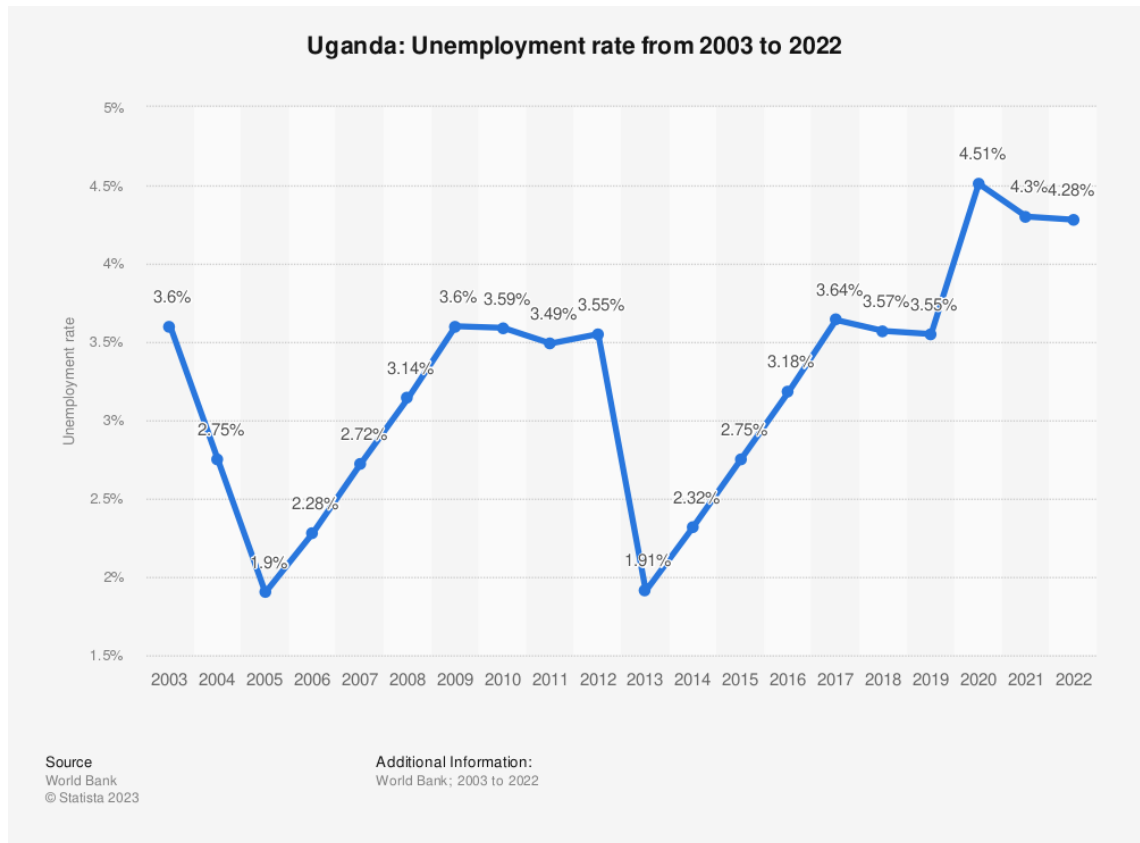


Figure 8. Uganda: Unemployment rate from 2003 to 2022 (Statista 2023).

3.3 Social Factor

Uganda's population was estimated to be 44 million people in 2020 according to the World Health Organisation (World Health Organization 2020). The country is considered to have the second youngest population in the world, with 98% of its

population below the age of 64 years. Uganda's high population is attributed to high birth rates with an estimate of 5.26 children per woman. A high number of Ugandans live under impoverished conditions, and this is the main reason for the country's low life expectancy. (Statista 2023.)

The increase in rural-urban migration over the past two decades has led to a high population within the cities, and due to the high unemployment rates the number of small businesses has increased, causing high competition for consumers. For consumers, however, this situation has led to an increase in a variety of products and services in the market, leading to satisfaction. Uganda's young population is single-handedly changing the ways in which small businesses market their products. Businesses are adapting to the use of the internet to interact with their customers, especially via different social media platforms.

3.4 Technological Factor

In recent years, digitalization in Uganda has progressed smoothly, and the technological landscape is growing, with an increase in the number of startups in the technology industry and an overall increase in the use of technology both commercially and recreationally. Compared to most Western countries, however, the country needs to prioritize research and development and invest in this field due to several benefits that will be realized in the country. (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development 2023.)

According to the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) (2022, 13), a total of 12.2 million actively used smartphones and 23.8 million feature phones had access to the internet at the end of 2022. Over the past decade, Ugandans have recognized the benefits of the internet, which has increased the use of smartphones and social media. To support this transition, the government has also taken different actions and by the end of 2022, 95% of the terminals in the Telecom industry were within reach of the Internet. (Uganda Communications Commission 2022, 13.) Figure 9 shows the steady increase in mobile phone usage in Uganda over the last two decades.

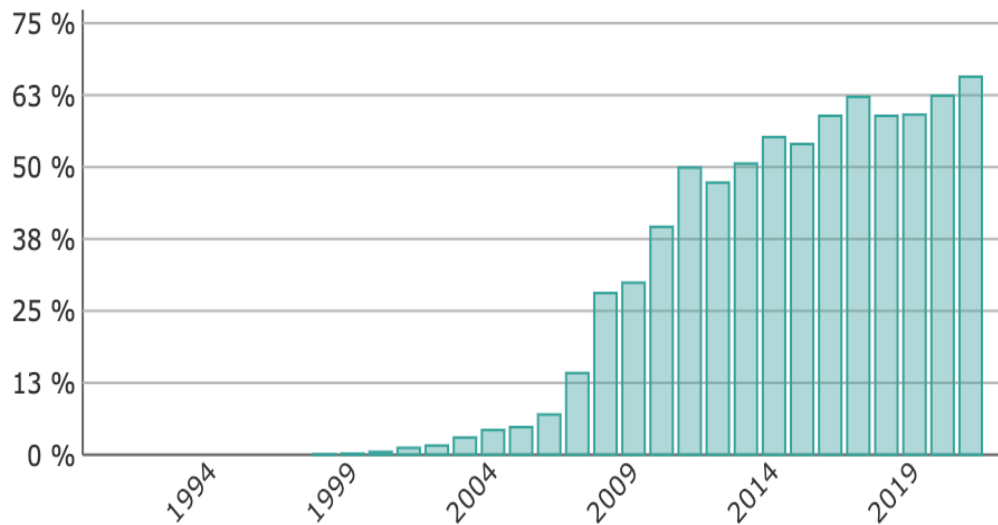


Figure 9. Mobile phones 1990-2021 in Uganda (WorldData 2021).

3.5 Legal Factor

In 2019, the Government of Uganda passed the Data Protection and Privacy Act to ensure the prioritization of privacy for citizens. The law suggests that citizens' data ought to be collected only under relevant situations with consent, it should be accurate, kept securely only when necessary, and that sharing collected data is prohibited. (Ministry of ICT and National Guidance 2019.) Although the decision has improved eCommerce and reduced fraudulent online behavior, the country still has a long way to go, as enforcement of the law is weak.

4 Analysis of the market

Uganda has a rich celebration culture with a variety of foods that have made the catering industry grow in the past decades. This has proven profitable for most businesses. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2023), 81% of Ugandans are engaged in subsistence farming. This makes it easier for firms in

the catering industry to access necessary supplies to conduct business. (Food and Agriculture Organization 2023.)

Although the hospitality sector is mainly profitable, numerous emerging start-ups in this sector have made it competitive and hard to build a concrete client base due to different offerings. There is a need to stand out with different delicacies and yet have affordable prices. For businesses, there is a question of how to keep a high quality of products and services with low purchasing power in the market.

4.1 Target Market

Armstrong and Kotler (2018) define a category of consumers with the same needs and could potentially gain value from the offerings of a given firm as a target market. While segmenting markets, the identification of different target markets enables a firm to ensure the optimum provision of value to each market. (Armstrong and Kotler 2018, 212.) Table Treats aims to redefine catering by offering finger foods, something that is not typical in the Ugandan catering landscape according to its cofounder (Kinyi 2023).

According to Statista (2022), Uganda has a total of 702 bank branches and/or financial institutions most of which operate in the capital, Kampala. Banks have different numbers of employees and usually receive several clients daily. (Statista 2022.) Banks have many small gatherings that Table Treats could cater to and manage. According to Kinyi (2023), the company has previously planned and managed corporate events, which gives it an avenue to expand into the banking field. (Kinyi 2023.)

Table Treats mainly focuses on corporate events, weddings, brunches, birthdays, and high teas among others. These are mainly intimate gatherings with a moderate number of people that the company can manage at the moment. Table Treats can offer a wide variety of snacks and beverages in these settings as they are profitable for the company and a way for the company to build its brand awareness. The party celebration culture is very

popular in Uganda, where it is popular to have food and /or, soft drinks and cake at these parties and are usually intimate with just family and friends. Uganda's high population provides Table Treats with the possibility of a wide variety of customers.

4.2 Competitive Situation in Uganda

Oakwood Events Uganda

Oakwood Events is an events company founded in 2017 by two event specialists looking to revolutionize the event planning industry in Uganda. The company's main team is made up of seven people, and most operations are carried out either in conjunction with third parties or outsourced. Oakwood Events specializes in planning corporate events, exquisite gift baskets, parties, and weddings. The company offers its services from the budgeting phase, all through to the execution, and has organized events for top companies in Uganda including banks, telecommunications companies, hotels, embassies, and other institutions. (Oakwood Events 2023.)

Oakwood Events has a solid marketing strategy to engage with clients and advertise its services and has a website that has a catalog of past events, clients it has worked with in the past, a webshop, and general information about its business, all providing extensive knowledge to online traffic. Besides phone calls and a physical location, the company also has a presence across different social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest. (Oakwood Events 2023.)

DAS Professional Event Planners

DAS Professional is an event-planning company founded in 2015 with its main office in Kampala. The company specializes in corporate events, wedding planning, and marriage registrations. DAS Professional (2021) mentions that they handle entire marriage processes, from assisting with budgeting to managing paperwork with other solution providers for any event. Over the years, the company has worked with several clients including top insurance

firms, startups, and numerous weddings in Uganda's capital. (DAS Professional 2021.)

Besides calls and face-to-face interaction with clients, the company's website highlights any information necessary for buyers to make a purchase. The website includes a webshop encouraging consumers to make purchases and a frequently asked questions (FAQ) page for clarification on any matter. In addition, DAS Professional has an audience on different social media platforms namely, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, where highlights of each past event are shared. (DAS Professional 2021.)

Pretty Events

Pretty Events is an events management and service provider company founded in 2008. Originally, the company managed events in the capital region alone but has since grown and it currently operates countrywide. Pretty Events' main clients are offices, institutions, weddings, and any other occasions that host large numbers of guests and offer decorations, public address systems, and stage setups among others. According to Pretty Events, the company's revenue is approximately 80,000 U.S. dollars. Among small clients, Pretty Events has worked with different famous brands like top banks, schools, churches, and sports events, which has given it an advantage over its competition. Along with its websites, the company also has a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram all through which clients can get quotations and free consultancy on desired events. (Pretty Events 2023.)

4.3 Analysis of the competitive situation

Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the competitive situation in the catering and event management industry, outlining key factors that help in evaluating and comparing four different competitors: Table Treats, Pretty Events, Oakwood Events, and DAS Professional. The table serves as a concise reference to compare and contrast key attributes and characteristics of the different competitors in the context of their area of expertise, client base, digital presence, revenue (in the case of Table Treats), service quality, and years of

experience. This information is valuable for strategic planning, market analysis, and decision-making in the industry.

Factors	Table Treats	Pretty Events	Oakwood Events	DAS Professional
Area of expertise	Brunch, birthdays, corporate events, weddings, high teas	Public address systems, stage setups, corporate events, wedding planning	Corporate events, wedding planning, exquisite gift baskets	Corporate events, wedding planning, marriage registrations
Main Clients	Influencers, schools	Banks, schools, churches, Weddings, sporting events	conferences, hotels, embassies, telecommunications companies	Startups, offices, insurance companies
Digital presence	Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, WhatsApp	Website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	Website Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest	Website, Facebook, Instagram & Twitter
Revenue		\$ 80,000.00 (€ 76,016.80)		
Quality of services	Excellent	Good	Good	Fair
Years of experience	10 months	15 years	6 years	8 years

Table 2. Competitor Analysis of Table Treats' direct competitors (DAS Professional 2021; Kinyi 2023; Oakwood Events 2023; Pretty Events 2023).

4.4 Analysis of Table Treats' position in the Ugandan market

In this section, leveraging insights from the SWOT analysis, we will conduct an assessment of Table Treats' standing within the Ugandan market.

Strengths

Table Treats is a company with extensive possibilities for growth, and this is because of different strengths. The company has a unique business model, not typical in the market, and it is gaining more attention which will enable it to increase its client base. According to Kinyi (2023), clients' needs differ and Table Treats has been able to plan tailor-made events. This adaptability gives the company a competitive advantage and prioritizes clients' needs which will help increase client retention.

Weaknesses

Like any business, Table Treats has a few weaknesses, for example the lack of enough capital, hindering expansion. The company's marketing strategy is limited, which affects progressive customer relationship management, resulting in low brand knowledge of the company in the market, making it difficult to get new clients.

Opportunities

Kinyi (2023) mentioned that Table Treats has worked with a few influencers in Uganda at different events which not only introduced the brand to the market but also brought some clients in. With this, the company operates in a market, where some consumers are readily available to purchase services.

Threats

The hospitality sector in Uganda is very competitive, and there are several dominant players with large market share and high brand knowledge. Additionally, Uganda's economy is unstable, consisting of fluctuations in currency that might negatively affect the company's business operations.

Although the market is large, Ugandans have low purchasing power, and this reduces prospective clients for the company thus affecting the profit margin.

5 Marketing Strategy Assessment: Insights and Prospective Enhancements

5.1 Social Media Marketing in Uganda

Armstrong and Kotler (2018, 521) argue that the rise of the internet has led to the creation of a series of social media channels over the past decades where millions of consumers interact daily. Among others, the most popular social media channels are Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Twitter, TikTok, Pinterest, YouTube, and Google+ all of which serve different purposes including sharing pictures, watching videos, and keeping up with current events all over the world. The shift of consumers to increased online activity has prompted firms to use social media as a marketing tool, and it has grown popular globally. (Armstrong and Kotler 2018, 521.)

Like any other marketing method, social media has several benefits to any firm, regardless of its size. Establishing a presence across various social media increases brand awareness and boosts interaction between a brand and consumers. Social media provides readily made target audiences, enabling a firm to make tailor-made information and content to share for example, Snapchat is mainly used by GenZ. The use of social media as a marketing tool is cost-effective, compared to other marketing methods, making it ideal for firms of all sizes. Social media creates a real-time avenue for firms to gain insights into how consumers interact with their products, keep up with consumer trends, and gain feedback which creates a better understanding of consumer behavior. (Armstrong and Kotler 2018, 522-524; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2016, 528.)

According to Taremwa (2023), the popularity of social media use continues to grow with more Ugandans using the channels for interaction, gaining knowledge, and keeping up with trending topics globally. Businesses are also equipping employees with the necessary skills to aid in this transition where

consumers are using online platforms to find information and make purchases. The most used social media channels in Uganda are Facebook and WhatsApp, with 5 million and 3 million users respectively. (Taremwa 2023.) The International Trade Organisation (2023), mentions that Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok are also popular and marketers are increasingly using these platforms to reach consumers.

5.2 Analysis of the company's current marketing strategy

Following its start in January 2023, Table Treats has interacted with prospective customers using both online and offline marketing activities. The company has established an online presence across different social media to build brand awareness and increase engagement with its customers. Currently, Table Treats mainly uses Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok for marketing where aesthetic pictures and videos of different event highlights, products, and services are shared with respective audiences. (Kinyi 2023.)

Instagram

Instagram is one of the most popular social media with over 1.35 billion monthly users worldwide (Statista 2023). The channel offers different ways in which a business interacts with its clients. Besides having a chat feature, users can share pictures, videos (reels), stories, and even record videos in real-time known as Instagram Lives. With its increased popularity, Instagram has added special features to improve how businesses operate, like the use of analytics, where businesses are able to see how users interact with company posts. (Meta 2023.) Table Treats' Instagram page currently has 753 followers with over 69 posts where it shares appealing and flavorsome images and videos of different appetizers and foods. The company posts updates on discounts and offers and actively interacts with its followers to build interaction and trust. (Table Treats Ug 2023.)

Snapchat

With over 375 million daily users, Snapchat offers a great audience for businesses to market their products and actively interact with users. The

platform offers advertisement packages for businesses to reach their target audiences and use different analytics to assess measure reach rates, and progress in using the channel in general. (Snap Inc 2023.) Table Treats mainly uses Snapchat to share visual content with its followers. The company also takes several orders via Snapchat as it is more popular among younger consumers according to Kinyi (2023).

5.3 Recommendations for incorporation of specific social media channels

Meta Business Suite

Meta offers businesses a one-stop platform where both a company's Facebook and Instagram profiles can be managed. The platform offers different options through which businesses can boost post engagement from followers.

Businesses have the option of using paid ads to reach wider audiences, access to analytical tools that highlight current trends, and utilizing the shop function where buyers are able to make purchases. (Meta 2023.) As mentioned in Section 5.1, Facebook is the most popular social media in Uganda, and the channel hosts different demographics representing all target audiences that the company aims to emphasize.

Meta Business Suite allows businesses to share content via Facebook, Instagram, or both, with the provision of scheduling content. Businesses are able to see how often and when followers interact with their posts, and based on this, posts can be shared to ensure optimization. (Meta 2023.) Table Treats already has an existing Instagram page, and Meta Business Suite provides an easy integration of the company in using Facebook. The company has plenty of visual content that it should share on Facebook to showcase the different products and services offered and engage with followers.

TikTok

TikTok is a new and popular social media platform where users share visual content, especially videos and pictures. With over 800 million users globally, the platform is popular among young people and creates an avenue for Table

Treats to share its content while engaging with different users. (Statista 2023.) Through sharing highlights after each event, creating short catchy videos, and participating in trends, the company has increased interaction with other users thereby increasing knowledge of the brand among users on the platform. TikTok also has other analytics for business accounts where Table Treats can track how users interact with its content.

X (formerly Twitter)

The channel is mainly associated with instantaneous posts and real-time updates on events happening globally. For marketers, the channel offers a curated audience looking for new information and ideas. X offers a free platform for businesses to advertise and market their products and services. With the use of trending hashtags, businesses can share their content with increased visibility. (X Corp 2023.) With proper utilization of X, Table Treats can reach the desired high-end people and institutions that can benefit from the company's services.

6 Conclusion

This section concludes the research by answering the research questions, it lists risks for table treats and recommends areas of further study for the company.

Table Treats intends to further establish itself in Uganda and widen its client base while staying profitable. The company has progressed fairly since its establishment earlier this year and now aims to put more emphasis on the increase in brand knowledge. This research has studied the situation of the Ugandan market, how favourable it is for the company to operate in the market as well as the best marketing practices in regards to social media Table Treats should utilize to achieve its goals.

Due to limitations in gaining information in this research, the main sources of information were different literature and an interview with one of the founders of Table Treats Uganda. Nonetheless, information from credible sources has been used in this research to make the necessary recommendations for Table Treats.

6.1 Answers to the Research Questions

RQ1. What does social media marketing in Uganda look like? Social media marketing is becoming increasingly popular in Uganda, although traditional methods like television are still commonly used. The use of social media by consumers is prevalent, and this has prompted most businesses to establish an online presence on at least one social media channel to engage with consumers.

RQ2. What social media platforms are cost-effective and will enable Table Treats to reach its target audience in Uganda? The most popular social media platforms in Uganda are currently Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and X. All these platforms offer businesses options to grow followers and increase interaction with users. The platforms also offer paid options where businesses are able to reach even more users thus increasing brand awareness. Table Treats can utilize these different options.

RQ3. What social media marketing plan can be implemented to attract consumers and increase brand awareness? While using all aforementioned social media, Table Treats should focus on creating more visual content containing different highlights, services, and other promotions. These will build interest among followers and further engage a wider audience resulting in increased brand knowledge. Working with different influencers to make relevant content will also help boost the company's image in the market.

6.2 Unforeseen Risks

In light of Table Treats UG's strategic planning, it is prudent to acknowledge the potential risks that the company might face in the future, particularly those related to unforeseen global events like the impact of COVID-19 on the catering and event management industry (Kotorov, Krasylnykova, Demel & Blaschke 2023, 76). This includes unanticipated requirements such as mask-wearing,

social distancing, and vaccinations, as well as the imposition of unexpected limitations and restrictions (Shrestha, Megha, Chakraborty, Mazzara, & Kotorov 2023, 576-585). It is imperative to factor in these elements as integral components of the company's risk assessment and future strategic considerations (Krasylnykova et al. 2023, 383–392).

The Ugandan economy is ever-changing with fluctuations in currency and changes in the political environment. For instance, the suspension of social media in 2021 by the Ugandan president negatively affected Ugandans. (International Trade Administration 2023.) In today's digital world, the use of online marketing methods is a prevalent way through which businesses interact with their clients, Table Treats should continue to use offline marketing methods to maneuver such unforeseen changes.

6.3 Suggestions for further research

Due to limited up-to-date information regarding the event management and catering industries in Uganda, this research is not entirely conclusive on the actual consumer behavior in the market. Table Treats should therefore make more studies into the market and take necessary initiatives to adjust the marketing plan accordingly.

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