

Tourism Development Policy Awareness as a Means for Promoting Sustainability: Practices from the Ethiopian Tourism Development Policy

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Abstract

The major purpose of this study is to examine the awareness level of tourism experts on the issues of tourism development policy for promoting sustainable tourism development in Ethiopia. To achieve this objective, quantitative and qualitative study approach, and purposive sampling technique were employed for both questionnaire and interview data gathering instruments. Quantitatively, thirty nine sample tourism experts were participated from the ministry, bureau, zonal and city experts and the collected data were analyzed by descriptive statistics, correlation, ANOVA, Post hoc and independent t-test. Qualitative data were collected from eight experts and analyzed through interpretative and descriptive account of the data; and the major findings of the study are presented. Accordingly, the t-test and ANOVA confirmed that there were statistically significant difference between the awareness level of BA/BSc and MA/MSc experts and those who have worked under ten years and above in the industry on tourism development policy concepts. Approach to correlation, statistically a significant relation was found between the tourism development policy elements of Ethiopia. Regardless of contribution, the ANOVA revealed that there was statistically a significant difference between those who have worked under ten years and above on the role of tourism development policy in the Ethiopian tourism industry. Furthermore, the t-test indicated that MA/MSc experts were predominant in awareness about the role of tourism development policy for sustainability. Finally, it is concluded that tourism development policy and sustainable tourism are closely related variables and it can play vital roles in the sustainable development of Ethiopian tourism industry.

Key Words: *Tourism Policy, Development & Ethiopia*

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Throughout the world millions of people, live in extreme poverty, struggling each day to meet the bare necessities for survival while lacking access to education and employment. Thanks to tourism industry, many developed and developing countries get a lot, but it does not operate in a predictable and mechanistic environment and is influenced by unpredictable circumstances (McDonald, 2006). It has long been recognized for its dynamic character and economic potential for boosting trade and opening up regions that lag behind in their development. According to Frangialli (1999), tourism in the 21st century is the world's biggest industry. The majority of tourist receipts go to developed countries, but the developing countries' share has been rising steadily since the late 1960s (UNWTO, 1993).

Frangialli (1999) further argues that along with its phenomenal growth and size, the tourism industry will also have to have more responsibility for its extensive impacts, not only its economic effects, but also the impacts on the environment and societies of host populations. To the host population, tourism is often a mixed blessing. Tourism is bound to bring about changes in society, since it is a powerful medium affecting change (Smith, 1977). These changes can be both socioeconomic and cultural as well as changes in access to and use of the natural resource base, which many people in the Third World are dependent upon for their livelihood.

Therefore, tourism contributes by its nature to the stability of regional and local economies, primarily because of its positive multiplier effect, which acts on creating business opportunities in a wide range of activities and significantly influences the development of employment in the region (Sharma, 2004). Just like any other economic sector, tourism also faces competitive pressures which are rising substantially in today's globalized society (Kozak, 2004). The national and regional governments should develop efforts aimed at increasing

competitiveness in tourism. Competitive advantage comes not only from the potential possibilities of external environment, but mainly from internal characteristics, i.e., from unique sources and methods of their use (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington 2008; David, 2009). Comparative advantage of destination is made up of its resources, which Dwyer and Kim (2003) classify into inherited (natural, cultural-historical), human-created and supporting sources (availability, quality of service, security, basic infrastructure). To achieve a competitive advantage it is essential to use these resources and apply a regulatory policy framework effectively with regard to the changing environmental conditions (Crouch, 2010).

Ethiopia's tourism landscapes present paradoxes and ambiguities. The possession of abundant tourism resources on the one hand and the failure to harness these resources for its development on the other hand is mere reflections of the prevailing paradoxes (Mulugeta, 2012). Ethiopia is rich in mosaic culture of people, impressive geological events, scenic beauty landscape, and cradle of humankind formed by complex and old aged natural and anthropogenic factors. The rich biodiversity intriguing landscape with unique historical events, hospitable cultures designated for attraction of tourists and historical researcher expedition (MoCT, 2010: 5). Fittingly, it has also given the description as "*Ethiopia: Land of Origins.*" While these mentions specify the presence of abundant tourism resource, reaping substantial benefits from these resource remains unconvincing (MoCT, 2006:17) and continued to be perceived as less consequential. Therefore, the country needs a strong legal framework that helps to regulate the industry. The policies and strategies pertaining to tourism in Ethiopia gives particular focus on the progresses attained since August 2009. The Ethiopian government envisages promoting interactions among actors; enhances their operational capacity and accelerates the mobilization of tourism resources for local development. The tourism development policy constituted among the relevant instruments formulated to realize the transformation of democratic developmentalism into concrete actions. However, the effectiveness of the tourism development policy of Ethiopia depends on the experts' awareness level which is not evaluated since it was endorsed.

2. METHODS OF THE STUDY

The methodological approach for this study is described as a cross sectional study within the qualitative and quantitative domains. In the main course, the study was relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data included in-depth open-ended and semi-structured interviews; this permitted the researcher to probe to unearth respondents' over all perception of tourism policy, and questionnaires with the target population of the study. Formal and informal discussions also were conducted with different association experts and governmental officials.

The Ethiopian tourism industry experts, which are directly involving in the industry and working at Addis Ababa in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Amhara National Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau who are working at Bahir Dar, Lalibela, Gondar and Debarke are the target of the study. Therefore, the populations of the study were tourism experts in these organizations and these are eleven experts from MoCT, nine experts at Bahir Dar, five experts at Gondar, Debarke and Lalibela culture and tourism experts each as well as two experts each at Gondar, Debarke and Lalibela Guide Associations. Since participating the whole population is unmanageable and costly in the given resource limits; the researcher stratified the whole population in to three strata as Ministry of Culture and Tourism Experts as one stratum; Amhara National Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau experts and tourism and related associations. Then, the sampling procedure was purposively selected for both interview and questionnaires, which 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 the cultural wing of offices and associations do not have relevant experience to the study area. For example in the head office of MoCT there are two hundred and forty nine employees but not more than eleven have relevant experience to the subject matter (MoCT, 2016).

Quantitative data were analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 19. This

computerized statistical analysis, was begun with simple frequency analysis (Percentage) and descriptive statistics measures (Mean and Standard Deviation) to the complex analysis of Correlation, one way ANOVA, Post hoc and independent sample t-test which were used in making comparisons between two different groups within the sample. The items for the questionnaire were prepared in the form of five points Likert scale comprising Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Agree and Strongly Agree with the value of 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. The average value was obtained by dividing the sum of each value by the number of rating scale. Therefore, the average value is 3. Based on the average value, the result was interpreted. If the score is less than 3 it is below the average of agreement, and if the score is greater than 3, the agreement is above average. To make more specific, if the mean fall between 0.5 and 1.49 it is Strongly Disagreement, between 1.5 and 2.49 Disagreement, between 2.5 and 3.49 scored Undecided, between 3.5 and 4.49 Agreement and above 4.5 score always Strongly Agree. The level of significant difference is at $\alpha=0.05$, which is the level of 95% confidence interval (2-tailed). Accordingly, the value less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) confirms the existence of statistical difference between the response of the respondents. However, p value = 0.05, implies the absolute value F -calculated equal to F -critical and hence no discussion can be made on the difference.

3. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Based on the sampling technique and procedure described, totally forty one copies of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents of the study and only thirty nine filled it properly and valid (95.1%). The items in the questionnaire were grouped into two parts. The first part contains items related to respondents' characteristics about their level of education and experience, and the second part comprises of variables related to the study, which is divided into three dimensions as Tourism Policy Suitability, Tourism Policy Feasibility and Tourism Policy Acceptability Questions. Furthermore, unstructured interview was held with two senior experts of Ministry of Culture and Tourism, two experts of Amhara National Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau, one expert at each Gondar, Lalibela and Debarq Culture and Tourism offices, and one expert from the guide associations. This is important to obtain data with regard to issues that required more clarification. In doing so, the characteristics of respondents, academic qualification and years of service is based on the responses to the background data in the first part of the questionnaire obtained from thirty nine experts. In addition, the analysis and interpretation of data also made. Accordingly, the results of the study are presented as follows:

Table 3.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Characteristics Categories	Respondents (N = 48)	
		No.	%
Academic Qualifications	BA/BSC	12	30.80
	MA/MSC	27	69.20
	Total	39	100
Work Experience	< 10 years	10	25.60
	10-20 years	9	23.10
	Years	11	28.20
	>31 years	9	23.10
	Total	39	100

Source: Compiled Survey Data

As it can be seen from table 3.1, among the selected sample respondents both (BA/BSC and MA/MSC) academic qualification were 12 (30.80%) first degree holders whereas, 27 (69.20%) were second degree holders. Thus, the data indicates that there was considerable difference between BA/BSC and MA/MSC respondents in number. This shows that the number of BA/BSC holder respondents far less than MA/MSC holders. With regard to the work experience, 10 (25.60%) of the respondents had less than ten years of experience and 9

(23.10%) of them had ten to twenty years of service in the industry. Similarly, 11 (28.20%) and 9 (23.10%) of the respondents had twenty one to thirty and above thirty one years of experience respectively. Therefore, from the analysis of the findings it is possible to infer that work experience of most respondents was average except those who have worked below ten years. This indicates that most of the respondents 29 (74.40%) were more experienced, above ten years.

In order to reveal the level of awareness of respondents on tourism policy issues, independent t-test for academic qualification groups, one way ANOVA analysis for years of experience groups, Post hoc comparison to determine which mean differ significantly after a significant F- ratio has been found in the ANOVA summary and descriptive statistics to show the average awareness level of respondents were conducted.

Table 3.2 Level of Awareness in Academic Qualification of Respondents on Tourism Development Policy Issues

Variables	Academic Qualification	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Sig.
TPS	MA/MSC	27	39.7097	9.65813	-4.179	0.00
	BA/BSC	12	49.7059	2.39178		
TPA	MA/MSC	27	33.6774	7.51615	-3.878	0.000
	BA/BSC	12	41.0588	2.90410		
TPF	MA/MSC	27	41.0323	8.26028	-4.279	0.000
	BA/BSC	12	49.8235	2.29770		

TPS – Tourism Policy Suitability Issues, TPA – Tourism Policy Acceptability Issues, TPF – Tourism Policy Feasibility Issues

Source: Compiled Survey Data

As it can be seen from the t-test result of table 3.2, there is a statistically significant difference between BA/BSC and MA/MSC respondents in their awareness level of tourism policy and sustainable tourism development at 95% confidence interval. Therefore, as it is indicated in the second row of this table, there is a statistically significant difference between MA/MSC and BA/BSC respondents level of awareness on the Tourism Policy Suitability issues with mean value of 39.7097 and 49.7059 respectively and t-value of -4.179 at 37 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance ($t(37) = -4.179, p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)). This means that MA/MSC respondents easily understand the concept of tourism policy suitability issues than BA/BSC respondents. Therefore, an increase in academic qualification leads to a better awareness on the tourism policy suitability issues.

Row three of the table shows that, there is a statistically significance difference between the awareness level of MA/MSC and BA/BSC respondents on the tourism policy acceptability issue with a value of ($t(37) = -3.878, p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)). This signifies that the awareness level of MA/MSC respondents on the tourism policy acceptability is better than BA/BSC respondents with mean value of 33.6774 and 41.0588 respectively. This indirectly leads to an increasing in academic qualification to a better awareness level on tourism policy acceptability issues. In the same fashion, the fourth row also confirms that, there is a statistically significance difference between BA/BSC and MA/MSC respondents on their awareness level of tourism policy feasibility test with a value of ($t(37) = -4.279, p < 0.05$ (2-tailed)). This indicates that the awareness level of MA/MSC respondents on the tourism policy feasibility is better than BA/BSC respondents with mean value of 41.0323 and 49.8235 respectively. Indirectly, this shows that an increase in academic qualification means increasing awareness level on the tourism policy feasibility issues. Generally, the t-test proves that an increase in academic qualification points out an increasing awareness level of tourism experts on the tourism policy issues and this is triangulated by the qualitative data above.

Table 3.3 Level of Awareness in Year of Experience of Respondents on Tourism Development Policy Issues

Variables	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
TPS	Between Groups	1679.796	2	559.932	10.678	.000
	Within Groups	2307.204	36	52.436		
	Total	3987.000	38			
TPA	Between Groups	848.232	2	282.744	7.875	.000
	Within Groups	1579.684	36	35.902		
	Total	2427.917	38			
TPF	Between Groups	1250.720	2	416.907	10.608	.000
	Within Groups	1729.259	36	39.301		
	Total	2979.979	38			

TPS – Tourism Policy Suitability Issues, TPA – Tourism Policy Acceptability Issues, TPF – Tourism Policy Feasibility Issues
Source: Compiled Survey Data

As it is indicated in the ANOVA result of table 3.3, there is statistically significant difference in the level of awareness on tourism development policy among respondents who have below ten years of experience, between ten and twenty, twenty one and thirty, and those who have worked above thirty one years in the tourism industry. The second row from this table shows that there is a statistically significant awareness difference on the tourism development policy suitability issues among the four levels of experience category ($F(2, 36) = 10.678, p < 0.05$). This implies that the four experience groups have no similar awareness level on tourism development policy suitability issues. The awareness level of these experience categories on tourism development policy suitability issues increase from those who have worked less than ten years to those who are above thirty one years experience but this does not mean that there is significant difference between each experience categories.

The third row illustrates that the awareness level on tourism development policy acceptability for the four experience categories significantly differs ($F(3, 36) = 7.875, p < 0.05$). This means that the four experience categories awareness levels on the tourism development policy acceptability are different and it increases up to twenty one and thirty years of experience. However, it does not mean that there is significant difference between each experience groups. In the same way, the fourth row shows that there is a statistically significant difference in tourism development policy feasibility issues awareness among respondents of the four experience categories ($F(2, 36) = 10.608, p < 0.05$). This also indicates that there is a difference in the awareness level of the groups on the tourism development policy feasibility and an increase in experience leads to a better awareness of the tourism development policy feasibility issues up to twenty one to thirty years of experience. But, this does not mean that there is significant difference between each category.

To wind up, the awareness level of respondents on tourism development policy for the four experience settings are not equal or at least the awareness of one of the experience categories differ from the other three. The problem is how to determine which means differ significantly after a significant F- ratio has been found in the ANOVA summary. To determine this, post hoc comparison test method was used and the result shows that the respondents for under ten years experience, in the four awareness variables, is different from ten to twenty, twenty one to thirty and above thirty one years of experienced respondents with a mean of -9.45029, -13.07656 and -12.67251 at 0.05 level of significance respectively. This means that there is a significant awareness difference among those respondents who have worked under ten years and other experienced respondents. However, there is no significant difference among the three categories of respondents who have worked above ten years of experience.

Table 3.4 Average Awareness Level of Respondents on Tourism Development Policy Issues

Items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
TPS	1	5	3.60
TPA	1	5	3.63
TPF	1	5	3.68

TPS – Tourism Policy Suitability Issues, TPA – Tourism Policy Acceptability Issues, TPF – Tourism Policy Feasibility Issues
Source: Compiled Survey Data

As table 3.4 reveals that, even if the awareness level of respondents varies in academic qualification and year of experience, the mean value of all respondents in one is above average (3) on their awareness level of the tourism development policy concepts. All items mean value ranges from 3.60 on the tourism development policy suitability issues to 3.68 for tourism development policy feasibility issues. Since statistically the awareness mean values of the four variables are in between 3.5 to 4.49 that show agreement, the average tourism expert respondents have the expertise knowledge on the tourism development policy variables. Policy and legal frameworks provide comprehensive guidelines to the implementation of detailed activities and plans in tourism. This calls for deeper apprehension of the elements endorsed in the policy. Accordingly, the section below aims to paint a succinct portrayal of the experts' knowledge and their awareness of relevant policy elements on tourism. The Tourism Development Policy of Ethiopia dictates directions and strategies that set the tone for operations in the lower levels. In fact, MoCT (2009) assumes the implementation of the Tourism Development Policy to fall on the shoulders of key organs like the government offices, local communities, civil society and the wider public. This is despite the fact that the implementation of the policy demands proper awareness and knowledge of actors. Nonetheless, the survey results indicated that the experts lacked awareness about the policy contexts. Awareness, knowledge and implementation of Tourism Development Policy received limited practical attention among the tourism experts, employees in tourism establishments and members of the lower level associations. Only a few number of the experts claimed to have awareness or knowledge about the Tourism Development Policy, which falls by far less than convincing. This was not only the issue left to the experts alone. A closer look on the practices on the ground revealed that managers and key stakeholders of the industry lacked thorough awareness of policy issues. This scenario could potentially lead to poor policy implementation. A key informant in Gondar resented that *"let alone the community and the public, the experts in the Office of Culture and Tourism are uncertain about the policy elements and strategic directions in the sector. Even those who claimed to know the policy may have only kept its shallow images and meanings."* Particularly, the connection of the policy elements with the planning exercises and then with each pieces of tourism activities are unsystematic and loosely fitted. One interviewee from the tour guide association explained the causes of misperception and shallow awareness about the various points of Tourism Development Policy by relevant stakeholders. His arguments mainly revolve around lack of awareness, exposures and poor implementation of the policy components. He stated that *"despite their decisive positions and contributions in the sector, actors such as tour operators and agents did not take part in the processes of issuing the policy. No one did consult them for their views on the drafted policy. I assume that such negligence was deliberate. The various community segments, as the end beneficiaries of the policy or experts as implementers, were out of the margin of consultation and processes to make it. As a result, the policy elements circulate among the top-level officials and bureaus alone having equivocal linkages with the grassroots level structures, which are the real implementers."*

To reinforce the roles of community in policy making contexts, Sandeep and Vinod (2014) contended that if there is not community involvement in policy making and decision making the control will be completely out of the hands of local people, outside will increasingly dictate tourism and tourism will kill tourism itself. Thus, as owners of the Tourism Development Policy, locals require rooms for engagement throughout its formulation and implementation courses. The empirical knowledge accessed through literature conferred the irreplaceable role of operators in the contexts of policymaking. For authors such as Budeanu (2003), "the tour operator has a pivotal role in the policies and actions designed to help all tourism stakeholders make positive contributions to ensuring environmental, cultural and economic sustainability."

The realities on the destinations indicated that the prevailing scenario did not avail such a treasured wisdom. A key informant at North Gondar Zonal Office of Culture and Tourism also commentated on the inadequacy of dissemination strategies used to orient the major policy components among the lower level implementers. The key informant characterized the “*efforts made by upper level officials to give orientation on policy elements across the various institutions*” as unsatisfactory. The non-existence of clear directives, guidelines and manuals further exacerbated the predicaments that surrounded the implementation of the policy and strategic programs under it. A better awareness and knowledge of the tourism development policy supports the realization of linkages among actors, preservation of cultural assets, and enforcement of regulations, laws and directives. It also enhances local, regional and national developments beyond recognizing the rights and obligations of interacting parties i.e. tourists and locals on the study destinations.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusion

An ascending in academic qualification points out an increasing awareness level of tourism experts on the tourism development policy issues (suitability, acceptability and feasibility). Similarly, tourism experts who have worked more than ten years in the industry have better awareness of the tourism development policy than those who have served less than ten years.

The poor enforcement of regulations and rules were common in the operations of Tourism Council, hotel associations, MSEs and other tourism establishments on the destination. The (Federal, Regional, Zonal and lower-level) government organs lacked the capacity to follow up and supervise the proper implementation of the regulations for tourism resource exploitation, preservations and promotions. Hence, the limited and ineffective application of the regulations and rules were crucial threats to tourism institutions and the tourism industry in the area. At the same time, implementers at lower levels encountered material and financial as well as human constraints. The establishments and the government line offices suffer from the dearth of technically equipped and experienced work force. The combined effects of material, technical, financial and human constraints deterred the operations of tourism institutions on the study area; it has also a significant and potent effect on the development of tourism industry.

The absence of systematic and standard ways of recording, compiling and reporting tourism related data and statistics was another predicament that bears negatively on the operation and growth of the tourism establishment and industry. This problem was not peculiar to the study sites. The paucities and defects associated with data were nationwide. The available tourism statistics were contingent on the incomplete reports of hotels, tour operators, tourism sites, and government offices. Underreporting or concealing income generated from tourism activities were common problems. Private owners correlate the reporting of the numbers of tourists with the government tax payment administration systems. Hence, hotels, resorts and other organizations deliberately underreport the numbers of tourists in fear of increased taxes. Tourism establishments often lack the system of recording and fail to compile genuine tourism-related statistics. Moreover, the tourism institutions were not in a position to understand the implications of data for planning and future development of the sector.

4.2. Recommendations

It is evident that the current way of doing tourism business in Ethiopia is no longer feasible to meet the challenges facing the tourism sector or to seize emerging opportunities. A new era of collaboration, involving all tourism stakeholders, is necessary to increase its market share and raise awareness of sustainable tourism practices. Therefore, on the bases of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are suggested as to tackle tourism development policy agendas in Ethiopia.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and Amhara National Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau should focus on capacity building and awareness raising of tourism experts for improving the tourism development policy's practices of the industry. Therefore, they should provide trainings and workshops especially for those experts who have BA/BSC academic qualification and less than ten years of work experience in the

tourism industry to understand tourism development policy issues and its process and utilization for sustainable tourism development.

They should be strong supporter and promoter of sustainable tourism development programs. They should attest to the credibility of different policy programs and initiatives which emphasize sustainability and promote and publicize sustainable tourism. They should include information about tourism policy programs in their publications and public relation materials (brochures, guidebooks, reports) and in relevant training programs. At the same time, academicians and practitioners of tourism industry should work to boost the demand and establishment of local and regional sustainable tourism schemes in Ethiopia.

Those structures have often less used for tourism development due to lack in capacity, organization, partnership, position, power, knowledge, money and awareness. As a result, the intervention of tourism institutions in interaction and exchange is so meager. This paved the way for superficial actions and interactions among stakeholders. Therefore, each respective government office should create a platform that helps the stakeholders to talk about their emotions about the industry.

In line with its developmental orientation, the government should back up the operations of tourism institutions even if there are long ways to go ahead.

A distinctive case in point is the absence of adequate rules and regulations that accompany the implementation and transformation of the various components of Tourism Development Policy on the ground with regard to the coordination and functions of the various tourism institutions. Therefore, the stakeholders should focus on the rules and regulation to enforce the tourism development policy.

The absence of operational manuals and guidelines are practical cases that seek attention in this regard. Even the enforcement of the existing rules has been quite superficial and ineffective. In this regard, the activities of operators, agents and lower level associations boost the movement of individuals with diverse taste for life, ideas, images, technologies and financial resources to the tourist settings should be considered.

Strengthening the operational capacity of each institution in order to create coordination platforms and networking for serious intervention strategies and further helps to increase the intensity of the cultural flows.

Another crucial area of intervention is the efforts required to empower the community and position it on equal standing with other stakeholders in the tourism industry. As the key component on tourism platforms (in the nexuses of three entities: government, community and private actors), the issue of giving appropriate recognition for the community enhances the cultural flows, institutional operations and even solidifies the interactional experiences between locals and tourists. The overall effects of interaction and exchange mediated through tourism institutions invite the examination of the impacts they impose on the community and the community's response towards the packages of proliferating benefits as well as adverse ramifications.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS) Culture and Tourism Bureau strategic plans should put the lens on the tourism development policy.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and the Amhara National Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau and higher educational institutions should organize trainings, workshops or seminars on the contribution of tourism policy for sustainable development.

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