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EHL CASE STUDY

# Invest in Education

How to start a school to address  
Rwanda's growing need for skilled  
hospitality & tourism professionals.

The tourism and hospitality industry continues to record impressive growth in Africa, and Rwanda is no exception. In 2019, the country ranked n°6 in East Africa on total international arrivals and inbound tourism expenditure accounted for \$526.11 M.

This represents a 40% increase since 2014 and is expected to continue growing by 28% by 2024. It therefore comes as no surprise that leaders and policymakers are focusing their efforts on supporting this growing sector with the aim to foster Rwanda's economic growth and tackle youth unemployment.

## Skills gap in the hospitality industry

The skilled hospitality personnel scarcity in Rwanda - like in many African countries - has resulted in local companies depending on international skilled personnel for jobs that could be occupied by locals. To address this skills gap, the Rwanda Development Board (RDB), established in 2008 to coordinate and promote national economic development, is looking for sustainable solutions to train and recruit young people to complete its workforce.

## Invest in education with a flagship school

RDB saw the development of the country's hospitality education portfolio as a priority to answer the shortage of high-quality hospitality talents with operational and managerial competencies. They chose to invest in creating a state-of-the-art hotel school, with a high-end infrastructure environment and an industry adapted curricula. The institution is to be the point of reference for hospitality education in Rwanda and the region, attracting students from the African continent.

## The right partner to develop a strong business case

RDB was looking for a partner able to advise on the best ways to materialize the development of their state-of-the-art hospitality school and help them navigate the challenges of building a hospitality program from the ground up. EHL Advisory Services, the consulting arm of EHL Group, ranked world #1 in hospitality management education, was a natural choice. As a global reference in the development of hospitality education institutions, EHL Advisory Services could lean on its experience in supporting the successful creation of hospitality schools in North Africa to offer a solid methodology adapted to the regional constraints.



# Approach

Investors, interested in setting up a school, have to work with the Ministry of Education to ensure meeting the required criteria. Rwanda's education system has experienced tremendous growth over the years as access to quality education has been a critical aspect of the government's mandate in the education sector. To gain the support from all stakeholders, RDB and EHL Advisory Services had to confirm the initial market assumptions as well as the feasibility and sustainability of starting a hospitality school in the region.

## I. Confirm the project potential and align stakeholders

In order to build a solid foundation for the project, EHL Advisory Services recommended 5 mandatory steps:

- Identify the hospitality education needs of the country,
- Understand the current hospitality education offer,
- Identify opportunities for investors to make the vision become a reality,
- Recommend the most appropriate hospitality education initiatives for the country and the region,
- Define the development steps in establishing the institution.

The extensive analysis required to accomplish these steps was completed by EHL Advisory Services, via desk research, on-site market research including interviews, site visits and workshops with relevant project stakeholders. The analysis confirmed the opportunity to develop a hospitality education center in Rwanda. In addition to formal education programs starting at vocational education level, the analysis uncovered the need to offer additional educational programs to build the required quality middle management in the tourism, hospitality, and service sectors. The recommended education portfolio was thus expanded to include post graduate diploma level, including tailor-made programs.

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## 2. Develop a strong business case

Once the project feasibility was confirmed, a complete report on the requirements for opening a high-end hotel institution in Kigali was developed. To satisfy the need for a new and unique hospitality education institution in compliance with RDB's vision, the business case detailed the education concept, the programs of study, the infrastructural needs, the organizational structure, the human resources need, the marketing of the institution, a 10-year financial plan and a cost-benefit financial analysis.



Adopting this approach allows all stakeholders to have a complete road map

The objective was to equip the RDB with a detailed roadmap to drive the school towards a successful launch. Through the implementation of the business case vision and education concept, the RDB will be able to tackle 4 key dimensions:

### **Academic benchmark**

EHL will develop the international standard curricula for professional diploma, bachelor's degree, postgraduate diploma, and tailor-made courses.

### **Student employability**

The institution will gain visibility and notoriety. It will become industry-recognized, locally and regionally, enabling students to opt for hospitality jobs and forming a dynamic alumni network.

### **International recognition via the EHL Network of Certified Schools**

The IHSE will collaborate with EHL in academic excellence: study programs, distinct faculty and exchange and transfer opportunities within the EHL Network of Certified Schools. The IHSE will be widely recognized by the hospitality industry, state leaders, education institutions and international companies.

### **Learning environment**

Targeted investment coupled with knowledge transferred from EHL Advisory Services will develop state-of-the-art infrastructure and equipment. Future students will benefit from a conducive setting for learning and close to additional areas of interest.

## Results

Informed dialogue with industry professionals enabled RDB to close in on the immediate training needs of Rwanda. And with this, the education programs to tackle the short-term, medium, and long-term education needs of trained professionals was agreed upon by all stakeholders.

Collaborating with industry experts is essential to offer sustainable solutions on the infrastructure needs for the proposed institution and support the delivery of the education programs including state-of-the-art facilities comprising education buildings, accommodation, and recreation facilities on campus.

The business case proposed for Rwanda outlined the features, unique selling proposition, and competitive advantage expected to help the RDB meet its objectives and exceed those of its students. The RDB can now rely on this fact-based study to guide them in the institution's development and allow them to make the most informed decisions regarding the project's next steps.

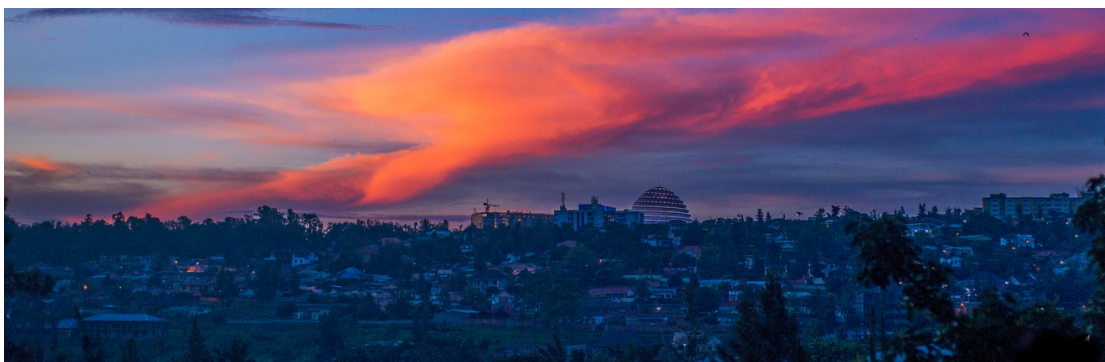
Through the implementation of this personalized solution, Rwanda's future flagship hospitality school will be able to:

- Develop industry-relevant hospitality workforce on both operational and managerial level through a curriculum combining arts and science.
- Leverage on partnerships, tight relationships with the industry and alumni network to gain visibility and notoriety.
- Stand out from the competition by offering greater specialization options, practical training and professional development.
- Attract students from the Africa region.
- Become a key player in developing qualified manpower as per the growth of the hotel industry and act as a catalyst for further investment in hospitality and service industries in Rwanda and the region.
- Become a center for certification in line with regulatory requirements.

The hand-in-hand work with specialized partners and experts will continue to provide support and guidance throughout the development of the school, from the identification and creation of a hospitality education concept to its grand opening to the continuing certification process.

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# Conclusion

## Is starting a hospitality school in Africa a good opportunity?

Africa is the world's most rapidly urbanizing continent, and the population is to triple by mid-century. By 2040 the top world's fastest growing cities will be African. So Africa is clearly on the path to some massive economic and social reforms in the next decade or two. We can anticipate an unprecedented shift in the business ecosystem of the continent.

## What are the implications of such a growth on the tourism and hospitality industry as a whole?

Some of the world's biggest hotel chains have announced their entry and expansion in Africa over the next five to ten years. The stabilization of sociopolitical situations in Africa, the rise of the middle-class and the growth in the economic index, provides a window of opportunities for the African hospitality sector to flourish.

Starting a hospitality school in a new region like Rwanda requires many steps, and it is therefore essential to spend time in confirming the project potential, aligning all stakeholders, developing a comprehensive business case and aligning it to the vision of the school to be started.

The in-situ market research in Rwanda confirmed the initial market assumptions as well as the feasibility and sustainability of starting a hospitality school and helped uncover further opportunities to develop the education expansion.

The initial investment in carrying out extensive research, conducting a wide array of interviews and evaluation with relevant project stakeholders, visiting hospitality schools and government agencies, and consolidating the insights into a comprehensive analysis, is crucial in reducing the time to market, minimizing costs, and ensuring the success of the project.



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