

# MISS TOURISM EMBRACES AI



Outgoing Miss Tourism Uganda queen

By Steven Odeke

**A**t the launch of the 13th edition of the Miss Tourism Uganda beauty pageant, held at Kampala Serena Hotel, an interesting

debate emerged; how can artificial intelligence align with a beauty pageant?

This year's theme, *AI, Culture and Tourism*, aims to encourage contestants to use technological innovation to showcase Uganda's rich heritage.

A highlight of the event was a demonstration by ZunoBotics, which unveiled an AI-powered robot tour guide named Okello. Although internet connectivity issues disrupted the presentation, the demonstration still offered a glimpse into the future of tourism.

Developed entirely by a team of Ugandan engineers led by Jonathan Ssemakula, Okello is designed to interact with tourists in multiple languages, including English, French, and five Ugandan local languages. Notably, the robot can automatically detect and switch to a visitor's



Outgoing Man Of Tourism

Younger beauty queens at the Miss Tourism Beauty Pageant

preferred language in real time.

However, it also sparked a key question: Is AI gradually replacing the human touch?

The consensus at the event was clear – while AI tools like Okello can make tourism presentations,

they cannot replace essential human qualities, such as empathy and emotional connection.

As part of the competition, scouts will travel across 12 regions of Uganda in search of contestants aged 18 to 27. The finalists will compete

for the national crown on September 4, at the Kampala Serena Hotel, succeeding the current titleholder, Cindy Kezia Nachap.

The winner will go on to represent Uganda at the Miss Tourism International pageant.

The event also marked the launch of the second edition of Man of Tourism International, the male counterpart to the pageant.

Auditions for both categories are scheduled for March 21 and April 4, at Sheraton Kampala Hotel.