

## Practices and Challenges of Domestic Tourism Development in Ethiopian Tourism and Hospitality Industry

By

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### Abstract

*The main purpose of this study was identifying and explaining current practices and challenges of domestic tourism development in Ethiopia. To achieve this objective, qualitative approach with a descriptive design and expert purposive sampling techniques were employed for focus group discussion and interview data gathering instruments. The qualitative data was collected from twenty private and governmental tourism experts and twenty eight domestic tourists in the form of interview and six focus group discussions with nine discussants each. The interpretation of qualitative data was a content descriptive approach that utilizes code of summary data and unattributed quotes to illustrate dominant issues in respondents' own words. The result confirmed that practices of domestic tourist arrivals, national tour operators and travel agencies, and hotel establishments in Ethiopia have grown at a rapid rate. This growing trend was the result of the major efforts made by the government and the private sectors in the development and establishment of institutions and legal frameworks. Whereas, the challenges include absence of domestic tourism strategy, political tribalism, use of the media for divisive agendas, language barriers, lack of organized tour, increment of prices, the travel culture of the society and monotonous tourism product in the destinations were some of them. Finally, based on the results of the study launching of domestic tourism development and marketing strategy, revision of tourism development policy, offering training for tourism operators and creating public private partnership platform were some of the recommended points to the sustainable development of domestic tourism in the nation.*

**Key Words:** Domestic Tourism, Practices, Challenges and Ethiopia.

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism can be divided into domestic tourism which embraces inside of the country and international tourism when tourists travel to another country. Both of them have high importance for any country and especially for those where tourism is a major economical sector. Domestic and international destinations exceedingly depend on each other (Malska, Hudo, & Cubuh, 2005). If domestic tourism in the country has low number of tourists, this destination has also low attractiveness for international travelers. And vice versa, if country has high number of international arrivals it means that this destination is also attractive for local citizens (Djachenko, 2007).

Domestic tourism throughout the world is a predominant but invisible portion of tourism industry. The bias on international tourism ignores most domestic tourists and their contributions. Consistent data on worldwide domestic tourism are not so readily available (Eijgelaar, Peeters & Piket, 2008). The significance of domestic tourism is still invisible due to the biases of researches on international tourism by considering its foreign currency (Robinson and Picard, 2006). Its economic and socio-cultural importance has been grossly underestimated. Presently, insufficient information about domestic tourism hinders progressing of this portion of tourism and its multifaceted significance (Moseley, Sturgis & Wheeler, 2007). The lack of commonly accepted and used definitions and awareness on the contributions of domestic tourism is largely responsible for this ignorance (Eijgelaar, Peeters & Piket, 2008). Domestic tourism, historically speaking, is in fact the first form of tourism that was practiced and today it continues to account for the most part of this activity by far: it is estimated that out of the 4.8 billion tourist arrivals per year 4 billion, or 83%, correspond to domestic tourism. Likewise, the economists estimated that at the global level domestic tourism represents: 73% of total overnights, 74% of arrivals and 69% of overnights at hotels (WTTC, 2016 and UNWTO, 2017).

Despite these impressive figures, the growth of domestic tourism in developing African nations including

Ethiopia is very limited. The African continent is truly adorned with a rich diversity, an abundance of untouched resources, natural beauty, cultural heritage and historical sites, wildlife, safaris, deserts and much more that, if channeled correctly, could provide considerable opportunities for domestic tourism, cultural tourism, and diaspora tourism. Looking to the future and the potential of tourism on the continent, UNWTO forecasts shows that by 2030 the number of domestic tourists in Africa is expected to increase by more than a double. In Africa domestic travel is more restricted due to low income levels. Even if other factors attributed for the existing less number of domestic tourists, few researches were conducted before. Similarly, the beneficiary of the society from domestic tourism is also minimal (Eijgelaar, Peeters, & Piket, 2008; UNWTO, 2019).

Ethiopia is endowed with unique natural and human made resources of immense benefit to tourism development if regularly consumed by both domestic and international tourists. It is a multicultural nation in which over 80 ethnic groups live together. More than perhaps any other country in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is known for its ancient and rich culture (Gordon and Carillet, 2003). Each ethnic group has its own unique cultural traits which attracts the attention of domestic and international tourists as well. Ethiopians are extremely proud of the range of their traditional customs, the visual and performing arts and special lifestyles, values, traditions, and festivals and events, banquets, music, theatre, shows, village and rural life, historic and religious monuments or vernacular buildings and ruins. Because of this amalgamation of resources, Ethiopians are very enthusiastic to visit their brothers and sisters who are living in the other corner of the country (Camerapix, 1995 and MoCT, 2018).

Off course, the presence of international tourists has become an important feature in everyday life of many Ethiopians, in both rural and urban areas. However, the problem is when the rationale for tourism development has been discussed within the country; it is often conceived in macroeconomic terms: generation of foreign exchange, government revenue and employment. These benefit the whole of Ethiopians, but it ignores the social and cultural elements of tourism sustainability. Even the tourism development policy of Ethiopia (2009) is biased to the economic contribution of tourism industry which magnifies merely the economic impact of international tourism without considering domestic tourism and its significance of the sector beyond its economic contribution. It emphasizes simply the contribution of international tourism in earning and conserving foreign exchange, in creating employment opportunity and distribution of income. Additionally, measurements are taken simply to enhance the economic profitability of the sector (Yechale, 2015 and MoCT, 2018).

The understanding level of tourism researchers and practitioners on domestic tourism is not clear for the smooth running of the industry and above all studies regarding the role of domestic tourism for national solidarity in a multicultural nation like Ethiopia is limited. There are no sufficient studies conducted and published in the field of domestic tourism development in Ethiopian context, this study is believed to provide significant knowledge and understanding to guide related authorities and managers in making right decisions and being on the same path with rapidly changing tourism industry. Little research has been conducted in assessing the economic contribution of international tourism for the local community, challenges of foreign tourists in destination sites, required facilities and the linkage of tourism sector with local economy by many researchers including World Bank (2006). Even the studies that have been made are sketchy and isolated; they shed very little light on the subject matter. Moreover, this study can be considered helpful to raise awareness of governmental and private sectors about the development of tourism industry in Ethiopia as a whole, as well as decision making processes, strategies, employed techniques and applied practices specifically for continuing improvement. Notably, understanding and improving domestic tourism is important for international trade, closer relationship across borders and better economic construction of the country. Therefore, this study attempts to fill the gap by focusing on the practices and challenges of domestic tourism development in Ethiopia.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researcher has chosen to carry out a descriptive research design within a qualitative research approach to explore the practices and challenges of domestic tourism development in Ethiopia (Patton, 1990 and Krippendorff, 2004). This approach is highly efficient in obtaining specific data about the value, opinion and social

issues of particular people (Hejri, 2006 and Altinay, Var, Hines, & Hussain, 2007). Qualitative approach allows the researcher to explore behavior, perspectives, feelings, and experiences in depth (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006) which was deemed to have the potential to benefit the study. In the course of the fieldwork, the study was relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data includes in-depth open-ended and semi-structured interviews; this permits the researcher to probe to unearth respondents' over all understanding on the practices and challenges of domestic tourism development and focus group discussions (FGD) with the target population of the study. Formal and informal discussions were conducted with different community members, domestic tourists, tour operators, associations, experts and government officials. Secondary data includes archival research from policies, books, proclamations, regulations, journals, magazines, proceedings, pamphlets, manuals, bulletins, newspapers, reports, articles, internet materials and individual writing exercises related to the study.

The population of the study was the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the nine National Regional States and two City Administration Culture and Tourism Bureaus (Addis Ababa, Mekele, Summera, Bahir Dar, Harar, Dire Dawa, Jijijiga, Adama, Hawassa, Assosa and Gambela), tourism and culture related associations, tourism media forum, domestic tourists, Ethiopian tourism Organization and respective offices and associations at these cities as well as the community members. Expert purposive selection for interview and FGD helped the researcher to exclude uninterested respondents, consider variations in education level and experience of respondents to the subject of the study. Above all, the whole experts of the organizations were not participated in the study because some of those who are working in these offices do not have relevant experience to the study issue.

Interviews with key stakeholders both from the private and public sector including senior experts from each bureau and offices, associations, tour operators and domestic tourists at each destination and policy and decision makers in order to elaborate on the practices and challenges being faced was conducted. Each pool of items was organized based on the main objectives of the research. All interviews were recorded by digital voice recorder and notes were also taken throughout the course of the interview. Based on the principles of data saturation, twenty eight domestic tourists, nine private tourism operators and eleven governmental officials were participated in the study. A total of six focus group discussions (FGD) with both private and public stakeholders were conducted with nine discussants each to identify the area of focus in order to elaborate on the practices and challenges being faced. Each group discussion pool of items was organized based on the main research objectives. All group discussions were recorded by digital voice recorder and notes was also taken throughout the course of the group discussion. To assure generalize-ability, data was collected from the maximum recommended number of samples based on the principle of data saturation.

Before the analysis of data, it is a must to measure the validity and reliability of the qualitative data. So, as reliability refers to the research trustworthiness and conformability (Bryman, Becker, and Sempik, 2008) to assure the reliability (repeatability) of qualitative data, all the interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were recorded and transcribed word for word. Therefore, one could go back and recheck the answers or responses. The interpretation of qualitative data was conducted as a content analysis method to organize and categorize obtained data into meaningful and efficient information, based on explicit rules of coding (Patton, 1990 and Krippendorff, 2004). In this case the interview and focus group discussion results were repeatedly and thoroughly read so as to gain the major themes of each respondent. Utilization of summary data and unattributed quotes to illustrate dominant issues in respondents' own words was employed. So, the processes of transcribing and interpreting from Amharic (local language) to English as well as identifying, coding and clustering was carried out. Therefore, the method of data analysis of the study is procedure of categorization of verbal and behavioral data, for the purposes of classification, summarization and tabulation. Based on this, the content of the qualitative data was analyzed on two levels; including the basic level of analysis of descriptive account of the data, this is what was actually said with nothing read into it and nothing assumed about it and the higher level of analysis is interpretative, it was concerned with what was meant by the response, what is inferred or implied.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis and discussion of data as part of scientific methodology of research process are fundamental to reach to some conclusion. Therefore, this section deals with the interpretation and discussion of data collected from domestic tourists, different tourism and hospitality associations, and tourism and hospitality experts through interview, focus group discussion (FGD) and document analysis.

### Practices of Domestic Tourism Development in Ethiopia

As per the UNESCO (2019) World Heritage list, Ethiopia has the biggest number of world heritage sites in Africa. With a total of 12 (eight cultural, three intangible cultural heritage of humanity and one natural) heritage sites, the country tops the list. The country also has five biosphere reserves and 12 literary and archival heritages registered by UNESCO. Ethiopia is the birthplace of coffee, the source of Blue Nile, the home of many ancient monasteries and diverse African traditional societies. The country has a unique cultural heritage, being the home of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, one of the oldest Christian Churches and the country which exercises Islam as a religion before the Middle East. It is also the land of extremes from Danakil depression (the lowest point in the country which is 116 meters below sea level) to Ras Dejen, the highest mountain peak of the country, which is about 4,620 meters above sea level. Yet, the country is endowed with archeological, cultural, historical and natural grounds that make Ethiopia unique. Consequently, Paleontological studies identify Ethiopia as the cradle of humankind (Yechale, 2015 and MoCT, 2018).

In light of the potential of domestic tourism market and resource giftedness of the nation, it is wise to plan domestic tourism, which is the tourism of resident visitors within the economic territory of the country of reference. In the last few decades, the number of tourist arrivals, national travel agencies and hotel establishments in Ethiopia has grown at a rapid rate. This growing trend was the result of the major efforts made by the government and the private sectors in the development and establishment of institutions and legal frameworks. These includes the National Tourism Development Policy Document (2009), Ethiopian Tour Operators Association, Tourism and Hotel Management Education at Higher Educational Institutions (2004), Tourism Code of Ethics document (2010), Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (2013), Ethiopian Tourism Organization (2010), National Tourism Transformation Council (2012) and the new Tourism Destination Marketing Strategy and destination brand for the country 'Land of Origins' (2015) are among from the many.

One respondent from the Ministry said that;

*Moreover, the government has been committed in facilitating the development of the required tourism infrastructure including accommodation, transport, catering, tourist information services, activities and development of other facilities. Conversely, despite all these facilitation commitments, the growth of domestic tourism in Ethiopia is very limited, an informal business and focuses vastly on religion or pilgrimage. The ideal domestic tourism has to consider all the conventional travel motivation factors and is thought to be strategically designed. However, domestic tourism strategy development is increasingly complex, with longer time-scales and a wider scope than in the past. Addressing the major and multi-faceted challenges faced by the domestic tourism industry demands an integrated approach to strategies development across many government organizations, at different levels of government and with the close involvement of the private sector.*

One FGD discussant from the tour operators whispered that;

*Shockingly, Ethiopia doesn't have a domestic tourism product development and marketing strategy as a nation and even the number of tourists do not counted properly and the government and other stakeholders do not agree on the figures including the international tourists. Off course, I understand that launching a domestic tourism development strategy requires a longer-term planning perspective compared to destination marketing strategy which tends to be more dynamic and often reactive in nature. Therefore, developing the necessary tourism and related infrastructure to meet expected future demand requires an integrated approach across departments and levels of government, with input and support from industry. There should be common mechanism to support a whole-of-government approach across ministries and public agencies for the development of a long-term domestic tourism strategy approved at the highest level of government. This strategy can play a key role in engaging government, industry, destination communities and other stakeholders in order to identify a vision, direction and goals for sustainable tourism development, and in order to set the necessary priorities, actions, and responsibilities to deliver a coordinated vision for the sector. Similarly, a longer-term approach fosters the development of the industry, rather than simply seeking to stabilize, adjust or re-orientate to new market opportunities. It is necessary in order to secure the longevity of tourism as an economic and socio-cultural force by focusing on the three sustainability dimensions, establishing industry diversity and securing innovation*

*and strategic improvements to productivity. The other issue is the number of domestic tourists which I strongly disagree with the government's figure. Even the numbers are collected from the respective regional culture and tourism bureaus and the 2018 regional summing up figures exceed the Ministry's 2025 plan. Therefore, this shows that each regional state is counting domestic tourists with a different approach from one another and even with the Ministry, and it is far ahead of the plans of the nation.*

To sum, there is increasing evidence of the several potential benefits of developing domestic tourism. Although not generating external earnings, it can contribute significantly to local economic development because domestic tourists typically purchase more locally produced goods and services than other tourists, thus supporting small-scale enterprises and the informal sector. While international tourism is generally subject to a range of global influences and events that can impact on the environmental and socio-cultural sustainability, domestic tourism is less sensitive to crises and less seasonal or fragile to external conditions which could limit continuous tourism development in the nation.

### **Challenges of Domestic Tourism Development in Ethiopia**

There are various challenges identified in the study that impede maximum realization of the development of domestic tourism in Ethiopia. The challenges are at various levels in different destinations in that while some are policy and strategy related issues at destination management level, others are more to do with socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects within the destinations. Different factors could affect domestic tourists negatively in a tourism destination, which will determine whether they will come again. If tourists have a bad experience, most will not want to return, therefore it is crucial to find what challenges of domestic tourism development and domestic tourists in a destination and their expectations. Even if the facilities and infrastructures intended for international travelers have benefited the domestic tourism market and led to its growth, in Ethiopian market, there have been deliberate efforts to prioritize international tourism promotion over domestic tourists by the national organizations. The following are some of the challenges that the respondents mentioned as affecting domestic tourism development negatively in Ethiopian tourism and hospitality industry.

**Lack of Domestic Tourism Strategic Plan:** Most importantly, regardless of the strong government commitment in designing of national tourism policy and other relevant documents to support the tourism sector, yet there is no separate domestic tourism development strategic plan and an independent domestic tourism marketing strategy at all. This in effect creates a problem on knowing of the exact figure of domestic tourists, their travel purpose and spending. On top of this the arrangement of domestic trips laid on everyone's hand, such as religious leaders, bus owners and commercial brokers. One respondent from Addis Ababa Tourist Guide Society, sadly, explained that the national and local legal travel agencies couldn't get an opportunity to provide professional tour packages and a time to think on focusing in it. He added that this situation makes the involvement of the national government hardly possible to assist and incentivize the establishment of specialist travel agents in domestic tourism that provide quality domestic tours for the nation, and also pay tourism tax. Therefore, the stakeholders strongly believed that the prevalence of the imbalance between tourism potential and domestic tourism growth from the sector is due to unsuccessful strategies, such as both the policies and strategies are overlooked, poorly designed and ineffectively executed. For example, the sustainable tourism master plan (2015) and the tourism development policy (2009) contradicts each other at some contents, the policy gives only a facilitation role for the public sector regarding to destination development while the sustainable master plan dictates as it should be developed by the public sector. Therefore, even the existing policy, declaration, regulation, strategies and directives should be harmonized and talk about similar agendas of the industry.

**Ethnic Conflict, Violent Extremism and Radicalization:** A number of respondents emphasized that nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia can be marked by the vestiges of former ethnic based conflicts and political systems, which add further level of complexity to efforts to bring different people together in the form of domestic tourism. In the case of Ethiopia experiencing ethnic based conflict, economic and security instability and restrictions on the movement of individuals and cultural products make it difficult to implement domestic tourism activities and foresee their long term development. Several respondents cited ethnic conflict as a key challenge for governments, in addition to the rising tide of violent extremism and radicalization. Addressing

reoccurring violence also diverts policy-makers from dealing adequately with other policy areas.

**Use of the Media for Divisive Agendas:** The respondents agreed that different ethnic groups are exploiting the media as a vehicle to generate and propagate negative stereotypes, prejudices and hate speech among nation, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia who are living peacefully for long time. Specially, they are exploiting social media as a means to provoke hatred and violence among different ethnic groups in the name of activism. The media response to the current geopolitical context and incidents of violent extremism can lack accuracy and nuance, which may be further exacerbated by political movements and external hostile information campaigns. Therefore, there is serious absence of professional and responsible journalism and activism role at the national and regional level which undermines the legitimacy of public information shared across different media platforms.

**Resilience of Existing Prejudices and Social Norms:** Respondents explained that some ethnicities of the country have dominant customs and are not open to other cultures. In highly traditional and conservative societies of the nation, outside influences can be viewed with caution and suspect. Therefore, the public have fixed ideas about these cultures, be disrespectful towards other peoples and nationalities, or be ignorant of or deny the existence of other cultures. Respondents cited that discrimination and racism as persistent obstacles to domestic tourism development in these societies.

**Travel Culture of the Nation:** The tourism stakeholders clearly pointed out the culture of Ethiopians as one of the reasons why Ethiopia do not travel locally. Culture of Ethiopia in this case refers to generally the way of life and what locals perceive as their norm. In terms of travelling, Ethiopia was viewed to be open to the idea of travelling. Just that they travel to visit their friends and relatives, holidays and religious places. However, in terms of actually going to the tourism attractions in Ethiopia, it was not viewed as a necessity. This attitude was blamed on the way Ethiopia was raised which contributed to them feeling they do not need to travel for leisure. Notwithstanding the above observation, it appeared not to adequately explain the increasingly high numbers of outbound leisure travel. However, the tourism and hospitality industry respondents seemed to provide a different but related view. It was observed that while culture might be an issue, lack of preparedness for leisure travel by citizens is a challenge to explain low participation. Leisure travel like most other household expenditure, involves financial outlay best prepared for in advance. However, such preparedness is also attached to the priority placed to the expenditure. Therefore, one might argue that the lack of preparedness demonstrates the value placed on leisure travel by the domestic market. Nonetheless, one cannot discount the pull of the external destinations especially ethnic conflicts as one of the factors contributing to less interest on the local tourism provision. As encapsulated by a statement from one of the travel agents; *"... like the saying always goes. The grass is always greener on the other side. I think that's what Ethiopia believes that it's better to travel outside than to travel within the country."* Therefore, even though lack of preparedness might present a challenge as mentioned, the other underlying issues also present an amalgam of factors which best highlight the prevailing situation in the Ethiopian domestic tourism consumption habits. Such factors best provide a more overriding rationale given the demonstration of propensity to travel by the citizens in their outbound consumption pattern.

**Monotonous Tourism Product:** Ethiopian tourism resource is dominated by cultural heritages and this has been viewed as one of the reasons why Ethiopians do not travel much within the nation as confirmed by all respondents. Firstly, culture based tourism is the predominant product that Ethiopia offers to its visitors and on top of that Ethiopian's mind awareness of tourism attractions are positioned with the rock hewn church of Lalibela, Aksum obelisk, Fasil Castle, Sof Omer cave, Al-negash and different monasteries and churches which are all culture based products. Off course, these products are suitable for senior visitors but the young generation test is shifted to different leisure activities, theme park. This was emphasized by one government official at the Ministry, who asserted much to the giggles of fellow group members; *"when you talk about tourism in Ethiopia what comes to mind to an ordinary Ethiopian is the historic route like rock hewn churches of Lalibela, Aksum obelisk and Fasil Castle. This is the failure of Ethiopian tourism organization as an institution since the role of*

*product development and diversification is mandated, exclusively. The organization fails to show other resources of the nation not only for the international tourists but also to its citizens.*” The study also found that creativity plays a major role in attracting domestic tourists, yet the domestic tourists criticized the service providers for its lack of creativity, saying that people will not come to their specific destinations several times just to excuse their similar services. The tourists agreed that in order to achieve a higher number of domestic tourists, the tourism and hospitality industry must be creative and offer new experiences every year at least. Therefore, there is a serious tourism product diversification and development problem as a nation.

**Language Barrier:** Some of the interviewees revealed that the country is more accommodating to Amharic, Oromifa, Tigrigna and English speaking people, thus when a tourist cannot speak those four languages it is hard to assist such a person whereas Ethiopia has more than eighty languages. At times if a black person speaks English, the response will be in Amharic, Oromifa or Tigrigna which makes communication problematic. One domestic tourist said that; *“in some of the destinations, the preference is given to people who speak Amharic, Oromifa or Tigrigna or white people, because if you are a black person they expect you to know these languages and even if you speak in English they will respond in these three languages.”* In addition to the lack of multi lingual guides in other Ethiopian languages, the tourism resources lack signage, which makes it very hard for domestic tourists to find tourism destinations and their values when they are visiting those places, especially if they are going without the assistance of tour operators or tour guides.

**Distance of Tourism Destinations:** The participants mentioned the issue of the distances between the tourism destinations, which limits domestic tourism from enjoying all that Ethiopia has to offer, because they spend time travelling to those destinations that calls for more days than they anticipated spending. One respondent from Bahir Dar said that the attractions are apart from one another, so it results in limiting domestic tourists to experience everything within a short time unlike other countries. They also raised the issue of transportation, as there is a lack of public transport to several tourism destinations, thus domestic tourists need to have their own transport to travel to destinations which are very expensive. Some regional states have started promoting their regional tourism resources but the issue of transport is impeding its success. Absence of transport for long journey makes it challenging for domestic tourists who do not have their own transport.

**Lack of Organized Tours:** The respondents complained about a lack of organized trips, when domestic tourists arrive in the destinations they find that they might have to wait for long times in order to take their tours. On the other hand, the packages that are offered are mostly not suitable for domestic tourists, because the service providers package experiences focusing mostly on the international market. In addition to the above, a tour operator respondent made an observation that some of Ethiopian tourism products are also not family-oriented as it is not children-friendly which is discouraging to some travelers who would want to travel with their children.

**Increment of Prices:** All the respondents were in agreement that prices charged at local facilities were too high. There was a particular focus on attracting high paying international tourists instead of local campers who paid little and brought with them their own provisions, degraded the environment and left no benefits. The approach led to the standard and pricing of tourism products in Ethiopia being too high. Though the intended benefits were realized, the domestic market on the other hand was left out as the prices were beyond what local people could afford. The respondents exposed the problem of hotel service and product owners doubling their prices in the peak season, which makes it even harder for domestic tourists to afford their services. The respondents emphasized that this issue will have long-term effects on the industry, which might lead to a point where domestic tourists do not use hotels, bed and breakfasts, guest houses and accommodation in general, but will choose to family and friends for accommodation. One tour guide from Addis Ababa affirmed that the prices are high and in peak season, the hotels, transport providers and guides make double the prices, which makes it hard for domestic tourism to afford them, and as a result they sleep at family or friends place. This was stressed by most respondents that the prices being charged are a bit high and Ethiopians cannot afford to go to these hotels and this is one of the reasons why people don't travel within the country.

## CONCLUSION

Domestic tourism, globally, is much greater than international tourism in terms of volume of visitors but it is the invisible portion of the total tourism activities. According to UNWTO statistics, domestic tourism flow worldwide may soon be ten times larger than international tourism flows. Despite this promising value, many governments and researchers tend to overlook this market at the expense of international tourism because of the default thinking that domestic travelers simply do not offer the same degree of benefit to the local market. They pay in local currency, are sensitive to local pricing (and tourist-targeted price increases), are less awed by local attractions, and are locals themselves, really, so do not offer the same visitor excitement as foreigners. Therefore, this study sought the views and perceptions of the tourism stakeholders concerning the domestic tourism challenges and practice in Ethiopia. All the respondents affirmed that the state of the domestic market is not where it should and there are challenges that need to be addressed for progress to be realized. The lack of strategic documents, travel culture of the nation, language barrier, monotonous tourism product, use of the media for divisive agendas and monotonous tourism product are some of the stumbling block that needs to be overcome. These challenges have not been helped by an undiversified tourism product offering in the nation. This and the high prices for services in the industry that is predominantly international focused does not help the situation and therefore pose a barrier to domestic tourism growth in the nation. However, if domestic tourism develops in a meaningful, sustainable and complementary way to international tourism in Ethiopia, it will offer destinations an exceptional platform for year-round tourism economy growth and development. And, as importantly, domestic tourism creates a destination that stands proud as a place for both the people of the world, and those of the destination, to explore and enjoy as their own.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, there should be a revision of the current tourism development policy. The policy has been in existence since 2009 and served more than ten years the tourism and hospitality industry. However, as per the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan, there is a need for destination development and the role is given to the public sector. As highlighted here, the issue was recommended by the Master plan but implementation has been a problem since the policy gives only the facilitation role for the public. The first step then is for the policy to be reviewed incorporating the recommendations of the master plan for domestic tourism to grow. Such a review will also catalyze the provision of other tourism products and aid diversity. The new policy also needs to make a provision for the private sectors to develop specific destinations for a limited period of time in the form of concession.

Secondly, the federal and regional governments should launch domestic tourism development and marketing strategy. Appropriate policy and strategy frameworks and political will are crucial to ensuring effective domestic tourism in Ethiopia. Policies and strategies to promote domestic tourism require holistic, interdisciplinary and integrated approaches. In most cases, the focus of a particular domestic tourism program and its target beneficiaries determine which national authority is responsible for its implementation. In other cases, where responsibility is spread across several ministries, the efficacy of domestic tourism processes is highly dependent on the efficiency of policy coordination. Therefore, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism should embark domestic tourism development and marketing strategy and indoctrinate to the implementer organizations (Tourism Ethiopia) and the regional governments. Then, the national and regional governments' strategic plans should put the lens on home growth traveler potentials, domestic tourism.

Thirdly, tourism and hospitality institutions should train tourism operators on the value and role of domestic tourism development. The study revealed that the need to educate and re-orient the tourism operators on the value of domestic tourism in social, cultural, environmental and economic development of destinations and the need to involve the locals. Therefore, if the locals become more aware of the potential benefits of domestic tourism, there will be a positive response, thereby culminating into a boom in domestic tourism within the local destinations. As a result, the national and regional tourism and cultural organizations and higher educational institutions should organized trainings, workshops or seminars on the practices and challenges of

domestic tourism development in the nation.

Finally, public-private partnership should be encouraged in order to increase accessibility to attractions for domestic tourists. From the observations made it can be concluded that in order to encourage accessibility, the tourism operators need to provide group travel and making travel more affordable. The operators could promote inter-regional travel by encouraging touring and publicizing the hidden secrets of the different attractions in different regions and the experiences there. Therefore, the national and regional government, tour operators, the destination managers, guides and the host community should team up for the increment of domestic tourist flow.

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