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Promoting tourism in developing economies: challenges and prospects

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Abstract

To be sustainable, tourism in all economies and especially in developing nations, must be economically viable. It thus needs to be carefully promoted and strive to meet the needs of society, while also protecting the environment and cultural heritage upon which it relies, and in this way, it will continue to deliver benefits without disadvantage to current and future generations. This research paper attempts to explore the current challenges and prospects of promoting tourism in developing economies. This paper shows clearly that the present challenges include inter alia, the following: (a) Government inability to formulate and implement progressive policies on tourism (b) the current fight against terrorism (c) unequal distribution of power and influence within the cultural divide (d) structural imbalances in overall development pattern in developing economies (e) cultural clashes. In terms of prospects, this paper identified the following-(a) alleviation of poverty (b) employment opportunity (c) development of collective community income (d) equitable management of resources between tourists and local people (e) the issue of corporate social responsibility. Finally, the paper discussed at length some important measures the Government in developing economies must adopt to promote tourism.

Keywords: developing economies, challenges, prospects, emerging markets

Introduction

The need to promote tourism in developing economies remains a burning issue. Unfortunately much has been said but very little has been done or achieved in promoting tourism in developing economies. Today, tourism has become one of the world's leading industries which have contributed greatly to the GDP of many nations. In the same vein, tourism is widely regarded as a means of achieving development. Indeed, the justification for promoting tourism in any area or region within the industrialised or less developed world, lies in its alleged contribution to the welfare of nations. In this perspective, the role of tourism has long been officially sanctioned, in as much as the World Tourism Organisation which is known as United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) asserted in its 1980 Manila Declaration on World Tourism that:

“World tourism can contribute to the establishment of a new international economic order that will help to eliminate the widening economic gap between developed and developing countries and ensure the steady acceleration of economic and social development and progress, in particular in developing countries, (WTO, 1980: 1)



In recent time the focus of UNWTO continues to be primarily on the contribution of tourism to the development of the less developed countries of the world.

In this perspective, tourism is seen not only as a catalyst of development but also of political-economic change which is used in achieving socio-economic development coupled with redistribution of wealth and power as a necessary condition to achieve development. This focus of UNWTO buttressed the developmental role of tourism in the less developed nations. Certainly, many such countries consider development to be a vital ingredient in their overall development plans and policies. (Dieke, 1989; Telfer and Sharpely, 2008; Roche, 1992).

The above scholars are of the view that the development of tourism has long been seen as both a vehicle and a symbol at least of westernisation and also of progress and modernisation. This is of much relevance to developing countries where the development of tourism is not of great concerns (see Brittons, 1987a; Brohman, 1996b; Harrison, 1992b, 2001a; Huybers 2007; Lea, 1988).

In the developed nations, the potential of tourism to contribute to development is also recognised and tourism continues to play an important role in most, if not all, organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. In Europe, for example there has long been evidence of national government support of the tourism sector, in some cases dating back to the 1920s and 1930s, and more recently tourism and some other select activities such as financial services and telecommunications – has become a major component of economic strategies (Williams and Shaw, 1991:1). In particular, tourism has become a favoured means of addressing socio-economic challenges facing peripheral rural areas (Cavaco, 1995a; Hoggard et.al, 1995; Phelan and Sharpley, 2011; Roberts and Hall, 2001) whilst many urban areas have also turned to tourism as a means of mitigating industrial decline. In recent time, Government support for tourism related development is evident in financial support for tourism-related development or regeneration projects. According to Sharpley (2008), one good example of this could be seen in the method of how European Union disburse its funds for rural regeneration through LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions Pour la Development des Economies Rurales) programme of 217 projects under the original LEADER Scheme, tourism was the dominant business plan in 71 (Calatrava Requera and Aviles, 1993). Thus, just as tourism is a global phenomenon, so too is its developmental contribution applicable on a global basis. However, what varies is simply the contextual meaning or the hoped for outcomes of tourism development.

Unfortunately, not much has been done by Africa and Middle East respective Governments to promote tourism when compared to America, Asia and Pacific and Europe. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) statistics show that Africa and the Middle East has the lowest percentage share of international tourist arrivals by region and this is illustrated by Table 1.1 below.

Table 0.1. Percentage Share of international tourist arrivals by region, 1960 – 2012.

	Africa	America	Asia & Pacific	Europe	M. East
1960	1.1	24.1	1.4	72.6	0.9
1970	1.5	25.5	3.8	68.2	1.1
1980	2.6	21.6	8.2	65.6	2.1
1990	3.3	20.4	12.7	61.6	2.2
1995	3.6	19.8	15.6	58.6	2.5
2000	4.0	18.6	16.8	57.1	3.5
2005	4.6	16.6	19.2	54.8	4.7
2006	4.9	16.0	19.7	54.6	4.8
2007	4.9	15.8	20.4	53.6	5.3
2008	4.9	16.1	20.1	52.9	6.0



2009	5.2	15.9	20.5	52.3	6.0
2010	5.2	15.9	21.7	50.7	6.4
2011	5.0	15.7	21.9	51.9	5.5
2012	5.1	15.8	22.6	51.6	5.0

Source: Adapted from UNWTO (2008b, 2011e, 2013b).

From the above table, it can be argued that much needs to be done by African countries and Middle East to promote tourism as it is done in the developed countries.

Theoretical Consideration:

The current academic debates on the concept of tourism have shown that the theoretical underpinnings of the concept cut across other disciplines. The current debates also revolve around a theoretical account of tourists preferences for destination types and motivations for travel. These two trends account to some extent the tourist behaviour and predict those of the future. The preference for destination closely looks for natural environment as travel destination while the motivation to travel is seen from the desire for relaxation. In this paper an attempt will be made to examine, first, the preference for natural environments and the relaxation theories before discussion other related theoretical framework.

The Reference for Natural Environments and Relaxation Paradigms:

Attempts have been made by environmental Psychologists to explain how individuals change the environment and in the same vein how the environment changes individual behaviour. Although tourism hinges on the environment and what most tourists experience and could be seen as transactional, tourism scholars (with the exception of Holden [2013]) have neglected findings and theories from this field. However, a preference for nature and relaxation evident in tourism statistics has displayed itself strongly in studies conducted by environmental psychologists. It has been observed that people preferred natural environment over urban environments and that nature was restorative. This work offered the research-based analysis of the vital psychological role that nature plays in fostering tranquillity and wellbeing for humans. This trend continued within the field of environmental psychology where evidence indicated that viewing natural scenes improves mental wellbeing including mental alertness, attention and better cognitive performance (Crompton, 1979).

In 1979 Crompton presented more than 100 studies that have found and showed evidence that natural environments contribute to relaxation. For example, he found that compared to university dormitory residents with less natural views from their windows, those with more natural views scored better in tests of directed attention and rated their attentional functioning as more effective. Notably, preference is not limited to the visual aspect of a given environment, it included preference for a given environment as a place in which to carry out particular behaviours and fulfil particular roles.

Further research on environmental preference by other academics in 2003 where they compared walking in a nature reserve versus walking in an urban surrounding, they found that walking in the nature reserve fostered blood pressure change indicating stress reduction. Moreover, positive effects increased and anger decreased in the nature reserve by the end of the walks whereas the opposite pattern emerged in the urban environments. Other experiments also found participants preferred a one-hour walk through a forest as opposed to walk through the city centre with similar duration. In studies on gardening



satisfaction and wilderness experience benefits, self-reports of sustained attention, feelings of peacefulness and opportunities for reflection appear to be the salient aspects of contact with nature. From the above discussion, it appears that this preference for nature and relaxation is not only of great importance but it reinforces the preference found in tourism statistics.

Push and Pull Factors

Dann (1981) and Crompton (1979) base the theories of tourist motivation around the very general notion of push and pull factors. Push factors, or psychological needs, are those aspects of motivation that drive an individual to travel away from home in the first place, whereas pull factors are those properties of destination that determine which are chosen, given the very decision to travel. Crompton (1979), in a study of 39 in depth interviews, identified seven specific push factors and two specific pull factors that motivated tourists. The pull factors were, escape from the mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression to a childhood state, enhancement of kinship relations and facilitation of social interaction. The two pull factors were those of novelty and education. In terms of Crompton's specific push-pull factors, he also made it clear that restoration is most consistent with relaxation, although the restorative properties of 'being away' also resonates with 'escape' from a mundane environment.

Another interesting theoretical framework is the Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory.

This is an influential theory of general human motivation and the basis of Pearce's (1989) travel career ladder, which came from Maslow (1943), who defined a hierarchy of five needs that must be met for a healthy and happy life. Individuals must fulfil lower stages of the hierarchy before higher needs can be met, making lower needs more powerful. At the lowest two levels are prerequisites for an individual's bodily survival: Physiological needs such as thirst, hunger and relaxation, and safety needs, such as freedom from threat or danger. Above basic survival, there is a need for social relationships that provide love, affection and friendships, and esteem that provides self-respect, reputation and a sense of achievement. The highest level of need is that of self-actualisation where one fulfils ones highest potential. As it results in relaxation, attention restoration theory seems to fit most clearly into the physiological level although its actual mechanism is psychological, a distinction not supported by Maslow's basic theory. In the hierarchy of needs attention restoration would be a basic prerequisite for higher functioning, and studies of extended exposure to the natural environment have demonstrated the development of higher functioning, in Maslow's terms, as exposure continued. Other scholars have found that participants on an 11-day outdoor challenge programme (similar to the popular Outdoor Bound System) reported feelings of mastery, self-confidence and inner peace after 11 days. It is tempting to venture that the initial exposure to nature provides restoration that fulfils lower needs and allowed the higher need of esteem and self-actualisation to be met.

Having discussed the above theoretical issues on tourism, an attempt will now be made to analyse both the current challenges and prospects of tourism in developing economies.



Current Challenges Facing the Tourism Industry in Developing Economies

The major challenges associated with tourism in developing economies are characterised by both poverty and the pervasive inability of governments to act on any policy (Richter, 1983). We have often observed that progressive policies may be subject to manipulation or bribery and thus has adverse effects in promoting tourism. Coupled with this problem, is the fact that governments of developing nations often lack the power to implements policies of any type and in the same vein, current fight against terrorism in developing nations has hindered tourist from developed nations in visiting some African countries. For example, the presence of Al-Qaeda in East Africa and Boko Haram in Nigeria is a serious threat to the tourism industry. Although efforts have been made to formulate policies by the government of Uganda, Kenya and Egypt to protect tourists form rebels, not much has been achieved in the implementation of the policies.

The issue of terrorism is now a burning issue and we all know that terrorism makes tourism a risky strategy to achieve national development. In recent times the tourism industry has frequently been depressed by war, civil strife and unstable conditions and tourists have frequently been affected, even to the extent of being caught in the crossfire (Richter, 1983). It has been observed that for the past 20 years tourists have increasingly been targeted by terrorists and the tourist are also targeted because of their nationalities. We could still recall that the 1999 murders of eight tourists in the Uganda forest were ostensibly aimed at US and British policies. It has also been observed that the poor government and also lack of capacity to adapt or the flexibility to find appropriate alternative approaches or resist political pressures may have also crippled the development of the industry (Huntington,1996). Such political environments make tourism challenges all the more daunting.

In recent time, government policy makers are faced with the challenge of how to manage the cultural clashes over tourism in the face of growing hostility to tourism. Over the last 10 years, criticism of tourism has shifted from the financial costs involved in developing this sector to the cultural costs incurred by societies embracing mass international tourism. This criticism is often seen in developing nations, most of which are socially conservative. The bone of contention here is that the mix of traditional citizens and non-traditional travellers can often be a recipe for disaster, and 'differences in cultural behaviour can be great that mutual understanding is replaced by antipathy' (Archer and Copper, 1994: 73-91).

These differences are often attributed to the highly unequal distribution of power and influence. When acknowledging the cultural divide, it is important to identify the owners of a country, to ask who controls the interpretation of its heritage (Richter, 1983), how its indigenous people and other minority groups are portrayed and who protects, controls or sells culture to the tourist. In view of this challenge, there is an urgent need for government in developing nations to develop policy on tourism that will promote mutual understanding between traditional citizens and non-traditional citizens. This policy is very important since it will bridge the great divide between the two.

The structural imbalances in the overall development pattern in developing economies are also a challenge in promoting tourism. In most third world countries, there are no clear strategies for development in general or for tourism in particular, and tourism has not been integrated with other economic sectors. As a consequence, tourism development in countries like Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republics is underdeveloped whereas in UK it has been uncontrolled and excessive. Organisation of the tourism sector has been inadequate which has contributed to the lack of profitability in many operations, and



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promotion prospects are poor, with massive reliance on expatriate staff. Above all, the major setback is inadequate training.

It is also interesting to note that tourism embraces many component activities which include tour operations and travel agencies, transport and the hotel sub-sector. Experience has shown that developing economies are not coping with the above activities. In 1997, tourism in Africa employed over 500,000 workers – over 80% in the hotel area and the rest in travel agencies and related services. Compared with other regions of the world, and with the world average, this indicates a great imbalance, with a proliferation to travel agencies, tourism offices and various transport companies. When one examines the employee/room ratio in the hotel business, it is evident that this is higher in Africa than other developed countries. This reflects a level of over employment which itself has numerous interconnected causes. These also include structural imbalances at all levels of the work force.

In respect of administration, accounting services and, by extension, managements represent a very low proportion of workers in an average African hotel of 50 employees. Typically, first-level supervision is provided by two or three people, which help to explain the poor quality of reception or services. This means that training reception staff is a key priority, which would raise the standard of service on offer without requiring deployment of more supervisory staff (Dieke, 2000). In most cases, recruitment is generally haphazard; the floors, laundry-room, bar and kitchen are generally overstaffed; productivity is low; there is lack of proper equipment; and maintenance, in particular, is much neglected in the hotels of developing countries.

There is a general dictum that the above challenges have been exacerbated by a climate that is often harsh for which there are special requirements for installing air-conditioning units, refrigerators, or generators. The purchasing of inadequate equipment and the employment of unqualified management staff affect the development and growth of the hotel industry in developing economy. As a consequence, the management of many hotels in developing countries has been impaired. This results in lack of supervision. The catering and the kitchen are maintained at a low level of mainly unskilled staff, the maintenance service lacks technicians, there is overemployment among the unskilled and this is not often seen. The above mentioned issues need to be addressed urgently by developing countries if they are to successfully promote the tourism industry.

At this juncture, an attempt will be made to work at the prospects in promoting tourism in developing economies.

The Prospects in Promoting Tourism

In the 1950s, tourism was identified as a strategy that could help newly independent developing countries to pull themselves out of various states of under-development (Scheynes). Scheynes argued that the liberal approach to tourism is informed by the logic of modernisation theory, which informed development practice particularly from the 1950s through to the 1970s. From this premises, tourism is often regarded as a catalyst for modernisation, economic development and prosperity in emerging nations in developing economy, an industry which generates jobs and foreign exchange, while also bringing beneficial socio-cultural change in terms of demonstrating 'modern' ways of life to people living in traditional cultures. The central argument here in respect of this approach is that people's traditional ways of life contributed to their poverty. This approach thus endorses



tourism as a suitable strategy for government of poorer countries to start the development of their economies, engage with Western society and pursue a range of development goals, including infrastructure development, job creation and growth.

In the same vein, tourism has been associated with performance in the economic sector through which to develop poverty alleviation strategies. Today, developing countries now have a market share of 40% of worldwide international tourism arrivals, up from 34% in 2000 (UNWTO, 2007: 4). For over 50 of the world's poorest countries, tourism is one of the top three contributors to economic development (UNWTO, 2000, cited in Sofield, 2003: 350). In addition to this, it is suggested that approximately \$68 billion given in aid annually pales is significant compared with revenues of around \$153 billion from tourism (see Christie and Sharma, 2008: 428). Furthermore, tourism is purported to provide a number of distinct pro-poor benefits as shown in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2. Pro-poor strategies to provide economic and other benefits

Strategy focus	Example
Economic benefits	Expansion in employment and wages through job creation and training for the poor. Expansion of business opportunities for the poor through entrepreneurial opportunities. Development of collective community income through e.g. lease fees, donations, equity dividends and cooperatives.
Non-cash livelihood benefits	Capacity building, training and empowerment. Mitigation of environmental impacts of tourism on the poor. Equitable management of resources between tourists and local people. Improved access to services and infrastructure (e.g. roads, water supply).
Policy, progress and participation	Supportive policy frameworks at the national and local level that enable participation by the poor. Increases participation by the poor in decision-making. Encouragement of partnerships between public and private sector. Enhancing of communication and the flow of information among all stakeholders.

Source: Based on Ashley (2002: 20)

The above table 1.2 shows that tourism can bring 'economic benefits' which contribute to the well-being of the poor directly through the generation of jobs. The tourism industry in 2009 employed over 235 million people worldwide (8.2% of all jobs) (WTTC, 2010: 7), and by 2013 this figure have reach 266 million in world employment (WTTC, 2013). This also stimulates the provision of income-earning opportunities for many others who provide goods and services to the industry, and brings economic benefits through collective community income such as lease money paid by resorts based on communal land or a share of gate takings at a national park going directly to a resident community.

Secondly, by enhancing local livelihood options, tourism can enable some rural communities to thrive rather than undergoing serious decline due to continuous outmigration of their youngest and brightest members (ESCAP, 2003: 28; Scheysens, 2007b).

Thirdly, tourism can also bring 'non-cash livelihood benefits' to the poor, including conservation of natural and cultural assets, opportunities for the poor to get training and develop further skills, and also indirect benefits through tax revenues which governments use to support infrastructure development such as road and water supplies, and to provide basic services, including education and health care (Ashley and Roe, 2002; Goodwin et.al., 1998).

Members of the public are also of the view that there may be 'policy, process and participation' benefits for the poor in developing countries whereby the government puts in



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place policy frameworks which encourage more direct participation by the poor in decision-making, where partnership between the public and private sectors are encouraged, and where people have better access to information. In a research work of Holden et.al.(2011) on tourism and poverty reduction in Elimina in Ghana, it is shown that participation goals are very important for the impoverished and they argued that:

“Poor people need to be included in tourism policy and practice, not only as a target group, but also in participatory mechanisms to ensure the appropriate use of tourism for poverty reduction... it is only through a better understanding of poor people’s experience of poverty, that tourism can be used more meaningfully as a strategy for its alleviation”.

Tourism should be commenced with the help of broad-based contributions that involves all relevant stakeholders, including the local community where the development is happening. Tourism’s great challenge is to provide quality local employment and an association between the local businesses and tourism should be established and sustained. A carefully crafted code of practice should be established for tourism at all levels and it should be based on globally recognized standards. Strategies for tourism operations, impact assessments, feasibility studies and monitoring of increasing impacts and limits to acceptable change should also be forged. Stimulating competitiveness in the global tourism sector is critical as are stimulating the development of a sustainable, responsible, and high quality tourism offering. Maximising the potential of the national policies and financial mechanisms for developing tourism is non-negotiable.

The Issue of Corporate Social Responsibility and Tourism

In recent time, there has been a determined and rapid shift to support corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the tourism industry. We have observed that there are some tourism businesses which are committed to CSR and they focus on changing their environmental practices, other are making a solid commitment to social responsibility, including poverty alleviation.

In their CSR activities, they have been involved in supporting local businesses, including agriculture, fishing cooperatives, textile cooperative and other SMEs. It should also be noted that some interesting initiatives by Travel Industry Groups have also emerged in recent years particularly in the UK and Europe, perhaps spurred on by the presence of advocates of responsible tourism and PPT in this part of the world. In U.K, NGO Tourism Concern has worked closely with this Travel Industry Group, introducing them to the concepts of CSR and fair trade in tourism, and developing a tool they can use to assist tour operators in tourism businesses they worked with internationally. This led to some UK tour operators embedding labour conditions to be included in a checklist for hotels promoted by the Federation of Tour Operators (Barnett, 2008: 1001). The Tour Operation Initiatives (TOI) is a non-profit initiative established in 2000 with the support of UNEP, INWTO and UNESCO. It promotes sustainable tourism practices, including cooperation with destinations and supply chain management (Telfer and Sharpley, 2008: 53).



There is a need for developing countries to develop their own operation initiatives in the tourism industry since the above bodies of the United Nations will give support to those initiatives in respect of promoting sustainability of the industry and this will give great assistance to the development and growth of the tourism industry in developing nations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has shown that there are many challenges still facing the tourism industry in developing economies. An attempt has been made to highlight some of the major challenges which include *inter alia* the following – (1) poverty and the pervasive inability of government to act on any policy it has promulgated (2) the issue of terrorism (3) structural imbalances (4) the cultural clash over tourism in respect of different cultural behaviour.

In the same vein, the research also highlighted the prospects or benefits that can be derived in promoting tourism in developing economies and these benefits include among others the following – (1) catalyst of modernisation (2) poverty alleviation (3) development of infrastructure (4) employment opportunity and increase in GDP (5) skills development and training opportunity (6) the issue of corporate social responsibility.

For the government in developing nations to fully achieve and sustain the above benefits, there is an urgent need of the respective government in developing nations to further develop and implement the legislative and policy framework for sustainable development and in particular the government needs to do the following:

- Co-ordinate and integrate more fully tourism development into the overall plans for sustainable development and develop effective and pro-active participatory approaches.
- Identify and adopt the most appropriate mix of regulation and economic instruments, and, in many cases develop economic instruments to address environmental issues.
- Work towards the effective promotion and enforcement of regulations and standards to promote the tourism industry.
- Ensure the participation of all stakeholders affected by or involved in tourism and its development, especially indigenous and local communities.
- Ensure that tourism makes positive contribution to economic development, and that the economic benefits of tourism are equitably shared.
- Encourage and catalyse industry initiatives for sustainable tourism across all sectors of tourism, including tour operators, travel agents, accommodation, land, air and sea transportation.
- Promote changes in consumer behaviour in both tourist – originating countries and destinations towards more sustainable forms of tourism.

Conclusively, the respective Governments in developing nations need to develop effective monitoring of progress towards sustainable tourism. It is very important to develop activities to monitor and control and mitigate difficult challenges that arise in the implementation of the legislative and policy frameworks for sustainable tourism development. It is thus critical to ensure favourable conditions for tourism to develop in a competitive, sustainable and responsible fashion.



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